

How Paris Was Spared

Is Paris Burning? by Larry Collins and Dominique Lapierre, *New York: Simon and Schuster, 1965. 376 pp. \$6.95.*

PARIS, most beautiful of the world's large cities, survived capture and liberation in World War II with only minor scratches. The French capital was surrendered without a fight in 1940. The freeing of the city in August, 1944, might well have been accompanied by shocking destruction of its historic monuments and wide vistas. The French Communists, a strong element in the underground resistance movement, were dead set on touching off an internal revolt in Paris, without waiting for German evacuation as a result of Allied military pressure.

And from his East Prussian headquarters, appropriately called "The Wolf's Lair," Adolf Hitler was issuing a series of peremptory, almost hysterical orders for the defense of Paris at any cost, for the extermination of all insurgents, for the demolition of the bridges over the Seine and the many masterpieces of classical architecture which have long made Paris a magnet for foreign visitors. But Paris was not for burning, even though "Is Paris Burning?" became a sinister *leitmotiv* in Hitler's messages to the German command in the city. The proud Arc de Triomphe, with its view to the Place de la Concorde, the Eiffel Tower, the Invalides, the Louvre, the Chamber of Deputies, the Vendôme Column and the crowning glory of Notre Dame still stand unscarred and untarnished.

How Paris was at once liberated and saved from serious damage is the subject of a vivid, thoroughly researched book by two journalists, American Larry Collins and Frenchman Dominique Lapierre. The authors have traced and interviewed hundreds of participants in the stirring events of 1944, French, Germans, Americans, generals, privates, former resistance activists, Parisians of both sexes who lived through the sporadic fighting and rejoiced when the bells of the churches of Paris pealed out as a signal that deliverance from the German yoke had come on August 25th.

Hitler had appointed a hardbitten veteran general, Dietrich von Choltitz, Commandant of Paris in the belief that he would unhesitatingly carry out the demolitions and destruction which *der*

Fuehrer envisaged as part of the defense of Paris. The easy capture of Paris in 1940 had been Hitler's moment of supreme joy. If this prize had to be given up, it should be yielded only as a mass of rubble and ruins.

Von Choltitz had distinguished himself in the capture of the large Russian base in the Crimea, Sevastopol, and had also ordered the bombing of Rotterdam. But, placed in supreme command in Paris, with mines and explosives set for massive destruction, Von Choltitz wavered, hesitated and finally used the services of the Swedish Consul, Raoul Nordling, in sending a message to the allied forces, urging them to come quickly and thereby settle the problem.

The work of Messrs. Collins and Lapierre probes for motives and backgrounds; but what impelled von Choltitz to act as he did remains something of a mystery. Part of the explanation may be found in the fact that he was not a fanatical Nazi thrown up by Hitler's revolution, but an old-line aristocratic professional soldier. An interview with Hitler in his headquarters had convinced him that Germany, with a madman for a leader, had lost the war. He did not desire the fame, or infamy, of the Greek who destroyed the famous temple of Diana at Ephesus.

From the standpoint of General Eisenhower, the liberation of Paris was not a Number One military priority. He was anxious to capture the city by a double enveloping maneuver which would avoid fighting in the streets and also make possible the pursuit of the retreating Germans to the Rhine and beyond. But these military considerations had to give way to political when the Communist wing of the resistance took the organization of a revolt in the city into their own hands. As one of their leaders, a Colonel who operated under the pseudonym of "Rol" put it: "Paris is worth 200,000 dead." Had the Communists been able to take over the city themselves they might have hoped to exert a decisive influence on the composition of the postwar civilian government, since France had always been governed from Paris.

The Gaullists in the resistance were pulled along into the uprising, but were willing to negotiate a cease-fire with von Choltitz, who accepted such an arrangement and turned down the ruthless proposal of one of his air generals: to devastate with air bombing the parts of Paris under insurgent control. But the Communists refused to observe the cease-fire. The result was a touch-and-go situation, with sniping and street fighting in various parts of the city, but no serious perma-

nent destruction because of the determination of von Choltitz to wait until the arrival of allied troops would get him off the horn of his dilemma and enable him, as he felt, to surrender with honor.

