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**"OVER THERE" 1944/45 -
AMERICANS IN THE LIBERATION
OF FRANCE:
THEIR PERCEPTIONS OF,
AND RELATIONS WITH,
FRANCE AND THE FRENCH**

Andrew A Thomson
University of Kent at Canterbury
P.H.D.
October 1996



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PhD Thesis
Andrew A Thomson
University of Kent at Canterbury, England
October 1996

Over 2.3 million U.S. citizens found themselves shipped to France in 1944-45, most of them ordinary men conscripted into the Army. This study centres on the experiences of these Americans in France - how they were prepared for dealing with the French; their perceptions of France and its citizens on the eve of their arrival; the welcome they experienced, the giving and receiving of help; the changing relationship in the differing phases of the Liberation; and the legacy of the interaction - its immediate legacy, and the legacy of veterans' feelings towards the French in the 1990's. How the interaction of ordinary Americans and French worked out is the key theme.

The study draws primarily on U.S. Army records, records of Civil Affairs operations, and the results of the author's questionnaire of veterans with experience of France.

Following an overall good interaction in Normandy, Franco-American relations on the ground reached a highpoint with the sweep across northern France and the invasion of southern France in August 1944. In the twelve months from September 1944 there was a serious deterioration in relations, the principal factor being the effect of the passage of time. However, although the experience thus ended on a very low note, on balance the interaction had worked out reasonably well. Given the circumstances - that it was wartime, that the war dragged on for much longer than it had appeared that it would, that soldiers everywhere are likely to contain a rogue element, and that there was a language barrier - the interaction was a healthy one on balance. Because the American involvement was devoid of overtly colonial or bad historical overtones, it was more straightforward than it would otherwise have been and bore up reasonably well under the strains that did afflict it - a mix of practical and cultural strains, rather than 'colonial' ones.

"OVER THERE" 1944/45 - AMERICANS IN THE LIBERATION OF FRANCE: THEIR PERCEPTIONS OF, AND RELATIONS WITH, FRANCE AND THE FRENCH

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Preface

The 40th Anniversary of D-Day caught my attention as a political event, since it saw an excellent example of the skilled - some would say cynical - manipulation of the medium of television by the staff of President Reagan's re-election campaign. It was reported that they had arranged for the President to deliver a moving speech atop the Pointe du Hoc cliffs in Normandy - recalling the heroism of the Marines who had scrambled up the cliffs early on D-Day to remove the threat to Omaha Beach from its guns - at a time of day such that it would be broadcast live on breakfast television on the US east coast. This was timed not just to catch breakfast viewers but to eclipse coverage of Democratic nominee-apparent Walter Mondale celebrating victory in the California primary election. As often when he spoke on military matters, Reagan's text was a mix (attractive to many voters) of optimism, respect, and sentimentality; the occasion was remembered by Reagan biographer Lou Cannon (in a deliberately cinematic metaphor) as "Reagan's best performance abroad".¹

The political interest, however, soon paled beside the drama and human interest of the many stories of Normandy veterans that appeared in the press in June 1984. It was striking to be reminded that the stirring but bloody events of 1944 had taken place just over the English Channel from where I lived. As a student of American history, it was sobering to note that several million Americans had had this experience of war - and of Europe - almost on my doorstep. The D-Day 40th Anniversary underlined how close my generation (born in the mid-1950s) was to that of the young front-line troops of World War II such as those Americans whose D-Day stories were being reported, most of them born in the 1920s; they were only one generation removed. What, I wondered, had these young Americans in 1944 made of France and the French? My generation had a chance, with most of the young World War II generation now in their sixties, to tap their memories, to examine some of their perceptions and their experiences. To a British

¹ Lou Cannon, *President Reagan: the Role of a Lifetime* (New York, 1991), p.485

student of American history, with a strong interest in France, and with easy access to the areas of France which the Americans covered in 1944-45, serious study of this general topic would clearly be of interest.

The release in 1985 of Hollywood producer George Stevens' personal colour films made on the spot from Normandy, through Paris, the Battle of the Bulge, and on into Germany - distributed in a compilation by the BBC entitled *D-Day to Berlin* - further stimulated my interest with its vivid bringing to life of an era we 'see' only in black and white.² Visits to the new Mémorial museum in Caen (opened in 1988), along with the landing beaches themselves, provided much of the background to the military and political events. My interest was sealed by discovering the surprising absence of scholarly texts on the interaction of American soldiers and the French in 1944-45 - there was nothing to parallel books such as Norman Longmate's *The G.I.s* concerning the US troops in Britain. This field was clearly ripe for study.

The throwing together in the mid-1940's of ordinary Americans and ordinary French men and women was a topic that invited images of contrast and surprise. Relatively isolated and technologically backward residents of Normandy, under German occupation, but until June 1944 otherwise untouched by the direct effects of war, were suddenly faced with American soldiers in their midst, even in their homes. Many Normans fitted a stereotype of reserved, somewhat cold north Europeans; they were the opposite of outgoing. Short on expressiveness, many Normans were also very different to many Americans in their degree of provincialism: small-scale mobility (use of cars, for instance) and large-scale mobility (social fluidity) were both very limited. For this people, to have the American Army and the World War descend on their region was a massive shock; caution and concern were bound to feature in their resultant outlook on the Americans in their midst. Photograph 1 (on the next sheet) captures some of this spirit: a lone American soldier stands self-consciously at his 'post' in the newly-liberated Norman town of Carentan, whilst a small group of middle-aged residents stand

² A book of photographic reproductions from the films was published in the same year, with text by Max Hastings: *Victory in Europe - D-Day to Berlin*.



PHOTOGRAPH 1: American and French (Carentan, Normandy, June 1944)

chatting a few yards off. With their seemingly ever-present cigarettes to their lips, the two men listen whilst the women talk and throw glances at the American; what this particular group thought of the generally tall, healthy and relatively uninhibited young Americans who they suddenly found in their midst remains, of course, unknown, but the photograph serves as a symbolic introduction to the overall topic of Franco-American interactions on the ground in 1944-45.

A lady who was 11 years-old at the time of D-Day vividly writes of how she met her first American soldier, in a description that captures the tenseness and excitement of some of these interactions. In the early hours of 6 June 1944 her father, a railway worker, had heard and then seen aeroplanes and parachutists in the skies around Ste-Mère-Eglise. He rushed back to his house beside the Paris to Cherbourg railway line to wake the family to tell them - and to fetch a bottle to celebrate:

He turned to go down the cellar, but before he had taken two steps the kitchen door was suddenly kicked open from outside, and standing framed against the darkness was a strangely dressed man carrying a machine-gun, which was aimed menacingly at us. Here we were .. ready to kiss and laugh and celebrate; instead of which, this fierce-looking stranger, his jaw set, his gun trained on us, had burst in on us from nowhere.

He kicked the door shut behind him, as violently as he had kicked it open. He didn't say a word. He just kept looking at us, as though waiting for someone to make a wrong move. My heart was pounding; I sensed, in that frozen moment, that if any of us did move then he would surely kill us on the spot. .. Finally the stranger broke the silence: 'Friend or foe?' he asked, in perfect French.

What a silly question, I thought; as if anyone would ever answer 'Foe'! In the heavy silence, the intermittent roar of the planes contrasted strangely with the quiet, persistent ticking of our old clock. It was [six-year-old] Claude who finally answered him. 'Friends, Monsieur - we're all friends'. His high little voice echoed round the room as he walked straight up to the soldier, his hands stretching out towards the barrel of the machine-gun. 'Friends', the soldier repeated, lowering the gun at last. 'Really friends?' And he ran his grimy hand through Claude's hair.

We all breathed again. Following my little brother's example, I went over to the soldier and kissed him on the cheek. He looked surprised, but pleased. The whole room now relaxed, and my parents came back to life and walked over to him. The soldier pulled a map from his pocket and laid it out on the table. He was all business now; the time for pleasantries was over. .. 'Show me where the Germans are', he said.³

³ Genevieve Duboscq *My Longest Night: an eleven-year-old French girl's memories of D-Day* (London, 1984), p.37-8.

Fifty years later, at the June 1994 D-Day 50th Anniversary, the drama of such encounters, the support offered by many Normans, and the liberation delivered by the American troops featured strongly in the celebrations in western Normandy. Photograph 2 (on the next page) shows the scene at one of the many smaller-scale ceremonies held on 7 June 1994, the day after the set-piece international ceremonies with Heads of State. The photograph is of the close of a ceremony held in the churchyard at Picauville, a small village five miles west of Ste-Mère-Eglise, by the 508th Regiment of the 82nd Airborne Division. The ceremony demonstrated how, in marking such momentous events and such traumatic times for both troops and civilians, very few ideas and concepts needed to be drawn on; they were few, but they were strong and deeply-felt.

The ceremony lasted less than fifteen minutes, starting with the marching in to the churchyard of a small group of modern US troops with their band, followed by a group of approximately forty US veterans; a crowd of about eighty was spread around the churchyard, spilling into the road. The *Marseillaise* was played, and the Americans were welcomed in a very brief speech, in French, which stressed the warmth of the village's greetings, their thanks for the events of June 1944, a pledge to never forget, and an expression of best wishes to the people of the United States. A current-day American soldier replied in English, again very briefly, noting the honour that it had been for men of the United States to liberate a people who were suffering, thanking the people of the village and its surrounding countryside who had looked after the paratroopers, and closing by a call to remember all those on both sides who had died in the area in those days in 1944. This was followed by a lone bugler playing 'Taps', and then the band playing the US national anthem. The French host thanked the Americans again, and then the troops marched out behind their band; the veterans filed out behind them, and headed for a barn where refreshments were to be served. This brief occasion - for many of the veterans the centrepiece of their visit, since it was the most specific to their regiment and to the community in which they had landed - was moving in its simplicity, and was marked by a striking degree of earnestness on the part of the young American soldiers (most of them born since the Vietnam War even). It was a reminder of the power not



PHOTOGRAPH 2: American troops leaving D-Day 50th Anniversary ceremony at Picauville, Normandy, 7 June 1994

just of the individual memories of June 1944 but of the collective national memories, both French and American. Regardless of the good and bad points of the overall interaction between Americans and French in 1944-45, that interaction had been marked for many French and many American troops by shared moments of extreme danger, terror, and (for many) excitement; both sides had at times found themselves in situations that demanded that they draw on the most basic instincts of protection of or trust in others. Such intense shared experiences usually bestrode all barriers of language and status. But such moments, for most Americans and French, came to be outweighed by the ordinariness of troop life or the struggle to make ends meet in a war-torn country; this naturally put a strain on relations. To a degree, the overall interaction of Americans and French in 1944-45 can be seen as a struggle between the 'noble' or emotional side of their interactions - the peak moments of intense shared experience - and the ordinary, irritating side of having to 'get along' with each other in poor circumstances.

When setting out on this study I was uncertain how far I could or should employ oral history, undertaking a comprehensive programme of interviews of US World War II veterans of France. Early on it became clear that it would be impractical for me to interview enough veterans to obtain the comprehensive sample of veterans and their experiences which I felt that the breadth of the topic demanded. Consequently I devised a questionnaire to obtain data and opinions regarding veterans' experiences of France and the French. This was very successful, resulting in over two hundred replies, the majority of which elicited interesting observations and illustrations. The rationale behind the questionnaire, an analysis of the respondees, and a blank questionnaire can be found at Appendix 2.

The study draws on these questionnaire responses; the records of SHAEF (Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Forces)⁴, the US Army commands in the field, and the European Theater of Operations Historical Division⁵; Civil Affairs records (training, and

⁴ Public Record Office, Kew, and National Archives, Washington DC

⁵ National Archives, Washington DC

operations)⁶; the reports of French Préfets⁷; personal papers and unpublished histories⁸; and a handful of interviews.

I would like to acknowledge the help of many people in bringing this study to fruition. Firstly, my thesis supervisors (in chronological order): Dr Melvyn Stokes of University College London, Dr Julian Hurstfield of the University of Kent at Canterbury, and Professor David Welch, Head of the School of History at Kent. I have received excellent assistance from archivists, especially Dr Richard Summers and his staff at the Military History Institute, and Richard Boylan and his staff at the National Archives, Suitland Branch (now moved to College Park, Md.). Professor Stephen Ambrose of the University of New Orleans gave me encouragement and advice at the start of the project, introduced me to some of the collections at the Military History Institute, and commented on an early draft of two chapters. I am grateful for financial support from the British Association for American Studies, the University of London Central Research Fund, the History Department at University College London, my parents, and Canterbury Business School; for hospitality in the United States from the McDowell, Matthews, and Mitchell families, and in Caen from the Dumas family; for the time and willingness to be interviewed of André Heintz, Philippe Jutras and Allen Petersen; for research assistance from my wife, Judith, in the Archives Nationales, and from my eldest son, Ben, in the Imperial War Museum Library; for assistance in distributing my questionnaires in June 1994 from Ralph Bennett of Tours International (Tunbridge Wells), and for help from all the family with folding all those questionnaires! Finally, a special thank you to Judith, Ben, Hannah and Joseph for their encouragement, curiosity, and support.

⁶ National Archives, Washington DC

⁷ Archives Nationales, Paris

⁸ At the two US Army facilities: the Military History Institute, Carlisle, Pa., and the Center for Military History, Washington DC

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SOURCES:

- 1 National Archives, Washington DC (ref. 111-SC-190346)
- 2 author
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- 5 National Archives, Washington DC (ref. 111-SC-190831)
- 6 National Archives, Washington DC (ref. 111-SC-192078)

List of abbreviations

AAF	US Army Air Force
AFHQ	Allied Forces Headquarters, Algiers (in charge of operations in southern France)
AMGOT	Allied Military Government of Occupied Territories (the Military Government regime employed by the Allies in Italy)
CA	Civil Affairs
CAHQ	Civil Affairs Headquarters, Marseille (in charge of CA operations in southern France)
CATS	Civil Affairs Training Schools
CO	Commanding Officer
COMZ	Communications Zone
ETO	European Theater of Operations (alternative: ETOUSA)
FCNL	French Committee for National Liberation*
FFI	French Forces of the Interior ('the Resistance')
G5	[Civil Affairs Section of a US Army unit]
GPRF	Gouvernement Provisoire de la République Française (French acronym for the Provisional Government)
PWD	Psychological Warfare Division
SHAEF	Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Force

* The FCNL declared itself the Provisional Government of France (the GPRF) in May 1944; it was recognised as the *de facto* authority by the Allies in July 1944, and as the Provisional Government on 23 October 1944. References in the text are to the FCNL up to 23 October 1944 and to the Provisional Government subsequently (this line is adopted because the majority of sources referred to in the text are US government or military sources, which themselves stuck to the acronym FCNL up to 23 October 1944)

Word count:

Chapter 1	3,666
Chapter 2	5,714
Chapter 3	4,881
Chapter 4	15,641
Chapter 5	19,056
Chapter 6	18,372
Chapter 7	4,158
Chapter 8	4,088
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	75,576

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Involvement in the Liberation of France was the biggest and most dramatic interaction of the United States with a mainland European country in American History. Over 2,300,000 US citizens found themselves shipped to France.¹ Some were diplomats and senior military staff; most were ordinary men (and, rarely, women), conscripted into the Army. This study centres on the experiences of these ordinary Americans in France in 1944-45. It looks at how they were prepared for dealing with the French; their perceptions of France and its citizens on the eve of their arrival there; and then, centrally, the welcome they experienced, the giving and receiving of help; the changing relationship in the differing phases of the Liberation; and finally the legacy of this interaction - its immediate legacy, and the legacy of veterans' feelings towards the French in the 1990s.

The involvement with France in 1944-45, with an estimated 2.3 million US troops, compares with approximately 1.5 million involved in the final campaign in Germany² (though falling to a tiny occupation force of 12,000 by 1947)³, 370,000 in the Italian campaign of 1943-45⁴, and approximately 2 million in France in World War I.⁵ The involvement in the Liberation of France was the most dramatic interaction because it started with the largest invasion in military history, was undertaken against a diplomatic background of non-recognition of the *de facto* government of the (allied) country concerned, and was preceded by heavy American involvement in a bombing

¹ See Figure 17 (ii) in Appendix 1 (page 243). Appendix 1 discusses details of US troop deployment in Europe, including a comparison of the scale of the US involvement in France and Germany.

² See figure 17 (ii) & (iii), Appendix 1

³ Douglas Botting, *The Aftermath: Europe* (Alexandria, Va., 1983), p.50

⁴ Ernest F Fisher Jr., *Cassino to the Alps* (Washington DC, 1976), p.544

⁵ Cyril Falls, *The First World War* (London, 1960), p.336 records that 2,086,000 American troops had crossed the Atlantic by the time of the Armistice, 11 November 1918 - but, given a US presence in Britain, it is unlikely that more than 2 million would have been in France; David M Kennedy *Over Here: the First World War and American Society* (Oxford, 1980), p.169 gives a figure of approximately 2 million in France.

campaign which killed tens of thousands of French civilians. (Some one-and-a-half million American troops were involved in Operation Bolero, the build-up in Britain from 1942-44, but this was not, of course, mainland Europe; though fascinating in its own right, it lacked the drama of invasion and liberation).⁶

This interaction between the peoples of the United States and France in 1944-45 is significant not just for its scale, but because it marked the beginnings of a US commitment to mainland Europe that has lasted to the closing years of the twentieth century. With some signs in the mid-1990s of a possibly serious loss of interest in Europe by a younger generation of American politicians (typified by the 'freshman' group of Republicans elected to the House of Representatives in November 1994), an examination of the beginnings of the commitment to Europe is timely.⁷ The turning-point in the US becoming massively involved in a long-term commitment to Western Europe could be seen as either the American occupation of (a large part of) Germany in 1945, the undertaking of the Marshall Plan from 1947, the establishment of the Truman Doctrine (of containment) in the same year, or the restoration of large troop numbers following the Berlin crisis of 1948 and the establishment of NATO in 1949. But the influx of over two million Americans into France in 1944-45 was the starting point, the first exposure of the nation and so many of its citizens to mainland Europe at mid-century, with all of its problems, its potential, and its vulnerability. It was not a turning point in the sense of long-term commitment - it brought no treaty commitments, and had never been intended to - but the experience was a beginning, a marker for the future. American troop levels in Europe plummeted in 1946-48, but the occupation of Germany throughout that time meant that an American presence in mainland Europe was maintained unbroken from D-Day onwards.

Relations between troops and civilians are always the source of latent (and, in times of warfare particularly, often open) tension. Relations between the troops of

⁶ Juliet Gardiner, *Over Here: the G.I.s in Wartime Britain* (London, 1992), p.41

⁷ See, for example, the report of Helen Dewar (Washington Post), "Junior Republicans Spurn Global View of US Policy", *International Herald Tribune*, 10 April 1996

foreign liberating armies and the civilians being liberated are also another obvious source of difficulty. With the Americans in France in 1944-45 these situations were played out in tandem - but with the added ingredient of a shared sense of historical links. France is often referred to as 'America's oldest ally' because of her support during the War of Independence. After the turning-point Battle of Saratoga in 1777, France - keen to avenge Britain for the loss of Québec in the recent French and Indian Wars (1756-63) - agreed to provide the fledgling United States with supplies, engineers, and naval support. Young French nobleman Lafayette came to symbolise this support, fighting alongside Washington, and the French Navy played a key role in the final campaign which ended in the British defeat at Yorktown in 1781. The relationship naturally fluctuated in the subsequent century-and-a-half. Many in America came to fear the more radical actions of the French Revolution after the bloody scenes in 1792, and American ships were snared in the blockades resulting from the Napoleonic Wars (though in the War of 1812 against Britain the US found itself notionally on the same side as Napoleon). A high point came with France's gift to America in 1886 of the Statue of Liberty. In 1917 World War I brought US troops onto European soil for the first time - by the end of the year 175,000 had arrived.⁸ Allied setbacks in early 1918 spurred the despatch of larger numbers (approximately a quarter of a million in each of May to July), building up to a peak of two million.⁹ The war ended in November 1918, following substantial (independent) American action from September onwards. This involvement, whilst very large, was militarily confined to the north-east of France, principally the Champagne and Lorraine regions; elsewhere, it involved significant interactions with the French only in the Tours, Bourges and Bordeaux areas and the ports of Brest, Ste Nazaire and Le Havre.¹⁰ The involvement in France in World War II was to be far more widespread.¹¹

To the young Americans in France in 1944-45, World War I was just one generation removed - some of the troops had fathers or uncles who had been in France in

⁸ Kennedy, *Over Here*, p.169

⁹ *Ibid.* p.177

¹⁰ *Ibid.* pp.190-205

¹¹ Map 8 (following page 97) shows the large portion of France that was the scene of US military operations in 1944-45

1917-18, only twenty-six years before D-Day. Thus these historical links were not just confined to history books: America's prior involvement with France had both old roots and a very recent chapter. Whether knowledge of these links made any difference to the Americans who found themselves in France in 1944-45, and particularly whether it had any positive effect (through increased American sympathy or tolerance), is a theme that is picked up at various points throughout this study. It is, though, secondary to the main question regarding the interaction of Americans and French in 1944-45 - namely: How did it work out? Were the newsreel scenes of American troops being strewn with flowers as they sped through French towns in the summer of 1944 simply a thin veneer over a truer picture of French ingratitude and American indifference, exacerbated by an unbridgable language gap? Was French bitterness at 'unnecessary' destruction of their towns (especially in Normandy) strong enough to wipe out the exhilaration and thanks that they might otherwise have felt at being liberated? Did American troops know (or care) much about France and the French?

Secondary (and broader) aspects of historical interest which arise from investigation of the main question are issues of whether soldiers in an invading army, albeit a friendly one, inevitably look at events from a purely military, operational perspective, and the liberated population look at events from a more civilian, political perspective. Is this the case, and, if so, does it suggest that any serious differences that arise are bound to be irreconcilable? This study looks at whether there can be a distinction between political and military questions in relations between liberators and liberated.

America's 'invasion' of Britain in the military build-up of 1942-44 (involving some one-and-a-half million US troops) has been the object of serious study as a meeting of two peoples, an interaction at the level of ordinary people.¹² This has not been so for the Americans' experiences in France; the focus of attention has been on

¹² For example, in Norman Longmate, *The G.I.s: the Americans in Britain 1942-45* (London, 1975), and Juliet Gardiner, *Over Here* (London, 1993)

military, political and diplomatic history.¹³ The bulk of the texts are either ones of American History with disappointingly minimal references to France, or of French History with passing references to the United States. Whilst the military histories, in particular, have furnished some illustrations of Franco-American interactions on the ground, the diplomatic and political histories only fleetingly mention how the 2.3 million US citizens were getting on in France, if at all.¹⁴ This study aims to start the process of filling the gap by providing a monograph that spans the overall experience of Americans in France in 1944-45, looking at how they fared, how they saw their situation, and how the relationship on the ground developed over time. It is a study in American History - the prime interest is Americans in Europe, rather than how Europe saw the Americans - but to fulfill its aim it does draw on a number of French sources to allow as comprehensive (and cross-cultural) a picture as the scale of the study allows. Where this study discusses issues that are dealt with much more comprehensively elsewhere, such as military events, the role of the French Resistance, Franco-American diplomatic relations, the Vichy government and collaboration, or French politics, it does so only in so far as the discussion may enhance understanding or exploration of the key subject matter here: ordinary American soldiers' perceptions of, and relations with, France and the French in 1944-45.

In existing texts, in some instances the treatment of the Americans in France in 1944-45 shows up tendencies to portray the Americans or the French (or both) in a simplistically bad light, rather than attempting a fuller analysis. Much critical opinion has tended since the 1960s to focus on the arrogance that many see behind America's

¹³ Rather than examining relations between ordinary French people and American troops, concentration in the most relevant works has been either on military history - e.g. Russell Weigley, *Eisenhower's Lieutenants: the Campaign of France & Germany 1944-45* (Bloomington, Ill., 1981), Charles B Macdonald, *The Mighty Endeavour: the American War in Europe* (New York, 1969) - political and diplomatic history - e.g. Julian G Hurstfield, *America and the French Nation: 1940-45* (Chapel Hill, N.C., 1986), Irwin M Wall, *The United States and the Making of Postwar France, 1945-54* (Cambridge, 1991), Charles G Cogan, *Oldest Allies, Guarded Friends: the United States and France since 1940* (Westport, Conn., 1994) - or, in biographies and autobiographies, a blend of all three - e.g. David Eisenhower, *Eisenhower: At War, 1943-45* (New York, 1986), Omar Bradley, *A General's Life* (New York, 1983). The only American text to devote more than just a few pages to relations on the ground in France is a specialist one: John Maginnis, *Military Government Journal* (Boston, 1971), the extended diary of the experiences in both France and Germany of the Commanding Officer of a US Civil Affairs detachment; reference is made to the latter in each of chapters 4 to 6 inclusive.

¹⁴ The book that gets closest to the issue is Hilary Footitt and John Simmonds, *France 1943-45* (Leicester, 1988), which includes discussion of the experiences of the US Civil Affairs detachments in its chapters 4 and 6 in particular; its main interest, though, is in the politics of the liberation.

perceived Cold War role as 'world policeman'¹⁵; similarly, there has been an emphasis on French collaboration and a questioning of the scale of the Resistance.¹⁶ Incomplete analyses of Franco-American interactions on the ground in 1944-45 therefore run the risk of operating only at the extremes of a 'nationalistic' spectrum where wartime difficulties boil down to the 'ungrateful French' or the 'arrogant Americans'. This stereotypical approach may be emphasised by writers sympathetic to France portraying the Americans as arrogant (and by implication, unsympathetic and lacking in understanding), or by others portraying the French as ungrateful (and by implication, collaborators or traitors to the Allied - and/or 'Anglo-Saxon' - cause) - or by both countries being portrayed in a poor light.

Max Hastings in *Overlord: D-Day and the Battle for Normandy* devotes just two pages to the military's interactions with civilians. A photograph of a woman waving to Allied military vehicles is captioned: "A classic image of liberators and liberated; in fact, the attitude of most Norman civilians to the Allies ranged between numbed indifference and sullen hostility".¹⁷ The emphasis is on Allied dissatisfaction with the Normans:

Soldiers were puzzled, sometimes angered, by the sight of French civilians tending their fields or going about their business with their little carts, apparently indifferent to the claims of their liberators to gratitude.¹⁸

He describes the predominance of the elderly, the abundance of food, rumours of French spying for the Germans, the activities of prostitutes; civilians looting materials from dead soldiers, and stealing from military pipelines. This picture is balanced only by an

¹⁵ e.g. 'New Left' critiques such as Joyce & Gabriel Kolko, *The Limits of Power: The World and United States Foreign Policy, 1945-54* (New York, 1972)

¹⁶ e.g. Paxton, R.O., *Vichy France: Old Guard and New Order* (New York, 1972); Bertram M Gordon, *Collaborationism in France during the Second World War* (Ithaca, N.Y., 1980). An analysis of the replacement of the myth of "a nation of resisters" by the 'counter-myth' of "a nation of collaborators" is given in two '50th Anniversary' articles which analyse the way that the memory of Vichy has been handled by the French, and outline recent work which brings more balance to the subject: John Sweets, 'Hold that Pendulum! Redefining Fascism, Collaborationism and Resistance in France', *French Historical Studies* vol.15, pp.731-58; Paxton, R.O., 'Vichy Fifty Years After', *Proceedings of the Western Society for French History* vol.21, pp.233-43.

¹⁷ Max Hastings, *Overlord: D-Day and the Battle for Normandy* (London, 1984), facing page 288 (top picture)

¹⁸ *ibid.* p.198

admission that Allied troops looted abundantly; not mentioned are the absence of younger men due to rural depopulation and the deportation of labour to Germany, the fact that Normandy - undamaged until June 1944 - was a rich agricultural area whose produce could now no longer be shipped to Paris and the south, and the truism that spies and prostitutes are a fact of warfare nearly everywhere.

The 'French' line that the Americans were arrogant is most often expressed by the supposition that the United States was considering imposing an 'AMGOT' in France - an Allied Military Government of Occupied Territories, the style of Military Government first installed in Sicily in 1943. Thus, Henri Michel in *The Second World War* writes:

[They] wanted to impose a military government on Allied France as on enemy Italy; they had even issued an occupation currency; they paid their troops with Francs printed in America.¹⁹

In fact, although early Allied planning took the AMGOT concept as its starting point (principally because its staff had no other model to follow: AMGOT at the time was just going into operation in Sicily), it was an idea that was flirted with for North-West Europe in the summer of 1943 only.²⁰ On 28 October 1943 the Allies adopted the principle of Civil Affairs for liberated allied countries, as distinct from Military Government; to underline the difference of this approach to AMGOT they made Civil Affairs a function of the military command at all levels (each level of command would have a Civil Affairs section) rather than organised as a stand-alone entity as Military Government had been in the AMGOT model.²¹ Donnison, author of the British official history of Civil Affairs, admits that "there were phases of the planning when [French] suspicion [of an AMGOT] was not unjustified"; the idea did not completely die - as late as 15 March 1944 Montgomery's 21st Army Group developed a 'Civil Affairs plan' (never announced) that planned a Military Government for France!²² On 25 May 1944,

¹⁹ Henri Michel, *The Second World War* (London, 1975), p.635

²⁰ FSV Donnison, *Civil Affairs and Military Government in North-West Europe 1944-46* (London, 1961), Ch.2.

²¹ Donnison, *Civil Affairs*, pp. 20-23. The body that took these decisions was COSSAC - the staffs of the Chief of Staff Supreme Allied Command; COSSAC evolved in January 1944 into SHAEF (Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Force) when the Supreme Commander, Eisenhower - appointed in December 1943 - took up his post.

²² Donnison, *Civil Affairs*, p.52. 21st Army Group was the operational level between SHAEF and the separate US, British and Canadian Armies; Montgomery was Commander of 21st Army Group, and

however, Eisenhower issued directives which stated categorically that "Military Government will not be established in liberated France".²³ AMGOT for France was dead in October 1943 and buried by May 1944.

But AMGOT had become a powerful myth. André Heintz, a leading figure in the Resistance in Caen in 1943-44, referred to the threat of an AMGOT several times during an interview with the author.²⁴ The idea appears in many texts. Beevor and Cooper in *Paris After the Liberation* pick it up in describing the eve of D-Day:

Already officials were being trained in Charlottesville, Virginia, for the acronym which Gaullists feared and loathed most: AMGOT - Allied Military Government for Occupied Territories.²⁵

And Andrew Shennan, in his 1993 profile of de Gaulle, perpetuates the concept:

De Gaulle was aware of US plans to install in liberated areas of France an Allied Military Government of Occupied Territories (AMGOT) similar to the one in liberated Italy. ... [*In mid-June - i.e. after the invasion*], with .. clear evidence of de Gaulle's popularity, the Allies gradually shelved their AMGOT plans.²⁶

The imposition of an AMGOT was clearly genuinely feared and suspected by de Gaulle, his French Committee for National Liberation (FCNL), and the internal Resistance movements. John Sweets records that the early 1944 issues of the underground *Bulletin Intérieur des MUR* (Movements Unis de Resistance, a collaboration of the three largest Resistance groups in the south) reflect "the resisters' strong suspicions that the Allies wanted to rule France under an AMGOT".²⁷ This suspicion acted as a catalyst to bring together the Resistance inside France and the FCNL operating from Algiers and London - an impressive feat. In 1943 de Gaulle's

thus in command of US First Army's General Bradley. On 1 August 1944 an American 12th Army Group was formed under Bradley, removing the US Armies from British command.

²³ Donnison, *Civil Affairs*, p.69. Even under Civil Affairs procedures, the Supreme Commander still had "supreme authority at all times and in all areas to the full extent necessitated by the military situation" (*SHAEF Handbook of Civil Affairs in France*), but this was only to be exercised *in extremis*. The fact that Eisenhower had such potential authority should not be exaggerated to the extent of describing this as 'Military Government'; for the clear differences between Civil Affairs and Military Government see (my) Chapter 3.1

²⁴ Interview with author, Caen 9 November 1990

²⁵ Antony Beevor & Artemis Cooper, *Paris After the Liberation: 1944-49* (London, 1994), p.32

²⁶ Andrew Shennan, *De Gaulle* (London, 1993), pp.33&35; my italics.

²⁷ JF Sweets, *The Politics of Resistance in France 1940-44* (De Kalb, Ill., 1976), p.205

representative Michel Debré presided over the Commission charged with designating the administrators of liberated France, especially the *Préfets* (in charge of *départements*) and the *Commissaires de la République* (in charge of regions) - the Commission all agreed "to the necessity to choose these representatives from among members of the Resistance, or where that was not possible, at least with the approval of the Resistance".²⁸ There were similarly successful joint efforts (led by Gaullist Louis Closon) to ensure that every community in France had a *Comité de Libération* ready to assume power locally when liberation came. This unity, brought about by the perceived threat of an AMGOT, enabled the FCNL and the Resistance to seize political power - and present the Allies in most liberated towns and cities with a *fait accompli* that was welcome for both sides. As Donnison observes:

Allied commanders were willing, nay anxious, to accept any administration other than that of Vichy, which was found by them in existence and which they judged able to administer the country.²⁹

Thus, although the AMGOT myth served a valuable purpose before Liberation, its perpetuation in later accounts is an example of a (sometimes unintended) stereotypically 'nationalistic' approach; it suggests that the Americans were unsympathetic, and clouds consideration of their interactions with the French after the Liberation.³⁰

An equal hazard in treatment of the subject of the Americans in France is the danger of being too selective from the chronology of 1944-45. The contrast between the euphoric welcome given to Americans at the Liberation of Paris in August 1944 and the

²⁸ Michel Debré, quoted in JF Sweets, *The Politics of Resistance*, p.108

²⁹ Donnison, *Civil Affairs*, p.81

³⁰ The question of an "occupation currency", a 'sub-myth' within the whole AMGOT question, is clarified in Donnison, *Civil Affairs*, pp.63 & 82-3. Both the FCNL and SHAEF were concerned that when the beachhead in Normandy was small there would not be enough banknotes in circulation, and it was planned therefore to introduce 'supplemental Francs' if necessary. Printed in the US, held by SHAEF, these were *more* Francs, not a different currency. SHAEF wanted the FCNL to declare these legal tender, and de Gaulle was happy to do so; but Roosevelt vetoed this. This lent an inappropriate element of uncertainty to the notes - whose currency was it? - and at the end of June, to make a point, the first *Commissaire de la République* (François Coulet) threatened to tell tax-collectors not to accept payments in these supplemental Francs. Senior CA staff in Normandy assured Coulet that the British and Americans would redeem any Francs collected to the end of June; Coulet told the tax-collectors to keep these Francs in separate accounts. Then the issue died away. Donnison concludes: "At no time does there seem to have been more than a very slight reluctance on the part of the public to use them. Nor was it necessary to put large numbers into circulation" (p.83).

extreme contempt shown by some American soldiers towards the French just a year later is stark. Describing just one of these stages, or giving undue emphasis to one of them, would naturally give an incomplete picture. The most effective approach appears to be to seek a broad picture - broad not just in terms of sources, but also of chronology. Broad also in eschewing interpretations of 'ungrateful French' or 'arrogant Americans' until conclusions need to be drawn.

A broadly chronological approach must span the whole of the Franco-American experience on the ground, from training through action to the legacy left at the end; it should draw on veterans' recollections and opinions, US Army and SHAEF records, and French sources. That is what this study seeks to follow.

It looks first at the situation of ordinary American soldiers prior to their landing in France (Chapter 2). This chapter examines their training (with emphasis on the War Department booklet *A Pocket Guide to France*), the extent of knowledge of Franco-American historical links, language capabilities, any pre-war experiences or links they had with France, and finally their perceptions of France and the French on the eve of their arrival there. The section on language explores the development of their knowledge of the French language from before the war through to 1945. The chapter draws on the results of the author's questionnaire of a sample of 209 US veterans who served in France in World War II (these are also used in Chapters 4 to 7; the questionnaire is discussed in more detail in Appendix 2).

Chapter 3 looks at the situation before landing in France of another group: US Civil Affairs staff. In contrast to the ordinary soldiers considered in Chapter 2, Civil Affairs (CA) staff were specially prepared for France and the French. They have been included in the study because they came closest to French civilians in their work. In addition, their training reveals something of US government pre-D-Day perceptions of France and what it felt that a group of well-educated troops needed to know to allow them to undertake important roles in France. These staff, whilst specially trained, were in

general taken from civilian life; although usually better educated and older than most 'G.I.s', they very much qualify as 'ordinary Americans' still.

Three core chapters cover the chronology of the Liberation of France and the numerous American-French interactions that were such an important part of it.

Chapter 4 explores the experiences of the Americans in Normandy. Whilst most accounts understandably focus on D-Day (6 June 1944), the time in Normandy proved long and difficult: the Allied armies did not break-out into the rest of France until the turn of July into August. This chapter looks at the very first contacts between Americans and French. It then examines the overall welcome, first from the US Army's viewpoint, and then from the perspective of the ordinary soldier. A close look is taken at the idea of the "ungrateful Normans" which gained some currency. Examples of reciprocal help are explored, and the experiences of CA staff in Normandy.

Chapter 5 looks at the most hectic period of the Liberation: the month of August 1944 and the early days of September. This period saw a very rapid sweep of the American armies across northern France, the invasion of southern France followed by a speedy advance northwards, and the Liberation of Paris on 25 August 1944. In each of these areas the overall welcome for the Americans and then the specific experiences of the CA detachments are studied. Particular examination is made of the role of the Resistance in southern France and American interactions with it, and the controversy over how much American help the French Army required in the Liberation of Paris; the latter became the subject of some American ill-feeling towards the French.

Chapter 6 outlines the long campaign in Alsace-Lorraine, the experiences of CA detachments in the whole of eastern France from October 1944 to early 1945, and the overall deterioration in Franco-American relations on the ground between September 1944 and September 1945. This is looked at against the backdrop of a physically and materially hard winter for the French people, and the blow to both American and French

morale of the prolongation of the war. Understanding this period is an essential counter-point to noting the generally good relations experienced in the summer of 1944. The deterioration is looked at from the American and then the French viewpoints.

Chapter 7 explores two aspects of the legacy of the experiences of the Americans in France in 1944-45. First, the immediate legacy - how the 'G.I.s' looked at France and the French as they left for home - and then the legacy from the viewpoint of approximately half a century later: how veterans viewed France and the French in the 1990s. This is then followed by Chapter 8, the Conclusion, which summarises the findings from the main text, before drawing them together into answers to the main questions raised in this Introduction.

To many of the Americans who took part in the Liberation of France (and the millions more who heard their stories first-hand) their experiences in France played a part in shaping their feelings about 'Europe' for decades to come. Pre-war isolationist America met Europe 'face-to-face'. How this interaction of ordinary Americans and French in 1944-45 worked out is the key theme in this study.

CHAPTER 2

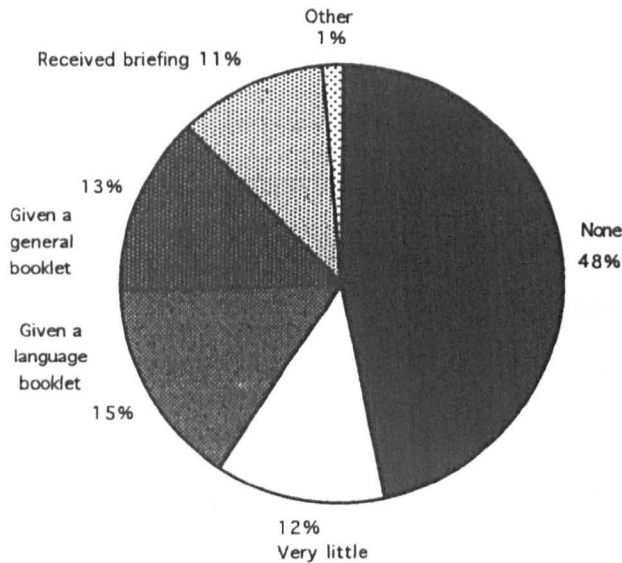
BEFORE LANDING: FRANCE AND THE AMERICAN SOLDIER

Before landing, ordinary American troops were mainly well-disposed towards France and the French. Most of these ordinary troops (meaning those other than Civil Affairs troops, who received special training) were well aware of some of the historical ties between France and the United States, but knew almost nothing of the language. Overall they had little or no direct training concerning the country they were to land in. However, the US War and Navy Departments produced a comprehensive booklet about France for each soldier. Soldiers' improvements in basic language skills prior to arriving in France, and their surprisingly high level of knowledge of Franco-American links, are in part a mark of the success of this booklet. It contributed to the good disposition towards the French of most American soldiers who approached their shores in 1944-45.

2.1 THE TRAINING OF ORDINARY TROOPS REGARDING FRANCE

A sample of 209 US veterans who served in France in World War II (by questionnaire in 1990-95, by the author: see Appendix 2) reveals the following level of training regarding France and the French:

FIGURE 1: Responses to question "What training had you received to prepare you for any contacts with the French?"
(A.A. Thomson questionnaires of US veterans 1990-95; 209 responses)



The main conclusion from these statistics is that only a small fraction (12%: 'Received briefing' and 'Other') recall receiving anything more specific than a booklet. 11% had briefings. These ranged from single sessions - "one briefing by a British officer" - to short programmes - "'classes' held in barracks"; "basic orientation course".¹ Some men commented on the relatively limited nature of these briefings:

We had a hurried indoctrination about the French, but less extensive than I remember prior to entering Cardiff, Wales, and before that Iceland.²

Amongst the key points remembered by some of those who received briefings were information on the part played by the FFI (French Forces of the Interior - 'the Resistance'), code words for FFI recognition, warnings about German sympathisers, and a brief history of French sufferings under Nazi occupation.³ Two men, both of whom landed some weeks after D-Day, recalled specifically being briefed that the French people would be friendly.⁴ The generally sympathetic tone of the briefings is captured

¹ S Ladin, O Thomas, P Cervone questionnaires (unless otherwise indicated, questionnaires are those organised by the author in 1990-95 - see Appendix 2 for details and a copy of the questionnaire). 'Questionnaire' is abbreviated to 'q.' in subsequent footnotes in this chapter.

² J Condon q.

³ D Brand, W Irvin, L Coen, J Susherebo qs.

⁴ A Burghardt, J Susherebo qs.

by one observation that there was "just enough training to be able to treat the French people with dignity".⁵

Just 1% of men received more than ordinary briefings. A soldier from 3rd Armored Division attended an RAF intelligence school about prisoners of war and "the return of evading fliers from the continent"; a US pilot received British intelligence briefings; and a SHAEF veteran attended the School of Military Government at the University of Virginia (discussed in detail in Chapter 3).⁶ These fuller experiences were very much the exception.

The most common training received was the provision of the US War and Navy Departments' booklet *A Pocket Guide to France* (the contents and style of which are the subject of the next section).⁷ The booklet was drawn up for distribution to all troops going to France. The relatively low figure of 28% who recalled receiving a booklet does not necessarily mean that the others did not receive it. Most of the men who received briefings or other forms of training reported receiving a booklet too. Indeed, many of the six out of ten men who recalled little or no training at all may well have received a booklet too - but they may not have thought of a booklet as "training"; training to them could well have meant exclusively verbal or physical activities.

Of the 28% who recalled receiving a booklet, just over half made reference to the booklet being about the language, or being a phrase book. The *Pocket Guide to France* contains 6 pages on the language, out of 36 pages in total; most of these contain useful phrases. In the absence of a separate French Phrase Book in the readily-available SHAEF and US Army records, and given that the most immediate cultural concern of men about to land in a country with another language would most likely be the language itself and how to communicate at all, it seems fair to draw the tentative conclusion that

⁵ S Tyzenhaus q.

⁶ D Crawford, K Haeuser, W Moore qs.

⁷ File 494-I; French Rehabilitation; ETO [European Theatre of Operations] Historical Division; Records of US Theaters of War, Record Group 332; National Archives, Washington DC. 1.5 million copies of the booklets were produced by the Information and Education Division, Army Service Forces (*The Army Almanac*, US Department of Defence, Washington DC, 1950, p.723)

references to a language booklet and to a general booklet are to the same thing - viz. *A Pocket Guide to France*.

One form of training for France that falls outside the categories of replies analysed so far is the experience of having fought in North Africa, against and/or alongside the French. Of the veterans whose questionnaire replies are analysed here, 17% were from Divisions with experience in North Africa. 3% of the total (18% of those from Divisions with North African experience) made specific reference to their time in North Africa as being a form of training.

2.2 'A POCKET GUIDE TO FRANCE'

A Pocket Guide to France is a well-written, skilfully constructed work which, although possibly appearing glib to sophisticated readers, filled a vacuum of knowledge about France and the French at just the right moment. It performed the multiple roles of informing, advising, and encouraging. Study of the booklet not only shows us what knowledge those who read it would have taken with them to France, but also what judgements the military made in deciding what information was the most important to impart, and in deciding where and how to insert words of guidance to the soldiers reading.

The booklet suffered the handicap of being an official publication - and therefore subject to scorn. Veterans claim never to have read the booklet, or to have found it not helpful.⁸ It seems doubtful that this would be the case for most men. Soldiers preparing to go to an occupied country, for many only the second foreign country (after England) that they will have been to, seem likely to have been in a state of alertness such that they would have wanted to read almost anything digestible about that country. This is likely to be true especially of those who had a lot of time to wait and wonder, either before

⁸ CA Petersen interview, Fair Haven, N.J., 25 February 1991; O Hill q.

setting off for France or during the long hours at sea en route (the men who landed on Utah and Omaha Beaches on D-Day had been aboard ship for at least 3 days⁹). Some men reported that the booklet was in fact presented to them on board their invasion craft, or in the port just before sailing.¹⁰ This did not give long for the facts to be absorbed, but it reached the soldiers at a time when they would have been hungry for information. One veteran felt able to rise above the scorn at official documents and declare that the booklet helped a lot; a veteran who claimed never to have read it had nevertheless carefully inscribed his name and number on its cover, and had kept it for at least thirty-six years after he had received it.¹¹

A Pocket Guide to France has twenty-eight pages of text, in five Parts. This is followed by an Annex giving basic facts about the decimal system, weights and measures, the language (mostly phrases), and - on the back cover - a quick reference table of important signs soldiers were likely to see: these range from the crucial (in the context of the 1940s) 'No Smoking' = 'Défense de Fumer' to the slightly absurd 'Stop' = 'Stop'!

Whilst the entire booklet is of interest for the insight it gives into the sentiments of a nation at war against the Nazis - "The Allies are going to open up conquered France, re-establish the old Allied liberties and destroy the Nazi regime everywhere. Hitler asked for it"¹² - , it is the information about and the perceptions suggested of the French and Franco-American relations that are of interest to this study. These can be divided into four areas:

(i) A belief in the popularity of America and Americans in France, and the need to retain this position; this is behind a decision to include strictures to the troops to treat the women with respect, not get drunk in caf  s, and not get into political quarrels - in short, to behave.

⁹ Roland G Ruppenthal, *Utah Beach To Cherbourg* (Washington DC, 1947), p.13; [Charles H Taylor] *Omaha Beachhead* (Washington DC, 1945), p.35

¹⁰ F McCue, H Soderberg, R Ulmer, O Thomas qs.

¹¹ CA Petersen (see footnote 8)

¹² *Pocket Guide to France* p 1; further references to this work are given after quotations in the text

(ii) A defensive or non-committal approach to France's defeat in 1940, its subsequent collaboration, and current political divisions; this is an important base for clarion calls to Allied solidarity, and to observations that Hitler would want nothing more than division between the Allies.

(iii) A stress on the serious, thrifty, family-centred, polite qualities of the French; this is an attempt to dispel the picture of France that men may have obtained from images of 'gay Paree', and a bid to make troops realise that the ordinary, provincial parts that they will most likely see are the *real* France.

(iv) References to France in history.

The belief in the popularity of America and the Americans in France can be seen even on page 1, with the bold statement that "Americans are popular in France". This statement has no supporting evidence beyond the brief sentence that follows it: "Your fathers or uncles who were in the AEF [the American Expeditionary Force, of World War I] may have told you about that".

Being popular was not going to be easy. In a section a few pages further on, entitled 'You are a Guest of France', the troops are told:

The household you are billeted with will probably want to show how they feel towards America and Americans. This will entail responsibilities you'll have to live up to. Mostly, the French think Americans act square, always give the little fellow a helping hand, and are good-natured, big-hearted and kind. They look up to the United States as the friend of the oppressed and the liberator of the enslaved. The French trust both you and your country more than they do most other men and nations. Keep that trust. (p.7)

This belief in the popularity of the United States seems almost touchingly presumptuous in view of the complete lack of evidence assembled. It reads like a caricature of Americans' perceptions of their role and how they are seen by other nationalities, especially given that nothing is written in the booklet which relates the sentiment to the French particularly.

The *Pocket Guide's* defensive or non-committal approach to France's defeat in 1940, its subsequent collaboration and its current political divisions, is subsumed in the broad and predictable theme of the vital necessity of the Allies sticking together. On just the second page the reader is reminded that the populations of France and Germany in 1940 were forty-two and eighty million respectively - figures that the reader is asked to bear in mind when considering statements about France being a 'pushover' in 1940. 'Keep quiet' is the theme that suggests itself:

The causes of France's early collapse in this war were so complicated that even the French bitterly disagree as to who or what was to blame. It stands to reason you know less about it than they do. Our Sunday morning defeat at Pearl Harbor still galls us. France's defeat is a raw spot which the Nazis have been riding every day for nearly four years. Don't help them by making the French sore.
(p.2)

Although this approach is an obvious one, it is - for its time - subtle in that it admits to the complexities and controversies of the defeat in 1940 rather than presenting a wholly whitewashed version of history. The case for keeping out of internal squabbles and preserving the vital alliance - in which every ordinary soldier would have a part to play - is thus quite persuasively put. The same argument extends to current political divisions within France too - though the author tries to put an optimistic gloss on events:

There are also purely French problems. General de Gaulle and his Fighting French are one of them, to some people. To most of the French he has symbolised resistance to the Nazis. He and General Giraud now have some sort of mutual agreement which will be for the help of all. (p.10)

The last sentence dates the authorship of the booklet to 1943 rather than 1944, as by the close of 1943 de Gaulle had outmanoeuvred the less agile Giraud out of any effective alliance.

Many aspects of the delicate issue of inter-Allied rivalry are addressed - and the issues are almost always met head-on:

(i) The booklet notes that some French have "harboured bitter feelings towards their former (*sic*) British allies" - reference to resentment of the British evacuation at Dunkirk, and the British destruction of the French fleet at Mers-el-Kebir two months later. American troops are urged not to "help anybody dig up past history in arguments. This is a war to fight the Nazis, not a debating society"! (p.10)

(ii) French civilian losses in Allied bombing are noted in a section entitled 'Necessary Surgery': most of the families who had been made homeless or had lost relatives "have understood the tragic necessity for this. Some, as a result of stray bombs, have not"(p.12).

(iii) By contrast, French military achievements *despite* 1940 are cause solely for celebratory text: "The heroic struggle put up by the Fighting French at Bir Hakeim, in the Libyan campaign, will live long in the annals of military enterprise" (p.11). The fact of Americans fighting Frenchmen in the early days of the invasion of North Africa in November 1942 is not mentioned.

The stress on the serious, thrifty, family-centred, polite qualities of the French has a two-fold purpose. Firstly, it is designed to pour cold water in advance on the noisier elements who may be under the impression that the French are relaxed about drinking, sex, and hard work:

France has been represented too often in fiction as a frivolous nation where sly winks and coy pats on the rear are an accepted form of address. You'd better get rid of such notions right now if you are going to keep out of trouble. A great many young French girls never go out without a chaperone, day or night. It will certainly bring trouble if you base your conduct on any false assumptions. France is full of decent women and strict women. (p.8)

In the same vein, cafés are brought 'down-to-earth': a café is described as a place where the Frenchman comes with his family, and "not a place where the French go to get drunk. Like all wine-drinking people, the French don't drink to get drunk. Drunkenness is rare in France" (p.17). The booklet clearly does not flinch at possibly exaggerating to make a point.

The second purpose behind this stress on the serious side of the French people is to make it clear that, although the Americans will most likely be in the provinces rather than the big cities, the provinces are the *real* France - an important place for Americans to behave therefore.

References to France in history open with a good example of American surprise at the large European role in history: "As a country France is a small place to have pulled such a big weight as she has over the centuries. You could put nearly all of France into our two states of Utah and Nevada"!(p.12) (Measured in this way, England must be even more surprising). Of course the key historical references are to France's role in the American War of Independence - "liberty-loving Lafayette and his friends risked their lives and fortunes to come to the aid of General George Washington at a moment in history when all the world was against us" (p.13). French naval and engineering help at the time is not forgotten. America's return in World War 1 features large - but France's suffering is stressed: "In that war, France .. lost nearly eighteen times more men than we did, fought twice as long and had an eighth of her country devastated" (p.13).

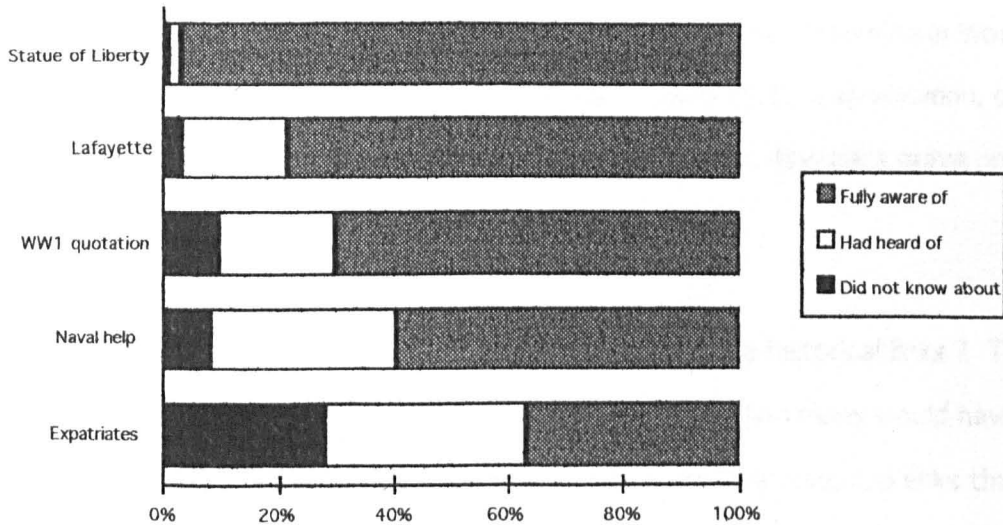
In summary, the stress in *A Pocket Guide to France* is on France as a friend and ally, whose problems are to be looked at sympathetically. It is a strong attempt to correct misleading images that soldiers may have had about the French and how to behave with them. The closing section - 'In Parting' - brings these themes together in rousing prose, the opening sentence of which recalls the bald "Americans are popular in France" of the opening page:

We are friends of the French and they are friends of ours.
 You are a member of the best dressed, best fed, best equipped Liberating Army now on earth. You are going in among the people of a former Ally of your country. They are still your kind of people who happen to speak democracy in a different language. Americans among Frenchmen, let us remember our likenesses, not our differences. The Nazi slogan for destroying us both was "Divide and Conquer". Our American answer is "In Union There is Strength".
 (p.28)

2.3 SOLDIERS' KNOWLEDGE OF FRANCO-AMERICAN HISTORICAL LINKS

Most of the American troops heading for France in 1944 knew of some of the more significant historical links between the two nations - as shown in the chart at Figure 2:

FIGURE 2: Knowledge of significant Franco-American historical links
(A.A. Thomson questionnaires of US veterans 1990-95; 209 responses)



Links suggested to veterans:

- 1 The fact that the Statue of Liberty was a gift from France
- 2 The role of Lafayette, young French nobleman who fought with Washington in War of Independence
- 3 The fact that General Pershing, on setting foot in France when American troops arrived in World War 1, reportedly said "Lafayette, we are here"
- 4 The crucial naval help given by France to the U.S. in the War of Independence
- 5 The presence of a large 'colony' of expatriate American writers and artists in France (Paris especially) in the 1920s and 30s

This list of Franco-American links, although far from exhaustive, reveals a high degree of awareness of the key times and areas where the two countries' histories overlapped. Given America's insularity, its distance from Europe, the much lower levels of international travel prior to World War II, and the difficulties of educating children during the Depression of the 1930s, one might have expected young Americans in 1944 to know much less about historical links with a single European country than the figures suggest.

The figures show an almost complete familiarity with the fact that the Statue of Liberty was a gift from France (97% fully aware). The numbers not aware at all of the other categories are small: only 3% unaware of Lafayette, 8% of French naval help in the War of Independence, 10% of the World War 1 quotation, and 28% of expatriates in France in the inter-war years. The presence of the expatriates is the least known phenomenon, with only 37% fully aware of their existence. (5% of respondents were informed enough to point out that the quotation attributed to General Pershing in World War I was not actually his; some believed it to have been drawn up by a spokesman, or said by one of his officers; it was in fact spoken by Col Stanton at Lafayette's grave on 4 July 1917.)

How do we account for the high levels of awareness of these historical links? They could be testimony to a more outward-looking general education than many would have believed of America in the 1930s. They could be said to show that historical links that have old and particularly crucial beginnings (spiced with notable 'human interest' such as the role of young Lafayette) really do make an impression on the minds of young Americans. This impression had probably been strengthened by the way that the links of the eighteenth century had been topped up in the intervening years - by the construction of the Statue of Liberty in 1886 (and the fact that it rapidly became a symbol of hope and greetings to millions of new immigrants), and by the huge American involvement in France in World War I. The figures could also show that the educational efforts of the US War Department - particularly through the *Pocket Guide to France* - bore some fruit.

The strongest explanation is the combination of the educational efforts of World War II with the fact that the last major strengthening of Franco-American links had been so relatively recent. To the young men of 1944 World War I was just one generation removed - it was some of their fathers or uncles who had come to France in 1917-18. The twenty-six years between 1944 and 1918 can be put in perspective by the calculation that twice that period separates 1996 and 1944; 1918-1944 is equal in length to 1970-1996. Photographs of the destruction in France, stories of American

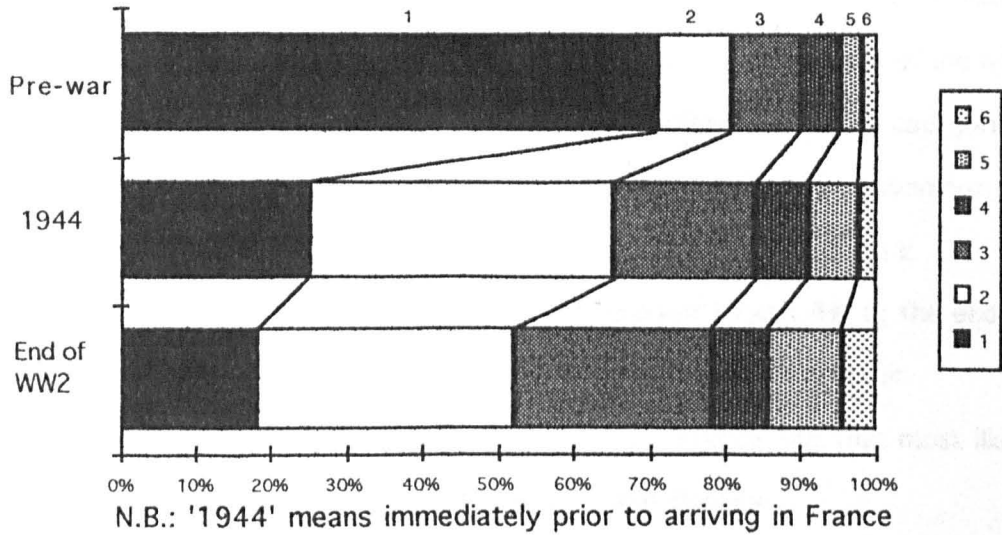
veterans' exploits, and ceremonies commemorating the huge losses of World War I - on French soil - would have been common in the memories of the majority of young Americans preparing to land in France in 1944. World War I and reminders in the *Pocket Guide* of older ties (and of common ground in the present day), would together have made the 'Franco-American friendship' a credible, live prospect to many American soldiers in 1944.

2.4 LANGUAGE CAPABILITIES

The majority of ordinary American soldiers who went to France in 1944-45 knew almost no French at all before World War II. By the eve of leaving for France many of these men had advanced a little - sufficient to ask one or two simple questions. By the end of World War II some of this original majority knew enough to find their way, or find out a man's occupation. A quarter of the original majority, however, still claimed to know almost no French at all at the war's end.

A sample of 208 US veterans who served in France in World War II were asked to estimate their language ability on a scale of 1 (Knew almost no French at all) to 6 (Fairly fluent); the results are shown in Figure 3.

FIGURE 3: Responses to question "How good was your French?"
 (A.A.Thomson questionnaires of US veterans 1990-95; 208 responses
 to language question - one less than to other questions)



Scale of language ability:

- 1 Knew almost no French at all
- 2 Knew enough to ask just one or two simple questions
- 3 Knew enough to find way, find out a man's occupation
- 4 Could pronounce words correctly, read newspapers
- 5 Knew enough to conduct fairly full conversation
- 6 Fairly fluent

The following points emerge from these figures:

(i) Whilst the large majority of soldiers knew almost no French at all before the war (71%), by the eve of arriving in France in 1944 the majority spanned categories 2 and 3 (able to ask a few questions; find the way; 59%, total of both categories). Only 25% still knew almost no French at all. The *Pocket Guide to France*, with its suggested phrases, had clearly had some of its intended effect.

(ii) By the end of the war 18% still claimed to know almost no French at all. The experience in France had lifted 7% out of this category during the preceding year, leaving just under a quarter of the original 71% forming a core for whom no language guides or experience in France had any effect. This quite small figure belies any notion that most G.I.s never learned anything of the language.

(iii) Whilst the majority still spanned categories 2 and 3 at the war's end (60% in total) there had been an encouraging increase in category 5 (able to conduct fairly

full conversation): it stood at 10% - up from 7% in 1944 and just 3% pre-war. For those men the increase in language ability had been impressive.

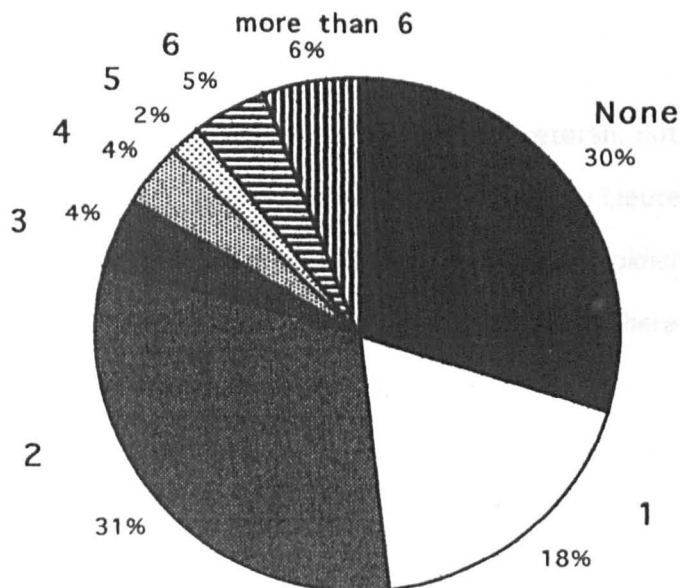
(iv) Excluding those who stayed in category 1 throughout, another 17% reported that they remained at the same level from before the war through to the end of the war. Although spanning all categories, these respondents are mainly from within categories 2 and 3; their presence is a counter to the idea of widespread continued improvement, for together with the 18% who stayed at category 1 they account for 35% in total.

(v) Category 6 (fairly fluent) rose from 2% pre-war to just 4% at the end of the war. This suggests that those in category 5 before the war expanded their capabilities to near fluency with the experience of being in France, but that most likely no soldiers with lesser knowledge rose all the way to near-fluency.

To try and gauge how widely French was known in the armed forces, men were next asked how many American troops they knew who could conduct full French conversations. The answers are set out in Figure 4:

FIGURE 4: Responses to question "How many Americans did you know who could conduct full French conversations"?

(A.A. Thomson questionnaires of US veterans 1990-95; 209 responses)



The overall response confirms the impression from the previous set of statistics (Figure 3) that only a handful of soldiers spoke fairly fluent French. 49% of soldiers knew 1 or 2 Americans who could conduct a full French conversation. Nearly one-third knew none - which is not surprising given that Figure 3 shows only 4% of soldiers fairly fluent by the end of the war. How then can one account for the 21% who knew 3 or more people who *could* conduct a full French conversation? The answer lies in the range of contacts within the Army that each soldier had, and in what way they have limited themselves in answering the question.

Some soldiers specified the number they knew as being from within their Platoon (groups of approximately thirty to fifty men) or their Company (groups of one to two hundred men). Others clearly thought of their whole Army experience. Thus a soldier in a Film Unit, moving around the Army, knew fifty to sixty soldiers who could conduct a full French conversation.¹³ Some parts of the Army would have more French-speakers (Civil Affairs staff, Signals, Public Relations) and those who had contact with them thus stood a higher chance of knowing more fluent French speakers than Figure 3's sample of 208 ordinary soldiers would suggest.

One Third Army soldier was not so mobile as the Film Unit veteran, but still ranged over the whole Army in his unique response to the question - "Two: my Lieutenant, and General Patton".¹⁴ 5% of the sample knew French-speaking American soldiers who were from either Louisiana (with its Cajun French dialect) or Maine (where there is a concentration of families of French-Canadian descent).

¹³ L Binger q.

¹⁴ R Bruno q.

2.5 PRE-WAR EXPERIENCES OR LINKS WITH FRANCE

The wartime journey overseas was for the vast majority of American troops the first time that they had left the United States. With so little international movement of ordinary citizens (even United States immigration had died down considerably in the 1930s), it is not surprising that of a sample of 209 ordinary soldiers only 6% reveal pre-war experiences in or links with France. However, no direct question was asked to ascertain how many soldiers knew of such experiences or links - revelations about such links have emerged from written comments volunteered by the respondents in the course of completing the questionnaire. The number would probably have been higher if a direct question had been asked.

The twelve men who make up the 6% provide a personal glimpse of Franco-American ties in the inter-war years. France was not totally unvisited - for a select few, it was familiar. Four men from the sample had actually visited France in the 1920s and 1930s. One was part of the US 1936 Olympics Team, and toured France after the Berlin games; one had been born in France, and returned twice to visit his grandparents; another was at school at St Cloud from 1929-31; the fourth spent many summers in France in the 1920s and 1930s visiting the French half of his family.¹⁵

Five of the other links were through men whose fathers or uncles had served in France in World War I. The remaining links were miscellaneous - one had a relation who was a photographer in Paris; one reported that his battalion surgeon was a graduate of the Sorbonne; and finally one man made reference to a family ancestor who had nursed Lafayette back to health following a leg wound received at the Battle of Brandywine.¹⁶

¹⁵ D Brand, R Huntoon, A Reeves, D Crawford qs.

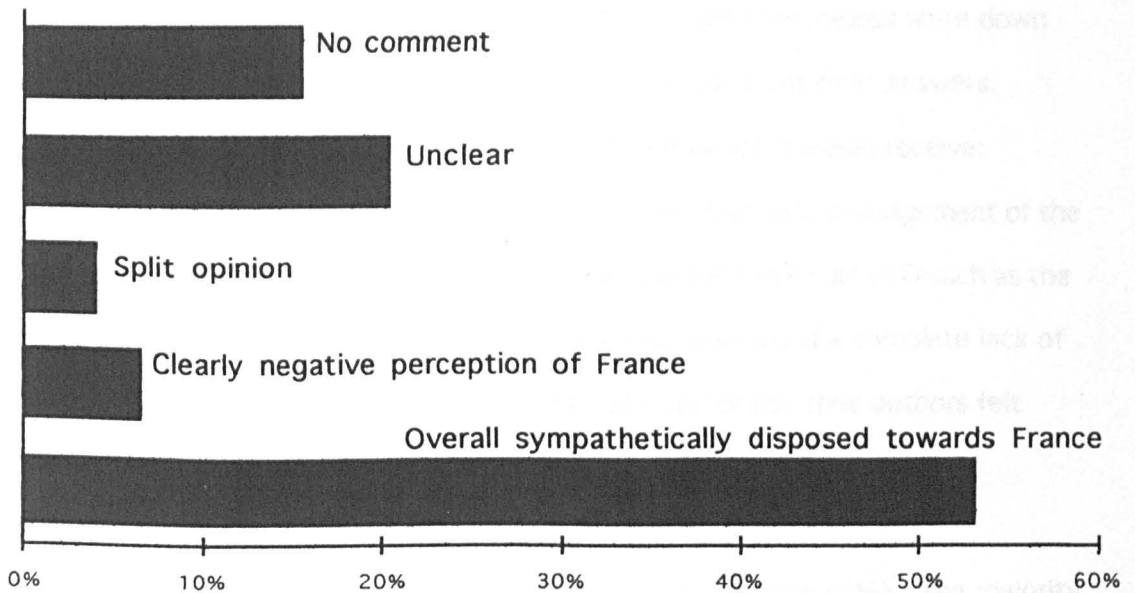
¹⁶ A King, W Coob, J Margreiter, D Swanson, D Thrasher; E Sackley, A Bauman, L Schaller qs.

2.6 SOLDIERS' PERCEPTIONS OF FRANCE AND THE FRENCH ON THE EVE OF THEIR ARRIVAL THERE

A majority of American troops about to set off for France were sympathetically disposed towards France and the French. A survey of veterans shows very few recalling unreservedly negative perceptions from the time immediately prior to setting foot in France. The results are set out in Figure 5.

FIGURE 5: Analysis of responses to question "In a very few words, what were your perceptions of France and the French on the eve of your arrival there?"

(A.A. Thomson questionnaires of US veterans 1990-95; 122 responses)



To the question "In a very few words, what were your perceptions of France and the French on the eve of your arrival there?", only 122 out of the sample size of 209 answered 'correctly'. Although the query was placed in a section entitled 'Setting the Scene', and was separated from the beginning of the next section ('Your experiences') by a thick dividing line, fifty respondents mistakenly answered the question as if it was asking for first impressions of France on arrival; thirty-seven did not fill in a reply at all.

