

HIDDEN FROM VIEW: FOREIGNERS IN THE FRENCH RESISTANCE

by

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## ABSTRACT

This study is prompted by awareness that hundreds of foreigners were part of the French resistance and that current research has marginalised their role. It examines the evolution of foreign resistance in France from 1939, when thousands of immigrants and exiles volunteered to join the French army, through to 1944 when hundreds of deserters from the German army joined the maquis. The study establishes the reasons for the presence of thousands of foreigners on French soil, who were then willing to support France in the defence of its sovereignty in 1939. It details the organisation of many of those foreigners into resistance by the communist associations of the Main d'Oeuvre Immigré, the MOI, in conjunction with the French communist party, following the occupation of France in 1940. It outlines the growth of resistance organisations which had been established during 1941 and 1942 and examines their transition from urban resistance to the rural maquis in 1943. In 1944, growing numbers of deserters from the German army defected to the maquis to participate in the eventual liberation of France. This study concludes that foreign resisters played an important role within the French resistance, but the fact that many were communists has contributed to the general reluctance to acknowledge their existence.

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## INTRODUCTION

The many foreign names on memorials, found on the roadsides of the French countryside, are testament to the participation of foreigners in the French Resistance. However, their role in the ensuing combat, to expel the German army from France and occupied Europe, often remains within the shadows of French Resistance. This study has been undertaken to attempt to redress that imbalance of memory. It is comprised of three key elements. Its aims are firstly, to determine the factors which influenced foreigners to join the French resistance; secondly, to establish the extent to which they participated in the French resistance; and thirdly, to examine their role within it from 1940 to 1944. Any discussion of resistance must of necessity fall between these dates, as clearly they define the years of occupation and hence resistance to it. However, when discussing foreigners and resistance, a more pragmatic starting point and one which will be used for this particular study, is the latter half of 1939. This extension outside the normal time frame will clarify the procedures through which foreigners joined the resistance in 1940. It will be argued that the latter half of 1939 proved to be the defining point in this process, when a great number of foreigners living in France volunteered to join the French Army. This dissertation will discuss how rapidly the remnants of their units, disbanded after France was defeated, became the springboard to resistance for a significant number of foreigners. Their commitment to resist the occupation was a momentous undertaking in itself, but it was also obvious that it marked the moment when they embarked on an indefinite and indeterminate future.

In order to examine the role of foreigners in the French Resistance three key elements, already outlined, have been identified as significant areas for discussion. However, before any discussion can proceed, a definition of who is a foreigner in France in 1940 must

be determined. The first set of questions will focus on this issue. Can foreign nationals be readily identified within the French population? Why were so many foreigners living in France in 1940? Can it be substantiated that 1939 and the declaration of war by France was the key to large numbers of foreigners entering into resistance? What evidence is there that the backbone of the foreign resistance was made up from the many different ethnic European economic migrants of the 1920s; the European political and religious exiles of the 1930s; the former members of the International Brigades who had fought in Spain and the Spanish Republican exiles who had fled Spain after Franco's victory? Was the re-annexation of Alsace by Germany in 1940 significant when discussing foreigners in the resistance?

The second set of questions examines the evolution of foreign resistance, as distinct from that of French resistance. Is there evidence of a distinct evolution in the organisation of foreign resistance? Was foreign resistance organised from within France or externally from London? Did the communist party play a significant role within their organisation? What evidence suggests that many foreign resisters were Jewish? Is there any evidence which indicates that Gaullism was a major influence in any of the foreign organisations?

Just as it is difficult to assess the size of the French resistance so it is with the foreign resisters. The third set of questions looks at whether the numbers participating in resistance were ever quantifiable. Is it possible to assess the number of foreign resisters? Was the perceived growth in resistance in 1943 due in fact to a relocation of urban groups to rural locations or was it as some historians believe a genuine growth in numbers? Was this a foreign led initiative? Is there any indication that the absence of foreign representation on the Resistance Council led to the isolation of foreign resistance organisations, which in turn led to the destruction and demise of many foreign groups?

