

DE GAULLE AND HIS  
MURDERERS

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*A factual account of a dramatic piece  
of contemporary history*

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1963, the great court drama of Vincennes, which had held all France in suspense for five weeks, came to an end.

The 23th of January had marked the opening in the great hall of Fort-Neuf at Vincennes, near Paris, of the eagerly awaited case against the group of assassins who, on 22nd August, 1962, had made an almost successful attempt on President de Gaulle's life in the suburb of Petit-Clamart, to the south of the capital.

One of the main reasons for this atmosphere of tense expectancy was the interplay of politics and justice, which is so often unpredictable in France. The case against Bastien-Thiry and his companions was, in fact, the last action brought before the Supreme Military Court.

That Military Court had been set up on 27th April, 1961, by President de Gaulle's Government by virtue of the special powers conferred on it by Parliament. Its purpose was to try the generals involved in the revolt in Algiers, and then other O.A.S. terrorists. Directly after the case against the leader of the revolt and Supreme Chief of the Secret Army Organisation, General Raoul Salan, who contrary to expectation was not sentenced to death on 23rd May, 1962, but merely to penal servitude for life, a new order dissolved the Military Court.

Its place was to be taken by a Supreme Court of judicature, the composition and competence of which could not, however, be legally established until 15th January, 1963. The new court was to begin functioning on 25th February.

For the defendants at Vincennes the question as to whether their case would be conducted entirely before the Military Court or would be transferred from it to the new court was in the truest sense of the phrase a matter of life and death. An appeal can be lodged against the sentences of the latter at the Court of Appeal, whereas the sentences of the Military Court were final.

So, from the first day of the case onwards, the defence endeavoured to prolong the proceedings beyond 25th February, so that the competence of the Military Court would expire before the verdict was reached. The Government saw through these tactics, however, and hastened to submit a new Bill to Parliament, by means of which the competence of the Military Court could be extended until all cases pending were concluded.

In the middle of February, the National Assembly adopted it by a large majority, and the protest which came immediately afterwards from the Senate had no effect. As a result, the proceedings against Bastien-Thiry and his fellow-conspirators were concluded before the Military Court.

The verdict, which was announced on 4th March, followed in essence the demands of the prosecution. The three main defendants, Jean-Marie Bastien-Thiry, Alain Bougrenet de la Tocnaye and Jacques Prérost, were sentenced to death. Three other death sentences were passed on accomplices still at large, namely, Georges Watin, Serge Bernier and Lajos Marton. Gérard Buisines, Louis de Condé and Jean-Pierre Naudin (the last two are still at large) were condemned to penal servitude for life.

The other defendants, all of them present, were sentenced to different terms of imprisonment. Pierre Magade and Pascal Bertin were given fifteen years' penal servitude each; the Hungarian Laszlo Varga was given ten years and was forbidden to reside in France for ten years; Alphonse Constantin was sent to prison for seven years, and Etienne Ducasse for three. The case against a second Hungarian involved in the attack, Gyula Sari, who was not arrested till about the end of the trial, on 22nd February, was not considered with the rest. As there was no appeal against sentences of the Military Court, the fate of the three

*Chapter 5*

## THE O.A.S.

BEFORE we deal with the first would-be assassin of de Gaulle whose name has been made public, Henri Manoury, and his companions and those who have sought to emulate him, it is necessary to go briefly into the early history and development of that secret terrorist organisation which was behind it all.

The O.A.S., as we have mentioned already, rose out of a secret alliance between the staunch supporters of French colonial dominion in North Africa, the so-called "Ultras," and those others, mainly high-ranking officers who, more for prestige reasons than for self-interest, were also resolved with all the means at their command to prevent Algeria from becoming independent.

