

ROMANIANS OF THE FRENCH RESISTANCE

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Robert Guédiguian's film *L'Armée du crime* and Didier Daeninckx's novel *Missak* have been recent reminders of the role of immigrants in the French Resistance. The fate of the 'Groupe Manouchian', twenty-two men and one woman executed in early 1944 (they were used in the Nazi propaganda campaign *L'Affiche rouge*), still resonates and provokes controversy, raising the issue of the silence which has often surrounded the place of foreigners in *la France résistante*. What is more, it raises the wider issues of the fate of many of the surviving *résistants* in post-war communist Eastern Europe and the potential conflicts between internationalism, nationalism and ethnicity. This article seeks to address such issues by examining the largely overlooked involvement of Romanians in the French Resistance, and the significant role they played—well beyond their numerical strength—in both the struggle against the German Occupier and in the post-war communist regime. If this could be seen as yet another example of *l'amitié franco-roumaine*—those strong political and cultural bonds that made of Bucharest a 'petit Paris' and of the French capital a place of pilgrimage and refuge—it also reveals a complex and sometimes tragic entanglement.

An event such as *l'Affaire Manouchian* is rightly cited as an example of the 'Vichy Syndrome' described by Henry Rousso, where a nation's reassuring self-image is shattered by the unbearable reminder of 'la guerre franco-française'.¹ But this resurgence of a past that 'will not pass' goes beyond the strictly national frame. Indeed, it highlights the networks, connections and transfers which have, as Patricia Clavin has argued, come more to light in transnational history.² Romanians of the French Resistance, mostly of Jewish origin and communist persuasion, roam across supposedly established national frontiers. At the same time, their story shows the persistence of the 'national' in France, Romania and beyond. As Pieter Lagrou has demonstrated in his study of patriotic memory in post-war Western Europe, 'the state became a central agent of a collective memory that was at the same time self-justification and recovery of national honour'.³ In the case of a 'people's democracy' like that

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¹ H. Rousso, *Le Syndrome de Vichy de 1944 à nos jours* (Paris, 1990).

² P. Clavin, 'Time, manner, place: writing modern European history in global, transnational and international contexts', *European History Quarterly*, 40 (2010), 624–40.

³ P. Lagrou, *The Legacy of Nazi Occupation: Patriotic Memory and National Recovery in Western Europe 1945–1965* (Cambridge, 2000), 292.

in post-war Romania, vagaries of party line and geopolitical relations, above all with Moscow, would further complicate the veterans' fate.

I

At first, the important role played by Romanians in the French Resistance might come as a surprise. After all, France welcomed relatively few Romanians between the wars. A former Romanian member of the Resistance, Gheorghe Vasilichi, who arrived in Paris in 1938, recalled: 'I was one of three million immigrants in France of whom around 800,000 were Italian, 400,000 Polish, 300,000 Spanish, 140,000 Belgian, and 14,000 Romanian.'⁴ But, on the qualitative level, the Romanian contribution to the struggles led by the French Communist Party (PCF) was far from negligible. Two historic figures of the Romanian Communist Party (PCR) had already made a contribution to the movement in France. In the early 1930s, Ana Pauker (née Rabinsohn) had been one of the Comintern's representatives for the PCF. Subsequently, her imprisonment by the Romanian authorities in 1935 (the PCR having been illegal since 1923) became a cause célèbre for the communist movement in France and elsewhere, making of Pauker a sort of '*Pasionaria* of the Carpathians'. Another communist leader, Valter Roman (né Ernest Neulander), edited several Romanian émigré publications in Paris, before commanding republican artillery during the Spanish Civil War. Pauker and Roman made for Moscow before the outbreak of the Second World War.

Other communists of Romanian origin, seeking refuge as well as education in France, and organized, since 1934, in the *groupes de langues* of the CGTU's Main-d'Oeuvre immigrée (MOI), would have a longer and often more tragic sojourn. Their relationship to the Romania they left was complex and uneasy: mostly Jews from the territories annexed at the end of the First World War, they did not feel at home in the Greater Romania that the PCR denounced, according to the Comintern line, as 'imperialist'. Internationalism appealed to those whose identity did not coincide with the virulently nativist and reactionary Romanian-ness being imposed throughout the country.

A classic example of the itinerary of Romanians in the French Resistance is that of Boris Holban, who would eventually become military commander of the FTP-MOI in occupied Paris. Holban was born in 1908 as Baruch Bruhman, into a large working-class Jewish family in Bessarabia, that part of the Russian Empire annexed by Greater Romania in 1918 (and which today is independent Moldova). Like many Jews, he became acutely aware of the persecution of his community. A double sense of oppression therefore pushed Bruhman to join the PCR and engage in political and trade union activity. He was imprisoned for his pains.

In January 1938, the Romanian government brought in sweeping anti-Semitic legislation that was applauded by Berlin and denounced by the League

⁴ *Români în Rezistența franceză în anii celui de-al doilea război mondial* (Bucharest, 1969), 10.

of Nations. One of its consequences was that Bruhman and other Bessarabian Jews were stripped of their Romanian nationality. It was time to go west: first to study in Czechoslovakia, then to make for Paris, where he hoped to join the many Romanians who had volunteered to fight in the Spanish Civil War. By the time he arrived, however, the International Brigades were being withdrawn from Spain. Instead, Bruhman became active in the MOI. With the outbreak of war, he, like many other foreigners, volunteered for the French army. In June 1940, he was taken prisoner. Six months later, thanks to a nun named Hélène Studler, and a Romanian communist, Irma Mico, he escaped from his stalag near Metz and, back in Paris, re-established contact with the MOI.

Bruhman became part of a resistance network in which Romanians played a disproportionate role. Reflecting the composition of immigrants to France between the wars, Romanians were relatively few in the Resistance. According to a police report, the MOI in the Paris region was made up of 653 foreigners of whom only 22 were Romanians: 350 were Italian, 70 Polish, 60 Armenian and 27 Hungarian—this would include those from northern Transylvania, recently annexed by the Horthy regime.⁵ That said, the Romanians distinguished themselves through their resistance activity, often playing a leading role in the Organisation Spéciale—a group of battle-hardened communist militants, generally veterans of Spain, created in autumn 1940 to protect distributors of illegal tracts—then the Francs-Tireurs et Partisans (FTP), created in spring 1942.⁶

Various Romanians joined Bruhman in playing active roles in the Paris region. Cristina Boico was a former student of biology at the Sorbonne, expelled in 1938 for communist activities. She was involved in the precocious student resistance to the Occupier, protesting against the arrest of scientist Paul Langevin, taking part in the march to the Arc de Triomphe on 11 November 1940, and distributing *L'Université libre* and *La Relève*, for which she was arrested then released. Boico would distinguish herself primarily as the FTP-MOI's head of intelligence in the Paris area.