Of the 122 valid replies, 36% offer no substantive view; they are the two sets labelled 'No comment' and 'Unclear' in Figure 5. Just under half of this group felt that they had nothing to contribute here ('No comment') - some of them pointed out that their only concern was to fight the Germans, some that they had no perceptions of France at all ("had no ideas"), and others that they did not recall "even thinking about it".¹⁷ One concluded:

I had been a soldier since graduating from High School in 1940 and, although I had some curiosity, I really wasn't very interested. I just went where I was sent. No background.¹⁸

The majority of those offering no clear view, though, did nonetheless write down their perceptions. Their feelings towards France are unclear from their answers. There were mentions of uncertainty at the welcome the Americans would receive; noncommittal references to knowledge of France from schooldays; acknowledgement of the German occupation of France; and expectations of meeting the same sort of French as the Americans had met in North Africa. What links these observations is a complete lack of any adjectival 'handles' that would allow one to say whether or not their authors felt sympathetically disposed towards the French.

A handful of respondents to this question reveal split opinions (4%). The majority of this small group contrast sympathetic (if clichéd) references to France's heritage or good living with negative references to France's defeat in 1940: "Beauty, good food and wine, but unable to defend themselves"; "An old country with a great history who had fallen on hard times; their defeated army reflected their willingness to surrender rather than fight".¹⁹ Another theme is respect for the Resistance balanced out by contempt for the level of collaboration.

¹⁷ M Dilthey, E Sackley qs.

¹⁸ I Faucon q.

¹⁹ G Madden, W Tomney qs.

Overall negative feelings towards the French are held by only 8% of respondents. Half of this group give the defeat of 1940 as the main reason for their scorn: "The debacle of 1940 and subsequent Vichy actions gave a poor perception. The hauteur of de Gaulle, undimmed by reality, was laughable".²⁰ The adjectives "cold", "distant", "defeatist", "self-interested", and "untrustworthy" are used. One soldier concludes "The French were not highly regarded by the American soldier".²¹

But the biggest group by far (53%) are those whose response to the question can be analysed as showing them overall sympathetically disposed towards the French prior to arrival. Many themes emerge from this group of answers. 20% of the group anticipate a friendly welcome from the French. 14% express pity or sympathy over the defeat of 1940 and the trials of the subsequent occupation. 10% mention World War I - France is remembered as an ally from those days, as a country which suffered terribly, a country to whom the United States 'owed it' to return and fight for its freedom again. The same number talk of France in well-meaning clichés: "A romantic country; lots of music, art; best wines in the world".²² 5% refer to France as a country with a considerable historical heritage and a long democratic tradition - "a great nation who [*sic*] had contributed much to western civilisation".²³ A similar number specifically refer to France as a World War II ally.

These themes are mixed together - many respondents interweave two or three of them in their answer. Amongst the words used in this group of replies are some unambiguous ones: "admired", "good", "brave", "sympathetic", "hard-working", "respect".

20 M White q.
 21 J Bourke q.
 22 A Carian q.
 23 R Denman q.

2.7 CONCLUSIONS

The ordinary American soldiers preparing to land in France in 1944 brought with them a range of perceptions of the country and its people. A clear majority of those recalling these perceptions were sympathetic towards France and the French. Most of the ordinary soldiers had received no briefings or other active training concerning the French; this was probably due to the pressures of combat training and the immense volume of men involved in D-Day and the subsequent build-up in Normandy. It is understood, though, that most of the men would have received the official *Pocket Guide to France*. The success of this booklet combined with basic knowledge that almost all of the troops had of long-standing Franco-American links to create a climate of goodwill towards the French amongst those troops who had opinions to express. This climate was sufficiently strong to counter for all but a few the potentially negative knowledge of France's collapse in 1940.

CHAPTER 3

BEFORE LANDING: FRANCE AND CIVIL AFFAIRS STAFF

In contrast to ordinary American soldiers, there was a group that was specially prepared for France and the French: the Civil Affairs staff. This chapter looks at the definition of Civil Affairs, how it was organised in the US Army, and how its staff were trained. Because of the combination of the average greater age of Civil Affairs troops, their small numbers, and the effect of their being spread across many military units (thus making it rare for any to be members of Division Veterans Associations), it has not been possible to obtain questionnaire data from Civil Affairs veterans such as that obtained from ordinary soldiers (outlined in Chapter 2). However, although there is therefore no directly comparable data as to individuals' historical knowledge, language capabilities, and pre-landing perceptions of France, the Civil Affairs staff nevertheless form an important and distinct group whom it is important and interesting to investigate. In this chapter, the records of their training provide insights into US perceptions of France; in later chapters, the records of Civil Affairs staff in action in France form a significant block of evidence regarding the quality of US-French interactions on the ground.

3.1 CIVIL AFFAIRS: DEFINITION, HISTORY, ORGANISATION

Civil Affairs staff in western Europe in World War II were Allied soldiers who were specially trained to take important rôles in the handling of the interface between the advancing armies and the local population during the liberation of occupied countries. The twin concepts of Civil Affairs and Military Government, and the need for specially trained personnel for them, had been recognised in the United States by the publication

in 1940 of Field Manual 27-5 *U.S. Army and Navy Manual of Military Government and Civil Affairs*.¹ The US had had military government experience in the wars of 1848, 1898 and World War I. The latter was followed by occupation of part of the Rhineland by US forces.

'Military Government' refers to the occupation of enemy territory, 'Civil Affairs' to the control of friendly areas liberated from enemy control. The flavour of the former is apparent in this excerpt from the *SHAEF [Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Force] Handbook for Military Government in Germany*.

The Supreme Commander has established the following as the primary objectives of Military Government:

- a) Imposition of the will of the Allies upon occupied Germany;
- b) Care, control, and repatriation of United Nations displaced persons, and minimum care necessary to effect control of enemy refugees and displaced persons ...²

Civil Affairs, on the other hand, was intended from the start to depend where practicable on the authorities of the nation being liberated. Thus the *SHAEF Handbook of Civil Affairs in France* defines the civil affairs powers of the Supreme Commander:

The Supreme Commander has, de facto, supreme responsibility at all times and in all areas to the full extent necessitated by the military situation and in accordance with the rules and customs of war. It is not intended, however, that Military Government should be established in liberated France. Civil administration in all areas will normally be controlled by the French themselves. In order to secure uniform civil administration, [the Supreme Commander] will utilise the leadership of French authorities (other than Vichy) in national administration. Commanders will also make every effort to ensure that any action required be taken by the French civil authorities. If initial recourse to French authorities fails, such executive action as the security of the Allied Forces or the success of the military operations may require is authorised.³

¹ *History of Military Government Training*, Vol 1, p.4; entry 472, War Department Civil Affairs Division; Records of the War Department General and Special Staffs 1903-47, Record Group 165; National Archives, Washington DC

² Quoted in *Civil Affairs and Military Government organisations and operations*, p.1; Report 32 of the Reports of the ETO (European Theater of Operations) General Board; Records of US Theaters of War, Record Group 332; National Archives, Washington DC

³ *ibid.*

By a decision of the Roosevelt-Churchill Québec Conference of 1943, civil affairs work was undertaken as a 'combined operation', with partly-integrated British and American units. It was decided that two-thirds of the officers and 100% of the enlisted men of each civil affairs detachment would be of the nationality of the Army operating in the area in question. This meant that up to one-third of the officers in detachments in the American area of operations could be British - though the fraction was usually smaller. When the decision was taken in 1944 to operate exclusive zones of occupation in Germany, a policy was started of gradually removing American and British CA (Civil Affairs) officers from the others' detachments; this process (known by SHAEF humourlessly as "disintegration"!) was complete by 20 October 1944.⁴

The American Army established a European Civil Affairs Division (ECAD) in February 1944. ECAD was made up of 7,700 men in total - approximately 2,700 officers and 5,000 enlisted men. It was organised into a headquarters and three regiments; each of these three regiments was made up of nine companies - which in turn were made up of CA detachments. The detachments were of four types, from largest to smallest, known as "A", "B", "C", or "D"; each company had one "A", one "B", two "C" and eight "D" detachments. Just over half of the detachments (14 out of the 27 companies in total) served in France; the remainder were trained for service in Germany exclusively.

The size and make-up of the four types of CA detachments can be seen from Figure 6 (on the following page), which also gives a good idea of the activities covered by detachments.⁵ "A" detachments were intended for regional capitals, "B" for capitals of départements, "C" and "D" for arrondissement and city districts. CA detachments were assigned to a town, and were to stay there even after the army units which had liberated the town had moved on. Detachments stayed in towns for periods of between a few weeks and four months.

⁴ *ibid.* p.23

⁵ *ibid.* p.23-29

FIGURE 6: Composition of Civil Affairs Detachments:

Detachment type:	A	B	C	D
<i>(i) Officers</i>				
Commanding Officer	1	1	1	1
Deputy Commander	1			
Deputy - Legal		1	1	1
Legal	2			
Public works, public utilities	2	1		
Fiscal	1	1	1	
Economics - labour	1	1		
Agriculture, public welfare		1		
Public welfare	1			
Police, Fire, Civil Defence	2	1	1	2
Transportation	1			
Posts, Telephone, Telegraph	1	1		
Civil Defence	1		1	
Supply	2	1	1	
TOTAL OFFICERS:	16	9	6	4
<i>(ii) Warrant Officers</i>	3	2	1	
<i>(iii) Enlisted men</i>				
Chief Clerk	1	1	1	
Warehouse Foreman	1	1		
Accountant	1	1		
Auditor	1			
Clerk, typist	3	1		
Court Reporter	1			
Draftsman	1	1		
Interpreter	2	2	2	2
Investigator	1	1	1	1
Motorcyclist	1	1		
Stenographer	1	1	1	
Truckdriver, light	6	4	2	2
TOTAL ENLISTED MEN:	20	14	7	5
TOTAL:	39	25	14	9

In addition to these CA detachments, ECAD supplied CA staff to serve in all the different levels of the Army chain of command. There were thus CA sections in SHAEF and in each of the descending levels of the Army hierarchy: Army Groups, Armies, Corps and Divisions. These staff operated as the "G5" section of the unit in question. World War II was the first time that "G5" joined the traditional army sections "G1" - Adjutant-General - "G2" - Intelligence - "G3" - Operations - and "G4" - Quartermaster-General.

The highest level in the US Army chain of command in France (below the Supreme Commander and SHAEF) was the Army Group. Up until 1 August 1944 there was no U.S. Army Group on the continent; the Americans were under Montgomery's 21st Army Group. When the US 12th Army Group was set up on 1 August Omar Bradley was made the commanding General. The only other Army Group involved in operations in France was the 6th Army Group which supervised the 15 August landings in Southern France.⁶

Under the Army Group was the Army. Four were involved in operations in France. The US First Army was the only one operational until the Third Army (under General George C. Patton) was formed on 1 August 1944. The First and Third Armies shared the sweep across France in August and September, the Third Army making the most rapid advances in August, with the First Army taking the more difficult left (northern) flank; it was the Third Army that fought the subsequent Lorraine Campaign. The Ninth Army was set up on 4 September 1944 to take over operations in Brittany. The Seventh Army advanced from Southern France following the 'Anvil' landings there in August 1944. When action took the Armies forward out of the more westerly parts of France, a Communications Zone was set up behind (COMZ). Many CA detachments, left behind after the action had swept eastwards, therefore found themselves under COMZ control.

Under each Army were Corps. From two Corps at the time of D-Day, the American forces spearheading the drive eastwards built up to six Corps by September - three each in both of the First Army (V, VII and XIX Corps) and Third Army (XII, XV, XX Corps). Each Corps' G5 section had three officers and four enlisted men, and was there to advise the Corps Commander on CA issues and coordinate the work of CA staffs in the Divisions that formed the Corps.

Under Corps were Divisions, the most significant units in understanding the structure of the army. Shelby Stanton describes Divisions in *Orders of Battle: US Army*

⁶ All background regarding US military structure is from Shelby L. Stanton, *Orders of Battle: US Army in World War II* (Washington DC, 1984), pp.3-5

in World War II (p.5) as “the largest units in the army having a prescribed organisation”; all units from Division down (brigades, regiments, companies, platoons) were based on standard Tables of Organisation & Equipment which “fixed the structure, strength, and equipment of these various unit types”. Corps and Armies, higher up the chain of command, on the other hand, were very flexible; they were formed solely “to provide command, control, and the provision of additionally required support to those forces placed under them”, and as such varied in size greatly. Each Corps had between two and five Divisions in it. US Infantry Divisions were of roughly 16,000 men in size. Infantry Divisions (other types being Armored Divisions or Airborne Divisions) had G5 sections of five officers and six enlisted men. It was Division-level G5 sections that controlled CA detachments in their area. The most common units making up Divisions were Regiments, and under them Companies. However there were not G5 staffs in units below Division level; ECAD's CA detachments formed the only CA layer beneath the G5 sections in the Divisions.

CA detachments had interactions with many differing levels of Army bureaucracy - they could anticipate questions and inspections and demands for information from SHAEF G5 down through Army-level, Corps-level, and Division-level G5 sections. CA detachments had many direct dealings too with the units that made up Divisions - units too small to have their own G5 sections. John Maginnis, Commanding Officer of the first operational US CA detachment in France (in Carentan), wrote in his memoir *Military Government Journal* of the initial work of his detachment, and its interaction with the different army units that it inevitably encountered. His account gives a good indication of the role of the CA detachment and how its success could be measured:

During the combat phase, we tried as best we could to get the community back into operation - putting out fires, getting the water system into operation, getting local government back into operation, establishing effective relations between the army and the civilian population, controlling circulation and refugees, disposing of dead persons and animals, and the hundred and one things that were necessary to re-establish the life of the community. Our relationship with the tactical units was, in many respects, not clearly defined. These units in most cases had only a dim idea as to the function and place of Civil Affairs. We realised this and took pains to see that they understood that we were there to help them by taking civilian problems off their shoulders. We managed to set up a

workable relationship between the military forces and civilian authority, one which gave the army the help it needed and also protected civilians from undue hardships.⁷

3.2 THE TRAINING OF CIVIL AFFAIRS STAFF REGARDING FRANCE

Training for US civil affairs staff took place in four major locations, all organised under the auspices of the Provost Marshall General's office of the U.S. Army:⁸

i) For selected top army officers, intended for senior administrative posts in Civil Affairs / Military Government, there was the School for Military Government at Charlottesville, Virginia. Approximately 800 men graduated from the seven classes held at Charlottesville between 1942 and 1944.

ii) For 2,500 men with professional and technical skills that the Army was given authority to commission from civil life, there was first a short 'Specialist Officers Course' at The Provost Marshall Generals School, Fort Custer, Michigan covering the general principles of Civil Affairs / Military Government. A similar course - the 'Company Officers Course' - was attended by junior officers and military police who would be involved in Civil Affairs / Military Government work.

iii) The enlisted 'civilians' then went on to Civil Affairs Training Schools (CATS) run by the military at ten university campuses, with a significant input from the academic world. The CATS were intended for study of the backgrounds and languages of the countries of potential occupation, together with practical civil affairs training exercises - 'problem work' which tried to tie together the general principles taught at Fort Custer and the study of national backgrounds.

iv) All men ended up on arrival in Europe at the U.S. Army's European Civil Affairs Division's training centre at Shrivenham, England. At Shrivenham men would,

⁷ John Maginnis, *Military Government Journal* (Boston, 1971), p.94. Maginnis uses the term "Military Government" in his title because half of the book concerns his experiences in Germany.

⁸ *History of Military Government Training*, Vol 1, pp.4-22; entry 472, War Department Civil Affairs Division; Records of the War Department General and Special Staffs 1903-47, Record Group 165; National Archives, Washington DC

in addition to further training, be allocated to CA detachments and subsequently sent to camps to await the move to France. 'Top-up' training took place at these camps. Men who were to be attached to British detachments went on to the British CA School at Eastbourne.

The School of Military Government was set up in May 1942 on the campus of the University of Virginia at Charlottesville. Its establishment was the Provost Marshall General's first response to a directive of 3 December 1941 (just three days prior to the attack on Pearl Harbour) making his office responsible for "training officers for future detail in connection with military government".⁹ The Provost Marshall General's Office's *History of Military Government Training* points out that "Until that time, in all the history of the American Army, no effort had ever been made to prepare officers for military government duties".¹⁰ One spur to this move towards planning was the Hunt Report, a summary of the American post-World War I occupation of the Rhineland by Colonel Hunt, Chief Civil Affairs Officer of the American occupying forces. He pointed out the lack of trained personnel and the overall unpreparedness for the task.¹¹

In response to the December 1941 directive, the following month the Provost Marshall General recommended the establishment of the School of Military Government. Its first experimental class started on 11 May 1942 with 50 officers. The school was expected to have a capacity of 100 officers for each 4-month class, thus producing 300 graduates per annum. During 1942, planning then underway on a full Military Government programme revealed that 300 men per annum was far too few - at least 6,000 would be needed, which would include several different categories of personnel. On 4 September 1942 the Provost Marshall General published a *Synopsis of War Department Program for Military Government*, which led to authorisation the next month to proceed with the following plan to obtain the minimum 6,000 personnel estimated to be required by the end of 1944:

⁹ *ibid.* p.1

¹⁰ *ibid.*

¹¹ *ibid.* pp.1, 3 & 4

(A) By increasing the training groups at the School of Military Government from 100 to 150 there could be trained by the close of the year 1944 ...	1000
(B) By training 100 [junior] officers per month at a Company Officers School at the Provost Marshall General's School, [Ft.Custer, Mich.]	2400
(C) By commissioning from civil life certain experts in professional and technical skills and training them in a combined military and civilian university set-up	2500
	Total: 5,900 ¹²

Thus it was only in the autumn of 1942 that the three distinct categories of CA/MG personnel were identified. They were:

i) Top administrative commissioned personnel - to be trained at Charlottesville; presumed to be destined for postings in the higher reaches of the Army (Division, Corps or Army levels) rather than CA/MG detachments.

ii) Men from civilian life, experts with administrative or technical skills, to be commissioned into the Army - to be trained in Military Government principles at Fort Custer (Specialist Officers Course), then go on to Civil Affairs Training Schools (CATS) at universities; presumed to be the backbone of the CA/MG detachments.

iii) Junior commissioned personnel and occupational or military police - to be trained in a one-month Company Officers Course course at Fort Custer; usually destined for junior roles in detachments.

835 men graduated from the School of Military Government at Charlottesville in the seven classes for the European Theater of Operations held there between May 1942 and April 1944. Class numbers ranged from 50 in the first (experimental) class to over 170 in the fifth and sixth classes; classes lasted between three and four months. There was an initial staff of ten officers, which was built up to twenty by the end of 1943, together with four civilian special advisers and lecturers.¹³ The School of Military Government was different to the Civil Affairs Training Schools, discussed later, in that it was run by military men for a choice selection of their own best men, using just a few civilians to help. CATS, on the other hand, were run jointly by the

¹² *Ibid.* pp. 11 & 12

¹³ *The School of Military Government - Schooling of Commissioned Officers*, pp.3 & 14; entry 442; Records of the Provost-Marshall, Record Group 389; National Archives, Washington DC

universities and the military, using almost exclusively civilian instructors. CATS gave greater emphasis to area and language studies, whereas men at Charlottesville - destined in the main for staff positions rather than field operations - had more practical exercise work.

Amongst the School of Military Government's outside speakers were Professor Allison from Yale talking on *The Provincial Town and the City*, and Professor Cole of Columbia giving a three-lecture course on French history from Napoleon to World War II. Professor Allison's talk contained similar material to that used in his CATS lectures. As an indication of the lesser emphasis given to area studies at Charlottesville, Professor Cole's third lecture - *France 1914-43* - covered the fall of France and World War II in just the last quarter of the lecture, whereas in the Yale CATS Professor Allison gave a dedicated lecture on *The Effects of the War on France*.¹⁴

Of the two courses run at the Provost Marshall General's School, Fort Custer, Michigan, 2,500 men in total attended the one-month Specialist Officers Courses, for men selected from civilian life. 300 men in total attended the two-month Company Officers Course, for junior commissioned personnel and occupational and military police.

For men from civilian life, this month at Fort Custer was followed by a two month course at one of ten CATS, held at the universities of Harvard, Yale, Pittsburgh, Michigan, Chicago (Far Eastern course only), Northwestern, Wisconsin, Western Reserve, Stanford and Boston. The Schools were established in the summer of 1943, one year after the establishment of the School of Military Government at Charlottesville.¹⁵ The ten universities involved in the programme were given contracts to run a syllabus prescribed by the Provost Marshall General, but using predominantly university staff.

¹⁴ Charlottesville lectures: entry 442; Yale lectures: entry 444; Records of the Provost-Marshall, Record Group 389; National Archives, Washington DC

¹⁵ *History of Military Government Training*, Vol 2, pp.1-18; entry 472, War Department Civil Affairs Division; Records of the War Department General and Special Staffs 1903-47, Record Group 165; National Archives, Washington DC

A member of the university faculty was designated Director of the CATS, and the Army appointed a full-time on-site Liaison Officer, normally a Colonel. This officer had usually graduated from the School of Military Government at Charlottesville, and, in addition to his liaison activities, conducted the military government part of the course.

Intakes to courses were of between fifty and one hundred men, their ages ranging from twenty-five to fifty-five. The syllabus required language instruction, language testing, lectures on area studies, area conferences (bringing in for 'interrogation' in an open discussion format selected nationals of the countries being studied), and the undertaking of CA set problems. A standard European Theater curriculum was developed for all CATS by late 1943:

1. Language instruction - 120 to 136 contact hours during the two months, at least 80 hours in conversational drill sessions with not more than 8 officers present.
2. Area lectures - 48 to 62 contact hours, at least 36 devoted to Germany (including Austria) and distributed as follows: at least 6 hours on political attitudes and political systems; at least 10 on government, with major emphasis on local government organisation and services; at least 4 on law, law enforcement, and the judicial system; at least 10 on the economic system, including industrial, financial and commercial organisation; at least 3 on public health and welfare; and at least 3 on education, propaganda, press and radio.
3. Area conferences - 32 to 48 contact hours.
4. European backgrounds of military government - not more than 10 contact hours.
5. Military government - 4 to 12 contact hours in review of principles, and 8 to 16 contact hours in solution of military government problems.¹⁶

From the records of the Yale and Harvard courses (those with fullest records) one can see lecture synopses that show that their courses were detailed, and brought out subtleties - as one would hope and expect. The CATS courses, certainly at Yale and Harvard, were far more than just a rundown on French and German geography and government, with language added. On the contrary, for example, the Harvard *International Relations, Ideologies, and Administration* course of 25 lectures, by Professor J.A. de Haas, after covering the World War I to World War II period in depth, concluded with three lectures on *The Social Environment of Administration*. These

¹⁶ *ibid.* Yale Appendix

included topics of obvious relevance to Civil Affairs officers, such as the informal character - by contrast with law and formal organisation - of many of the most important institutional features of societies different from one's own; the principal non-rational behaviour phenomena likely to be encountered - their social and psychological sources, and techniques of dealing with them; rumours - their genesis and propagation; sources of difficulty in not taking account of special local attitudes and customs; family relations and the status of occupation personnel in relation to women and informal social participation.¹⁷

In a similarly impressive way, Harvard's *Accelerated French Language* course contained the following amongst its section on *Situations to be Dramatised in French* :

- Explain to local police officials that they must share their authority with your military police; that civil crimes will continue to be tried before a civil court and military crimes before a military tribunal.
- Sympathise with the local residents for the hardships which they have endured; assure them of your friendship and good will, and of the United Nations' intention to bring freedom to their country and punishment to those responsible for their misfortunes.
- Try to find out to what extent a black market exists and what the current black market prices are on standard foods.¹⁸

Yale's studies on France, by Professor J.M.S. Allison, included a lecture entitled *Three Fundamental Characteristics of the French*. Professor Allison looks at three areas of individualism - the individualism of the Frenchman, the individualistic character of the French family, and the individualistic character of French towns and provinces. This analysis is what Professor Allison regards as the necessary background to the next section, entitled *The Approach to the French*. That contains material of direct practical concern to Civil Affairs officers:

[The Frenchman] is always suspicious of interference in his private affairs. Once he is assured that these will not be touched, he will usually give you his trust. ... He will not tell you the whole story at once, and he does not expect you to do so. He wishes you to lead up to your purpose slowly. Once that has been done and you have convinced him, he will give you his wholehearted support.

¹⁷ *ibid.* Harvard Appendix

¹⁸ *ibid.* Harvard Class III

... [Your] approach must always be a courteous approach. Officers when they approach a civilian always salute him - even as French bourgeois raise their hats to each other and French peasants salute by lifting their caps to one another as a sign of greeting. If you go to see a Frenchman at his house, never make a move to enter or indicate even your intention to enter until he has asked you to do so. A casual friendly comment about a child at the door or about a dog, or even about the vines on his garden wall, will often bring forth the invitation you desire.

The French are inclined to like the Americans. But they are frightened by our wealth and the way we often display it. They themselves are careful not to show their affluence by exaggerated display. More than all else American abruptness and haste to get to the point often alarms them. This will sometimes bring forth an angry rebuff. One should remember that this is done in self-defense. Anger or annoyance will pass very quickly.¹⁹

In the lecture *Effects of the War on France*, Professor Allison addresses French views of the United States, and the likely course of relations between their peoples when they finally meet:

The French have long believed ... that their salvation would come, in great part, from ourselves. They have never understood why the United States did not enter the last war until 1917, and they will find it even more difficult to understand why we waited until the last days of 1941 to enter this one. They will surely ask us that question, but it will be asked in good part and not in ill, for, at bottom, they have always liked us and trust us more than any other foreign nation. They like to believe that we are more like themselves, and we are, in temperament, certainly more akin to them than are the British. But the difference between ourselves and them is a vast one. Great as it is, however, the French will try not to recognise it.

They did that successfully during the last war. They approve of our democracy because it is more like their own; at least, they think it is; both are called Republics. Their idea of American democracy is that of Thomas Jefferson flavoured somewhat by the interpretations of Alexis de Tocqueville. Between our officers and the French, especially the French people, there is likely to be little misunderstanding.²⁰

Professor Allison felt, however, that the differences in standards of pay between French and American enlisted men could cause difficulties. Nevertheless, his attitude was one of optimism, and his lectures highlighted the strong base on which links could be built. He concluded one lecture with some rallying comments regarding the qualities of the French - somewhat reminiscent of the approach (on the question of the extent of collaborationism in particular) in the War Department's *Pocket Guide to France*,

¹⁹ Yale CATS (Civil Affairs Training School) papers, Course XI; entry 444; Records of the Provost-Marshal, Record Group 389; National Archives, Washington DC

²⁰ *ibid.*

discussed in Chapter 2. He pointed out that although the French "had been enslaved", after the first shock of defeat most of them did not behave for long like downtrodden people. They had manifested a native resiliency in the past, "and there is evidence that this same resiliency is there today. If we go there, we shall find energy, determination, and courage".²¹

3.3 CONCLUSIONS

US CA staff were exposed to lengthy training regarding Civil Affairs / Military Government, the country or countries they would be entering, and the language. The evidence of the materials on France from the CATS courses in particular suggests that they were comprehensive, dealing with matters of how to approach and deal with the French, as well as the historical, political and geographical background to France. The two-month duration of the CATS courses was a compromise between the need for the men to absorb heavy volumes of material and the need to put a sufficient number of men through the programme in the short time available before the invasion of north-west Europe.

It has been noted that it has not been possible to obtain data from CA veterans such as that obtained from ordinary soldiers (outlined in Chapter 2). However, with regard to CA staff's knowledge of the French language it is possible to draw the conclusion from the records of the CA detachments' experiences in France that, whilst French language instruction formed a substantial part of the men's training, nonetheless relatively few of them could speak French fairly fluently. John Maginnis, commanding officer of the CA detachment in Carentan (with a total staff complement of fourteen men), complained that: "In this rural, somewhat isolated, corner of France almost no one spoke English, and so there were few citizens we could use as interpreters. Aside from me, only Major Berkeley spoke French well, and, as a consequence, I spent an undue amount of time acting

²¹ *ibid.*

simply as an interpreter".²² That this was not uncommon is suggested by specific references in the records to times when detachment commanding officers addressed gatherings in French; if all of the CA staff were using French every day then there would have been nothing special to note about addresses in French.

We can surmise from the overall CA training programme that these specialist troops would understandably have had considerably more knowledge and understanding of France, the French, and Franco-American links than ordinary soldiers did. Having established the content and quality of their training, the prime interest lies in how CA staff used this training on the ground.

²² Maginnis, *Military Government Journal* , p.15

CHAPTER 4

NORMANDY: JUNE TO AUGUST 1944

With the exception of agents sent in by parachute or small boat (and a small but significant contingent involved in the 1942 Dieppe raid), the first Americans in World War II to see the French on their own territory and to walk on French soil were those involved in Operation Overlord on 6 June 1944 - D-Day. The site of operations was Normandy; the 'Second Front' that was opened up that day was to remain confined to the province for eight weeks. The break-out began on 25 July but it was not until 1 August that Allied forces moved outside Normandy when the Americans turned the corner near Mont-St-Michel moving west into Brittany and, very soon afterwards, south into the provinces of Maine and Anjou.¹ Many Americans' first experiences of France and the French were therefore gained in Normandy. For those who arrived relatively early, these were lengthy experiences, geographically somewhat confined.

These early experiences were forged in a period of fierce battle, when at times the outcome of the whole venture was in doubt. The Battle of Normandy was long, dispiriting and costly. In the ten weeks from D-Day to the closing of the Falaise Pocket on 18 August there were approximately 37,000 Allied military deaths, some 22,000 of them American² ; approximately 50,000 Germans died and 200,000 were taken prisoner.³

This chapter will, after clarifying the geographical and chronological background, consider the welcome received by the Americans in France (first contacts, and

¹ The names of the old (pre-Revolutionary) French provinces will be used in broad descriptions of events, rather than the names of the present-day Regions introduced in 1965, or the names of the départements (there being so many more of the latter, they are confusing in discussing sweeping events). Maine is the province around the city of Le Mans, south of the western half of Normandy; Anjou is the area around Angers, the largest city at the western end of the Loire Valley before it reaches the sea just beyond Nantes.

² Max Hastings, *Overlord: D-Day and the Battle for Normandy 1944* (London, 1984), p.313

³ John Keegan, *Six Armies in Normandy* (London, 1982), p.283

assessments of the overall welcome); the notion of the 'ungrateful Normans' which gained currency; reciprocal help between Americans and French; and the experiences of the Civil Affairs detachments in Normandy.

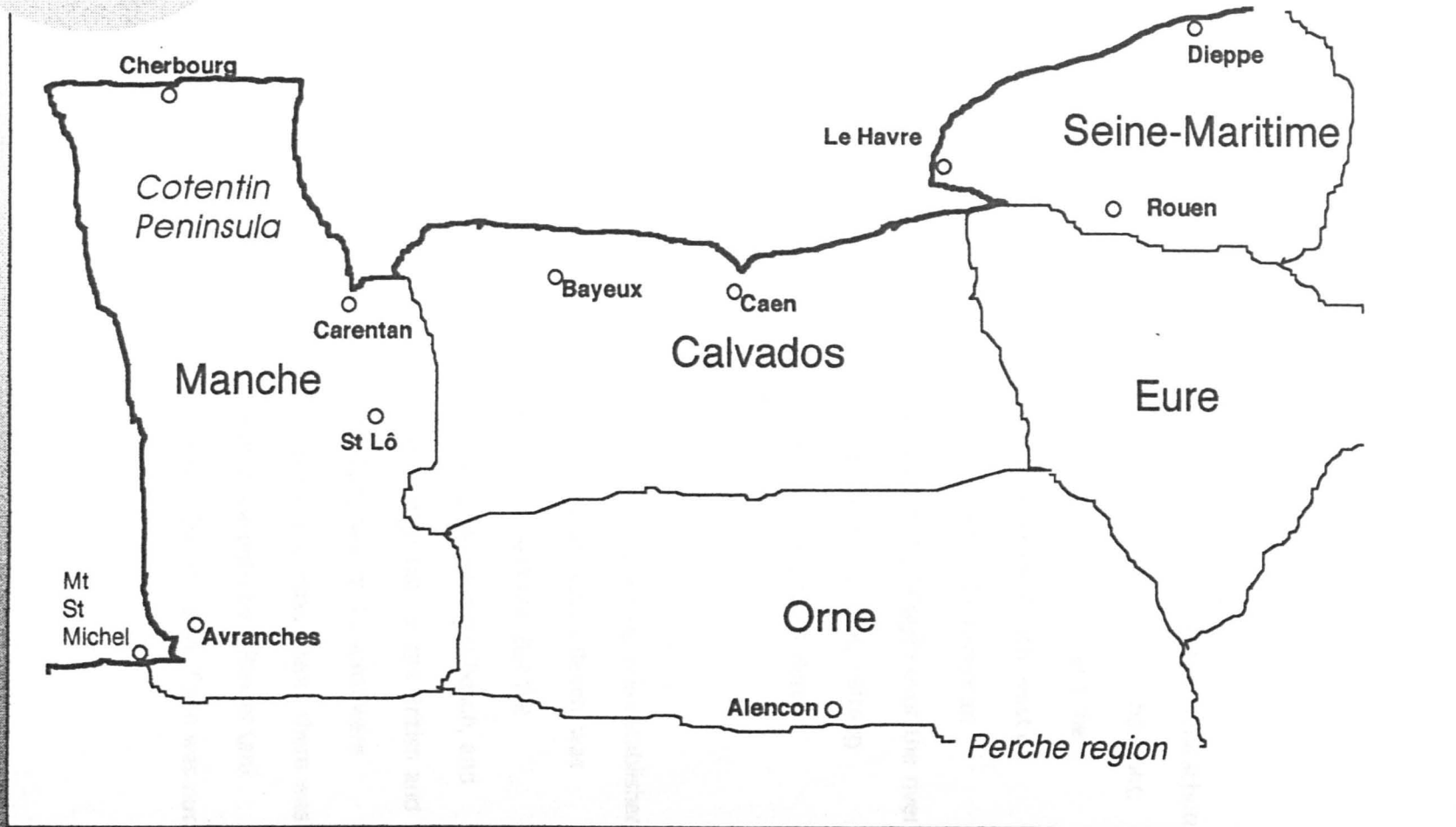
4.1 GEOGRAPHICAL AND CHRONOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

To put Americans' experiences of France and the French in this destructive and testing period into context one has to be clear about the geographic background, and how the Battle of Normandy developed.

The province of Normandy stretches from near the Somme estuary in the north-east, not far from the port of Dieppe, to near Mont-St-Michel in the west - a straight-line distance of 170 miles. That is also the approximate distance of Normandy's greatest extent north to south, from the tip of the Cotentin Peninsula near Cherbourg to the southern border of the Orne département in the Perche region. This is equal to the distance from Dover to Bristol. Normandy is thus a large province, bigger in area than Wales; if transposed onto a map of England it covers not just the whole of South-East England but East Anglia too.

The first eight weeks of fighting took place in Normandy's two north-western départements of Manche, covering the Cotentin Peninsula, and Calvados, centred on the port and university city of Caen, the heart of the Normandy of William the Conqueror (see Map 1, on the next sheet). To the south is the département of Orne which saw August 1944's fiercest fighting (the Falaise Pocket); Orne spans the Collines de Normandie range which is the watershed between rivers that flow into the Channel and those that flow into the massive Loire basin to the south. The River Orne flows from here to the sea through Caen to the north. Normandy has two further départements, one each side of the River Seine: Eure and Seine-Maritime (which includes Normandy's

Map 1: Normandy - Départements



largest city, Rouen, and the port of Le Havre). No American divisions saw action in Seine-Maritime and very few in Eure: these départements were predominantly in the British and Canadian sectors of advance.

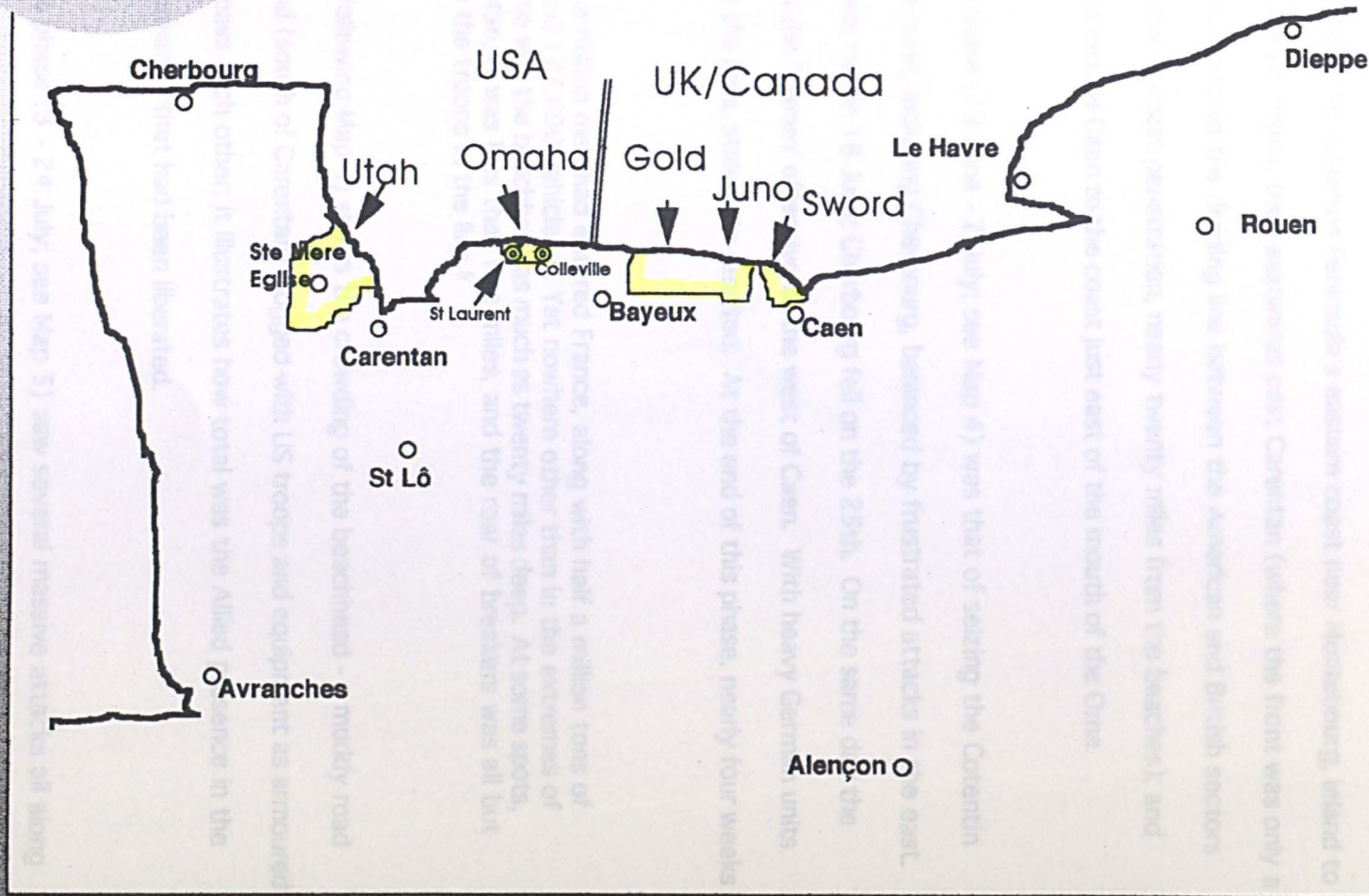
Six main phases to the Battle of Normandy can be discerned.⁴

The first phase was D-Day itself (see Map 2). 6 June 1944 opened with parachute and glider landings at the western (American) and eastern (British) ends of the front: the British landed around the River Orne north of Caen ('Pegasus Bridge' and the lowlands immediately to the east), and the Americans inland of Utah Beach, west of Carentan. Although more widely dispersed than had been planned, the American paratroopers succeeded in capturing Ste-Mère-Eglise, taking the bridges over the river and marshes to its west, and denying the Germans any chance of mounting a strong counterattack against Utah Beach. Approximately 10,000 paratroopers were successfully landed here.

The landing at Utah Beach was almost unopposed and a firm link-up was established with the paratroopers on 7 June. The other American landing, at Omaha Beach, was strongly contested; for part of the day the outcome was in severe doubt, but the Americans prevailed, scaled the strongly fortified heights overlooking the beach, and secured the villages nearby (St Laurent and Colleville) by nightfall. In the British and Canadian sectors the landings (on beaches code-named Gold, Juno and Sword) were successful and a front line was established ranging as much as 6 miles inland; there was however a small gap between Juno and Sword which was threatened by a Panzer tank division on the evening of D-Day. The ambitious D-Day objective of taking Caen was not met, though Bayeux fell easily the next day.

⁴ The best narratives can be found in John Keegan *Six Armies in Normandy* (London, 1982), Charles B Macdonald *The Mighty Endeavour* (New York, 1969), and Martin Blumenson *Breakout and Pursuit* (Washington DC, 1961)

Map 2: Battle of Normandy - first phase 6 June 1944



The second phase of the Battle of Normandy was that of joining the beachheads together (7-12 June; see Map 3). Gold, Juno and Sword were consolidated on the 7th, and linked up with the Americans at Omaha on the 8th. Carentan, the key town between the Utah and Omaha beachheads, fell on 12 June - becoming the site for the first operational Civil Affairs detachment in the American sector. By the end of 12 June the front stretched from the Cotentin Peninsula's eastern coast near Montebourg, inland to halfway across the peninsula, then eastwards past Carentan (where the front was only a few miles deep), inland to the dividing line between the American and British sectors near Caumont (the deepest penetration, nearly twenty miles from the beaches); and finally north-east around Caen to the coast just east of the mouth of the Orne.

The third phase (13 June - 2 July; see Map 4) was that of seizing the Cotentin Peninsula in the west, including Cherbourg, balanced by frustrated attacks in the east. The peninsula was cut on 18 June; Cherbourg fell on the 25th. On the same day the British launched the 'Epsom' offensive to the west of Caen. With heavy German units concentrated in the area, stalemate resulted. At the end of this phase, nearly four weeks after D-Day:

... almost a million men had entered France, along with half a million tons of supplies and 177,000 vehicles. .. Yet nowhere other than in the extremes of the Cotentin was the beachhead as much as twenty miles deep. At some spots, like Carentan, it was less than five miles, and the roar of breakers was all but audible to the troops in the line.⁵

Photograph 3 (following Map 4) shows the crowding of the beachhead - a muddy road near St. Fromond (south of Carentan) clogged with US troops and equipment as armoured vehicles try to pass each other; it illustrates how total was the Allied presence in the small part of Normandy that had been liberated.

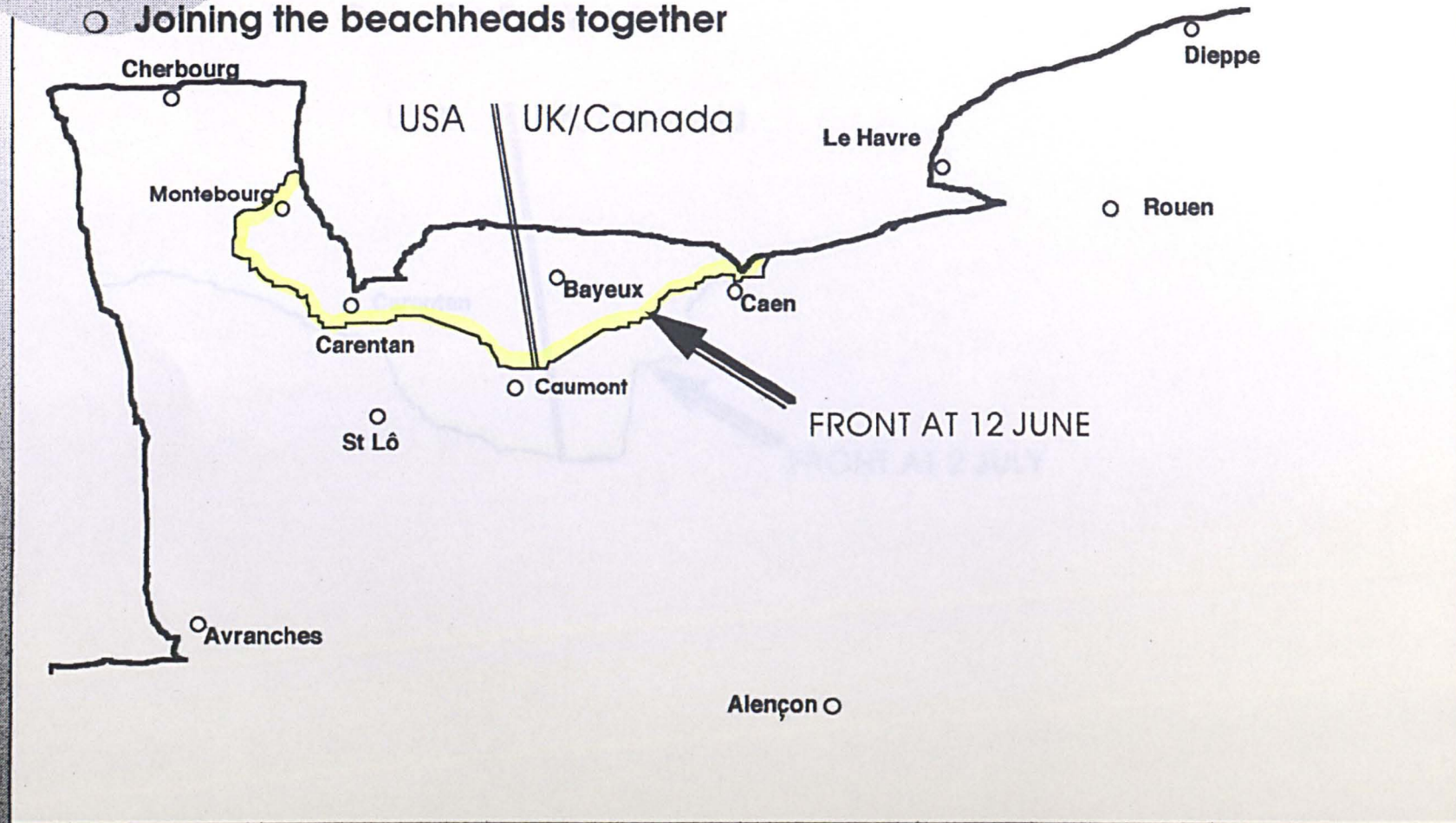
The fourth phase (3 - 24 July; see Map 5) saw several massive attacks all along the front, and the fall of the key junction town of St Lô in the west (18 July) and - at

⁵ Macdonald, *The Mighty Endeavour*, pp. 320-21

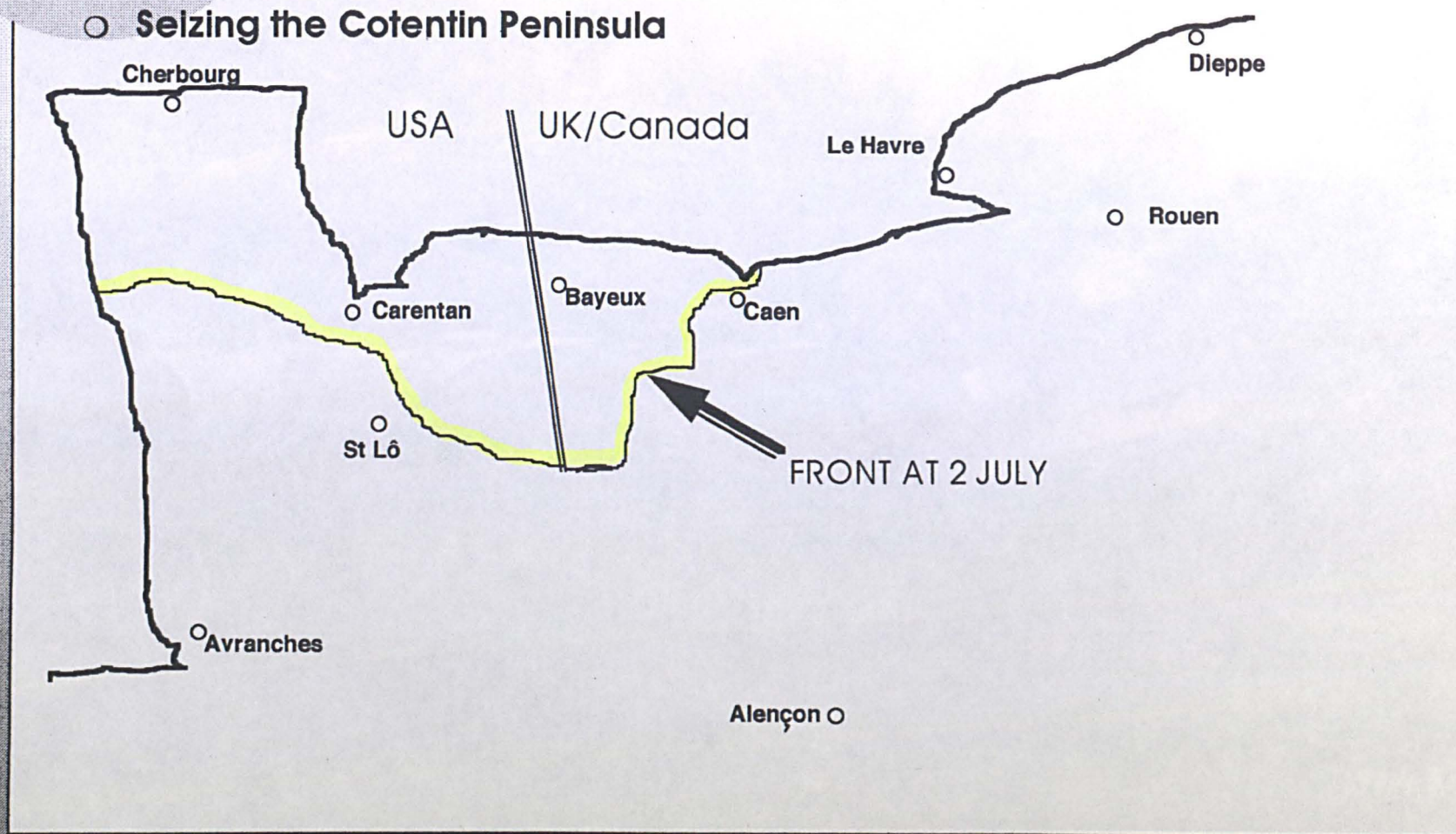


Map 3: Battle of Normandy: second phase 7-12 June 1944

○ Joining the beachheads together



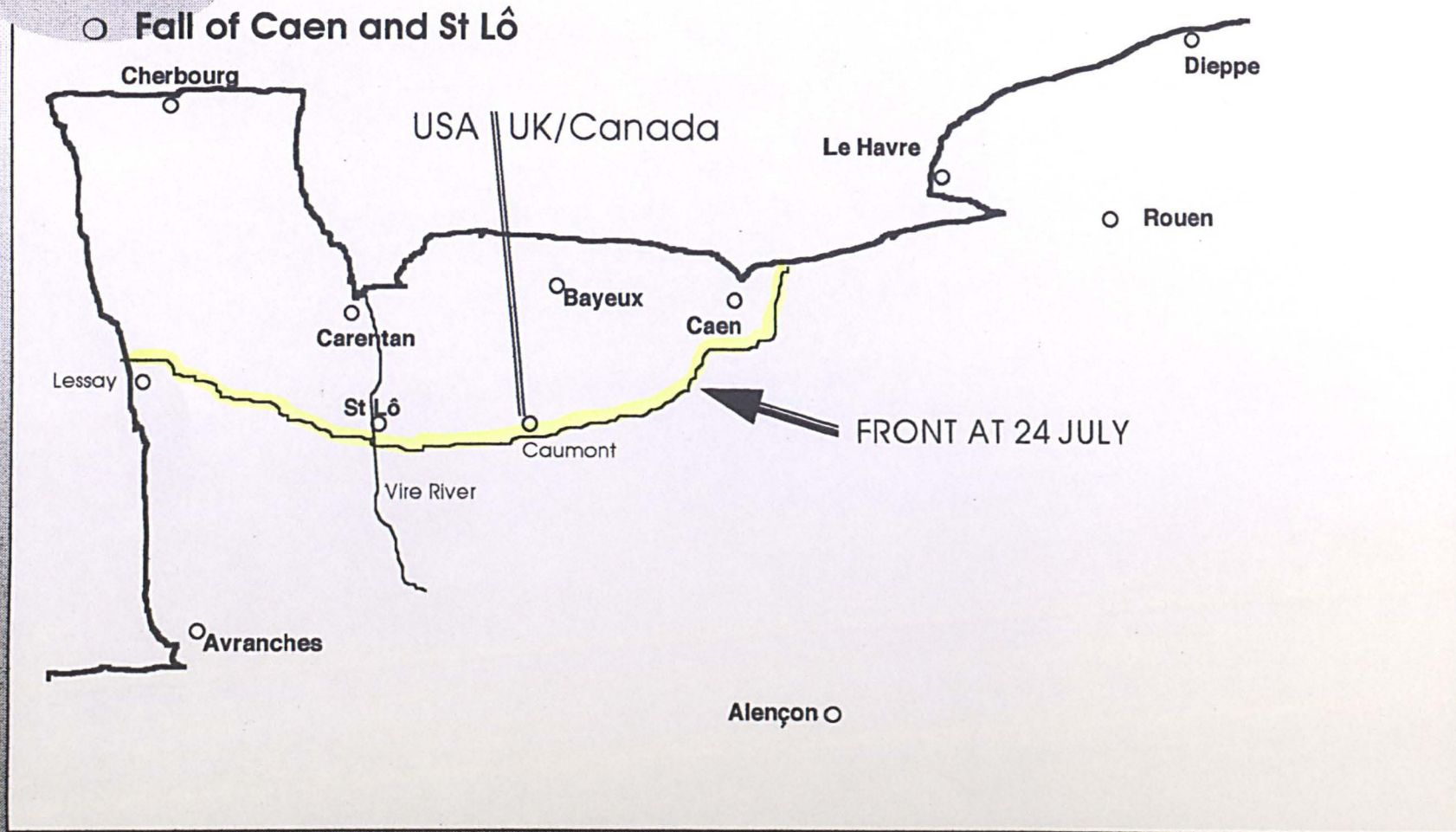
Map 4: Battle of Normandy: third phase 13 June - 2 July 1944





PHOTOGRAPH 3: The Americans in Normandy - crowded road near St. Fromond (July 1944)

Map 5: Battle of Normandy - fourth phase 3 - 24 July 1944



last - Caen in the east (9 July). But fighting in the hedgerow-filled *bocage* countryside was very slow and costly - days were spent advancing only hundreds of metres. As additional hazards the American sector included several large marshy areas, and the weather was dismal. Three weeks of large-scale American offensives (VIII Corps attacking on 3 July down the west side of the peninsula, VII Corps pushing off on 4 July south from Carentan, XIX Corps pushing west over the Vire River on 7 July) gained only between five and eight miles across the front. By 24 July the Americans were ready on a line from Lessay near the coast, south of St Lô and on to Caumont - ready (once again) for the hoped-for break-out.

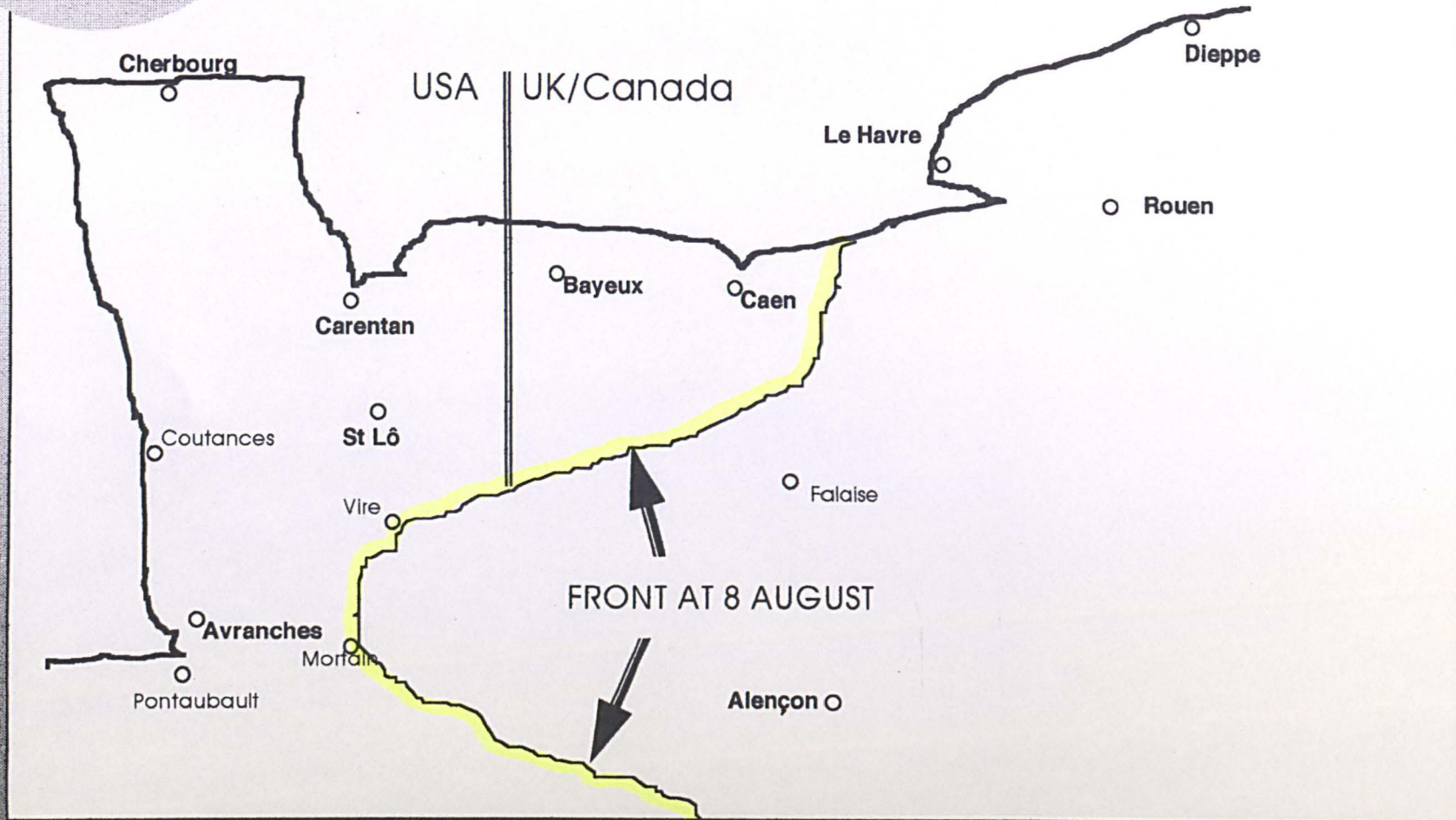
On the day that St Lô fell the British had launched 'Operation Goodwood' to the east of Caen: a massive air attack using 2,100 bombers prepared the way for a tank battle to clear the flat lands east of Caen - and, possibly, open the road to Paris. But on each of the next three days the British tank losses were staggering: 270, 131, and 68.⁶ The offensive ground to a halt on 20 July.

The fifth phase of the Battle (25 July - 8 August; see Map 6) saw the launch of the Americans' 'Cobra' offensive on 25 July and the unfolding break-out that followed. So long-awaited, the scale of the success of the break-out when it came was surprising. Slowly at first, but with ever-increasing momentum, the Americans pushed south and west, taking Coutances on 28 July and, most crucially, Avranches - the key to the road to Brittany - on the 30th. On 31 July they crossed over the bridge at Pontaubault and entered Brittany the next day. A German counter-offensive at Mortain on 6-8 August dented but did not destroy the momentum and by 8 August the front stretched from Brittany (liberated but for the ports, which would remain German strongholds for weeks) across to Le Mans, then back in a loop to Mortain, north-east to Vire and then east to the Caen-Falaise road where Canadian tanks had pushed off on 7 August in a bid to take Falaise.

⁶ Macdonald, *The Mighty Endeavour*, p.326

Map 6: Battle of Normandy - fifth phase 25 July - 8 August 1944

○ Break-out



The sixth and final phase of the Battle of Normandy was the development and dénouement of the 'Falaise Pocket' (9 - 28 August; see Map 7). This was a pincer movement in which the British and Canadians advancing from the north squeezed the retreating German armies between themselves and the Americans advancing from Argentan to the south. Controversially, the Pocket was not closed until late on 18 August, and a considerable number of German troops were able to flee up until 20 August; but heavy bombing of the Pocket left thousands of Germans dead on the tight hilly roads, and huge numbers of prisoners were taken. By 28 August the British and Canadians still faced the Germans in the part of Normandy near the Seine, but in the American sector fighting in Normandy ended; the front was by then east of the Seine, which had first been crossed at Mantes on 20 August (a breakthrough consolidated by the liberation of Paris just five days later).

4.2 *FIRST CONTACTS*

The first contacts that American servicemen had with the French were of course incredibly varied. But US military photographer David Englander's description of his first contacts - "A simple exchange of greetings, a few limited conversations, handicapped by inadequate language knowledge on both sides" - could stand for many men.⁷ And many countries - and many wars - of course. Others' comments highlight the foreign soldier in a strange land, reaching out tentatively to the local citizens, or receiving their simple gifts:

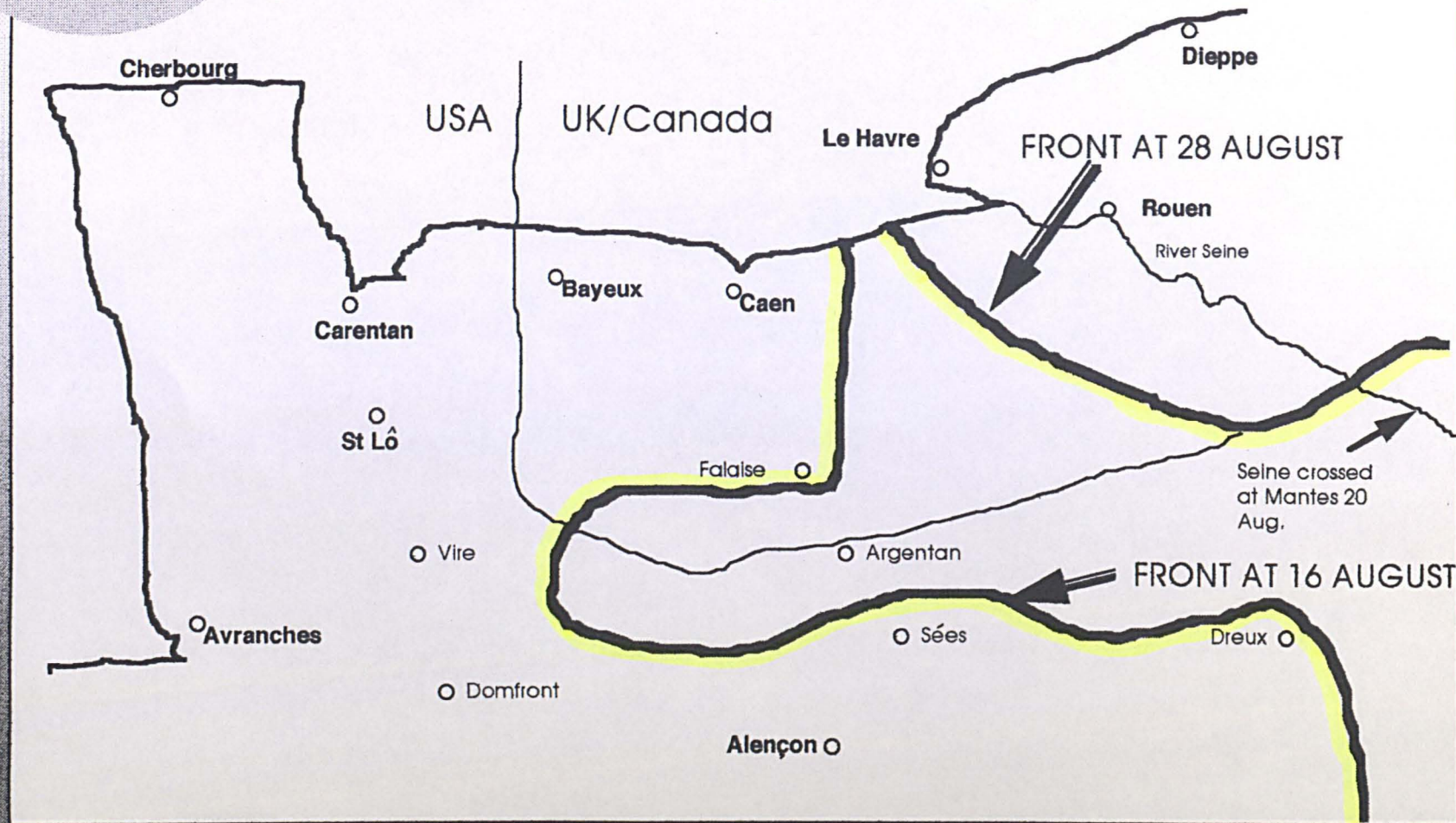
In a farm house not far off Omaha Beach, I stopped to get some heat on my legs which were hurting as a result of an injury I sustained on the landing. The French family were at first apprehensive, but after they saw I was hurting, they gave me some food and did everything they could to make me comfortable.⁸

⁷ D Englander - questionnaire 1990 (unless otherwise indicated, questionnaires are those organised by the author 1990-95. For details and a copy of the questionnaire see Appendix 2). 'Questionnaire' is abbreviated to 'q' in subsequent footnotes in this chapter.

⁸ C Hangsterfer q.

Map 7: Battle of Normandy - sixth phase 9 - 28 August 1944

○ closing the Falaise Pocket; crossing the Seine



George Macintyre of the 4th Infantry Division, which landed on Utah Beach, is one of the very few junior infantrymen to have written a full-length book about his experiences. His description of his group's first contact with the French captures the sentimental nature of these occasions when they occur in or close to a combat situation - and the awe with which they are consequently remembered by many veterans:

We weren't the only early risers on D-Day +1, for the Frenchman on whose farm we were bivouaced was noisily herding what was left of his herd of cattle to pasture. .. He called a cheery 'Bon jour' [sic] as he passed by, and we replied 'Good morning' - just as simply as that. That's really all we had time for as we had to be up and about the business of the day. Looking towards the farmhouse, we could see the farmer's wife as she paddled the day's wash. Seeing us arise from our slit trenches, two children, a boy about six, and a girl slightly younger, ventured cautiously towards us. They suddenly stopped about twenty feet away from the nearest soldier, and stared with wide open mouths at the strange sight of soldiers other than Germans on their land. I happened to be that nearest soldier, and held out two bars of Hershey Tropical chocolate. Slowly, and very shyly, they approached me. Gingerly they accepted the proffered chocolate, and when they saw what it was, their faces lighted up like Christmas trees. The boy screamed 'Papa', with the accent on the last syllable, and ran to him. The girl jumped up and down with joy. .. By this time some of the other boys were searching their pockets for whatever tidbits [sic] they had. In five minutes the boy's pockets and the girl's dress front were filled with chocolate, chewing gum and lumps of sugar. The mother was attracted by the commotion, and when she saw the sugar, she became as excited as the children. Papa wasn't doing badly either, for he had several packs of cigarettes and two tins of tobacco - rare and luxurious gifts to him. I noticed a tear in the corner of his eye, and it was all I could do to suppress the urge to cry myself. The farmer doffed his beret and embraced the nearest soldier, much to the soldier's embarrassment.⁹

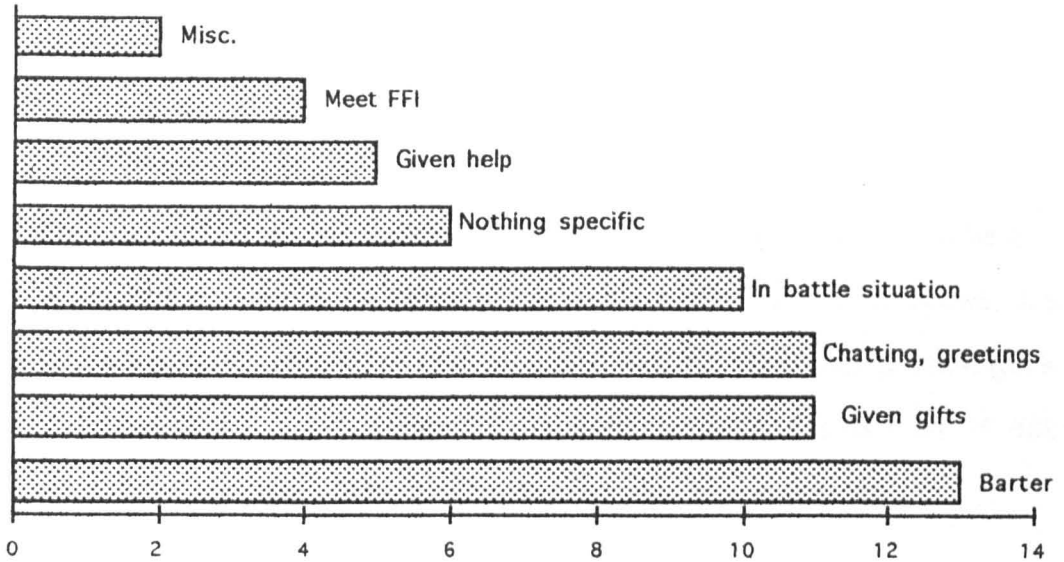
The most common types of first contacts were limited bartering, the receipt by the Americans of gifts, and brief greetings or conversations. Other types included coming across refugees or farmers during battle, receiving help, or meeting the FFI (French Forces of the Interior - 'the Resistance'). The first contacts recalled by a sample of sixty-two US Normandy veterans are set out in Figure 7 (see next page). The tenor of these recalled first contacts is on the whole clearly sympathetic to the French. Of the questionnaire sample, sixteen of the sixty-two responses contain explicitly positive references ("friendly"; "very helpful"; "warm"), and only one is explicitly negative.

⁹ George Macintyre, *As Mac Saw It* (unpublished manuscript, US Army Military History Institute, Carlisle, Pa.), pp. 167-9

All of the others are straight descriptions.