The O.A.S. was established in February, 1961 as a kind of parent association for different small terrorist groups already in existence at a secret session in Madrid in which two groups conspiring against de Gaulle's Government took part. On the one hand there was the group of emigrants under the leadership of Ortiz and Lagaille who had manned the barricades in Algiers at the beginning of 1960 and had subsequently sought asylum in Spain. And on the other hand there were the representatives of the then secret "Fronde" or insurrection against de Gaulle within the army, under the leadership of General Raoul Salan.

In the French, and to some extent in the foreign, Press

one occasionally read at the time that the O.A.S. was a "Fascist" organisation. But that was not quite correct. Among the O.A.S. leaders known by name there were indeed a number of dyed-in-the-wool Fascists, for example, the young theorist of the organisation Jean-Jacques Susini or the rebel Ortiz, who had already been cashiered. And the methods of the O.A.S. were certainly very like those of the Fascists.

But the leading men of the O.A.S., i.e., the group of high-ranking officers who staged the revolt in Algiers on 22nd April, 1961 and were then "symbolically" condemned to death, were not really politically minded. Although they could not indeed be classed as supporters of free democracy, they did not subscribe to purely Fascist ideals.

What inspired Salan and Gardy, Godard and Gardes and all the others, those refractory Generals and colonels, what impelled them to commit ever more crimes was misguided patriotism. It was their desire to keep Algeria, which had belonged to France for over 130 years, French for ever.

The O.A.S., created by them, did not therefore endeavour to set up a despotic Fascist régime, although the possibility could not be excluded that its development might have been in that direction if there had been a successful revolt. It pursued two main objects: firstly, to fight to the bitter end the F.L.N., the dominant organisation among the Moslem population of Algeria, using the very same terrorist methods as they did, and, secondly, to "punish" all French people who advocated the so-called "politique de l'abandon," i.e., the gradual relinquishing of Algeria.

If we want to find an historical precedent for the O.A.S. we must go back to the secret societies in Germany in the twenties. Then, as is now the case in France, the alleged supporters of a "politique de l'abandon" were the target.

Then as now the watchword was: The Society will deal with traitors. . . .

Arranged according to rank, the senior officers who joined the conspiracy against President de Gaulle formed, as it were, a series of concentric circles. Not all of them were members from the start. Some joined only as time went on. The élite of the organisation consisted of a group of five generals, namely, the former Supreme Commander in Algeria, Raoul Salan, who bore the not over-modest code-name of "Soleil" (Sun) in the O.A.S.

His second-in-command, General Paul Gardy, who had been Inspector-General of the Foreign Legion for a long time.

General Edmond Jouhaud (code-name "Compagnon") who had been born in Algeria and was the only "Black Foot" in this exalted company. He commanded the O.A.S. groups in the Oran area until his arrest.

The two generals Maurice Challe and André Zeller, who, in spite of their illustrious past in the army, did not play an important part in the O.A.S.

Around this leading group came the circle of colonels, consisting of the following men:

Ives Godard (51), who was long assumed to be the most important of the O.A.S. ringleaders, but did not play the leading rôle expected of him after all.

Colonel Godard was an old soldier experienced in battle. He won his spurs in the Resistance (for two years he was the second-in-command of the Maquis in Haute-Savoie) and after the War he served for a number of years in Indonesia and Algeria. He had, moreover, been trained at the famous military academy of St. Cyr.

In 1956 Godard was assigned as Chief of Staff to the then Commander of the 10th Paratroop Division in Algiers, Lieutenant-General Jacques Massu. In the following year

he staged the great military and police action against the Casbah, afterwards called the "Battle of Algiers" because it struck a decisive blow at the power of the F.L.N. in the Algerian capital.

For nearly three years—from 17th May, 1958 to February, 1961—Godard was Chief of the Security Police in Algiers, the very organisation that he said he would fight to the bitter end after he left their service.

Colonel Jean Gardes (born 4th October, 1914) who, as Chief of the 5th Bureau with the General Staff in Algiers, had conducted psychological warfare against the insurgents. Colonel Antoine Argoud, whom we shall often meet in this book. There will be a detailed account of the man himself and his life in one of the later chapters.