Another female activist was Olga Bancic, from Kishinev, Bessarabia, who had been imprisoned for trade union activities as a teenager before making her way to France. She was responsible for transporting revolvers and grenades, alongside her husband, the poet Alexandru Jar (né Jacob Solomon). Ferenc Boczor, from Hungarian-occupied Transylvania, and former chief of the PCR section there, was a veteran of the International Brigades who had escaped from the internment camp of Argelès, in the Pyrenees. Boczor displayed a particular aptitude for derailing trains and drew upon his knowledge as a chemical engineer. This Parisian network was eventually joined by prison escapees Ion Marinescu (né Sigmund Tumin) and Gheorghe Vasilechi, who had already experienced political repression in their native country, notably the show trial of a hundred communists and trade unionists in Craiova in 1936.

⁵ [Archives of the] M[usée de la] R[ésistance] n[ationale], Champigny-sur-Marne], Fonds thématique, carton 112, Résistance. Étrangers.

⁶ S. Courtois and M. Lazar, *Histoire du Parti communiste français* (Paris, 1995), 182–3.

The detachments commanded by Bruhman turned out to be the most courageous and deadly arm of the communist resistance in the Paris area: as foreigners, and often Jews, they had little to lose in occupied France, while a long experience of clandestine activity and civil war had made them well prepared. A report by the FTP-MOI details the exploits of a Romanian detachment, led by Joseph Clischi, at Clichy-sous-Bois in early July 1943:

Trois partisans armés de grenades et de pistolets ont attaqué à coups de grenades un autobus SS/54 chargé de soldats et d'officiers allemands... La population patriote de Clichy applaudissait nos camarades pendant le repli. Il s'est trouvé néanmoins un seul collaborateur qui a tenté d'arrêter le lanceur. Il a été abattu par la deuxième défense. Les Allemands qui se trouvaient sur la route encouragés par cette intervention ont tiré plusieurs coups dont l'un a blessé la deuxième défense qui s'est abrité dans un immeuble. La concierge et les locataires n'ont pas voulu trahir l'héroïque partisan. Alors les Allemands ont amené du renfort et cerné la maison avec plusieurs détachements, prenant une position de combat avec mitrailleuses, mitraillettes, fusils et gaz. Ils ont menacé les locataires de faire sauter la maison. Le partisan 10010, chef de l'opération, qui était blessé en défendant ses camarades, sortit de sa cachette, lança une grenade au milieu du détachement ennemi faisant plusieurs morts et blessés, tira ses dernières cartouches sur l'ennemi et tomba en héros face à l'envahisseur, exemple magnifique pour ses frères d'armes.⁷

Between autumn 1942 and November 1943, the men and women under Bruhman's command carried out 230 attacks. Trains were derailed, German soldiers shot, while the FTP-MOI's most spectacular exploit was the assassination (by accident) of Dr Julius Ritter, head of the Service du Travail Obligatoire, under which young French men were deported to Germany to work for the Reich.

However, Bruhman later claimed that, in the course of 1943, he had disagreed strongly with the FTP's demand for an intensification of urban guerrilla warfare, believing that it needlessly exposed the men and women under his command. This version of events has been contested by Bruhman's superior in the FTP, Henri Rol-Tanguy. Rol told his biographer Roger Bourderon that 'il n'a jamais exigé quoi que ce soit des FTP-MOI et qu'il n'a jamais démis ou nommé quiconque leur appartenant'.⁸ Whatever the exact reasons for this sudden departure from Paris, Bruhman went to do clandestine work in the north-east of France, notably the Ardennes, where he trained a maquis that included escaped Soviet prisoners of war. He was replaced in Paris by Armenian poet Missak Manouchian. In November 1943, nearly seventy FTP-MOI were arrested. It was a huge success not for the Gestapo but for the Brigades spéciales of the

⁷ MRn, Fonds thématique, carton 112, Résistance. Étrangers.

⁸ R. Bourderon, *Rol-Tanguy* (Paris, 2004), 232.

French police, who had organized a huge, meticulous *filature* which, they hoped, might lead to the PCF leadership itself. They were helped by the amateurishness of some of the resisters, but also, crucially, by the treachery under blackmail of a young Jewess, Lucienne Goldfarb, then the cracking under torture of the FTP-MOI political commissar Joseph Davidowicz. In February 1944, after a show trial, the twenty-two men of the 'Groupe Manouchian' were shot at Mont-Valérien. On the walls of Paris and other French cities the German propaganda service put the infamous poster now known as 'l'Affiche rouge', which insisted on the foreign origin and ideology of the 'terrorists' of 'l'armée du crime': Manouchian 'arménien', Rayman 'juif polonais', Boczor 'juif hongrois' (no doubt in recognition of allied Hungary's annexation of northern Transylvania), Alfonso 'communiste espagnol' and so on. Absent from the poster was the face of Olga Bancic. Because the Wehrmacht's penal code forbade it from killing a woman by firing-squad, Bancic was transferred to Stuttgart, where she was tortured again and, on her 32nd birthday, decapitated with an axe. Just beforehand, she had smuggled out a farewell letter to her daughter Dolores, named after *La Pasionaria*, Dolores Ibarruri.

The fall of the groupe Manouchian was a huge blow to the FTP in Paris, from which it never really recovered until the Liberation later that year. Bruhman was reinstated as military commander and began an investigation which, with the help of Cristina Boico, led inevitably to Davidowicz, who claimed he had escaped from police custody. After interrogation in a safe-house in Bourg-la-Reine, he was stabbed to death. However, as we shall see, in the context of France's 'memory wars', this did not bring closure to the affair.

Romanians were also active in resistance activities in the French provinces. The Vernet d'Ariège internment camp in the Pyrenees, which held Spanish republicans and foreign civil war veterans and resistance fighters, was a source of many activists in the armed struggle. Pavel Cristescu took part in a break-out in early 1943, after which he became FTP-MOI chief in Limousin and carried out spectacular attacks on German trains, notably in Périgord. Also in the break-out was Mihail Florescu (né Iacobi Iancu), a veteran of Spain, who would join the maquis in Lot-et-Garonne, before being moved to the military leadership in the Bouches-du-Rhône. Gheorghe Gaston Marin (né Grossman), from a wealthy family in northern Transylvania, came to France before the war to study mathematics and physics at the Sorbonne. In 1940, he volunteered for the French army. After demobilization, he commanded the FTP-MOI in Lyon, then Toulouse, notably leading an action among the miners of Carmaux, historic bastion of the French labour movement. One Doctor Fischer (alias Ferrier), also from northern Transylvania, placed his medical knowledge at the service of the maquis of Vercors, which was annihilated in late summer 1944.

