



Charles de Gaulle (1890-1970) was a recent member of the French government when Hitler's forces invaded France. Bitterly disagreeing that his country should surrender to the Nazis, in June of 1940, de Gaulle was an outspoken critic of the Vichy regime.

Later, de Gaulle became President of France. His political philosophy, referred to as "Gaullism," is still a force in French politics.

The BBC provides more information about him:

Charles de Gaulle was born in Lille on 22 November 1890 and grew up in Paris, where his father was a teacher. De Gaulle chose a military career and served with distinction in World War One.

During the 1930s he wrote books and articles on military subjects, criticising France's reliance on the Maginot Line for defence against Germany and advocating the formation of mechanised armoured columns. His advice went unheeded and, in June 1940, German forces easily overran France. As under-secretary of national defence and war, de Gaulle refused to accept the French government's truce with the Germans and escaped to London, where he announced the formation of a French government in exile. He became leader of the Free French.

After the liberation of Paris in August 1944, de Gaulle was given a hero's welcome in the French capital. As president of the provisional government, he guided France through the writing of the constitution on which the Fourth Republic was based. However, when his desires for a strong presidency were ignored, he resigned. An attempt to transform the political scene with a new party failed, and in 1953 he withdrew into retirement again.

In 1958, a revolt in French-held Algeria, combined with serious instability within France, destroyed the Fourth Republic. De Gaulle returned to lead France once more. The French people approved a new constitution and voted de Gaulle president of the Fifth Republic. Strongly nationalistic, de Gaulle sought to strengthen his country financially and militarily. He sanctioned the development of nuclear weapons, withdrew France from NATO and vetoed the entry of Britain into the Common Market. He also granted independence to Algeria in the face of strong opposition at home and from French settlers in Algeria.

In May 1968, violent demonstrations by university students shook de Gaulle's government. A general strike followed, paralysing France and jeopardising the Fifth Republic. De Gaulle held elections and the country rallied to him, ending the crisis. In April 1969, De Gaulle resigned the presidency after losing a referendum on a reform proposal. He retired to his estate at Colombey-les-Deux-Églises and died of a heart attack on 9 November 1970.

The photograph is circa, 1942.

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Quoted passage, about de Gaulle, [from the BBC](#).

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