There were also Colonels Roland Vaudrey, Joseph Broizat, Henri Dufour (Commander of the 1st Paratroop Regiment which played a leading part in the Generals' Revolt of 22nd April, 1961), Pierre Château-Jobert, who did not join the O.A.S. till the beginning of 1962, and finally Colonel Lachery.

Then came the circle of captains, fifteen in number, of whom the following in particular have played an important part:

René Sergent who was in the confidence of Colonel Argoud and worked in close co-operation with him and was later rewarded with the designation of "Chief of the General Staff" of the O.A.S. in France itself.

Jean-Marie Curutchet, also an immediate colleague of Argoud, who directed one of the most important special departments of the O.A.S, namely, O.R.O. (Organisation de renseignement et d'opération, i.e., the Intelligence Service of the O.A.S.).

Jean-René Souhère (33), a particularly able but disloyal officer, described by the newspaper *Le Monde* in an account

of his life published on 26th August, 1962 as a "soldat d'aventure" (soldier of fortune).

Finally we must mention a number of civilians who also played an important part in the formation or subsequent development of the O.A.S.

They included, apart from Georges Bidault who will be dealt with in some detail in a later chapter, above all the former Governor-General of Algeria (in 1955) Jacques Soustelle who was Minister of Information (1958-59) in de Gaulle's first Cabinet after his return to power.

There was also a certain Dr. Jean-Claude Perez, leader for many years of the French Ultras in Algeria, who looked after the Civilian Intelligence Service of the O.A.S.,

And the former Sub-Prefect Jacques Achard, described by the weekly *Candida* on 7th March, 1963 as being in the opinion of the police "the most dangerous man of all and perfectly capable of carrying out an attempt on de Gaulle's life single-handed. . . ."

## Chapter 6

### THE "THIRD MISSION" PLOT

AFTER giving up the fight for Algeria in June, 1962, shortly before it was declared independent, the O.A.S. turned their main attention to France itself. The terrorists who were resident there or had come flooding back from Algeria (they are also called "Activists" in France) were combined in two main groups, termed "Mission II" and "Mission III."

The head of Mission III, made up mainly of civilians (including many students, was the manufacturer André Canal, forty-eight years of age, former owner of a metal firm in Algiers. Canal, who has a glass eye which he used to hide with a darkened monocle, bore the nickname— and it was also his code-name— of "The Monocle." He was arrested on 5th May, 1962 and was condemned to death on 17th September, but his sentence was soon afterwards commuted to penal servitude for life by de Gaulle. His "adjutant," the unsuccessful student Jean-Marie Vincent, had the same severe sentence meted out to him.

The main task of Mission III was to organise the plastic bomb attacks in Paris and the provinces. Among these incidents the "blue night" of 17th January, 1962, during which the bursting of bombs could be heard all night long in Paris, is particularly well known. These attacks were carried out by groups who called themselves "Alphas" (Alpha 1, 2, 3, 4, etc.).

## Chapter 9

## THE RESISTANCE COUNCIL

After Bastien-Thiry had made up his mind to join the "Murderers of de Gaulle Club," he secretly got in touch at the end of March, 1962 with the leaders of the so-called "National Resistance Council (C.N.R.—"Conseil National de la Résistance") which had been formed a short time before under the chairmanship of the former Prime Minister Georges Bidault.

The composition of that Council, which then took over command of the underground movement against President de Gaulle's Government from the O.A.S., which had been seriously discredited by the events in Algeria, has never been a secret — at any rate not as far as the men at the top are concerned.

The actual Executive Committee was made up of four people: Bidault who was the Chairman and "Shadow Premier;" Jacques Soustelle, former Governor-General in Algeria and Minister of Information in de Gaulle's Government (1958-59); ex-General Paul Gardy, former Inspector-General of the Foreign Legion and, since the arrest of Salan, the highest-ranking officer in the O.A.S.; also ex-General Antoine Argoud, Chief of the General Staff of the Supreme Commander in Algiers, General Jacques Massu.