In Paris and the provinces, the surviving Romanians were therefore heavily involved in the liberations of summer 1944. Bruhman, Boico, Vasilichi and Marinescu were in the capital's *milices patriotiques* which, among other exploits, seized the Romanian consulate then occupied the Romanian tourist office with the aim of using it in the service of a new Franco-Romanian

relationship. Florescu and Gaston Marin played leading roles in the insurrections of Toulouse and Marseille. Romanian commitment did not end there: as a soldier of the FFI, Bruhman took part in the liberation of French territory, while Boico ended the war as a lieutenant in its ranks.

Not all clandestine activity was of an armed nature. Irma Mico, a young Jewish communist from northern Bukovina—also annexed to Greater Romania in 1918—had been sent to France by the PCR for training in revolution. At the outbreak of war, the Romanian consulate refused to authorize her return. She therefore joined the MOI, where she became responsible for making and transporting false papers. She was then given another mission, that of ‘le travail allemand’:

J'étais avec un groupe de jeunes femmes qui avaient un contact direct avec la Wehrmacht. Nous allions par deux et nous devions accrocher les soldats allemands. Nous parlions allemand et nous nous faisons passer pour des Alsaciennes ou des Lorraines. Eux croyaient avoir fait une conquête. Mais au bout de quelques minutes, nous sortions notre propagande antiguerre et antihitlérienne. Si nous réussissions à les intéresser, le but était de les faire passer dans la Résistance.⁹

A small number of German converts circulated letters from resisters condemned to death and other prisoners, stole arms and even, she claims, ended up on the Paris barricades in August 1944. Mico was trailed, but never arrested.

Romanian resistance was also cultural. The surrealist poet Ilarie Voronca (né Eduard Marcus), who had been in Paris since 1933, joined the maquis but also contributed resistance poetry. Tristan Tzara (né Samuel Rosenstock), *monstre sacré* of the Cabaret Voltaire, was active in the intellectual resistance, alongside Benjamin Fondane (né Benjamin Wechsler), who was eventually arrested by the French police and deported to Auschwitz. The tragic case of Fondane shows that Romanians of the French Resistance were not exclusively communist. The wartime sympathies of poetess Héléne Vacaresco may have been the polar opposite of her old friend Paul Morand, Vichy ambassador to Bucharest, but she was a respectable figure in both French and francophile Romanian establishments, being a close associate of Princess Marthe Bibesco, herself an anti-fascist. The sculptor Constantin Brancusi refused to exhibit his works during the Occupation, while the actress Maria Ventura refused to perform at the Comédie française.

In the autumn of 1943, the Front National Roumain (FNR) was founded. Grouping together all the ‘democratic’ elements struggling on French territory, this organization was very much in the ‘unity’ line adopted by Europe’s communist parties after Stalin’s decision to dissolve the Comintern. Although the husband of Irma Mico was behind the creation of the FNR, its president

⁹ I. Mico, ‘J’avais environ trente rendez-vous par jour’, *L’Humanité*, hors-série (Feb. 2007), 22–3.

was the eminent scholar Traian Vuia, who had lived in France since before the Great War, while the vice-president was a veteran socialist, Radu Florescu. The FNR brought out a clandestine publication, *România liberă*. The compromises of the Nazi-Soviet pact were repressed, as was proletarian internationalism. Instead, priority was given to the struggle for national liberation at the side of the Anglo-American and Soviet allies. Thus was created a front condemned to fissure when the Cold War came and anti-fascist Romanians were forced to choose between the West and 'people's democracy'.

II

Once fascism had been defeated, did Bruhman and his surviving comrades have a future in post-war France? Certainly, on 26 February 1945, *L'Humanité* paid homage to the 'Groupe Manouchian-Boczor', and on 7 June 1945, the FNR unveiled a plaque in honour of the 'Héros de Clichy', Joseph Clischi. However, that summer, Bruhman was invited along with other officers of the FTP-MOI to a meeting with Jacques Duclos. The communist leader lavished praise on the foreign fighters, but, as Bruhman/Holban recalled in his memoirs, published in 1989, Duclos added: 'nous conseillons à tous ceux qui sont originaires des pays libérés par l'Armée rouge d'y retourner. C'est leur pays, ils connaissent la mentalité de leur pays, sa langue, ses coutumes, leur devoir de communistes est d'aider leur Parti à transformer la société, afin de faire triompher le socialisme, la justice sociale'. Bruhman was persuaded: 'Il n'en fallait pas plus pour nous convaincre de retourner dans nos pays respectifs. Quant à moi, peu importe que je ne sois même pas né en Roumanie et que j'aie été déchu de la nationalité roumaine en 1938: j'y avais milité.'¹⁰ This was therefore a prospect that could appeal to hardened communist cadres. Another persuasive factor, however, was the rapidly growing awareness that the contribution of foreigners was being rapidly eclipsed by a Resistance myth that emphasized Frenchness. As Stéphane Courtois, Denis Peschanski and Adam Rayski point out: 'Les deux mémoires dominantes de l'après-guerre, la gaulliste et la communiste, ont convergé pour transmettre l'image d'un peuple français unanimement résistant, guidé qui par son chef charismatique, qui par son parti d'avant-garde. Les étrangers n'avaient plus leur place dans cette reconstruction imaginaire.'¹¹

Both nationalism and Cold War manicheism expressed themselves in the *Pages de gloire des vingt-trois*, published in 1951 by a PCF front organization, the Comité français pour la défense des immigrés (CFDI). This pamphlet paid homage to the Groupe Manouchian, but gave priority to French patriotism: 'Est-il besoin de démontrer que ce n'est pas les étrangers qui ont libéré la France, comme tentaient de le faire croire les nazis? Chacun sait que c'est le peuple français et sa courageuse avant-garde, les FTP-MOI qui ont payé cette

¹⁰ B. Holban, *Testament* (Paris, 1989), 229.