August 25, by happy coincidence the Feast of St. Louis, was the day of liberation. As General Leclerc's Second Armored Division, backed by an American force, moved into the city, the Germans withdrew without carrying out the planned acts of destruction. The authors convey the spirit of that day, which was beautifully clear, in the following typical descriptive passage:

Somehow, everyone knew "they" were coming this morning. A people who had counted off the years now began counting off the minutes. Everywhere, Parisians took out the treasures long and secretly stored for this day: a dusty bottle of champagne buried in a closet corner; a dress painfully stitched up from scraps of black-market fabric; a tricolor, its forbidden folds hidden for four years; the Stars and Stripes, sewn together from a memory often as touching as it was faulty; flowers; fruits; a rabbit; almost any gift, in fact, that might convey a city's welcome and gratitude.

The authors' method of meticulous interviewing of large numbers of participants and spectators dredges up many characteristic details. The story, for instance, of the old man who was heartbroken when bullets smashed his cart with a precious load of four pounds of potatoes, but found consolation in the thought that the smashed boards of his cart would furnish material for a fire to cook the remaining potatoes.

The feelings of the vanquished are also conveyed in descriptions of the last meeting of General von Choltitz with the officers of his staff, listening grimly to the pealing of the bells which announced the loss of the war and their own speedy consignment to the unknown fate of captivity.

The fall of Paris in 1940 conveyed in England and America a shock even more extreme than Christendom had experienced when Constantinople was captured by the Turks in 1453. Indeed, the danger seemed much closer home. Paris, unlike Byzantine Constantinople, was freed and was not forced to rise like a phoenix from ashes of destruction. Its liberation was an event sufficiently dramatic and important to deserve this lively and detailed chronicle, even if the gaudy journalese prose of the authors sometimes palls on the ear and becomes a vexation to the spirit.

Reviewed by WILLIAM HENRY CHAMBERLIN

The Making of Mao Tse-tung

Mao and the Chinese Revolution, by Jerome Ch'en, *New York: Oxford University Press, 1965. 360 pp. + appendix, bibliography and index. \$7.50.*

THIS IS a study of Mao's life and thought, as these relate to the development of the Chinese Communist party. The author gives special emphasis to the period between 1921 and 1949. He describes the internal political struggles within China and those that took place within the Communist party itself. In all of this Mao stands forth as the central concern of the author.

Dr. Ch'en, Lecturer in Asian History at the University of Leeds, has made an invaluable contribution to our understanding of Mao. His work is of special significance because he has made extensive use of Chinese source materials which have not previously been available in Western language translations. In this book the author makes the following points:

First, according to Dr. Ch'en, two very important events occurred in China at the turn of the century. One was the political revolution of 1911; the other the intellectual revolution of 1919, or the May 4th Movement. In both cases Mao played a very limited role. When the Revolution of 1911 broke out, Mao was already 18 years old. At this critical period of China's history he merely "shaved off his queue" and joined the revolutionary forces "as a private" (p. 31). In the May 4th Movement, Mao did not play any active part. He remained passive. As the author puts it, "They (the new thinkers) believed in the omnipotence of democracy and science; so did the young people, including Mao Tse-tung, under their influence" (p. 60).

Secondly, before Mao formally joined the Chinese Communist movement in 1921, he had very little knowledge of Marxism. His earlier intellectual formation was derived from Western philosophers, especially from Darwin, Smith, Huxley, Mill, Montesquieu, Kant, Spencer, and Rousseau. All of these he read in Chinese translations. Concerning Marxist thought: "Mao's knowledge of Marxism had come indirectly from Li Ta-chao's articles in *La Jeunesse* and from other radical papers after the May 4th Movement; now works of Marx, Engels, and Kautsky put the finishing touch to his conversion to communism" (p. 66).