



# The French-American Foundation

## Early years

**It all began, as had so many other initiatives in international affairs,** at the Council on Foreign Relations in New York. In late 1973, I had a number of conversations with James Chace, then the Managing Editor of the Council's journal, *Foreign Affairs*, about the state of relations with France.

At that time, I was on the staff of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee and had been struck by the anti-French attitudes I had encountered not only there but also in my previous assignments at the State Department. It seemed to me that the French could do no right as far as the majority of Senators and State Department officials were concerned. And the same antagonism pervaded the press. On the other hand, French attitudes, and often actions, appeared to be based on what seemed to be a visceral anti-Americanism.

There had, of course, been exceptions—French support in the various Berlin crises, in the Cuban missile crisis, in the abortive summit meeting with Khrushchev in Paris. But the underlying tone of what was said about U.S.

policy at the Foreign Ministry, in the National Assembly and, even more stridently, in the French press was invariably critical if not hostile. I wondered, I said to James, if something could not be done outside government channels to bring to bear a more rational and productive approach.

James replied at one of these discussions that he had recently had an almost identical conversation with Nicholas Wahl, then a professor at Princeton, and he offered to bring the two of us together. The three of us first met at the Council, and then Nick and I began to meet whenever I was in New York or he in Washington. We soon reached the conclusion that what was needed was a serious non-governmental organization that would bring together those interested in the French-American relationship in its largest sense--that is, not devoted, as some existing organizations were, exclusively to cultural matters or, as some universities were, to academic inquiry.

There were such organizations devoted to US relations with Germany and Japan, our adversaries in World War II; with Latin America; with Asia; and with Africa. There were institutions dealing with US relations with Europe as a whole, but it seemed to us that the French American relationship had become a case study in mutual misperceptions and thus had a uniquely complicated if not neuralgic nature that, for better or worse, set it apart.

We soon fastened on the idea of a foundation, realizing that certain conditions would have to be met if one were to be created.

- The first was a critical mass of support from people who had a strong interest in the subject and were prepared to spend time on the project.
- The second was, of course, funding, but it seemed to us that the financing would follow if sufficient support could be found.
- The third was the participation of the French for, after all, it would not be as effective or credible an approach to deal with bilateral subject matters from only one side of the Atlantic.

And in considering this third condition, **we came up with the idea of two foundations--one on each side of the Atlantic, each able to bring to bear its own perspective.** In other words, this would not be yet another case of Americans dealing with the

French (or preaching to the French) without some sort of reciprocity, and we thought that a dual structure would make it easier to obtain French participation. We realized that the concept would be new to the French and that, given the differences in how the two societies were organized, the structure in France would be quite different from that in the United States, but if the French were willing to go along with the idea it would be an experiment that might work.

The next step was to test the waters in Paris.

On October 25, 1974, Nick and I had lunch with Emmanuel (Bobbie) de Margerie (then Director of Western European Affairs in the French Foreign Office and later Ambassador to the United States) who encouraged us to proceed.

By this time, I was back in the State Department, having been appointed Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for European Affairs. The Assistant Secretary of State was my old friend and former colleague Arthur Hartman (later Ambassador to France and the Soviet Union). I did not want to continue even preliminary discussions without Arthur's approval and his agreement to keep the Embassy in Paris informed and, hopefully, involved. He urged Nick and me to continue.

The Charge d'Affaires in Paris at the time was Galen Stone. He arranged a meeting that afternoon with Claude Pierre-Brossolette, Secretary General of the Elysee (in effect, President Giscard d'Estaing's Chief of Staff). Bobbie de Margerie had called Pierre-Brossolette to support the appointment, and Galen went with me to the meeting. In a letter a few days later to Bobbie de Margerie reporting on the meeting, he said that "*Pierre-Brossolette was very responsive and enthusiastic and said that he was certain that the President would approve of such an idea.*" I also met with David McGovern, then the managing partner of the Shearman and Sterling office in Paris.

He said that he would do all the necessary legal work pro bono publico and that he was certain that the New York office would do the same. Edward Tuck subsequently agreed to do so.

**In late April, while both Nick and I were in Paris, Jean Pierre Soisson, Secretary of State for Universities, Giscard d'Estaing's campaign manager and the**

**youngest minister in the French cabinet**, organized a dinner for us to present the idea of two foundations to a group of government officials, academics and business people (who subsequently constituted themselves a preparatory group). The group agreed that the French organization would have to include government funds or it could never be brought into existence, that it should have no political objectives, that a board in France of broad professional composition should run it and that it should be formally inaugurated as part of the bicentennial year.

