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MOSCOW AND DE GAULLE

Soviet Views on De Gaulle
(Central Research Unit, 20 May 1958)

Review of Radio Moscow on Developments
in France

Communists Play Leading Role, Wurmser
(Literary Gazette, 17 May 1958)

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SOVIET VIEWS ON DE GAULLE

Central Research Unit
20 May 1958

1. Present Attitude

All the Soviet Bloc countries, including China, seem to be unanimous in condemning the events in Algeria as a fascist coup. The latest events in France itself and the position of De Gaulle are referred to as "the fascist threat". There is as yet no direct personal attack on De Gaulle,* but it is made fairly plain that an assumption of power by De Gaulle would be regarded by the Communist Bloc as a "fascist dictatorship." The Soviet attitude is perhaps best illustrated in the cartoon by the leading Soviet political cartoonist Boris Efimov published in "Pravda" on Sunday 18th May, 1958. This shows a group of French Generals and "capitalists", brandishing revolvers and an executioner's axe, hoisting against the figure of "France" a sculpture head of a General inscribed "Generals' Dictatorship."

2. Attitude during the War

In the past the Soviet attitude to De Gaulle has been vacillating. During the war it was on the whole well-disposed, except of course during the period of the Nazi-Soviet alliance. At one period it was particularly warm. That was when Stalin hoped to create a breach between the Allies and De Gaulle by assiduously courting the latter.

In December 1944 De Gaulle was invited to Moscow and on 10th December signed the Franco-Soviet Treaty of Friendship. He was treated to the usual full-scale Kremlin reception, with which the French delegation was reported to have been delighted. And Moscow Radio broadcast the following tribute to De Gaulle and his visit on the occasion of the signature of the Treaty.

"The visit of General De Gaulle, head of the French Provisional Government, and of M. Bidault, the French Foreign Minister was marked by numerous manifestations of sympathy The discussions in the Kremlin disclosed complete unanimity of view and the most sincere desire for close collaboration."

(Moscow Radio 10.12.44)

3. "Reactionary" and "Semi-Fascist"

During the post-war period the Soviet line on De Gaulle switched when Soviet hopes that the communists might gain power on the strength of their activities in the "resistance" seemed to them to have been thwarted by De Gaulle.

By the time the cold war was in full swing the official Soviet "Diplomatic Dictionary", published in Moscow in 1948, wrote of De Gaulle's "reactionary" concepts and his "semi-fascist party", the Rassemblement du Peuple Francais (RPF). The Dictionary does its best to play down even De Gaulle's role during the war and implies that both De Gaulle and the Free French Movement were really "made" by the Soviet Union.

* See Below page 5 for Literary Gazette attack on De Gaulle by French Communist, A. Wurmser.

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Here are some extracts from the article on De Gaulle appearing on pages 544 - 545:

"The strengthening of the international authority of the Free French Movement was helped by the position taken up by the Soviet Union. On 27.9.41 the Soviet Ambassador in England I. M. Maisky on the instructions of the Soviet Government informed De Gaulle in a letter of his recognition 'as head of all the Free French', underlining the firm intention of the Soviet Government after the achievement of victory to insure the full restoration of the 'independence and might of France'. The Soviet position was all the more important because the Government of the USA, maintaining diplomatic relations with the Vichy Government, ignored the Free French Movement and was clearly ill-disposed towards De Gaulle..."

"The reactionary line of internal politics corresponded to De Gaulle's conceptions of foreign policy. Forced by the pressure of France's vital interests to sign the Franco-Soviet Treaty of Friendship and Mutual Assistance, De Gaulle at the same time supported the idea of creating an anti-Soviet 'Western Bloc'."

"The drawing together of the Communist and Socialist parties over the question of the basis of the future constitution showed De Gaulle that the Constituent Assembly would adopt a project which would by no means correspond to his views and intentions - therefore on the 20.1.46 De Gaulle demonstrably went into retirement. Soon De Gaulle began to collect around himself the more reactionary forces of France, systematically conducting a struggle against the Republic, and set up a semi-fascist party - the RPF. De Gaulle speaks out against the USSR and supports the subordination of France's policies and economy to the United States."

