

The world has time and again strode on the cords of one power vetoing the other and ascertaining its control. Territorial conquest has constantly been a path to ascertain supremacy and emerge as a hegemon in the world through suppression of the indigenous identities of the masses. In this chaotic world order, the power always proclaims itself through demolition and bloodshed violence. During World War II Germany was expanding its arms quite unhesitatingly to capture the territories and establish themselves as superiors in the power game. Paris, the capital city of France stands for the political symbolism. It is widely revered by the lovers of history for its learning, liberation, and magnificence. 1940 can be marked as a dark year in French history due to the storm of war that strikes on Paris and the people who were abandoned behind to shed tears. The spirit of the people of Paris stood crushed and a huge uproar could be heard within the city for its liberty. The heart of France was brutally assassinated and was brought on its knees until the year 1944 when the united confrontation stood against Germanic forces to liberate the city of Paris.



Image source: Wikimedia

It was in the year 1940 that the Germans invaded France and the then unprepared army of

France has no option with them but to surrender themselves to the superior and planned Germans. France was not psychologically competent to bear the brunt of war and was therefore thrown to encounter the turmoil. The City of Paris was first bombed on 3rd June'1940 and was made to touch the feet of the superior forces. Paul Reynaud, Prime Minister of France resigned and was replaced by Marshall Philippe Petain who was earlier serving as the Deputy Prime Minister. The Armistice negotiated with new Prime Minister of France Marshall Philippe Petain and allowed the French collaborative government to retain the administrative control over the third of France. This new collaborative government was headquartered at Vichy and came to be known as the Vichy government. Can this be called a collaboration? Most of the sources term this as the collaboration with Germans but is not the truth rather it was the complete subjugation to them. Collaboration is always done with the parties which are on par with each other in every domain. Brigadier General Charles De Gaulle earlier holding the office of undersecretary for national defence took refuge at England and from there he commenced working on the strategies endeavouring to liberate France. The period between from 1940 to 1944 can be termed as grey because the French lost their individuality, purpose, vigour, and purpose. There was resentment which was gradually developing inside the French against the Germans and this was channelized through constant resistance by students, communists, and the common masses who denied to accept the suzerainty of the Germans.



Image source: Britannica

In the year 1944, the Germans were facing a combined allied attack and their power was weakening out. World war II was at its end and the massive destruction was paving its way. The city of Paris stood again to prove its claim to live with honour and dignity. However, the liberation of Paris did not happen in the summer of 1944 as for both the USA and Britain it was not the priority and they just want to take hold of the retreating German army.

By the 18th of August 1944, the news spread in the city of Paris that the allied advance was progressing to get France liberated. How did this happen? Brigadier General Charles De Gaulle insisted the allied forces to provide the aid to Paris to which they did not approve initially due to two reasons. The first reason was that the Germans were already fleeing the city and the second being that they did not want to destroy the urban city structure encompassing both the residential areas as well as the cultural architecture of utmost

significance. On 19 August 1944, most of the people were declaring strikes including the common masses, police officials, and the daily workers. This disruption in the normal routine was a medium of putting up resistance towards the Germans. The enlightened spirit of the people was much because they were assured of the advancement of the allied forces. Seeing the unrest and havoc in the city the allied forces decided to intervene and together both the second armoured division of France and the fourth division of the US army brought the liberation to France.

25 August 1994 marked the day of Paris liberation from the four-year occupation by Nazis Germany. General Dietrich Von Choltitz, German military governor surrendered his power in front of the allies and legally France was out of German control. Why did Choltitz do so? There is a debate on the issue of why did he surrender the power as he was already ordered by Hitler to destroy the city of Paris before handing it over to allies. The reason often cited is that he never wanted the city of Paris to mourn because of the whimsical desire of Hitler and the other reason being that he did not have enough military resources to blast the city off.

The Parisians after securing the liberation took to the street and proclaimed their emancipation. The joy was radiated from their faces. Brigadier General Charles De Gaulle became took over as the heroic leader of Liberated France. In his speech, he proclaimed merrily that Paris has been liberated because of the collective support of the French revolutionaries, government, and army almost ignoring the aid provided by the allied forces. He then leads the parade of French troops down to Champs-Elysees commemorating the victory. The ringing bells of Notre-Dam Cathedral signified the joy of liberation was followed by the recitation of Te Deum prayer. The tricolour flag of France could be found hanging from the antenna of Eiffel Tower. All these were some of the scenes highlighting the exhilaration and prosperity that was restored in the city of Paris.

How were the daily lives of people affected during the German conquest? Most of the time the sources don't bother to record the individual life experiences and oral stories which although neglected serve as crucial information. The people of France were losing their identity and the heritage which they have cherished for decades. France language was very much under threat due to Germanic pressure. They lost who they were and what they aspire for. The language was not just a medium of communication for the French people but is the way of life and a part of their living heritage and culture. People were facing an economic crisis and were unable to purchase the meals for them which meant the subsistence crisis. The rationing system was not only inefficient but was also irregular in supplies. There was a shift from the modern transport system to the traditional one as people were now moving to

Bicycles and horse-driven carriages. People lost their dignity, individuality, freedom, and rights. The French Jews were excluded in most of the spheres and were deported in huge numbers to the extermination camps. Jews suffered the worst form of humiliation and violence.



What did the image of people look like in the post-liberation period? The people were although celebrating the liberation but the worst was yet to be faced by some section of the populace. Those who were suspected of allying with the Germans were meted out with severe punishments and became a subject of public disgrace. Women who were thought to have a conjugal relationship with the German soldiers were compelled to shave their heads and were sometimes whipped. Prostitutes were strangled till death if they accepted the German clients. These all exhibit that liberation did not imply a happy ending rather some people were humiliated within their own country.

The people of Paris however never cease to commemorate the long history. The magnificent monuments and buildings present the glorious and bitter yore and shape the identity of contemporary Parisians. Various architecture celebrating the victory of France include the Museum of liberator, Army Museum, Memorials including Deportation memorials, Hotel De Ville, Notre Dame, etc. Along with this the movies, oral culture, diaries, and literature enlivens the liberation memories. Every year on 25 August France enjoys its independence as people attend parades, visit the cathedral, sing patriotic songs and display the French national flag. The city of Paris can be seen glowing in the colours of euphoria.

How is the liberation of Paris significant to us today? The day of liberation is not just meant for the people inhabiting in Paris but is valuable for the entire world. The day stands for values it inculcates within the world citizen today that of unity, national integrity, freedom, and list is endless. However, we should be cautious to not frame the perception of an event giving it a positive outlook always rather should also see the aftermath it brought. This is not to sideline the liberation of Paris which was needed to protect the identity of the common masses and was perhaps crucial but the way women's, prostitutes, and prisoner of wars were treated took a toll upon humanitarian values which were not upheld at that time. The revolutionary spirit of France will always be revered by the world. The liberation of Paris imprints the long-living identity of Paris which is to last eternally.

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