FIGURE 7: US Normandy veterans' recall of first contacts with the French

(A.A.Thomson questionnaires of U.S. veterans 1990-95; 62 responses)



Barter and the receipt of gifts of welcome together account for over one-third of the responses. The scale goes from the offering of relatively special gifts to hard bargaining. A prime case of the first is an old French farmer who had heard that the Americans were coming and had saved a crate of thirty dozen eggs.¹⁰ One veteran recalled receiving fresh milk, apples and cider for just a few cigarettes or pieces of candy - he felt that "they would have given us these items for nothing in return, but we wanted to give something".¹¹ Some others however were scathing about the farmers' trading: they "had been selling their produce to the Germans, and it seemed to make no difference to them if it was German or American, just as long as they could sell their products" (this was the only explicitly negative first welcome recalled).¹²

Food, drink and flowers to welcome the liberators is a famous image; two men of 1st Infantry Division suggest what it was like to be on the receiving end. To Gino Merli

¹⁰ F Dripps q.

¹¹ B Damsky q.

¹² M Dillthey q.

the coastal farmers were stunned to see the Americans - they were happy to see them, the older people with tears running down their cheeks, holding a bottle of wine to share the occasion; Alan Miller felt that "the people of St Laurent welcomed the Americans with open arms; it was a humbling experience".¹³ Photograph 4 (on the next sheet) shows troops in a lone American jeep being welcomed on the first day of Carentan's liberation.

Many troops were given Calvados, the strong apple-based spirit. It could be a mixed blessing (and, as the juxtaposition in this example of a first contact shows, was indicative more of a rich agriculture than of overall wealth): "A French peasant gave me a drink of Calvados. I nearly strangled. Two young men begged us for food".¹⁴ But apples could be more welcome - one simple gift stood out for one veteran:

A young innocent girl, perhaps 12 or 13, came to one of our first bivouacs with a huge apron-full of apples as gifts to the whole company. In my mind the girl's welcome remains ever precious.¹⁵

Limited chatting - at its simplest just "bonjour" greetings - was the next most common first contact. For this group, first contacts consisted of brief exchanges of phrases as they liberated towns, meeting and making friends with families and young girls in villages, and (for men arriving in Normandy after the battle had moved on) talking with civilians about the way the Americans had helped them.¹⁶ One veteran recalled shouting out 'Bonjour' to a couple fleeing a town with their meagre belongings ("they must think I was crazy!").¹⁷ Paul Skogsberg of 1st Division's Reconnaissance Troop found himself on the receiving end of a more bizarre such first welcome:

I had no contact with the natives [*sic*] until just north of Caumont, I was squatting over a latrine one evening when I heard a gentle feminine voice behind me (in French): 'Good evening, Sir'. I turned and as she waltzed by I bade her (in French) 'Good evening, Mademoiselle'!¹⁸

¹³ G Merli & A Miller qts.

¹⁴ E Phillips q.

¹⁵ W Shuster q.

¹⁶ O Thomas, W Irvin, L Hodges & J Margreiter qs.

¹⁷ T Behuniak q.

¹⁸ P Skogsberg q.



PHOTOGRAPH 4: Welcome - troops in a lone American jeep greeted on the first day of Carentan's liberation (12 June 1944)

The seeking of help, often in the direct course of the troops' jobs, caused other first contacts. Many had to ask for directions and information about the Germans ("people were very friendly and helpful in answering questions about what might be up ahead of us").¹⁹ Some needed help with injuries; others needed specific help with the tasks they were undertaking: thus, Graves Registration soldier Bailey's first contacts came through distributing requests for information on the location of the dead.²⁰

Sometimes first contacts were with the FFI²¹; sometimes they were in battle or extremely close to it. One soldier met farmers crossing the front lines near Caumont into their land, held by the Germans; another met civilians who walked into German minefields.²² Battle led to refugees, and for some Americans their first contacts were giving cigarettes and rations to them.²³

Not all veterans recalled their first contacts with the French. The 47% of the full sample of US Normandy veterans who did recall them may have included those with a more positive experience of the French. Thus the experience of the welcome overall in Normandy needs to be examined. This will be studied from two viewpoints: that of the US Army as revealed in its records, and that of ordinary soldiers on the ground, as revealed through questionnaire responses.

4.3 *THE OVERALL WELCOME - THE U.S. ARMY'S VIEW*

At the highest level - SHAEF - early reports revealed that the welcome from the French was apparently good. A Staff Conference of SHAEF's G5 (Civil Affairs) Section on 19 June 1944 heard that the attitude of the people in Normandy was "in general warm

¹⁹ A.King q.

²⁰ E Bailey q.

²¹ D Brand, F Garner, M Toans qs.

²² J Blistica & W Wilkin qs.

²³ S Coupe q.

and friendly".²⁴ At corps level, V Corps' G5 Section reported on 14 June that the cooperation of local officials was good; four days later they noted that the attitude of civilians in general remained cooperative.²⁵ At the division level, 1st Infantry Division's G5 Section reported enthusiastically from the immediate hinterland of Omaha Beach four days after D-Day:

The people without exception have been friendly. No subversive elements have been reported. There have been rumors that civilians were sniping. None of these have been confirmed and this HQ believes them groundless. It is believed the rumor arose due to soldiers finding German uniforms in civilian homes. Uniforms [were there] due to the fact that Germans were quartered there and left in haste without them.²⁶

V Corps had also been investigating these rumours, whose frequency peaked a few days after D-Day. On 9 June they had received numerous complaints of snipers in civilian houses, and of a lack of civilian cooperation. Enquiries they made of three sources - the corps' Counter-Intelligence staff, 1st Division's G5, and 29th Division HQ - all came up with favourable reports of civilian cooperation. The sniper reports quickly died away.²⁷

The French welcome was presumably founded mainly on the thrill and release of liberation itself. The records contain two citations of specifically American factors, though. A Resistance source told the First Army's Propaganda and Psychological Warfare unit that the French had been very much impressed by the American victory, "and above all by the force which the American Army represents".²⁸ In a village near St Lô the residents were "tremendously impressed by the quantity and quality of the American material".²⁹

²⁴ SHAEF G5 Staff Conference reports, file 494-E; ETO [European Theater of Operations] Historical Division; Records of US Theaters of War, Record Group 332; National Archives, Washington DC

²⁵ V Corps G5 HQ Periodic Report no. 1, 14 June 1944; memo 18 June Deputy Civil Affairs Officer to Senior CAO; file 205-5; Records of the Adjutant-General's Office, Record Group 407; National Archives, Washington DC

²⁶ *ibid.* 1st Infantry Div. G5 report to Commanding General, 10 June 1944. Covers the towns of St Laurent, Colleville, Ste. Honorine des Pertes, Russy, Mosles, Surrain and Formigny

²⁷ *ibid.* V Corps G5 Initial Civil Affairs Report, 10 June

²⁸ 4 August 1944 written statement by "a bona fide member of Resistance upon whose credibility we place a high rating"- amongst papers of First US Army's Propaganda & Psychological Warfare staff; file 494-P; ETO Historical Division; Records of US Theaters of War, Record Group 332; National Archives, Washington DC

²⁹ *ibid.* Report from the field on reactions of local population in Normandy - no.6, 14 August 1944

However, despite the encouraging level of enthusiasm and cooperation reported, not all civilians in Normandy were delighted. There was considerable resentment at some of the destruction of property by shelling and Allied air attacks. SHAEF's Psychological Warfare Section reported from Carentan (on the basis of conversations with thirty residents) that many felt that the shelling and bombardment of the town had been unnecessary; residents felt that the Americans could have taken the town sooner, and that the problem was poor intelligence.³⁰ Several sources quote particular resentment at the extremely heavy bombing of St Lô - some 2,000 civilians were killed and the city almost totally destroyed; residents said that it had been unnecessary because there were no Germans there.³¹ The chaplain of the Centre d'Action Sociale in Cherbourg, in a conversation with Allied Intelligence on 12 August, gave vent to popular spleen over the conduct of some of the Allied air raids over France as a whole:

The Abbé remarked that we had bombed Reims on the Jeanne d'Arc anniversary; and that on 11 November, when everyone said 'this is a day of peace and we shall be left alone', there had been a particularly heavy and murderous raid. When we hit our targets, people rejoiced, but when we hit areas that had no targets in them, or missed our mark, the people cursed. ... The people were fully aware of the difference between British and American bombing: they said the American aircraft flew high and plastered whole areas, whilst British craft dropped flares to select their targets.³²

However, the Normans accepted some of the destruction when it was appropriately in context. After expressing deep resentment about the St Lô bombing, the Mayor of Tessy-sur-Vire reported that, with regard to the bombing of his own town, the military situation had demanded it - and "consequently the population feels no resentment".³³ In Torigni-sur-Vire, the inhabitants welcomed the Americans cordially "despite the fact that the entire business section of the city was levelled by the concentrated bombing delivered by American planes on 12 June".³⁴ The records do not reveal whether there

³⁰ *ibid.* Report from the field on reactions of local population in Normandy - no.4, 21 July 1944

³¹ *ibid.* Report from HQ Propaganda & Psychological Warfare, First US Army, on visit to St.Romphaire, 3/4 August 1944

³² *ibid.* Conversation with l'Abbé Lebas, 12 August 1944

³³ *ibid.* Report from HQ Propaganda & Psychological Warfare, First US Army, on visit to Tessy-sur-Vire, 3/4 August 1944

³⁴ Report of CA detachment D2C1 3 August 1944; file 205-5.1; Records of the Adjutant-General's Office, Record Group 407; National Archives, Washington DC

had been what the inhabitants regarded as legitimate military targets. However, two factors made this destruction bearable: many citizens had been evacuated just before the raids; and the harsh behaviour of the German troops in the weeks between the bombing and liberation made the inhabitants delighted to see the Americans.

A further subtlety to the effects of devastation wrought by the Allies was the report by a member of the Resistance that at Percy (south of St Lô), which the Americans bombarded on 1 August, "eye-witnesses saw the Germans ... throw incendiary grenades in the houses which had not been hit".³⁵ Nevertheless, resentment at some of the huge air raids surely must have dented support for the Allies; fairly frequent references to St Lô in the records suggest that. However, the effects were probably short-lived or localised, for nowhere do they appear to have led to a lack of cooperation from communities. The Resistance source quoted above felt that "the American raids have not extinguished the sentiments of friendship and gratitude to our friends and Allies".³⁶ Indeed, the Abbé quoted earlier, despite his protestations at some of the bombing, spoke of "the spontaneous welcome that had been given the Allies"; he seemed convinced that the welcome was deep and sincere - "even though some people have taken time to see the light".³⁷

The observation in the Abbé's closing phrase ("some people have taken time to see the light") is a recurring one in the study of Normans' reactions to the Allies. The welcome in the early weeks after D-Day had been reported at the time as good, with ready cooperation. However, reports of snipers together with the resentment of some at American shelling or bombing appear to have cast a retrospective pall over how the overall early welcome was remembered later. Thus, when all of southern Normandy was freed in August's advances, First Army's G5 Section wrote of the territorial gains

³⁵ 4 August 1944 written statement by "a bona fide member of Resistance upon whose credibility we place a high rating" - amongst papers of First US Army's Propaganda & Psychological Warfare staff; file 494P; ETO Historical Division; Records of US Theaters of War, Record Group 332; National Archives, Washington DC

³⁶ *ibid.*

³⁷ *ibid.* Conversation with Abbé Lebas, 12 August 1944

"accentuating a trend in the civilian population towards complete and full cooperation".³⁸ It was much easier in the heady atmosphere of August for all the civilians to appear to be completely friendly; because of the excellent way that the military situation was developing, it was also easier for soldiers observing civilian reactions to feel almost free of threat themselves. As the liberation gained pace there was less need to shell towns to liberate them, and at the same time the public were gaining confidence that the Germans had been driven out for good. But the early welcome had not been a poor one; there had been no reported instances of any specific lack of cooperation. In fact the overall welcome in Normandy was fine - with no significant geographic or chronological variation. Thus, one month after D-Day, an Army historian arriving in Normandy for the first time, commenting on the evidence of the bombardment of Montebourg, inland from Utah Beach, was struck primarily by how "the people and children waved to us and [shouted] 'viva' [*sic*] something or other".³⁹ Further south at St Sauveur Lendelin, near where the 25 July break-out started, the population was reported as "very happy about 'la liberation', and very friendly to American troops".⁴⁰ Further east, at Tessy-sur-Vire, the civilians were reported as "highly enthusiastic, cooperative and happy over liberation; very friendly to Americans".⁴¹ On 7 August V Corps G5 Section reported that the attitude of the civilian population across southern Normandy as a whole remained friendly and cooperative; a reference over the BBC to a 'luke-warm' reception by residents of Normandy had "provoked a vigorous denial by the Mayor at La Mine".⁴² The idea of an earlier 'luke-warm' reception - the 'ungrateful Normans' - will be looked at in more detail in Section 4.5.

³⁸ First Army Civil Affairs Summary, 4 August 1944; file 101-5; Records of Adjutant-General's Office, Record Group 407; National Archives, Washington DC

³⁹ Diary of Team no.1, ETOUSA Historical Section, 6 July 1944; file 161; ETO Historical Division; Records of US Theaters of War, Record Group 332; National Archives, Washington DC.

⁴⁰ Reports of CA detachment D2A1, 15 August 1944; entry 613; Records of SHAEF, Record Group 331; National Archives, Washington DC

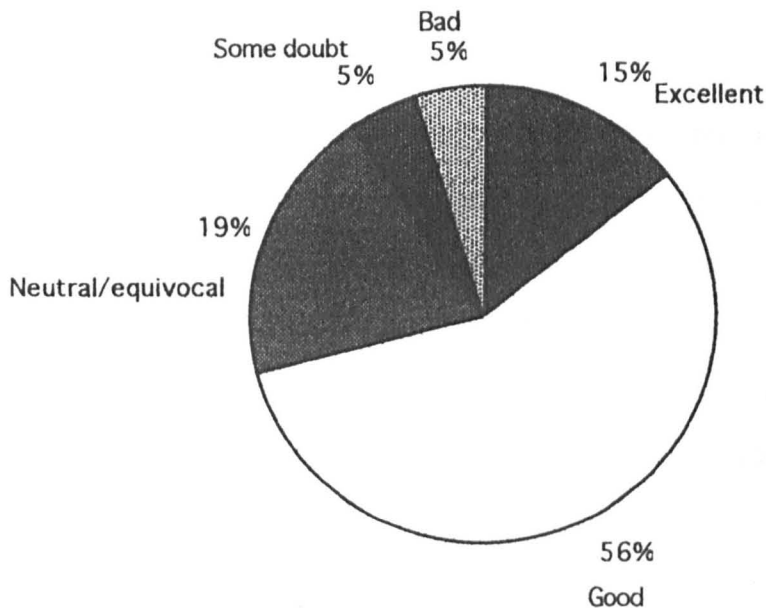
⁴¹ Report from HQ Propaganda & Psychological Warfare, First US Army, on visit to Tessy-sur-Vire, 3/4 August 1944; file 494-P, ETO Historical Division; Records of US Theaters of War, Record Group 332; National Archives, Washington DC

⁴² Civil Affairs Section V Corps report for July, p.6, 7 August 1944; file 205; Records of the Adjutant-General's Office, Record Group 407; National Archives, Washington DC

4.4 THE OVERALL WELCOME - THE ORDINARY SOLDIERS' VIEW

Ordinary soldiers on the whole experienced a good overall welcome in Normandy. A sample of 124 US Normandy veterans (questioned in 1990-95) revealed 71% describing a good or excellent overall welcome. The balancing 29% split between just 5% articulating a bad welcome, 5% having serious doubts, and 19% neutral or equivocal (see Figure 8).

FIGURE 8: Analysis of the overall welcome received by US soldiers in Normandy
(A.A. Thomson questionnaires 1990-95; 124 responses, out of 131 veterans with Normandy experience)



Those reporting an 'Excellent' welcome used adjectives such as wonderful, ecstatic ("I can remember adults crying"), "incroyable", overwhelming, and "excellent" itself⁴³. They saw the people as happy, enthusiastic, thankful - "and appreciative to the point of embarrassing the liberators".⁴⁴ One even went to the unusual extent of describing the Normans as excitable (his evidence: a man "had an American flag on a

⁴³ D Barickman, A Alvarez, T Gillis, B Moseley, E Aboussie qs.

⁴⁴ D Brand q.

staff and tried sticking it into the hard tarmacadam road").⁴⁵

The majority 'Good welcome' verdict from this sample naturally covers many varied (and often unexciting) descriptions. "Happy to see us", "very good", and "warm" are common.⁴⁶ Some reported the welcome as "good to excellent", whilst others only noted that what little contact they had was certainly pleasant enough.⁴⁷ Gino Merli of 1st Infantry Division described the milieu of a typically 'Good' welcome - often repeated:

The French were spreading the word [that] the Americans are coming. Each town prepared in their own way for our arrival and all were anxiously awaiting to see us and greet us - with wine for good luck - and beautiful flowers for the occasion. ⁴⁸

These Americans saw the Normans as friendly, thankful for the help they were receiving, and happy to see the Americans.⁴⁹ Some mentions of the Normans' reserved character are made; but amongst this majority group it is not seen as an unhelpful factor. Infantryman Ralph Obuchowski commented on it in a relative rather than a negative way, noting that they were were friendly and outreaching, "although somewhat reserved".⁵⁰ Engineer Joseph Miller felt that the Normans were not as demonstrative as people from other regions.⁵¹

However, others in this group were emphatic in their approval of the attitude of the Normans, writing of them as very friendly and appreciative, in the way that "US country people are always nicer than city folks; .. there are no French people more appreciative than the Normans".⁵² Carl Peterson of the Third Army felt that they could not have been nicer; his assessment was that the people in Brittany and Lorraine were

⁴⁵ G Smith q.

⁴⁶ e.g. T Behuniak, A Coen, W Pettit qs.

⁴⁷ J Burt, L Binger qs.

⁴⁸ G Merli q.

⁴⁹ e.g. B Olstad, E Randall, J Kolacki qs.

⁵⁰ R Obuchowski q.

⁵¹ J Miller q.

⁵² H Soderberg q.

more reserved and taciturn than the Normans.⁵³ Walter Shuster of 7th Armored Division thought of the Normans in terms of 'ethnic-Americans' back home - he felt that they were as "grateful and considerate as any ethnics I lived among in southern Connecticut"⁵⁴ For this majority who received a good welcome, Norman reserve was not seen as a problem. Those who had doubts about the welcome, or negative experiences, would make much more of this aspect of the Norman character. In their eyes, 'reserve' might come across as coldness - or being ungrateful.

A concept that comes through in many of the descriptions from the majority ('good welcome') group is that of men feeling a genuine warmth in the welcome. It was clear that this was probably as much to do with the single fact of liberation as with the presence of Americans: "We were welcomed as only liberators can be welcomed. We were given the best they had. We were kissed and hugged by men and women both".⁵⁵ This warmth was explicitly recognised by some, in phrases such as "sincere love and enthusiasm" and "straight from the heart".⁵⁶ It was quite likely (and understandable) that many American soldiers took this French warmth towards their liberators as warmth towards the Americans in particular. 1st Division infantryman Bert Damsky concluded: "They were very friendly, and seemed very, very appreciative of the American soldiers".⁵⁷

The 19% of the sample of US Normandy veterans who felt that the welcome was 'Neutral/equivocal' can be divided into three categories: the casual ("[it was] OK"; "so-so")⁵⁸; those who felt that the French were split in their reactions; and those who felt that the welcome was variable in a geographic and/or chronological sense.

Those who reported that the French were split in their reactions wrote of

⁵³ C Peterson q.

⁵⁴ W Shuster q.

⁵⁵ W Kleeman q.

⁵⁶ W Irvin, S Tyzenhaus qs.

⁵⁷ B Damsky q.

⁵⁸ e.g. J Fusco, Stevenson qs.

considerable variations. One remembered that whilst the civilians had been warm and friendly, the officials had not been; another, how most of the people were sincere, but "others thought we did too much damage".⁵⁹ Suspicions of collaboration led one man to report: "some good, some bad ... I was under the impression that all French people hated the Nazis [but] found out differently in Normandy".⁶⁰

Those who felt that the welcome varied geographically or chronologically believed that it depended on either the state of the battle or the size of community. Observations such as these are important to understanding what lay behind the reported concept of the 'ungrateful Normans' (examined at greater length in the next section). For some, the French at first seemed glad to see the Americans, but with a feeling of reservation in case the Germans came back and the Americans had to leave.⁶¹ Others noted a good reception, without reservation - but with fear in the air:

We were the first in any town and were always well received by a scared population who were not too sure how secure they were and if the Germans would come back.⁶²

For others their reception was on occasion rather cool - but when the French realised that the Americans were there to stay their reception became warmer.⁶³ Some veterans noted that the welcome was directly influenced by the presence of German troops in the area and by the time interval since Germans had been around.⁶⁴ One man translated this phenomenon into a comparative memory of Normandy as against the rest of France: "The reception was cool in Normandy to happy in the interior".⁶⁵

The geographical factor of size of community was commented on by many. Opinions ranged from a feeling that the smaller the town the better the welcome, or that rural

⁵⁹ W Pena, G Blstrica qs.

⁶⁰ T Hastings q.

⁶¹ A Bauman q.

⁶² M Wiener q.

⁶³ M Dillthey q.

⁶⁴ A Wright q.

⁶⁵ I Berkowitz q.

areas were more friendly and remained consistent, to a feeling that things were less personal in the metropolitan areas.⁶⁶

A 'Doubtful' welcome was reported by 5% of the sample. A Graves Registration soldier reported sombrely that his welcome was subdued and lacking in enthusiasm (!).⁶⁷ Of more concern were those who did not think much of their welcome: some reported that the French seemed to want everything the Americans had, including their rations⁶⁸; others that the French were not too friendly except in Paris⁶⁹; and some that the welcome was insincere:

They did not trust us, we did not trust them. When we liberated a town, U.S. and French flags were very visible; when we lost that town to a counter-attack the swastika reappeared.⁷⁰

It was a 'faked' welcome - they had the ability to cheer and wave to whoever was winning or occupying them at the time... In one town a girl, about 10 years old, was saluting us as we passed while her brother, about 5, was giving us the Nazi sign - when the sister saw this she slapped his extended arm and he quickly saluted; he had mistaken us for Germans.⁷¹

Amongst the group reporting a 'doubtful' welcome, Benjamin Sebastianelli of 1st Infantry Division was initially disappointed and failed to understand why there was such a lack of warmth from most people - until he "saw first hand that they were innocent victims of the war - losing their homes and loved ones from the shelling and bombings; survival came before liberation".⁷²

The 5% describing a 'Bad' welcome expressed it either baldly - "[It was] unfavourable"⁷³ - or aggressively, denying that there was a welcome at all: "There was

⁶⁶ G Caporale, J Constable qs.

⁶⁷ E Bailey q.

⁶⁸ G Caporale q.

⁶⁹ E Chamness q.

⁷⁰ J Ritter q.

⁷¹ J Marshall q.

⁷² B Sebastianelli q.

⁷³ A Welle q.

none - we were taken for granted"⁷⁴ ; "Never seen any welcome"⁷⁵. Some sought an explanation:

[We were] not very welcome, and I don't blame them. The Normans were doing quite well until we tore up the place. I didn't much care [for] them shooting at us however. .. Following Normandy, we were well received.⁷⁶

The clear picture from this sampling of US Normandy veterans' overall welcome is that a strong majority had good things to say: "They were very friendly and receptive to our coming"⁷⁷ ; "I think the French were genuinely grateful, and at that time thoroughly understood the price the American soldier and the American people were paying".⁷⁸ The reports of the minority though, at the time and later, are of considerable importance, for their effect spread quite widely.

4.5 THE 'UNGRATEFUL NORMANS'

Le Tomahawk, XIX Corps' newspaper produced by the troops on the battlefield, ran a three-paragraph piece on the good welcome from the French on the front page of its first issue (18 June 1944):

NORMANDY FOLKS ARE FRIENDLY

Flags, flowers, smiles and V [for Victory!] signs have greeted American troops in Normandy.

Some of the villages were badly damaged when the Boche were driven out by air bombardment, naval and land-based gunfire and direct assault, but the people accept it as a hazard of war and are already at work clearing away the rubble and setting their houses in order.

They are good, friendly folk. They deserve the best of treatment from their friends, the Americans. They welcome us.⁷⁹

⁷⁴ L Schaller q.

⁷⁵ C Cornazzani q.

⁷⁶ C Hinds q.

⁷⁷ J Constable q.

⁷⁸ R Stalcup q.

⁷⁹ *Le Tomahawk* 18 June 1944, in papers of Gen. Charles Corlett (U.S. Army Military History Institute, Carlisle, Pa.)

Did the latter really need to be said if the welcome were obviously good ? The slightly forced tone of the final curt sentence suggests that the editor(s) of the newspaper felt there were some misgivings to be corrected.

These misgivings centre around the idea, which gained some currency, of the 'ungrateful Normans'. Reports of some initial coolness from some of the Normans seemed to strike a chord. For some Americans, the image remained fixed afterwards - the 'ungrateful Normans' gained the status of a myth. As a consequence, many otherwise well-informed people have in their minds a picture of the residents of Normandy being relatively comfortably off during the Occupation and, subsequently, unwelcoming to the Allies.

However, the description of 'ungrateful', when looked at in the context of a changing battle scene, becomes less damaging, more understandable. For the welcome afforded the Allies in Normandy in some cases varied by a combination of time and place. Any initial coolness - which was clearly a minority finding, as illustrated by the previous two sections - wore off as the beachhead grew and became more secure.

General Eisenhower was aware of the phenomenon; speaking to his son John on a tour of the Normandy beachhead just nine days after D-Day, he explained why he believed the local population appeared subdued. John's son David Eisenhower writes:

'Despite everything a soldier is led to believe', Eisenhower observed, 'populations usually want to have as little to do with war going on around them as possible'. In his experience, whenever military formations passed, the population kept their eyes downward. 'Of course', he mused, 'one cannot expect the people to wave flags for several weeks after the arrival of our troops'.⁸⁰

Eisenhower was addressing the general phenomenon of exhaustion with war, but what of the reserve and coolness of the Normans specifically ? This is commented on in several reports, and so can not be dismissed. What is important is to separate out the various

⁸⁰ David Eisenhower, *Eisenhower: At War, 1943-45* (New York, 1986), p.303

strands of it, to seek to understand why there was coolness, and how far it marked a level of ungratefulness that would justify resentment by Allied troops.

The first of two main strands is the Normans' dismay at the destruction of their homes and countryside (discussed briefly in section 4.3). Britain's General Brooke, touring the American and British sectors of the beachhead on 12 June, had commented on the devastation of many villages, "and the sad countenances of the Normans, who believed 'we were bringing war and destruction to their country'".⁸¹ Infantryman Daniel Curatola wrote of a mixed welcome, with some very happy to see the Americans - but "others seemed to resent our destroying many of their villages and homes in fighting [the] Germans".⁸² Crane Brinton of the Office of Strategic Services (OSS, the forerunner of the CIA) commented that "Normandy has seen no fighting at all in modern times, and .. the Normans are taking the devastation worse, probably, than would the people who have lived for generations in the cock-pit north and east of Paris".⁸³

The second strand is concern at the outcome of the invasion. Infantryman Leroy Stewart noticed that the Normans "didn't want to give us too big a welcome in case the Germans drove us back. .. I think the further we got into France the welcome might have been better. They knew then we were there to stay".⁸⁴ Others noted that the people appeared to be still apprehensive about the possible return of the Germans, but "as time went on and the Americans were there to stay, the French realised this fact and their reception was warmer".⁸⁵ These observations are backed up by reports on the reactions of the local population in Normandy by SHAEF Psychological Warfare Section. Their 15 July report analyses the poor early response of the Normans as having three causes: 'shell-shock', the quiet nature of the people, and uncertainty as to whether the US forces would hold ground. However:

⁸¹ Eisenhower, *Eisenhower*, p.303

⁸² D Curatola q.

⁸³ Crane Brinton, 'Letters from Liberated France' in *French Historical Studies*, Vol 2 (1961), p.4

⁸⁴ L Stewart q.

⁸⁵ B Edelberg & M Diltthey qs.

Within a week of our landing, after battle had passed on, after they had seen the beach, after they had seen the troops, the tanks, the guns and the fantastic equipment covering all their roads and fields, they began to get confident that we really had come to stay, and that the Germans were quite incapable of pushing us out. They began to warm to us, and over heaps of rubble in towns smashed by our guns, such as Isigny, Montebourg, Valogne, flags and ribbons began to appear. Conspicuous among them - here and there - were union jacks and star-spangled-banners, which we had certainly not brought with us. Relations got warmer and more friendly, and very soon they were opening up to us, not only their hearts, but all their possessions.⁸⁶

Such reports would have been very welcome in Whitehall in particular, for the Prime Minister's Department had seen newspaper reports that the Normans were not just 'cool' to the Allies, but positively hostile. Major Desmond Morton of the Prime Minister's Department wrote to the Foreign Office on 21 June 1944 asking it to investigate rumours that the people of Normandy were in large measure pro-German.⁸⁷ The letter referred to an article in the 18 June *Sunday Pictorial* by Rex North, a British correspondent in Normandy. The Foreign Office passed the letter to SHAEF with the comment that "reports received .. from Normandy [do] not bear out the rumours, but in view of the high quarters in which stories [are] circulating .. an immediate, urgent and discreet investigation [is called for]".⁸⁸ Footitt and Simmonds report that Churchill circulated North's report to the Cabinet, as an antidote to the criticism that his Government was under for not recognising de Gaulle's Provisional Government.⁸⁹

North's article was blunt and unsettling to those who understood military-civilian relations in Normandy to be satisfactory. The article was, though, written in absurdly alarmist tones. It was probably the source of the picture that persists in some people's minds still of the Normans as being so economically comfortable under the Germans that they were consequently reluctant to be 'liberated':

⁸⁶ SHAEF Psychological Warfare Section, Reports from field (First US Army) on reactions of local population in Normandy - no.1: 15 July 1944; WO219/3665, Public Record Office, Kew

⁸⁷ Referred to in letter from Brig. Brice Williams SHAEF G5 4 July 1944.; WO219/3937, Public Record Office, Kew

⁸⁸ *ibid.*

⁸⁹ Hilary Footitt & John Simmonds, *France 1943-45* (Leicester, 1988), p.88

THESE PEOPLE TERRIFY ME

... Six out of ten of the people over here distrust and detest us, and I have carefully checked the figure. Further, more than half seem to be allies of the Germans so that it is impossible to tell who, if any of them, are our friends. For, like so many others, I expected everyone to fete our victorious forces as they came in. Instead, I have spent a week wondering where the next French bullet was coming from.

.. Over half the French I met in Normandy had no wish to be liberated. Men on street corners - wearing German field-grey trousers, let me add - turned their backs on me. Others just happened to spit at that moment.

.. There was no war in Normandy. .. The Germans [had been] stiffly polite. They brought trade, were scrupulously honest - under orders - in everything they did. And in Normandy the roses still blossomed as before, the cattle grazed peacefully. The artichokes, asparagus, crisp lettuce and vegetables were just as they had always been. The butter was as creamy, the eggs were as plentiful. .. Most of the people I saw in Normandy were rosy-cheeked and healthy. I ate with one woman. Her cupboards were full, and I remember wishing my wife had been there. At home we have to give up our butter to the child. Here no one would have noticed the difference if I had eaten an ounce with every slice.

.. [I believe that] the Germans, strictly under orders, have behaved so well in Normandy that the French have got used to them. That a whole generation has been growing up with these Nazis, and because their own young men are in German prison camps, the inevitable has happened. .. Our armies robbed a lot of Jeanes in France of their German boy friends. Jeanne - a woman who spat and said 'Damn the British' - is typical of a lot of young France. She is a potential sniper.

.. Decisions of the highest importance must be made. Already there are far too many British soldiers buried beneath wooden crosses in France after meeting with French bullets.⁹⁰

North's claims were loud, but wild. In his first sentence he wrapped together the words 'distrust' and 'detest' - a big leap. SHAEF's Psychological Warfare Section were spread over Normandy trying to determine the reaction of the Normans, but North claimed to be able to tell how they felt - and 'carefully check' the figure he reached. From that he makes the jump to stating that half of the people "seem to be allies of the Germans". Where others saw coolness in the Normans, North saw distrust .. then detestation .. and then alliance with the enemy.

Despite the hyperbole, North's article caused two reactions. Firstly, the Prime Minister's Department urgently wanted to hear what units in the field knew about the response of the Normans. Secondly, 21st Army Group (Montgomery's HQ, which formed

⁹⁰ *Sunday Pictorial* 18 June 1944; The whole article is approximately six times as long as this excerpt. Presumably the military censor was absent on 18 June

the layer of the military hierarchy between SHAEF and the separate British, Canadian and US Armies) moved straightaway to counter the damage that such talk could do to the degree of cooperation that the Allies desperately needed from local authorities. To a degree, for operational reasons, this would have had to have been their response, regardless of what the facts might be. But in a 19 June letter from 21 Army Group to Psychological Warfare Section requesting that guidance be given about this to the press, 21 Army Group show a greater degree of concern to satisfy themselves that North's comments are not representative than might cynically have been expected :

The information in the possession of this branch, which is believed to be representative, does not confirm North's conclusions. Taking into account the dour and undemonstrative nature of the Norman, our reception has been friendly and the degree of cooperation afforded by local officials most satisfactory. That the population generally is anti-German and pro-Allied is beyond doubt. The attitude of the peasant farmers towards the onset of war in their fields and villages is summed up in the remark of a man whose orchard was being ploughed up to make a flying strip and was overheard by one of our officers to say 'It is my contribution to war. Il faut ça'.⁹¹

SHAEF G-5 Historical Section summarised the guidance that 21 Army Group recommended be given to the press thus:

That the Norman, a dour individual, was not given to bursts of enthusiasm, so the absence of wild demonstrations should not be interpreted as hostility. Normandy is prosperous because it is the larder of France - that there is food in Normandy should not be interpreted that reports hitherto received of starvation in France are false. Isolated sniping by French civilians has been reported - at worst a few genuine cases; at best Germans disguised as women making their escape. In neither case should the stories be given prominence.⁹²

Downing Street's query was answered, in part, by the responses that were gathered from Normandy. Civil Affairs Section of the British Second Army wrote on 30 June that there was no evidence that the young French population were hostile to the Allied cause. On the contrary, a considerable proportion of young men were anxious to enlist in the Free French Forces. A negligible number of young women who were mistresses of

⁹¹ Letter 21 Army Group to SHAEF Psychological Warfare Section, 19 June 1944.; WO219/3937, Public Record Office, Kew

⁹² *ibid.*

German soldiers had shown hostility. Intelligence Section, 21st Army Group, observed that they had received no reports of hostility by younger people: all the evidence pointed the other way. Resistance groups in particular - made up largely of young people - were wholly pro-Allied and working well with them. First US Army G5 sent a brief message on 30 June: "Lack any evidence for an allegation that French people in younger age groups show hostility".⁹³ One Norman who was young at the time, M André Heintz of Caen, active in the city's Resistance movement, recalled a range of feelings towards the Americans in 1944, the majority of them favourable. On 10 July 1944 he set off from newly-liberated Caen to establish the condition of his aunt near Carentan - the first that he knew that he was out of the British sector was when he saw an American soldier 'relaxing' at his post; he and his contemporaries referred with some admiration to the American "laid-back attitude" ("attitude décontractée").⁹⁴ M Heintz reported that a common observation about the Americans at this time was that "they lacked tact so often": they tended to be friendly with those who talked the most, but given the subtleties of collaboration this could lead to difficulties.⁹⁵ However, their generosity was noted, and many residents remembered the Americans for the food they gave out; in the 1990s they still said "the Americans fed us".⁹⁶

When the on-the-spot responses to North's article had been assessed, official concern diminished. By this time (end-June) the Allied build-up had reached one million men and, although a break-out still seemed a long way off, the Normans could be fairly sure that the Allies were there to stay.

⁹³ *ibid.* Included in 21 Army Group report to SHAEF G5, 2 July 1944, quoted in letter from Brig. Brice Williams SHAEF G5, 4 July 1944

⁹⁴ Interview with author, Caen 9 November 1990

⁹⁵ *ibid.*

⁹⁶ *ibid.* ("les Américains nous nourrissaient"). In St Sauveur-le-Vicomte in 1990 M Heintz brought together an American veteran and a French lady that the veteran could only remember as "the farmer's little daughter" - her main recollection was "You fed us".

4.6 RECIPROCAL HELP

To read ordinary soldiers' recollections of help received from and given to the French is to observe some of the range of their attitudes towards the French, from another angle.

48% of the sample of US Normandy veterans who report details of help received say that they were given information. Children and young adults pointed out German locations - "nearly always someone would come forward and tell us where the Germans were hidden or, if they had left, which way they had gone".⁹⁷ The French would pass on information - though "language was a difficult problem to deal with for us".⁹⁸ Information received covered locations, troop strengths, vehicle types, artillery, habits, supplies - and names of collaborators.⁹⁹ The information could be of limited value - "sometimes they knew little more than 'they went that-a-way'!".¹⁰⁰ Jack Brewer of 3rd Armored Division reported that there were times when they were given false information that led them into traps, causing loss of life.¹⁰¹ This led of course to suspicion. One unit was given little help, "but didn't ask for any - [we] didn't know who to trust"; another veteran reported no assistance being received - only that he viewed some French "with considerable suspicion".¹⁰² Even if there was not false information being received, it was naturally a common worry that sympathisers or spies were active:

Local Frenchmen gave us occasional tips on German troop locations. On [the] other hand, terrible night bombing of our column on road near Gavray [was] believed to be due to radio work of local German sympathiser.¹⁰³

20% report the FFI as amongst the help received from the French. Often this is in

⁹⁷ A Alvarez & L Coen qs.

⁹⁸ A Miller q.

⁹⁹ A Wright, W Thibodeaux, G Merli qs.

¹⁰⁰ J Chavez q.

¹⁰¹ J Brewer q.

¹⁰² W Kleeman & L Schaller qs.

¹⁰³ M Marshall quest

the context of receiving information - "we received much help from FFI and town officials on [the] whereabouts of Germans"; "the FFI assisted us on the disposition of German troops"¹⁰⁴ - but in half the instances the FFI are credited with more. Two men spoke about the FFI "help[ing] the Army to liberate many towns and villages" and "help[ing to] clear out some villages along the way".¹⁰⁵ One reported how two FFI men volunteered to join his unit, and fought with them all across France; another unit had "25 to 30 French youths" join up for the duration.¹⁰⁶ Infantryman Gaylord Smith was full of praise:

FFI were wonderful young and old men; even some girls. They were the sneakiest people around, always darting around. For two days we tried to take a hill with machine guns on it. The third day we took it, but all the Germans had their throats cut; the French had been there that night.¹⁰⁷

10% reported poor experiences regarding help from the French - "very little"; "not very much" (these included the non-sequital report "None - mostly negative").¹⁰⁸ One who received no help recorded charitably, however, that "the people had nothing to give - we gave them and they were quietly grateful".¹⁰⁹

The range of miscellaneous help received does suggest a satisfactory, even healthy, working relationship between troops and local population. Americans received help with directions, with identifying the whereabouts of wounded soldiers, and with their own or colleagues' injuries. They were also assisted with gifts of food, wine and Calvados.¹¹⁰ The French offered "bread, wine, and friendship".¹¹¹ In general, "most requests for assistance were taken care of readily".¹¹² Joseph Nichols of 1st Infantry Division felt that the Normans "would give you the shirt off their backs".¹¹³

¹⁰⁴ H Soderberg & J Chavez qs.

¹⁰⁵ I Berkowitz & J Darden qs.

¹⁰⁶ J Pilck & P Skogsberg qs.

¹⁰⁷ G Smith q.

¹⁰⁸ T Hastings, W Wilkin, A Ulmer qs.

¹⁰⁹ M Wiener q.

¹¹⁰ E Koskinen, E Aboussie, D Brand, C Hangsterfer, A Welle, S Tyzenhaus, B Edelberg, E Philipps qs.

¹¹¹ J Kyolackl q.

¹¹² C Peterson q.

¹¹³ J Nichols q.

When it came to reciprocity, the Americans appear to have given quite willingly. Of those who reported American help to the French, 55% reported giving food, candy or cigarettes (one noted prudently that you had to be careful with cigarettes because often people sold them at a high price).¹¹⁴ Two veterans reported their unit having given ammunition, some fuel, and captured German small arms to the FFI.¹¹⁵ Gaylord Smith felt that all he could give were “just rations and goodwill”. He continued, in a telling comment on the limitations of the relationship: “I loved the French; they talked too fast [for us] to try to understand [them]!”¹¹⁶

Memorable instances of specific help include troops organising a collection for a pair of two-year-old girl twins orphaned in an Allied bombing raid; removing people buried in the rubble at Mortain after a nightbombing; giving the Curé at Ste-Mère-Eglise a canvas to fill a hole in the roof (noted to be still in use when revisited in 1947); and purifying the water (intended to be for the Army - but “French civilians were some of our best ‘customers!’”).¹¹⁷ Malcolm Marshall of 1st Infantry Division wrote that “everywhere lots of our battalion members ‘adopted’ French families, [and] took them food and cigarettes whenever our rear units were near farms or other inhabited areas”.¹¹⁸

The most unexpected forms of assistance given by American troops were two separate instances of infantrymen helping French women give birth. “I gave some of my rations for their kids, patched up a shrapnel wound on a man and his wife’s arm and leg, found a French pregnant girl in a hay barn and helped her in her delivery!”¹¹⁹

Some Americans of course were far from helpful to the French, though evidence of

¹¹⁴ A Miller q.

¹¹⁵ A King & B Edelberg qs.

¹¹⁶ G Smith q.

¹¹⁷ E Schooner, C Cornazzani, T Gillis, J Miller qs.

¹¹⁸ M Marshall q.

¹¹⁹ J Nichols q.

this is by definition harder to find. Colonel Bealke of 90th Infantry Division revealed something of this attitude in a letter of 26 June 1944 to his wife:

I am taking advantage of every French house I can to afford shelter. Since the French had neither the wits nor the courage to take care of their own country I propose to get some use out of it before I give back to them small portions that I take away from them.¹²⁰

As the earlier analysis and examples show, this attitude was clearly the exception.

4.7 THE EXPERIENCES OF CIVIL AFFAIRS DETACHMENTS IN NORMANDY

Evidence from the Civil Affairs staffs of US Army units ('G5 Sections') has been presented in analysing the overall welcome that the Americans received in Normandy (section 4.3). But what of the experiences of the CA detachments themselves, based in individual towns? In analysing their experiences and views in Normandy four major areas of interest emerge:

- (i) the French welcome for, and subsequent attitudes towards, the detachments;
- (ii) CA detachments' respect for French autonomy;
- (iii) CA detachments' tolerance of and respect for the French people;
- (iv) their handling of American crimes towards French civilians .

4.7 (i) *The French welcome for, and subsequent attitudes towards, the CA detachments*

There are no accounts in the Civil Affairs detachments records which reveal the initial welcome received by the CA detachments themselves. The records dwell rather on

¹²⁰ Papers of Jacob W Bealke, Lt.Col. in 90th Infantry Division, U.S.Army Military History Institute, Carlisle, Pa.

evidence of the overall welcome (as examined in section 4.3), or on immediate details of the town just entered; operational concerns dominated. Donnison, however (in *Civil Affairs and Military Government in North-West Europe, 1944-46*, p.76), summarises that the detachments were "received everywhere by the inhabitants with friendliness, if not with enthusiasm, and the local administrative officials were in every case cooperative".

The CA records do reveal something of the subsequent feelings of the French towards the detachments in Normandy: where a detachment's performance was good enough to have attention drawn to it they were liable to be flattered. Some detachments were showered with praise, such as A1A1 in Cherbourg - "M.Coulet, the Regional Prefect, .. expressed his opinion that the Cherbourg CA Detachment was a model one".¹²¹ (A1A1 was the lead CA detachment, given Cherbourg - the first large city to be liberated - to provide experience for its main assignment: Paris). In Cherbourg there was both a new Préfet and a new Sous-Préfet; the detachment felt that their relations with both were "extremely cordial, and they came to rely upon the detachment for advice on many matters".¹²² Army historians interviewing M Gresselin, head of Resistance in Cherbourg, reported his feeling that:

[The detachment's] cooperation with the Resistance had been constant and complete. He was particularly grateful for the way in which the Detachment had manoeuvred the affairs of the city back into the hands of the French. In his opinion, the job of CA was, rightfully, to make itself progressively unnecessary.¹²³

The detachment in Trévières was the subject of effusive praise in a welcoming speech by the town's mayor at the first meeting of the detachment with all the local mayors:

[Our Allies] have just arrived, and they say 'We don't come here only to deliver you but to give you what you need, to give you what you do not have anymore, to return what has been taken from you'. What beautiful language. I heard it often on the Allies Radio program, and these same noble and good words

¹²¹ CA detachment A1A1 8 Aug. summary report, p.3; entry 613, European Civil Affairs Division papers; Records of SHAEF, Record Group 331; National Archives, Washington DC

¹²² *ibid.*

¹²³ *ibid.* undated paper in 'Cherbourg Misc.: Appendix IV' papers; entry 613

Capt. Masters [detachment CO] told me upon his arrival, and he repeats them every day. We have in him, for our Canton, one who knows our needs, the ambassador of Mr Roosevelt.¹²⁴

Time increased the respect of the French for the CA detachments at the same time as building up the experience of the units themselves. First Army's G5 Section reported in late-August that "the French officials ... have a better understanding of the needs of the First US Army, and realise that those needs are reasonable and that it is to their advantage to cooperate fully".¹²⁵

4.7 (ii) *CA detachments' respect for French autonomy*

Civil Affairs detachments in Normandy did not interfere in French appointments of mayors and other officials; only rarely did they interfere when the French authorities moved against collaborators. However, the detachments were clear what they wanted from the French - labour, billets for troops, keeping unnecessary traffic off the roads, and help in gathering information. These demands did not show a lessening of respect for French autonomy, however, because of their clear military necessity.

Detachments often found that mayoral appointments were already taken care of. On arriving for their assignment in Dreux (between Chartres and Rouen) the day after the town had been liberated, detachment D5B2 found when they called on the mayor's office that he was being replaced the following day by the mayor who had been removed by the Germans four years ago.¹²⁶ There is no hint in the record that the detachment queried the new appointment, no suggestion that they thought it might be their right to ask any questions about the man due to return as mayor. Rather it seems that this French appointment - presumably by the Sous-Préfet, the next level of the French

¹²⁴ Detachment D3B1 5 July report; file 205-5.1; Records of the Adjutant-General's Office, Record Group 407; National Archives, Washington DC

¹²⁵ *Ibid.* US First Army Civil Affairs Summary 24 August 1944; file 101-5

¹²⁶ Detachment D5B2 17 August 1944 report; entry 612; European Civil Affairs Division papers; Records of SHAEF, Record Group 331; National Archives, Washington DC

administrative hierarchy - was accepted quite naturally. Though the American and British governments did not formally recognise de Gaulle's provisional government until as late as October 1944, its local appointees were being accepted without question - out of operational necessity - by the Allies' CA detachments.

The Cherbourg detachment reported of its first week: "The only person who was dispossessed by the French during these early days was the Sous-Prefect M Bourdin who had been appointed by Vichy".¹²⁷ Again, the inference is that appointments were a French matter.

On occasions US CA staff were involved in setting up meetings to appoint a new mayor. In doing so they were simply doing the organising, not the choosing. The Civil Affairs Officer of 35th Division, on entering Torigni (near Vire) on the day that the town was liberated, found that the mayor had been evacuated by the Germans; he contacted the Curé and several prominent citizens who recommended that a M Lefevre be designated as Acting Mayor. As events tragically unfolded, this American officer ended up having to follow French recommendations twice in the same day:

Arranged for a general meeting at 1800 to act on said recommendation. ...
 At approximately 1730 [our men were] evacuating a group from M.Lefevre's farm and the entire group came under fire. Twenty-two persons were killed ... including M.Lefevre (nominee for Mayor) and the Curé. ...
 At 1800 the scheduled meeting was held, and due to the death of M Lefevre, M.Grandjen was the unanimous choice of the townspeople who attended. He thereupon was designated as the Acting Mayor.¹²⁸

An exception to the general position of respecting French autonomy by not getting involved in political appointments can be found in V Corps' G5 Section's advising the mayor of a commune near Bayeux to ignore instructions from the Vichy-appointed Sous-Préfet in Bayeux.¹²⁹ This in fact ran counter to General Eisenhower's reported desire

¹²⁷ *ibid.* Detachment A1A1 8 August 1944 review of operations since June; entry 613

¹²⁸ CA Periodic Report, 35th Division, 31 July-1 August 1944; file 205-5.1; Records of the Adjutant-General's Office, Record Goup 407; National Archives, Washington DC.

¹²⁹ *ibid.* CA Periodic Report, V Corps, 14 June 1944; file 205-5.

"that influence of Vichy be terminated, but that it be done by French authorities".¹³⁰

Sometimes, respecting French autonomy in political appointments meant accepting a Vichy appointee. This happened in instances where a Vichy appointee was valuable to the community. XV Corps' G5 accepted such a Préfet in Alençon staying in office - though only after approval by 90th Division's Counter-Intelligence staff, French 2nd Armoured Division, "and the French Resistance Movement".¹³¹

The Normandy records of the CA detachments show that in the political area perhaps most sensitive to the French - the handling of collaborators - they rarely interfered. John Maginnis (the only CA detachment commanding officer to have written a book about his experiences) witnessed a parade of women collaborators in Domfront, their heads shaven:

I told all of our personnel to keep off the street and away from this demonstration, so that there would be no involvement in it. This was a French affair, which was not our business to condone or to criticise, although it seemed to me that there were other methods of punishment more effective and less degrading than this.¹³²

The detachment in Trévières discovered on a routine visit to the mayor's office in a nearby canton that the mayor had been arrested by the Gendarmerie.¹³³ This was clearly seen as a problem for the French alone.

Where there was any question of collaborators being Nazi sympathisers who might pose a threat to the Army then the Americans did take action, by reporting details to the nearest Counter-Intelligence unit. For example, 2nd Division's G5 Section received various reports concerning the loyalty of certain civilians - these were straightaway

¹³⁰ SHAEF G5 Staff Conference Report for 12 June 1944; file 494-B; ETO Historical Division; Records of US Theaters of War, Record Group 332; National Archives, Washington DC

¹³¹ XV Corps G5 report 31 July - 31 August 1944; file 215-5.2; Records of the Adjutant-General's Office, Record Goup 407; National Archives, Washington DC

¹³² John Maginnis, *Military Government Journal* (Boston, 1971), p.98

¹³³ Detachment D3B1 report of 9 July 1944; file 205-5.1; Records of the Adjutant-General's Office, Record Goup 407; National Archives, Washington DC

passed over to the Division's Counter-Intelligence staff for investigation.¹³⁴ But when the issue was simply one of dealing with collaborators long after the Germans had gone, then a few detachments did step in and blunt some of the steps that the local population were planning for revenge. Thus in Cherbourg Col. Hawley, commanding officer of the CA detachment, "stopped [a] young resistance group from cutting off hair of girls alleged to have slept with German soldiers".¹³⁵ And the detachment in Ste-Mère-Eglise investigated complaints of interference with civilians by Resistance members at Chef-du-Pont: "Minor incidents against persons who collaborated or dealt with Germans. Resistance leaders cautioned about such actions".¹³⁶ Whether both of these actions were effective is not known.

Whilst still respecting French autonomy, CA detachments were not shy about placing demands on the French when information or action was required for operational reasons. Maginnis, in Carentan, was careful to explain why things were wanted of local officials. The chief thing he tried to bring out when he met a gathering of local mayors was the reason that he was asking them to do certain things - and he was very pleased with the response that he got: "they all seemed willing and anxious to cooperate and there was an air of cordiality about the meeting that was most satisfying to me. Perhaps it was simply that after four years of being told to cooperate, they were now being asked to cooperate".¹³⁷ (Photograph 5, on the next sheet, shows Maginnis in action, hosting a meeting on 21 June 1944 with the Acting Mayor and the town's Doctor).

Maginnis detailed how the Army's demands for labour were met and organised in Carentan, the first town in the American sector to have a CA detachment. (The town had a population of approximately 4,000):

We [supplied] about 300 to 350 men a day. .. The army general purchasing unit

¹³⁴ *Ibid.* 2nd Infantry Division G5 report of 26 June 1944; file 205-5.2

¹³⁵ Col. Hawley 8 July 'CA: Impressions'; file 492-C; ETO Historical Division ; Records of US Theaters of War, Record Group 332; National Archives, Washington DC

¹³⁶ Detachment D6B1 Journal entry 30 June 1944; entry 614; European Civil Affairs Division papers; Records of SHAEF, Record Group 331; National Archives, Washington DC

¹³⁷ Maginnis, *Military Government Journal* , p.58



PHOTOGRAPH 5: Civil Affairs in action - Major Maginnis (US, Commanding Officer of CA Detachment) hosts a meeting in Carentan, 21 June 1944

[Left to Right: another member of the Detachment; Dr Simon, town doctor; Major Maginnis; M.Lecampion, Acting Mayor]

[took] the largest allotment, averaging about 100 men a day. .. [The unit] which was handling supplies back along the coast averaged about 50; the Signals Corps utilised some 45; the PTT took 35; the railroad about 35; the Travaux Publique (roads) took 15; the city of Carentan utilised 25, and varying smaller numbers were needed by combat and other U.S. units for a variety of tasks.

The only way that a steady flow of labor could be maintained was through the establishment of a Labor Bureau in the mayor's office and this was done. The mayor supplied the bodies, and Captain Berkeley Berkeley determined priorities and assigned men to the various agencies.¹³⁸

Likewise the Cherbourg detachment arranged a wage scale for the use of all agencies doing any hiring, and organised for all French labour to be recruited through the 'Bureau Français de Travail'.¹³⁹ In Vire the CA detachment itself, faced with an urgent labour need, did not hesitate to enrol eight refugees as traffic control police.¹⁴⁰

Billeting was a military requirement that CA detachments had to meet. In Cherbourg the detachment had to smooth matters out with the residents following the effects of the US military's apparent working principle of simply finding that a house was empty and moving in; the military did not realise that some residents had been moved out forcibly by the Germans shortly before the Americans' arrival, or that they had left as a means of avoiding shelling. The Navy were particularly guilty. The CA detachment "had been instructed that power of requisition could be exercised only when in case of dire military necessity. But the Navy was unconcerned about the fine points of French sovereignty. Their idea was that it was a captured port".¹⁴¹ The peak of their insensitivity came when they took over the home of the Préfet of the Manche Département, placed a sailor on guard and let nobody in.¹⁴² As well as sorting out the consequences of incidents such as this, the CA detachment's commanding officer had to negotiate particularly delicately to take over a department store as a Red Cross Club for black American troops. The record of the negotiation shows the CA staff not hesitating to

¹³⁸ *ibid.* p.38

¹³⁹ ETO Historical Division interview with Col. Howley 8 July 1944; file 492-C; ETO Historical Division; Records of US Theaters of War, Record Group 332; National Archives, Washington DC.

¹⁴⁰ Detachment C1B1 report 11 August 1944; file 205-5.1; Records of Adjutant General's Office, Record Group 407; National Archives, Washington DC

¹⁴¹ undated paper in 'Cherbourg Misc.: Appendix IV' papers; entry 613, European Civil Affairs Division papers; Records of SHAEF, Record Group 331; National Archives, Washington DC

¹⁴² *ibid.*

ask something of the French when it was a question of operational necessity, but doing so in a subtle and respectful manner. (The record also shows that the 'operational necessity' was a consequence of the US Army's policy of segregation):

[We explained to the Mayor] that a great problem now existed, with 15,000 colored troops coming in and no place for recreation. We pointed out that they were well disciplined troops, not like the Senegalese, and that it was necessary that they be given the opportunity to play, as troops must of necessity after they have worked. The Ratti [Department Store] was desired.

The Mayor sympathised with us, but the Ratti was the pride of Normandy, and Mrs Ratti had been loyal to the Resistance and they were coming back to Normandy to reopen the store, and it was necessary that such a store be in operation for the people of Cherbourg.

I told him he was entirely right, and proceeded to point out that the store had practically nothing on its shelves, and the scarcity was such that no store materials could come into Cherbourg for quite some time. And then we pointed out that the store had suffered a certain amount of damage that had to be made right, and with the military holding priorities on repair materials, it would be practically impossible for Mrs Ratti to have those repairs made. And then, the Army would pay Mrs Ratti well for the use of the store and it would revert back to her upon the collapse of Germany. A conference was held with Mrs Ratti and her lawyer and it was amicably worked out.¹⁴³

Control over civilian traffic was another area of importance to CA operations.

Detachments had to be strict about the number of passes issued for travel for further than six kilometers from a town. In Sées the ratio of approved passes to rejects on the detachment's first day of operations was 10 to 74.¹⁴⁴ The detachment operating in the vicinity of Domfront provided an example of just how ready CA staff were to refuse passes when necessary:

Marcel Horel, refugee from Caen requests pass to return home. Not granted.

Frenchman requests pass to attend funeral of brother-in-law, 14 kilometers away. Not granted.¹⁴⁵

In addition to expecting help from the French in the areas of labour, billeting, and traffic control, the Americans were clear that they expected the French to look after as

¹⁴³ *ibid.*

¹⁴⁴ *ibid.* Detachment C1D1 Journal 22 August 1944; entry 610

¹⁴⁵ *ibid.* Detachment D6B1 21 August 1944 report; entry 614

many things themselves as possible. In this they were only following CA guidelines - which specified that they were not there to run things that the local communities could run themselves - but it also provides further evidence that they had no desire (or time) to unnecessarily interfere in French affairs. Thus the detachment based in Balleroy (south-west of Bayeux) could report that the Curé of the village of Cormolain was "doing an excellent job with the refugees", and the detachment in Campeaux (near Vire) that all refugees were "being taken care of through local authorities".¹⁴⁶ The Cherbourg detachment reported that "the French, in this war, do all their actual work, and are accomplishing the rehabilitation of the town through their own agencies".¹⁴⁷

Maginnis in Carentan, though, was cautious about the ability of the French to handle many things. In late-August, with fewer and fewer American troops stationed in the area, the transition back to civilian control was being accelerated. But "this made for difficulties because the civilians were not ready or capable, in these recently fought-over towns, to pick up the routines of normal living. Inability to cope with civilian supply requirements, even in a minimal way, was an outstanding example of this".¹⁴⁸ V Corps' records echoed this judgement in a report from one of their staff who had informed the Mayor of Trévières that "more activity and efficiency would be expected in the future from [his] gendarmes".¹⁴⁹

In fact it is Maginnis who provides a more subtle picture on the whole question of autonomy. He noted that in mid-July clashes regarding autonomy did start to occur - and that he did not hesitate to come down on the side of the Allies whenever military needs were at stake. But these problems were not due to the actions of the local authorities, rather they were due to the Provisional Government trying to flex its muscles, acting through its Regional Commissioner in Bayeux, M. Coulet:

¹⁴⁶ Detachment D2C1 report 21 June & Detachment D5F1 report 4 August 1944; file 205-5.1; Records of the Adjutant-General's Office, Record Group 407; National Archives, Washington DC

¹⁴⁷ ETO Historical Division interview with Col. Hawley, 8 July; file 492-C; ETO Historical Division; Records of US Theaters of War, Record Group 332; National Archives, Washington DC

¹⁴⁸ Maginnis, *Military Government Journal*, p.87

¹⁴⁹ Memo 6 July 1944 to V Corps Senior Civil Affairs Officer; file 205-5.1; Records of the Adjutant-General's Office, Record Group 407; National Archives, Washington DC

As the government of General de Gaulle began to reach into relations between local civil authority and the US Army, misunderstandings and difficulties began to arise. For example, the mayor of Carentan was troubled by orders coming from [each of] the sous-prefect of the Department of Manche, the French military authority, and the American Army. He was inclined to shrug off the directives of the poorly defined French authority. We discussed this situation from time to time, always with the same conclusion - it was a fact of life that the United States Army was in control and not the French.

Today [we] talked with a Colonel Laroque of the French Regional Commission at Bayeux about who was to pay for civilian purchases from the army. We did not even know the status and authority of this Commission. We said to Colonel Laroque: get your position clarified with SHAEF, First Army, or someone in high Allied authority, so that proper official directives will come down the military chain of command to us from First Army G-5. While Civil Affairs agreements had been made before the invasion between the Allied Forces and Norway, the Netherlands, and Belgium, none existed with France. Under such nebulous conditions, when French authorities attempted to put into effect measures that clashed with our responsibilities, we naturally did not recognise them.¹⁵⁰

By contrast, a SHAEF Staff Conference on 20 July heard from General Grasset that the French were considerably more moderate in their outlook than earlier:

Relations are much easier; they are beginning to realise that they cannot get on without CA. I found Coulet a very nice fellow and very anxious to do things right.¹⁵¹

It is possible that Maginnis was being deliberately awkward here, in the understandable interests of simplicity; any CA detachment's task was difficult enough without another new channel of requests - and possible clashes.

There is one example in the records of an instance where French autonomy was inadequately respected because of CA staff sticking too rigidly to a possibly false understanding of 'rules'. The Cherbourg detachment had reported with enthusiasm on 3 July that the first French newspaper to be printed in 'Free France' had just come off the presses - *La Presse Cherbourgoise*.¹⁵² V Corps' G5 Section, in contrast, wrote in its report for 1-10 July:

¹⁵⁰ Maginnis, *Military Government Journal*, p.50

¹⁵¹ SHAEF G5 staff conference 20 July, 1944; file 494-B; ETO Historical Division papers; Records of US Theaters of War, Record Group 332; National Archives, Washington DC

¹⁵² Detachment A1A1 8 August 1944 review of operations since June, p.2; entry 613, European Civil Affairs Division papers; Records of SHAEF, Record Group 331; National Archives, Washington DC

The French newspapers *La Renaissance du Bessin* and *La Presse*, published in Bayeux and Cherbourg respectively, appeared during this period without prior notice of their "official" status, with the result that their distribution within the Corps was forbidden for several weeks pending receipt of approval from First US Army¹⁵³

Such a lack of imagination is probably easier to forgive in the CA staff of an Army unit - the CA detachments themselves, being based in towns, were 'closer to the ground'.

The overall picture is one of the American CA staff in Normandy unquestioningly respecting French autonomy in the crucial area of choice of local officials, normally staying aloof from French action against collaborators - but, nonetheless, being plain about what they expected from the French in order to advance the military effort. They were pleased to see the French act on their own where they were capable, but all the while their acceptance of French autonomy was tempered by the necessity to, if pressed, put military needs first.

4.7 (iii) *CA detachments' tolerance of and respect for the French people*

CA detachments showed a fair degree tolerance of the French. They often understood the French point of view, and consequently could be serious and effective in their role of representing the US military and the local French authorities to each other. For example, from the earliest days of the invasion they understood the need to get the US Army off the backs of the French wherever they could: thus 1st Division's G5 Section recommended an end to the practice of each succeeding unit in a town questioning and searching people and property - to allow this "was to needlessly harrass a friendly population, and will endanger the cooperative and helpful attitude thus far universally encountered".¹⁵⁴ Likewise, when detachment A1A1 was trying to sort out the telephone

¹⁵³ V Corps G5 report 7 August 1944: review of 1-10 July operations; file 205-5; Records of Adjutant-General's Office, Record Group 407; National Archives, Washington DC

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.* 1st Division G5 report 10 June 1944

and mail services in Cherbourg it realised that the general question of mutual understanding was most important:

[There was a] fundamental difference in viewpoint between French civilians and American military personnel. The former had had four years of experience in doing without various facilities and services. They had found life possible under those conditions and therefore saw no necessity to remedy the situation overnight. On the other hand, the Americans, through inherent conviction and military necessity, wished immediate results.¹⁵⁵

Toleration was the first necessary step on the road to full respect for the French and their point of view. That such respect was developing even in the early days after D-Day can be seen from 1st Infantry Division's G5 Section writing a short reference for a citizen of Caumont on 14 June; it pointed out that he had been "of great assistance to us in our area. He also is apparently responsible for the safety of a number of Americans [whom] he sheltered, treated and hid until he was able to turn them over to the 26th Infantry".¹⁵⁶

A significant part of the work of showing respect for and cultivating the goodwill of the French was done through efforts to boost relations between the CA detachments and the town. Thus detachment commanding officers, who could usually speak good French, used formal occasions to make speeches in French. In the light of the relatively few CA staff who could speak French fluently, one can understand how grateful the local citizens were for the recognition implicit in a speech in French by an American officer. General Maxwell Taylor, commanding officer of the 101st Airborne Division, gave two such speeches in Carentan. On the day after the town was liberated, he met the mayor and other city officials and "charmed them by giving a little talk in excellent French, apologising for the damage and mortality that war brings to places in its path, and asking them to give all possible assistance and cooperation to the division". Six days later General Taylor held a ceremony in the town to present medals; when he spoke to the

¹⁵⁵ Detachment A1A1 Report on Communications Services 27 June to 1 August 1944; entry 613, European Civil Affairs Division papers; Records of SHAEF, Record Group 331; National Archives, Washington DC

¹⁵⁶ 1st Division G5 letter 14 June 1944; file 494-B; ETO Historical Division papers; Records of US Theaters of War, Record Group 332; National Archives, Washington DC.

gathering in French (Maginnis writes) "we could see the pleased expressions on the faces of the civilians, for here was an American they could understand - and they wanted so much to understand".¹⁵⁷ The Cherbourg detachment reported that an American officer was one of the speakers at the town's Bastille Day celebration - "the crowd cheered its approval".¹⁵⁸

Hospitality was an important ingredient in building relations between the detachments and the French. On their fifth day in Sées, the CA detachment's commanding officer invited the mayor to lunch in the Officer's Mess; he later hosted an evening meal for the Regional Commissioner. Another popular move was the arranging of special events. Thus the same detachment, through the Special Services Officer of V Corps, arranged a Band Concert for the town of Sées on 27 August. It attracted a "crowd conservatively estimated to be between 2,000 and 2,500 people. A holiday atmosphere reigned and Franco-Allied cordiality and goodwill was seen everywhere".¹⁵⁹

The respect that men of the CA detachments had for the French is evident in their pleasure at being invited to attend liberation ceremonies. An officer and three enlisted men represented the Dreux detachment at the liberation fete of St Germaine, a small village of some 500 people:

The incident was typical. The men arrived there at about 11.30 a.m.. The celebration was attendant on their arrival. They lined up in parade order at the Mayor's office and marched a hundred yards to the monument commemorating the dead of the last war. A bugle played and they observed a moment of silence. Then the mayor read the letter of two boys, members of the FFI, who had written it to their father just before they had been shot by the Germans. A solemn and moving moment. The lieutenant and enlisted men were then presented flowers by a small boy and girl and taken to a large room behind the town cafe. The room was decorated with flowers and the tables were set with glasses and small rolls. The dinner consisted of these small rolls and an aperitif and champagne which had apparently just been dug up. There were about 40 people at the table - FFI members, veterans of two wars, and the town dignitaries. 'Vive la France' was responded to with 'Vive l'Amérique'. The Marseillaise was sung and the Detachment representatives sang the Star Spangled Banner. The men left after

¹⁵⁷ Maginnis, *Military Government Journal*, pp.13 & 22

¹⁵⁸ Press Release regarding Bastille Day 1944; file 494-C; ETO Historical Division papers; Records of US Theaters of War, Record Group 332; National Archives, Washington DC.

¹⁵⁹ Detachment C1D1 25 & 27 August 1944 reports; entry 610, European Civil Affairs Division papers; Records of SHAEF, Record Group 331; National Archives, Washington DC

their pictures had been taken with the mayor and his family.¹⁶⁰

This work all paid dividends. It generated mutual respect, which was an important contributory factor to the success of so much CA work. Maginnis writes:

The degree of cooperation we had obtained from the local government officials was impressive. There was never any question about their status, and we did not meddle with their internal affairs. We accepted them for what they were, without relation to former, present, or future French national governments. They were earnest, industrious men, suddenly called upon to face infinitely more arduous duties and trying situations than they could possibly have imagined. We won their respect and confidence; they won ours.¹⁶¹

This respect was crucial in helping the CA detachments deal successfully with the consequences of crimes committed by American troops against French civilians.

4.7 (iv) *CA detachments' handling of American crimes towards French civilians*

The crimes of American soldiers in France started with looting and theft. Just four days after D-Day American troops broke into the mayor's office in Colleville (behind Omaha Beach) and took some money and the official seal.¹⁶² Thefts were frequent. 2nd Division's G5 reported on 4 July "another theft by American soldiers" - this time lumber out of a works yard.¹⁶³ The mayor of Campeaux (south of St Lô) complained:

[On] 1 August [the] Germans left his house in good condition; at 1000 on 2nd August three or four American soldiers, unit not known, smashed in his doors and windows with rifles and looted his house, taking all food, silverware, etc., and to his remonstrances answered "c'est la guerre".¹⁶⁴

Whilst reports of looting, and similar ones of scuffles in cafés, are hardly surprising, the reports of forcible entry and rape are shocking. On 19 August a Madame

¹⁶⁰ *ibid.* Detachment D5B2 17 Sep. 1944 summary report, p.18; entry 612

¹⁶¹ Maginnis, *Military Government Journal*, p.93

¹⁶² V Corps G5 Section report 10 June 1944; file 205-5; Records of Adjutant General's Office, Record Group 407; National Archives, Washington DC.

¹⁶³ *ibid.* 2 Infantry Division G5 report 4 July 1944; file 205-5.2.

¹⁶⁴ *ibid.* Detachment D5F1 report 3 August 1944; file 205-5.1

Gifon arrived at office of the detachment at Juvigny (near Domfront) and fainted. She was revived and a Major from the American Medical Detachment was brought in.

Madame Gifon complained that two American soldiers forcibly entered her home the night before and fired a number of rifle shots inside the house. No one was injured. Soldiers slept in beds in home, left in morning. .. [Division-level Civil Affairs Officer] located and identified two soldiers responsible. Placed in arrest of quarters under their C.O.¹⁶⁵

Detachment D6B2 arrived in the town of St Hilaire, near Mortain, on 4 August. They were thus in the town at the time of the German counter-attack at Mortain a few days later; the CA detachment played an heroic part in helping troops and civilians during the severe shelling of St Hilaire during the fighting. Ironically, just a week later the main entries in the unit's journal concern the effects not of German attacks but of violence by American troops:

Sat. 12 August: Several soldier-civilian incidents developed. Lt Col Charles Sellers reported two civilian women wounded by negro soldiers - one in the arm, the other in the foot. .. The wife of the secretary of the Canton, Mme Guillaume, was assaulted in turn by two white soldiers, one holding the husband and the rest of the family away at the point of a gun while the other attacked, and then reversing positions. The wife of the FFI head, Mme Blouet, was threatened at the point of a gun by a sergeant and two soldiers, all white, but fortunately that was as far as the affair went. The incidents occurred at approximately 8 and midnight Friday night, at Savigny and S. Sympherien respectively about three or four kilometers apart. Investigation by Lt Schlacter made it evident that the units involved had left several hours before and there was no way of getting any clue as to soldier or unit.

