Britain and France in World War Two

Colloque at the British Embassy in Paris

Friday 16 October 2015

British Embassy Paris

Welcome HMA Sir Peter Ricketts

Speakers:

DAVID REYNOLDS is Professor of International History at Cambridge and a Fellow of the British Academy. He is the author of eleven books including In Command of History: Churchill Fighting and Writing the Second World War (2004), which won the Wolfson Prize, and The Long Shadow: The Great War and the Twentieth Century (2013), which was awarded the Hessell-Tiltman Prize and was the basis for a three-part TV series on BBC2 that he wrote and presented.

> ***Britain and France in 1940: The Road not Taken*** By early 1940, amid a second war with Germany in a quarter-century, Whitehall concluded that the British policy since 1918 of keeping France at arms' length had been fundamentally mistaken. London belatedly accepted that a strong British-French relationship, embracing the wider public as well as officialdom, was essential to win the war and secure a durable peace. This paper explores one of the fascinating 'what ifs' of twentieth-century history. How would British-French relations have developed if France had not fallen in 1940? Would the British have developed a very different attitude to 'Europe'? These are not merely academic speculations about the past. They also throw light on the forthcoming EU referendum.

ROGELIA PASTOR-CASTRO is Lecturer in International History at the University of Strathclyde. Her research interests focus on European security and integration. Her publications include, co-edited with John W Young, *The Paris Embassy: British Ambassadors and Anglo-French Relations, 1944-1979* (2013). She has published on post-war European defence and British and French diplomacy. She is currently writing a book on Britain and France: Contending visions of Europe. She is Treasurer of the British International History Group.

> ***The Paris Embassy and Franco-British diplomatic relations*** This paper will begin by briefly discussing the Paris Embassy during the war before turning its focus to the British Ambassador to France, Sir Oliver Harvey and French Ambassador to Great Britain, Rene Massigli. It will discuss how their experiences during the run up to the outbreak of war and their actions during the war created certain expectations and informed their worldviews. By analysing their trajectories this paper will highlight some of the factors that influenced their

predispositions, and consider some of the episodes which informed their strategic vision and post war ambassadorships.

ANTOINE CAPET Fellow of the Royal Historical Society, est professeur de civilisation britannique à l'université de Rouen (émérite depuis septembre 2014). Après son doctorat d'État sur « Les classes dirigeantes britanniques et la réforme sociale : le poids des années de guerre, 1931-1951 » sous la direction de Roland Marx (publié sous forme remaniée en 1991), il a continué de s'intéresser à la Grande-Bretagne en guerre, et tout particulièrement à la personne de Churchill. Il a participé au catalogue de la grande exposition Churchill-de Gaulle des Invalides d'avril à mai de cette année (chapitre « Le patrimoine littéraire et historique dans les textes et les discours de Churchill et de De Gaulle »). Il est par ailleurs chargé de la rubrique 'Britain since 1914' de la Royal Historical Society Bibliography de Londres et il siège au comité éditorial de la revue *Twentieth Century British History* (Oxford University Press)

Comment Churchill voyait-il la France et les Français à la veille de la guerre ? Il convient de distinguer entre la France et les Français, car aux yeux de Churchill, les deux ne se confondaient pas. Ne serait-ce que pour des raisons bassement pragmatiques, il juge le renforcement des liens avec la France prioritaire pour son pays. Mais s'y ajoutent des raisons sentimentales : il aime profondément la France. Mais fait-il encore confiance aux Français en septembre 1939 ? Certes, il y a toujours sa profession de foi de mars 1933, « Thank God for the French Army », mais en privé il exprime de graves inquiétudes quant à la solidité du partenaire potentiel dont il vante constamment les mérites en public, et ses rencontres avec des dirigeants français ne le rassurent que partiellement. La discussion portera sur cette dichotomie et ces doutes à la veille de la guerre.

JULIAN JACKSON FBA. Professor of Modern French History at Queen Mary University of London. Has published widely on the history of 20th century France and is at currently writing a biography of Charles de Gaulle.

ANTONY BEEVOR'S latest book is Ardennes 1944 – Hitler's Last Gamble. He is the author of Crete: The Battle and the Resistance, (Runciman Prize), Stalingrad, (Samuel Johnson Prize, Wolfson Prize for History and Hawthornden Prize for Literature), Berlin – The Downfall, The Battle for Spain (Premio La Vanguardia), and D-Day: The Battle for Normandy, (Prix Henry Malherbe and the Royal United Services Institute Westminster Medal). His next work The Second World War was another No. 1 international bestseller. His books have appeared in more than thirty languages and have sold more than six and a half million copies. A former chairman of the Society of Authors, he has received honorary doctorates from the Universities of Kent, Bath, East Anglia and York. He is also a visiting professor at the University of Kent.

Franco-Soviet Relations, 1943-1947 In 1944 at the time of the Liberation, General Charles de Gaulle faced immense problems, both of internal security and external relations. There was a striking contrast between de Gaulle's resentful and often counter-productive conduct

towards his anglo-saxon allies, and his more skilful approach to Stalin and the French Communist Party. He was determined to re-establish 'republican legality' by disarming the Resistance. His trump card was the urgent need of Maurice Thorez, the French Communist leader exiled in Moscow, to return to France. De Gaulle also hoped for a measure of Stalin's support in his struggle for France to be acknowledged as one of the victorious powers. But Stalin's attitude, heavily coloured by the consequences of her defeat in 1940, was dismissive. The Soviet leader saw only one possible interest: France might prove a useful wild card in the western alliance.