¹¹ S. Courtois, D. Peschanski and A. Rayski, *Le Sang de l'étranger. Les immigrés de la MOI dans la Résistance* (Paris, 1989), 426.

libération de leur sang.¹² The CFDI praised 'les efforts inlassables des pionniers de la lutte armée—ceux de 1940 et 1941', thus conveniently avoiding the compromises of the Nazi-Soviet Pact, which had seen Jacques Duclos regain Paris behind the advancing Wehrmacht and send out feelers to the new German ambassador, Otto Abetz.¹³ Olga Bancic was considered one of the most glorious names of the Resistance, but she was described as from Bessarabia, not Romania, thus recognizing its re-annexation by the Soviet Union. In the afterword, Charles Tillon, former commander of the FTP and communist minister expelled from government in 1947, attacked the socialists now sharing power with the right: 'En France, des Pleven, Jules Moch ou Queille—au nom d'un gouvernement dont certain membres ont voté pour Pétain au même collaboré à son ministère—déportent des républicains espagnols, des hommes qui ont risqué leur vie pour la France.'¹⁴ Instead, 'on blanchit, on libère les hommes de la 5^e colonne hitlérienne'.¹⁵ Dwight Eisenhower was no less than the 'généralissime d'une nouvelle Wehrmacht et d'une nouvelle Waffen SS atlantique'.¹⁶

This revival of a spirit of Resistance, now directed at Anglo-Saxon imperialism and the twin evils of the Marshall Plan and NATO, helps explain the markedly French nature of Louis Aragon's poetic homage to the Groupe Manouchian, written to mark the inauguration of a rue Manouchian in Paris in March 1955. The geopolitical pretensions of Aragon's *poésie nationale*—which virulently attacked 'le cosmopolitisme'—more than constraints of prosody, meant that the twenty-three martyrs' countries of origin were omitted from the final version, and described as 'étrangers et nos frères *pourtant*' who 'criaient *la France en s'abattant*' (our emphasis).¹⁷

It was not only French chauvinism that presented an obstacle to Romanian *résistants*. On returning to Romania in 1946, Bruhman changed his name to Holban in order to facilitate his integration:

De Bruhman, je deviendrai Holban. Cela sonne plus roumain!
D'ailleurs je ne serai pas le seul à prendre un nouveau patronyme.
Que ce soit dans l'armée ou d'autres institutions, on a bientôt du mal à trouver des Rotstein, Finkelstein et autres noms juifs. Rien que Marinescu, Cristescu, Ionescu, etc. Il ne faut pas 'choquer' les oreilles sensibles des bons antisémites qui pullulent.¹⁸

Holban's new career began well. He became active in the military section of the PCR, whose aim was training future cadres in the armed forces. He was rapidly promoted to head of the cadre section in the Ministry of the Armed Forces, where he played an important role in the 'communization' of the Romanian army. For this activity in the late 1940s, he was heavily decorated.

¹² *Pages de gloire des vingt-trois* (Paris, 1951), 7.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 19.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 199.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 200.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 202.

¹⁷ J. O'Reilly, 'Le Groupe Manouchian et le manuscrit du *Roman inachevé*', *Digraphe*, 82/83, (1997), 110-1.

¹⁸ Holban, *Testament*, 232.

Holban's Resistance comrades—most now with changed names—also fared well. In 1946, the Romanian government recognized the pension and other rights of former combatants in the French Resistance. Gheorghe Vasilichi became Minister for Education. Mihail Florescu became an officer in the Romanian army as well as secretary to the Ministry of Information. Gheorghe Gaston Marin—who returned home to discover that his entire family had perished at Auschwitz—was personal secretary to party leader Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej, then advanced rapidly in the Ministry for Industry before being appointed Minister for Electrification. Cristina Boico became a director in the Ministry of Information. Alexandru Jar had important responsibilities in the Ministry of the Interior, before devoting himself exclusively to literature.

Not all Romanians of the French Resistance chose to settle in their 'hometown'. After visits to Romania, Ilarie Voronca committed suicide, while Tristan Tzara soon broke with the PCF. What is more, the returning resisters' high-level contribution to the construction of socialism in Romania proved short-lived. According to Holban's *Testament*, 'plus je m'intègre dans la vie et dans l'activité militaires, plus je prends conscience du fait que mes connaissances en la matière sont nettement insuffisantes pour la fonction que j'exerce'.¹⁹ After only six months in post, the Director of Cadres was the target of critical comments by his subordinates. However, according to the Securitate (secret police) file on Holban, it was rather his character and lack of ideological rectitude that were problematic. He had, informers alleged, an excessive taste for the finer things in life, a passion for hunting, and preferred the company of officers who were not party members.²⁰ According to Holban, the political climate added to his woes: 'En 1950, nous sommes en pleine guerre froide. En pleine chasse aux sorcières aussi. On voit des titoïstes, des traîtres, des espions. De grands procès sont en préparation.'²¹ In early 1950, there arrived in Bucharest a trade union delegation from the United States, representing the Romanian colony in Detroit. The head of the delegation gave Holban details on the life and activities of his emigrant brothers. Soon afterwards, Holban was summoned to the central committee building and sacked. It was the end for colonel Holban: he was sent to do work 'on the ground' as manager of a textile factory.

Holban rightly placed his personal career problems in a wider geopolitical context. With the onset of the Cold War, and Stalin's split with Tito, veterans of the Spanish Civil War and French Resistance became suspect. They were 'cosmopolitan' elements who had operated outside the strict control of Moscow and achieved a revolutionary legitimacy and prestige that threatened those who had stayed at home. They could easily be presented as a fifth column threatening the new people's democracies and, especially, the absolute control of the Kremlin. Holban recalled:

¹⁹ Ibid., 233.

²⁰ CNSAS (Archives of the Securitate, Bucharest), dossier 1187872.

²¹ Holban, *Testament*, 234.

Après mon retour en Roumanie, alors que les faits étaient encore fortement présents à la mémoire, j'avais commencé à en coucher le récit par écrit. Mais le moment était mal venu, comme je n'ai pas tardé à m'en apercevoir. La Résistance en France? Qui aurait osé publier un tel ouvrage et braver la ligne officielle, qui exigeait d'ignorer tout ce qui n'était pas l'Union soviétique, l'Armée rouge, les démocraties populaires? C'était le début de la guerre froide et la Résistance en France, même celle des communistes, était affublée d'une double tare: s'être déroulée dans un pays 'impérialiste' et avoir eu pour protagonistes des anciens volontaires d'Espagne, des Juifs, autant dire des éléments 'cosmopolites'.²²

From 1949 onwards, the will to impose the primacy of the USSR led to a series of show trials where high-ranking leaders throughout the people's democracies were condemned to death by communist tribunals in an atmosphere with strongly anti-Semitic overtones. This began in Hungary with the trial of Laszlo Rajk in September 1949, and continued in Bulgaria with the Kostov trial of December 1949 then the trial of Rudolf Slansky in December 1952. In France, the character assassination and expulsion of erstwhile heroes Charles Tillon and André Marty for 'anti-party' activity were thankfully not fatal for those targeted, but completely in the spirit of the witch hunt in the East.

