



## *The Struggle for Cooperation: Liberated France and the American Military, 1944–1946* by Robert L. Fuller.

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Review by David A. Messenger, University of South Alabama ([davidamessenger@southalabama.edu](mailto:davidamessenger@southalabama.edu)).

Robert Fuller begins his inquiry into the relationship between the American military and the French Government and its civilians by noting that Pres. Franklin D. Roosevelt initially believed that the United States would establish a military government of occupation for all of France after the D-Day invasion in June 1944. This reflected in part the poor relations the United States had with Gen. Charles de Gaulle, who claimed to represent the legitimate French Government, first from London and then from Algiers. When the invasion came, no US military government was imposed, for within days de Gaulle was in France to begin the process of setting himself up as the head of the new French Government in Bayeux on 14 June 1944 (2). The presence of the US military in France through 1946 complicated relations between the two states, and between American soldiers and French citizens. *The Struggle for Cooperation* is important for its contribution to our understanding of postwar Europe.

The best parts of Fuller's book concern the policies developed to deal with people in unique situations created by the war. Liberated France contained some 2.7 million non-French Displaced Persons (DPs); at the same time, 2.4 million French DPs in Germany and elsewhere wanted to get back to their homes (88). The rapid influx of these citizens in spring and summer 1945 created competition with American soldiers in cities like Metz over the living space that remained following the fighting and destruction. Members of the French left felt the Americans were set upon making French returnees feel less than welcome (93).

The American Red Cross, helping foreign DPs in camps inside France awaiting repatriation, refused to hand supplies over to the French Government on the grounds that volunteer aid had to be distributed without government involvement (95). The US Army's employment of Polish DPs in the Marne led to a crime spree and looting of supplies in the DP camps. That these were not guarded very effectively caused more conflict between French and Americans (98). So, too, the US Army employed German POWs in France—nearly 73,000 by February 1945—who outnumbered French civilians in places like Cherbourg. This led the French to accuse the Americans of being “too lenient” with Germans (106).

American-run POW camps were accused of exhausting water and other resources in rebuilding communities like Tholonet (Bouches du Rhône) (107). In all of these examples, the conflict between the French and the Americans was situational, but they shed light on attitudes and approaches to the early postwar period, as resentment against the Germans and other foreigners remained strong in a France hoping to regroup and take care of its own.

Fuller is particularly insightful on issues like the black market and the relations between American soldiers and the French civilian population. The black market, well established during the German occupation, survived Liberation. Though GIs tried to steal US Army property and sell it to French citizens for a profit, most black-market sales were relatively small time (124). Ameri-

can cigarettes were a popular item. French police and American MPs often cooperated to eliminate the black market and foster reconstruction and the return of a law-abiding society.

In contrast, French police were suspicious of American soldiers and their ties with French society; this was in contrast to the French experience with German soldiers who many believed had acted “correctly” while in France (145). The most common offense committed by American soldiers was public drunkenness. The city of Cherbourg banned GIs from all establishments serving alcohol after a series of attacks and rapes by drunken soldiers. In the Aube in July 1945, mayors of various villages met to coordinate their responses to drunken attacks by American soldiers (150). The worst crime in the eyes of the French was the rape of their women by American soldiers, often spurred on by excessive drinking. The French often accused Black GIs of being the rapists, such as when, in September and October 1944, forty-five rapes committed in the Manche were blamed only on African-American servicemen (160). African American soldiers constituted 10 percent of US forces but were accused of 56 percent of the rapes committed from November 1942 to September 1944 in the Mediterranean theater (161).

Fuller highlights cases of cooperation as in the areas of transportation and requisitioning of supplies. The US soldier made his presence felt in many towns where the Army took over schools, hotels, and other concerns. American employment of German POWs in the early work of reconstruction seemed logical to US military officers but struck the French as problematic. GIs who got drunk and damaged property or attacked French women seemed to be treated too leniently by the Army in the eyes of the French. These daily frictions, ranging from misunderstandings to brutal attacks tell us much about the immediate postwar period and the experiences of a country emerging from Nazi occupation to try to find a new beginning. Ultimately, as Fuller makes clear, cooperation was found, as American soldiers fairly quickly left France by 1946, and the French went on to rebuild their country and establish positive relationships with the American Government and American citizens. However, to assume it was there from the start would be an exaggeration, and Robert Fuller’s contribution is to show us how difficult the transition from war to postwar was even among allies and friends.