The next steps were to be:

1. the selection of someone to act as organizer and executive secretary,
2. the drawing up of the legal charter of the French organization,
3. the formal constitution of a board to meet in June or July and thus be in a position to meet with the American board in the fall.

At the conclusion of the meeting, Jean Laloy, then Director of Cultural Affairs at the Quai d'Orsay, agreed to provide the necessary seed money.

Nick and I then organized two dinners -in Washington on May 16<sup>th</sup> and in New York on May 21<sup>st</sup> . Many of those who have been active in the foundation's activities since its inception attended including:

- James Chace,
- Edward Tuck,
- Guido Goldman (the eminence grise behind the German Marshall Fund),
- former ambassador John Irwin,
- George Franklin (former President of the Council on Foreign Relations, then North American Secretary of the Trilateral Commission and later a Board member),
- Stanley Hoffman and
- Alex Vagliano (Senior Vice President of Morgan Guarantee and later a Board member).

The consensus of those attending the two dinners was that it would take \$50,000 and five months to get organized; **the French and American organizations should be linked by a**

**common name, a parallel legal structure and a joint statement of objectives and purposes but each should be able to operate independently;** and that it was essential to keep the momentum moving to take advantage of the bicentennial year as an ideal time to begin.

Finally, it was agreed that the foundation should work in six areas:

- local government—both local administration and local services such as transportation;
- national planning; social services--including family and child care;
- the provincial media; translations--particularly of French books into English; and regional cultural activities.

Nick followed up with former Ambassadors Dillon, Houghton and Irwin and obtained from them a pledge of \$45,000.

I returned to Paris on May 26<sup>th</sup> and went to see Andre Gadaud, a member of Soisson's staff who had served in the French Embassy in Washington where I had known him. Gadaud told me that Soisson had discussed the project with Giscard and that Giscard had said to go ahead and see what happened.

Gadaud described Giscard's reaction as "*a blinking green light.*"

In late August I reported to Arthur Hartman that the foundation had been incorporated, that the application for IRS certification as a tax exempt entity had been made and that a tentative steering committee had been appointed and would meet on September 22<sup>nd</sup>. Those who had agreed to serve on the steering committee, in addition to Nick and to me, were:

- Louis Begley, of Debevoise Plimpton;
- James Chace;
- George Franklin;
- Stanley Hoffman;
- Edward Tuck;
- August Hekscher, former President of the Twentieth Century Fund and former New York City Parks Commissioner.

By the time I returned to Paris in late October, **the French foundation had organized a tentative Steering Committee and had appointed as Executive Director Philippe Bertin-Mourot** who had worked for both the Reader's Digest and Avon products on both sides of the Atlantic and had more recently been secretary of the Maxim's Business Club. He was to begin work on October 27 and had been asked to have a report ready by the end of January with a suggested detailed structure for the French foundation, a proposal for funding it (e.g. what proportion to be contributed by the government and what proportion by private sector firms) and a list of projected activities over the next two years. Incidentally, as a historical footnote, there had been a meeting in September attended by members of Giscard's staff, Chirac's staff (he was then Prime Minister) and Jean Laloy.

Chirac had said that he preferred a single foundation based in New York devoted exclusively to language and culture. He had finally agreed to the **concept of two foundations but wanted two French members on the New York Board (one of whom would be the French cultural counselor), two American members on the French board and special attention to be paid to French language teaching in the United States.**

In January 1976, I reported to Arthur that the foundation had \$75,000 in the bank, an IRS tax exempt certificate, an office at 684 Park Avenue (the top of the Spanish Institute building) and an Executive Secretary, Mrs. Constance Jewett, a bilingual graduate of Vassar who had been head of the modern languages department at the Town School. She was assisted by Mrs. Lee Carpenter Long, a Wellesley graduate, who had been Stanley Hoffman's secretary at Harvard. Yves Andre Istel, a partner at Kuhn Loeb, had joined the steering committee, Nick had assumed the presidency, the process of appointing a board had begun and the French side had committed \$75,000 for their operating expenses for one year.