Of the two politicians and two soldiers named, it was in both instances the elder (namely, Bidault, who is sixty-three years of age, and the sixty-one-year-old General Gardy) who

were the men of straw, whilst the two younger men, Soustelle and Argoud, were the men of action.

The key personality in the Council, at least latterly, was Colonel Argoud, at any rate as far as the actions directed against de Gaulle's régime in France are concerned, carried out under the code-name of "Mission II."

And what of Bidault? A clever, cultured man who in his younger days had made a name for himself as the courageous leader of another underground movement — at that time he led, with de Gaulle, the first, and real, "Conseil National de la Résistance" against the German army of occupation in France. Today he certainly does not have in him the stuff of which the leader of a subversive movement is made.

De Gaulle, his friend and fellow-campaigner in the years 1940-45, has never made any secret of his contempt for the "chief opponent" of later days. This is shown, amongst other things, by two biting remarks made by the General and known only to his intimate friends.

When at the end of March, 1962 the President learned that Bidault had taken over the chairmanship of the National Resistance Council, he made the following comment: "Well, good news at last." And when after the attack made on 22nd August it was reported to him that Bidault had declared abroad that he had been responsible for it, de Gaulle remarked drily, "He certainly flatters himself."

The actual fact of the matter is that Bidault was responsible for the action of 22nd August only in his capacity as nominal chief of the C.N.R. None of the prisoners tried at Vincennes disputed the fact that the attempt had been carried out on behalf of that Council. On the contrary, most of them, including Bastien-Thiry, made a point of confirming this.

Moreover, the Resistance Council formally took upon itself the responsibility for the attack. Immediately afterwards it published an "official communiqué," which stated: "On 22nd August, 1962 at 8:30 p.m. a detachment of the 1st Special Duty Regiment attacked the motorcade of the President of the Republic on National Highway 309 (the correct number is 306-J.J.) near the Petit-Clamart cross-roads with sub-machine guns and machine-guns. That operation was carried out on the orders of the Supreme Military Command for France in keeping with the directives of the Executive Committee of the C.N.R." (cf. *Le Monde* of 2nd February, 1963).

The text of that "communiqué" was supplied to the French Press in envelopes bearing the stamp of the National Assembly. A communication was also enclosed, stating that "General de Gaulle was on 3rd July, 1962 condemned to death in absentia for high treason by sentence of the Military Court."

In connection with this curious "death sentence," to which he referred again and again to justify his action, Bastien-Thiry made the interesting statement at the trial at Vincennes that the "Military Court" appointed by the C.N.R. consisted of two generals and four colonels *on active service*. The "sentence" was passed on the very day on which de Gaulle proclaimed the independence of Algeria, which was considered by the O.A.S. and C.N.R. people as a serious violation of the constitution and high treason.

With the publication of the above-mentioned "communiqué" the Resistance Council committed a grave tactical error for which they were to suffer later on. In the "official" text it was stated that the attempt had been carried out "on the orders of the Supreme Military Command for France." This was certainly an indirect indication that the actual organiser of the attempt at Petit-Clamart was ex-Colonel

Antoine Argoud. For those in the know it was a clear pointer.

In this connection it may be remembered that Argoud in his interview with *Spiegel* (November 10th, 1963) said the following about the composition of the C.N.R.: "At the head of the Council is a committee whose chairman is Monsieur Georges Bidault. *Within the ranks of the Executive Committee I myself deal with France*. And it is the task of Minister Jacques Soustelle to provide the liaison with neighbouring states."