According to Ana Pauker's biographer, Robert Levy, 'the Romanian leaders were increasingly pressured after the Rajk trial to purge the veterans of the Spanish Civil War and the French Resistance in Romania, whom the Soviets' anti-Tito campaign had targeted. Internal documents on the trial from Budapest explicitly pointed to Romanian co-conspirators in the affair and called for their prosecution.'²³ At first, the leadership did not follow their counterparts elsewhere in the eastern bloc. However, a vast purge eventually decimated the PCR leadership in May 1952. Ana Pauker, daughter of a rabbi, and who had spent much of the previous decades in Moscow and the West, was an excellent 'cosmopolitan' scapegoat for the trauma of transition to state socialism.²⁴ She was removed by the 'national' group of leaders, notably Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej and Nicolae Ceausescu, who had spent the war in Romanian prisons. In her fall, Pauker brought down many veterans of the French Resistance and the Spanish Civil War.

The career of Ion Marinescu was brutally stopped: a chemical engineer by training, he was demoted to a factory in the provinces. Gheorghe Vasilichi was removed from the Politburo and, although eventually rehabilitated by Gheorghiu-Dej, put under threat again in autumn 1952 when he refused to exclude veterans from the Union of Production Cooperatives he now directed. Cristina Boico was dismissed from the Foreign Ministry. Valter Roman was

²² Ibid., 275–6.

²³ R. Levy, *Ana Pauker: The Rise and Fall of a Jewish Communist* (Berkeley, 2001), p. 153.

²⁴ V. Tismăneanu, *Stalinism pentru eternitate. O istorie politică a comunismului românesc* (Iași, 2004), 165–8.

sacked as Minister for Telecommunications, and interrogated daily by the party, being accused of anti-communist espionage in Spain. He was targeted as a potential candidate for show trial. This purge of French resisters and ‘Spaniards’ coincided with the Slansky trial in Prague. However, the death of Stalin in March 1953 prevented such a spectacle happening in Bucharest. There were also limits to this purge: even before Stalin’s death, Mihail Florescu was appointed Minister of Chemical Industry.

Also in 1952, Holban was back under surveillance. His movements—work, social life, going out to pay a phone bill—were watched closely from 6 in the morning to 11 at night. The informants seemed desperate to find evidence of wrong-doing:

He goes to a doctor specializing in venereal diseases and syphilis. We believe that the objective is ill, because he bought medication. From the *filatura* it emerges that he has visited various shops for food and hunting equipment and always looks at himself in the window. Habitually, he lunches at a new restaurant called *The Hunter*. It is the most luxurious and expensive restaurant in Bucharest.

But on Christmas Day 1952, an exasperated commanding officer wrote: ‘nothing has emerged from this investigation except the fact that he meets lots of women.’²⁵ The case was closed, although Holban’s career in the regime would never be salvaged.

Another victim of Stalinist orthodoxy was Olga Bancic’s widower, Alexandru Jar. In 1956, wrongly sensing the possibility of a cultural thaw after Khrushchev’s ‘secret speech’, Jar recklessly denounced the dogma of socialist realism. Gheorghiu-Dej seized on Jar’s remarks to carry out a neo-Stalinist ‘counter-reform’ that not only brought to heel the Writers’ Union, but eliminated those ‘deviationist’ elements in favour of more ‘collective’ leadership.²⁶ Openly denounced for heresy in the party daily *Scinteia*, Jar was expelled from the Writers’ Union and banned from publication. Of course, he was under close Securitate surveillance. An agent described thus Jar’s state of mind in 1956:

When we saw him, we were afraid. He was weak, dishevelled, and pale, with the wild eyes of a madman; he had not slept or eaten for two days. He was walking around and around, gesticulating, lighting a cigarette, chewing on it, throwing it on the ground and lighting another. ‘Unheard-of... Extraordinary... Unbelievable...’ that’s all he could say at the beginning... Jar is destroyed in body and soul. He is afraid of losing his existence, of being excluded from friendships, and even of being arrested.²⁷

In 1958, the departure of the Red Army and the beginnings of a ‘national’ communism were not accompanied by internal liberalization. On the contrary,

²⁵ CNSAS, dossier 1187872.

²⁶ E. Neagoe, ‘Problematika cultului peronalității în mediul literar din România. Cazul Alexandru Jar’ in *Arhivele Securității* (Bucharest, 2004), 462–81.

²⁷ CNSAS, dossier 118781.

in order to impose its authority and reassure the Soviets, the Gheorghiu-Dej regime launched a new campaign of repression. In May 1959, the *filatura* on Jar recommenced. An informer reported:

Most of the time he stays at home and the neighbours hear him tapping on his typewriter. In the neighbourhood, it is not known that he pursues enemy activity or demonstrates hostility to our regime. We must mention that he is very attentive to what happens around his home, often looking out of the window or going out onto the balcony.²⁸

In 1961, once the wave of terror had abated, the Securitate closed Jar's file and destroyed many of the documents.

Indeed, things would gradually improve in communist Romania. With the liberalization of the 1960s, freedom of expression and movement increased. After a brief period of political disgrace, Gaston Marin, a highly respected technocrat, was re-appointed a government minister and took part in important delegations abroad, notably to France and the USA. In 1965, Jar was allowed to publish again. The Franco-Romanian rapprochement, which reached its climax with De Gaulle's state visit in May 1968, then Ceausescu's visit in 1970, also helped the Romanians of the French resistance. As Ceausescu warmed to his new global role as 'maverick' in the communist bloc, PCR propaganda began emphasizing the party's 'internationalist traditions'. At the 9th Congress in 1965, veterans of the Spanish Civil War and the French Resistance, including Florecu, Gaston Marin and Vasilichi, were elected to the Central Committee. All of a sudden, their story became fashionable and ideologically and diplomatically useful, which was illustrated by a flurry of events and publications.