On February 9<sup>th</sup>, Alice Saunier-Seite, who had replaced Jean-Pierre Soisson as Secretary of State for Universities, announced at a lunch in Paris the creation of the foundation. The provisional steering committee met before the lunch to approve the "statuts" of the Foundation and to discuss programs. The members of the committee who attended were:

- Pierre Tabatoni (former cultural counselor in New York but then director of international relations in the universities ministry who was also serving as temporary president),
- Andre Gadaud (by this time French Cultural Counselor in New York),
- Jacques Dupuy (from the Foreign Ministry's Cultural Affairs Department),
- Jacques de Fohlen (Director of European Affairs at the Foreign Ministry),
- Michel Bruguiere (from the Prime Minister's office),
- Sylvain Pivot (of the CNPF),
- Jean Louis Gergorin (from the Quai's Policy Planning Staff),
- Olivier Chevillon (Managing Editor of Le Point),
- Michel Pomey (a member of the Conseil d'Etat),
- Serge Hurtig (of Sciences Po)
- Philippe Dennerly, a businessman educated at MIT and Columbia.

Before the Steering Committee meeting, Bertin-Mouroit had polled the members on their order of preference for programs.

The results were: images of the two countries in the mass media 11 votes, images of the two countries in school books 10 votes, citizen participation in local affairs 9 votes, changing attitudes towards work 8 votes, child care 7 votes, social security and health insurance 4 votes.

At the Steering Committee meeting, Michel Pomey, a member of the Conseil d'Etat, an expert on foundation law and the Committee's legal adviser, said that he was setting up the Foundation as an "association" under the law of 1901 which would not prevent it from calling itself a "fondation" or from receiving money from private and public donors. He also said that the "statuts" would include a statement that that the French Foundation's main activities were to be carried out in cooperation with the American Foundation. The organization was then officially organized as la Fondation Franco- Americaine.

Phillippe Bertin-Mouroto came to New York in late February and again in late March, and during those meetings it was agreed that the first project would be a French-American Journalists Conference to be held in Washington on May 15 at the School for Advanced International Studies of the Johns Hopkins University.

A project committee was formed to organize the conference under the chairmanship of James Chace. The other members were

- Stanley Karnow, then with the German Marshall Fund and formerly with the Washington Post,
- John Hess of the New York Times,
- Joseph Kraft the columnist and
- Nicholas King, formerly press attaché at the American Embassy in Paris.

The journalists who attended were from fourteen newspapers, magazines and other media including the *New York Times*, *the Washington Post*, *Le Monde*, *Le Figaro*, the *Los Angeles Times* and French radio and television.

The conference budget was \$16,000--half financed by the Paris foundation, half by New York with most of the U.S. financing coming from the German Marshall Fund and the New York Times Company Foundation.

**On May 17<sup>th</sup>, the day before the dinner at the French Embassy, to be attended by President Ford and Secretary of State Kissinger,**

at which the French President was to announce formally the formation of the two foundations (which, in fact, had already begun to operate), it became necessary to inform Secretary Kissinger about the project. Accordingly, Arthur Hartman sent the Secretary a memorandum saying that Giscard would mention the subject in his remarks at the dinner and providing background information including a statement that Nick and I had kept him; Winston Lord, head of the Policy Planning staff; John Richardson, Assistant Secretary of State for Cultural Affairs; and Monroe Leigh, State Department Legal Adviser fully informed and that "all of us have approved of the way the foundations have been organized." The memorandum was returned to Arthur with a check mark and a note from the secretariat staff saying, "HAK apparently saw". Whether



Secretary Kissinger really saw or read the memorandum, we will never know.

At any rate, at the dinner on May 18 (at which neither Nick nor I was present) there was an exchange of toasts between the two presidents. Giscard's toast included two paragraphs based on a draft which Nick and I had given the French Embassy. A White House press release gave the text of both toasts.

The two pertinent paragraphs in Giscard's toast read as follows:

*"For this reason, lastly, I hope that there will be more and more contacts and meetings between our two countries and that, in fact, will be the aim of the two foundations which have just been established, one in New York and the other in Paris, in order to promote relations between the United States and France "Under the guidance of well-known figures, they will work together closely to further exchanges and dialogue between our two countries. Now, one of the objectives of my visit to which I am most attached will have been achieved. I know, Mr. President, that it meets your wishes too; that is, that France and the United States should know each other better in order to understand each other better."*

The next project undertaken was to expose young teachers of English in French secondary schools to the United States. A three-week tour of the east, mid-west and Texas took place in the summer. The visit was oriented towards the workings of federal, state and municipal governments, the judicial system, industry, agriculture, the media and religion. Each teacher also spent three weekends with families in Baltimore, Lincoln, Nebraska and Freeport, Illinois. One third of the cost of the trip was assumed by the teachers and the remainder by the French foundation. Plans were also made for a program of internships for French journalists on American newspapers and for a study of childcare systems.