Sun. 13 August: Late in evening a report of another attempted rape case was made. Capt William B Jacobs brought all the witnesses in the case, including the accused, the victim and the arresting soldiers. Statements from the two arresting soldiers were obtained, the prisoner turned over to the MPs for the night. Further testimony from the girl will be obtained in the morning and a full report forwarded to Provost Marshall, 7th Corps.

Mon. 14 August: Full report of soldier-civilian incident referred to in yesterday's Journal sent forward. Added incident reported by Mayor of Chevreuille, occurring 0500 this morning. One soldier entered home, tried to get into bed, was resisted by husband. Soldier fired one shot in the air and left.¹⁶⁶

The detachment in the nearest main town south of St Hilaire, Fougères, seemed to

¹⁶⁵ Detachment D6B1 19 August 1944 report; entry 614; European Civil Affairs Division papers; Records of SHAEF, Record Group 331; National Archives, Washington DC

¹⁶⁶ *ibid.* Detachment D6B2 12-14 Aug. 1944 reports; entry 612

suffer a plague of serious incidents. Fougères had been liberated on 2 August, and the CA detachment arrived three days later. The first report of violence appears in the journal a week later: on 12 August the mayor reported that an army unit in the commune of La Selle en Cogles had committed eleven cases of rape and threatened the populace with weapons; the mayor of La Selle sent word that the situation was growing serious and that if immediate action were not taken he was afraid the populace might take retaliatory action against the troops. Two days later there was a report of soldiers becoming "very unruly and drunk" and two separate reports of soldiers entering and pillaging homes. Two days later the commanding officer of the detachment went with a Military Policeman to impress on officers in command of troops in the locality the need for stricter control over their troops. On the same day a report came in that two French women had been murdered near Laignelet by troops - a woman, 49, and her daughter, 12, had been killed by one shot of a carbine in bed on their farm. That night a 66-year-old farmer near Louvigne was killed; the next day two soldiers were charged with his murder. All this had its effect on the community. On 24 August the journal records that Dr Stree of the Sous-Préfet's office complained that

Because of the indiscriminate shootings by troops at night, doctors and civilians alike fear to go out after curfew in event of emergencies. Due to this, one man last night was unable to be given emergency treatment in the hospital and was dead by morning. It was asked if it would be possible to arrange with MPs for some form of escort to the doctors in event of future emergencies.

The final entry in the unit's journal, for 28 August, reports calm returning - and suggests an explanation:

The past five days have been very quiet in reference to crimes committed by American troops. This has been due to departure of transient units that were in this area previously. .. Most of the cases will be very difficult to solve as the units which were involved are gone and the civilian population does not know what these units were nor who the individuals were.¹⁶⁷

To the horror of violence, therefore, was added the insult of the perpetrators often

¹⁶⁷ *ibid.* Detachment D3B2 12-28 August 1944 reports; entry 622

not being brought to justice. On the other hand, the commanding officer of the European Civil Affairs Division instructed all units to read out and place on their bulletin boards an obviously deterrent list of thirteen convictions of US troops for murder and/or rape. All the men were sentenced to hang. The list, signed "by command of General Eisenhower", was produced for distribution to all Army units, not just Civil Affairs. One of the entries reads: "A soldier of the 583rd Ordnance Ammunition Company was convicted by a general court-martial and sentenced on 21 September 1944 to be hanged for the crime of rape committed at Laignelot (*sic*), France".¹⁶⁸ It is not clear if this was connected to the August double murder at Laignelet, but it does suggest that at least some of the perpetrators of these crimes were caught.

Some French were happy to admit that misbehaviour by American troops was not a uniquely American phenomenon. Abbé Lebas, interviewed by Allied Intelligence, said that he did not expect troops to behave perfectly - he had no doubt that Leclerc's French soldiers would misbehave if they got the chance: "soldiers were the same the world over".¹⁶⁹ On the other hand, citizens of the village of Le Guislain (near Vire), interviewed by First Army's Propaganda & Psychological Warfare staff, felt that the (relatively) good behaviour of American troops in their area seemed all the better to the population because of the very bad behaviour of the German troops during the latter months of occupation.¹⁷⁰

Despite widespread knowledge of trouble caused by American troops, the CA records from Normandy nevertheless show instances of strong French support for the US military. This support manifested itself in several ways. Firstly, the French respected the sacrifices of American lives, and made efforts to show their respects to the dead. The detachment in Dreux reported that the compiling of records of allied dead in the area was

¹⁶⁸ Circulated under cover of memo of 3 Nov. 1944 from ECAD Commander Col. Pendleton; file 494; ETO Historical Division records; Records of US Theaters of War, Record Group 332; National Archives, Washington DC.

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.* Conversation with Abbé Lebas, 12 August 1944; file 494-P

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.* First Army report from the field on reactions of local population in Normandy - no. 6, 14 August 1944

"an almost continual task", in which they received a lot of help from the French:

The following case is typical of the reports which came into the office. .. A civil policeman called to report that he had buried an American flyer who had been shot down on June 10, 1944. The body had lain among some high weeds for six weeks before it had been discovered. He asked if he could write to the family to tell them what he had done. One of the men offered to write it for him. He also asked permission to put a cross and flowers on the grave. Permission was granted.¹⁷¹

Another measure of support was the fact that young Frenchmen volunteered to join the American Army. 2nd Infantry Division G5 Section reported on 17 June that there had been a number of such requests.¹⁷²

Misbehaviour by US troops clearly did not have so negative an effect on French opinion as to wipe out the effect of the Americans' role as liberators, or to lessen the respect that was shown for CA detachments by French citizens and authorities.

4.8 CONCLUSIONS

The experiences of France and the French of both Civil Affairs and ordinary soldiers in Normandy in June, July and August 1944 were on the whole positive. The military uncertainties of June and July led to some localised feelings that the Normans were 'ungrateful'. However, the overall welcome received by both CA and ordinary soldiers was perceived by a majority as being a good one. The French offered thanks and practical assistance - often by way of gifts of food; the majority of Americans were grateful.

When considering the experiences and views of ordinary US soldiers in Normandy the limitations of the material we have must, of course, always be borne in mind (these

¹⁷¹ Detachment D5B2 17 September 1944 summary report, p.4; entry 612, European Civil Affairs Division papers; Records of SHAEF, Record Group 331; National Archives, Washington DC

¹⁷² 2 Infantry Division G5 Section report, 17 June 1944; file 205-5.2; Records of Adjutant-General's Office, Record Group 407; National Archives, Washington DC

are considered in more detail in Appendix 2). The responses to the author's questionnaires were made between 46 and 51 years after the events of 1944. They concerned striking experiences that occurred to the respondents when they were mostly very young men. For some, their experiences would have long since been enshrined in family folklore, and as such would not be easy to look at from a new perspective. Recollection of such events, so long after the time, will inevitably be spotty - some parts of the experience simply not remembered - or selective - a desire to ponder the most striking incidents only. (Memoirs, though usually written nearer the time, are by definition even more selective; with a questionnaire, or even more with an interview, the historian can try and catch the respondent a little off guard perhaps - but the precise subject matter of memoirs is totally in the hands of the author).

It was clear from Chapter 2 that the ordinary soldiers who went to France knew - and, in some cases, cared - relatively little about France (though more than might have been expected). To many soldiers France was just another country - "more hills and rivers to cross".¹⁷³ However, this relative lack of appreciation of the specifics and the character of the country and its people contrasts with the overall good reports of the men's feelings about their reception by the French people. The liberators and the liberated were often thrilled by what they were experiencing, and wanted to share it together. In a classic image of warfare, the human contacts made during liberation - however fleeting - were strong and memorable, regardless of the virtual impossibility in most cases of breaking the language barrier.

The initial coolness and/or caution of many Normans in the uncertain (and destructive) immediate aftermath of D-Day gave rise to the idea of them being 'ungrateful'. This was important because it was probably a contributing factor to the decline in respect for the French by American soldiers over the winter of 1944-45

¹⁷³ C Cornazzani q.

(considered in Chapter 6), but it should not cloud the fact that the significant majority of American soldiers reported a good welcome from the French in Normandy. Americans and French offered each other mutual help, which was usually gratefully received both ways. This initial meeting of the two peoples in Normandy, and their relationship in the first months, was in many ways a success; this was especially true of the CA staff, who by virtue of their role were closest to the French. It was the prolongation of the war, the harsh winter of 1944-45, and the effect of time on the inevitably delicate relationship between the liberators and the liberated, which was to lead to feelings turning sour.

CHAPTER 5

SWEEP ACROSS FRANCE: AUGUST & SEPTEMBER 1944

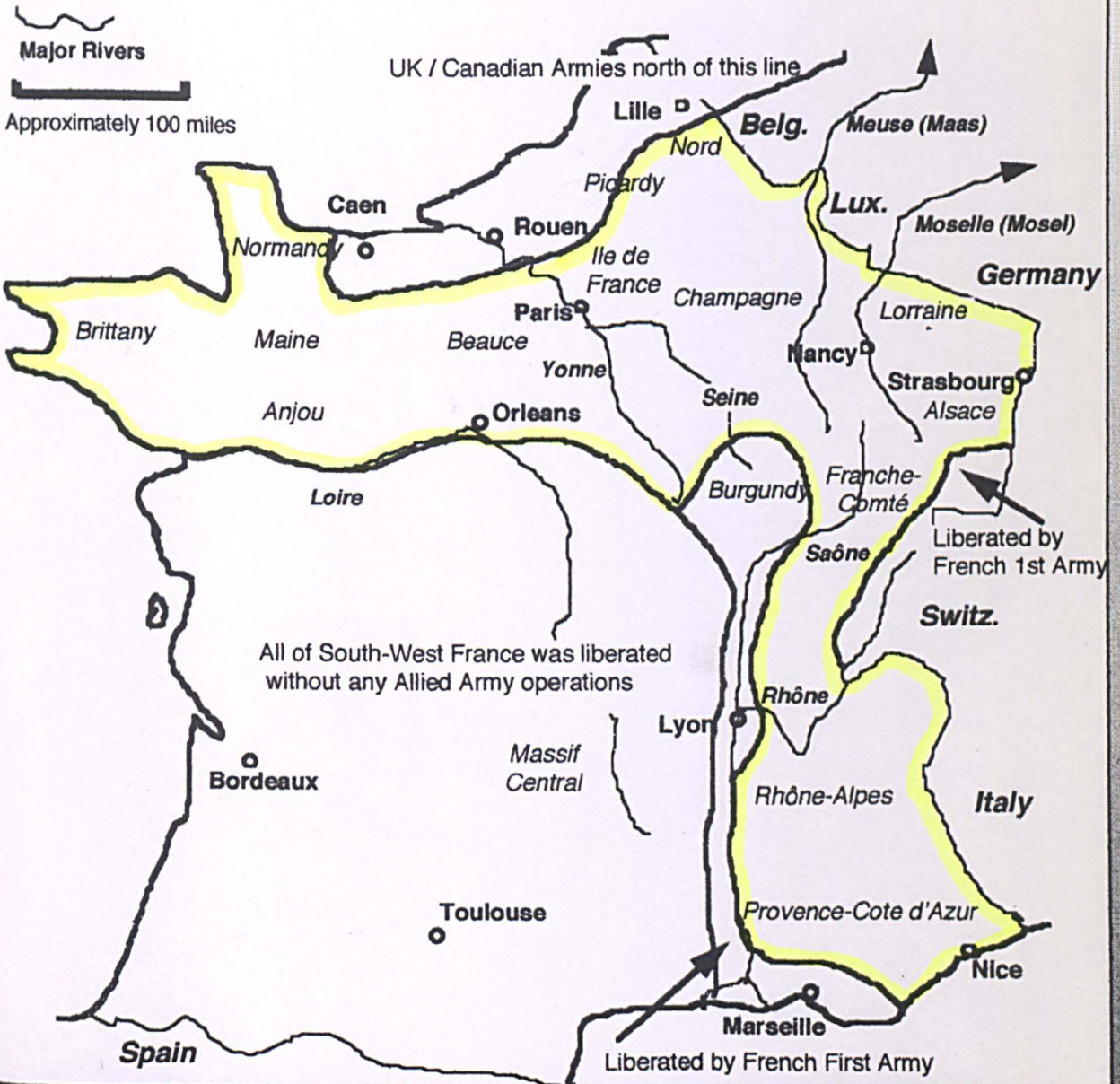
The two most familiar images of Americans in France in World War II are of troops coming ashore on D-Day and of the American Army rushing across northern France after the German collapse in August 1944. The latter image, its context, and particularly how relations between Americans and French were seen and handled in this brief and eventful phase are the subject of this chapter.

Geographically the chapter covers the areas where the American Army operated between 1 August and 11 September 1944, excluding the last phase of the fighting in Normandy (the development and closing of the Falaise Pocket - covered in Chapter 4). This includes therefore, in the north: Brittany, the areas between the Loire River and Normandy and between the Loire and the Seine, the central region of Ile de France, Champagne, eastern Picardy and parts of Nord and Lorraine; and, in the south, Provence-Côte d'Azur, Rhône-Alpes, Burgundy and Franche-Comté (see Map 8, on the next sheet, which shows the complete area of US Army operations in France in 1944-45). Chronologically the chapter covers the advance of the American Armies between 1 August and 11 September. On 1 August American troops moved out of Normandy for the first time; on 11 September forces from the northern campaign and the southern campaign (launched with its own 'D-Day' on 15 August 1944 in Provence) met in Burgundy - a day which ironically also marked the end of the rapid sweep and the start of a long campaign to clear Lorraine and finally Alsace.

To give full consideration to relations between Americans and French within the area liberated by 11 September, the chapter includes events in those areas up to the end of September. All events after 30 September are covered in the next chapter, along with

Map 8: Regions covered by US Army operations in France 1944-45

Edge of area of US Army operations



all of the fighting in and liberation of the heartland of Lorraine and the whole of Alsace, the early stages of which took place between 11 and 30 September.¹

This chapter looks in turn at the geographical and chronological background to the events of 1 August to 11 September 1944, the welcome during the sweep across northern France, Civil Affairs in northern France in August and September, the liberation of Paris, and the invasion of southern France and the subsequent rapid sweep northwards.

5.1 GEOGRAPHICAL AND CHRONOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

In the eight weeks between D-Day and the end of July 1944 the American Army had advanced a maximum of 55 miles into France from the landing beaches. Between 1 August and 11 September they leaped a further 320 miles into the heart of the country, to a point only 80 miles from the German border on the River Rhine. But those 80 miles would prove to be as hard to win as the first 55 in Normandy: Strasbourg, adjacent to the Rhine, was not taken until 23 November (and Colmar to the south was not taken until 5 February 1945 even). The six weeks of August and early September thus saw the swiftest liberation of French territory of the American Army's operations in northern France - swift enough to make the use of the term 'sweep' highly appropriate to categorise the advances of the US First and Third Armies.² They were, however, exceeded in rapidity by the advance of the US Seventh Army and the First French Army from the landings in Provence on 15 August 1944 north to Burgundy and the French-Swiss border region of Franche-Comté; at its maximum this covered very approximately the same distance as the drive in the north (320 miles) - but in only four weeks rather than six.

¹ Within Lorraine, the département of Meuse (centred on Verdun) was liberated in the last days of the sweep of August/early-September and is included in the current chapter therefore. The liberation of the heartland of Lorraine, the départements of Moselle, Meurthe-et-Moselle, and Vosges, is covered in Chapter 6.

² From 1 August the Third Army started to operate in France; First Army had been active since D-Day.

5.1 (i) *The north*

Operations in the north in August and early September covered the flattest, most open areas of France. The main area of activity ran eastwards from the southwestern corner of Normandy, below the hills of southern Normandy (see Map 8: Regions covered by US Army in France 1944-45). Whilst one corps operated in the rough Brittany Peninsula, the main events were initially in the regions centred on Le Mans (Maine), Angers (Anjou), the northern side of the Loire Valley, and the wide open plateau country of the Beauce around Chartres. From there attention focused on the Ile de France region, a gently sloping basin with the River Seine and the city of Paris at its centre. All of these areas contained no constricting hilly terrain of any consequence; there was a well developed road network which, despite Allied bombing, greatly facilitated rapid motorised movement. East of the Seine the American advance spread out with the First Army heading in a more northerly direction. This took it across the eastern half of the Picardy region and a part of the Nord département; the latter was a highly industrialised region with large coal, iron and steel, and textiles developments, the former a continuation of the predominantly rich agricultural terrain already traversed.

The Third Army continued due east across the Champagne region, giving the advance the alliterative and attractive sobriquet of 'The Champagne Campaign'. The countryside here again posed no problems - it was similar to the rich plateau lands of the Beauce. East of Champagne the advance liberated the rolling and more forested countryside of the Meuse département before stalling at the Moselle River, the heartland of Lorraine. The two main rivers in this area both flow north to the Rhine, and thence to the North Sea: the Meuse which flows into Belgium west of the Ardennes Forest (and, in Holland, becomes the Maas, straddled by the town of Maastricht), and the Moselle which flows through Nancy and Metz before entering Germany (where it becomes the Mosel). The Moselle was the centre of an industrialised region, centred on iron ore deposits.

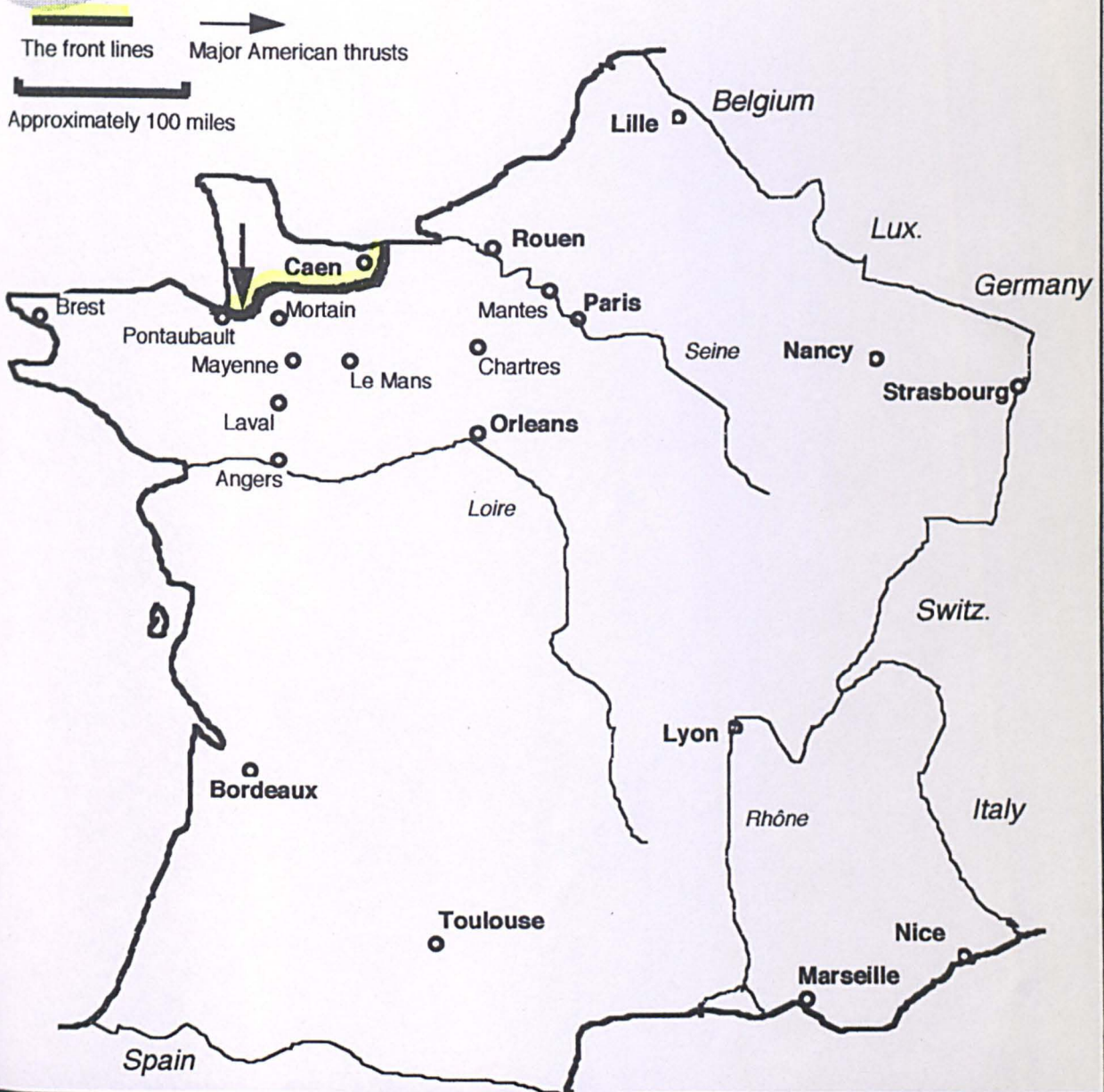
The advance in the north had started in earnest with the 'Cobra' offensive launched on 25 July 1944 from a line between St Lô and the west coast of Normandy.³ Exactly one week later, on 1 August, American troops crossed the bridge at Pontaubault close to the border of Normandy and Brittany and turned the corner to head west into the Brittany Peninsula (see Map 9). 1 August saw the activation of the US Third Army (under General Patton) to operate alongside the existing US First Army; both Armies came under the new US 12th Army Group commanded by General Bradley (prior to this date Bradley had commanded US First Army, under Montgomery's joint 21st Army Group; the change - long planned - reflected the fact that there were now more American than other Allied troops in France). Patton's Third Army initially concentrated on clearing the Germans out of Brittany - the chief port of Brest was surrounded by 9 August. However, as the realisation dawned that the Germans were in a greater state of collapse than even the more optimistic projections had hoped for, the opportunity was taken just a few days into August to turn some limited explorations to the south into a major shift eastwards. Thus Mayenne and Laval were liberated on 5 August, Le Mans on the 8th, and Angers, on the Loire, on the 10th. On 7 August a strong German counter-attack at Mortain in south-western Normandy sought to cut the Americans' thin supply lines by attacking towards the sea, but this was beaten off after three days.

In the meantime part of the Third Army was sent north from Le Mans to exploit the possibility of trapping the German Army between Alençon (liberated on 12 August) and Falaise, currently under attack by a Canadian and British advance from the north (see Map 7 in Chapter 4). This force took Argentan and closed the 'Falaise Pocket' on 18 August, other forces exploiting northwards from Dreux to chase the retreating Germans. But by this time the main cities on the Loire had been taken, including Orleans on 16 August (see Map 9). Chartres was taken on the 18th and the first crossing of the Seine was made on the 20th at Mantes, thirty miles downstream of Paris.

³ Good narratives are: Martin Blumenson *Break-out and Pursuit* (Washington DC, 1961) Parts 4 to 7, Charles B Macdonald *The Mighty Endeavour* (New York, 1969) chapters 18 to 20, and Chester Wilmut *The Struggle for Europe* (London, 1952) chapters 20 to 22

Map 9: The front lines at 1 August 1944

○ One week after the start of the 'Cobra' offensive



The climactic event of the campaign in France came on 25 August 1944 with the liberation of Paris (looked at in detail in section 5.4). By this time Third Army forces had crossed the Yonne River at Sens and pushed east as far as Troyes - on the River Seine like Paris, but 85 miles to the south-east (see Map 10).

The last week of August saw the most rapid advances. Third Army entered Châlons (29th), Reims (30th) and Verdun (31st); First Army sped through Compiègne and Laon (both on the 31st). In the first week of September First Army continued through St Quentin (1st) and Valenciennes (2nd), crossing the Belgian border on the 3rd, and ending up on 11th September on a front just ten to twenty miles short of the German border in both Belgium and Luxembourg. Third Army to the south began to outrun its supply lines and consequently ran into serious difficulties maintaining its advance in September. This combined with a strong German defence of the Moselle River line to slow the advance almost to a halt by 11 September, just west of Metz and Nancy (see Map 11).

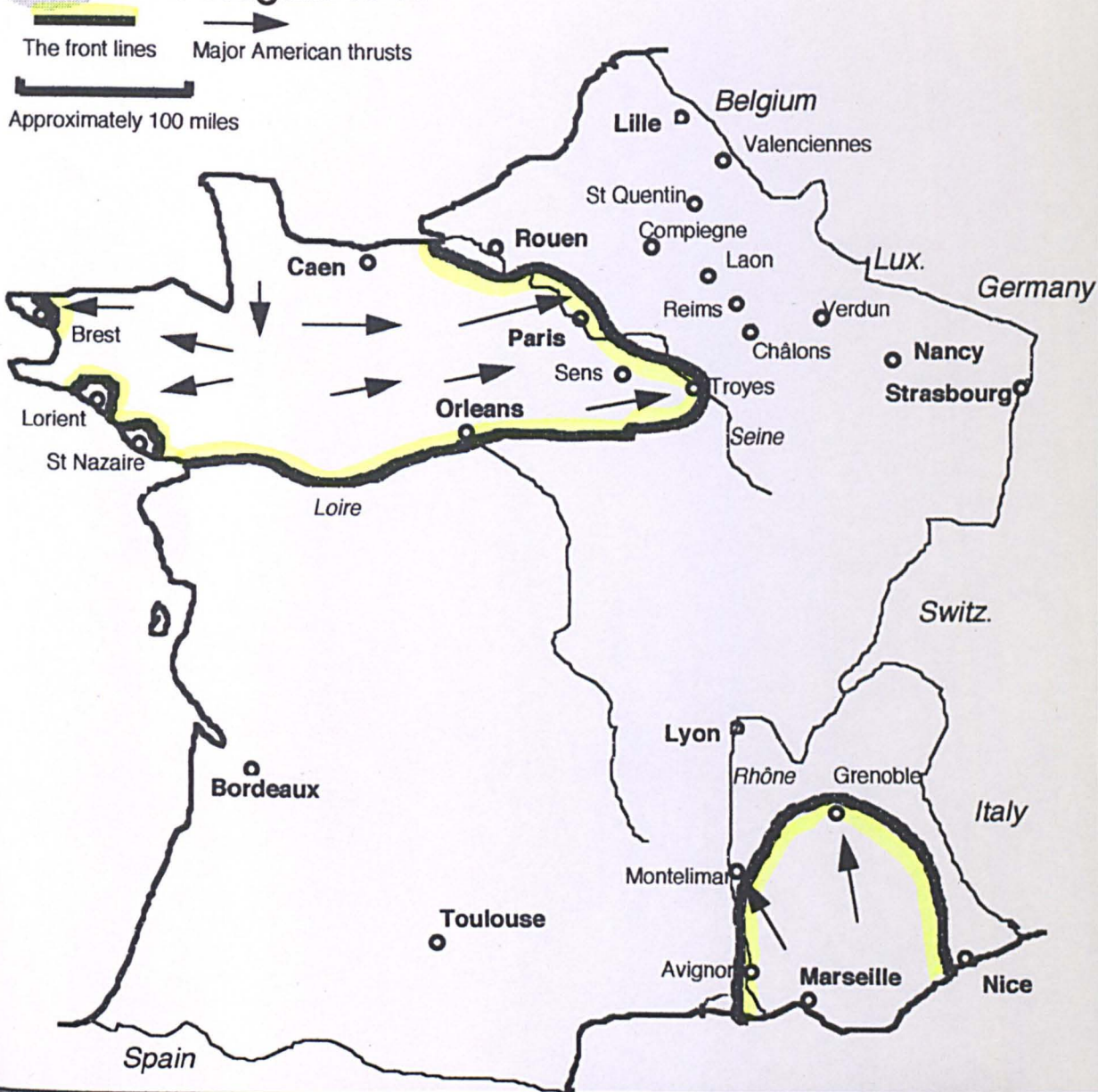
In the north of France the only pockets of territory not yielded by the Germans outside of Alsace and Lorraine were the Atlantic Coast ports of Royan, La Rochelle, St Nazaire, Lorient, and Brest, and the Channel Ports of Le Havre, Boulogne, Calais and Dunkerque. Brest, Le Havre, Boulogne and Calais fell before the end of September 1944; the others all stayed in enemy hands until VE Day.

5.1 (ii) *The south*

Actions in southern France took place in a radically different landscape. East of the Rhône delta the coast is predominantly rocky and hilly. Marseille and Toulon are the biggest ports, Marseille being at that time the second largest city in France; Toulon was a large naval centre. With their potential as harbours from which to supply Allied armies attacking Germany, these cities were the principal initial objectives of Operation

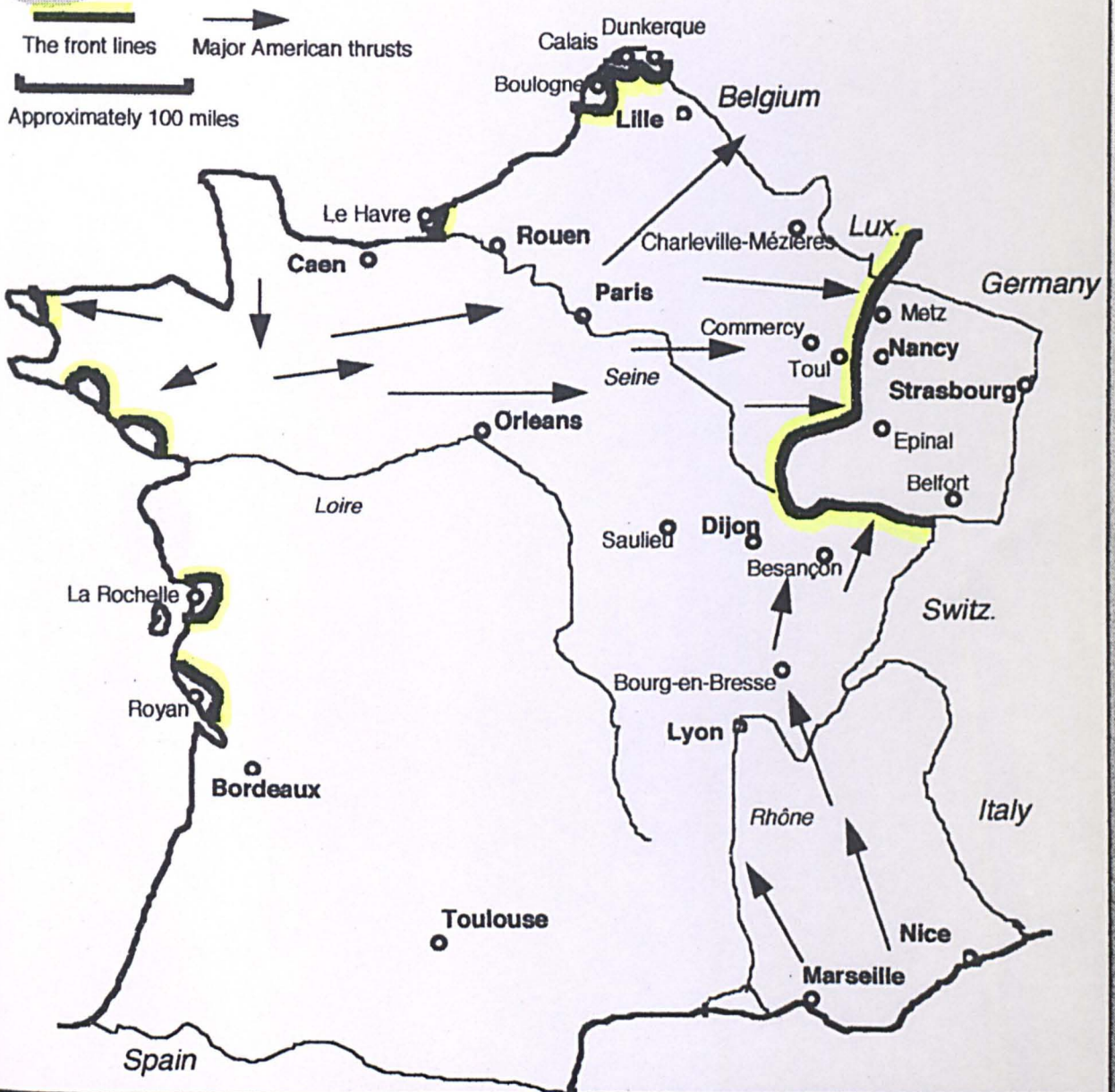
Map 10: The front lines at 25 August 1944

- The Liberation of Paris
- Landings in Southern France had started on 15 August 1944



Map 11: The front lines at 11 September 1944

- Meeting of the advances from North and South, in Burgundy (Saulieu)



'Anvil', the plan for an amphibious landing in southern France in mid-August 1944.⁴ A series of relatively small beaches in the area between St Tropez and Cannes were chosen for the landings (see Map 12).

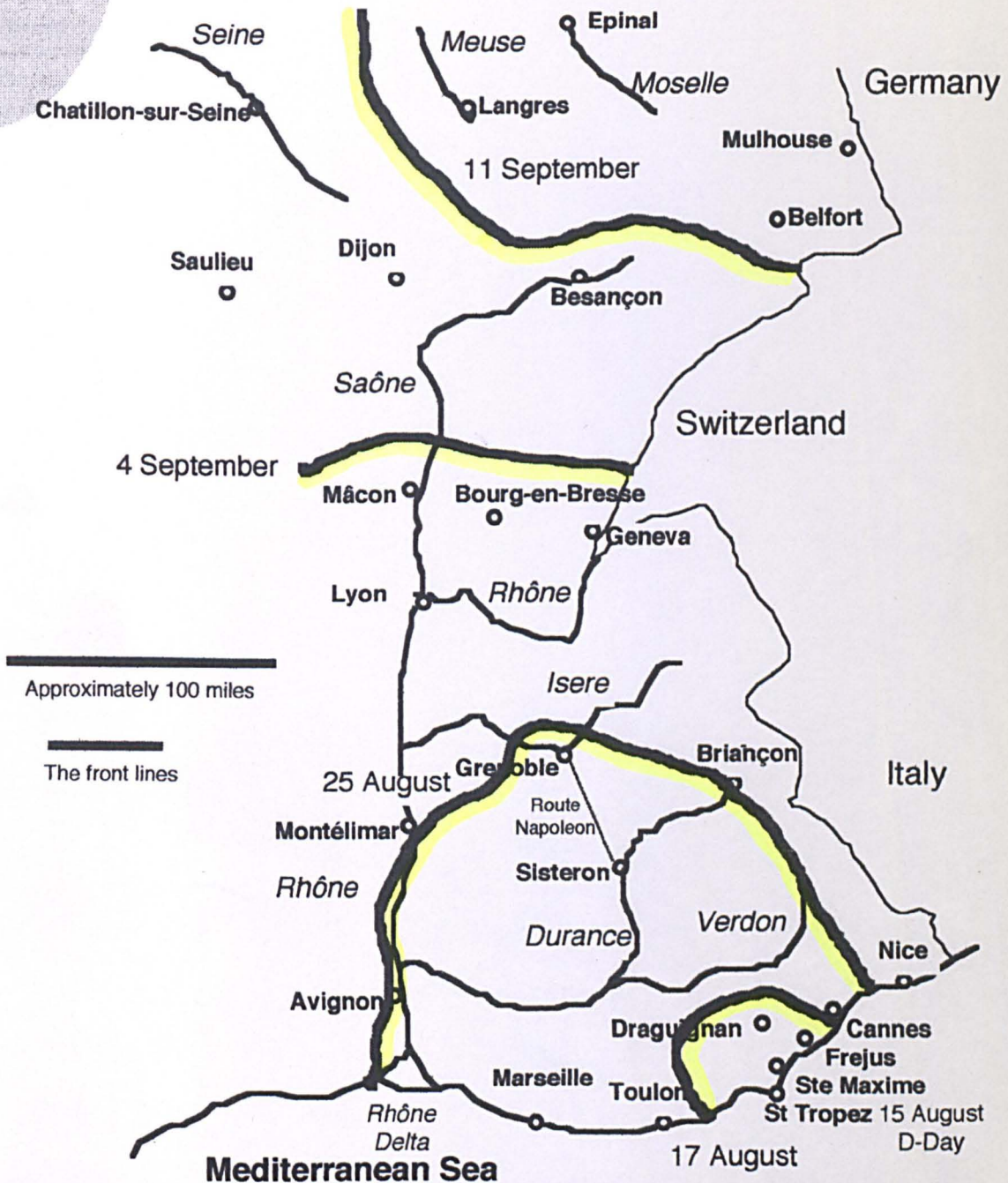
Inland from the Mediterranean coast the country is dry and hilly. There are three significant geographical features of relevance to the campaign of 1944. Firstly, the Rhône-Saône corridor - the valley of one of France's largest rivers (the Rhône) and its principal tributary (the Saône), which together lead due south from Burgundy to the Mediterranean. South of their confluence at Lyon the Rhône valley narrows to between five and fifteen miles, pinched between the edge of the Massif Central highlands to the west and the foothills of the Alps to the east. The Rhône forms a vital communications channel, but a vulnerable one: if blocked, alternative routes are mostly mountainous and involve very large detours.

The second significant feature is the Alpine mountain chain. The highest mountain peaks (amongst Europe's highest) are along the Italian and Swiss borders, but the Alps and their foothills fill almost the entire south-eastern quadrant of France (south and east of the Rhône). This was to prove both a benefit and a difficulty to the Allies. The benefit was that an attack on the Allies' eastern flank, from Italy, would be hard; the difficulty of course was getting their own men and materiel across the hills.

Helping in the latter, though, was the third significant geographical feature: the Durance valley and the 'Route Napoleon' beyond. The Durance, which joins the Rhône near Avignon, is a substantial river which flows down from Briançon in the Hautes-Alpes; below Sisteron its valley is wide and open. This accessible valley formed a corridor pointing in the direction of Grenoble, a city to which it was linked by the hilly

⁴ 'Anvil' was renamed 'Dragoon' in the last days before the operation (enabling Churchill to joke that he had been dragooned into accepting the plans - he had been extremely reluctant); the original 'Anvil' designation is commonly used in historical studies. The best coverage of the campaign in southern France can be found in the final volume of the Center for Military History's *US Army in World War II* series of operational histories: Jeffrey J Clarke & Robert R Smith, *Riviera to the Rhine* (Washington DC, 1993).

Map 12: The campaign in southern France, August & September 1944



but fairly well-developed 'Route Napoleon'. Used by Napoleon on his return to France in 1815, this was the key alternative north-south route to that of the River Rhône.

D-Day on the beaches of Provence was 15 August 1944. Whilst the initial landings were conducted solely by the US Seventh Army, French forces came ashore the next day. Operating until mid-September under US Seventh Army, these forces - under General de Lattre de Tassigny - formed an embryonic First French Army. Whilst US forces moved inland, French forces moved along the coast to seize Toulon and Marseille. With a German withdrawal ordered on 18 August, progress was quicker than expected. But serious and costly fighting developed in both cities: they did not fall to the French until 27 and 28 August respectively.

On 18 August an American armoured Task Force set off north across the Verdon River to reach the Durance. By the evening of the 19th it had taken Sisteron, and three days later - just one week after the landings - Grenoble too. The next day Avignon fell and the Americans were free to chase the retreating German forces up the Rhône Valley. American units from the Sisteron region moved west to Montélimar to try and capture or destroy German forces as they tried to escape. A seven-day battle ensued around Montélimar, with mixed results. Once the bottleneck had been cleared the way was free to Lyon (taken by the French forces on 3 September), Bourg-en-Bresse (4 September), Besançon, the capital of Franche-Comté (8 September), and Dijon, the capital of Burgundy (10 September).

On 11 September elements of the French 1st Infantry Division met the US 6th Armored Division in Saulieu, in western Burgundy. The advance from the Mediterranean had taken just four weeks. In such a rapidly moving situation the concept of clearly-defined front lines had evaporated somewhat; Map 11, therefore, should not be interpreted as suggesting that Allied troops actively controlled all the area between the two advancing armies - contact had only been made by a few hundred troops. However, the German forces posed no serious threat there - as indeed they did not throughout the

whole section of France south of the Loire and west of the Rhône. German units had been ordered to withdraw from south-west France at the same time as those in the south-east started to pull back. The delaying Battle of Montélimar helped many German divisions to pull out of the south-west before the northern and southern Allied forces met. Nevertheless, there were still large scale surrenders of German forces to the Americans all along the Loire River. The towns and villages of south-west France were liberated by the FFI (the French Forces of the Interior - 'the Resistance') or simply by the withdrawal of the Germans; no Allied armies (including the French) operated there in the summer of 1944.

Whilst the front lines were fluid on 11 September, within a matter of days the line shown on Map 11 had become disturbingly 'hard'. The Germans held the 'Dijon salient' (the bulge in the line north-east of Dijon) to give themselves a few more days to fall back to the Vosges Mountains around Epinal and to defend the Belfort Gap between the Vosges and the Swiss border (see Map 12). In the north they had stopped the Third Army at the Moselle. When asked in November 1918 how long it would take to drive the Germans back to the Rhine if they refused the Armistice terms, Marshall Foch had replied "Maybe three, or maybe five months, who knows?"⁵ From September 1944 it would be six months before the Rhine - just 80 miles from the Moselle - was crossed.

5.2 ON THE MOVE - THE WELCOME IN NORTHERN FRANCE

For American troops involved in the sweep across northern France in August and early September 1944 the welcome from the French was a very different experience from that which they or their predecessors had previously experienced in Normandy. Different circumstances meant that many more troops were exposed to the experience of actually liberating towns and villages, or at least of being amongst the first Allied troops to arrive in a community after the Germans had fled. This understandably led to a higher

⁵ Blumenson, *Breakout and Pursuit*, p.702

proportion of troops feeling good about the welcome from the French. However, this needs to be kept in perspective against the overall good welcome in Normandy. Without careful attention to what the records suggest, the six summer weeks of festive liberations - giving rise to the familiar image of American troops being fêted by townsfolk, kissed by the young women, and plied with wine and food - can easily make Franco-American relations in the preceding two months in Normandy look poor, which is counter to the balance of the facts outlined in Chapter 4. The summer liberations were an emotional high for both the American troops and the French who welcomed them; they were part of an unrealistically rapid and unexpected turn of events, the letdown from which contributed to a decline in Franco-American relations on the ground during the winter which followed.

The memorably good welcome that the liberating American troops received has been caricatured by 1st Infantry Division veteran Alfred Alvarez:

Weather - outstanding; women - beautiful and fun-loving; food - available and delicious; wine - plentiful and intoxicating; which all became known as 'the Champagne Campaign'.⁶

George Macintyre of the 4th Infantry Division paints an evocative picture of the release that the local residents felt at liberation - and their desire to thank and include the Americans. He describes a liberation festival - not the throwing of flowers at passing troops, but the town celebrating:

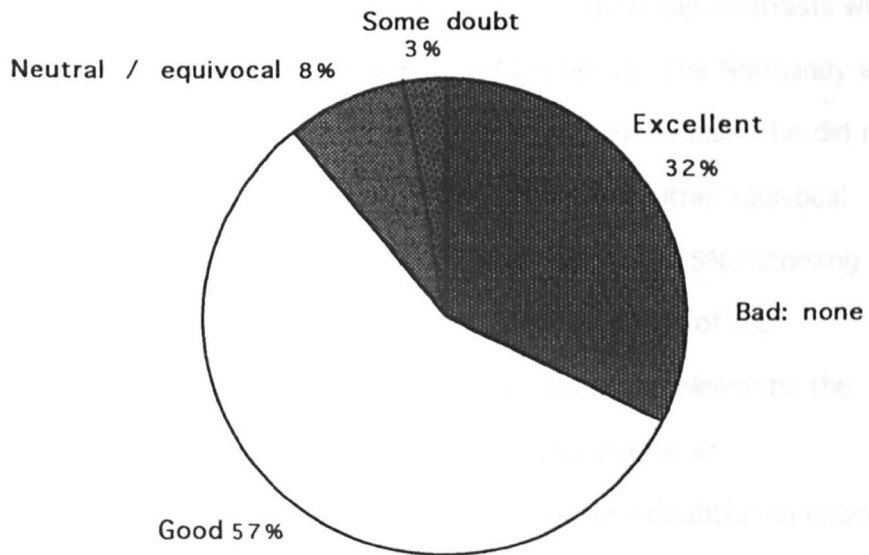
We arrived in Juilly [late in the day],.. only an hour behind a retreating enemy. We bivouaced on the grounds of a school. That night the entire population of the village, from babes in arms to old folks on crutches, paraded by torchlight through our campsite. They sang as they paraded, "A Long Way to Tipperary" and "La Marseillaise". The French national anthem was beginning to bring a lump to my throat. I had heard it under such varying circumstances - by the soldiers of the 2nd French Armored Division as we travelled with

⁶ A Alvarez questionnaire (unless otherwise indicated, questionnaires are those organised by the author 1990-95. For details and a copy of the questionnaire see Appendix 2). Alvarez was one of 35 of the sample of US Normandy veterans who made comments in their questionnaire responses which related to post-Normandy events (the responses of the majority of the full sample of 124 Normandy veterans made no specific references to post-Normandy experiences, though many of their comments clearly related to their whole time in France). 'Questionnaire' is abbreviated to 'q' in subsequent footnotes in this chapter.

them, by the happy people of many towns and villages we passed through ... by a blind violinist in Lebourg, by a tiny boy accordionist in Cherbourg. I joined the happy people of Juilly. ... Once we reached the town square a street dance was started. We danced with men, women and little children - even each other. Some fine wine was produced, and soon everyone was having a wonderful time. About two o'clock in the morning, from sheer exhaustion, we had to call it quits.⁷

A clearly good welcome overall was experienced by a sample of 37 US World War II veterans whose experiences in northern France commenced in August or early September. 89% of them described it as good or excellent; none described a bad welcome; the balancing 11% split between neutral/equivocal and a doubtful welcome (see Figure 9).

FIGURE 9: Analysis of the overall welcome received by US soldiers whose experiences in northern France commenced in August or early September 1944 (A.A.Thomson questionnaires 1990-95; 37 responses)



An 'Excellent' welcome was described in terms such as "Great!", "overwhelming" and "very touching".⁸ The majority 'Good welcome' verdict saw many different descriptions, from "warm" and "most appreciative" to "genuine"; one veteran felt that the French

⁷ George Macintyre, *As Mac Saw It* (unpublished manuscript, US Army Military History Institute, Carlisle, Pa.), pp.334-5. Juilly is five miles east of Charles de Gaulle Airport.

⁸ e.g. T Trulson, A Cohen & C Stout qs.

were "grateful for our coming", another that they were "always cordial to us".⁹ These Americans saw the liberated people of northern France as joyous, friendly, and enthusiastic; unlike in Normandy there is no mention of them being at all reserved.¹⁰

Those who felt that the welcome was Neutral/equivocal wrote of it as being just 'OK' or 'mostly positive and pleasing' - the latter phrase carrying a hint, but no details, of some adverse reactions.¹¹ One veteran felt that while most of the French received the Americans with open arms, some had lost property and were "not happy greeting us".¹² The lone veteran reporting a Doubtful welcome wrote simply that the French "seemed to distrust us".¹³ Whilst there were several such comments amongst the Normandy sample, the observation seems decidedly out of place given the widespread reporting of overall good (even ecstatic) welcomes after the Breakout.

The 89% figure for the combination of Good and Excellent responses contrasts with 71% in the Normandy veterans' sample (see Figure 8, in Chapter 4). The Normandy and later samples are, however, similar in that, of the remaining fraction (those who did not report a good or excellent welcome), roughly two-thirds record a Neutral/equivocal experience. The significant difference is that the Normandy sample has 5% recording a Bad welcome, whereas there are none in the later group. The experience of the Normandy veterans was an overall good one, but with significant mixed elements; the experience of the later group, although a smaller sample, shows overall an unequivocally good welcome, with just a tiny fraction experiencing a doubtful reception.

That the welcome did appear to some observers to improve between Normandy and the areas after the Breakout is clear from comments by some of the Normandy sample of veterans: "Once we broke out of the beachhead and started to rapidly drive through France we were greeted enthusiastically by the French people in liberated towns and

⁹ e.g. B White, R Oden, J Haertlin, G Dane, L Bryant qs.

¹⁰ e.g. L Vaughn, E Demos, J Haertlin qs.

¹¹ D Swanson, O McHale qs.

¹² E Bredbenner q.

¹³ R Bruno q.

rural areas"; "All the way through France it was an increase in the crowds and more show of gratitude".¹⁴ Lt Col Bealke of 90th Division, who had written disparagingly to his wife about the Normans ("taking advantage of every French house I can since the French had neither the wits nor the courage to take care of their own country" - full quotation on page 77), perhaps typifies those observers who saw a clearly better welcome in August. His description of liberation and the reaction of the French is a vivid one - though still with a hint of irritation in it:

The reaction of the French people [here] is much different from the people where we were first. The first place it didn't seem to make much difference to them whether the Germans were still around or not. Here the people hate the Boche - they are so glad to see us they are almost a nuisance. Every Frenchman seems to feel it is his duty to shake hands with every American soldier he sees, and since they can't remember too well, sometimes they shake hands with the same soldier more than once - especially when they dig up some of the wine they had buried and hidden from the Germans.

As we move forward and liberate these towns they ring the church bells, run out on the streets trying to give away cider, wine, flowers, eggs and other things. Every house blossoms out with a tri-color as the Americans come in.¹⁵

A number of Normandy veterans, on the other hand, detected no significant change in the welcome: "Welcome in Normandy and Brittany was about the same"; "No [variation] - we were welcomed wherever we went".¹⁶ This would fit with the majority (71%) of the sample of Normandy veterans having recalled a good/excellent welcome. For many, the experiences of August and early September may have been different - the way that Franco-American exchanges occurred certainly was, with rapid liberations predominating rather than contacts in rear areas or in damaged towns during the fighting - but their overall feeling about the welcome was not radically different.

The speed of the American advance convinced some troops that no meaningful contact could possibly have taken place in such circumstances. Martin White of 4th Armored Division illustrated how fast the advance was, for Armored Divisions especially, by noting that amongst the help they received from the French was

¹⁴ B Edelberg & R Pocklington qs.

¹⁵ Papers of Jacob W Bealke (letters of 4 & 8 August 1944), US Army Military History Institute, Carlisle, Pa.

¹⁶ R Stalcup, A Burghardt qs.

"information and Michelin road maps from town officials - we had outrun our Army map supply!"¹⁷ One veteran reported that "most towns were just driven through and [there was] no real contact with the populace"; another felt that he had been rushed into combat and had no time for any contact with the French - and, he added, "anyway, if you can't communicate with them you can't have contacts".¹⁸ American military photographer David Englander wrote that he:

... never had a chance to get acquainted with the French because I was always on the move with front-line units. .. There was really no time to cultivate friendships. US Army units moved with enormous self-sufficiency; there was little need to contact the French for anything. .. The average US combat soldier was indifferent to the country he was passing through and its inhabitants. His preoccupation was with staying alive, doing his bit to defeat the Nazis, and while doing so, avail himself of whatever creature comforts there were (if any).¹⁹

However, George Macintyre's description of the liberation celebration in Juilly suggests that contacts were certainly possible - regardless of the language barrier. Englander himself later picked up two Frenchmen outside Paris wanting a lift into the city, and entered into a lifetime correspondence with one of them.²⁰

The brevity or relative lack of contact experienced by many American troops did not, though, mean that the welcome from the French went unnoticed or was not of interest. For the French, delighted by their liberation, were keen to make their own contact with the Americans, in whatever way (and however briefly) they could; they wanted outsiders to share their moment of triumph. Thus were born some of the classic images of 1944. An engineer with 3rd Armored Division recorded how French civilians lined the streets throwing flowers and giving the troops wine and apples: "all the girls kissed us and the people cheered as we moved on - it was like a gigantic parade. .. One day an old lady kissed my shoes - they were so thankful to be liberated".²¹ A soldier in 80th Infantry Division wrote to his parents that the French were at their gates as the troops

¹⁷ M White q.

¹⁸ A Daunoras, K Reemsen qs.

¹⁹ D Englander letter to the author, 18 July 1990

²⁰ D Englander q.

²¹ Robert T Franklin memoir (pp.7 & 8), 23rd Armored Engineers, 3rd Armored Division, in US Army World War II Army Service Experiences questionnaire papers, US Army Military History Institute, Carlisle, Pa.

drove by, the older ones handing out cider, the younger ones waving French and American flags, and the girls tossing "flowers of friendship".²² Such scenes can be most strikingly seen in unique film shot in colour by Hollywood producer George Stevens (working for the US Army Signal Corps' Special Coverage Unit) - they form the August 1944 section of the compilation made by the BBC of Stevens' films (1985): *D-Day to Berlin*. Photograph 6 (see next sheet) shows a similar image: a woman presenting flowers to the crew of an American tank in appreciation for the liberation of Avranches (3 August 1944). These contacts - though offering little opportunity for conversation or building relationships - were intense, and memorable. One important side-effect of the speed of the advance was that contacts were usually too brief for serious conflicts to arise.

Contacts were brief, but this did not mean that the American soldiers by definition did not think about them. A Tank Battalion's combat history, written in diary format, contains an observation of conversation on a day off for tank maintenance in late August:

25th August 1944: Same old stuff, up in the morning, chow of 'B' rations, work on the vehicles, chew over some rumors. We talk about some of the battered French towns we have gone through and how French people tossed flowers at us and how we drank their cognac. In turn a few 'B' rations were tossed to them.²³

Not only does this show how the experience was not an unthinking one, it also demonstrates that the area of the summer advances did have its share of war damage. This is significant because the lower level of destruction in the areas being liberated in August and early-September was believed by some of those who felt that the welcome improved significantly between Normandy and the rest of the country to offer an explanation for that improvement. An engineer attached to V Corps felt that the welcome "became overwhelming after the breakthrough when we entered towns that had not been destroyed".²⁴ A member of SHAEF's G5 Section described leaving Normandy behind:

²² *ibid.* 15 August letter from 2nd Lt. Leonard J Stephan, 80 Infantry Division

²³ *ibid.* Combat History, Co. B, 702nd Tank Battalion, 80th Infantry Division

²⁴ J Miller q.



PHOTOGRAPH 6: Flowers for the liberators - appreciation for the liberation of Avranches (3 August 1944)

There was no longer a battle-line, only an indefinite area of movement. We began to move more often and in longer jumps between camping places. We had definitely left the Norman countryside. ... The people in northern France were very friendly, which was generally true in areas relatively untouched by war.²⁵

And Max Hastings writes in *Victory in Europe*:

As Allied columns rumbled east through France, they left behind the sullen Norman peasants embittered that their homes and farms had been made a battlefield, and entered towns and villages unscarred by war, where girls hurled flowers at every tank, and euphoric citizens mobbed and cheered each passing unit.²⁶

Hastings' observation is clearly exaggerated, in two ways. Firstly, whilst many in Normandy were resentful at war damage, not all who were affected were 'embittered' - some were understanding where the military necessity had been clear (as discussed in chapter 4). Secondly, by no means all the towns and villages beyond Normandy were untouched by war. Whilst many communities did escape unscathed, it is important to note that there was war damage in almost every département in France (seventy-four out of the total of ninety départements, compared to thirteen in World War I).²⁷ Damage was from Allied air attacks, Resistance sabotage, or artillery or small-arms fire. A quarter of all buildings in France were destroyed (compared to 9% in World War I).²⁸ Allied air attacks in particular were as much a source of concern and some resentment beyond Normandy as they had been there. The destruction and loss of life from them was considerable: in the main church in Beaugency (département of Loiret) there is a striking memorial to the fifty-five residents killed during Allied bombing of the town's bridge over the River Loire - groupings of four or five with the same surname suggesting members of one family wiped out. US 12th Army Group's Psychological Warfare Division reported discussion with the mayor of the city of Laval to the effect that "some of the bombing of [Laval], which he terms 'blind and brutal', may have

²⁵ Payne-Templeton memoirs June 1943 - July 1945 (unpublished manuscript, US Army Military History Institute, Carlisle, Pa.), pp. 31 & 33

²⁶ Max Hastings, *Victory in Europe* (London, 1985), p.61

²⁷ J-P Rioux, *The Fourth Republic* (Cambridge 1987), p.18. There are ninety-five départements today, the number having been increased by sub-division of the départements in the Ile-de-France region in the administrative reorganisation of 1965.

²⁸ *ibid.*

affected the population"; however, the mayor felt that "these effects have worn off quickly".²⁹ Similarly, First Army reported that "despite the destruction of houses and non-military buildings in the bombardment, the civilian populations of .. Pontorson [west of Pontaubault] and other towns .. warmly welcomed the Allied troops on their arrival".³⁰ However, in Rennes the Département Secretary of the CGT union (Confédération Générale du Travail) told Third Army's Psychological Warfare Division that the bombings had been detrimental to American prestige; whilst it was fully realised that bombing of military objectives was a vital necessity, "it was felt that insufficient precautions were taken to protect French lives".³¹

Despite such feelings, it is clear that on balance more communities had escaped unscathed in the territories liberated in August and early September than had done so in Normandy. Where great damage was caused, feelings could run as high in the newly liberated areas as in Normandy, but there were fewer such problems. In fact, the Americans found a fairly widespread optimism among the French, based on a belief that a corner had been turned in the war. Third Army's Psychological Warfare Division, for example, reported from Sées (north of Le Mans) about "the enthusiastic reception still being exhibited to the passing troops" three days after liberation - and added "the people ... have every confidence in early victory".³² First Army felt that the Allied victories had strengthened public confidence that "the enemy has been driven out for good and that all of France will soon be liberated".³³ An additional factor contributing to rising civilian morale was the appearance in battle of the French 2nd Armored Division; headed by General Leclerc, it fought as part of the American V Corps in clearing the Falaise Pocket, then took a lead rôle in the liberation of Paris. These feelings of optimism must be borne in mind when considering relations between the French and the Americans at

²⁹ Report from Psychological Warfare Division, 12th US Army Group, on Conditions in the City of Laval, 15 August 1944; file 494-P, ETO Historical Division; Records of US Theaters of War, Record Group 332; National Archives, Washington DC

³⁰ US First Army Civil Affairs Summary 4 August 1944; fFile 101-5; Records of the Adjutant-General's Office, Record Group 407; National Archives, Washington DC

³¹ 25 August interview with M Geffroy, Département Secretary CGT, Rennes, Psychological Warfare Division, US Third Army; file 494-P, ETO Historical Division; Records of US Theaters of War, Record Group 332; National Archives, Washington DC

³² *ibid.* Opinion sampling in Sées area, 17 August 1944

³³ US First Army Civil Affairs Summary 4 August 1944. File 101-5; Records of the Adjutant-General's Office, Record Group 407; National Archives, Washington DC

this time: naturally it was easier for them to get along well when both sides hoped and felt that the war might end before too long.

One indication of a very good welcome overall is the way that several aspects of the sweep across northern France suggest a healthy mutual respect between the French people and the American troops. French respect for the Americans is apparent not just from their reported behaviour when their communities were liberated, but from comments reported by the Psychological Warfare Divisions of US 12th Army Group and Third Army. The Rennes President of the Comité Départemental de Libération told one Division that the population was extremely impressed by the rapid American advance, "and naturally full of enthusiasm for the US soldier".³⁴ The French were impressed by the amount and variety of war materiel that the Americans brought: one Division reported from Le Mans how "the prodigious amounts of war materiel which flow almost uninterruptedly over the streets of Le Mans call forth no end of admiration at the power of the United States. 'Now we can see why we had to wait so long for the landings' is a frequent comment".³⁵ They reported that the democratic relationship between officers and men was another item which impressed the French.³⁶

Even some radical sectors of French society appear to have respected the Americans. In Le Mans a Communist Party article pointed out that "contrary to the allegations of Vichy the Anglo-American troops have been hailed with enthusiasm wherever they have brought liberation".³⁷ Whilst the role of the Communist Party and how its leaders saw the Americans in France will be looked at more closely in Chapter 6, this quotation is interesting as a demonstration of how the Communists and the Allies had common ground not just in evicting the Germans but in discrediting the Vichy regime. It

³⁴ Interview with M Kerambrun, 29 August 1944, Psychological Warfare Division, US Third Army; file 494-P, ETO Historical Division; Records of US Theaters of War, Record Group 332; National Archives, Washington DC

³⁵ *ibid.* 29 August Report on Situation in Le Mans, Psychological Warfare Division, 12th US Army Group, on Conditions in the City of Laval, 15 August 1944

³⁶ *ibid.*

³⁷ *ibid.*

was quite in order for Communist Party members to show their enthusiasm and respect for the liberating American troops.

French children were particularly impressed by the Americans. One who was just five years old at the time recalled the liberation of his village west of Reims on 29 August 1944, contrasting the last memories of German occupation with the generosity of the Americans. As the Germans retreated, the population took refuge in one of the huge champagne cellars near the River Marne - they could hear the detonations of the charges that the Germans had placed on the bridges over the river and the nearby canal:

People in the cellar began to name the bridges as they were blown up; at the third boom I fell asleep. The next thing I remember is, now outside the cellar, watching the first American soldiers, in full battle gear, their rifles slung over their shoulders, walking down the street, one file on each side... Everyone was cheering and waving, and all of a sudden a wrapped cube of sugar thrown by a passing GI landed in my hands. No German soldier had ever done that to me! After the soldiers on foot came the tanks and combat engineers, and for me more sweets than I had ever known - chewing gum, oranges, candy and crackers - crackers, which I savoured as cookies.

At my young age I did not fully comprehend the meaning of all these events. However, as far as the American liberators were concerned, my young mind was impressed by their generosity - and by their efficiency, as they had in no time [built] two bridges over the canal and the Marne.³⁸

American respect for the French is clear in reported comments concerning several areas: the FFI; assistance from civilians; and the manner in which the Americans saw the treatment of collaborators as a purely French affair, despite some qualms.

The FFI feature large in American accounts. Of the sample of US veterans whose experiences in France commenced in August and early September 1944, half of those who recalled receiving help from the French report that such help came from the FFI. A few were sceptical of the help, because of the amateur nature of the FFI: for example, one felt that the FFI's help was limited because of their lack of training.³⁹ Another wrote

³⁸ Jean V Poulard, Speech to Indiana P.O.W. Convention, 17 June 1988 (unpublished; sent to the author under cover of letter of 16 October 1990 - Poulard was at that time Professor of Political Science at Indiana University Northwest, Gary, Ind.. Two of his sisters had married American GIs, and their influence had led him to move to the US in adult life)

³⁹ A Dodds q.

ambiguously that "they attempted to be helpful".⁴⁰ But the G5 section of 80th Infantry Division were quite clear about the value of the FFI in its area of operations in early September:

All during the period from 7 September on we were getting considerable intelligence through FFI men from Millery who were crossing the river [Moselle] at night with data from workers used by Germans during day. This information was very helpful in preparing for and making crossing of Moselle River. Several [of their] men .. were killed whilst in [our] service.⁴¹

First Army reported that in the areas being reached in August the FFI were better organised and under more competent leadership than in Normandy.⁴² Two weeks later they were full of praise - and admiring of the FFI's resourcefulness:

The FFI did a magnificent job of backing up the gendarmes and the municipal police, guarding vital points and military stores, directing traffic, establishing information points, apprehending collaborationists and German soldiers, as well as assisting in the recruiting of the French Army.

There were, of course, numerous cases of their seizing enemy vehicles and supplies, especially gasoline and oil, and quickly converting them on the spot to their own use rather instead of formally turning the materiel over to US control. US Supply services, however, were swamped with handling equipment over-run in the advance and thus the conduct of the FFI in many cases actually worked out to the benefit of all concerned.⁴³

In many cases French civilians, not overtly connected to the FFI, provided military assistance; this again increased American gratitude and respect. 7th Armored Division reported that civilians had reported the location of a minefield on the road to Dreux, and also the presence of 100 Germans 3 kilometers north of the city; nearby some civilians had five Germans hemmed up in a farm.⁴⁴ In Le Mans only one of the bridges over the River Sarthe was intact -

.. and that one was saved by the action of a civilian named M Gabriel Bodereau who, in the face of enemy fire, cut the fuses on the explosives the Germans had placed against the bridge and saved it from destruction, thus enabling the American tank columns to enter the city much earlier that would [otherwise]

⁴⁰ Martin F Loughlin memoir (p.1 of the chapter headed 'Moselle'; the chapters are not numbered, and the pagination starts anew in each chapter), 80th Infantry Division, in US Army World War II Army Service Experiences questionnaire papers, US Army Military History Institute, Carlisle, Pa.

⁴¹ Civil Affairs Section 80th Infantry Division report for September 1944; file 380-5.0; Records of the Adjutant-General's Office, Record Group 407; National Archives, Washington DC

⁴² *Ibid.* 24 August 1944 Civil Affairs Summary, US First Army; file 101-5

⁴³ *Ibid.* 7 September 1944 Civil Affairs Summary, US First Army

⁴⁴ *Ibid.* Civil Affairs report from Combat Command A of 7th Armored Division; file 607-5.

have been possible. The Commanding Officer .. recommended this civilian for an American Army Decoration.⁴⁵

American troops respected the French right to deal with collaborators as they saw fit, despite some qualms at what they saw. Some troops comment disapprovingly of the brutality involved in some of the methods that the French employed, but none of them talk of interfering, or trying to. One remembered: "The FFI shaved women's heads and tortured some of the men. We ignored it and looked the other way".⁴⁶ George Macintyre described what happened in the village of Juilly the morning after the liberation celebration that he had taken part in, believing that he and his colleagues had been ordered not to intervene:

The following morning I was to see [the villagers] in a different frame of mind. .. The people knew who [the collaborators] were and when the enemy was gone they took measures against them. If they were men, they were beaten until they were unconscious, or killed by gunfire on the spot. If they were women, they were stripped to the skin, their hair was clipped to the scalp, and their bodies painted with red swastikas. As often as not they were paraded from place to place and exhibited like so many beasts of the jungle. We had been ordered to stay clear and let the French people take care of the collaborators in their own way. Not apathetically, we stood by and obeyed our orders.⁴⁷

Despite these reported orders, twenty miles further north Macintyre's Division found itself in the middle of a debate amongst the French over the treatment of ten alleged collaborators in Nanteuil-le-Haudoin - including the mayor. When the population "threatened to molest the alleged collaborationists and take the law into their own hands", the Division's Senior Civil Affairs Officer conferred with the Acting Mayor, the Chief of the local FFI and the Chief of the Gendarmerie regarding how to restore order.⁴⁸ He arranged for the Division Commander, General Barton, to address the population, following which they dispersed and the collaborators were placed in the joint custody of the Gendarmes and the Division's Military Police.⁴⁹ The record is not clear who had asked for the Division to be involved, but it would appear to be a case of French officials seeking American help to defuse potential lawlessness. As such, it would be a

⁴⁵ *ibid.* XV Corps Civil Affairs report for period 31 July to 31 August 1944; file 215-5.2

⁴⁶ C Henne q.

⁴⁷ Macintyre, *As Mac Saw It*, pp. 334-5

⁴⁸ 4th Infantry Division Periodic Civil Affairs Report, 30 August 1944; file 205-5.1; Records of the Adjutant-General's Office, Record Group 407; National Archives, Washington DC

⁴⁹ *ibid.*

demonstration of the mutual respect that the welcome during the sweep across France generated: the Americans wanting to leave collaboration issues to the French, but the French wanting help in a particular instance, from forces that they felt they could trust.

The six weeks of the sweep across northern France was but a small fraction (14%) of the eleven months between D-Day and VE Day. However, this brief period - almost an interlude - represented a high point in Franco-American amity and respect. Martin Loughlin of 80th Infantry Division wrote of the end of August that "outside of Argentan the war so far had been a veritable picnic. No opposition; cheering and grateful French. Wine, bread and fruit as the Division, completely motorised, zoomed through central France". But overstretched supply lines and surprisingly strong German residual strength meant that the sweep could not and did not last. After passing through Verdun, Martin Loughlin noted: "The halcyon days were over. Resistance increased as we approached the Moselle River".⁵⁰

5.3 THE EXPERIENCES OF CIVIL AFFAIRS DETACHMENTS IN NORTHERN FRANCE: AUGUST & SEPTEMBER 1944

As they had in Normandy, Civil Affairs (CA) detachments continued to play a central rôle in relations between the US Army and the French in the whole area of the sweep across northern France. The rapidity of the sweep meant that often detachments had shorter periods in a community, making it harder to develop working relationships; however, this was more than compensated for by the much lower reported incidence of American crimes towards French civilians. Contacts between troops and civilians were usually too brief for troubles to develop.

⁵⁰ Martin F Loughlin memoir (pp. 1 & 2 of chapter headed 'Moselle'), 80th Infantry Division, in US Army World War II Army Service Experiences questionnaire papers, US Army Military History Institute, Carlisle, Pa.

The experiences and views of the CA detachments operating in August and September in the area liberated between Normandy and the Moselle River will be presented in four main areas of interest (as studied for Normandy in section 4.7):

- (i) the French welcome for, and subsequent attitudes towards, the CA detachments;
- (ii) CA detachments' respect for French autonomy;
- (iii) CA detachments' tolerance of and respect for the French people;
- (iv) their handling of American crimes towards French civilians.