In 1965, the PCF had brought out a brochure, *On les nommait des étrangers*, by Gaston Laroche, which glorified the exploits of the FTP-MOI. This work gave priority to Italians, Poles, Spaniards and Hungarians, portraying them as the descendants of Dombrowski, Garibaldi and Frankel, who had aided the Paris Commune and other French revolutionary struggles. Indeed, France remained paramount. In the small chapter devoted to Romania, Laroche cited the example of Joseph Stern, who, before being shot by the French police, had cried: 'Je suis plus français que vous!'²⁹ However, the Romanians naturally attempted to attract more attention to their nation's specific contribution to the French Resistance. In May 1968, the History Institute of the Central Committee of the PCR unveiled in Ivry cemetery a commemorative plaque which finally revealed the true names of the Romanian detachment of the FTP-MOI. To mark the event, the Institute distributed a postcard which was a photomontage of the map of France and the portraits of Olga Bancic and Ferenc Boczor, among other martyrs.

In 1969, the Institute brought out a book on Romanians of the French Resistance. In his preface to this richly illustrated volume, Gheorghe Vasilichi

²⁸ CNSAS, dossier 118782.

²⁹ G. Laroche, *On les nommait des étrangers* (Paris, 1965), 326.

emphasized, in orthodox manner, the early beginnings of the French resistance, which, he claimed, began with Maurice Thorez and Jacques Duclos's appeal in July 1940. Boris Holban contributed fifty pages on the resistance in Paris, although his account was inevitably selective: the Boczor-Manouchian group was brought down by an unnamed *provocateur*, and there was no mention of the role of Lucienne Goldfarb or of the French police; Holban's return to Romania was explained in purely patriotic terms. Elsewhere in the volume, Gaston Marin remembered insurrectional activity with the miners of Carmaux, Ion Marinescu evoked the Liberation of Paris, and Mihail Florescu recounted the Liberation of Marseille. Alexandru Jar contributed a literary text, dramatizing the last moments of Joseph Clischi, and acknowledging the activity of one 'Pierrette', pseudonym of Olga Bancic. Curiously, there was no contribution by Cristina Boico, although her intelligence activities were often mentioned.

That said, Ceausescu's 'golden age' soon lost its sparkle as it became increasingly hostile to foreign interference, notably on the question of human rights, leading to strains in relations with France and other Western nations. The regime's renewed emphasis on the 'national' would again have negative consequences for Resistance veterans. In 1976, a year after the Helsinki Agreement, the Securitate began surveillance of Ion Marinescu: his marriage with a Frenchwoman, and association with 'personalities of Jewish origin with changed names' particularly interested them.³⁰ Meanwhile, back in France, the Gaullist and communist myth of *la France résistante* was increasingly put into question, notably by the documentary *Le Chagrin et le pitié, l'affaire Touvier, la mode rétro*, and the emergence of a specifically Jewish memory of the Occupation.

III

It was a sign of the financial crisis faced by *L'Humanité* and of the Romanian embassy's lack of hard currency that there was, for the first time, no PCR stand at the Fête of September 1985. But this Fête included in its programme a debate, 'Étrangers, résistants, communistes dans la Résistance', to which was invited Gheorghe Gaston Marin, as a riposte to the 'campagne d'intox anticommuniste' surrounding the 'Groupe Manouchian'. On 2 July 1985, Antenne 2 had broadcast a documentary, *Des Terroristes à la retraite*, made by Serge Mosco in collaboration with the anti-communist historian Stéphane Courtois. According to the thesis of Mosco and Courtois, which based itself on Missak Manouchian's last letter to his wife Mélinée, and an interview with her, the Groupe Manouchian had been sacrificed, perhaps even betrayed, by a communist leadership that was chauvinistic, even anti-Semitic, and prepared to spill foreign blood to present itself as the most active force in the French resistance. The widow repeated her belief that Boris Holban, under the code name 'Roger', was one of those guilty of abandoning the group to their fate. In the

³⁰ CNSAS, dossier 118783.

anti-communist climate of the 1980s, such allegations were taken up with alacrity. In his book *L'Affaire Manouchian*, Philippe Robrieux went so far as to suggest that the group had been handed over to the French police by an ultra-secret 'special apparatus' answerable only to Moscow.³¹

The PCF leadership and resistance veterans mobilized against such 'calumnies' in the film and the ensuing media firestorm. In his memoirs, Gaston Marin denounced the argument of Mosco and Courtois:

It is asserted or suggested that certain arrests of MOI resisters were made thanks to French resisters. According to 'witnesses', the PCF broke relations with the MOI and dislocated in various regions MOI cadres with a view to paralysing their activity... The protagonists with such opinions do not know or forget the strict rules of illegality, the necessity to break links in order to prevent, via *filature*, the pursuit and fall of a part of or all of an organization. The absence of Boris Holban from the leadership of the FTP-MOI in the Paris region, during a period when he asked to be moved to another region, has been used in a wide press, television and cinema campaign to tarnish this hero of the Resistance, making him responsible for the fall and execution of the Groupe Manouchian, when the culprit was the traitor Davidowicz, condemned and executed by the Resistance.³²

But Boris Holban's absence from the Fête de l'Humanité, and from the newspaper itself, said a lot about his drift away from the communist movement. It was in August 1979 that Holban had seen Paris for the first time in thirty-three years. At a ceremony marking the thirty-fifth anniversary of the Liberation of Paris, he met up again with his old comrade Henri Rol-Tanguy, architect of the Paris insurrection. The following month, he was one of three representatives of the Amicale des Juifs anciens résistants, who relit the flame at the Arc de Triomphe. Holban took advantage of this sojourn to read what had been written on the Resistance and noted that 'les historiens ou écrivains qui traitent de la Résistance passent sous silence la contribution et le rôle des immigrés'.³³

With his visa expired, he returned to Romania. But back in France in October 1984, Holban found himself obliged to pronounce on 'le sang de l'étranger'. Holban met a journalist from *l'Humanité*, J.-P. Ravery, who was seeking information on the struggle of the FTP-MOI in 1943 so as to refute the 'fantasist' claims of Mélinée Manouchian and her attacks on Holban in particular. But this journalist quickly changed position when the PCF launched its campaign against the broadcast of Mosco's film:

Il me demande amicalement, mais avec insistance, de me prononcer publiquement contre la programmation du film et d'accompagner

³¹ P. Robrieux, *L'Affaire Manouchian* (Paris, 1986).

