



Free France's Lion: The Life of Philippe Leclerc, de Gaulle's Greatest General

William Mortimer-Moore

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But for his early death, many Frenchmen believe Leclerc would have been their greatest figure to emerge from World War II. De Gaulle himself admitted to his son-in-law that he gave up smoking when Leclerc died, in order to retain his health in case France needed him, because Leclerc was no longer there.

From the fall of France until 1943, Leclerc dovetailed his operations with the British effort in North Africa, establishing himself as a dynamic combat leader in the battles against Rommel. But once the conflict shifted to European soil he became even more prominent as the commander of the 2nd French Armored Division (the famous 2e DB). For the next two years he was under the operational control of either Patton's Third Army, as in the Normandy breakout, Hodges' First Army, at the Westwall, or Patch's Seventh Army in the south.

His career not only includes the liberation of Paris, for which he is most famous, but the retaking of Strasbourg and the reduction of the Colmar Pocket. Helping to spearhead the advance into Germany itself, Leclerc's armor comprised a rock upon which American units could rely, and its waving the tricolor during the Allied counter-invasion went far toward retrieving French prestige in the war. By the German surrender in May 1945, Leclerc is one of very few Frenchmen of whom it can be said that he never stopped fighting to regain France's freedom, from the debacle of 1940 right through to the end.

After VE-Day Leclerc was dispatched to reassert French authority in Indo-China, an uphill task given the atrophy suffered by the French colonial government due to its isolation from its homeland and local Japanese superiority. While being partly successful in the south and Cambodia, Leclerc soon discovered that the Viet Minh were harder to dislodge in the North, and that Ho Chi Minh was more than a match for frequently changing postwar French governments. Recognizing that France had neither the means nor the will to recover control, Leclerc advised his government to "negotiate at all costs." This didn't happen, leading to Dien Bien Phu eight years later and thence to US involvement.

Surprisingly, Leclerc has never yet been the subject of a thorough biography in English. Nevertheless many Americans and Englishmen will inevitably have noticed the plethora of monuments to Leclerc in any moderately sized French town. With a fast-paced narrative covering combat at all levels of command and a foreword by Martin Windrow, author of *The Last Valley: Dien Bien Phu and the French Defeat in Vietnam*, *Free France's Lion* will make fascinating reading for any serious student of the full scope of World War II.

REVIEWS

"...a solid biography of the man who was a hero in France during and after the war, second only to- or even exceeding-Charles de Gaulle in popularity and respect...does a good job, in particular, of allowing readers to feel sand in the nostrils when Leclerc is raiding with his tiny band of Gaullists in the desert, and also allowing readers to feel the swelling sense of pride, excitement, and drama when the veterans of Chad and the Fezzan race into the boulevards of Paris in 1944...Moore demonstrates conclusively that Leclerc served as a lion of Free France. Anyone who mocks the French for lack of fighting spirit would do well to read this

book about a fine soldier and his men, and learn a little history.” Stone and Stone

“Beginning with the fall of France in 1940, Leclerc’s diplomacy with more difficult leaders, risky missions in West Africa, raids on Italians in Libya and other daring battles, and stories of his charismatic leadership provide a stunning picture of the man known as France’s Lion.

Book News, 02/2012

“[The] first full-scale biography in English of the ‘liberator of Paris.’ . . .the descriptions of Leclerc’s military strategies and tactics are engaging . . .”

?Publishers Weekly

“Mr. Moore has done an excellent job with this book. It is highly entertaining and helps bring to light apart of World War II that many readers know little about...French Africa.”

Portland Book Review

“... a must read for any serious student of World War II in Europe. ... excellent index. It would be an excellent addition to any community, college or personal library.”

Kepler’s Military History

an excellent and enjoyable work, well worth a read for anyone with an interest in broadening his or her knowledge of the Second World War or the life of a very interesting and engaging man.

Birmingham "On War"

“...the first full-scale biography in English of General Leclerc, the ‘Liberator of Paris’, considered to be de Gaulle’s greatest general... This biography is lively, intelligent, and never boring”

War in History Book Reviews

"..an excellent introduction to France in the Second World War and not just the life of Leclerc."

The Nymas Review

"...a highly readable, compelling, and well-researched work geared toward a general audience.... offers so much material otherwise unavailable in English that both specialists and general readers will profit from reading it."

Michigan War Studies

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Nicole Norris:

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Michelle Labat:

In this period of time globalization it is important to someone to obtain information. The information will make you to definitely understand the condition of the world. The health of the world makes the information much easier to share. You can find a lot of personal references to get information example: internet, paper, book, and soon. You can see that now, a lot of publisher which print many kinds of book. Often the book that recommended to your account is Free France's Lion: The Life of Philippe Leclerc, de Gaulle's Greatest General this guide consist a lot of the information in the condition of this world now. This specific book was represented just how can the world has grown up. The language styles that writer value to explain it is easy to understand. The particular writer made some research when he makes this book. Here is why this book acceptable all of you.

Elbert Lupton:

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