4. De Gaulle "Forgotten"

Since then Soviet propaganda has tended increasingly to ignore De Gaulle. This has partly been due to the deliberate attempt to re-write the history of the last war as people's memories fade. In doing so, De Gaulle and the Free French Movement have been completely overshadowed in the Soviet version by the communists who are now represented as virtually the only French force which continued to resist the Nazis.

The Soviet treatment of De Gaulle was vividly illustrated in December 1954 on the occasion of the tenth anniversary of the signing of the Franco-Soviet Treaty. At that time in 1954 the Soviet Union was making special approaches to France in its attempt to break up the Western Alliance with its new "soft" diplomacy. As part of this policy special anniversary celebrations of the signing of the Franco-Soviet Treaty were laid on in Moscow accompanied with much propaganda fanfares throughout the Soviet Union. A large-scale meeting was held in the Moscow Palace of Trade Unions. It was addressed by no less personages than Molotov, then First Deputy Premier and Minister of Foreign Affairs, by the Premier of the R.S.F.S.R., by Shvernik, then Soviet Trade Unions President and other leading figures. Not a single one of them mentioned De Gaulle, and his name cropped up once only in the whole meeting,

and that only incidentally in a quotation from a French newspaper which Molotov included in his speech.

This policy of studied neglect has been continued. The latest authoritative Soviet mention of De Gaulle appears in the 2nd edition of the Large Soviet Encyclopaedia. This does not contain a special entry for De Gaulle. But in its entry for France, which appears in one of the latest volumes - No. 45 - published at the end of 1956, De Gaulle merits a few scant references.

In tracing the history of French resistance during the war the Encyclopaedia mentions De Gaulle as head of "an anti-Hitlerite centre formed in London of a movement of French bourgeois elements, who found themselves outside the borders of France."

The Encyclopaedia later accuses De Gaulle of having packed the French Committee of National Liberation with his own supporters and of having kept out the "representatives of the Communist Party of France." There are one or two other passing references to De Gaulle, usually with the implication that he was tied up with "reactionary forces". His name seems to fade out of the picture given in the Encyclopaedia article and even his resignation from public life is not mentioned.

Review of Radio Moscow on
"Developments in France"
28 May 1958

Moscow broadcasts very little comment on the French situation, but correspondents' reports from Paris are given considerable attention. Tass reports Pflimlin's resignation and the vote in the National Assembly leading up to this action, stating that Pflimlin "admitted" that he had negotiated with De Gaulle, and declaring that as a result of the maneuvering by Pflimlin and right-wing deputies an "artificial situation" was produced which permitted the premier to violate the will of the majority of deputies. Noting that Pflimlin had an overwhelming majority, a broadcast to the United Kingdom asserts that his resignation can be regarded only as a deliberate desire to clear the way for reaction. The Home Service, quoting from Duclos' statement in the General Assembly, states that Pflimlin disregarded the communist votes in his favor, thus obtaining a "formal pretext" for resigning.

Moscow makes frequent reference to the Paris demonstration against De Gaulle, described in the Home Service as "grandiose," and Tass says hundreds of thousands of workers responded to the call of the Communist Party and other leftist groups. The dispatch, noting the presence of prominent figures in the demonstration, mentions Duclos and Pineau, but fails to name Mendes-France. A roundup of reports for Pravda, Izvestia, and Trud, broadcast to the United Kingdom, says Frenchmen who hold dear the democratic freedoms are displaying their willingness to defend the Republic, as was shown by response to the strike call of May 27.

According to Tass, the French Communist Party Politburo adopted a resolution condemning De Gaulle's plans and calling for the Socialists to rally in defense of Republican Government. Duclos proposed a meeting of leaders of left-wing parties to suggest a joint candidate for the premiership, Tass says. Another Tass dispatch claims that Fascists in Tarbe, in the Pyrenees, were found to possess plans for the assassination of Communist and General Federation of Labor leaders.

Leonov tells French listeners, quoting the London Times, that in his statement De Gaulle talked as if he already were chairman of the Council of Ministers, and what is more disturbing, he declared his trust in the military in Algeria and said he planned to get into immediate contact with them. A Tass report says that De Gaulle's statement has been denounced by the Communists and Socialists, the biggest groups in the general assembly. According to another Tass dispatch, right-wing groups are exerting pressure on the socialists to compel them to accept De Gaulle, and are placing their hopes on Mollet.