5.3 (i) *The French welcome for, and subsequent attitude towards, the CA detachments*

There was no 'typical' way that a CA detachment arrived in a town and took up its duties, and therefore no typical welcome. Some detachments followed very closely behind the liberating troops. These detachments were sometimes caught up in the general French welcome for the American army, and as such had an exhilarating experience, such as that of E. Daley of detachment C2A2 in Brittany:

Our unit, consisting of nine Enlisted Men and five Officers, entered St Brieuc in a blaze of glory on 6 August 1944. Deliriously happy people lined the highway and the main street leading into town to welcome us. I was perched on top of a three-quarter-ton truck feeling very much as Roosevelt must have felt at his inauguration. .. Darkness was closing as we moved into town, but the local officials looked at us and welcomed us as they might a big league baseball star. After doing what we could during the evening, we were wined and dined at a local hotel and put to bed between sheets, a wonderful experience after having moved from one orchard to another for many weeks before.⁵¹

Some detachments arrived whilst battle was still raging. The 'welcome' in Pont-à-Mousson, on the Moselle River north of Nancy, where German resistance was growing fierce (6 September), was very different to that in St Brieuc:

Since the town was under German artillery fire the Detachment proceeded with caution. Leaving the jeeps and men at the edge of town, Capt. Welch (CO) and Cpl. Pinkowski proceeded on foot towards the center of town to make contact with civil authorities. Within a short time a mortar shell exploded on a roof top a

⁵¹ Detachment C2A2 6 August 1944 report; entry 617; European Civil Affairs Division papers; Records of SHAEF, Record Group 331; National Archives, Washington DC

short distance from the men showering them with debris. Upon arrival at the Hôtel de Ville, Capt. Welch contacted Major François, Chief of the FFI, who was in charge of both the military and civil situation in the town. After a brief conference with Major François, Capt. Welch ordered the detachment to set up in the Hôtel de Ville. The Detachment arrived [there] under intense artillery, mortar and machine-gun fire. Bodies of two American soldiers lay in the square, and three dead French Maquis lay before the entrance. Sgt. Werfel immediately began hanging out the American, British and French flags from the balcony. Machine-gun bullets were ricocheting off the Square during all this time.⁵²

Whilst the Pont-à-Mousson detachment's welcome had obviously been different in that there were no cheering civilians, all CA detachments shared the experience of contacting the French civilian authorities or, in their absence, the local FFI commander. All detachments received businesslike or even cordial welcomes - none recorded any hostility.

A measure of the healthy overall welcome that CA detachments received was the cooperation that they obtained from French officials. Thus, in Pont-à-Mousson the detachment noted the "complete cooperation of the French Civil Authorities as well as the local populace"; any restrictions imposed on civilians because of military need "were generally taken philosophically by the French".⁵³ The St Quentin detachment reported "civic relations with military most cordial"⁵⁴, and the Angers detachment wrote to Third Army, "cooperation splendid".⁵⁵

French respect for the detachments is plain from the fact that they invited detachments to send representatives to significant French ceremonies. Thus the detachment in Vitry-le-François (south of Châlons) was invited to the funeral of five FFI men on 4 September and to a Thanksgiving Mass on 10 September.⁵⁶ When American troops reached the areas of France where World War I had been fought, detachments found that the United States was clearly still respected for its rôle in that conflict. On 13 September the detachment in St Mihiel (on the Meuse, south of Verdun)

⁵² *ibid.* Detachment D4D2 Historical Report 5 - 30 September 1944; entry 619

⁵³ *ibid.*

⁵⁴ *ibid.* Detachment C1D1 7 September diary entry; entry 610

⁵⁵ Detachment C1C2 report of 13 August 1944 to Third Army; file 220-5.1; Records of the Adjutant-General's Office, Record Group 407; National Archives, Washington DC

⁵⁶ Detachment D5D2 War Diary September 1944; entry 619; European Civil Affairs Division papers; Records of SHAEF, Record Group 331; National Archives, Washington DC

attended a mass and small celebration to mark the 26th anniversary of the liberation of St Mihiel by American forces in World War I.⁵⁷ The Vicar of Toul brought in reference to World War I when addressing detachment D1D2 at a liberation celebration on 24 September:

Mon Capitaine, you represent here the powerful and glorious American Army. You have a special right today to our heartfelt, respectful and grateful homage. .. On Saturday September 1st American tanks entered our City of Toul. The Germans had re-crossed the River Moselle: we were free. What we all felt at that moment cannot be expressed in words. Some feelings penetrate so deeply into the depths of the soul that it would be difficult to express them. That same evening I had the honour of holding conversation with an American officer who was desirous of getting some information about the Cathedral. .. It was not my first contact with The American Army. I have very lively memories of the happenings of October 1918 when, as a soldier of the 367th Infantry Regiment, I saw the forest of Clermont-en-Argonne crowded with Allied troops on the point of taking our place in the trenches. At that time, as today, I was full of admiration for those men. .. A few days later we heard how they .. had retaken Montafaucon and St Mihiel. Only a few weeks later victory was ours! May [God's] blessings pour abundantly today and forever on the United States and France.⁵⁸

The Commissaire de la République for the Champagne region wrote in his first report to the Ministry of the Interior in Paris that relations with the CA detachments were very cordial - it was clear to him that the Commanding Officers were genuinely desirous of helping the population:

Relations with the various officers commanding these detachments are most cordial. On their part, they have declared their wish to bring the maximum help to the civilian population.⁵⁹

That relations overall were healthy is suggested by the fact that the earliest available préfectoral report, that of 11 September for the Aube département (centred on Troyes),

⁵⁷ *ibid.* Detachment D2D2 Operational Diary 13 September 1944

⁵⁸ *ibid.* Detachment D1D2 Monthly Historical Report September 1944

⁵⁹ Report of the Commissaire de la République for the départements of Marne, Haute-Marne and Aube to the Ministry of the Interior, 27 September 1944; coté F/1cIII/1222, Archives Nationales, Paris. The Ministry of the Interior requested bimonthly reports from commissaires and préfets in a circular of 20 September 1944 (referred to in, for example, 15 October 1944 report of Préfet of the Seine; coté F/1cIII/1227). "Les relations avec les divers officiers commandant ces détachments sont des plus cordiales. On constate de leur part une volonté affirmée d'apporter l'aide la plus grande à la population civile".

makes no mention of the Americans at all even though the area had been liberated by the American Army only two weeks previously.⁶⁰

5.3 (ii) CA detachments' respect for French autonomy

As in Normandy, CA detachments in northern France in August and September did not interfere in French appointments of mayors and other officials; only very rarely did they interfere when the French moved against collaborators. They did, however, make clear demands on the French when militarily necessary - for example, in providing labour, buildings to billet troops in, or help in keeping unnecessary traffic off the roads.

Detachments usually found that civil appointments were already taken care of. In Pont-à-Mousson the detachment reported uncritically how the previous mayor "was removed from office by the French because of his alleged pro-Nazi sympathies".⁶¹ John Maginnis, Commanding Officer of the detachment in Charleville-Mézières, similarly accepted the préfectoral appointment in that city. He told the Préfet that he "would look to [him] as the responsible civil authority in the Department, and would help him develop and establish that authority". The proviso of course, he pointed out, was that "actions by [the Préfet] that in any way would affect the military had to be submitted to me for approval; Civil Affairs could not recognise orders from him or higher French authority that ran counter to military requirements".⁶²

The detachment which entered Vitry-le-François on 31 August had to deal first of all with a local Comité de Libération. That the detachment respected the Comité's decisions is evident from its uncritical report of events on their entry into the town: "Proceeded on foot to the Hdq. Comité de Libération. Contacted M. le Président, who

⁶⁰ Report of the Préfet of the Aube département to the Ministry of the Interior, 11 September 1944; coté F/1cIII/1209; Archives Nationales, Paris

⁶¹ Detachment D4D2 Historical Report 5 - 30 September 1944; entry 619; European Civil Affairs Division papers; Records of SHAEF, Record Group 331; National Archives, Washington DC

⁶² both quotations from John Maginnis, *Military Government Journal* (Boston, 1971), p.110

informed me the Sous-Prefect, Mairie, and Police Chief had been removed."⁶³ However, dealing with something as unorthodox as a temporary committee was obviously a source of some concern to the Americans, for when the deposed Sous-Préfet, Mayor and his Secretary lobbied the Detachment the next day to accept their authority, the detachment commander did not refer as he might have done to the role of the Comité, but rather he sought advice from the Préfet at Châlons - geographically and hierarchically the nearest French government official:

Contacted Prefect at Châlons who advised that present administration (Comité de Libération) are to cooperate with us, and when Sous-Prefect arrives for this arrondissement he will report to us as such with necessary credentials.⁶⁴

This gave the Comité sufficient legitimacy in the detachment commander's eyes for him to tackle the deposed officials, but the entry of the previous day suggests that operationally he had been prepared to accept the Comité's actions anyway. On 4 September he first mentions a new Sous-Préfet:

[The] newly-appointed Sous-Prefect .. appears to be a very capable man. Conference in p.m. with Pres. of Comité de Libération; new Maire will be appointed in a few days; officials in other cantons in arrondissement being screened by FFI and S-P. I will receive list of loyal patriots in a few days and will then pay my respects to them.⁶⁵

Again we can see a clear acceptance that the French must have autonomy in these matters; the commander betrays no hint of any suggestion that he will wish to query the list of loyal patriots. When a newly appointed mayor started work on September 13 the commander obviously felt that this put affairs on a securer, more 'constitutional' (though he did not use the word) footing:

The Comité de Libération will no longer function and official government business will now be carried on in the usual manner. Political situation here now considerably cleared up and the operation of this Detachment will be facilitated since we can work through these officials.⁶⁶

⁶³ Detachment D5D2 War Diary September 1944 - 31 August; entry 619; European Civil Affairs Division papers; Records of SHAEF, Record Group 331; National Archives, Washington DC

⁶⁴ *ibid.* 1 September

⁶⁵ *ibid.* 4 September

⁶⁶ *ibid.* 13 September

Operationally, of course, what mattered most was having good men in post. At times this meant deciding which French officials should, if possible, be by-passed. This was not being disrespectful of French autonomy but being practical in deciding how best to get things done. Occasionally a French appointment would have an adverse effect, as the detachment in Toul found:

The Sous-Préfet of Toul, M Jean Marceau, was succeeded by M Roger de Morant upon instructions of Departmental government in Nancy. As far as this Detachment is concerned M Marceau was a very competent man and cooperated with this office wholeheartedly up to the time he was relieved. I talked with M de Morant concerning the release of M Marceau. He stated that M Marceau was being released because he had been appointed by Vichy; that M Marceau's ability was recognised, but that it was the policy of the new government to release the men who served under the Vichy government. He said M Marceau was to be given a new post in another locality.⁶⁷

In keeping with behaviour elsewhere, the Americans accepted even this appointment - but this time they had at least questioned it on the spot, if not officially. It is interesting to note the suggestion that M Marceau would turn up elsewhere - presumably as a 'new' appointment; some of these must clearly have been recycled Vichy men. Although the *SHAEF Handbook of Civil Affairs in France* specified that the Supreme Commander should "utilise the leadership of French authorities (other than Vichy)", the general thrust of the Handbook - that as much as possible should be done by the French themselves - and the practicalities of needing to have French officials to work with, meant that sometimes the Americans did indeed have to deal with ex-Vichy men.⁶⁸ The Toul record quoted above shows that they did not regard this as unacceptable; indeed, it was not difficult to rationalise that such men were quite likely relatively 'harmless' - the most hardened (and dangerous) collaborators were likely to have fled with the German forces or gone into hiding - and could almost be seen as simply civil servants. Whilst in some cases such a viewpoint would have been naïve, the American CA detachments were operating on the principle of accepting French appointments: if that included 'Vichy men', then so be it.

⁶⁷ *ibid.* Detachment D1D2 Monthly Historical Report of 5 October 1944 - 13 September
⁶⁸ *SHAEF Handbook* quoted in *Civil Affairs and Military Government organisations and operations*, p.1; Report 32 of the Reports of the ETO General Board; Records of US Theaters of War, Record Group 332; National Archives, Washington DC

The records of CA detachments show that in the political area most sensitive to the French - the handling of collaborators - detachments only interfered once. Most detachments took a decidedly 'hands-off' attitude, such as that in St. Quentin on 23 September: "French officials beginning to arrest collaborators; a marked fear of arrest noted amongst certain elements".⁶⁹ Detachment D2D2 reported without comment on 20 September:

Collaborators: a special Commission, composed of Pres. of the Tribunal Police Commissionaire at Commercy, and 2 members of National Committee of Liberation, will sit at St.Mihiel on 22 September and investigate each individual case. They will decide what future action will be taken for trial, internment or release.⁷⁰

In contrast is the 6 September journal entry of Maginnis' detachment in Charleville-Mézières. This provides the only example in the records studied of CA staff interference in French treatment of collaborators:

Information was received at this office that it was proposed to hold a court for the trial of the collaborators who would be shot immediately. We stopped this plan.⁷¹

Neither the journal, Maginnis' book, nor his background papers (held at the US Army Military History Institute) reveal where the 'information' had come from. The possibility exists that it came to the detachment in some formal or semi-formal way, from someone in authority (perhaps the préfet - or possibly a respected figure such as the curé); if so, then Maginnis might well have felt that he had to act. If it was the case that the préfet was the informer, then the overall picture would be one of detachments not interfering in French treatment of collaborators except where specifically asked to do so by the French authorities.

An undercurrent throughout Maginnis' time in Charleville-Mézières was the difficulty the préfet had in having his authority recognised by the local FFI. This could well explain Maginnis' intervention over the potential punishment of collaborators -

⁶⁹ Detachment C1D1 23 September diary entry; entry 610; European Civil Affairs Division papers; Records of SHAEF, Record Group 331; National Archives, Washington DC

⁷⁰ *ibid.* Detachment D2D2 Operational Diary 20 September 1944; entry 619

⁷¹ Maginnis, *Military Government Journal*, p.103

perhaps he was silently operating on the préfet's behalf, to ensure that the wishes of the civil authorities were followed and not those of an alternative power source. Credence is lent to this possibility - and strength given to the picture of CA detachments respecting the autonomy of those whom the French had put in positions of legitimate authority - by the clear way in which Maginnis showed the FFI that they had to respect both the US Army's military authority and the préfet's civil authority. On 9 September (four days after the liberation of the town) he conferred with the local FFI leaders:

They were operating in a little world of their own - anxious to stay independent, yet anxious to cooperate with the army. I explained, as gently as I could, the relationships among the US Army, the prefecture, and the FFI. I said that I looked to the prefect as the civil authority and that they should do the same. I told them that the military functions that they were now performing (for example, guarding warehouses, patrolling, and rounding up German prisoners) were under control of First Army and that, until such time as a regular French army command was set up in the département, they were to look to me for guidance and assistance.⁷²

However, on 23 September the FFI arrested and held the *intendant*, the man in charge of food and rationing. Maginnis had to act, since only the préfet could remove someone from this post and only the police could imprison them. He went to the FFI leaders. They had no sound reason to act against the *intendant* "other than pique, or wanting to show the prefect who is boss"; he told them that the US Army would not tolerate illegal interference with the civilian authority or economy "and would use force if necessary to prevent such action".⁷³ The man was released the same day. (One week later the *intendant* left town - "at the suggestion of the prefect"; Maginnis felt that "this indicated that [he] had really been under some cloud, or that the prefect had eased him out through fear of the FFI".)⁷⁴

As in Normandy, clear demands were made on the French when militarily necessary. These were in the areas of providing labour, providing buildings to billet troops in, or helping to keep unnecessary traffic off the roads. The demands could at times be large. Detachment D1D2 recorded billeting 9,500 troops in Toul in the period

⁷² *ibid.* p.111

⁷³ *ibid.* p.126

⁷⁴ *ibid.* p.135

5-30 September.⁷⁵ The sort of situations that could rapidly arise were illustrated in St Mihiel (a town only one-third the size of Toul) where the detachment reported the following two heavy demands for billets in a four day period:

23 September 2100 hrs: Request for billeting overnight - 30 officers and 90 enlisted men of 329th Infantry Regiment, 83rd Division, and parking facilities for 35 vehicles. Lt.Rees billeted the men and proportion of officers and all vehicles [on a] farm, the remaining officers billeted at No.11 rue de Calvaine.
26 September 1500 hrs: Captain Nace, 487th Engineer Battalion, Company B, called, asking for billets for his company - 120 personnel and 40 vehicles. He was quartered at Chateau Luriville, rue la Fontaine Rouge, St Mihiel.⁷⁶

There are no recorded instances of French refusal to meet CA detachments' demands. In some areas the French were able to take the lead. Thus in Compiègne, for example, the detachment felt that "the French authorities are adequately controlling civilian circulation so that roads and travel arteries are clear".⁷⁷ In none of the demands made of the French by CA detachments in August and September was there any lessening of respect for French autonomy, rather a continuing recognition of the paramountcy of military needs - even with the military successes underway.

5.3 (iii) CA detachments' tolerance of and respect for the French people

The records of the detachments contain many generous assessments of Frenchmen. Detachment D1C2 in Melun reported that "the Mayor, the leader of the resistance group, was an extremely able man and it was a privilege to work with him".⁷⁸ The detachments showed their respect for the French by the ways in which they tried hard to fulfill their remit of smoothing relations between the Army and the French. Maginnis hosted a meal in Charleville-Mézières on 20 September, his recalling of which makes clear the importance such gestures could have:

⁷⁵ Detachment D1D2 Monthly Historical Report dated 5 October 1944, entry for 30 September; entry 619; European Civil Affairs Division papers; Records of SHAEF, Record Group 331; National Archives, Washington DC

⁷⁶ *ibid.* Detachment D2D2 Operational Diary 23 & 26 September 1944

⁷⁷ Detachment D3B1 CA Periodic Report no.59, 2 September 1944; file 205-5.1; Records of the Adjutant-General's Office, Record Group 407; National Archives, Washington DC

⁷⁸ Detachment D1C2 Operations History p.3; entry 612; European Civil Affairs Division papers; Records of SHAEF, Record Group 331; National Archives, Washington DC

I decided that it would be nice for us to show our appreciation to the officials, both military and civilian, who had given us their confidence and cooperation in the job of getting the Department back on its feet. We decided to do it right. The party was a light buffet supper from 7.00 to 9.00, with champagne served to the forty guests throughout these hours. .. We imported two uniformed waiters from the Hotel du Nord to assist. About forty bottles of champagne and several cartons of cigarettes were consumed. .. I found out later that local citizens had been consumed with curiosity about the social customs of the Americans and British. Most of all, they seemed touched by the fact that we had even thought of making such a gesture towards them. .. The next day many of them made it a point to stop in again and express their thanks, and *L'Ardennais* published a most flattering article. The reception was undoubtedly the major thing we did to cement relations with the French while we were in Charleville.⁷⁹

Detachments noticed when the French people were able to take care of things themselves. In Pont-à-Mousson the detachment "found that the civilians were adequately taking care of the debris, clearing of streets, and felling of dangerous walls".⁸⁰ In Verdun "the people .. are making a fine effort to restore water service, clean up [the] city and restore orderly procedures in all matters".⁸¹

5.3 (iv) CA detachments' handling of American crimes towards French civilians

In contrast to the serious crimes reported in the Normandy area, when the American Army swept over northern France in August and early September it left few traces of significant trouble. The exception in the records is a report by the detachment in Chateau-Thierry (midway between Paris and Reims) of a rape:

Moryl, François: this man's wife was attacked and raped by two negro soldiers at 2230 3rd September 1944 at Essomes-sous-Marne in the man's home. The negroes knocked at the door, when he answered he was taken at the point of a gun to a nearby field, tied and left there while his wife brutally beaten and raped. This is the second report on this occurrence. This one made by the Manager of the Farm as the man involved desires to move off the farm. Manager given two 'off limits' signs for property. Incident has been reported to VII Corps Provost Marshall.⁸²

⁷⁹ Maginnis, *Military Government Journal*, p.124

⁸⁰ Detachment D4D2 Historical Report 5 - 30 September 1944; entry 619; European Civil Affairs Division papers; Records of SHAEF, Record Group 331; National Archives, Washington DC

⁸¹ Detachment D4C2 CA Initial CA Report, 4 September 1944; file 220-5.1; Records of the Adjutant-General's Office, Record Group 407; National Archives, Washington DC

⁸² Detachment D6B1 Journal 8 September 1944; entry 614; European Civil Affairs Division papers; Records of SHAEF, Record Group 331; National Archives, Washington DC

Whilst this is the lone rape report (and there are no reported murders by American troops), looting and theft do make an appearance. For example, in Vitry-le-François on 3 September a vacant house was reported as having been looted by US troops.⁸³ An incident near St Quentin, though, suggests that a cautious perspective is perhaps appropriate:

Investigated report on the taking of 450 railroad ties ['sleepers'] by American troops from Amigny station. M Deplangue (railroad agent) states that they were taken by various troops camped in nearby woods for firewood at various times. .. A neighbour stated 'if the Americans took that many, M Deplangue sold them'.⁸⁴

Theft, particularly, was common on both sides.

Despite trouble caused by American troops, however, it is clear that it did very little to damage the respect which the American Army still commanded. A striking measure of support was the fact that young Frenchmen volunteered to join. One detachment had three such requests inside two weeks. On 1 September, in Chateau-Thierry: "Youngster 15 years old requests chance to work with Americans"; he was referred to the mayor. Later the same day, "Two men request[ed] opportunity to fight with American troops. Referred to Mayor to enlist in French Army". And on 11 September, in Laon, a French boy asked to join the American Army; he was "informed that it was not quite practical at this time; recommended he see the local Gendarmerie about joining the French Army"⁸⁵ Such requests are indicative of the enthusiasm of the time, and a sign of the healthy Franco-American relations on the ground that had been engendered by the sweep across France, and the professional backup work of the CA detachments.

⁸³ *ibid.* Detachment D5D2 War Diary September 1944 - 3 September; entry 619

⁸⁴ *ibid.* Detachment C1D1 26 September diary entry: entry 610

⁸⁵ *ibid.* Detachment D6B1 Journal 1 & 11 September 1944; entry 614

5.4 THE LIBERATION OF PARIS

The Liberation of Paris on Friday 25 August 1944 was the climactic moment of France's liberation, news of which was keenly awaited by all the Allies; Henri Michel described it as having "a symbolic significance and a moral importance which aroused tremendous echoes all round the world".⁸⁶ It is important in a study of the Americans in France in 1944-45 because of its double symbolism: first, because the Parisians' ecstatic welcome for the Americans marked the high-water mark of French goodwill towards the American troops, and secondly because the manner in which a French unit was chosen to lead the attack, and the way that some American troops believed that it had performed, came later to stand as symbols of American dissatisfaction with the French. In addition, the Liberation caused many flashpoints of irritation between the Allies and de Gaulle's French Council for National Liberation (FCNL, by this time the 'Provisional Government' to nearly everyone except the United States and Britain) - however, these were mostly of concern only at senior political and military levels.

5.4 (i) Chronology

The key events in the Liberation of Paris took place over the twelve days 18 to 29 August.⁸⁷ On Friday 18 August, with news spreading across the city of the Americans' break-out from Normandy and the imminent closing of the Falaise Pocket, the Comité Parisien de Libération (with a Communist Party chairman) called for an insurrection the next day. This ran counter to the wishes of the FCNL, represented in Paris by de Gaulle's civil and military Delegates, Alexandre Parodi and Jacques Chaban-Delmas; they felt that it would put Paris and its residents at great risk. Sensing the inevitable, however, the Gaullists took the initiative and opened the insurrection by seizing the Préfecture de Police (on the Ile de la Cité) at 7.00 a.m. Saturday 19th and installing

⁸⁶ Henri Michel, *The Second World War* (London, 1975,.) p.638

⁸⁷ See M Blumenson *Breakout and Pursuit* (Washington DC, 1964) ch.24, L Collins & D Lapierre *Is Paris Burning ?* (London, 1965), and H Footitt & J Simmonds *France 1943-45* (Leicester, 1988) Ch.5

their nominee for Préfet de Police. A city-wide insurrection developed, Resistance fighters setting up barricades at key points and seizing several of the arrondissement Mairies and the Hôtel de Ville. The Germans fought back, and the Commander for the Paris Region, von Choltitz, resolved on a major attack on the rebel strongholds for the next day.

Early on the Sunday (the day that American forces first crossed the Seine, at Mantes) Swedish Consul-General Raoul Nordling arranged a temporary truce in Paris. The head of the Paris FFI, Rol Tanguy, sent his Chief of Staff on a mission to the Americans seeking immediate Allied intervention. De Gaulle flew to France from Algiers to see Eisenhower, who wanted to hold to the Allies' original plan of bypassing Paris. By Monday 21 August the truce had broken down completely. Leclerc, Commander of the French 2nd Armored Division, despatched a small reconnaissance unit towards Paris, without the Allies' permission (he was, of course, under their command; indeed, his entire division had been equipped and trained by the Americans⁸⁸). In Paris the FCNL seized each of the government ministries. Von Choltitz was under pressure to accept a Luftwaffe plan to destroy the whole of the north-eastern part of the city as a way to squash the street fighting. On the Tuesday Rol Tanguy's Chief of Staff reached General Bradley's headquarters near Laval. His description of the struggle, together with pressure that de Gaulle had put on Eisenhower (threatening in a letter that he would authorise Leclerc to enter Paris, regardless of Allied wishes), led to the two generals agreeing late that evening to send Leclerc's Division into Paris. The same day von Choltitz put off the Luftwaffe and sent a delegation to the Allies (led by Nordling's brother) to tell them to come quickly; von Choltitz was not going to surrender without a fight, but he was concerned that he could not control his own situation in Paris (particularly pressure to destroy many landmarks, already primed).

On Wednesday the French 2nd Armored Division started east. The Nordling delegation reached Bradley, who decided to prepare the American 4th Infantry Division

⁸⁸ described in Marcel Vigneras, *Rearming the French* (Washington DC, 1957)

to enter Paris if the French division got into trouble. On Thursday Liberation was expected, the French forces having set off from Rambouillet that morning; but the fighting was slow. That afternoon Bradley, frustrated, ordered the 4th Division to enter Paris from the south. Shortly after 9.00 p.m. five of Leclerc's tanks made their way through to the Hôtel de Ville and bells rang out across the city. But the full Liberation had to wait for the next day Friday 25th August, and was far from easy. Both the French 2nd Armored and the American 4th Infantry Divisions were involved: the French started to enter the city from the Bois de Boulogne and the Porte d'Orléans from about 8.30 a.m. onwards; the 4th Infantry Division entered from the south-east and reached Notre Dame around noon. Von Choltitz surrendered to Leclerc at 3.00 p.m.; de Gaulle arrived at 4.00 p.m. Leclerc's Division had lost 71 men killed, the people of Paris approximately 3,000.⁸⁹

Saturday 26 August saw De Gaulle's famous parade down the Champs Elysées followed by a service of thanksgiving in Notre Dame Cathedral, during which shots were fired. The following Tuesday, 29 August, the American 28th Infantry Division marched down the Champs Elysées in front of de Gaulle and Eisenhower in a show of strength that put the seal on the Liberation; the images of US troops marching in front of the Arc de Triomphe came to symbolise the sweep of August 1944, and the highpoint of Franco-American mutual celebration.

5.4 (ii) *The welcome*

It is common knowledge that the French and American troops entering Paris were given a truly tremendous welcome. The American 12th Army Group's Psychological Warfare Branch reported on 26 August:

⁸⁹ Blumenson, *Breakout and Pursuit*, p.614; Jean-Pierre Azéma, *From Munich to the Liberation 1938-44* (Cambridge 1984), p.205

The reception which has been given troops arriving here in the last two days probably surpasses anything ever known before. Our soldiers are actually mobbed. .. The Americans are regarded by and large as young Gods. People repeat again and again: 'We have waited for you so long' and 'Thank you, thank you for coming'.⁹⁰

Morris Wiener of 28th Infantry Division remembered:

The population in Paris during our arrival and parade the next day was something I will never forget. The people were overjoyed and we were kissed and hugged to a degree that my face swelled. It was an unbelievable experience.⁹¹

Others described the welcome as enthusiastic and genuine, and the people as "ecstatic to see us" and "fun-loving and nice".⁹² Joseph Miller, in a V Corps reconnaissance party that entered Paris on Liberation Day, felt that it was "the most emotional experience of my life".⁹³

George Macintyre, in Paris with the 4th Infantry Division, painted a word picture of some of the city's people in his memoir *As Mac Saw It*. Parts of the passage stand as testimony not just to the joyous welcome that American troops received in Paris, but to an element of awe in French interactions with American troops in the optimistic days of August and early September 1944. The passage indicates also the respect for the ordinary French people that the experience of being part of their great celebrations engendered in one American infantryman:

Memories of the people - climbing three flights of steps to see a bedridden Frenchwoman who wanted to see an American soldier before she died - how painful yet how joyful her tearful embrace - the firm handclasp of the French ex-soldier who had lost his eyes to the Gestapo - the band that played 'America' as the two of us drank a toast to freedom - the man who pulled a well-worn American dollar from his pocket and proudly showed it to me, a dollar given to him by an American soldier in World War I - 'Is it still good?', he asked... Men with broken-down work shoes, spit-polished until they shone - patched trousers with a crease that would cut frozen butter - shirts that were more

⁹⁰ 12th Army Group Psychological Warfare Branch. Paris Intelligence Report 26 August 1944; file 494-E; ETO Historical Division; Records of US Theaters of War, Record Group 332; National Archives, Washington DC

⁹¹ M Wiener quest.

⁹² J Haertlin, R Brown, E Demos qs.

⁹³ J Miller q.

starch than shirt - the ease with which all ages rode a bicycle - the joy of the children as they again, or perhaps for the first time, tasted candy and chewing gum - the sincereness of their 'bon chances' when we parted from them - how glowingly they beamed when we spoke to them in their native tongue - the elaborate ceremony the men indulged in when they lighted an American cigarette - how thankful the women were for the gift of a bar of soap or a pinch of sugar for their babies - how tenderly, yet how fiercely the younger men held our rifles when we allowed them to - if only France had had such weapons when 'La Boche' attacked them - that wonderful man Roosevelt! - When would the war end? - How old are you? - Was there much destruction in Cherbourg? Or Chartres? - Do we have much food in the United States? - Questions, questions, questions.⁹⁴

Most situations have a spoiler, an exception that proves the rule. Two veterans of the 28th Infantry Division's Paris parade recall a very ordinary welcome: "just so-so", and even "indifferent to hostile!"⁹⁵ For most Americans, though, being welcomed in Paris on Liberation Day was a peak experience. Film footage of the welcome forms one of the key sequences in George Stevens' documentary film *D-Day to Berlin*. After seeing that, one can appreciate an American captain's description that it seemed that "a physical wave of human emotion picked us up and carried us into the heart of Paris; it was like groping through a dream".⁹⁶

5.4 (iii) *Who liberated Paris ? The Liberation as a Franco-American sore point*

Late in the war, and afterwards, a significant number of American veterans came to believe that the French had been unable to liberate their capital city without the Americans. Of a sample of US veterans who were in France in 1944-45, 6% of those who were in northern France at the time of the Liberation of Paris commented to that effect in questionnaire responses, with no specific prompting (the comments came in sections on clashes with the French, or major surprises encountered by the veterans). The harshness of the comments of most of those recalling such beliefs suggests the likelihood that if a direct question concerning the relative rôles of the French and

⁹⁴ Macintyre, *As Mac Saw It*, pp. 324-6

⁹⁵ G Stevenson, R Ulmer qs. They gave no further details.

⁹⁶ Matin Blumenson, *Liberation* (Alexandria, Va. 1978), p.156

Americans in the Liberation of Paris had been put to the sample of veterans then the majority opinion might well have been negative to the French.

This negative feeling stemmed not from the broader picture - no liberation of Paris or many other French cities would have been possible without the American rôle in D-Day and the sweep across France, and there would have been no French 2nd Armored Division without American equipment or training - rather, the negative impression came from two specific decisions, taken together. Whilst some veterans emphasise one more than the other, it was the sequence of the French 2nd Armored Division being chosen to liberate Paris, followed by General Bradley's later decision to send the American 4th Infantry Division into the city (because he believed that the French were being too slow), that caused American troops to doubt French military abilities. Bradley's memorable quotation in his 1951 autobiography (*A Soldier's Story*) - that he could not wait for the French "to dance their way to Paris. .. To hell with prestige, tell the 4th to slam on in and take the liberation" - summed up the negative perceptions: the French had insisted on taking the lead, and then they were too slow.⁹⁷

Other American observers at the time, however, had been duly respectful of the French military. In observing General Leclerc on the morning of Friday 25 August, 12th Army Group's Psychological Warfare Branch wrote that "the impression was one of wonderful dignity and confidence".⁹⁸ A Psychological Warfare Unit attached to the French 2nd Armored Division reported that "the job was done quickly, efficiently and with a minimum of losses to the French".⁹⁹ And the job done by the Resistance and the people of Paris drew plaudits:

The worst enemy of the French will not be able to deny that the Parisians, armed only with small arms, a few rifles, some bottles of gasoline and an occasional sub-machine-gun, seized certain Paris strong points and held them against German tanks and armoured German units. I believe the tank score in

⁹⁷ quoted in Blumenson, *Breakout and Pursuit*, p.614

⁹⁸ 12th Army Group Psychological Warfare Branch, Report on Entry of French 2nd Armored Division into Paris, 27 August 1944; file 494-E; ETO Historical Division; Records of US Theaters of War, Record Group 332; National Archives, Washington DC

⁹⁹ *ibid.* 26 August 1944 report 'Fall of Paris' by Psychological Warfare Unit attached to French 2nd Armored Division; file 494-P

Paris is over forty destroyed by these primitive means. It is no wonder that these people are feeling their oats and want to strut for a while. .. At the same time there is a genuine surge of enthusiasm and love for the Allies. No one who has run the gauntlet of the cheering crowds with the children being held up to be kissed can doubt the sincerity of their gratitude. The one word which the population use more than any other to the Allied military is 'merci'.¹⁰⁰

However, the sending of French troops followed in rapid succession by Bradley's sending an American division hit a raw nerve with many American troops. A veteran not involved himself in the Liberation of Paris saw the 2nd French Armored Division "leave Argentan to 'liberate' Paris - they were an armed drunken rabble!".¹⁰¹ Men from two American Armored Divisions both recall standing aside to allow the French 2nd Armored Division to enter Paris first - "an apparent political decision":¹⁰²

As we approached Paris we had General de Gaulle and the Free French Armored Division [sic] following behind us. We pulled south and let de Gaulle go into Paris as a liberator for political reasons - so he could become the leader of France after the war.¹⁰³

Given the intense determination of President Roosevelt not to have de Gaulle foisted on the French people, it is clear that the Allies were not setting out to ensure that de Gaulle 'become the leader of France after the war'. Rather, the decision to send French troops to Paris had been made very early on. Blumenson writes that provision had been made for this in Allied plans in 1943: "SHAEF had agreed to include a French division on the Overlord troop list 'primarily so that there may be an important French formation present at the re-occupation of Paris'".¹⁰⁴ In another text Blumenson writes that Eisenhower had agreed to a statement of de Gaulle's that 'It must be French troops that take possession of the capital' at a meeting between the two men in Algiers on 30 December 1943.¹⁰⁵ The decision was, obviously, political, but it was not made on the spot in northern France in August 1944.

¹⁰⁰ *ibid.* SHAEF Intelligence Section, extract from 30 August 1944 Operational Report: Paris Situation; file 494-E

¹⁰¹ W Koob q.

¹⁰² R Brown (of 5th Armored Division) q.

¹⁰³ Robert Franklin memoir: 1943-45, p.7, 3rd Armored Division; in US Army World War II Army Service Experiences Questionnaires papers, US Army Military History Institute, Carlisle, Pa.

¹⁰⁴ Blumenson, *Breakout and Pursuit*, p.599

¹⁰⁵ Blumenson, *Liberation*, pp.129-30

Some of the negative memory comes from pique: 1st Infantry Division veteran Isadore Berkowitz recalled that "we were angry because our division didn't liberate Paris. We fought from Normandy to the outskirts of Paris, and they let the French have [the] honour - politics".¹⁰⁶ Another understood that the French "had demanded that their tankers would lead the attack".¹⁰⁷ Malcolm Marshall of 1st Infantry Division was more generous: "We didn't put up with local troop interference [by the French] but gave their troops opportunity where possible, such as letting French 2nd Armored Division enter Paris first".¹⁰⁸

When it comes to Leclerc's troops' performance, Bradley's crude view is what came to be remembered. A 4th Infantry Division veteran summed up: "De Gaulle wanted his troops to be first in Paris - [but] they were so drunk that we didn't wait for them but went ahead with our mission to liberate Paris".¹⁰⁹ However, Blumenson writes, "contrary to Bradley's belief, Leclerc's troops had not been merely liberating and celebrating; .. they were fighting and dying while moving slowly ahead against concentrated fire".¹¹⁰ Celebrations there were, and they are bound to have had some slowing effect, but von Choltitz had meant what he said about not surrendering easily: the south-western outskirts of Paris were the scene of a bitter fight. Bradley grew impatient because everyone was watching and waiting for the Liberation - the long wait bred frustration. As commander of US forces he had a high level of responsibility for the operation - and General Gerow, the American Corps' commander immediately above Leclerc, hit that nerve with a series of impatient messages to Bradley's headquarters. Gerow was furious because Leclerc had sent part of his forces in a more south-easterly direction than planned around the Parisian outskirts (specifically to avoid sixty tanks near Versailles) - they went across territory earmarked for 4th Infantry Division, without informing Gerow. Gerow then claimed that Leclerc was disregarding "all orders

¹⁰⁶ I Berkowitz q.

¹⁰⁷ C Harbold q.

¹⁰⁸ M Marshall q.

¹⁰⁹ R Lingert q.

¹¹⁰ Blumenson, *Liberation*, p.140

to take more aggressive action and speed up his advance"; Leclerc was unlikely to have any desire to slow the Liberation at all - an order such as Gerow's was somewhat futile therefore. However, it was promptings such as these that led Bradley - with no precise knowledge of Leclerc's progress or problems - to take his decision to send 4th Infantry Division into Paris. Footitt and Simmonds believe that Bradley's move:

was not a political decision, but a result of military intelligence that indicated that an early arrival by strong American forces could forestall the destruction of Paris and disrupt the retreat by the 26th and 27th Panzer Divisions through the city.¹¹¹

It is unclear whether this is a reference to the arrival of the Nordling delegation on Wednesday 23 August which caused Bradley to order that 4th Infantry Division be prepared for a possible move on Paris, or to the actual decision on Thursday 24th to send them in. If it is to the latter, then what was being called for was simply a bigger show of force, regardless of the performance of the force already being sent; an American force was being readied anyway, so it was that force that would have to go in.

The generally negative memory held of these incidents is shown by a strange recollection of a veteran from 30th Infantry Division, which passed just north of the city: "Paris had to be cleared out of German saboteurs and the fighting stopped with German personnel in and out of uniform before General de Gaulle consented to enter Paris for the celebration of liberation".¹¹² This is clearly at odds with what eyewitness accounts and newsreels show of de Gaulle's courage under fire at Notre Dame. It can only be explained by a general climate, amongst American troops, of some contempt for the French military. It is a short step from such 'memories' to almost dismissing the French involvement in the liberation of Paris altogether. 4th Infantry Division's operations were confined to the part of Paris east of Notre Dame - only one-third of the city; 28th Infantry Division's parade down the Champs Elysées left a different

¹¹¹ Footitt & Simmonds, *France 1943-45* (Leicester, 1988), p.139

¹¹² S Ladin q.

impression though. In fact, not only had 28th Division not been involved in the city's liberation, but they then marched straight out of the city and 'back to the war'.¹¹³

5.5 THE INVASION OF SOUTHERN FRANCE

The experience of the invasion of southern France and the campaign northwards to Burgundy and Franche-Comté (see Map 12) had similarities to the sweep across northern France in that it was rapid, covered regions less badly damaged than Normandy had been, and took place at a time of great optimism. However, in southern France not only was the advance even more rapid than in the north (approximately the same distance was covered in four weeks, rather than six), but the number of American troops was proportionately less due to the strong rôle played by the French military: the period up to 11 September involved four American divisions, including the division-size 1st Airborne Task Force, but the French contribution built up to eight divisions.¹¹⁴ In particular, the civil affairs (CA) operation was much sparser compared with that in the north: it involved approximately 135 officers¹¹⁵, compared to some 1,400 in northern France.¹¹⁶ Instead of CA detachments for each town, division- and corps-level CA staff played the key rôle, along with French Liaison Officers - representatives of the French Committee for National Liberation. Another significant difference in the south is that the entire south-west of France was liberated without any Allied troops - in only half of the south were there any American troops therefore.

This section looks at the overall welcome, help received from the FFI and civilians, and Civil Affairs in southern France.

¹¹³ Blumenson *Breakout and Pursuit*, p.615

¹¹⁴ Clarke & Smith, *Riviera to the Rhine*, p.26

¹¹⁵ 12 October 1944 letter from Chief Civil Affairs Officer, Seventh Army, quoted in H Coles & A Weinberg, *Civil Affairs: Soldiers Become Governors* (Washington DC, 1964), p. 790

¹¹⁶ Report 32 of the Reports of the ETO General Board *Civil Affairs and Military Government Organisations and Operations*, p.108, shows that fourteen of European Civil Affairs Division's twenty-seven Companies operated in France; ECAD had approximately 2,700 officers in total. Records of US Theaters of War, Record Group 332; National Archives, Washington DC

5.5 (i) *The welcome in southern France*

The overall welcome accorded the American troops was regarded as very healthy, with accounts often including descriptions of joyous townspeople cheering American troops and plying them with food and drink - as in the sweep across the north. Paul Cervone of 45th Infantry Division recalled that when they landed at Ste Maxime, "we were greeted by the French people as liberators - cheers, wine. We were impressed and happy to see them and their joy at being freed from the 'Boche'.¹¹⁷ His division's unofficial history was quite clear about the welcome:

From the first day the Division met friendly cooperation from civilians. This was their Liberation Day, the day they had awaited for years to see. Americans were not new to most of these Frenchmen for this sector of the coast which is part of the 'Côte d'Or' [sic.] had been vacation land for many American and British people. The civilians were eager to tell what they could about the 'already defeated' Boches and were anxious to cheer the invading forces on against the common retreating enemy.¹¹⁸

A small sample of sixteen US veterans of the campaign in southern France (one from SHAEF and fifteen from 45th Infantry Division) showed all of them recalling a good or excellent overall welcome (see Figure 10). Whilst difficult to categorise their brief descriptions, the standard of welcome remembered by four of the veterans could be classified as 'Excellent': for example, "Very sincere and cordial; very warm"; "[I] loved it!"¹¹⁹ The remainder described a 'Good' welcome, using phrases such as "They seemed fond of us", "We were most welcome" - and just plain "Good".¹²⁰ None in this sample had any doubts about the welcome. Just one used the word 'reserved' to describe the people - and that was in a list of complimentary adjectives: "Proud. Pleasant. Friendly. Reserved".¹²¹

¹¹⁷ P Cervone q.

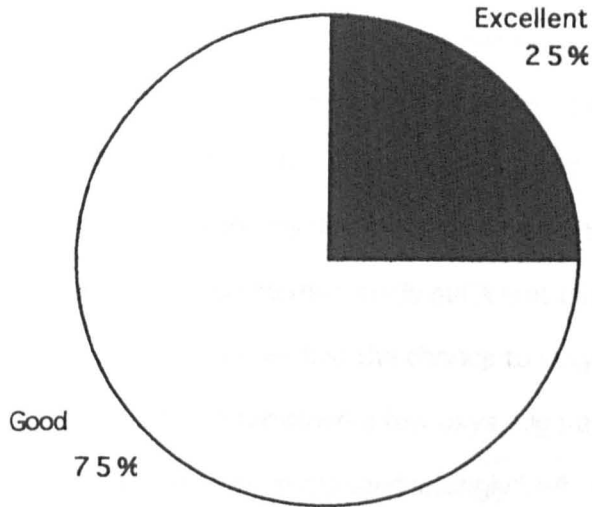
¹¹⁸ Unofficial history of 45th Infantry Division operations, p.93; quoted in H Wells quest. Confusion between the Côte d'Azur, where the landings took place, and the Côte d'Or - not a 'coast' at all but the name of the wine-growing slopes of Burgundy - was common (and understandable!).

¹¹⁹ G Madden, M Thrasher qs.

¹²⁰ L Wims, J Mulhall, E Shaw qs.

¹²¹ F McCue q.

FIGURE 10: Analysis of the overall welcome received by US soldiers in southern France (A.A.Thomson questionnaires 1995; 16 responses)



Ten of the sixteen recalled their actual first contact with the French. For half of these men it was limited chatting with a handful of civilians: talking to civilians "as best we could - mostly hand gestures"; meeting French girls and a young man gathering up parachutes at the drop zone inland from Ste Maxime.¹²² For three of the men their first contact was with the FFI. The experience of one of them illustrates how this could be both melodramatic and yet limited because of the language barrier. Two Americans had captured nine Germans, and were not sure what to do next:

"Anyone speak English?" I asked. My question was greeted with silence. While we were contemplating our next move, other men came out of the woods and approached. They were armed but not in uniform. [We] were at a disadvantage but did not lower our carbines.

One of the men moved forward and removed his jacket. On his left sleeve he wore an armband with an American flag. It was identical to our own. "Vos amis", he said. "FFI".

... Later .. we shared our cigarettes with our newfound French friends and tried to visit. But my high school French was sadly lacking and we soon lapsed into naps.¹²³

¹²² J Piazza, F McCue qs.

¹²³ Marvin Thrasher memoir (p.3), in US Army World War II Army Service Experience questionnaires papers, US Army Military History Institute, Carlisle, Pa.

Giving the lie to any perception that the campaign in southern France might have been 'easy' (for troops or civilians), James Bird of 45th Infantry Division noted that the first French person he saw was a teenage girl lying in a street in Ste Maxime with her back blown out.¹²⁴ He also pointed out that "in our rush through France we had very little contact with French people" - recalling the question over the sweep in northern France as to whether the speed of advance ruled out meaningful contact.¹²⁵ Bird was in the division's 160th Field Artillery Battalion - the only other man from that Battalion in the sample of southern France veterans makes no specific comment about the amount of contact. But in other Field Artillery Battalions some men made sufficient contact to share and exchange things with the French - where they had the chance to stay put for more than a day: "in areas where our gun position remained a few days, cigarettes, soap, chocolate, coffee, eggs, bread and wine were shared, exchanged willingly".¹²⁶ Men from the division's 157th Regiment got even closer to the French: "We dined and slept in their homes; met some lovely families who treated me as a son or father"; "Met a lot of French families and they helped us and invited us into their homes for meals and wine".¹²⁷

It is clear that many French were making an effort to be polite to the Americans. Some late arrivals to the campaign, landing directly in Marseille on 1 September, struck lucky with this. At Sunday mass three of them were invited to the home of the mayor of Marseille by his wife, "who wanted to show a good example to the French; she spoke beautiful English and was quite charming".¹²⁸ As in northern France, contacts may have been brief, but for many Americans they were memorable. The French were keen to share their moment of triumph. Optimism was in the air, and both French and Americans hoped and felt that the war might be over before too long.

¹²⁴ J Bird q.

¹²⁵ *ibid.*

¹²⁶ F McCue q.

¹²⁷ P Cervone, M Shirk qs

¹²⁸ D Macdonald q. This was probably the wife of Gaston Deferre, newly-appointed mayor, if he had taken office by Sunday 3 September (he was in post by the time de Gaulle visited on 15 September); Deferre went on to a career in national politics, running for President against Pompidou in 1969, and serving as Defence Minister in the early 1980's.

5.5 (ii) *Help from the FFI and civilians*

Contacts with the FFI were an important link between the French and the Americans in southern France. The FFI were strong in the region, and they impressed the Americans. This is brought out in the US Army's ETO (European Theater of Operations) history of operations in the south:

The invaluable support of French partisans is a matter of record. 143rd Infantry Regiment [part of 36th Infantry Division], for example, in its journal account of the march up [to] Grenoble .. declares, 'In this area FFI forces were strong. Passage through the mountain river gorges would have been impossible for our motor convoys without the flank protection of the FFI'. .. According to 142nd Regiment, 'Prisoners of War admitted being constantly harassed [by the FFI]. .. The invasion of southern France had struck those areas where partisans and underground had been most effective.'¹²⁹

In southern France the FFI had evolved into a large and effective force. It was estimated that by 15 August 1944 they could muster approximately 75,000 men (but only about one-third of them armed); Clarke & Smith note that on 7 August the German commander in the south reported that the FFI "no longer constituted a mere terrorist movement, but had evolved into an organised army at his rear".¹³⁰

Men of 45th Infantry Division recalled that FFI troops joined their unit (specifically 157th Regiment) and fought alongside the American troops. They were respected: "[They] remained with us to Munich. Very good soldiers, they remain on our Association roster, and visit each year during reunions".¹³¹ Whilst highly respected, though, the FFI were far from docile partners for the Americans. The blend of amateurishness and daring that gave them agility and surprise caused them to chafe at the restraints a large military organisation such as the American Army imposed. Men of 45th Infantry Division recalled that the FFI "always wanted us to dash off and engage

¹²⁹ *Invasion of Southern France*, Office of ETO Historian, p.251-2; file 607; ETO Historical Division; Records of US Theaters of War, Record Group 332; National Archives, Washington DC

¹³⁰ Clarke & Smith, *Riviera to the Rhine*, pp. 42 & 96

¹³¹ C Smith q.

various large forces of Germans; we had enough German troops to oppose us already".¹³²

Harold Wells summed up the blend of respect and frustration:

We understood the position of the FFI and respected their position. We were glad for their help but there were times when they resented our authority and would go ahead on their own. As I remember one or two times when we were endangered by their actions, we were able to work with them and neither party was upset.¹³³

The 45th Infantry Division unofficial history concluded that the FFI "contributed substantially to intelligence and to the actual capture of enemy soldiers and materiel".¹³⁴

As in the sweep across northern France, American troops were impressed by civilian assistance in the fighting. There are no suggestions of a sullen, unhelpful population. On the contrary, the Americans "received useful information and help from civilians and officials."¹³⁵ 36th Infantry Division reported one such instance of help:

After moving off the beachhead [towards Frejus], we came to what seemed to be a country club. .. We decided to go in and investigate it more thoroughly. As [we] entered the gate a woman came out and stated that she had fifteen German soldiers disarmed and locked in her garage. .. They had stopped in the house, and in some way or other she had disarmed them and locked them up.¹³⁶

Not all was plain sailing of course. At times the Americans experienced frustration with the French way of doing things, particularly with the less distinguished elements in French society. American attempts to organise the flow of civilian traffic over Lyon's only two surviving bridges (21 out of its 23 bridges having been destroyed by the Germans) brought out the worst in some of the French:

The average time to get from one side to the other was two-and-a-half hours; in some instances it ran to six hours. Lt Col Hay, Senior Regional Liaison Officer at Lyon, worked desperately in conjunction with the civilian police to arrange traffic control plans. Unfortunately, the police were none too efficient and there were no MPs available for duty. Col Hay and an assistant had to go on the bridge and direct traffic themselves. Their problems were made more acute

¹³² L Wims q.

¹³³ HG(!) Wells q.

¹³⁴ Unofficial history of 45th Infantry Division, p.93, quoted in HG Wells q.

¹³⁵ P Cervone q.

¹³⁶ *Invasion of Southern France*, Office of ETO Historian, p.253; file 607; ETO Historical Division; Records of US Theaters of War, Record Group 332; National Archives, Washington DC

by irresponsible FFI members who insisted on driving the wrong way in the one-way traffic lane and even went so far as to threaten the American officers with guns to force their way through.¹³⁷

In another example, the serious shortage of labour in the ports left the Americans trying to unload supplies with poor quality workers - ones who, despite the critical need to shift supplies to hungry parts of southern France, were not prepared to give the over-stretched American port officers the benefit of the doubt. The American record reveals the frustrations that resulted:

Delays in the preparation of the payroll, plus misunderstandings of the pay rates followed by the Army, .. resulted in several spontaneous stoppages. These, combined with the notorious laziness of Marseille workers, their reluctance to work on Sundays and often on Mondays, too, [and] their demands for two-hour lunch periods, infuriated [port] officers who had to get ships unloaded and supplies moving.

There could be no denying the truth of the French statement that the cream of Marseille workers were prisoners of war, had been drafted for forced labor by the Germans, or had joined the FFI. The remaining number were small and markedly inefficient.¹³⁸

But these were the frustrations of outsiders, seeing how an urgent task could be done better, clashing with the least attractive elements of the indigenous population. Most reports are of widespread civilian support, shown in many ways. American officers visiting Marseille in September reported that crowds on the streets "greeted them with overwhelming friendliness".¹³⁹ The playing of the American national anthem at ceremonies for a visit by de Gaulle on 15 September had "brought hearty applause and shouts of 'Vive l'Amérique' from sections of the crowd".¹⁴⁰ Seventh Army reported that the southern press were treating the Americans in general well: each of the Marseille newspapers had printed favourable accounts of a press conference in which civil affairs policies and plans were outlined, and Nice newspapers had run grateful stories on the arrival of US food and on the demeanour of American troops in the city.¹⁴¹ (The latter

¹³⁷ From 'History of CA Operations for Southern France', SHAEF papers - quoted in Coles & Weinberg, *Civil Affairs*, p.769

¹³⁸ *ibid.* pp. 778 & 777

¹³⁹ Seventh Army CA Summary of Field Reports no.4, 17 September 1944, file 107-5; Records of the Adjutant-General's Office, Record Group 407; National Archives, Washington DC

¹⁴⁰ *ibid.*

¹⁴¹ *ibid.*

followed some weeks after a period when American troops had been at the centre of trouble in the city, which had caused serious civil affairs problems).

5.5 (iii) *Civil Affairs in southern France*

The Civil Affairs (CA) records show that the Americans were well received by the French: "first accounts from the field were unanimous in telling of the wild, sweeping enthusiasm with which the local populace was greeting its American liberators".¹⁴² They also show that the French were quick to earn the respect of the American forces. A US history of CA operations in southern France concluded that the first ten days "saw the French take control of their affairs and their government with fine competence".¹⁴³ One week after D-Day, the CA officer sent to Draguignan to help in the reorganisation of département-level administration indicated that it was "as firmly established as is possible in the circumstances"; things were going ahead "so smoothly" that he was leaving that day.¹⁴⁴ A report on French efforts to help with serious transport problems declared that "the ingenuity and initiative shown by the French officials and FFI in regard to transport are characteristic": they were reassembling trucks that had been hidden by départemental officials - "the wheels in one place, the engines in another, and the bodies in a third".¹⁴⁵

The Americans found that mayoral and other appointments were being made by the French with little difficulty. The American CA officers did not interfere with appointments. 3rd Infantry Division's experience in the thirteen towns that it had liberated in the first three days after the landings was that:

¹⁴² From 'History of CA Operations for Southern France', SHAEF papers - quoted in Coles & Weinberg, *Civil Affairs*, p.756

¹⁴³ *ibid.* p.762

¹⁴⁴ Seventh Army CA report of 22 August 1944 - quoted in Coles & Weinberg, *Civil Affairs*, p.758

¹⁴⁵ Civil Affairs Report on Liberated Areas 18-23 August 1944, SHAEF G5 files - quoted in Coles & Weinberg, *Civil Affairs*, p.775

.. in each town the FFI was well organised - no problems of replacement of public officials have arisen which were not handled by [them]. The condition of these towns is good, the people healthy and enthusiastic.¹⁴⁶

36th Infantry Division's CA officers recorded a slightly different approach in St Raphael, Fréjus and Draguignan: whilst the FFI was "completely organised and prepared to .. install a mayor and care for civilian needs", they noted that it was the division's ("very competent") French Liaison Officer who "in each case authorised the installation of the new mayor and got things started".¹⁴⁷ This was in keeping with the 'Anvil' Civil Affairs Plan which noted the intention "to rely largely on French Liaison Officers in relationships with the French Authorities".¹⁴⁸ This was in contrast to northern France where the French Liaison Officers - members of staff of the Military Mission of the French Committee for National Liberation (FCNL) - had played only a minor supporting rôle.¹⁴⁹

The key rôle played by French Liaison Officers fitted with the overall tenet of the southern France operation, described by Coles and Weinberg as being, on the CA side, "distinctive in the amount of responsibility placed on officials of the liberated territory".¹⁵⁰ This policy was felt to be appropriate given the success of CA operations in the north to date and also the greater military rôle played by the French in 'Anvil'. The slight gamble implicit in the policy was suggested after the campaign by the Operations Officer of CA HQ (established in Marseille in early September): "If the French had failed to take over their responsibilities we would have been in the soup. As it was, they proved capable and we encountered no unsurmountable difficulties".¹⁵¹

¹⁴⁶ Seventh Army Civil Affairs Report 18 August 1944; file 107-5; Records of the Adjutant-General's Office, Record Group 407; National Archives, Washington DC

¹⁴⁷ *ibid.*

¹⁴⁸ *ibid.* 'Anvil' Civil Affairs Plan, section 11

¹⁴⁹ In the north the French Liaison Officers were members of the staff of General Koenig, Chief of the FCNL Military Mission to SHAEF; in the south they were members of the staff of General Cochet, Chief of the FCNL's Military Mission to the Commanding General, US Seventh Army.

¹⁵⁰ Coles & Weinberg, *Civil Affairs*, p.751

¹⁵¹ From 'History of CA Operations for Southern France', SHAEF papers. - quoted in Coles & Weinberg, *Civil Affairs*, p.761

The thin spread of the CA operation can be seen from the fact that only two CA officers were allocated to each US Infantry Division, together with one French Liaison Officer; there were no CA detachments such as those in northern France.¹⁵² The lead Civil Affairs officer for 36th Infantry Division described operations:

The division is moving so fast that we cannot set up all towns falling into our hands. We are letting Corps [CA officers, following behind] catch the towns adjacent to our route. Our operational setup is: I remain with the division command post and move with it to settle local divisional problems. Examples: looting in St. Raphael, labor for bridges in Sisteron. The team of Lts. Justis and Broadhead pull up to the rear, setting up the town as they go along. They join me at division. .. We cannot revisit a town [once] passed.¹⁵³

'Setting up the town' usually meant checking that the FFI had installed a mayor, and that the French Liaison Officer had authorised the appointment - or, if no appointment had been made, that the French Liaison Officer had designated the mayor themselves. One exception to this norm was the experience of the CA officer with the 1st Airborne Task Force which landed behind the lines on D-Day; he did not have a French Liaison Officer with him and found in the first town he reached (Le Muy) that no mayor had been selected to replace the Vichy mayor who had fled:

Consequently, he had to take it upon himself to locate the former, pre-Vichy mayor and, in the name of [1st Airborne Task Force's Commander] General Frederick, restore him to his old post. Later, a French Liaison Officer regularised the appointment.¹⁵⁴

Seventh Army G5 Section believed that whilst French Liaison Officers were valuable because civilian officials cooperated with them "to an extent impossible with American officers", nevertheless the presence of US CA officers (albeit few in number) had been important in reassuring local officials "as to lack of selfish intentions of the Army operation, and that [the] instructions and requests of the French Liaison Officers had US Army support and approval".¹⁵⁵ In addition, Seventh Army G5 felt that the work

¹⁵² *Ibid.* p.756

¹⁵³ 36th Infantry Division Weekly Civil Affairs report, undated - quoted in Coles & Weinberg, *Civil Affairs*, p.757

¹⁵⁴ From 'History of CA Operations for Southern France', SHAEF papers. - quoted in Coles & Weinberg, *Civil Affairs*, p.756

¹⁵⁵ Seventh Army G5 report 6 November 1944 - quoted in Coles & Weinberg, *Civil Affairs*, p.791

of local officials had been made smoother and had been supported by the people because of the officials' "recognition and acceptance by the Allies through CA officers".¹⁵⁶

As in the north, the Americans respected French autonomy in the area of treatment of collaborators. 36th Infantry Division CA staff reported that the FFI were "doing a wonderful job of German collaborator and political clean-up"; G5 section of Allied Forces HQ in Algiers (the equivalent in the southern France operation to SHAEF in the north) reported without comment how a number of women had "had their hair clipped by 'young patriots'", and how "a considerable number of collaborationists have been incarcerated by Resistance groups".¹⁵⁷ However, with a concerned eye for a stable rear area, the same section records one warning to the French of the effect of possibly unwarranted arrests:

It has been called to the attention of the Chief of Staff to [General Cochet] that unwarranted arrests might lead to social unrest. He stated that he has already started screening these arrests with a view to preventing injustice, but he cannot move too quickly owing to the passions of the moment.¹⁵⁸

Whilst that warning carried no threat of interfering with French autonomy, growing unruliness amongst elements of the FFI led some in the American CA staff to wish that stronger action could be taken. Coles and Weinberg describe a "disturbing" element in the FFI - "an element found primarily among the younger members and armed civilians posing as members".¹⁵⁹ Allied Forces HQ noted that "bands of young members of the FFI have been roaming the countryside, and some have taken threatening attitudes towards civilians".¹⁶⁰ The Nice area posed particular problems. An estimated 100 summary executions and 1,000 arrests took place in the two days following Nice's liberation by the FFI on 29 August.¹⁶¹

¹⁵⁶ *ibid.*

¹⁵⁷ G5 AFHQ report 18-23 August 1944 - quoted in Coles & Weinberg, *Civil Affairs*, p.759

¹⁵⁸ *ibid.* p.760

¹⁵⁹ Coles & Weinberg, *Civil Affairs*, p.770 (footnote 10)

¹⁶⁰ G5 AFHQ report 18-23 August 1944 - quoted in Coles & Weinberg, *Civil Affairs*, p.770

¹⁶¹ Coles & Weinberg, *Civil Affairs*, p.764 (footnote 6)

On the coast, even American troops were shot at; there were five reported cases in the Marseilles region where the shots hit their targets. In mid-September one American soldier was shot through the head and killed while riding in a car, unarmed; when the two men responsible were handed over by the Americans to the Sous-Préfet at Toulon, they were eventually released; they had admitted the shooting but claimed that the occupants of the car had fired on them first.¹⁶²

The Chief of the Public Safety Branch at CA HQ, Major Russell Kennedy, felt keenly that the late arrival and small numbers of CA Public Safety officers were contributory factors in such breakdowns of law and order. His analysis of the situation at the end of September was that the number of FFI in Marseille:

had dropped to about 3,000 [from 4,500] as the original members, mostly reputable citizens, returned to their normal pursuits, leaving the undesirable elements as the great bulk of the organisation. It was at this time, having reported that the FFI in the Marseille region consisted largely of criminals and undisciplined young hoodlums and that effort was being made to secure the liquidation of the outfit, [that] I received a letter from Lt Col Mark Howe [VI Corps CA Officer] informing me that I had lost my perspective and did not understand the troubles of France.¹⁶³

His reference to "effort .. being made to secure the liquidation" of the FFI was presumably to moves being discussed at that time by the FCNL to disband the FFI and absorb it into the French Army; his tone, though, suggests a wish that such liquidation could have been effected by CA staff. This reveals an interesting split in American CA officers' attitudes towards problems in France. On one side were those such as Major Kennedy, who is on record as believing that a lesson from the operations in southern France was that "whenever the Army goes into a new area .. disturbances among the civil population, and thefts of military supplies and equipment, will be in inverse ratio to the number and efficiency of Public Safety officers present in the initial stages".¹⁶⁴ He believed that the (planned) delay in bringing Public Safety officers into southern France

¹⁶² History of Public Safety Operations in Southern France - quoted in Coles & Weinberg, *Civil Affairs*, p.771

¹⁶³ *ibid.* p.770. VI Corps formed the level above Seventh Army. The American Army hierarchy for 'Anvil' went: Allied Forces HQ, 6th Army Group, VI Corps, Seventh Army, and then the Divisions.

¹⁶⁴ *ibid.* p.795

until ten days after the initial landings had permitted "the FFI .. and other extra-legal organisations, to take control of the situation".¹⁶⁵ Major Kennedy seems to have missed the point that the FFI and the FCNL had worked in partnership (no matter how uneasily) at the time of liberation - in many towns the FFI had even appointed the mayor. Neither the Allies nor the French would have wanted CA Public Safety officers to prevent the FFI from "taking control of the situation". The presence and organisation of the FFI at the time of liberation, and its close links to the FCNL, had been beneficial to the success of the military operation; subsequent civil order problems, whilst alarming, were secondary to that basic fact.

On the other side from men such as Major Kennedy were those - such as Lt Col Howe, who felt that Kennedy had lost his perspective - who took a hands-off attitude.

The History of CA Operations for Southern France summarises this split:

The difference in viewpoint between Lt Col Howe and Major Kennedy was representative of the wide cleavage in attitude among CA personnel. Officers who served at CA HQ report that two extremes could be seen there, the one holding that 'everything the French did or didn't do was perfect and that the American Army should remain completely aloof from French affairs', and the other feeling that 'nothing that the French did was right and that an AMGOT [Allied Military Government of Occupied Territories - the Military Government regime employed by the Allies in Italy] should be established'. In as much as the policy-making officers, it is said, leaned more to the former view than the latter, CA HQ in general tended to follow a hands-off policy.¹⁶⁶

Although caricaturing the extremes, this passage makes clear that the end-result was a hands-off policy. Whilst in the long run that made for smoother Franco-American relations - by not allowing potential causes of grievance for the understandably-sensitive French to occur - it is important to realise that it was not without tensions on the American side.

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.* p.794

¹⁶⁶ From 'History of CA Operations for Southern France', SHAEF papers. - quoted in Coles & Weinberg, *Civil Affairs*, p.771

Along with unruliness, another undesirable feature that was growing in September 1944 was the black market. In southern France this grew to big business proportions. Coles and Weinberg concluded:

An estimated 20% of supplies landed at Marseille was stolen and sold by members of the armed forces and their followers; not only civil affairs supplies but also Army stocks were pilfered. At one point the theft of gasoline threatened to halt the Allied advance up the Rhône.¹⁶⁷

Both sides were guilty: many French leaped at the chance to purchase these goods. In this area, Major Kennedy's pleading the cause of too-few Public Safety officers has an indisputable logic - put (by him) in a manner that even showed the French authorities in a generous light:

The French authorities in Marseille did everything requested, and did it reasonably well, to suppress the traffic in military property, but only military police arresting military personnel for selling or trading the supplies can really suppress such traffic.¹⁶⁸

The other problems faced by CA staff in southern France centred on supplies: food shortages (critical in coastal cities, but eased by late-September), transportation problems (eased by mid-September with the unloading of more than 500 four-ton trucks, dedicated to CA use), and difficulties recruiting labour to unload supplies (only significantly eased by bringing in 28,000 Italian prisoners of war to do the job).¹⁶⁹ There were very few reports of serious crimes committed by American soldiers against French civilians. There was looting, and there were a few outbreaks of unruly behaviour by American troops. When the American 1st Airborne Task Force was assigned to the Nice area to hold off the Germans along the Italian border, trouble soon developed between the American troops and civilians in an already-tense town:

[The unit's] foxholes were only a short ride from Nice's bistros, and rough, hard-boiled paratroopers, tense and nervous from relentless days under fire, flocked to them for release .. The conduct of these soldiers was often wild and

¹⁶⁷ Coles & Weinberg, *Civil Affairs*, p.752

¹⁶⁸ History of Public Safety Operations in Southern France - quoted in Coles & Weinberg, *Civil Affairs*, p.795

¹⁶⁹ Coles & Weinberg, *Civil Affairs*, pp.773-785

unruly. Fights between them and civilians were frequent. .. The CA officers had to spend a great deal of time smoothing wounded civilian feelings.¹⁷⁰

By 6 September the situation in Nice had quieted down to such an extent that the Civil Affairs Officer was able to report that "from the operational point of view there does not seem to be any cause for alarm. Order has definitely been established, although there are a few isolated cases of looting and banditry on the part of groups of FFI".¹⁷¹

5.6 CONCLUSIONS

The six summer weeks of liberations and German collapse in northern France were a high point of Franco-American amity. Nearly nine out of ten of a sample of American troops reckoned their welcome from the French to have been good or excellent.¹⁷² Memoirs and Army records reveal excited welcomes and memorable - if brief - contacts. Above all, the speed of the American advance and a widespread optimism that the war might be over relatively soon meant that there was minimal trouble between American soldiers and the French population. This high point makes objective assessment of relations beforehand and afterwards harder; it set a very high standard for any comparisons.

The Liberation of Paris was a climax in terms of mutual goodwill. However, the memory of General Bradley ordering the 4th Infantry Division to help the French 2nd Armored Division complete the Liberation sowed a measure of contempt by some American soldiers for the French military that was unjustified; nevertheless, it played a rôle in the later decline in relations between Americans and French.

¹⁷⁰ From 'History of CA Operations for Southern France', SHAEF papers. - quoted in Coles & Weinberg, *Civil Affairs*, pp. 763-4

¹⁷¹ *ibid.* p.764

¹⁷² see Figure 9

The invasion of southern France saw the most 'hands-off' American involvement with the local French of any of the parts of France that the American Army helped to liberate. The strength and organisation of the FFI eased the Americans' path both militarily and in questions of civil affairs. The overall welcome was, as in the north, healthy and enthusiastic. Problems did develop with the unruliness of elements of the FFI, with poor behaviour by American troops in the Nice area, and with difficulties in recruiting efficient labour to unload much-needed supplies, but these were not sufficiently serious to eradicate the beneficial effect on overall Franco-American relations on the ground of the heady welcome and speedy advance of the American troops from the Riviera on 15 August to Burgundy and Franche-Comté just four weeks later.

Mid-September saw the advances from the north and the south merge, and stall. As supply lines faltered in the north, as German resistance hardened in Lorraine and Franche-Comté, and as the French people and the American troops each had to come to terms with a war that would stretch beyond Christmas 1944, relations would be put to a stern test. In Franco-American relations on the ground, the relative euphoria of August and early-September 1944 was indeed short-lived, but it can no more therefore be dismissed as an anomaly than can the huge military successes of those weeks. The big territorial gains gave the Allies credibility, freed millions of French citizens, and brought victory significantly closer; the generally heady relations between French citizens and officials and American troops added an episode to the history of Franco-American contacts to match that of Lafayette or World War I, and provided some 'fat' to live off in the lean months that were to follow.

CHAPTER 6

THE HARD WINTER OF 1944/45 AND ITS EFFECTS

The winter of 1944-45 saw a deterioration in Franco-American relations on the ground. This was first evidenced in the equivocal welcome in Alsace-Lorraine, but spread to relations across the country, and stretched well beyond the end of the winter. Whilst the deterioration was fairly severe, it needs to be seen in perspective, as a decline from an extraordinary peak of mutual goodwill in the summer of 1944.

This chapter principally covers the period from 11 September 1944 to VE Day, 8 May 1945; discussion of the deterioration in relations, however, covers a full twelve months from September 1944. Following the exhilarating sweep of the Allied armies across France in August and early September 1944, the liberation of the country was dramatically slowed down by strong German resistance in Lorraine. In the north, the fighting fronts of the British and Canadian Armies and the US First Army were near the eastern borders of Belgium and Luxembourg by mid-September; after the end of the month, the Americans and the French (the First French Army, operating as part of US 6th Army Group) were the only Allies fighting the Germans in France.