OLIVIER WIEVIORKA is Professor at the Ecole normale supérieure de Cachan and senior fellow at the Institut universitaire de France. His main books in English are Normandy (Harvard UP, 2010), Orphans of the Republic (Harvard UP, 2009) and Divided Memory (Stanford UP, 2012). His Histoire de la résistance (Perrin, 2013) will be issue by the Belknap Press of Harvard in 2016.

Has the French resistance been so French? The French historiography generally considers that Resistance in France has been a spontaneous phenomenon spread from the core of the civil society. Partially exact, this view, however, neglects part played by the Allied secrets services, mainly the SOE and to a lesser extent the OSS. This paper tries to reassess the part played by the Anglo-Americans in the shaping of the French resistance but equally shows that the French were as useful to the British that the British were useful to the French.

KARINE VARLEY is a Lecturer in French and European History at the University of Strathclyde. Her research interests lie primarily in war, nationalism and memory. She is the author of *Under the Shadow of Defeat: The War of 1870-71 in French Memory* (Palgrave, 2008), and has published widely on the Franco-Prussian War and Second World War in the *Journal of Contemporary History, European History Quarterly, French History, Modern & Contemporary France* and in edited volumes. She is currently writing a book exploring French relations and entanglements with Italy during the Second World War. She was previously Lecturer in Modern European History at the Universities of Edinburgh and Durham. She is Treasurer of the Society for the Study of French History and is a member of the editorial board of *Modern & Contemporary France.* She is a Fellow of the Royal Historical Society and a Fellow of the Higher Education Academy.

***Perceptions of Britain in Vichy's foreign policy, 1940-42*:** This paper will explore how perceptions of Britain and the British government shaped the formulation of foreign policy under the Vichy regime. Despite numerous assessments that a German-led victory would be more detrimental to French interests than a UK-led victory, deeply-embedded distrust of British ambitions within the Vichy government was only aggravated by British actions such as the naval attack on Mers-el-Kébir. Comparisons will be drawn between the negative perceptions of Britain held by many in Vichy and the efforts at rapprochement with Italy that sought to build upon the cultural and historical connections between France and Italy. With both Britain and Italy representing threats to French sovereignty over the colonial empire and naval fleet, this paper will explore the decisions made by key figures within the Vichy

government and the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs at critical junctures in 1940 and late 1941.

MARTIN THOMAS is Professor of Imperial History and Director of the Centre for War, State, and Society at the University of Exeter. Currently a research fellow of the Independent Social Research Foundation, he has written extensively on the French empire and contested decolonization. His most recent books are *Violence and Colonial Order: Police, Workers, and Protest in the European Colonial Empires, 1918-40* (Cambridge University Press, 2012), and *Fight or Flight: France, Britain and their Roads from Empire* (Oxford University Press, 2014).

RICHARD TOYE is Professor of Modern History at the University of Exeter. He has published widely in the fields of modern British, imperial and global history, and is best known for his three books on Winston Churchill. He is co-author, with Professor Martin Thomas, of *Arguing About Empire: Imperial Rhetoric in Britain and France 1882-1956*, which is to be published by Oxford University Press.

> ***War of words: Franco-British imperial rhetoric, 1940-45***: World War II - or, to be precise, the fall of France in 1940 - created an unprecedented crisis in Anglo-French relations. The cataclysm that befell the French state - and its division into rival Vichy and Free French regimes - meant that Britain's relationship with those who claimed to represent France reached unprecedented levels of difficulty and complexity. On the one hand, there was open conflict with Vichy. On the other, there were the extraordinary ups and downs of Churchill's relations with De Gaulle. Moreover, although it was rarely articulated as such, this crisis was an inherently imperial one, with the competing rhetorics of 'Frenchness' articulated by Vichy and the Free French respectively having a fundamental connection to Empire. As this paper shows, both collaboration and resistance were acts (or processes) with intrinsic imperial (and rhetorical) repercussions.

PETER JACKSON holds the Chair in Global Security at the University of Glasgow. He has published widely in the fields of international history, intelligence studies and the history of modern and contemporary France. Among his publications are *Beyond the Balance of Power: France and the politics of national security in the era of the First World War* (Cambridge, 2014); *Exploring Intelligence Archives* (London, 2008) and *France and the Nazi Menace: intelligence and policy, 1933-1939* (Oxford, 2000). Jackson was editor of *Intelligence and National Security* (the world's leading journal of intelligence and security studies) from 2004 through 2015. He is now writing a history of the rise of modern intelligence with Sébastien Laurent.

> ***Franco-British intelligence co-operation*** Peter Jackson's contribution will examine Franco-British intelligence co-operation in the years leading up to and beyond the outbreak of the Second World War. The central conclusion on offer is that there was no systematic collaboration in intelligence matters until the very eve of war. For French intelligence officials intelligence exchanges were an initial first step towards effective political and military cooperation.. This was precisely what British policy makers wished to avoid for most of the period in question. The British defence establishment was extremely reluctant to

pool its intelligence resources with those of France. As a result, systematic co-operation was undertaken too late and without sufficient commitment on the part of the British government. Yet unofficial channels for the exchange of information that functioned continuously throughout the inter-war period endured after the fall of France. These exchanges were sporadic and characterised by suspicion on both sides. But it is testament to fundamentally anti-German orientation of the French intelligence community that had been a cultural reflex for three generations of French soldiers.

Vin d'honneur

Opportunity to visit the residence