By October the structures of both foundations were in place. The steering committee of the New York Foundation had the following membership:

- Nicholas Wahl, Professor of Politics, Princeton University, President
- Edward H. Tuck, Partner, Shearman and Sterling, Secretary and Counsel
- James Chace, Managing Editor, Foreign Affairs, Treasurer
- Louis Begley, Partner, Debevoise, Plimpton, Lyons and Gates

- Michel Bergerac, Chairman and President, Revlon George Franklin, North American Secretary, the Trilateral Commission.
- August Hekscher, former Administrator of Cultural Affairs and Parks Commissioner of New York City.
- Stanley Hoffman, Professor of Government, Harvard University.
- Yves Andre Istel, Partner, Kuhn Loeb and Company.
- Marie-Monique Steckel, Director, French Industrial Development Agency, New York.
- James Lowenstein, Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for European Affairs, advisor to the Board.

The members of the New York Board consisted of all of the above members of the Steering Committee and in addition the following:

- Thomas Bishop, Professor of French, New York University.
- The Honorable C. Douglas Dillon, former Ambassador to France, Under Secretary of State, and Secretary of the Treasury, then President of the Board of Trustees of the Metropolitan Museum of Art.
- Michael Harrington, National Chairman, Democratic Socialist Organizing Committee.
- The Honorable Amory Houghton, former Ambassador to France, former Chairman of Corning Glass Works.
- The Honorable John N. Irwin, former Ambassador to France, partner Patterson Belknap Webb.
- Joseph Kraft, syndicated columnist.
- Jean Mayer, President, Tufts University.
- John B. Oakes, Editorial Page editor, the New York Times.
- The Honorable Nathaniel Samuels, former Under Secretary of State, Chairman Louis Dreyfus Corporation.
- The Honorable Sargent Shriver, former Ambassador to France, partner Fried, Frank, Harris, Shriver and Kampelman.
- Howard Stein, Chairman of the Board, the Dreyfus Corporation.
- Gordon Wright, Professor of History, Stanford University

In Paris, the Steering Committee of the French Foundation had the following members:

- Pierre Jouven, former president Pechiney-Ugine-Kuhlman, Chairman.
- Philippe Bertin-Mourot, Administrator.

- Michel Bruguere, Haut Comite de la Langue Francaise.
- Olivier Chevrillon, publisher, Le Point.
- Philippe Dennerly, president Etablissements Dennerly.
- Jacques Dupuy, Director General, Foreign Ministry Cultural Affairs.
- Pierre de Gunzburg, director, Chargeurs Reunis, Safic Alcan.
- Serge Hurtig, Secretary General, Fondation Nationale des Sciences Politiques.
- Thierry de Montbrial, Professor, Ecole Polytechnique.
- Michel Pomey, Conseil d'Etat.
- Pierre Tabatoni, delegate, Relations Universitaires Internationales.

The Board in Paris consisted of the above members of the steering committee and the following:

- Jacqueline Baudrier, President, Radio France
- Pierre Aigrin, Technical Director, Thomson CSF.
- Michel Boiron, Professor of Medicine, University of Paris VII.
- Andre Bouillot, President, SNPA.
- Jean Daridan, Amassadeur de France, President France Amerique.
- Claude Evain, Director of International Relations, CNPF.
- Roger Fauroux, Deputy Director General, St Gobain Pont-AMousson.
- Pierre Giraudet, President, Air France.
- Emmanuel Lepoivre, counselor, Union des Industries Metallurgiques et Minieres.
- Pierre Ledoux, President, BNP.
- Maurice Laure, President, Societe Generale.
- David McGovern, Shearman and Sterling (representative of the Foundation in New York).
- Jacques Maisonrouge, President, IBM Europe.
- Jacques Marchandise, Chairman, Librairie Hachette.
- Emmanuel de Margerie, Director General, Musees de France.
- Pierre Moussa, Director, Cie Financiere de Paris et des Pays Bas.
- Daniel Salem, President, Conde Nast International.
- Raymond Vuilliez, Chairman, Sequana

At this point in the life of the two foundations, I left Washington to assume my new post as Ambassador to Luxembourg and as a result lost track of the daily ebb and flow of subsequent developments as the two foundations came to life. But I thought it would be worth recording how the two foundations came to be created, who were the personalities involved, and what the original motivations were that lay behind the decisions on directions the two foundations should take. The ups and downs in the lives of the two foundations and in the relationship between the two, the personalities subsequently involved and the successes and failures of the two organizations remain to be described another day.

**James G. Lowenstein**