The geographical area liberated in this period was the heartland of Lorraine, the whole of Alsace, and the besieged Atlantic Coast ports (Royan, La Rochelle, St Nazaire, Lorient and Brest) and Channel Ports (Le Havre, Boulogne, Calais and Dunkirk). Brest, Le Havre, Boulogne and Calais fell in the second half of September; the others not until VE Day.

The chapter looks in turn at the geographical and chronological background to events in this period, the welcome received by the Americans in Alsace-Lorraine, Civil Affairs in Eastern France from October 1944 to early 1945 (Civil Affairs being restricted to Eastern France from October 1944 onwards as the French Provisional Government - belatedly recognised by the major Allies on 23 October 1944 - took over full responsibility for the rest of the country), and the deterioration in relations between French and Americans in the period September 1944 to September 1945.

6.1 GEOGRAPHICAL AND CHRONOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

The area of battle from 11 September 1944 onwards covered the northern half of the Franche-Comté region, the heartland of Lorraine, all of Alsace, and - for the few days that it took to clear it in mid-September - the far south-eastern corner of Champagne (see Map 13). The rivers in Franche-Comté, principally the Doubs and the Saône, flow south. The remainder of the overall area is part of the Rhine basin, dominated by the Rhine itself which forms the Franco-German border from north of Strasbourg down to the Swiss border. The two other principal rivers in the area, the Moselle and the Saar, flow north from the major physical feature: the Vosges mountains. The Vosges form the divide between Alsace to the east and Lorraine to the west. The High Vosges, with peaks of over 1,400 metres (4,500 feet), stretch from Belfort in the south to Saverne in the north. Belfort and Saverne sit in strategically important gaps - Belfort between the High Vosges and the hilly Swiss border, Saverne between the High Vosges and Low Vosges, a lesser continuation of the range northwards to the German border.

The north of the area contains two major industrial regions, based on iron ore deposits around Metz and the coalfield along the Saar river. The major cities in the area

Map 13: Alsace-Lorraine



are Strasbourg, on the Rhine, and Nancy and Metz on the Moselle. Being a border region, Alsace-Lorraine had had a Franco-German cultural mix for many centuries. All of Alsace and the northern part of Lorraine (the Moselle département, centred on Metz) had been incorporated into Germany from 1871 to 1918, and from 1940 until liberation.

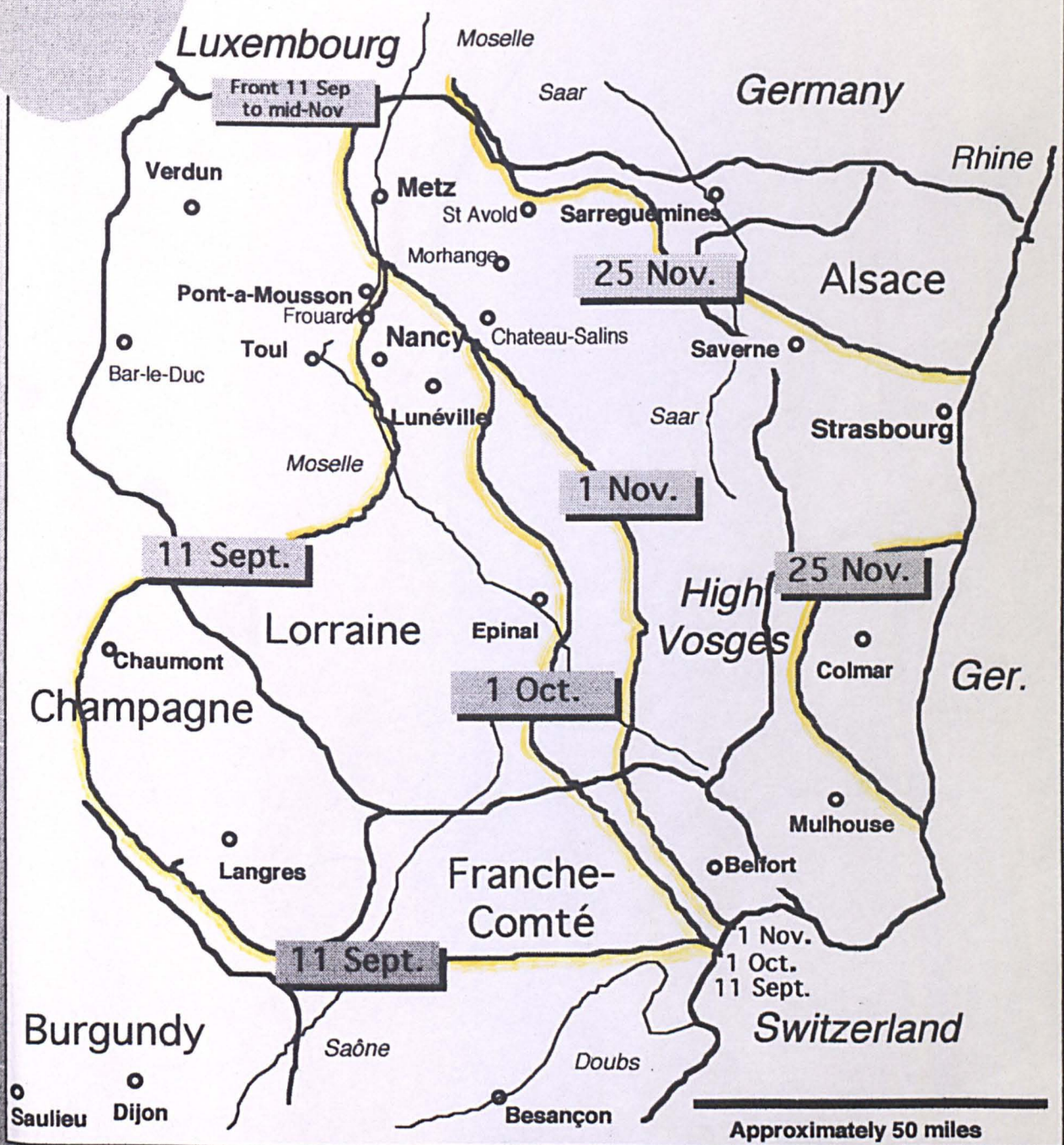
On 11 September 1944 there was a clear fighting front line in northern Lorraine, with the American Third Army (under General Patton) facing German Army Group G.¹ The front ran south from the Luxembourg border a few miles west of the Moselle river, with just two small bridgeheads held by the Americans - Pont-à-Mousson and Toul; major efforts were being centred on liberating Metz and Nancy (see Map 14). South of this area, though, the front became indistinct. There was no fighting front here, rather an approximately sixty-mile wide band in which German forces were pulling back from southern and south-west France, and reconnaissance elements of the American Third and Seventh Armies were probing from north and south. The approximate area still covered by the Germans stretched westwards in a bulge that included Chaumont and Langres.

It was reconnaissance elements from a French division with the Seventh Army, advancing from the Rhône-Saône corridor, that met troops of a Third Army division in Saulieu, west of Dijon, on 11 September. Unlike the closing of the Falaise Pocket, this meeting involved no battle; the Germans had pulled out earlier that day. A fighting front resumed north-east of Dijon, where Seventh Army were advancing northwards in force; the front line stretched eastwards to the Swiss border at a point some twenty miles short of Belfort. Within a few days an uninterrupted fighting front line had been established in France from the Luxembourg to the Swiss borders.

On 15 September Seventh Army, which had advanced from the Riviera to Lorraine, was transferred to SHAEF control from Allied Forces HQ in Algiers; this gave General

¹ Good accounts are Jeffrey Clarke & Robert Smith, *Riviera to the Rhine* (Washington DC, 1993), parts 3-5, and Charles MacDonald, *The Mighty Endeavour* (New York, 1969), chapters 21-25.

Map 14: The campaign in Alsace-Lorraine September 1944 - March 1945



Eisenhower direct control of the entire western front from Antwerp to Switzerland. To appreciate the atmosphere of mid-September 1944 one needs to recall that these were some of the busiest days in the war in Western Europe -there were still very serious threats to the Allies, but these were overlaid by a strong optimism bred by the summer's dramatic advances: on 8 September the first V2 fell on London, on the 10th the go-ahead was given for Operation 'Market-Garden' to cross the Rhine at Arnhem, and on the 11th American troops entered Germany for the first time (at Prüm, across the Belgian border). Directives issued by Eisenhower on the 15th spoke boldly about seizing the Rhine in both north (around the Ruhr) and south (between Koblenz and Mannheim, due east from the Saar Region). In Lorraine, Nancy fell on 15 September and Patton was preparing an attack on Metz and a push to the east of the Moselle - in the context of the time it was seen as likely to succeed.

The second half of September, however, brought setbacks and, consequently, a heavy dose of realism. 'Market-Garden' stalled: Arnhem (the 'bridge too far') had to be given up on 26 September. Metz was stubbornly held by the Germans, and an attempt to break out east of the Moselle was halted at Lunéville: fierce tank engagements there on 18 September successfully saw off a German counter-attack aimed at recrossing the Moselle, but had the effect of halting Patton's advance. Further south, the bulge in the front line out to Chaumont and Langres was squeezed out, but by the end of the month the front had only reached the lower reaches of the Vosges, just east of Epinal. October saw only minor advances in the valleys of the Vosges. To the north and south of the mountains, Metz and Belfort remained solidly in German hands.

A major offensive was launched in November which finally achieved the breakthroughs that had been expected in September. The French First Army, operating at the southern end of the front, broke through the Belfort Gap and reached the Rhine on 19 November; the cities of Belfort and Mulhouse both fell on 25 November. In the

north, Third Army seized Metz at last on 23 November - more than two months after the first concerted attacks. In the middle, Seventh Army broke through the Saverne Gap on 22 November and took Strasbourg the next day (Leclerc's French 2nd Armored Division, under US Seventh Army command, leading the way). Eisenhower then directed Seventh Army to turn northwards and, together with Third Army on its left flank, push the Germans back across the border that ran west from the Rhine to Luxembourg. By mid-December American troops had fought their way onto German soil; small portions of French territory remained in enemy hands all along the northern frontier, however, and there was also a large pocket of German strength around the town of Colmar, south of Strasbourg.

Two Franco-American flashpoints developed in the early weeks of 1945, over Strasbourg and Colmar. As a response to the 'Battle of the Bulge', the Germans' dramatic counter-attack in the Ardennes in mid-December, Seventh Army took over all of Third Army's front around the Saar to free Third Army forces for a push against the southern flank of the 'bulge'; this greatly stretched Seventh Army's forces and made them vulnerable to an anticipated counter-attack in Alsace. Launched on 1 January 1945, this counter-attack - Operation 'Northwind' - caused Seventh Army to execute a pre-planned fall-back to a line south-east from the Saar to the Rhine (roughly from the border north-east of Sarreguemines due south-east to the point on the Rhine that had been reached by 25 November: see Map 14). It had been intended that Strasbourg be evacuated as part of this pull-back, but de Gaulle put up vigorous resistance and Eisenhower, in the end, relented. The fact that the Americans had considered giving up such an important French city, of enormous emotional significance to the French (the key to their resumption of sovereignty in Alsace-Lorraine in 1918), caused considerable bitterness. The continued existence of the Colmar Pocket, on the other hand, caused American ill-feeling at what appeared to some to be French weakness in ejecting this last German remnant. The pocket had been left completely in French First

Army hands when Seventh Army had been directed northwards on 24 November. Attacks on Colmar had had to be suspended on 22 December, though, as part of the response to the Battle of the Bulge. Colmar was not taken until 2 February 1945, and the pocket was not completely cleared until 9 February. It was not until the American drives to the Rhine at the turn of February into March that the territory in northern Alsace that had been given up in early January was completely regained; save for the besieged ports of Dunkirk, Lorient, St Nazaire, La Rochelle and Royan, these became the last square miles of French soil to be liberated.

6.2 ALSACE-LORRAINE - THE WELCOME

Many American troops felt that the welcome was cooler in Alsace-Lorraine than elsewhere. Of the different samples of US veterans in France in World War II whose experiences have been presented in previous chapters, 15% of those who went on to serve in Alsace or Lorraine specifically commented in questionnaire responses that the welcome was different in that region. Whilst a majority did not comment, the observations of the vocal minority are to an extent borne out by Army unit records. Of nineteen veterans who did not arrive in the country until 1 October 1944 or later (whose experiences have not been considered so far in the text; they are looked at in Section 6.4 (ii)), only four served in Alsace or Lorraine; whilst their later arrival meant that most could not make a comparative judgement of the welcome, the differing welcomes that these four report show a mixed picture. Although one found the welcome "OK" and another reported that the people waved and smiled ("but looked destitute"), a third felt that it was "mainly unfriendly - due to the destruction of [their] villages".² The fourth wrote:

² M Shapiro, C Haug, S McDonnell questionnaires (unless otherwise indicated, questionnaires are those organised by the author 1990-95. For details and a copy of the questionnaire see Appendix 2). 'Questionnaire' is abbreviated to 'q' in subsequent footnotes in this chapter.

They were friendly, but nothing like [in] the first part of the war. This is based on stories, films, media reports and stories from old-timers in the outfit. Noticed when we were in Colmar area the welcome was cordial, not as friendly.³

Of the veterans whose earlier experiences have been presented previously, the specific comments regarding the welcome in Alsace-Lorraine tell of a cooler, mixed welcome: "Some not so happy with us"; "not as good"; "not so warm"; "more subdued"; "not nearly as friendly".⁴ On the other hand, John Margreiter of 7th Armored Division, who first travelled to the front lines in September to Pont-à-Mousson, felt that "the people grew much friendlier as we got closer and closer to the fighting line: i.e. the most-recently liberated were the most friendly".⁵ But others reported mistrust: Gaylord Smith of 80th Infantry Division felt that the people of Alsace-Lorraine "as a rule were cold to us Americans - we didn't know who to trust".⁶ Martin Loughlin from the same Division reported them as "at times hostile, on one occasion deadly as an Alsatian directed fire on our company positions, killing one of our men"; in his memoir he added that the "young children .. appeared to be pro-German".⁷

Army records reveal a pattern of increasing reports of an uncertain or indifferent welcome the deeper the Army progressed into Lorraine and, particularly, Alsace. From the end of November, as the Americans cleared the areas of Lorraine nearest to the German border and entered Alsace itself, reports speak of American troops' suspicions of a German-speaking population. From mid- to late-December onwards, news of the German counter-offensive in the Ardennes - and fears of a similar move in Alsace - diminished troop suspicions somewhat, perhaps due to a stronger feeling of a 'common enemy'.

³ G Bunnell q.

⁴ T Hickman, G Moore, D Oden, T Stauffacher, R Schweir qs.

⁵ J Margreiter q.

⁶ G Smith q.

⁷ M Loughlin q.; Martin Loughlin memoir (p.2 of chapter headed 'Rest Area'), 80th Infantry Division, in US Army World War II Army Service Experiences questionnaire papers, US Army Military History Institute, Carlisle, Pa.

Nancy was the first large city to be liberated in Lorraine. 12th Army Group's Psychological Warfare Branch reported a welcome to match those of the summer:

We have not encountered a happier and friendlier population in any of the liberated cities (except for Paris). .. Attentions towards our troops as a sign of appreciation are remarkable. Wherever our soldiers stop, they are swamped immediately. We were stopped on the street and thanked for being here: 'We thank you for coming. We waited a long time. Now you are here, we shall never forget this'.⁸

Twenty miles south-east of Nancy, however, SHAEF reported "a lack of enthusiasm .. on the part of the liberated population of Lunéville"; they noted that the residents "speak more German than French, and [have] much sympathy for the Germans".⁹ The allegation is not substantiated. One month later they reported:

Increasing lack of sympathy towards the Americans .. as Third Army troops approach the German border; in Arracourt and Chambrey (with German and Polish inhabitation) indifference characterises relations with American troops¹⁰

These villages, though, are only twenty miles east of Nancy - not near the border; the lack of movement in the month was clearly generating frustration that found some expression in suspicion of German-speakers. The report then declared as fact a rumour that might well have contributed to later American troop suspicions, of residents of Alsace in particular:

East of Alsace [*presumably meaning east of the Vosges Mountains, for the area east of Alsace - i.e. over the Rhine - was not of imminent concern, and was outside the scope of this report on France*], the Germans have evacuated civilians for a distance of 30 kilometers. Civil Affairs authorities report that

⁸ 12th Army Group Psychological Warfare Branch report of 20 September 1944 to Third Army; file 494-P; ETO Historical Division; Records of US Theaters of War, Record Group 332; National Archives, Washington DC

⁹ *ibid.* SHAEF Psychological Warfare Division, Extracts from CA Summaries & Reports 14-30 September 1944

¹⁰ *ibid.* SHAEF Psychological Warfare Division, Extracts from CA Summaries & Reports 2-19 October 1944

'remaining civilians are there with the approval of the enemy and hence are probably unreliable'.¹¹

Seventh Army, coming up from the south into the Vosges mountains, reported on 18 October that the attitude of the civilian population was "less friendly and demonstrative than further south".¹² They put this down to "proximity to active military operations for a longer period, and a closer association with the Germans, both economically and geographically".¹³ Three weeks later they drew a distinction between the attitude and cooperation of officials, which had been excellent, and the attitude of civilians which was "one of aloofness".¹⁴ When new areas were liberated in the next few weeks as a result of the November offensives, however, Third Army to the north reported that civilians in front line towns were "enthusiastic and welcome American troops as liberators".¹⁵ One week later they were more cautious: "Recently uncovered population not hostile towards US forces, but apathetic regarding political issues of war - chiefly concerned in security of homes and obtaining food".¹⁶ "Enthusiastic" had been replaced by "not hostile". In the middle section of the front, Seventh Army reported of the towns liberated by the November offensives that:

The liberation .. has been enthusiastically received by the vast majority of the inhabitants. Certain towns, however, are definitely indifferent, but there have been no overt acts.¹⁷

The next report in this sequence, however, is not quite so sanguine about the inhabitants' attitude. It introduces two new elements - the fact of German-speaking residents, and the effect that this (together with the relative indifference of some communities) was having on the American troops:

¹¹ *ibid.* My italics.

¹² Seventh Army Report on Civil Affairs Activities 12-18 October 1944; file 107-5; Records of Adjutant-General's Office, Record Group 407; National Archives, Washington DC

¹³ *ibid.*

¹⁴ *ibid.* Seventh Army Report on Civil Affairs Activities 2-8 November 1944, dated 9 November 1944

¹⁵ *ibid.* Third Army Civil Affairs Weekly Bulletin 16 November 1944; file 103-5.6

¹⁶ *ibid.* Third Army Civil Affairs Weekly Bulletin 23 November 1944

¹⁷ *ibid.* Seventh Army Report on Civil Affairs Activities 23-29 November 1944, dated 30 November 1944

Although, in general, the people are undemonstrative, their attitude could be classed as more friendly than unfriendly. The fact that most people speak only German caused some mistrust on the part of the troops, but the condition was not serious and is improving.¹⁸

36th Division's report of the same date (covering just the High Vosges part of Seventh Army's area) was more generous to the civilians, and clear that American troops' suspicions of the local residents had no strong grounding:

Alsations were found to be enthusiastic in their welcome of the Americans in most areas, with only a small proportion of the population presenting a cold, stern countenance. The French tricolor has been prominently displayed in Alsatian towns, along with the American flag and the Union Jack. .. A growing tendency has been noted on the part of American troops to regard the Alsations as pro-German, largely because of their language and customs.¹⁹

On 11 December Seventh Army noted "continuing reports of some mistrust by the military for the civilian population, .. due largely to language and the proximity to Germany".²⁰ Whilst proximity to Germany made the troops nervous and suspicious, it was not until 19 December's report that Seventh Army made reference to the fear that proximity to Germany (and German troops) might put into the local inhabitants themselves. This understanding may have eased the situation a little. A distinction had emerged between XV Corps' area (in the west, around the Saar) and VI Corps' (east of the Vosges), with the latter experiencing the strongest 'common-enemy' feeling:

[In XV Corps' area] the language difficulty and the anxiety of the populace (due to the proximity of German troops and the possibility of counter-attack) have made the situation slightly strained, although most of the troop suspicions have been easily up-rooted.

The morale of the civilians and the attitude toward American forces were reported good in all towns in the VI Corps area. The ruthless tactics of the Germans in levying all available man-power for forced service in the Volksturm resulted in bitter anti-German feelings which made the sentiments toward American forces stronger.²¹

¹⁸ *ibid.* Seventh Army Report on Civil Affairs Activities 30 November - 2 December 1944, dated 3 December 1944

¹⁹ *ibid.* 36th Division Report on Civil Affairs Activities for week ending 3 December 1944; file 336-5

²⁰ *ibid.* Seventh Army Report on Civil Affairs Activities 3-9 December 1944, dated 11 December 1944; file 107-5

²¹ *ibid.* Seventh Army Report on Civil Affairs 10-16 December 1944, dated 19 December 1944

By the next week, civilians in border areas were openly nervous about the prospects of a German counter-attack - there was a decrease in the display of French flags, and reports of people packing in preparation for evacuation. Nevertheless, "in spite of this feeling of uncertainty, it is generally reported that the troop-civilian relationship shows a marked improvement".²² There may have been a 'coming-together' feeling engendered by news of Germany's 16 December Ardennes counter-attack.

After the 'Northwind' attack was launched by the Germans on 1 January 1945, forcing an American withdrawal in the extreme north-east of the area, Seventh Army found that:

Alsations have been more cordial toward American forces than at any previous time. No complaints of misuse of buildings, or of troop misconduct, have been reported. It would seem that the Alsations now welcome the presence of American troops at any price.²³

This improvement was set to continue: at the end of January 1945, XV Corps reported that relationships between the local people and the troops had "materially improved" during the month.²⁴ Seventh Army described the attitude of those in the border areas as "generally good - the characteristic feeling is one of reserved friendliness".²⁵

Some American soldiers had had the chance to gain a more sympathetic attitude towards the people of Alsace-Lorraine earlier than this. Memoirs tell of individual Americans' reactions to what they saw of local poverty, the mixed cultural heritage of the area, the destruction of towns and villages, and French efforts to show respect for American sacrifices. Donald MacDonald of 45th Infantry Division was fortunate to see the cultural mix from two angles, through families he befriended, one in Epinal in

²² *ibid.* Seventh Army Report on Civil Affairs Activities 17-23 December 1944, dated 26 December 1944

²³ *ibid.* Seventh Army Report on CA Activities 7-13 January 1945

²⁴ *ibid.* XV Corps Civil Affairs Report January 1945; file 215-5.2

²⁵ *ibid.* Seventh Army Report on CA Activities 14-20 January 1945

Lorraine and, later, one near Saverne in Alsace. In Epinal, MacDonald was invited to many meals with the Bettinger family. Near the end of his time in the city he was witness to an outpouring of anti-German feeling that was fierce enough to give pause to anyone considering using the label 'pro-German' for the Alsace-Lorraine region:

The time was fast approaching, we told [the Bettinger family], when we would be moving up to Alsace in support of our forward units. Their comments went about like this: 'We hope that you will be sent to the area around Colmar and not Strasbourg'. On asking why, we got the following: 'Because Colmar is mostly French and Strasbourg is mostly German'.

With a wife that was half German .. I couldn't accept such a statement and, like throwing lighter fuel on a fire, I added 'There must be some good Germans'. Immediately the whole family dropped their knives, forks, and everything else, and stared at me. Then Papa spoke with great conviction as he stated something that, to him, was written in stone: 'There are no good Germans and if you knew them as well as we do, you would realise that to be true'.²⁶

In Saverne, MacDonald was billeted with a M and Mme Fertig. This was a family whose history would have shamed any American soldier who made an automatic link between language and political sympathies; it might also have surprised Papa Bettinger. M Fertig, seventy-six years old, was German by birth, had been a German soldier in World War I, "but was now staunchly French in his sympathies".²⁷ He was a member of the FFI (French Forces of the Interior - 'the Resistance'), going on nightly patrols to watch out for activity by German sympathisers. MacDonald writes with awe of this surprising family:

His first language was German, but he also spoke French. Mrs Fertig .. spoke only German, and once proudly showed us a snapshot of her brother, resplendent in his German Army uniform.

[They] had a son, a college professor, whose whereabouts was unknown to them. While we were with them, they received word that he was with the Free French Army. Only with a background of Alsace-Lorraine history could one understand this complex family.

We learned that, during the German occupation, they had risked severe penalties by secretly listening to famous anti-German author, Thomas Mann, broadcasting from Washington DC. We moved up a few places on their esteem chart when we told them that Mann's son was a member of our 45th Division.²⁸

²⁶ Donald MacDonald Memoir p.28 (unpublished manuscript, selected photocopies sent to the author with questionnaire response)

²⁷ *ibid.* p.33

²⁸ *ibid.* p.33-4

On Christmas Eve in the Fertig household the American troops sang carols in English, the Fertigs in German. But just days later the village was threatened by Operation 'Northwind' and, MacDonald writes, "secret German sympathisers were less discrete in showing their joy".²⁹ Knowing whether it was reasonable to describe a community in this region as 'pro-German' was clearly a very difficult judgement for anyone to make.

Other experiences that gave American troops a more understanding view of the residents of Alsace-Lorraine included being witness to relative poverty. Martin Loughlin of 80th Infantry Division, whilst describing the area as "dreary" and its people as "generally not too friendly", was nevertheless struck by the presence of hunger:

The true meaning of hunger up until this time had not been known to us. At evening meal on the first night [in Merlenbach, in the Saar region], we left the mess area to dump our food in the garbage cans and clean our mess kits. Waiting for us were women and children who scooped the garbage out of the cans. The next time we ate and every meal thereafter we all took a little more to eat and ate less.³⁰

Another American soldier was sympathetic to the economic hardships that the war had brought to the lady who took in his laundry in Epinal:

Her husband had worked for the railroad before retirement. Before the war, they had had a comfortable living on his pension. Then, with war-induced inflation, the value of his pension went to almost nothing. They were eking out a bare income as best they could. We found that payments of money were of limited value to the couple since the Francs had been devalued. .. Thus we started taking them little things, such as minor amounts of foodstuffs, which they appreciated greatly.³¹

When invited by the family for a meal, he and his colleagues "were touched by what we sat down to". When Americans were able to get close enough to the French to be invited

²⁹ *ibid.* p.37

³⁰ M Loughlin q.; Martin Loughlin memoir (pp. 2-3 in chapter headed 'Rest Area'), 80th Infantry Division, in US Army World War II Army Service Experiences questionnaire papers, US Army Military History Institute, Carlisle, Pa.

³¹ Kenneth Williamson memoir, pp.153-4, 45th Infantry Division, in US Army World War II Army Service Experiences questionnaire papers, US Army Military History Institute, Carlisle, Pa.

into their homes for a meal, respect and gratitude usually predominate in their memory of the occasion(s) - even in Alsace-Lorraine:

The dear lady had fixed potatoes about three different ways. There was a little greenery. The meat dish was rabbit, probably from an animal that they had kept for a special occasion. Just before the meal, the gentleman asked Gene and me to accompany him to his cellar; there, with a mildly triumphant grin, he removed a loose brick from the wall and pulled out a bottle of wine, 'Saved from the Allemande'. .. The memorable part of the meal was the spirit with which it was offered.³²

Martin White of 4th Armored Division saw some of the inhabitants of Lorraine coming to terms with the destruction of their village - and still finding the spirit to show due respect to American dead. White believed that, normally, a soldier "has neither the time nor the inclination to ponder the impression his violence creates in the minds of the civilian dwellers of his battlefield"; the events in the village of Valhey (north of Lunéville), however, proved for him a major exception, the behaviour of the inhabitants evoking a strong measure of sympathy from him.³³ On 21 September 1944 he took a group to Valhey to remove to the US Army cemetery the bodies of two Americans killed in action there a week previously, and buried in the village churchyard by the local people; they were the bodies of a tank commander and his gunner - the commander had returned under machine-gun fire to his burning tank to try and free his trapped gunner. Arriving in mid-morning, White was asked by the mayor if they could delay the disinterment until one o'clock as the people of Valhey were at lunch. In conversation, White expressed regret at the damage to the mayor's house from the American engagement; the mayor noted simply that "walls and glass were a small price to pay for liberty".³⁴ White and his men drove back to the village square at one o'clock:

The entire population of Valhey was drawn up in the square. .. My face must have shown my astonishment. The Mayor explained that his people wished to honour 'les braves' who had died to free them. .. The curé led the procession of villagers and eight wondering Americans the few hundred yards to the

³² *ibid.* p.154

³³ Martin White 'A Funeral in Lorraine', p.2, 4th Armored Division, in US Army World War II Army Service Experiences questionnaire papers, US Army Military History Institute, Carlisle, Pa.

³⁴ *ibid.* p.7

cemetery. After the blessing of the bodies, the curé began the final prayer, the great verse of Simeon. As he intoned the words of the Benedictus the distant artillery, which had provided a sullen backdrop throughout the day, flared up in a rolling paen which almost drowned out the voices asking for peace and for service without fear.

The soldiers were lifted from their graves onto the ambulance litters. Then, one by one, each of the assembled villagers passed in front of the bodies and placed upon them the flowers they carried. I felt that some thanks should be said for the trouble and regard of the people. Dredging up my last reserves of French, I said: 'People of Valhey, People of France, in the names of Sergeant Sadowski and Private Hay, I thank you'.

On my return to the Battalion, I remember telling Colonel Abrams that if M.G.M. had screened the day's events as part of a war film I would have hooted in disbelief. At the Colonel's direction, I .. wrote to General John Wood, Commanding General of the Division, telling him of the honor shown to our men by the people of Valhey. [He] wrote to the Mayor, thanking him and his people for the reverence shown to the bodies of Sergeant Sadowski and Private Hay.³⁵

This series of recollections by American troops who, through circumstances, were able to see more of the people of Alsace-Lorraine than could be seen by marching or motoring through the towns of the region, shows that even in a region where the welcome was cooler than to the west there were contacts with 'ordinary' people which evoked some understanding and a measure of sympathy from the Americans. The overall colder welcome, though, can not be dismissed. The number of reports of a more subdued, uncertain or indifferent welcome suggest that there clearly was a noticeable difference in the welcome from that experienced in the summer.

Several factors can account for this. Firstly, the slowdown in the advance meant an increase in the amount of destruction of towns and villages; as in Normandy in June and early July, near-static battle conditions led to more artillery damage and, consequently, resentment at the destruction of homes and communities. Secondly, the cultural mix in the region may in fact have meant that a greater proportion of the population were more likely to be German-sympathisers; whilst it is not possible (or popular) to give a figure, the experience of M Fertig, keeping an eye on German sympathisers near Saverne

³⁵ *ibid.* pp. 7-10

for the FFI, suggests that German sympathisers were a real problem. (Whilst collaborators had been a problem across France, the difficulty mostly lay in what to do with them - active German sympathisers, however, in the sense of those who could assist the German war effort, had not been a large problem after liberation in the summer; the speed of advance naturally lessened the dangers). Thirdly, the suspicions of American soldiers towards German-speakers (found particularly in the north-east of the region) may have had a reciprocal effect: undisguised American suspicion may have led to the residents returning a cold welcome. Fourthly, the halting of the summer's advances and the continuation of the war through a bleak and hungry winter gave rise to an overall deterioration in Franco-American goodwill on the ground, from which Alsace-Lorraine was naturally not immune.

6.3 THE EXPERIENCES OF CIVIL AFFAIRS DETACHMENTS IN EASTERN FRANCE: OCTOBER 1944 TO EARLY 1945

The experiences of Civil Affairs (CA) detachments in eastern France over the winter of 1944-45 confirm the reported cooler to indifferent overall welcome in Alsace-Lorraine, but reveal many healthy working relationships with the French across eastern France as a whole; even in Alsace-Lorraine several detachments established a good rapport with the local civilians and officials. In this, CA detachments' experiences ran counter to the general trend over the winter which saw a decline in mutual respect between the French and Americans in France. Whilst for ordinary troops the generally static nature of the war during the autumn and winter meant that the French and the Americans 'saw too much of each other', CA detachments were often (but not always) able to benefit from the time available to build up working relationships. They did, however, have to deal with one of the effects of American troops often remaining a long time in each place - American crimes towards the French.

This section examines CA detachments' activities in the whole of eastern France from 1 October 1944 through to early 1945. During this period the majority of detachments were based in Alsace-Lorraine or eastern Champagne. From 23 October 1944, when responsibility for all civil matters in territory to the west of Champagne and Picardy was transferred from the military authorities to the French Government (with the creation of the 'Zone of the Interior'), no CA detachments were working much further west than Reims (save for detachments retained in regional capitals for liaison purposes, and a few detachments specialising in Displaced Persons).³⁶ During February and March 1945 nearly all CA detachments were pulled out of France to take up postings in Germany.

6.3 (i) *The French welcome for, and subsequent attitude towards, the CA detachments*

The welcome for CA detachments was mixed, but in several cases the detachments were nevertheless able to establish good relationships. When Detachment D5B2 arrived in Frouard, a suburb of Nancy, on 6 October 1944 they "were not welcomed .. as fervently as further west" (see Map 14).³⁷ The staff felt that the people were not as friendly and open, but admitted (from the perspective of four weeks later) that

When the detachment began to make friends, they found the people most generous, kind and friendly. The [staff] have been invited collectively and individually to all of the homes in Frouard that could accommodate them. They have been welcomed into what community life there is.³⁸

East of Nancy and the Moselle River, however, there were different experiences. The detachment in St Avold, twenty-five miles east of Metz, found that "most civilians were apathetic toward the arrival of the American troops, there being no demonstration of

³⁶ *Civil Affairs and Military Government Organisations and Operations*, Appendix 4; Report 32 of the Reports of the ETO General Board; Records of US Theaters of War, Record Group 332; National Archives, Washington DC

³⁷ Detachment D5B2 Historical Report 8 November 1944, p.1; entry 612; European Civil Affairs Division papers; Records of SHAEF, Record Group 331; National Archives, Washington DC

³⁸ *ibid.* p.3

friendship on the part of the local population".³⁹ Lack of references in their reports to the quality of their working relationship with local officials suggests that it might have been no more than merely satisfactory. When the detachment from Frouard was also moved east, to the small town of Morhange (ten miles south of St Avold), they found very few people about - "those that were on the streets were, if not hostile, unenthusiastic".⁴⁰ The staff "disliked the town intensely; the change from a patriotic France to an apathetic France may have had something to do with it".⁴¹ The detachment offered two observations that, they felt, partly explained the apathy. Firstly, the département that Morhange was in (Moselle) had, along with the two Alsace départements, been incorporated into Germany for the last four years; this made reintegrating the area into France difficult, particularly economically since German currency had been in use.⁴² Secondly, the detachment could find "no evidence of a resistance movement"; they believed that the core of any potential movement had been removed by the Germans in 1940, and that subsequently all those of pure French origin (determined by the language spoken in the family) had been moved to the interior of France.⁴³

The idea that the welcome deteriorated the further east the Americans progressed or the nearer they got to the German border was countered by the next experience of the detachment from Frouard and Morhange. On 9 December 1944 they moved on to Sarreguemines - further east, and right up on the northern border with Germany. The welcome, and the overall ethos, were very different:

Sarreguemines, in the view of its inhabitants, was a city. Their attitude was urban and cosmopolitan. It is perhaps this attitude which was responsible for their adherence to the French cause. Another factor may have been the fact that it was a border city, and that loyalties are apt to be clearly defined in such a city. At any rate the attitude of the people of Sarreguemines differed sharply from the attitude encountered in Morhange. Here was an energetic people with clearly defined loyalty for the French and Allied cause.⁴⁴

³⁹ *ibid.* Detachment C212 Monthly Historical Report December 1944, p.2; entry 619

⁴⁰ *ibid.* Detachment D5B2 Historical Report 15 January 1945, p.1; entry 612

⁴¹ *ibid.* p.10

⁴² *ibid.* p.8. The reincorporation of these three départements matched the incorporation of exactly the same area into Germany in 1871.

⁴³ *ibid.* pp. 9&10

⁴⁴ *ibid.* p.14

Despite the welcoming and positive attitude experienced by the CA detachment, Sarreguemines' situation, being on the front line for many weeks in November and December, made its people at times tense. This affected their attitude towards the Americans in general. The CA detachment plotted the people's oscillating feelings towards the American military:

The general attitude was quite similar to other parts of France until Oct 14 when a group of American bombers flew over the city and then returned to dump many bombs in the centre of the city, killing 100 people. Since there were no military targets near the place where the bombs were dropped, the people were bitter and disappointed. .. The front, even at present writing, is very close. As a result the place was a hotbed of rumours. Every troop movement, and there were many, had a thousand interpretations. Although it was felt that the people were basically loyal to the allied cause, there was much doubt and uneasiness among the population. They were afraid the Germans would come back. .. As the fighting gradually receded from the city, the attitude began to change. The Americans gained prestige. When the [Psychological Warfare Branch] sound truck appeared and began to make daily announcements and broadcast the news, dispelling the many prevalent rumors, the attitude became quite satisfactory.⁴⁵

The detachment clearly benefitted when American troops thus showed that they could keep the Germans at bay. Strong and efficient working relationships subsequently developed.

The préfets of the départements in Alsace-Lorraine reported good relations with the CA detachments. In November 1944, Moselle's préfet wrote that "Relations continue, as in the past, to be very satisfactory"; he reported of the detachment in Hayange (temporary capital of the département prior to the liberation of Metz) that it was one "with whom I have very good interactions".⁴⁶ He did, however, have some potentially serious problems. Firstly, he had had to lodge a protest with the American Army that they had evacuated the residents of some towns without any advance warning to

⁴⁵ *ibid.* p.24. The description in the first sentence of the attitude before the air raid could not have been based on first-hand observation but must have been based on interviews - the town was not liberated until November.

⁴⁶ Report of Préfet of Moselle to Minister of the Interior for 1-15 November 1944 - Ch.XII 'Relations avec les autorités alliées civiles et militaires'; cotés F/1cIII/1222; Archives Nationales, Paris. ("Les relations continuent, comme par le passé, à être très satisfaisants"; "... avec lequel j'entretiens des rapports très cordiaux").

the French authorities. The Americans responded that military circumstances had made consultation impossible, but tried to reassure him that "whenever possible, my staff would be warned in good time"; they then thanked the Préfet for "the continuing help which my staff had been giving the American forces".⁴⁷ Secondly, the Préfet had experienced continuing difficulty obtaining permits to travel freely for his staff and for vehicles delivering civilian supplies. He saw this as symptomatic of the low profile that the French authorities had - though recognising some extenuating circumstances:

One has the impression that the French Administration is barely recognised. I attribute this to the prevalence of military operations, but also perhaps to my lack of a Liaison Officer with sufficient knowledge of English.⁴⁸

One month later the Préfet's patience was wearing thin: he felt that relations with the American authorities were ".. always cordial on a personal level; but they are much more difficult if measured by results".⁴⁹ Huge American demands for billeting (in Metz in particular) had caused resentment - the Americans had been attempting to take over every building once held by the Germans, even though in some cases the local residents had moved back in. The Préfet had given the Americans his and his staff's addresses to protect their houses, following a 'promise' not to commandeer them, but the very next day one of his colleagues' houses had been seized; when the Préfet got the soldiers to leave, they proceeded to walk out with three electric lamps.⁵⁰ The Préfet also felt that the Americans were over-reacting to the fact that they were in a German-speaking area by holding Lorraine deserters from the German Army as P.o.W.s, even though "it is clear that they had there some excellent Frenchmen who had escaped at great danger to

⁴⁷ *ibid* ("chaque fois que cela sera possible, mes services seraient avisés en temps utile"; ".. l'aide constante que mes services avaient apportée aux forces américaines").

⁴⁸ Report of Préfet of Moselle to Minister of the Interior for 1-15 December 1944 - Ch.XII 'Relations avec les autorités alliées civiles et militaires'; cotés F/1c111/1222; Archives Nationales, Paris ("On a parfois l'impression que l'autorité de l'Administration française est quelque peu méconnue. J'attribue ce fait aux opérations militaires et peut-être aussi à ce que j'ai pas auprès de moi un officier de liaison administrative connaissant suffisamment la langue anglaise")

⁴⁹ *ibid* ("toujours aussi cordiales si on les envisage du point de vue strictement personnel; mais elles sont beaucoup plus difficiles si on s'en tient aux résultats").

⁵⁰ *ibid*

themselves".⁵¹ This led to a feeling of helplessness - it was hard to get through to the Americans:

The people have the impression that the Americans think they are already on German soil. When you explain the true situation to American officers you do get through, but the message gets no further than the person you have been talking to.⁵²

French officials in German-speaking areas thus faced an uphill struggle to persuade the Americans overall of the strength of loyalty in Alsace-Lorraine, but it was a struggle in which their closest contacts, the CA detachments, were of assistance; the préfets expressed serious frustration, but not hopelessness.

Elsewhere in eastern France, the welcomes for CA detachments had taken place before this period. The records do, however, show very healthy subsequent developments in French attitudes towards the detachments. In Pont-à-Mousson in late November the Commanding Officer of the detachment that had entered the city under fire in early September (see section 5.3 (i)) was awarded the title of Honorary Citizen in an impressive ceremony in the Grand Hall of the Mairie:

The colorful ceremony reached its climax when a 20-piece orchestra played the American and French national anthems and toasts were drunk to America and France and the good relationship the Detachment had helped to maintain with the people of France. The city .. also paid homage to the American army as its liberators by naming one of its principal avenues 'The Avenue of the United States'.⁵³

Similarly, the detachment in Reims (the second to operate in that city) found itself very well-treated by the French. After their first week they reported "Local officials very cooperative" - and the relationship blossomed.⁵⁴ On 22 November "Officers of the

⁵¹ *ibid* ("Il est évident qu'il s'agit là d'excellents Français qui se sont libérés au péril de leur vie")

⁵² *ibid* ("La population a l'impression que les américains se croient déjà en territoire allemand. Lorsqu'on explique la situation vraie aux officiers, on arrive à les convaincre, mais cette conviction ne dépasse pas l'interlocuteur du moment")

⁵³ Detachment D4D2 Historical Report 1 October - 30 November 1944, p.4; entry 619; European Civil Affairs Division papers; Records of SHAEF, Record Group 331; National Archives, Washington DC

⁵⁴ *ibid*. Detachment C1D1 Journal, 27 October 1944; entry 610

Detachment enjoyed a very pleasant dinner and evening as guests of M.Schneiter, Sous-Préfet of Reims".⁵⁵ Later that week the officers and men were invited on a conducted tour of the Cathedral, and in early December two of the officers were guests at a specially arranged boar hunt.⁵⁶ The detachment in Bar-le-Duc, in the far west of Lorraine, reported in November that relations had been so pleasant that all the men "regretted to bid farewell to their numerous friends and acquaintances"; on the day that they left, the mayor presented the Commanding Officer with an oil painting as a token of his friendship.⁵⁷ Whilst experiences varied in Alsace-Lorraine, west of the Moselle the memory of the 'liberation summer' clearly still left a glow in relationships between CA detachments and their communities. Whilst both sides had to work hard, they were ploughing fertile ground.

6.3 (ii) *CA detachments' respect for French autonomy*

In this period, the level of American respect for French autonomy in local appointments can only be assessed where CA detachments were operating in recently-liberated areas (i.e. Alsace-Lorraine); in the rest of eastern France, where appointments had already been made, questions of autonomy only arise within established working relationships - for example, over activities which were left to the French to organise, or over the handling of security suspects.

Unlike during the summer sweep across both northern and southern France, in Alsace-Lorraine the appointments of mayors were not made almost exclusively by the FFI or local *Comités de Libération*. Four methods were in operation: appointment by FFI/*Comité de Libération*, by Provisional Government representatives, by division-level CA Officers, or by a CA detachment in consultation with the French. The Americans

⁵⁵ *ibid.* 22 November 1944

⁵⁶ *ibid.* 26 November & 2 December 1944

⁵⁷ *ibid.* Detachment C212 Monthly Summary November 1944, p.2; entry 619

were careful to respect French autonomy by always following the lead of *Comités de Libération* or representatives of the Provisional Government - where they could be found. Where they could not, the Americans ended up having to make more appointments in Alsace-Lorraine than they had elsewhere. The Americans' appointments were clearly regarded as temporary - neither the Americans nor the appointees tried to insist on their staying in post once Provisional Government appointments were made.

In the early stages of the push into southern Lorraine, Seventh Army reported in mid-October that officials designated by the *Comités de Libération* had "taken office without incident".⁵⁸ In much of Alsace-Lorraine, though, the FFI was much less prominent than elsewhere in France (in Frouard the CA Detachment reported that "there was no evidence of a resistance movement"; in Sarreguemines "the FFI existed but it was weak"), and as a consequence the representatives of the Provisional Government with the American Army had to make many appointments.⁵⁹ The Provisional Government, anticipating the special difficulties that might arise, had sent an Alsace-Lorraine Mission to accompany the liberating Armies; they also retained their division-level French Liaison Officer representatives. Seventh Army reported that whilst the Alsace-Lorraine Mission made what appointments it could, they were unable to cover the whole area and it was often the French Liaison Officers that had to "take the initiative in establishing temporary government in many towns".⁶⁰ In Ste-Marie-aux-Mines in the High Vosges, French Liaison Officers called the old (pre-1940) town council into session; "guided by the [VI Corps and 36th Division] French Liaison Officers, [it] chose a mayor of known loyalty to the French cause".⁶¹

⁵⁸ Seventh Army Report on CA Activities 12-18 October 1944; file 107-5; Records of Adjutant-General's Office, Record Group 407; National Archives, Washington DC

⁵⁹ Detachment D5B2 Historical Report 15 January 1945 pp. 9&15; entry 612; European Civil Affairs Division papers; Records of SHAEF, Record Group 331; National Archives, Washington DC

⁶⁰ Seventh Army Report on CA Activities 3-9 December 1944; file 107-5; Records of Adjutant-General's Office, Record Group 407; National Archives, Washington DC

⁶¹ *Ibid.* 36th Division Report on CA Activities for week-ending 3 December 1944; file 336-5

In mid-December came a report from Seventh Army that, since the Alsace-Lorraine Mission and the French Liaison Officers had been too busy, "American CA Officers had to designate temporary mayors in a few cases, for the first time [in this part of France]".⁶² In Alsace-Lorraine, CA detachments were being assigned to areas immediately behind where Divisions were operating, and therefore it was Division CA Officers that were entering towns in forward areas.⁶³ Thus, in Sarreguemines the mayor was appointed by the Division CA Officer. In the Morhange area the CA detachment reported:

The towns .. were without mayors. Appointments in the beginning were made by Division SCAOs [Senior Civil Affairs Officers] and by the Detachment. With establishment of the Sous-Prefecture at Chateau-Salins, the appointments were made by the French government. There was no conflict. When the regularly appointed mayor turned up, the acting mayors who had been appointed by the American Army relinquished their duties to the new appointees.⁶⁴

Where a CA detachment did find itself involved in making a mayoral appointment, it was careful to consult closely with the French. When Strasbourg fell there were no corps or division CA officers or any French Liaison Officers nearby. Two CA detachments were moved in. They appointed a temporary mayor "after conferences [with] the FFI and General Leclerc, French 2nd Armored Division".⁶⁵

Operationally, of course, what mattered most was having good men in post. At times this meant deciding which French officials should, if possible, be by-passed. In St Quentin the detachment learned to avoid the Chef du Cabinet of the Regional Commissioner (the 'Commissionnaire de la République', the official in charge of a group of départements - i.e. senior to the Préfet in charge of each département):

It was learned that M Marchandise, the Chef du Cabinet for the Regional Commissioner, opposed our efforts to obtain .. information [about the bank

⁶² *ibid.* Seventh Army Report on CA Activities 10-16 December 1944; file 107-5

⁶³ *ibid.* Seventh Army Report on CA Activities 24-30 December 1944

⁶⁴ Detachment D5B2 Historical Report 15 January 1945, p.9; entry 612; European Civil Affairs Division papers; Records of SHAEF, Record Group 331; National Archives, Washington DC

⁶⁵ XV Corps CA Report November 1944, p.3; file 215-5.2; Records of Adjutant-General's Office, Record Group 407; National Archives, Washington DC

balances of German accounts]. [Commanding Officer] has observed in recent operations .. that M Marchandise is somewhat of an obstructionist. It is decided hereafter to by-pass this individual and to conduct official business only with the Regional Commissioner. The latter has always been most cooperative.⁶⁶

M Marchandise, true to his obstructionist style, returned to the fray two days later when he repeated to detachment staff his view that financial institutions should not have to give the Americans information about German accounts. He went further:

He made the remark to Lt. Hapeman that the US Army did not 'conquer' France; to which the Lt. countered 'No, but it did liberate France - and the high command has a right to certain data which you have ordered withheld from us'. Lt. Hapeman stated [that] further refusals would only be accepted in writing from M Marchandise.⁶⁷

Deciding to by-pass an obstructionist official was not being disrespectful of French autonomy but being practical in deciding how best to get things done. Wanting the information from the banks was not regarded by the CA detachment as a question of autonomy since it involved the military struggle to defeat the enemy; information about enemy assets was at issue.

An incident in Reims illustrates how CA detachments would act decisively, and unilaterally, when issues of military security were at stake. On 29 December 1944 they obtained the cooperation of the nearest Counter-Intelligence Corps (CIC) troops in raiding a flat in rue de l'Infirmière. For five consecutive nights during air raids suspicious flashing lights had been seen coming from this property; reconnaissance pinpointed the window used. A Mme Rouyer was arrested; she denied any guilt, "but practical tests conducted from her apartment window doomed her; CIC handling case from herein".⁶⁸ This arrest was made with no French involvement; it was another instance of CA detachments making an exception to French autonomy when a clear military issue was involved.

⁶⁶ Detachment C1D1 Journal, 12 October 1944; entry 610; European Civil Affairs Division papers; Records of SHAEF, Record Group 331; National Archives, Washington DC

⁶⁷ *Ibid.* 14 October 1944

⁶⁸ *Ibid.* 29 December 1944

As in the rest of France, detachments were not shy about placing demands on the French when information, action, or resources were required for operational reasons. Thus there were the usual needs for labour, for strictly limiting civilian traffic on the roads, and for the use of property. The detachment in Dombasle, near Lunéville, was quite clear whose need was greatest when a clash loomed over the use of school buildings for billeting:

1 October: Civilians are anxious to bring home refugee children for school which it is reported will begin before 15 October 1944. .. The schools in this area are now used to billet troops and due to the scarcity of suitable billets it is believed that school buildings may be needed for this purpose. In that case the civil authorities would have to use other means for holding classes.⁶⁹

In the event, on 22 October the Detachment was able to arrange for part of one school to be used for classes, and the next week an entire school was "turned over .. for use of younger children".⁷⁰

In early 1945 demands for billeting grew intense in Reims in particular, the new site of SHAEF's Forward HQ; this caused serious friction to develop.⁷¹ The Préfet reported local feeling where comparisons were being made with the period of occupation:

The people have been roused by a state of affairs that in some respects reminds them of moments from recent years. Several times I have had vehement protests delivered to me, and I have had to personally establish the scope and above all the need for the [billeting] demands presented [by the Americans].⁷²

⁶⁹ *ibid.* Detachment D5D2 War Diary 1 October 1944; entry 619

⁷⁰ *ibid.* 22 & 28 October 1944

⁷¹ SHAEF still maintained its main base at Versailles. It was because of the siting of the Forward HQ that Reims became the site of the principal German surrender on 7 May 1945.

⁷² Report of Préfet of Marne to Minister of the Interior for 1-28 February 1945 - Ch.XII 'Relations avec les autorités alliées civiles et militaires'; cotés F/1cIII/1222; Archives Nationales, Paris ("La population s'est émue d'un tel d'état de choses qui pouvait lui rappeler pour une part, certaines heures des dernières années. A plusieurs reprises, j'ai été saisi de protestations véhémentes et j'ai dû m'employer personnellement à préciser la portée et surtout la nécessité des demandes présentées")

His protestations did not change an already healthy working relationship with the CA staff, though, for in the same report he notes that "My personal relations with representatives of the American Army continue to be excellent".⁷³

In addition to expecting help from the French in the areas of labour, billeting, and traffic control, the Americans were clear that they expected the French to look after as many things as possible themselves. In this they were only following the basic CA principle that CA was not there to run things that the local community could run themselves, but it does provide further evidence that CA detachments had no desire (or time) to unnecessarily interfere in French affairs.

Often the Americans were complimentary about the job that the French did in the many areas that they left to them. Thus the detachment in Bar-le-Duc credited:

.. the Secour Social for the efficient manner in which that organisation has handled the refugee problem in this area: during the nearly three months of operation in Bar-le-Duc, there has been only one occasion on which this Detachment has been called upon by French authorities to assist in dealing with refugees or displaced persons.⁷⁴

In the area of traffic control and the maintenance of law and order, the detachment felt that "the French in this area have restored the normal functioning of their public affairs in a remarkably short period and with a minimum of confusion and friction".⁷⁵ In Dombasle the detachment reported on the appointment of a "Committee of local citizens .. to handle any refugees that may be sent here from the front"; three weeks later they reported that it was "functioning well".⁷⁶

⁷³ *ibid.* ("Mes relations personnelles avec les représentants de l'Armée Américaine demeurent excellentes")

⁷⁴ Detachment C212 Monthly Summary November 1944 p.3; entry 619; European Civil Affairs Division papers; Records of SHAEF, Record Group 331; National Archives, Washington DC

⁷⁵ *ibid.* p.2

⁷⁶ *ibid.* Detachment D5D2 War Diary, 6 & 31 October 1944

In Charleville-Mézières, however, John Maginnis expressed caution about the ability of the French to handle things. Plans in October 1944 for the French authorities to take over a Displaced Persons camp had started to come unravelled:

Major Bradshaw reported that the French were anything but prepared to operate the camp. M Jacquet, who was supposed to be running things, apparently was attempting to do so while still attending to duties at the prefecture from which he had never been released. It all boiled down to the fact that the French government had agreed (and this was a replay of the Normandy situation on a large scale) to do things it was just not able to do. The care and handling of thousands of DPs was a big job, requiring skill and organisation, and these requirements simply were not present in the present structure of French authority.⁷⁷

In this context, Seventh Army commented in November that whilst officials in Alsace-Lorraine continued to willingly assume emergency responsibilities, they were often either too old or inexperienced:

Limited energy on the part of elderly officials and lack of administrative experience and ability in the case of younger officials have considerably limited their effectiveness, and contributed to the problems of relief and refugees.⁷⁸

CA staff recognised the difficulties that the French had, therefore, but were naturally quick to praise when the French took over more and more spheres of activity. Not only was that the plan, but it helped all round by lessening the potential for misunderstandings over autonomy. Not only did CA detachments have no time or inclination to trample on French autonomy, they positively wished more autonomy on the reviving French authorities - it was the measure of CA's success.

The overall picture in this period is of CA detachments (and CA staff in army units) unquestioningly respecting French autonomy in the choice of local officials, and where through circumstances they had to make an appointment themselves, seeking to have their appointees replaced as quickly as possible by regular French appointees. The

⁷⁷ John Maginnis, *Military Government Journal* (Boston, 1971), p.144
⁷⁸ Seventh Army Report on CA Activities 16-22 November 1944; file 107-5; Records of Adjutant-General's Office, Record Group 407; National Archives, Washington DC

records for this period contain no references to detachments disrespecting French autonomy in the area of how collaborators were handled. Where issues of military security were at stake, detachments were prepared to make arrests or demands without reference to the French; when the Army required things for operational reasons, the CA detachments would obtain them. Where the French had the resources to take over activities, however, the detachments were keen to encourage it. They sought to respect and increase French autonomy - save only where military needs had to take priority.

6.3 (iii) *CA detachments' tolerance of and respect for the French people*

The records show a generous degree of tolerance for the French by the CA detachments operating in eastern France. As an example, the routine but controversial task of distributing passes for travel brought out the following observation from the detachment in Frouard:

For the most part requests have been reasonable. When we have been forced to refuse them, the people have understood and with a 'tant pis' have left peaceably. The French are, in our experience, an eminently reasonable people. There were those who wanted to buy passes with a little present; they were exceedingly rare.⁷⁹

The records of the detachments contain many generous assessments of individual Frenchmen. The detachment in Sarreguemines described the official in charge of food and distribution as "sincere, well-informed and extremely cooperative"; the engineer there was a "loyal and experienced official", and the team of doctors and nurses "were indefatigable and courageous - no mission was too dangerous; they gave unstintingly of their skill and their boundless energy".⁸⁰

⁷⁹ Detachment D5B2 Historical Report October 1944, p.6; entry 612; European Civil Affairs Division papers; Records of SHAEF, Record Group 331; National Archives, Washington DC

⁸⁰ *ibid.* Detachment D5B2 Historical Report 15 January 1945, pp. 14&20

The detachments showed their respect for the French by the ways in which they tried hard to fulfill their remit of smoothing relations between the Army and the French. The detachment in Lunéville noted in its reports that they "made particular efforts to cultivate [the] goodwill of the French people... At all times, and upon all occasions, it was remembered that the Civil Affairs officer, in relation to his bretheren of the Service, is 'the people's man'".⁸¹ Many different ways to cultivate the goodwill of the French were tried. The detachment in St Quentin arranged a dinner for the Regional Commissioner and his wife "in the interest of continued cordial relationship"; (after the meal they gave their guests a tour of the building, the former Gestapo premises - the Commissioner had been held there as a prisoner just three months previously).⁸² In Reims the staff helped to organise a Christmas party for 300 orphans.⁸³ In Charleville-Mézières, Maginnis gave a party for all the detachment's interpreters; in another revealing glimpse of the lack of widespread language capability in the CA detachments (despite their training), he described the interpreters as:

of inestimable value to us, for without them most of our officers could not communicate effectively with civilians. They gave their time and effort unstintedly, and they all seemed so happy doing it. I felt that they all went away, after the buffet supper, feeling that we really did appreciate them.⁸⁴

The Americans noticed and remembered kindness and support that were shown to them. This is evident in Detachment D5B2's telling of how, in Morhange, it was able to arrest the ex-Mayor of Frouard, their previous place of assignment:

The former Mayor of Frouard had disappeared with the Germans, taking with him several children. He had been an active collaborator and informer and was thoroughly hated in Frouard. Lt.Colomb found some of these children from Frouard. Using the information given by the children, [he] tracked down the former Mayor, picked him up and turned him over to CIC [Counter-Intelligence Corps]. From CIC he was sent to Nancy to stand trial. The day Lt.Colomb announced his discovery was a day of rejoicing in the Detachment. In apprehending him the Detachment felt as though it was repaying the people of

⁸¹ *ibid.* Detachment C2D2 Historical Record p.6; Entry 619

⁸² *ibid.* Detachment C1D1 Journal 1 October 1944; Entry 610

⁸³ *ibid.* 18&25 December 1944

⁸⁴ Maginnis, *Military Government Journal*, p.141

Frouard for the many kindnesses they had shown the Detachment during its stay in Frouard.⁸⁵

Whilst this demonstrates the affection that the detachment had for the people of Frouard, the context of the passage suggests that a measure of caution is required regarding detachments' respect for the French: it was written whilst the detachment was in Morhange which (as seen in the welcome described in section 6.3 (i)) "they disliked .. intensely".⁸⁶

6.3 (iv) *CA detachments' handling of American crimes towards French civilians*

In contrast to the relative lack of significant trouble caused by American troops during August and early September, the record in eastern France during the autumn and winter was more similar to that in Normandy (see section 4.7 (iv)). It was less severe in that there is only one report of rape and none of any murders, but the level of looting and disturbances was high. The Commanding Officer of one detachment spoke for the experience of many when he wrote that "The record of mischief caused both intentionally and unintentionally by our troops is long and in spots rather on the infamous side".⁸⁷ The relatively static nature of the war would have played a significant part in this: troops, in the rear areas in particular, had time to sniff out goods to steal or bars to frequent.

The crimes ranged from looting, hold-ups, and drunkenness to rape. Detachments were well aware how such behaviour would have a bad effect on how the Americans were received in France:

In each of the towns [around Morhange] .. the evidence of extensive looting and carelessness presented an unforgettable sight. Mattresses, furniture and other

⁸⁵ Detachment D5B2 Historical Report 15 January 1945, p.12; entry 612; European Civil Affairs Division papers; Records of SHAEF, Record Group 331; National Archives, Washington DC

⁸⁶ *ibid.* p.10

⁸⁷ *ibid.* Detachment D5B2 Historical Report 8 November 1944, p.3

possessions treasured by the evacuees were lying in the mud and muck of the streets where they had been tossed. In the buildings, dresser drawers were open, their contents spilled on the floors and furniture had been burned. Such actions by American soldiers are in exact contrast to the American spirit and certainly do not stimulate a friendly feeling for Americans.⁸⁸

The cases dealt with in Frouard in a ten-day period in October 1944 were typical. On 19 October an irate Frenchman appeared at the CA detachment's office indignant at his furniture having been used by American troops for firewood. The brazenness of such theft is brought out by the fact that the firewood had been burned in the man's own stove, also taken without his permission! The detachment noted: "Investigation made, report submitted, the man a little soothed, the office awaited the next break. Something like this happens every day".⁸⁹ Five days later a man complained that American troops had stolen his boats:

He ran down to the bank and remonstrated with them, asking them to at least give him a receipt for the boats. Language barrier. No one could understand him, he could not understand them. In the heat of the ensuing argument one of the soldiers struck him with the butt of his M1 and knocked him unconscious. When he recovered, he bicycled to our office. He was already blind in one eye and now he was afraid he would be blind in the other eye. He was soothed and a report was filed.

Three days later the story was of trouble in the town. The detachment's Public Safety Officer was called to a café where five troops were in "an advanced state of intoxication and were shooting up the place".⁹⁰ With the aid of a Military Policeman the men were disarmed and taken to their unit's Commanding Officer. The Public Safety Officer wrote:

It was the first time in France that they had been billeted in a town, the first time they had been in a cafe, the first time they had been able to buy any drinks and the first time they had been able to talk to a girl. There were two "girls" in the cafe who were amenable to their advances, accompanied by cigarettes and candy, which, most certainly were being and had been made. Mirabelle is a powerful drink.⁹¹

⁸⁸ *ibid.* Detachment D5B2 Daily Summary 27 November 1944; entry 614

⁸⁹ *ibid.* Detachment D5B2 Historical Report 8 November 1944, p3; entry 612

⁹⁰ *ibid.*

⁹¹ *ibid.*

In Champigneulle, a suburb of Nancy, drinking led to a hold-up in a café. When the owner opened the till to give change, one of three Americans drinking there held him up with a revolver, took the contents of the till and left the premises. The CA detachment reported that the three soldiers had visited the café previously and "[could] be identified by [the] proprietor, his wife, and waitress".⁹²

The only report of rape came from 36th Infantry Division in Alsace in early December.⁹³ This, like all cases of American crimes against French civilians, was handled by referring all disciplinary action to the offender's Commanding Officer. CA detachments were clearing-houses for French complaints of violence, and no more. If a detachment could identify culprits, then it could start the process of bringing them to justice within the American Army.⁹⁴ However, the detachment in Lunéville was clear that the most realistic aim of CA detachments was to reduce friction rather than to produce justice:

Restitution was accomplished in a few cases; but in most the culprits could not be identified nor lost property recovered. It is hoped that injured civilians .. gave the Detachment credit for honest concern with their misfortune, and a fair endeavour to effect a remedy. Reports of misconduct of the troops were transmitted to the appropriate staff and were thoroughly investigated. It is believed this helped to reduce the friction between our troops and French civilians.⁹⁵

Violence committed by American troops continued to be a problem after the CA detachments had moved on to Germany by the spring of 1945. It was an important ingredient in the deterioration in Franco-American relations that had started over the winter of 1944-45 and gathered pace as 1945 progressed.

⁹² *ibid.* Detachment D2D2 Operations Diary 11 October 1944; entry 619

⁹³ 36th Division Report on CA Activities for week-ending 3 December 1944; file 336-5; Records of the Adjutant-General's Office, Record Group 407; National Archives, Washington DC

⁹⁴ American Army courts meted out punishments that started with short periods of detention in camp, but could be severe - Section 4.7 (iv) of the text includes reference to Army court convictions of thirteen men for murder or rape, all of whom were sentenced to hang.

⁹⁵ Detachment C2D2 Historical Record, p.6; entry 619; European Civil Affairs Division papers; Records of SHAEF, Record Group 331; National Archives, Washington DC

6.4 THE DETERIORATION IN FRANCO-AMERICAN RELATIONS ON THE GROUND: SEPTEMBER 1944 - SEPTEMBER 1945

In early September 1944 Paris had recently been liberated, American troops were sweeping across both northern and southern France, and Franco-American relations on the ground were as good as they would ever be in World War II. In early September 1945 the war in Europe had been over for four months, Japan had recently surrendered, and American troops were on their way home - but relations between Americans and French in France had deteriorated markedly. The deterioration was due to a growing mutual mistrust. This section looks at how serious the deterioration was, and what contributed to it on both the American and the French sides.

6.4 (i) *The extent of the deterioration*

Richard Rivard of 1st Infantry Division shared an experience common to many American troops at this time: a train ride from Germany across France to Marseilles, for shipping home. His diary reveals that the American soldiers on his train resented the French intensely. He describes feelings that were "not universal", but held by "a sufficient majority"; they amount to nothing less than contempt for the French, evidenced by appalling behaviour:

They hate the French, perhaps because they see in the French all that we know is distasteful and obnoxious in America. .. There is a certain sort of grubby, greedy grasping between the French and Americans. They play all the dirty little tricks on each other that people who dislike each other usually play. For instance, as the train pulls out of a station, .. there is the soldier who grabs the piece of clothing a Frenchman has been trying to sell, and takes it and dashes aboard the moving train while the frantic Frenchman runs down the platform screaming obscenities. Then there is the American trick of emptying a carton of cigarettes, refilling the packs with sawdust. Then this empty carton is sold to a Frenchman at a high price, and as the train pulls out you watch this horrified and enraged Frenchman tear open the packages and throw them down on the platform.

There are even worse things, such as the obscene treatment of the French civilians by American soldiers who expose their private parts as the train passes through a village station.⁹⁶

The first sign of such behaviour on the journey had been the treatment of French children begging in Alsace-Lorraine. The troops noticed a contrast with the "well-fed, healthy" German children they had been with; Rivard felt that the children of Alsace-Lorraine were the most miserable he had ever seen, standing in rags, "with huge sores on their faces". Outside, the industrial area of Lorraine seemed dead - the steel furnaces cold, "the machinery and cars rusted, everything rubble and chaos". In the playing of a theme that would stand out in veterans' memories of the French at the end of the war, Rivard noted the marked difference between "the vigor and freshness of Bavaria and the confusion and wantonness of Alsace-Lorraine". There was a difference, too, in the troops' attitude to the children:

Now the soldiers are no longer sharing their rations; indeed, they are laughing and showering contempt upon [the children]. Here one of the beggars stands before us and gets nothing.⁹⁷

Rivard felt "sick to my stomach" at the behaviour he witnessed. But although he did not share the attitudes (and certainly not the behaviour) of those American troops on his train whom he described, his diary is particularly interesting for the observation that "frankly, France looks wretched".⁹⁸ As a soldier who had spent the last eight months in Germany, Rivard detected in his three days travelling down the length of France that the country had suffered - from German invasion, from occupation, from liberation, and now from an 'American occupation'. Even in the first few hours in Alsace-Lorraine, Rivard had been shocked by the desultoriness of the area. His overall conclusion was that "there is no doubt that occupation, even friendly occupation, is worse than war".⁹⁹

⁹⁶ Richard P Rivard diary, 5 September 1945 (unpublished; selected photocopies sent to the author with questionnaire response)

⁹⁷ *Ibid.* 3 September 1945

⁹⁸ *Ibid.* 5 September 1945

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

In the same month as Rivard's train journey, the Information and Education Division of the US European Theater of Operations (ETO) completed a report entitled *Changes in Attitudes of Soldiers in the European Theater Toward our Allies*.¹⁰⁰ Based on a comparison of surveys undertaken in late-April/early-May and in mid-August 1945, the report showed that Rivard's experience of hostility by American troops towards the French fitted into a broader picture of a growing lack of favour towards the French. The figures showed that whereas in April/May 68% thought favourably of the French, in August only 45% did (the equivalent figures for feelings towards the English were 72% and 75% respectively): see Figure 11.

FIGURE 11: Replies of American troops to the question "What sort of opinion do you have of the French people?" (April & August 1945)

*(with comparative figures for opinions of the English and the Germans, August 1945)*¹⁰¹

	April 1945	August 1945	English (August)	German (August)
Very favourable	15%	6%	21%	3%
Fairly favourable	53%	39%	54%	47%
Rather unfavourable	21%	31%	16%	33%
Very unfavourable	6%	19%	5%	12%
(no answer)	5%	5%	4%	5%

¹⁰⁰ Information and Education Division, European Theater of Operations, report, *Changes in Attitudes of Soldiers in the European Theater Toward our Allies: from April to August 1945*, September 1945; Report no. ETO-102; Records of the Office of the Secretary of Defence; Record Group 330; National Archives, Washington DC

¹⁰¹ *ibid* pp 2&3

Particularly striking is that those thinking 'Very unfavourably' rose from 6% to 19%; 'Very favourable' responses fell from 15% to 6%. The report called attention to the fact that expressed opinion in August was no more favourable towards the French people than towards the Germans; in fact, Figure 11 shows that the Germans attracted 5% more on the favourable side (50%). When American troops were asked which of the Germans, the English or the French they liked best as people - "leaving aside for the moment the fact that they are our enemies or our allies" - 48% replied 'English', 23% 'German' and just 16% 'French' (with 13% giving no answer).¹⁰² This is a surprisingly rapid response to the changed rôles of Germany and France: just three months after VE-Day, the clear-cut losers of the war in Europe can be looked at sympathetically, whilst the more subtle position of the French (an ally, but with the legacy of defeat in 1940 and subsequent collaboration) leaves them vulnerable to distrust and dislike. The figures are also testimony to the lasting effect of the strong sympathy towards Britain generated by its 'standing alone' in 1940.