³² G. Gaston Marin, *În serviciul României lui Gheorghiu-Dej. Înmernari din viața* (Bucharest, 2000), 85–6.

³³ Holban, *Testament*, 244.

ainsi d'autres 'protestations'. Malgré quelques réserves que j'avais, après avoir visionné le film j'ai trouvé qu'il était néanmoins bien venu, ne fût-ce que pour contredire la légende selon laquelle les Juifs se seraient laissé emmener comme des moutons dans les fours crématoires. Pour cette raison et aussi parce qu'à mes yeux il ne s'agissait plus d'un débat, mais d'un règlement de comptes et de querelles politiques, j'avais refusé de m'en mêler.³⁴

Holban's neutrality attracted the fury of the PCF. In an article by J.-P. Ravary, Holban appeared in *l'Humanité* of 15 June 1985 as the infamous 'Roger' who had betrayed the Groupe Manouchian. In the same issue, Rol-Tanguy condemned the film, but without a word of support for his former FTP comrade. On 28 June 1985, in the communist weekly *La Voix de l'Est*, a close friend of Mélinée Manouchian criticized the over-estimation of the role played by 'un certain Olivier', Holban's other *nom de guerre*.

Abandoned by the PCF, Holban chose to break his silence in an interview with a Jewish ex-communist historian, Alexandre Adler, in the socialist daily *Le Matin*. Adler wrote of Holban in France:

Il désire y finir ses jours. Modeste retraité de l'industrie textile roumaine, le général Holban, qui n'a, en réalité, fait partie de l'armée roumaine que de 1948 à 1950, en tant qu'officier politique, c'est-à-dire responsable communiste, a bien vite été écarté comme tant d'autres. Placé dans le cadre de réserve, il conserve le grade de général de brigade, mais certes pas ses fonctions: il sera ingénieur d'abord au ministère des industries légères puis, toujours la descente, dans une usine textile de Bucarest jusqu'à l'heure de sa retraite. On est loin, on le voit, du roman de services secrets qu'on nous sert aujourd'hui. Il ne sort aujourd'hui de sa retraite parce qu'il est mis gravement en cause: Mélinée Manouchian l'accuse d'avoir indirectement provoqué la mort de son époux et de ses camarades, en leur transmettant l'ordre de rester sur place à Paris alors que ceux-ci se savaient menacés d'une arrestation imminente. Observons tout de suite que cet ordre, s'il avait été transmis, ne serait pas issu du cerveau de Holban lui-même, qui était directement subordonné au comité militaire des FTP.

With Holban's help, Adler dismantled the accusations. Holban could not be guilty of treason because, at the time of the fall of the Groupe Manouchian, he was underground in the north-east: 'En août-septembre 1943, Boris Holban ('Roger') se trouve en désaccord avec la nouvelle tactique de guérilla urbaine prônée par ses chefs. Il la trouve essentiellement, à juste titre, trop coûteuse en hommes, trop aventureuse. Il est alors relevé de ses fonctions par ses responsables et éloigné de l'action.' It was the political commissar FTP-MOI, Davidowicz,

³⁴ Ibid., 246.

who had proposed Missak Manouchian as new military commander. And it was Davidowicz who would speak under torture.

These facts had been confirmed by Cristina Boico in her memoir on Ferenc Boczor in the *Magazin istoric*, published in Bucharest in January 1980, where she explicitly mentioned Holban's activities in northern France at the dates mentioned. As we have seen, this version is also corroborated by Gaston Marin. But Adler's judicious conclusion pointed to the tragic fate not only of Boris Holban but of other Romanian resisters:

Cette affaire douloureuse, s'il en est, a laissé encore aujourd'hui bien des blessures intactes. Il s'y mêle la conscience d'une mise à l'écart de l'immense majorité des cadres juifs de la résistance communiste, en URSS et dans les démocraties populaires, la rélévation de leur épopée pendant bien des années par le PCF lui-même.³⁵

In 1989, Holban concluded thus on the *Affaire Manouchian*:

Heureusement que je me trouve aujourd'hui en France et que je peux m'exprimer librement sur ce sujet. Si je m'étais trouvé pendant cette odieuse campagne en Roumanie, non seulement je n'aurais pu répondre, mais j'aurais été traité comme un pestiféré. C'est d'ailleurs la principale raison pour laquelle j'ai décidé ne plus y retourner.³⁶

IV

Holban's memoirs returned to the *Affaire Manouchian*, but also placed great emphasis on his Jewishness, which life had made him more conscious of. This *prise de conscience* can be seen among many of his former comrades. After the fall of the Ceausescu regime, Dolores Bancic emigrated to Israel, as did Gheorghe Gaston Marin, who concluded his memoirs thus:

Appreciating the end of the communist regimes and the grave attacks on ethics and morality propagated by communism, I now consider that Zionism, Herzl's dream, remains today an urgent necessity for the Jewish people. In reality, even after the Second World War, the propagation of antisemitism begins to appear in all the countries of the world. Only in the Judenstadt, a land of the Jews, which has been founded as the result of the heroic struggle of the sons of this people, can it be sure of a genuine homeland, the defence and the protection of the Jewish people.³⁷

Cristina Boico had already joined her children in France in 1987. She aimed to make her own contribution to the history of the Resistance, notably in

³⁵ A. Adler, 'Exclusif: Boris Holban parle', *Le Matin*, 17 June 1985, 16.

³⁶ Holban, 249.

³⁷ Gaston Marin, *În serviciul României lui Gheorghiu-Dej*, 236.

collaboration with the Holocaust Memorial Museum of Washington. When she died in 2002, she left behind an uncompleted manuscript, *Histoire d'une famille au XXème siècle. Souvenirs et réflexions*.

Some Romanian communists remained faithful to the commitment of their youth. Mihail Florescu—who had owed his exceptionally long political career to a close relationship with Elena Ceausescu—kept his house in the prestigious Primavara district of Bucharest where PCR nomenclatura resided. Florescu no longer played a role in political life, but, in 1996, was invited to Spain to commemorate the creation of the International Brigades. On the other hand, in a press interview, Simone Marinescu remembered that, before his death in 1992, Ion Marinescu ‘was very disappointed because in his youth he had committed himself to the communist ideal, but quickly understood that it had not been translated into reality in Romania’. With the help of the French Embassy, his widow quit the Primavara district for her home town of Nantes: ‘I took with me only two suitcases, the same number as when I left France in 1945.’³⁸ In 1994, Boris Holban received the *Légion d'honneur* from President Francois Mitterrand. Beneath the Arc de Triomphe they conversed briefly about their mutual gratitude to sister Hélène Studler, who had helped both of them escape from Nazi imprisonment in Metz. Holban died in 2004.