Although that interview was not published until the beginning of March, 1963, after Argoud had been kidnapped from Munich, it is known to have taken place away back in October, 1962. In the light of this fact a further remark by Argoud becomes highly significant: "... I was also in France in the last few months." That is to say, he was there about the time that the attack at Petit-Clamart was organised.

If further evidence were needed that Argoud was the man who had really pulled the strings it was provided by the trial at Vincennes. During the proceedings on 27th February, Bastien-Thiry, in answer to a direct question from the Presiding Judge: "Who was your leader? Was it Argoud?" admitted frankly: "Yes, it was Argoud."

The third attempt on de Gaulle's life had been foisted barely two weeks before, and again it was shown that the chain of commands stretched back to the "Supreme Commander" for France who was then spending his last days of freedom in Germany and Italy.

Only someone knowing all this will understand why the French Secret Service made every effort to lay hands on Argoud. It was the only way to prevent a further attempt by Mission II on the President's life.

But the joke is that in spite of all the disciplinary measures adopted by the Minister of Defence, Messmer, the same thing happened again in September. Again Argoud travelled unmolested from one garrison to another, not merely in order to incite the officers to rebel against de Gaulle (as he had done in the spring), but also to organise a kind of airlift to Algeria.

In actual fact, incredible as this may sound, because Algeria was independent by that time, Argoud and the officers in sympathy with him, stationed in the Federal Republic, organised a secret air link with the airfield of Boufarik, to the south of Algiers, which was still under French control. This had the twofold aim of smuggling O.A.S. agents and weapons into Algeria and bringing friends who were in danger in Algeria to safety in Europe (*Le Monde*, 26th September, 1962).

What makes the kidnapping of Argoud from Munich, which was carried out in violation of international law, so suspicious is the fact that a man for whose arrest warrants had been sent out, was able to move almost without restriction until very recently in areas controlled by France. The French military authorities in Germany could of course have arrested the fugitive ex-officer legally at any time as they exercise full jurisdiction at their own camps. But they did not do so, but left it to the Secret Police to hand the elusive traitor over to the French authorities in a highly illegal manner. And so Colonel Argoud, who had found asylum at the barracks of Baden-Baden and Rastatt, was to meet his doom at a peaceful Munich hotel.

## Chapter 11

### THE ASSAULT DETACHMENT

It was learned from Bastien-Thiry's own lips that the connection between himself and the National Resistance Council was established via a so-called "Study Group," whose task it was to arrange attacks on the President. As the defendants at Vincennes stated again and again he was not going to be killed, but merely kidnapped. After that he was to be hauled before a military court, in some secret place that was well guarded, and condemned to death once more for high treason, and finally executed.

Whether or to what extent this kidnapping theory is to be believed will be examined carefully later on. At this point let us merely state that that argument played an important part at Vincennes and that the aim to kidnap de Gaulle had a vital effect on the composition of the assault detachment and on the way in which the various plans to attack him were worked out.

Bastien-Thiry did not reveal who the members of the Study Group were, but the French police believe they know the names of different people who belonged to it. First of all, Argoud himself, also two ex-captains, René Sergeant and Jean Carutchet, the first of whom was Argoud's "Chief of Staff," and the other a man who worked in close collaboration with him. It is said, moreover, that Carutchet has now succeeded Argoud as chief of Mission II. A third ex-captain, Jean René Sonétre, who is now living in Spain, is supposed



to have played a leading part in planning the attack at Petit-Champ.

Whatever truth there may be in all this, it is a definite fact that Bastien-Thiry was instructed by the Study Group to form an assault party. Its members were to be, above all, good shots and possess various technical abilities (as, for example, motor mechanics, electricians, etc.).

Let us now look at the individual members of the detachment, in so far as their lives and personalities have been revealed by the trial at Vincennes.

The second most important man in the undertaking was Alain Bougrenet de la Toornaye, scion of an old and noble family from Brittany which, as he himself put it in Court, had given "France crusaders, robber knights and officers."