Other evidence of the scale of the decline in feelings towards the French comes from the responses to three statements with which the troops were asked to agree or disagree:

FIGURE 12: The shift in responses of American troops to statements about France between April and August 1945 ¹⁰³

	April 1945	August 1945
"We should do everything we can to help France get back on her feet as soon as possible"	60% agreed	51% agreed
"Most French people sincerely like Americans"	73% agreed	52% agreed
"The French nation is so weak and split up that it will never amount to anything again"	73% DISAGREED	62% DISAGREED

¹⁰² *ibid.* p.3

¹⁰³ *ibid.* pp 6&7

The biggest change is in those believing that the French people sincerely liked Americans. The fall in the proportion feeling that everything possible should be done to restore France (the first statement above) matches a wider finding in the report regarding help to all the Allies: in August 1945, only 49% felt that the United States should send food to those Allies that needed it (down from 58% in April) and just 29% felt that money and materials should be sent (down from 38%).¹⁰⁴

Relative disapproval of the French showed itself in a finding in the report that only approximately 50% of the troops surveyed agreed with the statement "Considering everything, the French have done as good a job as possible of fighting this war"; there was a slight fall in this proportion between April and August 1945, but it was regarded as too small to be significant. Comparative figures of troop regard for the English and Russian war efforts were approximately 80% and 90% respectively (again, with no significant change between April and August).¹⁰⁵ The spectre of France's defeat in 1940 presumably still loomed large in American troops' minds.

The authors of the report concluded that there was no evidence to support theories that better educated men had more favourable attitudes towards the Allies, or that the longer men were overseas the worse their attitudes towards their 'hosts' became; on the contrary, they felt that there was some evidence to suggest that the longer troops remained in a particular country, the more favourable their attitude became to that country's people.¹⁰⁶ Troops who had spent more than eight months in France recorded 52% favourable feelings towards the French, whereas those who had spent between four and eight months recorded 47%, and those spending less than four months recorded 40% (all figures August 1945; the mean 'Favourable' figure was 45% - see Figure 11).¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁴ *ibid.* p.6

¹⁰⁵ *ibid.* p.8

¹⁰⁶ *ibid.* p.4

¹⁰⁷ *ibid.*

On the French side, préfets' reports during 1945 made clear that whilst official relations with representatives of the American Army remained healthy, in some areas - particularly those with significant American forces - the French people had become very disenchanted with the Americans. The Préfet of the Marne, which included large American camps around Reims, noted in June 1945 that:

Relations between the Town-Majors [the Army officers who handled the principal CA functions in a town after the CA detachments had left] and the different civil authorities are both courteous and full of mutual understanding. .. In contrast, the presence of several thousand troops in the département gives rise to almost insoluble problems, since each evening many thousands of troops from the camps descend on Reims by lorry. .. They look for alcohol, lack respect for the local women, and often their conversations degenerate into fights and injuries result. .. The people of the Marne in general lament the lack of discipline of the troops.¹⁰⁸

The préfet of the adjacent département, Haute-Marne, suggested in his February 1945 report that difficulties were more widespread, even affecting official relationships too: "Relations with the various American services, which had been close and frequent, have become more and more difficult".¹⁰⁹ However, a sample of préfets' reports from across the country shows that official relations in many départements ranged from satisfactory ("Nothing to report" is the relevant entry in the reports throughout most of September 1944 to September 1945 in, for example, Hautes-Alpes and Haute-Saône) to very good (the most common entry in the relevant section of the Préfet's report for Isère, for example, reads "My dealings with the [American] authorities are always excellent and

¹⁰⁸ Report of Préfet of Marne to Minister of the Interior for 1-30 June 1945 - Ch.XII 'Relations avec les autorités alliées civiles et militaires'; cotés F/1cIII/1222; Archives Nationales, Paris ("Les rapports du service entres les Etats-Majors et les différentes autorités civiles sont empreints de la plus grande courtoisie et de la plus grand compréhension. .. Par contre, la présence de plusieurs dizaine de milliers d'hommes de troupe dans le département donne naissance à des problèmes quasi insolubles, ainsi chaque soir dix mille américains des camps de la région sont amenés à Reims par camions. .. Ils cherchent de l'alcool, manquent de respect aux femmes, et parfois les discussions un peu vives dégénèrent en bagarres, et des blessés sont à déplorer. .. La population marnaise en générale regrette le peu de correction des troupes").

¹⁰⁹ Report of Préfet of Haute-Marne to Minister of the Interior for 31 January - 28 February 1945 - Ch.XII 'Relations avec les autorités alliées civiles et militaires'; cotés F/1cIII/1222; Archives Nationales, Paris ("Les relations avec les divers services américains qui devraient être très étroites et fréquentes s'avèrent de plus en plus difficiles").

marked by cordiality"; that of Rhône includes phrases such as "very good", "cordial" and "excellent").¹¹⁰

A survey of French public opinion undertaken in the month preceding VE Day showed that whilst there was "little marked antipathy in the general feeling of Frenchmen toward America, there was [however] abundant criticism".¹¹¹ Approximately half of the people questioned felt that the United States had failed to live up to their expectations.¹¹² Specific questions flushed out some of the areas of concern: in June 1945, 78% of people outside Paris felt that the Americans treated German prisoners better than they should be treated (the figure for Paris was 75%); 33% overall were displeased with the conduct of the American Army in the fight against Germany; and only 27% felt that the United States had made the greatest contribution to the defeat of Germany (as opposed to: Britain 18%, USSR 64%).¹¹³ These figures quantify some of what SHAEF Psychological Warfare Division had been noting in its reports from the field: growing criticisms of the United States from approximately October 1944 onwards. These had not led to any serious threats, but they were strong enough to cause relations on the ground to slide.

6.4 (ii) *The American perspective on the deterioration in relations*

Of the full sample of 209 veterans whose experiences in France in 1944-45 have been studied through their responses to the author's questionnaire, approximately one quarter commented on aspects of the deterioration of relations between Americans and

¹¹⁰ Reports of Préfets to Minister of the Interior - Ch.XII 'Relations avec les autorités alliées civiles et militaires'; cotés F/1cIII/1207 (Hautes-Alpes), 1226 (Haute-Saône; Rhône), 1219 (Isère); Archives Nationales, Paris (".. Rien à signaler"; ".. Mes rapports avec les autorités en question sont toujours excellents et empreintes de cordialités"; "très bonnes", "cordiales", "excellentes").

¹¹¹ *Some Recent Trends in French Attitudes Towards the United States*, p.1, [US] Office of War Information in collaboration with the French Institute of Public Opinion, 2 July 1945; file 494-J; ETO Historical Division; Records of US Theaters of War, Record Group 332; National Archives, Washington DC

¹¹² *ibid.* p.2

¹¹³ *ibid.* pp.4&5; since the latter figures add up to 109% it is clear that some people were nominating two countries.

French. (The experiences of the nineteen men whose whole time in France did not begin until October 1944 or later reveal no clear signal: approximately one-third each reported a good or a neutral welcome; four made no comment, and just one reported a bad welcome). It is comments from those who had been in France during the summer of 1944, and were therefore able to make comparisons with the healthy relations then, that highlight the deterioration and its constituent parts. Themes that come across are a feeling that the French were not putting their energies into rebuilding their damaged cities, that the French were thieves, that they had made a mess of clearing the Colmar Pocket, and that the relationship simply suffered from the passage of time - this caused irritation, which was in turn exacerbated by the antics of some American troops.

Whilst one veteran in his memoirs contrasted the energy of the French in rebuilding Marseilles in September 1944 with what he had seen in Italy ("One thing that struck us after leaving southern Italy where no one cleaned up the debris of war: workers were out in droves repairing streets and utilities - they were like a hill of red ants that had been disturbed")¹¹⁴, comments relating to later in the war (or after) reveal contempt with what American troops saw as inactivity on the part of the French:

My opinions of the French sank lower after we entered Germany. Immediately after their buildings were bombed out, the German people started [sorting the bricks], preparing for the future. The French still had ruins and wreckage lying around from World War I.¹¹⁵

Veteran William Pettitt noted that to see the French "not attempt to repair homes and surroundings was a bit bothersome".¹¹⁶ The experience of John Marshall, though, shows that there was a reciprocal element to the feelings that this generated: on boarding

¹¹⁴ Kenneth D Williamson memoir, p.150, 45th Infantry Division, in US Army World War II Army Service Experiences questionnaire papers, US Army Military History Institute, Carlisle, Pa. American contempt at the longevity of World War I wreckage shows up in the reported comments of Newt Gingrich, elected Speaker of the US House of Representatives in 1995, on his memories of visiting the Verdun area as a 14-year-old in the 1950s: "Three times my lifetime ago, people had damaged that town, and they still hadn't found the energy or the resources to fix it" (Time magazine, 25 December 1995, p.44).

¹¹⁵ J Condon q.

¹¹⁶ W Pettitt q.

a ship in Le Havre early in 1945 he was struck by the remaining mess and destruction - he asked some Frenchmen, "Why don't the French clean up this place?", and was told "You damn Americans caused all of this, and it's your responsibility to rebuild it".¹¹⁷

Colmar caused specific problems in Franco-American understanding. In sentiments reminiscent of the experience over the liberation of Paris, American veterans felt a degree of contempt for the French inability to clear the Pocket, and the resulting need for American help in the final operation in early 1945: "The French seemed to concentrate on chasing girls and bragging; we reduced the Pocket quickly and left the area with no regrets".¹¹⁸ Some felt that "the French insisted on taking [the] credit" for liberating Colmar, and others that they "didn't get the job done".¹¹⁹ American help was indeed required, and French progress was disappointing; but any perception that the French spent two months struggling for the Pocket before the Americans arrived would be wrong.

The Pocket was first apparent in the last week in November when Strasbourg fell to the north and Mulhouse to the south; after two weeks' preparation - during which two Divisions were withdrawn from the French First Army in an (aborted) attempt to set up an offensive against the Germans in Royan and La Rochelle (at de Gaulle's insistence) - General de Lattre's troops fought for the Pocket from 13 to 22 December.¹²⁰ This produced no breakthrough, and the effort was called off because of the Ardennes offensive. When the attack on the Pocket was renewed on 20 January it involved two French and one American Corps; in the first week progress was slow - particularly by French I Corps in the south. The US 6th Army Group commander, General Devers, brought in further American divisions to help; the Pocket was finally closed on 9

¹¹⁷ J Marsahl q.

¹¹⁸ A Bauman q.

¹¹⁹ L Bryant & M Thrasher qs.. General Bradley went so far as to write "After taking Strasbourg in November, the French had lazily and ill-advisedly failed to clear [the Colmar Pocket]" - *A General's Story* (New York, 1983), p.387

¹²⁰ Clarke & Smith, *Riviera to the Rhine*, pp.486-90

February.¹²¹ Thus, although the Colmar Pocket was in existence for eleven weeks, it was only in the eight-day December offensive and the first week of the offensive in January that the French made poor progress - the rest of the time was filled with preparation for battle, or enforced inactivity due to the Ardennes offensive; once American troops were committed in large numbers (27 January) it still took two weeks until the Pocket was totally cleared.

Experiences in Paris led to adverse comments over the winter of 1944-45. Veterans felt that Parisians would, not unnaturally, "take advantage of a G.I.", that they "didn't care for the American Army presence any more than the German occupation", and that, after the war, although the people were friendly, it was "not to the [same] degree as before".¹²²

Many veterans testify to the prevalence of theft as the winter developed. "They robbed us blind" summarises the memories of many.¹²³ Whilst some thefts were amusing in their daring - for example, the theft of an ambulance by a patient, or the disappearance of a locomotive near Paris - the general result was a lack of trust and a feeling that the French had low standards.¹²⁴ One veteran was surprised at how rapidly the French "changed from grateful to mercenary, at how stealing anything loose seemed to be the acceptable thing to do"; another noted that France was the only country where he saw boys stealing after the war.¹²⁵

Thieving, of course, was not the only derogatory adjective applied to the French at this time. Veterans' memories cover the gamut from lazy, greedy, and arrogant, to "ungrateful and selfish".¹²⁶ Underlying all such descriptions, though, is the theme of

¹²¹ *Ibid.* pp.533-58

¹²² L Vaughn, W Pena, R Gravlin qs.

¹²³ R Ulmer q.

¹²⁴ Wartime Diary of Thomas Jacobs, p.8, in US Army World War II Army Service Experiences questionnaire papers, US Army Military History Institute, Carlisle, Pa.; S Coupé quest.

¹²⁵ A Bauman, W Shuster qs.

¹²⁶ e.g. R Atkinson, Q Reams, I Berkovitz, W Johnston qs.

change - how different the French seemed in their feelings and actions towards the Americans:

When I returned to the front from hospital in March 1945 [having been away since 28 October 1944], I found that many French civilians had a different, less friendly attitude towards Americans. [After further hospital treatment] I again crossed France on my way back to my Company [in Germany] in May 1945 and found more anti-American sentiment than I had encountered in March 1945.¹²⁷

Some of the veterans rationalised that whilst the French were indeed behaving badly, Americans might have done the same in similar circumstances:

The damn French would steal anything loose; but remember they had been occupied for a long time and had a terrible time. Your people or mine might be a nation of thieves under the same circumstances.¹²⁸

Similarly, the anti-American nature of French feelings and behaviour was seen by some veterans as the perhaps inevitable product of the passage of time - the Americans simply overstaying their welcome - rather than there being particular antipathy between Americans and French. Donald MacDonald was reminded of the saying "Guests, like fish, stink after three days"; Bob Harmon felt that

As time went on, our welcome 'wore out' - sometimes quite rapidly. We were foreign, we were rough in the way of infantry outfits .. we stole their chickens and their wine and made rude comments to their girls. .. They grumbled once in a while when we simply walked into their lives and their barns and their kitchens.¹²⁹

Some of these close interactions were the inevitable product of war; some were made harder for the French to bear by the attitudes or behaviour of some of the American troops. Veteran Lloyd Coen remarked that "The Americans did not seem as welcome as time went on - but with the behaviour of some of our men I can understand why".¹³⁰

¹²⁷ J Margreiter q.

¹²⁸ W Kleeman q.

¹²⁹ D MacDonald, C Harmon qs.

¹³⁰ L Coen q.

Others felt that G.I.s "took advantage of the French", and that "after liberation some soldiers caused problems".¹³¹ Gaylord Smith was harsher in his criticism:

The US fighting man as a rule was [of the] obnoxious 'take-over kind'. Everywhere we have gone, we try to show our superiority, especially in what we have and the other people don't.¹³²

With American irritation at French 'laziness' and thieving, and French contempt for Americans' 'take-over' superiority, it is not surprising that a veteran returning to Reims in May 1945 (having left France in October 1944) reported "both sides becoming irritated with each other".¹³³ For the Americans, the perceived lack of energy of the French, their difficulty in clearing the Colmar Pocket, the prevalence of theft, and a feeling of (the Americans) having overstayed their welcome, created an atmosphere where earlier suspicions or doubts about the French bubbled to the surface again: the French defeat in 1940, the 'ungrateful Normans', and the supposed French military failure to liberate Paris unaided added fuel to the smouldering fire of discontent felt by American troops in France in 1945. Such a mixture of raw American feelings would have been hard enough to defuse on its own, but, to an extent, the feelings were mutual - and mutually reinforcing. The French felt that they had many grounds to feel ambivalent about the Americans.

6.4 (iii) *The French perspective on the deterioration in relations*

A SHAEF Psychological Warfare Division (PWD) report of 20 October 1944, based on observation and interviews in cities in the south-west, listed seven aspects of what it reported as a "marked increase" in anti-American feeling:

- a) Failure to recognise the de Gaulle government. ...

¹³¹ G Bunnell, C Blakeslee qs.

¹³² G Smith q.

¹³³ L Binger q.

- b) Failure to believe the 'atrocities stories'. It is a very common opinion that Americans stupidly fail to believe the reports of German atrocities, and in fact that they show no realisation of the trials of the occupation.
- c) Chocolate to prisoners. ... They are angered to learn that German prisoners are getting chocolate while French children continue to get none.
- d) Insufficient arms parachuted. .. Maquisards were given a few machine-guns and grenades by parachute, and then ordered to impossible tasks by London.
- e) Fear of economic domination ...
- f) Little food for Southern cities. There had been considerable expectation of food from the American armies, but so far the amount seems to have been negligible.
- g) Insufficient materiel for FFI. The reports that men on the Belfort front are suffering from the cold, because of inadequate clothing, have aroused much hostile criticism.¹³⁴

The failure of the US and Britain to recognise the FCNL as the Provisional Government of France was understandably top of the list at this time. The delay had become intolerable to many French by mid-October: the Provisional Government had been operating out of Paris for nearly two months, and clearly appeared to have widespread support. The Préfet of the Ardèche reported on 27 October 1944 that "The attitude of the governments of the US and the UK who, until just now, had obstinately refused to recognise the GPRF, have been severely judged here in the Ardèche".¹³⁵ A 33-year-old insurance agent, interviewed by PWD on 3 October 1944 for a report on political opinion in France, found it "inexplicable that the US should have maintained diplomatic relations with the Pétain government (when it was common knowledge that this government did not represent a French majority)", and yet it now withheld recognition from the Provisional Government, "which has the support of practically the whole nation".¹³⁶ Others linked the recognition question to one of the level of respect which France felt that it deserved. M Crevon, director of a grouping of Resistance

¹³⁴ SHEAF Psychological Warfare Division report on Public Opinion, Clermont Ferrand 20 October 1944; file 494-P; ETO Historical Division; Records of US Theaters of War, Record Group 332; National Archives, Washington DC

¹³⁵ Report of the Préfet of Ardèche to the Minister of the Interior, 27 October 1944 - Ch.I 'Situation Générale'; coté F/1cIII/1209; Archives Nationales, Paris ("L'attitude des Gouvernements des [Etats-Unies et Grande-Bretagne] qui, jusqu'ici, s'étaient obstinés à ne pas reconnaître le GPRF a été très sévèrement jugée en Ardèche"). See List of Abbreviations for clarification of the use of the acronyms FCNL and GPRF.

¹³⁶ SHEAF Psychological Warfare Division report on political opinion in France, 3 October 1944; file 494-P; ETO Historical Division; Records of US Theaters of War, Record Group 332; National Archives, Washington DC

organisations in the Nancy area, told PWD that the French did not understand why the US and Britain did not recognise de Gaulle's Provisional Government - it was a question of pride:

It may seem of little importance to the Allied leaders, but 'Frenchmen are very proud', and they suffer from the idea that they are not taken into consideration but left aside. .. [They] feel that they have a right to be considered by the Allies. They had to stand the crushing attacks of the Germans in 1914 and 1940. They are the advance post of the front of the democracies, and should be treated as a deserving member. .. Throughout the German occupation and during our advance the Resistance helped the common effort and M Crevon hopes the Allies fully realise it.¹³⁷

The second two points on PWD's list - American failure to believe atrocity stories, and their generous handling of German prisoners - are two sides of a broader point: a perceived American lack of understanding of and sympathy for what the French had experienced. The insurance agent interviewed by PWD was amazed at the "courteous and generous treatment" of German prisoners by the American Army; he could not understand how such treatment could be given to men many of whom had committed crimes "which, if committed in the United States, would inevitably send the perpetrators to the electric chair".¹³⁸ A common complaint was that PoWs received luxuries (cigarettes, chocolate, clothes, soap) "to which good French citizens have no access", and which "were denied to them as prisoners in Germany and as civilians during the occupation".¹³⁹ (The American side to this can be gleaned from comments in the reports quoted - for example, "Frenchmen of this type are blind to the importance of encouraging surrenders", and "The Geneva Convention is no argument to them").¹⁴⁰ More seriously, a report from Brittany in September 1944 went so far as to record French complaints of:

¹³⁷ *ibid.* HQ 12th Army Group Publicity & Psychological Warfare report 5 October 1944

¹³⁸ *ibid.* Report on political opinion in France, 3 October 1944

¹³⁹ *ibid.* SHAEF PWD Summary of Psychological Intelligence 23-30 September 1944; 'Social and Political Trends in Ille-et-Villaine Department of Brittany', 13 September 1944

¹⁴⁰ *ibid.* (both)

The open friendliness with which the Germans are treated by American soldiers; the immediate camaraderie and interchange of experiences, forgetful of the atrocities which the prisoners have only just committed.¹⁴¹

Whilst this report is a lone one, and not substantiated, it underlines in its emotive description the feeling that the Americans were not sympathetic to French suffering.

The insufficient volume of arms drops for the Maquis was a common complaint from the recent past; the fear of economic domination was a harbinger of a concern that would become a common theme in France in the coming decades; neither point, though, drew on specific examples from contemporary events. The relative lack of food for cities in the south and the shortage of materials for French troops, however, were two aspects of perhaps the major cause of French disquiet with the Americans in 1944-45: insufficient supplies from the United States. France, suffering from massive war damage and economic dislocation, was in desperate need of physical assistance: food and fuel primarily, but also clothing and equipment for reconstruction (of the transportation network especially). The needs were stark and clear. In 1938 the country had produced 47 million tonnes of coal, and imported 23 million more; of this total of 70 million tonnes, French industry consumed 67 million. By the autumn of 1944 daily coal production had fallen to 43% of 1938 levels, and imports were nearly impossible to obtain; as a consequence, in 1945 French industry was only able to use 40 million tonnes of coal.¹⁴² Rioux cites as an example of one of the consequences of this the fact that the metallurgical industry of Lorraine "could resume production at only a fraction of pre-war levels: 58,000 tonnes in December 1944 compared with a monthly output of 500,000 tonnes in 1938".¹⁴³ After the summer of 1944, food became scarce; in Paris and the large cities in the south it had been scarce even during the summer. Official rations for adults in Paris were a mere 900 calories in August 1944, 1,210 in

¹⁴¹ *ibid.* 'Social and Political Trends in Ile-et-Villaine Department of Brittany', 13 September 1944

¹⁴² Jean-Pierre Rioux, *The Fourth Republic 1944-58* (Cambridge, 1987), p.20

¹⁴³ *ibid.*

September 1944 and only 1,515 in May 1945.¹⁴⁴ In contrast, the British official history of Civil Affairs in North-West Europe notes that CA planning levels for the liberated countries of Europe were 2,000 calories per day - "this was considered the minimum necessary to avoid disease over a period of a few months".¹⁴⁵ (British wartime rations were 2,800 calories in 1941 and 3,000 in 1944).¹⁴⁶ Not only was food distribution extremely disrupted due to the dislocation of the transport system, but supplies were below pre-war levels due to labour losses, shortages of imported fertilizers, fields ravaged by war, and a shortage of agricultural machinery spare parts.¹⁴⁷

There was an expectation that the United States, with its renowned wealth, would help alleviate the shortages. As M Crevon, Director of the Nancy Resistance groups, boldly expressed it in his interview with PWD, "the French expect material help from the US".¹⁴⁸ M Crevon had spent much of his time during the occupation destroying telephone exchanges, and blasting bridges and canals: "It would only be fair to receive some help, after the war, to rebuild these. For the time being, the French would appreciate Allied help to alleviate the food shortage"; M Crevon concluded, "Bring the flour, milk, meat and potatoes, and this takes care of your propaganda".¹⁴⁹

The French found it hard to believe that capacity could not be spared for substantial civilian supplies. The Préfet of the Marne, reporting on the general feelings of his population in March 1945, noted that "[The people] hold it against the allies for having done practically nothing to ameliorate our material shortages".¹⁵⁰ A SHAEF Intelligence

¹⁴⁴ *ibid.* p.23

¹⁴⁵ F.S.V. Donnison, *Civil Affairs and Military Government in North-West Europe 1944-46* (London, 1961), p.65

¹⁴⁶ *ibid.*

¹⁴⁷ Rioux, *The Fourth Republic*, p.24

¹⁴⁸ HQ 12th Army Group Publicity & Psychological Warfare report 5 October 1944; file 494-P; ETO Historical Division; Records of US Theaters of War, Record Group 332; National Archives, Washington DC

¹⁴⁹ *ibid.* p.4

¹⁵⁰ Report of Préfet of Marne to Minister of the Interior for 28 February - 31 March 1945 - Ch.1 'Situation Générale'; coté F/1cIII/1222; Archives Nationales, Paris ("On tient rigueur à nos alliées de n'avoir pratiquement rien tenté pour améliorer notre condition matérielle")

Officer reported, from conversations that he monitored on an October 1944 train journey from Toulouse to Orléans, the strong feeling of disbelief amongst the French that ships could not be spared to send more food.¹⁵¹ The priority for supplies, though, was still for the military effort; the war was not won. However, a belief developed in France that the United States had "promised" 700,000 tonnes of civilian supplies during the first six months after D-Day; the actual deliveries of 200,000 tonnes, by contrast, appeared meagre, despite the logistical difficulties that reaching even that level had caused.¹⁵² French concern at this shortfall prompted SHAEF Public Relations Division to issue a briefing paper on Aid to France in March 1945 which pointed out that the programme of supplies had never been a covenant - merely sets of targets "estimating the most that could be done in a minimum of time. In many cases emergencies cut into these aims. They never at any time were 'promises'".¹⁵³ The paper went on to detail assistance to France that, in the debate over civilian supplies, had not been recognised: the equipping, training and maintenance of the First French Army (involving the provision of 1,100 aeroplanes, 65,000 motor vehicles, 2.3 million uniforms, and the shipment of 240,000 tonnes of supplies each month), the modernisation of 20 French warships at a cost of \$200 million, the training of 3,000 pilots, and the maintenance of 20 French air bases in North Africa.¹⁵⁴ In a similar vein, the US Army's Communications Zone HQ ('COMZ', established in October 1944 to oversee operations in those areas behind the zone of military operations) wrote in Spring 1945 a poster display (a 'show') setting out statistics to clarify how it was helping France, and not acting in a parasitical way. The posters pointed out that the US Army was self-supporting in food, imported all of its coal from Britain, employed 70,000 French

¹⁵¹ Unevaluated Intelligence Report from HQ Allied Information Service [SHAEF], 21 October 1944; file 494-P; ETO Historical Division; Records of US Theaters of War, Record Group 332; National Archives, Washington DC

¹⁵² Rioux, *The Fourth Republic*, p.8

¹⁵³ SHAEF Public Relations Branch 'Allied Aid to France', 2 March 1945; file 494; ETO Historical Division; Records of US Theaters of War, Record Group 332; National Archives, Washington DC

¹⁵⁴ *ibid.*

civilians, had cleared French ports, and had helped with the rehabilitation of the railway, canal and road systems.¹⁵⁵

Nevertheless, SHAEF reports suggested that ignorance of the full effect of the war in Britain and America meant that the French were unlikely to appreciate the difficulties of supplying the liberated nations of Europe. In October 1944 SHAEF reported: "Interest in the American and British war efforts appears lukewarm .. [The people have] no idea of the immense resources of manpower and industrial techniques which have been needed to drive the Germans from their country".¹⁵⁶ A September 1944 report from Paris spoke of "a dismal ignorance" about what had happened in the US and UK in the preceding four years; "Most women were surprised to learn that so many items in America and England required 'les tickets' as in France; few knew of the sacrifices that have been made by the Allies on the home front".¹⁵⁷

Two further sources of French complaints contributing to a deterioration in relations with Americans in France were heavy demands for accommodation or goods, and aspects of the behaviour of American troops in the country at large. Accommodation demands were heavy in cities such as Paris, Reims and Metz; not only SHAEF but also the US Army's COMZ were based in or near Paris, and troops on 3-day leave in Paris increased pressure on accommodation. As the British official history of CA writes, "In December [1944] the French protested against this monopolisation of accommodation".¹⁵⁸ In March 1945 SHAEF consequently ordered a reduction in the numbers needing to be accommodated, but since COMZ was not under SHAEF's direct control (it was a US Army and not an Allied organisation), "the results were quite insignificant".¹⁵⁹ Accommodation therefore remained a problem in Paris even after

¹⁵⁵ *ibid.* Draft Outline of COMZ Show (undated); file 494-Q

¹⁵⁶ *ibid.* Special Report on General Conditions in South-west France, 20 October 1944

¹⁵⁷ *ibid.* HQ Allied Information Services, Consolidated Report - Paris Area; PWD Report, Paris 25 September 1944

¹⁵⁸ Donnison, *Civil Affairs*, p.107

¹⁵⁹ *ibid.*

SHAEF was wound up in July 1945. In the provinces, the Préfet of the Aube département reported in February 1945 that whilst his relations with the Americans remained cordial, it was clear that demands for billets were a problem: "There are causes of friction between us because of the American demands for large numbers of billets and our having too little to offer".¹⁶⁰ American demands in general caused resentment for they appeared to underline an ignorance about the privations of the French. The Préfet of the Rhône repeatedly told the Americans when demands could not be met:

In the face of new requisitions, I have had repeatedly to underline the shortage of lodgings, the resentment caused by such demands on people in economically poor straits, and at times the impossibility of delivering what was asked for.¹⁶¹

(The Préfet did note that on these occasions the good sense of his arguments was recognised by the Americans).

American behaviour invited comment. PWD reported that individual cases of bad manners and tactlessness "inevitably occur and engender particularly sharp reaction in places where the German occupying forces were 'correct'".¹⁶² By October 1945 the number and frequency of American crimes had become too much for the population of the Marne département - they were glad to see them leave, as the Préfet reported:

The question of interest to the whole département is the departure of the American troops. Relations between the American and French authorities are unquestionably good, but this is not the case between the public and the soldiers of the American Army: thefts, armed attacks, and rapes have left people extremely nervous.¹⁶³

¹⁶⁰ Report of Préfet of Aube to Minister of the Interior, 1 February 1945 - Ch.XII 'Relations avec les autorités alliées civiles et militaires'; coté F/1cIII/1219; Archives Nationales, Paris ("Il y a entre nous des causes de friction du fait que les Américains demandent des cantonnements en grand nombre et que nous en avons très peu à leur offrir").

¹⁶¹ Report of Préfet of Rhône to Minister of the Interior, 1 -15 February 1945 - Ch.XII 'Relations avec les autorités alliées civiles et militaires'; coté F/1cIII/1226; Archives Nationales, Paris ("J'ai du à plusieurs reprises, en présence de nouvelles demandes de réquisitions, souligner la pénurie des locaux, la gêne de la population civile ressentirait ou même l'impossibilité absolue d'accorder ce qu'on exigeait").

¹⁶² SHAEF PWD report 'The French Political Situation' 14 December 1944; file 494; ETO Historical Division; Records of US Theaters of War, Record Group 332; National Archives, Washington DC

¹⁶³ Report of Préfet of Marne to Minister of Interior 1 - 31 October 1945 - Ch.I 'Situation Générale'; coté F/1cIII/1222; Archives Nationales, Paris ("La question qui intéresse tout le département c'est le départ des troupes américaines. Les relations entre les autorités françaises et américaines sont sans doute

In Normandy, M André Heintz recalled the fear that residents of Carentan had of some of the supply troops who set up camp in the area from the autumn of 1944. They felt that some of the troops treated the locals "wildly" ("comme sauvage") - there were fights when they were drunk, and some residents slept with axes by their beds; some of these Americans were disgusting in their behaviour.¹⁶⁴ In September 1945 the Préfet of Moselle recorded squabbles resulting in a murder and serious injuries in the suburbs of Metz:

On 20 September following a brawl a French NCO, married and father of two children, was killed and an American soldier seriously wounded. .. [On 24 September] three soldiers seriously wounded the father of a girl who was coming to her defence because of the soldiers' too-persistent attentions. .. The residents of Moselle have been profoundly shocked by these incidents, the number of which risk striking at the prestige of the American Army.¹⁶⁵

Particular concern was, not surprisingly, expressed over American troops' behaviour towards French women. M Crevon from Nancy was clear where to draw the line:

Many soldiers who do not know French point to a girl, to themselves, and rest their head on their hands as if they were going to sleep. They apparently do not have a high opinion of French girls, M Crevon says. People appreciated the soldiers' liberating their country, but they should not assume they are allowed everything.¹⁶⁶

American discriminatory behaviour towards blacks likewise attracted adverse comment from the French. The SHAEF agent reporting on conversations on a train journey noted:

excellentes, mais il n'en est pas de même entre le public et les soldats de l'armée des Etats Unis: des vols, des attaques à main-armée, des viols, rendant l'opinion extrêmement nerveuse").

¹⁶⁴ Interview with author, Caen 9 November 1990

¹⁶⁵ Report of Préfet of Marne to Minister of Interior 16 - 30 September 1945 - Ch.XII 'Relations avec les autorités alliées civiles et militaires'; coté F/1cIII/1222; Archives Nationales, Paris ("Le 20 Septembre à la suite d'une rixe un sous-officier français, marié et père de deux enfants, trouvait la mort, tandis qu'un soldat américain était grièvement blessé. .. [Le 24 Septembre] trois soldats .. qui poursuivaient de leurs assiduités une jeune fille, blessaient grièvement le père de celle-ci, venu s'interposer. .. La population mosellane a été profondément émue par ces faits dont la multiplication risque de porter atteinte au prestige de l'armée américaine").

¹⁶⁶ SHAEF PWD report 'The French Political Situation' 14 December 1944, p.2; file 494; ETO Historical Division; Records of US Theaters of War, Record Group 332; National Archives, Washington DC

Criticism of American policy towards negroes was brought up by remarks of a man standing in corridor near open door of compartment. All joined in to express at considerable length French surprise and disapproval of American treatment of the negro. They considered their own attitude to the negro to be an example to the US.¹⁶⁷

(This report was rephrased euphemistically in SHAEF's PWD Summary Report one week later: "The American policy of discrimination towards the negroes, differing as it does from the French, is not altogether understood by them").¹⁶⁸

The Communist Party played a role in the deterioration of Franco-American relations in 1944-45 through the way in which they talked up the rôle of the Soviet Union in winning the war (at the expense of recognising American efforts) and through the rumours that they spread. At a meeting held in Paris on 9 September 1944 one of the speakers (Benoit Frachon) said that it was "'thanks to the glorious Red Army' that France had been liberated; this was received with considerable applause. A reference to the part played by the Anglo-Americans was slight and aroused no applause".¹⁶⁹ The Préfet of Yonne criticised the communist press in his département for telling the people to be on their guard against the American soldiers when, in his opinion, this did not echo the sentiments of most of the population:

The communist newspaper in Yonne published an article that was unflattering to the American troops in suggesting that the population be on their guard against the soldiers. This article did not ring true with either the American authorities, who were not moved by it, nor with the majority of the population.¹⁷⁰

¹⁶⁷ *ibid.* Unevaluated Intelligence Report from HQ Allied Information Service [SHAEF], 21 October 1944

¹⁶⁸ *ibid.* Special Report (France) No.11, SHAEF PWD 27 October 1944

¹⁶⁹ *ibid.* HQ Allied Information Service, 9 September 1944 report on Communist Party meeting held at Velodrome d'Hiver, Paris

¹⁷⁰ Report of Préfet of Yonne to Minister of the Interior, 1 - 15 June 1945, Ch.XII 'Relations avec les autorités alliées civiles et militaires'; coté F/1cIII/1233; Archives Nationales, Paris ("Le journal communiste de l'Yonne a publié un article désobligeant pour les troupes américaines en demandant à la population de se méfier des soldats. .. Cet article ne semble pas avoir eu d'écho ni auprès des autorités américaines qui ne s'en sont pas émues, ni auprès de l'ensemble des habitants de l'Yonne").

Coming at a time (June 1945) when awareness of the frequency of American troop misbehaviour was widespread, the Préfet's confidence that most of his département would not go along with the article's thrust could be seen as self-deluding; in the same report he writes of the people fraternising "très volontiers" ("very readily") with the troops in the camps at Auxerre and Sens - whilst in the same month the Préfet of the Marne is noting the number of prostitutes from the Paris region installed in the towns adjoining the American camps in his département, and the following month the Préfet of Seine-et-Oise, west of Paris, notes that "in general, the American soldiers do not exhibit very decent behaviour".¹⁷¹ There was genuine concern at American behaviour, regardless of communist comment. Beevor and Cooper believe that the Party:

Was quick to exploit the reservoir of anti-American feeling. Some of the rumours spread were ludicrous, yet gained a measure of credence. The Communist minister, François Billoux, claimed that during the fighting the US air force had bombed heavily 'in a premeditated plan to weaken France'. Another rumour even claimed that the Americans had been so angry about the Franco-Soviet pact signed in Moscow [during de Gaulle's visit in November 1944] that they had allowed the Ardennes offensive to penetrate into France purely to give the French a fright.¹⁷²

For the Americans, the existence of a strong Communist Party was cause for alarm; it appeared to many to be evidence that France was its own worst enemy.

French concerns about the Americans' delay in recognising the Provisional Government, their lenient treatment of PoWs, low level of supplies, heavy demands, and poor behaviour towards both French women and their own black troops, created an atmosphere which fuelled earlier myths (about the Allies' wish to impose an 'AMGOT' on France, together with an 'American currency') and gave rise to new ones (such as those promulgated by the Communist Party). Perhaps hardest of all for the French to stomach was what Beevor and Cooper describe as "the generally justified suspicion that the

¹⁷¹ Reports of the Préfet of Marne & Seine-et-Oise to Minister of the Interior, 1 - 30 June & 1 - 31 July 1945, (both) Ch.XI 'Relations avec les autorités alliées civiles et militaires'; coté F/1cIII/1222 & 1228; Archives Nationales, Paris ("d'une manière générale, les soldats américaines n'observent pas toujours une tenue très décente").

¹⁷² Antony Beevor and Artemis Cooper, *Paris After the Liberation: 1944-49* (London, 1994), p.147

Americans preferred the Germans: in France, Americans claimed to hear only complaints and excuses, while in Germany they found a population grateful for having been saved from occupation by the Red Army".¹⁷³ Whilst the Americans' supposed preference would be hard to prove or disprove (the only evidence that is remotely close to this point being the observations of a few veterans comparing the energy of Germans involved in rebuilding with French relative inactivity), the fact that many French may have harboured this suspicion is suggestive enough of a deterioration in their feelings for the Americans.

Despite French irritations with the Americans, though, some see a residual respect and gratitude for the G.I.s. Rioux is clear that the passage of time made some of the ill-feeling inevitable - but did not erase the gratitude of liberation:

It was perhaps inevitable that all this .. should have generated resentment and even hostility among the civilian population. .. Tension mounted as the French people discovered that America was not just candy and cigarettes; in the spring of 1945 the 'US go home' graffiti multiplied and there began to be talk of the 'nouveaux occupants', while the American press contained stories about French ingratitude. Yet it would be unrealistic to take this changing view of the Americans for a sign of deep ill-feeling. Behind the daily hardships and frictions the population remained profoundly grateful to its liberators, while finding new self-confidence and encouragement in de Gaulle's steadfast defence of French sovereignty.¹⁷⁴

This conclusion recalls the quotation in section 6.4 (i) that French public opinion in April 1945 showed "abundant criticism", but "little marked antipathy in the general feeling" of the French for the Americans.¹⁷⁵ Reports of reaction to the death of President Roosevelt on 12 April 1945 support this, for they record not only feelings of shock but also warmth, and recognition of Roosevelt's (and, by implication, the United

¹⁷³ *ibid.* pp.145-6

¹⁷⁴ Rioux, *The Fourth Republic*, p.8-9

¹⁷⁵ *Some Recent Trends in French Attitudes Towards the United States*, p.1, [US] Office of War Information in collaboration with the French Institute of Public Opinion, 2 July 1945; file 494-J; ETO Historical Division; Records of US Theaters of War, Record Group 332; National Archives, Washington DC

States') part in helping in the liberation of France from Nazi rule. In Basses-Alpes the news "had provoked profound and sincere feelings amongst the people".¹⁷⁶ In Isère:

The public was staggered to learn of the death of President Roosevelt. .. He won public gratitude for the way in which he brought America into the War and helped in a big way to liberate us from the invader.¹⁷⁷

Continuing gratitude for the Liberation was clear also in the welcome given to Eisenhower in Paris in June 1945: *Le Monde* reported that "Yesterday Paris reserved for General Eisenhower one of its warmest welcomes".¹⁷⁸ *Le Monde* also shows how more mature attitudes were emerging on the vexed question of supplies. On 25 April 1945, commenting on a press conference given by Jean Monnet regarding the continuation of Lend-Lease arrangements, the paper remarked that "the shortage of American imports [over the winter] .. , contrary to what others declare, was not due to a lack of goodwill on the part of the Allies".¹⁷⁹

Beevor and Cooper - after crediting Malcolm Muggeridge with observing that "everybody ends up by hating their liberators" - note, on the other hand, how French youth "appeared infatuated with all things American".¹⁸⁰ Simone de Beauvoir wrote of the initial welcome for the G.I.s that "the easy-going manner of the young Americans incarnated liberty itself .. once again we were allowed to cross the seas".¹⁸¹ Even when the thrill of liberation had worn off, and despite the difficulties of the winter of 1944-45, for the young in France a fascination with American things:

¹⁷⁶ Report of Préfet of Basses-Alpes to Minister of the Interior, 16 April 1945 - Ch.I 'Situation Générale'; coté F/1cIII/1206; Archives Nationales, Paris (".. a provoqué une profonde et sincère émotion dans la population").

¹⁷⁷ Report of Préfet of Isère to Minister of the Interior, 15 March - 15 April 1945 - Ch.I 'Situation Générale'; coté F/1cIII/1219; Archives Nationales, Paris ("Le public a appris avec stupeur la mort du Président Roosevelt. .. La reconnaissance populaire lui est acquise pour le fait d'avoir amené l'Amérique à entrer en guerre et nous avons aidé pour une large part à nous libérer de l'envahisseur").

¹⁷⁸ *Le Monde*, 16 June 1945, p.1 ("Paris à réservé hier au général Eisenhower l'un des plus chaleureux accueils dont il a le secret")

¹⁷⁹ *Le Monde*, 25 April 1945, p.1 ("L'insuffisance des importations d'Amérique, contrairement à ce que d'aucuns prétendaient, n'était pas due à un manque d'entente avec les autorités alliées". The paper continues: "Elle était la conséquence de l'accentuation des opérations militaires, et surtout de certaines difficultés matérielles telles que le manque de tonnage et la pénurie de moyens de déchargement dans les ports français dévastés")

¹⁸⁰ Beevor & Cooper, *Paris After the Liberation*, p.148

¹⁸¹ *ibid.* p.143

.. represented both a yearning to escape from the poverty and delapidation around them, and a preference for American informality after the stuffiness of Vichy. But it also struck a deeper chord, the legend of a new world offering a vision to the old. 'America symbolised so many things!', wrote Simone de Beauvoir. 'It had stimulated our youth. It had also been a great myth - an untouchable myth'.¹⁸²

Thus the French felt that they had good cause to feel critical of the Americans - but in some respects (for the young in particular) the presence of the Americans represented change and stimulation. It was in this respect that French irritations with the Americans differed from Americans' complaints about the French.

6.5 CONCLUSIONS

In Alsace-Lorraine, the centre of military action in France from September 1944, American troops received a cool to indifferent overall welcome. The more static nature of the conflict did, though, allow some troops to experience contacts with ordinary people that evoked some understanding and sympathy. The experiences of Civil Affairs detachments in Alsace-Lorraine confirmed the overall cool welcome, but with some detachments able to take advantage of the more static conditions to establish good working relationships with local officials. The detachments had a spate of looting and disturbances by American troops to deal with, though fewer very serious crimes than in Normandy. West of Alsace-Lorraine, CA detachments maintained and built on their good working relationships with their communities.

Between September 1944 and September 1945 there was a fairly severe deterioration in relations between French and Americans on the ground, leading to 50% of American troops in France having an unfavourable opinion of the French people in an

¹⁸² *Ibid.* pp.148-9

opinion sample in August 1945; more of them liked the Germans best as people to the French. Lying behind this deterioration were American troops' feelings that the French were not putting their energies into rebuilding their country, that they were thieves, and that their army had failed to clear the Colmar Pocket. The French were sore at the Americans' tardy recognition of the Provisional Government (not that any G.I. could have hastened that at all!), the low level of American supplies, their easy treatment of German prisoners, continuing incidents of violence and the poor behaviour of some American troops towards French women. On both sides, these feelings led to the restoking of myths that had grown up earlier in the War - that the Normans had been ungrateful, that the French Army had been unable to liberate Paris without American help, or that the Americans had planned to impose an 'AMGOT' (and their own military currency) on France.

Many French and Americans realised that a principal factor in the deterioration of the relationship was the passage of time: the Americans overstayed their welcome, the war did not live up to what had seemed the promise of the summer of 1944 that it might be 'over by Christmas', and the French had to endure a physically hard winter, made tougher by food and fuel shortages. For some French - the young in particular - the continued presence of the Americans in 1945, despite the irritations, still carried welcome suggestions of change, liberty, and informality. For many American troops, on the other hand, there seemed little to be positive about in France: they were away from home, they did not (generally) speak the language, France was badly damaged and short of almost all the necessities of life, and the country did not ooze the optimism of Liberation any more. The immediate legacy of the interaction between American troops and the French people in 1944-45, therefore, was the low opinion that many American troops had of the country and its people.

CHAPTER 7

THE LEGACY

One year after the first Americans arrived in France on D-Day, the first of those that had served throughout the balance of the war in Europe were heading back to the United States. Many American troops left for home through French ports (principally Le Havre and Marseilles), the majority of them between August and December 1945. They were only too glad to be leaving the Army, Europe and France behind; the prospect of seeing family and friends again would naturally have eclipsed almost everything else. When, through questioning by friends back in the United States or through introspection, they later stopped to consider their time in France, for many of them the immediate legacy of their experiences there would have been clouded by having left at a time when Franco-American relations on the ground had fallen to a low point.

Just as for many soldiers their first introduction to France had been the War Department booklet *A Pocket Guide to France* (described in chapter 2.2), for troops still there in late-1945 another publication (believed to have been produced by the US Government), entitled *112 Gripes About the French*, might have been their final reading about France.¹ Its very existence is part of the immediate legacy of the interaction between American troops and the French people in 1944-45: it stands as testimony to the deterioration in relations - but also to continued efforts to understand the problem and to 'work it through'.

¹ *112 Gripes About the French* is available only in a facsimile reprint by Editions Hermé (Paris 1994). The reproduction is complete - all of the numbered pages are included, and the style and quality of print make it clear that it is a facsimile and not a fresh printing - but there are no indications of authorship or publication details. Only (strong) circumstantial evidence is available to indicate that it is a US Government publication: firstly, there are strong similarities of style between *112 Gripes About the French* and the *Pocket Guide to France*, particularly in the manner in which potentially negative aspects of France or the French are clearly and concisely dealt with, often with asides drawing the reader's attention to the need to tolerate and accept differences as unavoidable, even healthy; secondly, a postwar list of publications of the US Army's Information and Education Division includes under 'Miscellaneous books and pamphlets' the title *29 Gripes About the Filipinos*, produced in September 1948 (*The Army Almanac*, US Department of Defence, Washington DC, 1950, p.722) - this would suggest that a publication with a similar title was one of a series produced by the same Division.

This chapter looks at the legacy of the experiences of Americans in France in 1944-45; it considers this in two time periods. Firstly, the immediate legacy: the perspective of late-1945 as seen through the booklet *112 Gripes About the French*. The booklet is looked at not just for what it shows of the state of relations, but for its attempts to analyse the complaints and put them in perspective.

Secondly, the chapter examines the legacy in the 1990s, through an examination of veterans' views of France and the French, taken from the questionnaire responses of the full sample of 209 US veterans who were in France in World War II.

7.1 '112 GRIPES ABOUT THE FRENCH'

The opening section of the booklet *112 Gripes About the French* is illustrated with two sketches: in one a smiling American soldier, gun in hand, is the centre of a celebration, being kissed by a girl, a smiling Frenchman looking on; in the other a bemused American soldier is left on his own in a French street, with haughty-looking French civilians ignoring him. The section is entitled 'The French and Us'. With this image the (anonymous) authors of the booklet straightaway show that they understand one of the principle feelings of American troops towards the French - expressed as early on as the second 'gripe':

At first, when we came into Normandy, and then into Paris, the French gave us everything - wine, cheese, fruit, everything. They threw their arms around us and kissed us every time we turned around. They gave us the biggest welcome you ever saw. But they've forgotten. They're ungrateful.²

However, the booklet's answer limits itself to pointing out the practical limitations on French material generosity - "perhaps the French ran out of wine, cheese, fruit and cognac to pass out free" (p.3) - and does not tackle the decline in the generosity of spirit

² *ibid* p.3. Further references to this work are given after quotations in the text.

of the French welcome for the Americans.

This is unusual, for with its declared aim of bringing into focus "those irritations, dissatisfactions and misunderstandings which arise because it is often hard for the people of one country to understand the people of another" (Foreword), the booklet normally hits issues head-on. For instance, it refutes the complaint that Americans had "come to Europe twice in twenty-five years to save the French" by declaring that "it was better to fight our enemy in Europe than in America" (p.2). The answer to the question "We're always pulling the French out of a jam - did they ever do anything for us?" is that France helped the United States in "one of the greatest jams we were ever in" - standing alone in the American Revolution (p.5). American superiority about the thriving black market ("The black market is disgraceful!", declares the ninetieth gripe) is countered with the query "Where did the French black market get American cigarettes, soap, candy, chocolate, razor blades, shoes? From American soldiers who sold them - on the black market" (pp.76 & 78).

The 'gripes' reveal three themes in the authors' understanding of American attitudes towards the French in late-1945. Firstly, following US Army experiences in defeated Germany, the complaints include unfavourable comparisons of the French with the Germans. Secondly, the complaints often portray a lack of charity towards the situation that the French found themselves in at the time. And finally they suggest what ignorance there was, particularly regarding the effect of the war on France.

The section on 'The French and the Germans' includes many comparative complaints - thus, for example: "The French aren't our kind of people; the Germans are"; "The Germans are easier to get along with than the French, because the Germans are law-abiding" (pp.54 & 55). The responses remind readers about the French status as allies, about German responsibility for starting the war, and they point out that whilst French individuality might make the French appear to be a liability, this was preferable in its effects to what German 'discipline' had wrought (p.55). The familiar criticism that,

compared with the Germans, the French appeared to be doing little to clear up their bombed cities, is countered with four points. Firstly, the French lacked adequate supplies of materials and equipment; secondly, the Germans had started cleaning up bomb damage using prisoners of war before their country was invaded; thirdly, it was the Allied Military Government in Germany that was organising the clean-up - getting things done in an occupied country was easier than in a liberated but damaged country such as France; and finally comes the frank statement that, even without the above three factors, "the Germans *would* probably do a quicker and better job of cleaning up their cities than the French. So what ?" (p.62). This latter retort fits with one of the observations suggested in many of the answers: that people of different countries are, by definition, different, but that these differences do not make them inferior: "'different' does not mean 'worse'" (p.31). Similarly, every country has its good and bad individuals (pp.4 & 15). In the case of France, the nation's status as an ally, sharing the same enemy, should matter more than any differences, or any 'bad apples' amongst the French (p.5).

Lack of charity towards the French appears in grumbles such as one declaring that their "railroads are a mess; their equipment is a mess" (p.49). The answer points out that, due to Nazi requisitions and Allied bombing, in 1944 "the French found only 35% of their locomotives and 37% of their freight cars" (p.50). Similarly, French reliance on the provision of American uniforms for French troops evokes not sympathy but resentment; the booklet's answer appears to be trying to change attitudes by presenting the facts in a manner that may make a resentful American soldier see that such feelings were out of place:

"It burns me up to see a Frenchman using American uniforms"

It would burn you up more if they were in German uniforms.

Before we invaded North Africa in 1942, our government arranged to equip eleven French divisions. Why ? Because every French soldier took a place that might have had to be filled by an American. The 11,000 French soldiers who were killed in action *after* D-Day were entitled to the uniforms in which they died.

Where else could the French have gotten uniforms ? From the Germans ? France was occupied by the Germans when we were equipping the French Army. (p.84)

Whilst the booklet deals mainly with complaints which are (in the words of the booklet's Foreword) "not 'questions', but indictments which contain complicated and sweeping preconceptions", sometimes the booklet is dealing simply with ignorance. Its teaching role comes over in the answers to provocative statements such as "The French got off pretty easy in the war" (p.98). Four pages of statistics follow which show that, amongst other losses, there were approximately 200,000 military deaths, 60,000 civilians killed in bombings, 90,000 other civilian deaths in France itself, 180,000 killed or died in Germany, 765,000 workers deported to Germany, 1.7 million buildings destroyed and 5,000 bridges blown up (pp.99-102). Where French fighting ability is questioned, the American reader is reminded - or, in many cases perhaps, told for the first time - that in the Battle of France in 1940 the French lost 108,000 soldiers killed, that the French fought in Africa, Sicily and Italy as well as France and Germany, and that, amongst other things, the Resistance had successfully delayed the arrival in Normandy of a crucial Panzer Division by twelve days (pp.61,13,14). There is presumed ignorance too about France's overall contribution to mankind - "What did these frogs ever contribute to the world anyway ?" (p.27). This is answered by reference to the role of French Enlightenment writers in giving impetus to the concepts of liberty, human rights, and "government by the people" - followed by a three-page list of scientists, composers, artists, philosophers and explorers (pp.28-31). The booklet points out that between 1901 and 1939 Frenchmen won 28 Nobel Prizes to the US' 25 (p.24).

There are some 'faults' which the booklet does not disagree with, rather it seeks merely to put them into perspective. Thus, an admission that "*some* Frenchmen have certainly gyped *some* Americans" is balanced by a challenge to the complainer to consider whether he had not been 'ripped off' (in more contemporary parlance) in towns near army camps back in the US (p.21). Similarly:

"French women are easy pick-ups"

The French women who are easy pick-ups are those who are easily picked up. It is as foolish to generalize about French women from the few that any American has met as it would be to generalize about all American women from the few a man might pick up near an Army camp. (p.43)

Some characteristics of the French are seen to be American-like - and therefore probably cause for friction. The first 'gripe' in the section entitled 'The French: Characteristics' is that "The French are too damned independent" (p.20). The retort does not deny it, rather it builds on it: "They are proud. They are individualists. So are we. That's one reason there is friction between us" (p.20). A complaint that the French are always criticising is met with the riposte that it "sounds as though the French are like us" (p.24). Indeed, "We are very proud of our right to criticize" (p.24). This answer ends with an allusion to the theme of the (unflattering) comparisons with the Germans: "Beware the people who do not criticize. Beware the country where criticism is *verboden*. Beware the country where men obey like sheep" (p.21).

112 Gripes About the French uses some of the same stylistic techniques as the *France* training booklet (discussed in Chapter 2.2): pithy retorts to American preconceptions of aspects of France or the French, using short sentences to put over a careful selection of facts to dispel ignorance, or to give perspective. It was comprehensive, and yet short enough (readable in full in 45 minutes) and easy enough to 'dip into' to have had a reasonable chance of getting through to its intended audience. No records exist of its distribution, or of its impact on readers. However, its array of 'gripes' acts as a marker of what some officials believed to be prevalent American attitudes towards the French in late-1945; as such it is a valuable part of the legacy of the final months of Americans in France in 1944-45.

7.2 VETERANS' VIEWS OF FRANCE AND THE FRENCH - THE 1990s

Veterans looking back over approximately half a century include almost equally-sized groups of those with either unfavourable or favourable feelings towards France and the French in the 1990s; the unfavourable responses were marginally larger. These core constituencies appear to be of significant size - around one-third of veterans - if just the responses of those replying to the specific question "Do you hold strong views about France/the French today?" are taken into account: see Figure 13. However, only 122 out of the full sample of 209 veterans replied to this question. If a lack of response to the question is taken to equate to a 'Neutral' feeling, then it is clear that over half of US veterans of France in World War II did not hold strong views in the 1990s - see Figure 14 (next page); here, the groups with Unfavourable and Favourable feelings include only approximately one in five veterans in each.

FIGURE 13: Feelings towards France/the French in the 1990s of US veterans specifically responding to the question "Do you hold strong views about France/the French today?" (A.A.Thomson questionnaires 1990-95; 122 responses)

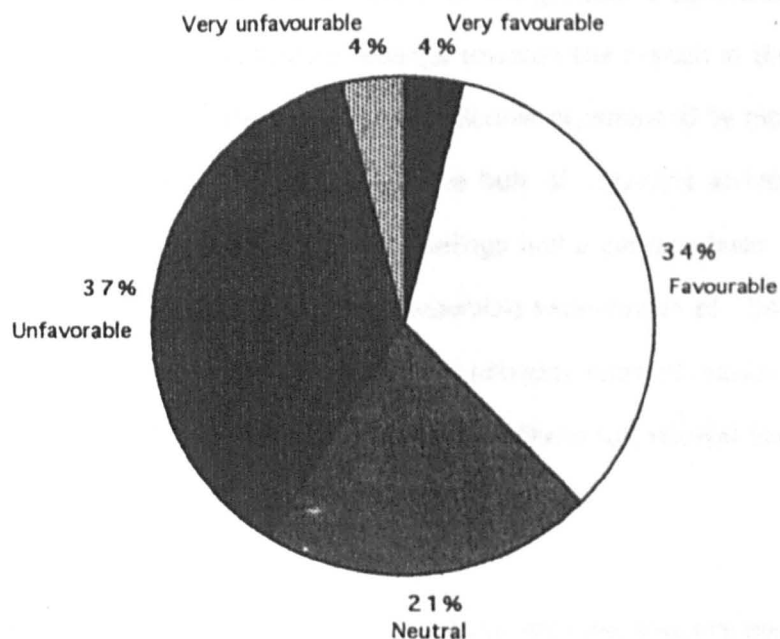
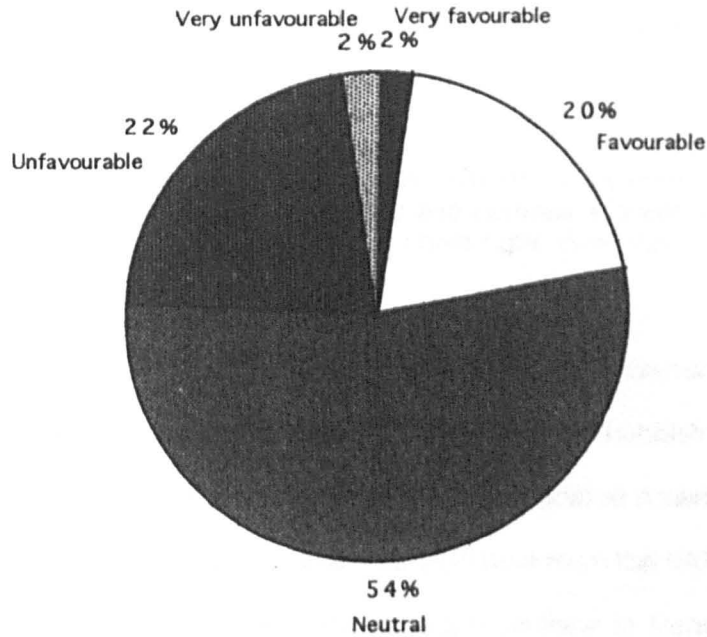


FIGURE 14: Feelings towards France/the French in the 1990s of US veterans, taking nil response to the question "Do you hold strong views about France/the French today?" to equate to 'Neutral' feeling.
(A.A.Thomson questionnaires 1990-95; full sample of 209 veterans)



Because veterans' final exposures to France and the French had on the whole been during a low time in Franco-American relationships on the ground, a significantly higher proportion of those with unfavourable feelings towards the French in the 1990s might have been expected. Instead, the overall good welcome experienced by most Americans in France - particularly in 1944, when the bulk of veterans arrived there - left a significant core of veterans with favourable feelings half a century later. For the majority of veterans questioned, the on-balance favourable experiences of 1944 appear to have acted as a counter-weight to the memory of the unhappy state of Franco-American relationships in 1945; the result is that most of them felt neutral towards the French.

With the passage of time the attitudes of many of the veterans towards the French may have mellowed; there may have been a larger core of veterans with unfavourable feelings towards the French in earlier decades. The hard core of those holding very

unfavourable views of the French in the 1990s (2% - see Figure 14) refer to familiar themes from 1944-45 - for example, collaboration, or contempt for "the assertion that the French 2nd Armored Division liberated Paris" - but also to themes that spill over into the postwar period: "[The French are] full of bombast and willing to go whichever way is to their advantage even if it is morally wrong".³ Veteran Bert Edelberg vented his feelings:

[I] believe the French are arrogant, with a false opinion of superiority, indifferent to foreigners, [showing] ingratitude and perhaps a latent anti-semitism. Militarily I don't believe the French could fight their way out of a paper bag.⁴

Adjectives that appear in the descriptions of those with plain unfavourable feelings towards the French (22% - see Figure 14) include "ungrateful", "snobbish", "aloof", and "greedy".⁵ These veterans did not feel that the French appreciated American sacrifices on France's behalf.⁶ De Gaulle's withdrawal of France from the NATO command structure in 1966 (which necessitated NATO HQ moving from Paris to Mons, Belgium) clearly rankled:

De Gaulle was *always* a bastard! After he forced all US forces out of France in the postwar years (leaving behind only the bodies of those who had died liberating France in the two World Wars), I became very 'francophobic'!⁷

One veteran bracketed this action with French refusal to allow US planes to fly over French territory for the April 1986 bombing of Tripoli - both examples, in veterans' eyes, that "they do not back the USA". Several felt that the French "did not support the American stand on many world-wide issues after the war".⁸

At the other end of the scale, veterans with very favourable feelings towards France and the French in the 1990s (2% - see Figure 14) used phrases such as "I like

³ I Berkowitz, M White, A Bauman questionnaires (unless otherwise indicated, questionnaires are those organised by the author 1990-95. For details and a copy of the questionnaire see Appendix 2). 'Questionnaire' is abbreviated to 'q.' in subsequent footnotes in this chapter.

⁴ B Edelberg q.

⁵ C Cornazzani, E Aboussie, E Koskinen, R Lingert qs.

⁶ R Brown, G Madden qs.

⁷ J Margreiter q.

⁸ L Coen, A Welle, M Dilthey qs.

them", and "Wonderful people".⁹ Asking the question "Do you hold strong views about France/the French today?" brought out some wistful memories:

Oui! The glories of the countryside - especially the grand valleys of the Loire and the Seine - attract me; the people have been wonderful to me.¹⁰

I love the French people in Normandy: they admire and appreciate American veterans. They smile at my broken French, but I sound better than their broken English. I spoke on French TV and to a class of French children. I lived with a French family, sold a cow in French, marched in parades.¹¹

One veteran who had very favourable feelings towards the French in the 1990s wrote disparagingly about "these younger generation 'swinger group types' that go to France, splash the American dollar, make airs and show-off, come back to the USA and tell bad tales"; he was aware of general bad feeling towards France, but felt that it was unwarranted.¹²

Words like "respect", "proud" and "civilised" appear in the reports of those veterans with a favourable attitude towards the French (20% - see Figure 14).¹³ Several responses echo themes in some of the answers in *112 Gripes About the French* - thus, Jack Chavez notes of France's independent streak: "I see them as being *really* independent - but then that's a quality we Americans also have".¹⁴ Similarly, the fact that there are good and bad individuals in all countries is brought out: "They are a good, honest race, and to be respected; there are some that are undesirable the same as we have in our own country".¹⁵ Such a common-sense approach is seen also in the line that "They are as nice to you as you are to them".¹⁶

The tremendous material and political progress made by France since World War II evokes favourable comment. One veteran wrote how the French had "come a long way from the troubled, weakly-led post-World War II time. On a scale of 1 to 10, I would

⁹ E Chamness, D Murray qs.

¹⁰ C Harmon q.

¹¹ W Irvin q.

¹² J Nichols q.

¹³ e.g. R Atkinson, G Meril, R Gravin, L Rothbard qs.

¹⁴ J Chavez q.

¹⁵ J Constable q.

¹⁶ C Henne q.

rate them a 3 in 1944, and a strong 8 today."¹⁷ The political independence that went with this overall revival - and particularly de Gaulle's role - did not go unnoticed by veterans with favourable views of the French. Whilst few go so far as Thomas Hickman who eulogised "General de Gaulle - great man, great patriot!", some in this group of veterans show a sense of sneaking respect for France often taking an independent stand in the world: "A beautiful country, proud people, great *frustrating* ally".¹⁸ Others take a pitying (populist) view of politicians: "[They are] thrifty, hardworking, intelligent people that deserve better political leadership than they have - but then we all need that!"; "Some things about their leadership I don't like, but the mainstream French man and family are our friends".¹⁹ One expression of France's revival of prosperity, stability and pride experienced by several veterans were the D-Day 50th Anniversary celebrations in June 1994. These were undertaken in a sober but confident manner, and proved to be a skillful blend of both ceremony at the international level and goodwill amongst veterans and younger generations at the local level. Alan Miller's feelings towards the French were clearly affected by the celebrations:

I feel very supportive of the French today. On the [50th] Anniversary they .. welcomed Americans who returned so warmly that the memories of this experience will last always. I now have a new and genuine interest in my life: FRANCE!²⁰

Another veteran (who "[felt] better for the 50th Anniversary") wrote that "later generations seemed more steeped in our contribution to defeat Hitler".²¹

One part of the legacy of Franco-American interactions in 1944-45 is veterans' personal links with the French. Of the full sample of 209 veterans who responded to questionnaires, 33 (i.e. 16%) reported developing lasting personal links with the French. Of these, five reported that the contacts had stopped, in most cases a few years after the end of the war; three reported links that had developed since the war, usually through visits to battle areas. Two of the thirty-three developed a particularly serious

¹⁷ K Haeuser q.

¹⁸ D Oden q.

¹⁹ C Peterson, H Bishop qs.

²⁰ A Miller q.

²¹ W Wikin q.

and lasting link - they married French women. Thus, Lloyd Coen "married a French girl on June 8, 1946 - she could not speak any English at the time; she has a mother 91 years old still living in France"; James Pullella wrote in 1990 that he had "married a girl I met in Paris and have been happily married for 43 years".²² For some, the links have brought exchange visits and ties which were as strong in the 1990s as they had always been: James Caniglia, for example, had links with a family he met near Chartres - "we have visited each other quite a bit - it's a bright spot in my life".²³ Another veteran befriended a Normandy family who helped tend a wounded GI's eyes - "We [have] visited them, they came to our daughter's wedding. Their grandson was our guest here five years ago for two months".²⁴

The 84% who formed no links stand testimony to the speed of advance across France of most troops, the language barrier, and a measure of disinterest. For some, however, links would have been too painful. Justin Baca writes:

The combat experience was so very traumatic to me that I cut *all* ties with the past upon returning to civilian life. Only recently, I met a French granddaughter of a survivor and recalled, with sadness, events.²⁵

The 16% who did form lasting links, though, demonstrate that overall the interactions of French and Americans were far from negative or unproductive.

7.3 CONCLUSIONS

The immediate legacy of the experiences of Americans in France in 1944-45 is captured in the booklet *112 Grips About the French*: suspicion, carping and ignorance on behalf of many Americans, countered by a serious attempt to redress the balance. The booklet suggests that many Americans showed a lack of charity towards the predicament of the French, and that this often manifested itself in unflattering (and inappropriate)

²² L Coen & J Pullella qs.

²³ S Caniglia q.

²⁴ A Welle q.

²⁵ J Baca q.

comparisons with the Germans.

The longer-term legacy of veterans' experiences in France is shown by the division of their feelings towards France and the French in the 1990s. A majority were neutral in their feelings; of the rest, the proportion expressing favourable (and very favourable) feelings was within two percentage points of the number expressing opposite views (see Figure 14). Thus, despite most American soldiers having left Europe at a time when relations with the French on the ground were at a very low ebb, the legacy of feeling approximately half a century later had not been badly skewed to the negative. This is testimony to the overall healthy state of Franco-American relations on the ground in 1944 in particular. For many soldiers the experiences of 1944 were enough for them either to retain their good feelings towards the French, or to balance out later negative experiences and leave them with overall neutral feelings about the French.

A comparison of Figure 14 with Figure 5 in Chapter 2 shows how opinions about France and the French shifted between the eve of the soldiers' arrival in France and their considering their reflective feelings in the 1990s. On the eve of arrival, 53% had felt overall sympathetically disposed towards France and the French, and only 8% had negative perceptions (39% had split opinions, were unclear, or had no comment). By the 1990s the 8% with negative feelings had grown to 24% unfavourably disposed towards the French; the 53% overall sympathetically disposed had split into 22% with favourable feelings, with the rest forming the majority of the 54% expressing neutral feelings in the 1990s. Whilst the unknown role of the 39% who expressed no clear view in 1944 makes comparative analysis somewhat uncertain, it seems clear that veterans' experiences in France had boiled 1944's sympathetic majority down to a core 22% who clearly liked and respected the French. Not so much can be read into the rise from 8% to 24% of those with negative feelings, since that increase of 16% only required a shift of four out of ten of those expressing no clear view in 1944 (the 39% referred to above). What is most striking, given on the positive side the overall good welcome in 1944 and on the negative side the serious deterioration of relations in the winter of 1944-45 and

beyond, is the legacy of 54% with neutral feelings in the 1990s: for the majority of American veterans, their experiences in France in 1944-45 appear to have balanced themselves out.

CHAPTER 8

CONCLUSION

The spectrum of American experiences of France and the French in 1944-45 ranged from the highpoint of the tumultuous welcome at the Liberation of Paris to the low-point of the shameful behaviour towards the French exhibited by American soldiers onboard a train bound for Marseilles (reported in Richard Rivard's diary in September 1945). To draw conclusions about the perceptions of, and relations with, France and the French of Americans in France in 1944-45, however, requires a deliberate drawing away from selective episodes, and a move towards a broad chronological portrait. The use of selective episodes has been responsible for inadequate representations of the interactions between Americans and French. A broad picture is essential - broad not just in terms of sources, but of chronology: it is necessary to span the whole overall experience - from soldiers' feelings prior to arrival in France, through all the theatres of conflict, to the immediate legacy as the bulk of troops headed back home in the second half of 1945. That is what this Chapter seeks to do - summarising the findings from the main text, before drawing them together into answers to the main questions raised in the Introduction.

Most ordinary American soldiers preparing to land in France received no briefings or other active training concerning the French, but, nevertheless, they were better prepared for their interactions with the French than that might lead one to expect. It is understood that most American troops received the official *Pocket Guide to France*, a successful publication which served to enhance an already reasonable level of knowledge of Franco-American historical links. It also introduced the soldiers to some rudiments of the French language. By the eve of their departure for France only one soldier in four knew no French at all; most could ask a few questions, such as how to find their way. By the time these troops arrived in France, a majority of them were sympathetically

disposed towards the country and its inhabitants; less than one in ten had a definitely negative perception. There was of course some disinterest in France ('just another country'), but this was not the majority feeling.