Re-evaluation of the role of foreigners in the French Resistance has continued since. Certainly, the allegations made at the time of *l’Affaire Manouchian* have been discredited following the discovery of French police documents concerning the *filatures* which led to the fall of the group (and this may well explain the PCF’s public indifference to the re-screening of *Des ‘Terroristes’ à la retraite* on Arte in February 2014).³⁹ The film by Robert Guédiguian, *L’Armée du crime*, exemplifies a swing away from the sceptical view of the Resistance and back towards a more positive, even hagiographical representation.⁴⁰ The film does feature Olga Bancic, Alexandru Jar and Ferenc Boczor, although it strangely overlooks the particularly dramatic fate of Bancic. Instead, Guédiguian is—understandably, given his ethnic origins—more concerned with Manouchian’s memory of the Armenian genocide, while unrealistically presenting the group as ‘anti-stalinien’ and flagrantly violating the basic rules of clandestine activity.⁴¹ Lucienne Goldfarb, inexplicably renamed Monique Stern, is wrongly presented as more victim than traitor. The litany of the martyrs’ names at the beginning of the film, punctuated by ‘mort pour la France’, perhaps expresses a contemporary anti-racist agenda that goes beyond the gallo-centric *résistance* view hegemonic in the 1950s and 1960s. In this way, Guédiguian’s work echoes the recent films *Indigènes* (on the role of North African soldiers in the liberation of France) and *Les Hommes libres* (on Muslim resistance in occupied Paris), although the ultimate horizon of Frenchness remains.

³⁸ L. Betea, ‘Din pasiune s-a făcut mare comunista’, *Jurnalul national*, 21 February 2005.

³⁹ J. Amat and D. Peschanski, *La Traque de l’affiche rouge* (Paris, 2008).

⁴⁰ R. Guédiguian, *L’Armée du crime* (Paris, 2009).

⁴¹ S. Bouloque and S. Courtois, ‘*L’Armée du crime* de Robert Guédiguian, ou la légende au mépris de l’histoire’, *Le Monde*, 15 Nov. 2009.

Didier Daeninckx's novel *Missak* eschews some of Guédiguian's sentimentality and *invraisemblance*.⁴² Instead, the main character, Dragère, a journalist on *L'Humanité*, is tasked by Jacques Duclos with providing a dossier on the Groupe Manouchian for the inauguration of the rue Manouchian (symbolically an impasse) in March 1955. As winter flood waters rise in Paris, so Dragère wades into a sombre past that will not pass: Stalinist attacks on 'trotskyist' immigrants, the humiliation of Charles Tillon, the suggestion of betrayal in Manouchian's last letter, which Aragon avoids in his famous poem. The Romanians Cristina Boico and Boris Holban are now behind the Iron Curtain and uncontactable. Dragère's doctored dossier is kicked into the long grass before he can make contact with Lucienne Goldfarb, now a streetwalker and still a police informer. Daeninckx's 'docu-fiction' surpasses Guédiguian's film in artistic quality and veracity, although it suggests that one 'Boris Bruhman' may be a lead. This is an obvious confusion with Boris Holban, whose 'innocence' Daeninckx now completely accepts. He told this author:

Je n'ai jamais pu penser, comme Mélinée Manouchian, qu'il était impliqué dans la chute de Missak. Son dossier de la police politique livre le peu de doutes qu'il y avait à ce sujet. S'ils avaient eu le moindre élément sur une telle responsabilité, il en aurait été fait usage. Je pense, pour ma part, que Mélinée Manouchian a été intoxiquée et qu'une opération de délégitimation du rapport PCF-Manouchian a été entreprise au début des années 80.⁴³

Romanians of the French Resistance are therefore now a marginal and fading reference. In his speech of 21 February 2014 at Mont-Valérien, to mark the seventieth anniversary of the execution of the Groupe Manouchian, President François Hollande did make special mention of Olga Bancic, 'qui venait de Roumanie'. But Hollande's speech wrapped the contribution of these resisters in the tricolour flag: in their breasts 'battait le coeur de la patrie'; they had devoted their lives to 'le destin collectif de la Nation'. It was as if, in the Aragon poem Hollande alluded to more than once, they died crying 'la France', although there is no evidence of this, and the last letters of Bancic and Manouchian make no reference to French (or any) patriotism.⁴⁴ Communism, internationalism and such 'transnational' identities as Jewishness were eclipsed by a thoroughly nationalist, gallocentric reading of the Resistance, thus displaying how, as Patricia Clavin concedes, 'the national container has proven remarkably resilient'.⁴⁵ Hollande used the occasion to announce the transfer of four resisters to the Pantheon: gender parity may have been respected, but there was no place for an *étranger* and/or a communist, to the outrage of the PCF leadership.

⁴² D. Daeninckx, *Missak* (Paris, 2009).

⁴³ Interview with the author, 17 October 2010.

⁴⁴ www.elysee.fr/declarations/article/discours-lors-de-la-cereemonie-d-hommage-a-la-resistance.

⁴⁵ Clavin, 'Time, manner, place', 632.

Furthermore, in recent polemics over the expulsion of Roma from France, there have been frequent references to Vichy oppression but no mention, even in the Communist press, of the role played by Romanians in the fight against the Nazi occupiers and their collaborators. This partly corresponds to the decline of the Franco-Romanian relationship with the end of the Cold War and the consequences of European unification and globalization. As for post-communist Romania, silence now shrouds the contribution of their countrymen and women to the French Resistance. Already in 1994, the small street in central Bucharest named after Olga Bancic was de-baptized. No one knows where the commemorative plaque has gone. That said, in April 2013, on Romanian television, a two-hour special on 'Romania in the wars of others' looked at their compatriots' role in the Spanish Civil War, the French Resistance and the war on the Eastern Front. Guests included Petre Roman, first post-communist prime minister of Romania and son of Valter Roman. 'Why does no-one speak about Romanians in the French Resistance?', the presenter asked more than once, without getting a clear response.⁴⁶ It could be ventured that the exploits of mainly Jewish communists, who often did not feel Romanian, are out of place in the savagely capitalist and still strongly anti-Semitic Romania of today. Their memory could resist neither the 'national' nor the 'transnational'.

⁴⁶ 'Români în războiul altora', www.antena3.ro/inregistrari/secvential-cu-adrian-ursu-88.html.