The defendant himself was one of those officers, but at the age of thirty-six he had only reached the rank of lieutenant, whilst his friend Bastien-Thiry, who was one year younger, was already a lieutenant-colonel.

Bougrenet de la Toornaye, a small, slight figure, bald and sullen, indulged in passionate outbursts before the Court against the Head of State whom he had vainly tried to kill.

Jacques Prévost was a man of a quite different stamp and was the second deputy leader of the detachment. He was a former paratrooper and belonged to the narrow circle of "soldats perdus." He had been present at the débâcle of Dien Bien Phu and later on had fought for another lost cause in Algeria.

But his behaviour was certainly not that of a soldier of fortune. On the contrary, he was modest, almost gentle, and perhaps a little naïve. He seemed the most likeable of all the defendants.

In contrast to Bastien-Thiry and Bougrenet de la Toornaye, Prévost came from quite a humble home. Thirty-two years of age, he lost his father when he was quite young. His

mother was a variety artiste. So the boy grew up in the atmosphere of music-hall and cabaret life and received a poor education. He was a sentimentalist and idealist in the opinion of one psychological expert. "Yes, but he is also a man who ponders over problems very carefully," added another.

A characteristic act on the part of Prévost was to shield one of his fellow-defendants at the risk of his own life. When the Public Prosecutor asked for a death sentence to be pronounced on Gérard Buisines, a former Foreign Legionary, because he had shot at de Gaulle's car, but demanded only a penal servitude for life for Prévost, the latter declared. "I gave Buisines the order to shoot. So if the death sentence is required, it must be passed on me, and not on Buisines." The Court did as he asked and condemned him to death, whilst Buisines was let off with a life sentence.

If our criterion for measuring the relative importance of the individual members of the assault detachment is the severity of the sentence passed on each, then the men who come next must be Georges Watin, Serge Bernier and Lajos Marton who were all condemned to death in their absence. Of the three, we have details only about Watin.

The fugitive Georges Watin is undoubtedly a highly dangerous man. He was involved also in the attack planned for February, 1963, which we shall discuss later. This uncouth, bull-necked man with crew-cut black hair looks sinister. And he is. Although agriculture was his real line, Watin, aged about forty, ran a flourishing restaurant in Algiers. There he joined a terrorist group made up of Ultras and is supposed to have played a part in the attack made with anti-tank guns on the then Supreme Commander, General Salan, in 1957, a matter that has never been properly cleared up. In December, 1960 Watin was expelled from Algeria on the orders of the Government in Paris and thereupon returned to his

THE RISE AND FALL  
OF  
MOISE TSHOMBE

*A Biography*  
*by*  
*Ian Colvin*

LESLIE FREWIN : LONDON

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forgiven.' Tshombe thought so little of this offer that he described it to the Spanish police as a trap.

The Spanish authorities seemed to realise his danger just as readily as Tshombe did; they feared that he might be assassinated, like Ben Khider, the Algerian politician shot in Madrid, despite the presence of two plain-clothes detectives. To kidnap him in Madrid and get him away from there to Africa did not seem physically possible; but by ill luck a mercenary officer had advised Tshombe that his more important conferences about a return to the Congo - a subject in which the Central Intelligence Agency was intensely, if unfavourably, interested - could be held with less risk of supervision by that zealous body if he would make trips to the holiday island of Majorca. It was there in Palma that Major Hoare had seen him in December 1966 and Major John Peters, despite his disruptive role in the Tshombe coup of 1966, was another visitor. He was due to meet Tshombe there late in June 1967. Tshombe had come to like the luxurious Hotel de Mar in Palma. It appealed to the European facets of his character. There was an elegant clientele of holidaymakers. He liked the vast view of the Mediterranean from the secluded windows of his suite. It was a quiet place in which to scheme out his Congo plans. The advice given to him may have been quite sincere, but it was also true that only 240 miles of open sea lay between Palma and the inhospitable coast of Algeria.

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