US Civil Affairs (CA) staff, specially trained to take important roles in the handling of the interface between the advancing armies and the local population, received lengthy training regarding France. The core training - two months at Civil Affairs Training Schools run in American universities - gave them considerably more knowledge and understanding of France and the French than ordinary soldiers had. However, although language training formed an important part of the programme, in the event relatively few of them could speak French with a fair degree of fluency.

When both of these sets of soldiers arrived in Normandy in June 1944, the majority reported a healthy welcome. The military uncertainties of June and July 1944, together with resentment at excessive Allied bombing, led to some localised feelings that the Normans were 'ungrateful'. But this contrasts with the overall good reports of the American troops' reception by the French people: seven out of ten soldiers recalled a good or excellent welcome. The Battle of Normandy was long and painful, but when communities were liberated both the liberators and the liberated were often thrilled by what they were experiencing and wanted to share it together. Americans and French offered each other mutual help: the French were forthcoming with information or local provisions, the Americans with candy, cigarettes or medical help. During the time in Normandy some American troops committed serious crimes, including instances of rape and murder; these naturally created difficulties for the CA detachments who had to deal with the consequences. On the whole, however, the CA experience in Normandy was a healthy one, with mutual respect developing quickly.

After the break-out from Normandy in early August, the six weeks of the American sweep across northern France developed into a high point of Franco-American relationships; nearly nine out of ten American troops recalled a good or excellent

welcome from the French. The speed of the American advance and a widespread optimism that the war might be over relatively soon meant that there was minimal trouble between troops and civilians.

The Liberation of Paris on 25 August 1944 was the climax in terms of French goodwill towards the Americans. However, the memory of General Bradley ordering an American Infantry Division to help the French complete the city's Liberation sowed an unjustified measure of contempt by some American soldiers for the French military. In the invasion of southern France in the same month, the overall welcome was, again, healthy and enthusiastic. Problems developed with the unruliness of elements of the Resistance, with poor behaviour by American troops in the Nice area, and with labour for unloading much-needed supplies, but these difficulties were not sufficiently serious to eradicate the beneficial effect of the heady welcome and the speedy advance of the American troops northwards.

The relative euphoria of August and early-September 1944 was short-lived, but it can no more be dismissed as an anomaly than can the huge military successes of those weeks. The big territorial gains gave the Allies credibility, freed millions of French citizens, and brought victory significantly closer; the generally excellent relations between French citizens and officials and American troops added an episode to the history of Franco-American contacts to match that of Lafayette or World War I, and provided some 'fat' to live off in the lean months that followed.

From September 1944, American troops received a cool to indifferent welcome as the campaign reached Alsace-Lorraine. The more static nature of the conflict did, though, allow some troops to experience contacts with ordinary people that evoked some understanding and sympathy. The CA experience in the region confirmed the overall cool welcome, but with some detachments able to take advantage of the more static conditions to establish good working relationships with local officials. There was a spate of looting and disturbances by American troops, though less very serious crimes than there had

been in Normandy. In the rest of France at this time, CA detachments maintained and built on their good working relationships with their communities, though tensions over billeting and troop behaviour caused concern.

In the twelve months after September 1944 there was a serious deterioration in relations between French and Americans on the ground. This left half of American troops in France having an unfavourable opinion of the French people by the time of an August 1945 opinion sample; more of them preferred the Germans as people to the French. Lying behind this deterioration were American troops' feelings that the French were not putting their energies into rebuilding their country, that they were thieves, and that their army had failed to clear the 'Colmar Pocket' in Alsace. The French, in turn, were sore at the United States' late recognition of the Provisional Government, the low level of American supplies, their easy treatment of German prisoners, their heavy demands, and the poor behaviour of some American troops towards French women. On both sides, these feelings led to the restoking of myths that had grown up in earlier months - that the Normans had been ungrateful, that the French Army had been unable to liberate Paris without American help, or that the Americans had planned to impose an 'AMGOT' on France.

A principal factor in the deterioration of the relationship was the effect of the passage of time: the Americans overstayed their welcome, the war did not live up to what had seemed the promise of the summer of 1944 that it might soon be over, and the French had to endure a physically hard winter, made tougher by food and fuel shortages. However, for some French - the young in particular - the continued presence of the Americans in 1945, despite the irritations, carried welcome suggestions of change, liberty, and informality. For many American troops, on the other hand, there seemed little to be positive about in France: they were away from home, they did not (generally) speak the language, the country was badly damaged and short of most of the necessities of life, and no longer sparkled with the optimism of Liberation.

The immediate legacy of the interaction between American troops and the French people in 1944-45 is captured in the US booklet *112 Gripes About the French*: a low American opinion of the French, with suspicion, carping and ignorance on the part of many Americans. The booklet countered this with a serious attempt to redress the balance. The longer-term legacy of veterans' experiences in France is shown by the division of their feelings towards France and the French in the 1990s. A majority were neutral in their feelings; of the rest, the proportions expressing either favourable or unfavourable feelings were of nearly equal size. Thus, despite most American soldiers leaving at a time when relations with the French on the ground were at a very low ebb, the balance of feeling approximately half a century later had not in fact been badly skewed to the negative. This is testimony to the overall healthy state of Franco-American relations on the ground in 1944 in particular. For many soldiers the experiences of 1944 were enough for them either to retain their good feelings towards the French, or to balance out later negative experiences and leave them with overall neutral feelings about the French.

From this summary of findings from the main text, it is possible to draw together an answer to the central question - How did the interaction of ordinary Americans and French in 1944-45 work out? It can be shown that the interaction was a healthy one on balance; but to appreciate the ingredients of that balance requires consideration of the differing welcomes received by the Americans, understanding of the changing possibilities for developing relations between Americans and French, and analysis of the deterioration in relations from autumn 1944 onwards. In Normandy (June and July 1944) the welcome was on the whole a good one, during the months of August and early September 1944 it was overall good to excellent, but in Alsace-Lorraine it was generally cool to indifferent. In Normandy and during August and early September 1944 the good welcome led to healthy relations, especially for the CA detachments; many ordinary soldiers exchanged mutual help with the French, took part in bartering that was generally beneficial (usually cigarettes and candy for fresh food and drink), and made limited personal contacts. The rapid sweeps across France, in August especially,

severely limited the opportunities for contact, but this was compensated for emotionally by the ecstatic 'flying' welcome that the mobile troops received; where relations could develop further, they were positive. The cooler welcome in Alsace-Lorraine came at the time when a serious deterioration in Franco-American relations on the ground began. This did not stop CA detachments from establishing some good working relationships, and (a limited number of) other soldiers from establishing relationships which allowed them to develop some understanding of and sympathy for local citizens. Whilst the deterioration was principally caused by the effect of the passage of time - the Americans 'outstaying their welcome', combined with disappointment on both sides that the war had not ended by then - it was exacerbated by references to three sets of problems that had developed in the relationship. Firstly, reports that the Normans had been 'ungrateful'; these were exaggerations of what had been localised disquiet at 'excessive' Allied bombing and an understandable concern at what the final outcome of the invasion would be. Secondly, the story that the French Army had been unable to liberate Paris without American help; General Bradley's calling in the 4th Infantry Division had been driven by impatience rather than strict military necessity, but allowing the French 2nd Armored Division to take the lead anyway was what irked American soldiers. Thirdly, tales of the cool welcome in Alsace-Lorraine; the suspicion of American soldiers at the German-speaking residents in the north-east of the region may have had a reciprocal effect here.

Contempt of Americans for the French grew, during 1945 in particular. The French were irritated by the Americans, too, but the edge was slightly taken off this by a measure of respect (hidden much of the time), and the knowledge that the presence of the Americans represented change. In these circumstances, the experience of the Americans in France in 1944-45 ended on a very low note - lower for the Americans than the French. But on balance the interaction had worked out reasonably well, certainly better than neutral overall: given that these Americans were in France in wartime - a time of destruction and shortages for the French, and personal danger and uncertainty for the Americans - , that the war dragged on for many months more than it had appeared it would during August 1944, that soldiers anywhere are likely to contain an element that

will behave badly (even appallingly), that the government of the United States refused to recognise the Provisional Government of France for nearly five months after D-Day, and that the soldiers and civilians spoke different languages, - given all these circumstances, the interaction was a healthy one on balance.

There were instances of clear American arrogance, just as there were demonstrations of French ingratitude. These uglier sides were naturally more visible after relations started to slide in the winter of 1944-45. But the examples of openness, warmth, and friendliness on both sides are too clear for clichéd portraits of the 'bad Americans' or the 'bad French' to stand for the overall experience. The fact that 22% of veterans retained a good or excellent feeling for France and the French in the 1990s, and 54% a neutral one - particularly given that most troops had left France when the Franco-American relationship was at its lowest point - points to how positive overall the relationship was in 1944 such as to ride out the bad feelings of the winter and 1945.

The question of secondary, but broader, historical interest that this study is able to inform is the issue of whether members of a friendly invading army inevitably look at events from a purely military, operational perspective, and the liberated population look at them from a more civilian, political perspective. Is this the case, and, if so, does it suggest that any serious differences that arise are bound to be irreconcilable ?

The ultimate necessity to put military questions first should have meant that in any serious situation local and national political questions would have been subordinated to military requirements. The liberators, even CA staff, were after all literally wearing military hats; they had recently completed a period of intense military training - or even combat (the Mediterranean) - and were steeped in a military outlook. The liberated population were only just freed from a period of repressed political and cultural activity, and presumably would be all too keen to settle outstanding local questions - from dealing with collaborators down to tackling practical parochial problems.

In fact one can see, on the ground, a blurring of these anticipated views, and therefore a diminution of the irreconcilability of differences that did occur. For amongst the liberated the vast bulk of the population were all too aware of their own need for military operations to be of paramount importance: if invading Allies did not keep the Germans away then liberation would have been a mirage. This perspective was naturally easier to attain when gunfire could be heard than when all had been quiet for weeks, but it was when the military situation was difficult that it was critical not to have irreconcilable differences between the military and the liberated population.

Likewise the military perspective of the liberating soldiers was not monolithic. For infantrymen and supporting troops, the sight of civilians struggling to rebuild their lives tended to bring home to them that the whole struggle was ultimately about ensuring that such ordinary people could indeed rebuild and restore their communities. Contact with local citizens, however fleeting, enabled soldiers to take onboard the civilian, local perspective. Only amongst trained CA staff, perhaps, could that perspective be expected to stretch to include an understanding of specifically political questions, but the ordinary soldier's exposure to a civilian rather than a military perspective was crucial. Amongst the CA staff, the more astute realised that their army's need to have military operations paramount could in fact only be addressed by some involvement in local politics, loosely defined. If politics could not be allowed to jeopardise operational necessities, then they had to be understood and, to an extent, addressed.

This leads to a begged question: namely, whether a distinction between political and military issues in relations between liberators and liberated is actually a real and significant one at all. President Roosevelt in particular insisted on political questions being left until after the war was over, on the premise that without military victory political questions were theoretical ones only. This stance is what lay behind his policy of non-recognition of the French Provisional Government. Although enhanced by a personal dislike of de Gaulle - and Roosevelt's not wishing too openly to admit that

maintaining diplomatic links with Vichy from 1940 until 1942 had been shown by events to be not only morally but strategically wrong - the artificial holding back on addressing political questions is the key to understanding Roosevelt's French policy of 1940-44.¹ It led to impasse in the Allies' trying to conclude a formal Civil Affairs Agreement with France, with the result that this was not finalised until 25 August 1944 - ten weeks after CA activities had started in Normandy. (The CA work, though, had not seriously suffered from the absence of the Agreement).

The experiences of the Americans in France in 1944-45, and particularly those of the CA staff, show that rigid distinction between political and military questions in relations between liberators and liberated was not appropriate. The liberation of a nation by massive ground forces involves a web of political and military interests and challenges and rapid changes - ones that were on the whole skillfully handled by Americans in France.

The Americans were helped in their task by their relative freedom from colonial attitudes. Whilst many Americans in France in 1944-45 may well have viewed the US rôle in the invasion of Europe as that of assisting the tired and degenerate Old World (again), of coming to win the war through American vigour and know-how, this was an attitude of cultural arrogance rather than colonial ignorance. Most of the ordinary Americans in France in 1944-45 would have wanted nothing better than to return to the US as quickly as possible - to leave war-damaged, materially-stretched, hard-to-understand Europe behind. Before the shocks of the early Cold War called the US back again, many Americans in the 1940's had no intention at all of their country maintaining any presence in Europe, no desire to be masters in any of its troublesome territories. Although Americans may have wanted to 'show the Europeans a thing or two' whilst they were 'Over There', they were thinking of American know-how, prosperity, informality and generosity - the ingredients, in their eyes, of American superiority - rather than imposing control of any sort. The country was ready to play its part in rebuilding

¹ Closely analysed in JG Hurstfield, *America and the French Nation 1940-45* (Chapel Hill, N.C., 1986)

Germany (including duties of occupation) and, this time, it would take a leading rôle in the United Nations organisation, but Americans did not seek any direct involvement in Europe for its own sake.

The United States at this time was causing friction with the UK (and France) because of Roosevelt's determinedly anti-colonial stance; acknowledging the US' abhorrence of colonialism in the mid-1940's is ironic from the perspective of fifty years later, with knowledge of criticism that the United States' superpower status later led her to colonial tendencies (particularly during the Cold War), but it is important. This anti-colonialism went back further than just the isolationism of the inter-war years, having roots in America's War of Independence. There had been important exceptions in American history, principally some aspects of continental expansion in the nineteenth century (though the treatment of Native Americans, it could be argued, was more extermination than colonialism) and also the acquisition of territories in the Pacific at the turn of the century; the United States was also far from free of international racism (as much of its propaganda against the Japanese in World War II showed); but these facts do not alter the strongly-held American antipathy to colonialism as practised by the major European powers. This lack of any 'colonial baggage' is an important ingredient in why the Americans' interactions with the French in 1944-45 were, on balance, healthy: it meant that the American liberation of France was devoid of overtly colonial or bad historical overtones. (By contrast, any British actions in France in 1944 could not help but be shadowed by the centuries-old antagonisms of two powerful European neighbours; because of her colonial approach to international affairs and her history of dealings with the French, Britain had to tread very warily).² Because the American liberation of France was devoid of overtly colonial or bad historical overtones, it was more straightforward than it would otherwise have been and was therefore able to bear up reasonably well under the strains that did afflict it - a mix of practical and cultural strains, rather than 'colonial' ones.

² Britain's rôle in France was made easier by the United States' obviously leading position amongst the Allies, the fact that the area covered by British military operations in France was relatively small (roughly a strip about 40 miles wide stretching from Caen through Rouen and up to Lille - see Map 8 in section 5.1 (i)), and the fact that her front line had passed into Belgium by early September 1944.

Although some of the French saw threats in the way the Americans behaved, events could not sustain any fear that these threats might have been colonial in character or intent. A colonial style of liberation would have caused extremely deep dissension between French and Americans and would have seriously threatened the stability of what was the fighting front in 1944 and the supply line in 1945. 'AMGOT', or at least the exercise by the Supreme Commander of the full powers embedded in CA policies, would then have become a reality. As it was, the French had enough challenges dealing with the Americans as they were - disarmingly friendly at times, demanding or arrogant at other times, impatient at French ways - and, from the autumn of 1944, the Americans found it increasingly difficult to tolerate the French. The lack of colonial designs in the Americans made them easier for the French to deal with (it contributed, for instance, to American openness), and the fact of positive shared historical links - particularly ones so recently reinforced (in World War I) - gave both sides some mental support to fall back on.

Their experiences in Europe knocked the rough edges off the arrogance of some Americans, reinforcing how fortunate the United States was materially and (through its distance from aggressors) geographically. Walter Powell of 6th Armored Division summed up his impression of serving overseas:

I felt sorry for the English and French people and thought how lucky I was to be born in America. My impression was that they had very little before the war started and we have so much.³

Being landed in France in 1944-45 made starkly clear to most Americans how lucky they were. In their resultant desire to help, their openness and their generosity, many Americans entered into interactions with the French in a spirit of sympathy. In the summer of 1944 the majority felt good about their welcome from the French people, who were themselves thrilled to be liberated, and fascinated by their liberators.

³ Walter Powell, 6th Armored Division, US Army World War II Army Service Experiences questionnaire (question 26a), US Army Military History Institute, Carlisle, Pa.

Troubles came, for 1944 played out differently to 1918 - war raged on French soil for a full nine months after the huge assault on D-Day (in 1918 less than two months elapsed from the start of the major American offensives to the Armistice), and weariness entered the relationship between French and Americans. The lack of any significant hidden American agenda - particularly their lack of any colonial or quasi-colonial approach - meant that the interaction between ordinary Americans and French in 1944-45 was on balance a healthy one, the openness and warmth of the summer of 1944 tipping the balance against the bitterness and ill-feeling shown by many in 1945. Pre-war isolationist America had met Europe 'face-to-face', and both sides had gained something in understanding. Although both sides had been bruised in the process, French citizens and American troops had played out an episode in the history of Franco-American contacts that was grander in scale than any that had gone before.

Appendix 1

THE DEPLOYMENT OF U.S. TROOPS IN EUROPE

To give a clear picture of the scale of the US involvement in France in 1944-45 (for the purposes of the Introduction to this work) necessitates a comparison of the number of US troops in France and Germany, since these were the US' two largest involvements on the European continent in World War II. To do this requires consideration of several figures, and several factors - these are set out in this Appendix.

Surprisingly, there are no readily-available comprehensive statistics on the numbers of US troops in different countries in World War II. Information on overall troop levels on the Continent was gathered by SHAEF (see Figure 15), and information on the deployment of US Divisions by country is available (Figure 16), but figures for the number of US troops in France and Germany specifically can only be estimated: this is done in Figure 17 (by calculations which draw on Figures 15 and 16). Estimating troop levels requires careful consideration of the denser deployment of support troops and the Army Air Force in France as against Germany, explained in the Notes to Figure 17 (ii).

With these final estimates in Figure 17 (ii) available, the first set of figures to be considered concerns the peak commitment, the maximum number of troops that were deployed in a country at any one time. For France this was an estimated 1,300,000, in each of December 1944 and March 1945; for Germany, an estimated 1,550,000, in April/May 1945: see Figure 17 (ii).

Secondly, there is the number of troops who ever set foot in the country in question - the total number of troops stationed in a country, for short or long stays, at any time between D-Day and VE Day. For France this was an estimated 2,370,000; for Germany

it was approximately 1,550,000: see Figure 17 (iii). In the case of Germany, the number of troops involved at the peak (April/early-May 1945) was the same as the number of those who ever entered the country - all those American troops who were going to be in Germany in this period were all there together in April/early-May 1945 (the peak was soon passed: by VE Day itself 11 Divisions had advanced into Austria and Czechoslovakia). In France, by contrast, of the total of 55 Army Divisions that had experience in France, there were never more than 23 in the country at any one time (see Figure 16); when US strength had built up by August 1944 to over 20 Divisions, some of the forward Divisions were shortly to move into Belgium and the western fringes of Germany.

Thirdly, there is the size of involvement as measured by a combination of numbers of troops and length of stay. A calculation of 'US troop-months' for the period from D-Day to VE Day shows an estimated 10.9 million in France and 4.5 million in Germany: see Figure 17 (ii), box. Calculations of 'US troop-months' in both countries for a similar-length period after VE Day (May 1945 to March 1946 - see Figure 18, box) give an estimated 3 million for France and 6.4 million for Germany; totals for the overall period June 1944 to March 1946 would be 13.9 million for France and 10.9 million for Germany therefore.

Fourthly, there is the proportion of the US Army who had any experience in France. The estimated 2,370,000 who were in France at some point between D-Day and VE Day represented 29% of the entire US Army, and 44% of all those who served overseas: see Figure 19. Equivalent figures for soldiers with experience in Germany are 19% and 29% respectively.

In terms of both the number of troops having experience of the country and their length of stay, the US troop involvement in France was larger than that in Germany; only in terms of the maximum number of troops deployed at the same time was the involvement in Germany bigger. The rapid build-up in France in 1944, the lengthy

Alsace-Lorraine campaign over the winter, and the presence of most of the large Communications Zone (COMZ) force in France meant that the amount of US troops' exposure to France added up to more than that in Germany - even when the larger troop numbers in Germany in the first eleven months of the postwar occupation are taken into account.

The final Table in this Appendix, Figure 20, sets out the location of each US Army Division under SHAEF on the Continent between D-Day and VE Day. This data was used in compiling Figure 16, but it is interesting in its own right as an illustration of the very different geographical experiences of US troops in Europe: of the 60 Divisions, 25 were involved in the fighting in France in the summer of 1944, and 19 were involved in Alsace-Lorraine; 14 did not arrive until 1945, and 5 spent no time in France. 18 had experience in Germany before the December 1944 Battle of the Bulge (this early experience was principally around Aachen and the Heurtgen Forest, near the Belgian border). All but 3 of the 60 Divisions had entered Germany by mid-April 1945.

Figure 15: Number of troops under SHAEF on the Continent, D-Day to VE Day

	10-Jun-44	2-Jul-44	15-Aug-44 <i>estimate</i>	15-Sep-44	15-Oct-44 <i>estimate</i>	15-Nov-44 <i>estimate</i>	15-Dec-44	15-Jan-45	15-Feb-45	15-Mar-45	15-Apr-45
Total US troops under SHAEF on Continent	169,091	467,882	1,100,000	1,376,565	1,500,000	1,800,000	1,965,601	2,088,397	2,251,528	2,468,188	2,585,382
Total Allied troops under SHAEF on Continent	367,825	952,061	1,850,000	2,241,162	2,500,000	2,950,000	3,240,630	3,382,133	3,595,483	3,848,790	4,137,401
US as % of total:	46%	49%	59%	61%	60%	61%	61%	62%	63%	64%	62%

SOURCES: 10-Jun-44 10 June 1944 report 'Progress of build-up: position at midnight 9/10 June'; WO219/190; Public Record Office, Kew
 2-Jul-44 SHAEF G4 Daily Logistical Bulletin no.22, 2 July 1944; WO219/190; Public Record Office, Kew
 15-Sep-44 18 September 1944 SHAEF Report 'COSITINTREP No.166 - Naval'; WO219/190; Public Record Office, Kew
 15 Dec. onwards Semi-monthly Reports of Allied Personnel Strength on the Continent; WO219/3243; Public Record Office, Kew

Other nationalities, 15 Dec. 1944:

Britain	810,584	25%
France	293,411	9%
Canada	116,610	4%
Italy	28,800	1%
Poland	16,924	1%
Other	8,700	0%

- NOTES: 1. SHAEF = Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Force
 2. Troops involved in 'Dragoon' landings in Southern France are included in 15 August estimate, although they were not officially absorbed into SHAEF until September 1944.
 3. All US figures include the Army Air Force (approximately 8% of the total) and Navy shore personnel (less than 1%).
 4. Estimates are the author's.

Figure 16: Number of US Army Divisions in France, Belgium/Holland, and Germany: D-Day to VE Day (at mid-month each month)

	15-Jun-44	15-Jul-44	15-Aug-44	15-Sep-44	15-Oct-44	15-Nov-44	15-Dec-44	15-Jan-45	15-Feb-45	15-Mar-45	15-Apr-45	Total no. of Divisions ever in the country/area in this period:
France	11	15	23	20	19	20	22	20	23	18	3	55
Belgium/Holland	0	0	0	4	3	6	4	19	14	5	0	26
Germany	0	0	0	4	9	11	17	10	19	36	57	57
TOTAL:	11	15	23	28	31	37	43	49	56	59	60	

Percentage of total number of Divisions, by area:

France	100%	100%	100%	71%	61%	54%	51%	41%	41%	31%	5%
Belgium/Holland	0%	0%	0%	14%	10%	16%	9%	39%	25%	8%	0%
Germany	0%	0%	0%	14%	29%	30%	40%	20%	34%	61%	95%

SOURCE: calculated from Figure 20, whose data is from Shelby Stanton, *Orders of Battle: US Army in World War II* (Washington DC, 1984)

- NOTE RE. DIVISIONS: (i) Divisions are the largest US Army units with a prescribed basic structure. Divisions are clustered into Corps, which themselves are clustered into Armies.
 (ii) US Army Infantry Divisions in World War II had approximately 16,000 troops [Charles Macdonald, *The Last Offensive* (Washington DC, 1972), p.16]; Armored Divisions had approximately 11,000 and Airborne Divisions 8,500 [Maurice Matloff, ed., *American Military History* (Washington DC, 1969), p.462].
 Approximately 1.8 other troops were required to service & support each of the troops in the Divisions [see note to Figure 17 (ii) for breakdown of this overhead]

Figure 17: Estimates of number of US troops in France & Germany: D-Day to VE Day

- (i) Calculated by taking the percentage of the total number of US Divisions under SHAEF located in each of France and Germany (Figure 16, box) and applying that percentage figure to the total number of US troops under SHAEF on the Continent (Figure 15, top line):

	15-Jun-44	15-Jul-44	15-Aug-44	15-Sep-44	15-Oct-44	15-Nov-44	15-Dec-44	15-Jan-45	15-Feb-45	15-Mar-45	15-Apr-45
France	169,091	467,882	1,100,000	983,261	919,355	972,973	1,005,656	852,407	924,735	753,007	129,269
Germany	0	0	0	196,652	435,484	535,135	777,098	426,203	763,911	1,506,013	2,456,113

- (ii) Calculation at (i) revised to take account of the fact that nearly all COMZ (Communication Zone), AAF (Army Air Force) and Navy troops on the Continent were located in France:

	15-Jun-44	15-Jul-44	15-Aug-44	15-Sep-44	15-Oct-44	15-Nov-44	15-Dec-44	15-Jan-45	15-Feb-45	15-Mar-45	15-Apr-45	Total no. of troop-months D-Day to VE Day:
France	169,091	467,882	1,100,000	1,056,022	1,080,484	1,170,973	1,293,183	1,010,102	1,207,382	1,310,231	1,038,031	10,903,381
Germany	0	0	0	123,891	274,355	337,135	489,572	268,508	481,264	948,788	1,547,351	4,470,864

- NOTES: 1. Raw numbers for Germany in Table (i) have been multiplied by 0.63 to remove COMZ, AAF & Navy 'overheads' [0.63 = compromise between figures in Notes 2 & 3 below].
2. SHAEF Records (Troops on the Continent: Interim Report no.15, 5 January 1945; WO219/3243; Public Record Office, Kew) show that, using 15 December 1944 troop numbers, each Division incurred on average the following 'overheads' in ground troop numbers:

No. of troops in Division	14,243	36%	
Corps & Army overhead	12,325	31%	
COMZ overhead	13,360	33%	... i.e. if COMZ troops removed, troop numbers = 67% of previous total
	39,928		

Since ground troops made up 91% of the total troop levels (with AAF & Navy making up the remaining 9% - see Note 3 to Figure 15), the COMZ element represented 33% of 91%, i.e. 30% of overall troops total; COMZ, AAF & Navy combined = 39%. Therefore to remove these overheads, multiply Germany figures by 0.61.

3. End-March 1945 figures for COMZ and AAF were 633,000 and approximately 230,000 respectively [Russell F Weighley, Eisenhower's Lieutenants (Bloomington, Ill., 1981), pp.667-8] - a total of 863,000, or 35% of the approximate total number of US troops: 2,500,000. Therefore, to remove these overheads, multiply Germany figures by 0.65.

2. A single-point check on the final estimates is available: on 4 April 1945 when General Bradley absorbed the US Ninth Army into his 12th Army Group (giving him the largest field command in American history), he had 1,300,000 troops, in 48 Divisions. Scaling up these figures to the full complement of 57 US Divisions in Germany by mid-April (i.e. by including General Devers' 6th Army Group in Bavaria) gives approximately 1,544,000 troops - very close to the 1,547,351 estimate above for 15 April 1945. [References: Russell F Weighley, Eisenhower's Lieutenants (Bloomington, Ill., 1981), p.684; Omar N Bradley, A General's Life (New York, 1983), p.423]

- (iii) Total number of troops ever stationed in France or Germany, D-Day to VE Day:

France: Figure 16 shows that 55 Divisions saw service in France in this period (out of the total of 60 US Divisions in Europe). A crude calculation of the number of troops that this represented is thus 55/60 of the maximum number of US troops (2,585,382 - Figure 15: 15 April 1945 number) - i.e. 2,369,934

Germany: The number of troops involved at the peak (April/early-May 1945) was the same as the number of those who ever entered the country - i.e. approximately 1,547,351: see figures in Table (ii) above. [A crude calculation such as that done for the numbers in France - i.e. 57/60 of the maximum number of US troops - would be inappropriate because of the concentration of COMZ & AAF troops in France - see Section (ii) above].

Figure 18: Estimates of number of US troops in France & Germany: May 1945 to March 1946

	May-45	Jun-45	Jul-45	Aug-45	Sep-45	Oct-45	Nov-45	Dec-45	Jan-46	Feb-46	Mar-46
(i) Number of US Army Divisions left in SHAEF area on Continent:	60	57	49	46	35	28	25	18	11	9	7
(ii) Estimated no. of Divs in France	3	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	4	2	2
" " " Germany	46	41	34	32	23	18	15	10	6	6	4
" " " other	11	10	9	8	6	4	4	2	1	1	1
(iii) Estimate of numbers in France:	168,609	337,218	337,218	337,218	337,218	337,218	337,218	337,218	224,812	112,406	112,406
Estimate of numbers in Germany:	1,261,734	1,124,589	932,586	877,728	630,867	493,722	411,435	274,290	164,574	164,574	109,716

Total no. of troop-months May 45 - Mar 46: 2,978,759 6,445,815
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SOURCE: Dates of Divisions' return to USA are given in Shelby Stanton, *Orders of Battle: US Army in World War II* (Washington DC, 1984)

- ASSUMPTIONS IN ESTIMATES:
1. Estimated number of troops calculated by multiplying the number of Divisions at (ii) by the mean no. of troops attributable to each Division: in France, 56,203 (this figure calculated by dividing 10,903,381 troop-months - Figure 17 (ii) - by 194 'Division-months' - sum of top row in Figure 16); for Germany, 27,429 (4,470,864 troop-months divided by 163 'Division-months').
 2. By 15 May 1945, 11 of the 57 Divisions that had been in Germany on 15 April 1945 (see Figure 16) had moved on to Austria or Czechoslovakia - a similarly-proportioned split between Germany and the other occupied countries is assumed for the rest of the eleven-month period set out in this Table.
 3. All Divisions are assumed to have spent one month in France prior to / in transit to embarkation for the USA; an average of 6 Divisions per month would have been thus in France en route to USA in this period, the numbers trailing off in 1946.

NOTE: Final US troop levels in its occupation zone in Germany were 12,000 by 1947 (Douglas Botting, *The Aftermath: Europe*, Alexandria, Va., 1983, p.50)

Figure 19: Overall US Army statistics, May 1945

	USA	Europe	Pacific	TOTAL US ARMY:	% of total US Army having experience		% of those serving overseas having experience	
					In France:	(Germany:)	in France:	(Germany:)
Troops	1 2,884,557	3,838,813 est.	1,567,966 est.	8,291,336	29%	19%	44%	29%
Divisions	2	68 (7 of the 68 - Mediterranean Theater)	21	89				
included in nos. of troops:								
Army Air Force	3 800,000 est.	1,075,000 est.	425,000 est.	2,300,000				

- SOURCES:
- 1 Total & number in USA: US Department of Defence, *The Army Almanac*, Washington DC, 1950, p.625; Europe/Pacific split of troops overseas: estimate based on 71:29 ratio in Maurice Matloff (ed.), *American Military History*, Washington DC, 1969, p.466
 - 2 Maurice Matloff, *American Military History*, Washington DC, 1969, pp. 461 & 497
 - 3 Army Air Force total is from Matloff, p.463; their fraction of the total Army (28%) is used to estimate the split between USA, Europe and Pacific. Weighley [*Eisenhower's Lieutenants* (Bloomington, Ill., 1981), pp.667-8] gives a figure for end-March 1945 of 458,000 AAF in European Theater of Operations, split roughly equally between England and the Continent; there were also very large AAF forces operating in the Mediterranean Theater of Operations.

**Figure 20: Location of US Army Divisions in France, Belgium/Holland, and Germany:
D-Day to VE Day (at mid-month in each month)**

All Divisions present in June, July or August 1944 were involved in the summer sweep across France. The Divisions are split thereafter according to their battle experience in the autumn / early winter of 1944:

- (i) Divisions with battle-experience on the southern front (Alsace-Lorraine) prior to mid-December 1944 'Battle of the Bulge'
- (ii) Divisions with battle-experience on the northern front (Germany, Belgium/Holland) prior to mid-December 1944 'Battle of the Bulge'
- (iii) Divisions arriving on Continent during 1944 but with no significant battle-experience before mid-December 1944
- (iv) Divisions not arriving on Continent until 1945

Within each group, Divisions are listed in order of their arrival on the Continent.

Inf.	Infantry Division
Arm.	Armored Division

SOURCE:
see Figure 16

(i) Divisions with experience on the southern front (Alsace-Lorraine) prior to 'Battle of the Bulge'

		15-Jun-44	15-Jul-44	15-Aug-44	15-Sep-44	15-Oct-44	15-Nov-44	15-Dec-44	15-Jan-45	15-Feb-45	15-Mar-45	15-Apr-45	Return to USA:
90th Inf.	France	1	1	1	1	1	1		1				24-Dec-45
	Belgium/Holland									1	1	1	
	Germany							1					
79th Inf.	France	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1				10-Dec-45
	Belgium/Holland										1	1	
	Germany												
35th Inf.	France		1	1	1	1	1	1					10-Sep-45
	Belgium/Holland								1				
	Germany									1	1	1	
5th Inf.	France		1	1	1	1	1	1	1				19-Jul-45
	Belgium/Holland									1			
	Germany										1	1	
4th Arm.	France		1	1	1	1	1	1	1				became 1st Constab. Brigade, Germany, May-46
	Belgium/Holland									1		1	
	Germany										1	1	
6th Arm.	France			1	1	1	1	1					18-Sep-45
	Belgium/Holland								1	1			
	Germany										1	1	
80th Inf.	France			1	1	1	1	1	1	1			3-Jan-46
	Belgium/Holland											1	
	Germany										1	1	
3rd Inf.	France			1	1	1	1	1	1	1			4-Sep-46
	Belgium/Holland											1	
	Germany											1	
36th Inf.	France			1	1	1	1	1	1	1			15-Dec-45
	Belgium/Holland											1	
	Germany												
45th Inf.	France			1	1	1	1	1	1	1			10-Sep-45
	Belgium/Holland											1	
	Germany												
26th Inf.	France				1	1	1	1		1			Inactivated in Germany 29-Dec-45
	Belgium/Holland								1				
	Germany										1	1	

		15-Jun-44	15-Jul-44	15-Aug-44	15-Sep-44	15-Oct-44	15-Nov-44	15-Dec-44	15-Jan-45	15-Feb-45	15-Mar-45	15-Apr-45	Return to USA:
94th Inf.	France Belgium/Holland Germany				1	1	1	1					6-Feb-46
95th Inf.	France Belgium/Holland Germany				1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	29-Jun-45
44th Inf.	France Belgium/Holland Germany				1	1	1	1	1	1	1		20-Jul-45
10th arm.	France Belgium/Holland Germany					1	1	1	1	1			13-Oct-45
100th Inf.	France Belgium/Holland Germany						1	1	1	1			10-Jan-46
103rd Inf.	France Belgium/Holland Germany						1	1	1	1			18-Sep-45
14th Arm.	France Belgium/Holland Germany						1	1	1	1			16-Sep-45
12th Arm.	France Belgium/Holland Germany						1	1	1	1			1-Dec-45

(ii) Divisions with experience on the northern front (Germany, Belgium/Holland) prior to 'Battle of the Bulge'

		15-Jun-44	15-Jul-44	15-Aug-44	15-Sep-44	15-Oct-44	15-Nov-44	15-Dec-44	15-Jan-45	15-Feb-45	15-Mar-45	15-Apr-45	Return to USA:
82nd Airborne	France Belgium/Holland Germany	1						1	1				3-Jan-46
101st Airborne	France Belgium/Holland Germany	1						1	1	1		1	Inactivated in France 30-Nov-45
1st Inf.	France Belgium/Holland Germany	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	active into 1946
4th Inf.	France Belgium/Holland Germany	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	10-Jul-45
29th Inf.	France Belgium/Holland Germany	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	16-Jan-46
2nd Inf.	France Belgium/Holland Germany	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	20-Jul-45
2nd Arm.	France Belgium/Holland Germany	1	1	1			1	1	1	1	1	1	29-Jan-46
30th Inf.	France Belgium/Holland Germany	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	21-Aug-45

		15-Jun-44	15-Jul-44	15-Aug-44	15-Sep-44	15-Oct-44	15-Nov-44	15-Dec-44	15-Jan-45	15-Feb-45	15-Mar-45	15-Apr-45	Return to USA:
9th Inf.	France Belgium/Holland Germany	1	1	1									active into 1946
83rd Inf.	France Belgium/Holland Germany		1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	26-Mar-46
3rd Arm.	France Belgium/Holland Germany		1	1	1				1			1	inactivated in Germany 10-Nov-45
8th Inf.	France Belgium/Holland Germany		1	1	1	1	1			1	1	1	10-Jul-45
28th Inf.	France Belgium/Holland Germany			1					1	1			2-Aug-45
5th Arm.	France Belgium/Holland Germany			1	1	1	1	1	1		1	1	10-Oct-45
7th Arm.	France Belgium/Holland Germany			1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	9-Oct-45
104th Inf.	France Belgium/Holland Germany				1	1			1	1	1	1	3-Jul-45
102nd Inf.	France Belgium/Holland Germany					1	1	1	1	1	1	1	11-Mar-46
78th Inf.	France Belgium/Holland Germany							1	1	1	1	1	22-May-46

(iii) Divisions arriving on Continent during 1944 but with no significant battle-experience before mid-December 1944

		15-Jun-44	15-Jul-44	15-Aug-44	15-Sep-44	15-Oct-44	15-Nov-44	15-Dec-44	15-Jan-45	15-Feb-45	15-Mar-45	15-Apr-45	Return to USA:
9th Arm.	France Belgium/Holland Germany					1	1	1	1	1			13-Oct-45
84th Inf.	France Belgium/Holland Germany						1	1	1	1	1	1	20-Jan-46
99th Inf.	France Belgium/Holland Germany						1	1	1	1	1	1	26-Sep-45
87th Inf.	France Belgium/Holland Germany							1	1	1		1	11-Jul-45
106th Inf.	France Belgium/Holland Germany							1	1	1		1	1-Oct-45
75th Inf.	France Belgium/Holland Germany							1	1				14-Nov-45

11th Arm.	France Belgium/Holland Germany		1	1		1	1	inactivated in Germany 31-Aug-45
17th Airborne	France Belgium/Holland Germany		1			1	1	15-Sep-45
66th Inf.	France Belgium/Holland Germany		1	1		1	1	6-Nov-45

(iv) Divisions not arriving on Continent until 1945

		15-Jun-44	15-Jul-44	15-Aug-44	15-Sep-44	15-Oct-44	15-Nov-44	15-Dec-44	15-Jan-45	15-Feb-45	15-Mar-45	15-Apr-45	Return to USA:
8th Arm.	France Belgium/Holland Germany								1		1	1	13-Nov-45
76th Inf.	France Belgium/Holland Germany								1		1	1	31-Aug-45
63rd Inf.	France Belgium/Holland Germany								1	1	1		26-Sep-45
70th Inf.	France Belgium/Holland Germany									1	1		9-Oct-45
42nd Inf.	France Belgium/Holland Germany									1	1	1	inactivated in Austria Jun-46
89th Inf.	France Belgium/Holland Germany									1		1	16-Dec-45
65th Inf.	France Belgium/Holland Germany									1	1		inactivated in Germany 31-Aug-45
69th Inf.	France Belgium/Holland Germany									1		1	16-Sep-45
13th Airborne	France Belgium/Holland Germany									1	1		23-Jul-45
71st Inf.	France Belgium/Holland Germany									1	1		10-Mar-46
16th Arm.	France Belgium/Holland Germany										1	1	13-Oct-45
20th Arm.	France Belgium/Holland Germany										1		active into 1946
86th Inf.	France Belgium/Holland Germany										1		17-Jun-45
97th Inf.	France Belgium/Holland Germany										1	1	26-Jun-45

Appendix 2

QUESTIONNAIRES

Whilst much of the research for this study has involved studying the records of SHAEF, the US Army's commands in France, the Civil Affairs detachments on the ground, and the War Department's training programmes in the United States, a significant input to the discussion about ordinary soldiers has been the results of a questionnaire undertaken by the author between 1990 and 1995. This questionnaire was designed to make available information regarding the background knowledge, experiences and views of a sample of US World War II veterans who were in France in 1944 and/or 1945.

This Appendix considers in turn:

- (i) the background to the author's questionnaire;
- (ii) the problems and possibilities inherent in using oral evidence in historical research;
- (iii) the limitations of the oral evidence used in this study.

(i) *The background to the author's questionnaire*

A pilot questionnaire in 1990 produced 40 responses. This was very successful in terms of response rate (70%), and the quality of replies. Only three changes were necessary before the despatch of the main batch of questionnaires:

(i) The introductory text ("How you might be able to help me"), which had been in the form of a covering letter, was incorporated into the 4-page questionnaire itself. This saved on production and postage costs, and made the questionnaire less daunting - it was now a single item in the envelope.

(ii) In the question seeking perceptions of France and the French on the eve of arrival, the phrase "on the eve of your arrival" was highlighted; this was to try and

obtain answers to the question itself and not, as happened with many of the pilot responses, find veterans writing about the first French that they met. This highlighting did not have the desired effect: too high a fraction (24%) still wrote about post-landing thoughts. Although important, this question was probably one too many in the "Setting the scene" section; many veterans appear to have been impatient to move on to writing about their time in France itself.

(iii) To ease both production and the processing of replies, and enhance appearance, the questionnaire was changed from two double-sided A4 sheets (stapled) to a single A3 sheet, double-sided.

The main questionnaire was distributed on two occasions: in June 1994 to veterans visiting Normandy for the D-Day 50th Anniversary celebrations, and in February 1995 by post from within the United States. Disappointingly, only 20 replies were received from the June 1994 distribution. 149 useable replies were received from the 1995 mailing - a very satisfactory 65% response rate. With the pilot questionnaire responses this made a total of 209 useable responses.

The June 1994 distribution was not to named individuals; it had to rely on tour guides distributing and collecting questionnaires, and was not successful (though the 20 useable replies were valuable). Both the pilot questionnaire and the February 1995 main mailing were to named individuals (and included reply-paid envelopes). Names and addresses were obtained from three sources:

(i) Most came from study of replies to the US Army Military History Institute's *World War II Army Service Experiences Questionnaire*, stored at the Military History Institute in Carlisle, Pennsylvania. This is a large and ambitious project which is one of a series, alongside similar projects for World War I, Korea and Vietnam. It consists of an 18-page detailed questionnaire tackling all aspects of the experience of serving in the Army in World War II - from where people were and what they felt when Pearl Harbor was bombed, through recruitment, training, service overseas, action, discipline, leadership, and subsequent return to civilian life. The

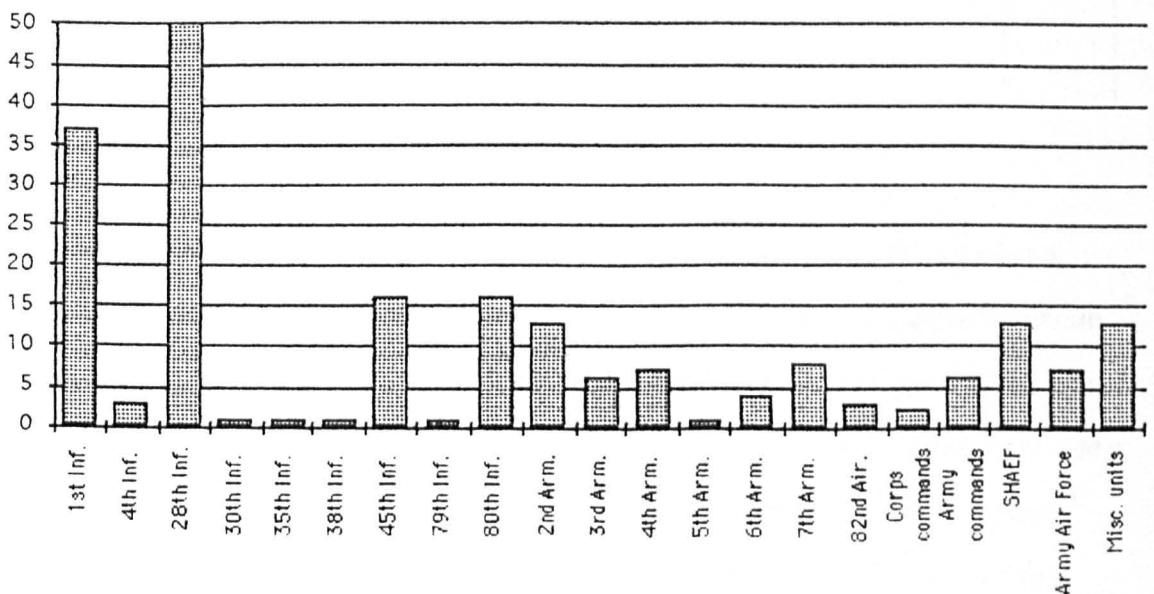
project has been undertaken by Army Division, as funds allowed; by early 1995 the Military History Institute had in its possession replies covering approximately 40 divisions, which filled some 200 box-folders. Approximately one-quarter of the divisions covered had served in France. The author's questionnaire was sent to those veterans whose replies to the Overseas Service section of the *Army Service Experiences Questionnaire* had sufficient content to show that they might well respond to a questionnaire specifically about France. Approximately 3% of replies came from families of veterans reporting that the veteran in question - usually their husband or father - had died.

(ii) 20 names and addresses were provided by respondents themselves - contacts that they considered it would be helpful to follow up; these included names of Army Air Force personnel.

(iii) 24 names and addresses came from the SHAEF U.S. Veterans Association.

The distribution of the 209 total useable replies across Army units is shown in Figure 21. There is a spread across many units, including Armored as well as Infantry

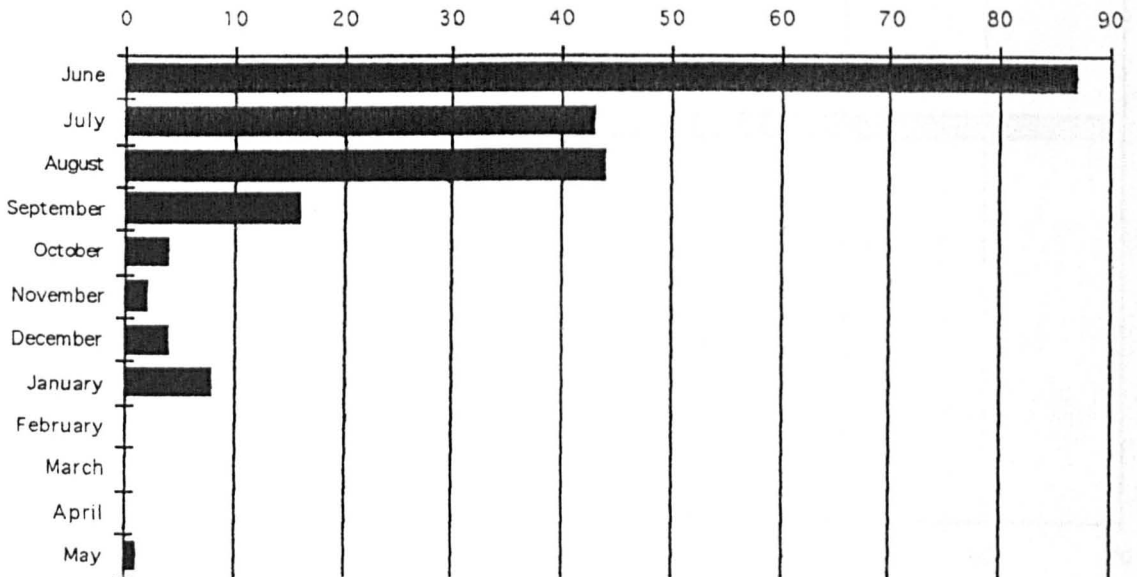
FIGURE 21: Distribution of respondents to author's Questionnaire across Army units (Divisions, unless otherwise specified)



Divisions. 42% of replies are from 1st Infantry Division or 28th Infantry Division, both of which saw action in Normandy. 1st Division was involved in the D-Day landings themselves; 28th Division's claim to fame was as the division that marched through Paris a few days after the city's Liberation - and marched right out of the city to the front lines.

The distribution of arrival dates in France is given in Figure 22. The vast bulk of arrivals (83%) were in June, July and August. 19% of respondents were literally D-Day veterans (6 June 1944 arrival).

FIGURE 22: Dates of arrival in France for questionnaire respondents

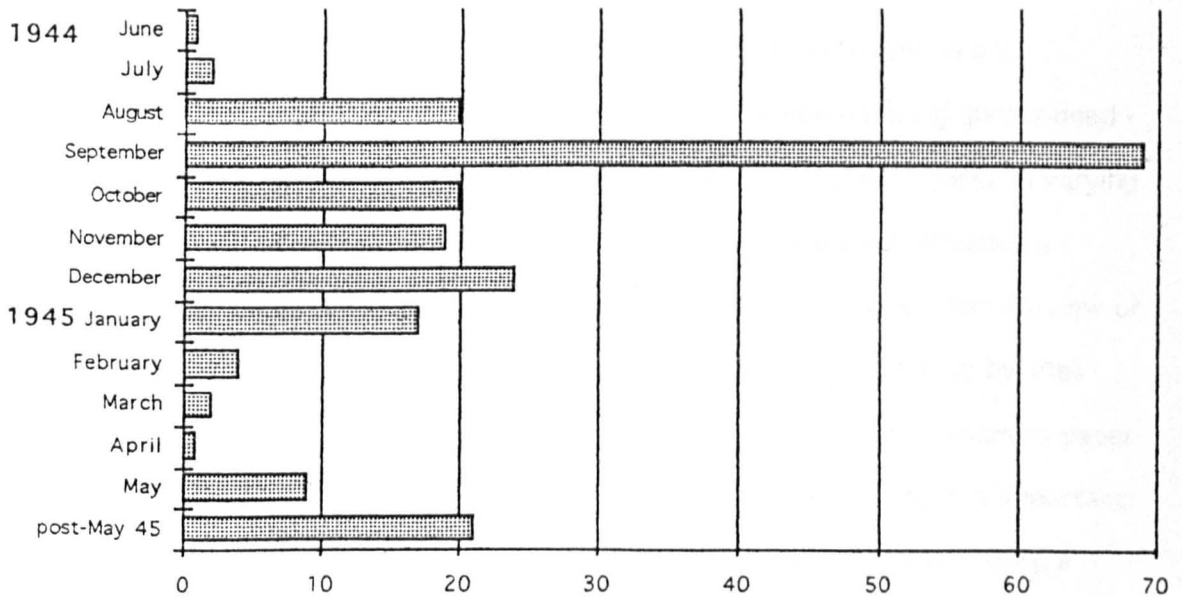


Departure is harder to pin down than arrival. Some respondents did not give a departure date, some gave a date in 1945 which represented their final departure from Europe, whilst others gave the date of their first departure from France - usually when their unit moved into Belgium. Many troops who first left France in the autumn of 1944 still had significant experiences in France before their final departure from Europe. Many enjoyed 3-day passes for leave in Paris (after VE-Day especially), most were transported across France by train prior to being shipped home from Marseilles or Le Havre, and some returned to further combat duty in France (for example, 28th Infantry

Division, when moved into Belgium in late-August/early-September 1944, returned to the Colmar Pocket in January 1945).

Figure 23 shows the assumed date of first departure from France; it is the result of a series of assumptions depending on knowledge of the veteran's Division. The figures show 43% first departing France in August or September - 1st and 28th Divisions were amongst those that crossed into Belgium in the last days of August and the first days of September.

FIGURE 23: Dates of first departure from France for questionnaire respondents



The distribution of respondents across the time periods used for this study is as follows:

(Chapter 4:)		
First significant experience of France was in Normandy in June, July or August 1944		131
(Chapter 5:)		
First significant experience of France was in August or September 1944 (of which, 16 landed in Southern France)		59
(Chapter 6:)		
First significant experience of France was after 30 September 1944		19
	<i>Total</i>	<i>209</i>

A blank questionnaire can be found at the end of the Appendix.

(ii) *The problems and possibilities inherent in using oral evidence in historical research*

Whilst much of the literature concerning oral history relates primarily to the use of transcribed interviews, it includes many aspects that are of direct relevance to the use of questionnaires, particularly debate over the reliability and validity of memory.

The problems of using oral evidence could be described as falling into three principal categories: process, scale, and memory. The process involved in any interview or questionnaire survey is bound to impact on the person being questioned - how, where, and by whom the subject is interviewed will affect the response in varying ways; similarly, the style, context and content of a questionnaire will influence a subject's willingness to complete it and the manner in which it is done. No interview or questionnaire is likely to be seen as completely neutral or non-threatening by their subjects - they are being asked to verbalise their experiences or commit them to paper in a quasi-public setting, usually to someone who is a stranger. Whilst it is important, in the case of questionnaires, to take care in setting out the document and offering a friendly introduction that makes the context of the survey quite clear, one can never remove the barrier of process completely: respondents, to varying degrees, will tailor their responses to what they see as the context. Process can affect how far respondents are prepared to reveal their memories, thus making debate about memory gaps difficult - have respondents really forgotten, or are they not prepared to tell us ?

The problem of scale with the use of oral evidence is the mirror image of its clear advantage in obtaining information about 'ordinary' people, namely that (except in the case of 'élite oral history'¹) responses are being sought from people who are unlikely to

¹ Considered in Anthony Seldon & Joanna Papworth, *Elite Oral History* (London, 1983)

have been aware of the bigger historical picture of the events about which they are being questioned. Oral history gives us a small-scale view of events, and a patchy one at that. Oral evidence is not the medium for observing the deeper structures and processes at work in history; it is more of a technique for fleshing out the picture we have of a period, for attempting to 'recreate' history, rather than attempting to explain it.

The major problem associated with the use of oral evidence is the question of memory. How far does the phenomenon of hindsight, the fact that the past is remembered through layers of later experience, invalidate oral evidence? Is "the 'voice of the past' .. inescapably the voice of the present too"?² What is remembered (and what is not), the reliability of memory over time, and the validity of memories are the central concerns here. Paul Thompson, in *The Voice of the Past*, attributes crucial importance to research by Bartlett and others which concluded that the greatest loss of memory occurs within a few minutes of an event or an experience.³ Later tests by Bahrick, Bahrick and Wittlinger revealed that the loss of memory of ex-students recalling names and recognising photographs of fellow college graduates was as great in the first nine months as in the period between nine months and nearly fifty years afterwards.⁴ This rapid drop off in memory appears to be backed up by Elizabeth Loftus' research into the sources of error in eyewitness accounts of events: if memory does decay rapidly early on then eyewitness accounts - often first related some minutes or hours after an event - will understandably be prone to differ; she also shows that it is "relatively easy to interfere with memory by supplying subsequent information".⁵

Bartlett, the Cambridge pioneer of 20th-century memory research, believed that memory is closely linked to the subject's attitude to the events in question, and that recall of memory involves a process of the reconstruction of events in one's mind. He concluded that memory involves interpretation and selection and is therefore prone to

² John Tosh, *The Pursuit of History* (Harlow, Essex, 1984), p.178

³ Paul Thompson, *The Voice of the Past - Oral History* (Oxford, 1978), p.111

⁴ HP Bahrick, PO Bahrick & RP Wittlinger, 'Fifty Years of Memory for Names and Faces', *Journal of Experimental Psychology*, March 1975 - quoted in Thompson, *The Voice of the Past*, p.102

⁵ Quoted in Alice M. and Howard S. Hoffman, *Archives of Memory: a Soldier Recalls World War II* (Lexington, Ky., 1990), p.20

self-deception. There is a natural tendency to seek meanings and associations in things; this can lead to people changing stories to accommodate their own viewpoint and experience. Once this interpreting, selecting and altering has taken place, Bartlett believed, then the resultant memory remains stable over a long period of time (giving lie to the popular idea of memory gradually fading like an old photograph).⁶

Tom Harrison, founder of the Mass Observation project in Britain in the 1930s, focused on two aspects of memory in his study, *Living Through the Blitz*.⁷ He found that when Mass Observation's on-the-spot reports of the Blitz were compared with recollections made thirty years later (either by the people who had made the reports or by some of the reports' subjects), some memories had been forgotten altogether, whilst others had been subject to what he terms "glossification". Memories had developed in such a way that there was little between the extremes of amnesia or memories of glory. Whilst concluding about the selective amnesia that "readjustments of memory are normal, healthy and (after suffering) essential", his lesson from both sets of phenomena was that "the only valid information for this sort of social history is that recorded at the time on the spot".⁸

Harrison's conclusion may be tempting, especially since on-the-spot reports of significant experiences can be very vivid. But Charles Morrissey cautions that whilst this vividness may appear to denote greater authenticity, one should be wary when memories "are overstated as explanations of significant changes".⁹ In addition, the concept of rapid early memory loss is significant to on-the-spot reports since these may actually have been written some hours or days later.

In the study of memory that is of greatest relevance to the experience of US troops in Europe in World War II, oral historian Alice Hoffman's *Archives of Memory*, the

⁶ Frederic C. Bartlett, *Remembering: a Study in Experimental and Social Psychology* (Cambridge, 1932), pp.93-4, 207-8, 213, 301-14

⁷ Tom Harrison, *Living Through the Blitz* (London, 1976)

⁸ *ibid.*, pp.320, 321 & 327

⁹ Charles Morrissey's Introduction in Hoffman, *Archives of Memory*, p.xiii

author used her husband's memories of World War II service in Italy, France and Germany as a test case to observe the reliability and validity of memory. After checking his war memories as recounted to her in 1978 against documentary evidence of his unit's activities, and then checking his memories as recounted to her four years later to see how stable they were, her conclusion was that:

There is a subset of autobiographical long-term memory which is so permanent and largely immutable that it is best described as archival. .. Archival memory consists of recollections that are rehearsed, readily available for recall, and selected for preservation over the lifetime of the individual. .. It appears that the impressions stored in archival memory are assessed at the time they occur or shortly thereafter as salient and hence important to remember. .. [They] either are unique happenings or are recorded because they represent the first occurrence of an event which subsequently became routine.¹⁰

She sees this memory as stable over time and basically accurate - but limited in size. Major gaps in archival memory may be due to the 'missing experience' occurring immediately prior to some more shocking or significant set of events, which meant that there was no occasion to rehearse the memory of the experience, and thus it was never lodged in archival memory. This of course is particularly relevant in rapidly moving and potentially shocking wartime experiences.

What Hoffman does not address fully, however, is the question of individual readiness to reveal archival memories. For some veterans the memories were clearly 'archived' but were too painful to tell - or to want to recall to themselves. Thus William Manchester, in his memoir of Pacific war experiences that he only felt able to write thirty-five years after the end of the war, reveals how in the 1970s he went through a process of painfully releasing memories that had been present but repressed:

Some recollections never die. They lie in one's subconscious, squirreled away, biding their time. Now mine were surfacing in this disconcerting manner. .. This then was the life I knew, where death sought me, during which I was transformed from a cheeky youth to a troubled man who, for over thirty years, repressed what he could not bear to remember.¹¹

¹⁰ Hoffman, *Archives of Memory*, pp.145-46

¹¹ William Manchester, *Goodbye Darkness: a Memoir of the Pacific War* (London, 1981), pp.11&398. In a stark 'footnote to history' journalist Bob Herbert reports that Manchester suffered a heart attack in 1994 following which doctors, studying X-rays of his heart, saw an object two centimeters long in the right ventricle. It was a bullet, which had probably hit him whilst he was unconscious after a bomb blast. Herbert concludes: "Memories may fade and interest may wane, but history doesn't get more real than a

Manchester appears to have experienced what Thompson describes as 'life review': "a sudden emergence of memories and of a desire to remember, and a special candour which goes with a feeling that active life is over, achievement is completed."¹² Whilst Thompson sees life review as coming considerably late in life - possibly linked to retirement or bereavement - it is a phenomenon that can be seen in slightly younger people (Manchester was in his fifties), perhaps brought about by children leaving home, the death of a parent, early retirement plans, or feelings evoked by the early deaths of friends.

Memory may thus be fallible, particularly through being partial and selective, but Hoffman shows that long-term memories of significant experiences can be both valid and stable over time. The phenomenon of veterans reaching the age when a relatively liberating process of life review may occur gives rise to the expectation that they may feel freer than they would have done in earlier years to reveal their archival memories of World War II to others.

The possibilities that oral evidence offer historians centre around the access that it can offer to the views and experiences of non-élite participants in history - 'ordinary' people. As in the current study, this can offer an insight available from no other evidence, and by so doing can lend flavour and colour to the picture painted by more traditional historical sources.

Oral evidence gives us the possibility of interrogating people's memories in a systematic way, with the historian being in charge (to an extent) in terms of the questions asked, the ground covered, and (with an interview) the possibility to ask follow-up questions. It is this that makes oral evidence far superior to autobiographical sources - as Lummis observes:

bullet in the heart" (Bob Herbert, 'A Historian's Lament for a War's Forgotten History', *International Herald Tribune*, 12 March 1996)

¹² Paul Thompson, *The Voice of the Past*, p.113

Oral history should be a good deal more precise than even various forms of autobiographical and personal testimony simply because it is the product of two people (the informant and the researcher) and as such is focused more on historical than on biographical concerns.¹³

However, the use of oral evidence demands considerable care, particularly through being alert to the uncertainties regarding our understanding of memory. Oral history should be seen and employed as one among several techniques and not as a branch of history in its own right. It gives us a patchy and incomplete picture, but often of a part of the historical canvas that might otherwise have remained totally hidden; in its patchiness, however, it is akin to historical evidence generally - in most situations a considerable part of the historian's skills lie in drawing as clear a picture of the whole from a remarkably small amount of surviving and relevant evidence. Indeed, given the research findings concerning rapid early decay of memory, many historical documents are as open to questions regarding the validity of memory as oral evidence, for few contemporary accounts of events are recorded very close to the instant at which they unfold. As Lummis notes:

Much documentary evidence is oral evidence that has been committed to paper at a particular point in time. The problems of memory - how fallible it is and how biased retrospective evidence may be - which are attributed to oral evidence are actually an epistemological problem of much other historical evidence made visible and inescapable.¹⁴

(iii) The limitations of the oral evidence used in this study.

The limitations of the oral evidence used in this study can be divided into two categories: those relating to the sample, and those relating to the responses.

The sample is numerically small. Although 209 usable replies is a very respectable figure for such an exercise, given resource limitations, it is of a size that,

¹³ Trevor Lummis, *Listening to History : the Authenticity of Oral Evidence* (London, 1987), pp.11-12

¹⁴ *ibid.* p.12

when analysing subsets of the whole of approximately 10% or less, the number of respondents (below 21) can not be regarded as statistically significant. Thus, the figures showing the welcome witnessed by the 16 soldiers with experience in southern France (see, e.g., Figure 10, page 140) can be regarded as illustrative only. Indeed, the sample is based heavily on two combat divisions (42% of the respondents were from the 1st and 28th Infantry Divisions), and has relatively few Armored Divisions or Army commands represented. The majority of respondents had experience in Normandy and the rest of northern France.

This uneven spread is a reflection of the imbalance of replies to the US Army Military History Institute's *World War II Army Service Experiences Questionnaire*, given that the author's questionnaires were sent to a cross-section of respondents to that survey. The 1st and 28th Infantry Divisions are very well represented in the Military History Institute's collection of completed questionnaires; this is believed to be because their respective Veterans' Associations lent their weight and prestige to the survey. Only one of the three divisions with experience in the campaign in southern France (45th Infantry Division) was represented in the Military History Institute's replies by early 1995 - and then only very thinly. The author's sample is thus correspondingly skewed, giving a predominance to experiences in northern France.

In considering the limitations of the responses received, adequate attention must be given to the fact that the majority of the questionnaires were completed within a year of the high-profile celebrations of the 50th Anniversary of D-Day; this may well have generated a tendency to take a rather rose-tinted view of experiences in France. The age of the respondents is an important factor to bear in mind also - for many of them the phenomenon of 'life review' discussed above (page 258) would have been at work. What Thompson describes as "a diminished concern with fitting the story to the social norms of the audience [at this stage of life]" might be expected to lead to more honest

recollections; however, the 50th Anniversary celebrations may have had some counter-effect by reuniting veterans around 'old truths'.¹⁵

When addressing the responses of veterans regarding feelings about France and the French in the 1990s one needs to be aware that the majority 'neutral' feelings may simply reflect the fact that France in the 1990s (as at most other times) had a low profile in the United States.

These questionnaires were completed a long time after the events in question; they concern memories of striking experiences that the respondents had when they were young and impressionable, and are thus likely to have been subject to selection or embellishment. Many men's memories of interactions with the French may never have got as far as their archival memory, with the far more searching experiences of war and death blotting out such details, denying the opportunity of rehearsing and storing such memories - thus making some of the men's recollections of the French more a reflection of what they believe they may have thought, or what others have said subsequently, than a valid memory. Thus, in addition to the questionnaire sample being somewhat small and skewed towards experiences in northern France, it is subject to serious caveats concerning memory and our relatively inadequate understanding of it; nevertheless, this set of questionnaires provides a unique insight into the previously unexplored question of the experiences and views of ordinary Americans in France in 1944-45 - if interpreted with caution and used alongside a significant set of other historical sources it can stand as testimony to the significant possibilities inherent in using oral evidence in historical research.

¹⁵ Paul Thompson, *The Voice of the Past*, p.113

"Over There" 1944-45 - The American Liberation of France

WHAT THE U.S. SOLDIER / AIRMAN THOUGHT OF FRANCE AND THE FRENCH

A Questionnaire to help with research for a PhD thesis by Andrew A Thomson,
37 The Crescent, Canterbury, England CT2 7AW

* HOW YOU MIGHT BE ABLE TO HELP ME:

I am interested in how the regular United States soldier or airman who was in France in 1944-45 viewed the country and its people. What did they think about the peoples they were liberating? What did they think about America's "duty", both in 1944 and later, towards the peoples of Europe? What did they think of the countries they fought in?

Many studies have been made of the Americans in *England* in WWII. FRANCE is of great interest because it was the first country to be liberated - and it was a country with old historical and sentimental ties to the United States, completely different to the 'mother country' links with England. Did these links actually mean anything to the ordinary participants (both American and French) of the events of 1944-45?

The liberation of France marked the beginnings of America's long, ongoing, commitment to mainland Europe - a key turning point in Europe's history. It was a dramatic "meeting" of two peoples on a huge scale. How did it work? As an American who was in France in 1944-45 could I ask your help by completing this Questionnaire? If you feel you cannot help, do you know someone who could?

* ABOUT MYSELF:

I am a *part-time* historian, 37 years old, married with three children. I earn my living as the Administrator of the Canterbury Business School of the University of Kent. I have a first degree in American History from Birmingham University, England, and a Masters degree from London. I am doing this present study in my own time and at my own expense.

A Some basic facts:

- A.1 NAME:
- A.2 ADDRESS:
- A.3 TELEPHONE:
- A.4 WHAT DATES WERE YOU IN FRANCE IN 1944-45 ?
- A.5 WHAT MILITARY UNIT(S) WERE YOU SERVING IN ?
-
- A.6 DO YOU RECALL WHICH PLACES YOU WENT TO IN FRANCE ?
- i) Towns/villages near which you camped for periods of more than 3 days:
-
- ii) Towns/regions that you passed through briefly:
-

B Setting the scene:

The Language:

B.1 How good was your French ?

Please tick the most appropriate box, for EACH of the three time periods:

- i) before World War II
- ii) by the time you arrived in France in 1944
- iii) by the time you LEFT France in 1944/45.

pre-War: 1944: end War:

- Knew almost no French at all
- Knew enough to ask just one or two simple questions
- Knew enough to find way, find out a man's occupation
- Could pronounce words correctly, read newspapers
- Knew enough to conduct fairly full conversation
- Fairly fluent

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

B.2 How many Americans did you know who could conduct full French conversations?

.....

Historical links between France and America:

B.3 In 1944, how much did you know about the links between the U.S. and France ?

Here are some of the historical / sentimental links - please tick to show if you knew of these:

	Didn't know about:	Had heard of:	Fully aware of:
i) The role of Lafayette, young French nobleman who fought with Washington in the War of Independence:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
ii) The crucial naval help given by France to the U.S. in the War of Independence:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
iii) The fact that the Statue of Liberty was a gift from France:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
iv) The fact that General Pershing, on setting foot in France when American troops arrived in World War I, said "Lafayette, we are here":	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
v) The presence of a large 'colony' of expatriate American writers and artists in France (Paris especially) in the 1920s and 30s:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Before you arrived in France:

B.4 What training had you received to prepare you for any contacts with the French ?

B.5 In a very few words, what were your perceptions of France and the French on the eve of your arrival there ?

C Your experiences:

- C.1 What were your first contacts with French people in 1944 ?
- C.2 What did you think of your welcome from the French ?
- C.3 Did your welcome vary from region to region, or as time went on ?
- C.4 What assistance did you or your unit receive from French civilians or officials ?
- C.5 Did you or your unit have any occasion to GIVE particular help to French ?
- C.6 How did you rate the standard of living in France ?
- C.7 Did you or your unit experience any trouble over the French asserting their sovereignty ? - Were there any clashes between U.S. military demands and local French wishes ?

C.8 Did you establish any lasting personal links with French people ?

C.9 Any major surprises ?

C.10 Did your opinions of France / the French change in the time you were there ?

C.11 Do you hold strong views about France / the French today ?

D Follow-up:

D.1 Have you revisited France since WW II ?

D.2 Do you plan to visit France in the near-future ?

D.3 Would you be prepared to be interviewed by myself later in my research - either in the U.S., or in Europe if you are travelling ?

Thank you very much for your time.

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(<i>CA detachment records</i>) |
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- ETO Historical Division
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