COMMUNISTS PLAY LEADING ROLE

Moscow, Soviet European Service

17 May, 1958

Andre Wurmser article in

Literary Gazette: "Plot Against the Republic"

(Summary) It was a plot against the republic that led to the coup in Algiers, a plot one could call the "plot of generals" if it was not more precisely the plot of one general--General De Gaulle. He is the head and soul of it.

The script was prepared in detail. On the day it was expected the National Assembly would refuse confidence to the Pflimlin government, when the government crisis was to be revived and would appear as a deadlock, the parachutists of Massu would easily seize power in Algiers with no force to resist them. This was not an insurrection but was a "legitimate protest answering the deficiency of state power and the impotence of the parliament.

The script also provided for Paris demonstrations and a call to the only man who would be able to organize national unity--General De Gaulle, who was once in power, to put an end to the alleged anger of the French of Algeria as General Massu had been the first to establish in Algiers the fascist regime which his inspirer was to establish in his turn in Paris.

Such was the script. But, there were the communists. History will say that on that day they saved the republic by overthrowing all the fascist plans. Insofar as Pflimlin wanted to continue the war in Algeria, reaction was certain that the communists would vote against him. It was enough for the reaction to find a few additional votes to prevent formation of the government. But Pflimlin also stated his desire to defend republican legality.

The communists clearly saw the maneuver of the fascists and by spoiling their calculations made investiture of the Pflimlin government possible through abstention, which had the value of a positive action for the defense of democratic freedoms. After this, General Massu was no longer in a state of insurrection against the deficiency of state power, but against the republic. He could not cover his seditious action with excuses, this serviceman with more arrogance than finesse. One saw his disappointment in the embarrassed explanation he mumbled. He admitted he had put his hopes in De Gaulle but what hopes could De Gaulle nurture after a government was lawfully invested by the Assembly?

"From the start this government took measures, admittedly weak, directed against the Parisian accomplices of the Algiers rebels. About 50 were arrested; Soustelle was placed under police surveillance. Thus the government made the second stage of the plot fail. Even those who still doubted De Gaulle's participation in the conspiracy were asking him publicly whether he was disavowing Massu. Thus, De Gaulle had to make the declaration he had hoped to make during the confusion of a crisis without end and under such conditions that he had amazed himself. He accused his old enemy the republic--and what he calls the 'regime of parties,' in other words democracy, of all sins. He declared himself 'ready to assume the powers the republic,' in other words to substitute himself for the republican regime.

"At the same time, in Algiers Massu was shouting "Long Live De Gaulle!" Salan, the general whom the government had unreasonably entrusted with counterbalancing Massu, was shouting "Long live De Gaulle!" The small fascist groups in Paris were shouting: "Long Live De Gaulle!" The four plotters--Bidault, Duchet, Morice, and Soustelle--were shouting: "Long live De Gaulle!" The hour of a great confrontation, of a decisive choice between the republic and fascism, had come."

Popular reaction then began--strikes, contacts between political and trade union organizations, formation of vigilance committees including sections of the communist and socialist parties and trade unions. Pflimlin tried to extend his cabinet to the right and to the left. Pinay put forward the condition that Lacoste should be maintained in Algiers but Pflimlin apparently refused. In any case, Pinay refused to join the government which was thus reinforced only on the left. The socialist party proclaimed: "The republic is threatened," and at the end of a text where the old anti-communist accusations were not yet eliminated, called for the broadest union of all working people. Personal rule was denounced by the trade unions.

During the night, the government dissolved several fascist organizations and decided to ask the assembly to vote a state of emergency throughout France. The Radical Party came forward against De Gaulle; political leaders, socialists, radicals, and even parties much more to the right took a clear cut position in defense of the republic. The retort was as rapid as De Gaulle's statement had been insolent. "The game on which the future of France depends has not yet been played. In order to impose the authority of the republic on the rebels of Algeria, one should renounce the idea of compromising with them.