Towards the end of the war in France, there is evidence that the style and organisation of resistance changed radically. The final set of questions examines this point. Is there evidence that foreigners were included in the general organisation of the Uprising? Does the evidence presented challenge the view that this was a spontaneous call to arms? Could the ultimate success in the liberation of many French towns be attributed to foreign resisters? What role was played in the liberation of France by the many different ethnic groups which deserted from the German army particularly in 1944? In view of this can it be argued that, at a certain point after the allied landings, foreign resistance groups were transformed into an army? Does the evidence suggest that, foreign resistance continued to function under the auspices of the several foreign resistance organisations, at least until the German army was expelled from France? Can the fact that the contribution of foreigners to French resistance was ignored for so long be justified?

The period from 1940 to 1944 has captivated the interest of many academics and writers. Between 1964 and 2001 it was the subject of over 11,600 publications and of this total 3,250 were devoted to the theme of resistance.<sup>1</sup> However, in comparison with the vast number which analysed and discussed the various facets of French resistance, relatively few have concentrated on the part played by foreigners within that resistance. Their absence from academic studies is especially obvious in the immediate aftermath of liberation and the three decades following the end of the Vichy State. This can in part be explained by the fact that de Gaulle, anxious to unite a fractured nation, projected the image of France as a nation of resisters in his speech, in Paris on 25<sup>th</sup> August 1944, when he said, 'Paris! Paris outraged! Paris broken! But Paris liberated! Liberated by itself, liberated by its people with the support

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<sup>1</sup> Laurent Douzou, *La Résistance française : une histoire périlleuse* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 2005), 13.

and the help of the whole of France, of France that is fighting, of France alone.’<sup>2</sup> This brief homage to a nation and with it the allusion to the idea of a united France, manipulated an ecstatic crowd similar to the large, enthusiastic crowds which had gathered in Nancy and Dijon only weeks before in May and had given the same rapturous welcome to Pétain.<sup>3</sup> De Gaulle’s emotional speech left no room to embrace, or even acknowledge, the contribution foreigners had made to resistance. The idea that France was a country of resisters was continually reinforced in the 1960s, through popular literature and film. This image was largely reinforced by academic studies, published during this time, which made only cursory references to foreigners. In fact, by 1975, of a handful of books which had been written by former foreigners in the resistance, the only one which had been published in French which provided testimony of the combat undertaken by foreign resisters had been written by Boris Matline using his pseudonym of Gaston Laroche.<sup>4</sup>

After a visit to the ruins of Oradour-sur-Glane in 2004, I read Sarah Farmer’s account of the events surrounding the annihilation of this village.<sup>5</sup> Learning that this atrocity of unimaginable proportions had taken place on the 10<sup>th</sup> June 1944, four days after my father had landed in France on D-Day, stimulated a personal interest in the wider picture of France under occupation. It was from Farmer’s account that I first learned that foreigners had played a part in the resistance and it was this which motivated me to research this particular aspect of resistance in more detail.<sup>6</sup> This research is not a study of resistance in general, but

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<sup>2</sup> Thomas R. Christofferson and Michael Christofferson, *France during World War II: From Defeat to Liberation* (New York:Fordham University Press, 2006), 134.

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xCaLOK3nEp8> accessed 24<sup>th</sup> September, 2012.

<sup>4</sup> Pierre Bolle, ed., *Grenoble et le Vercors. De la Résistance à la Libération 1940-1944* (Grenoble : Presses Universitaires de Grenoble, 2003), 140.

<sup>5</sup> Sarah Farmer, *10 juin 1944, Oradour, Arrêt sur mémoire* (Paris: Éditions Perrin, 2004).

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.* 192.

rather the extent to which foreigners were involved in that resistance and their role within it. However, any discussion relating to foreigners in the resistance must include the general organisation and function of the French resistance. So often evidence points to the fact that no matter how tenuous the links, the two were so often closely connected and hence contributes to some of the difficulties encountered with this project.

It is acknowledged that the surge in interest in this period of history followed the publication of Robert Paxton's book, *Vichy France: Old Guard New Order 1940 – 1944* in New York in 1972, which was translated and published in France a year later. His book sent shock waves through the French establishment when, almost 30 years after the end of the war, the myth of France as a country of resisters was finally dispelled and the dark shadows of collaboration with the Nazis were laid bare. In the 1970s, sectors of the population were still largely in denial and reacted to his book with anger and derision. One reader wrote to Paxton demanding to know why he dared to criticise French politics and worse still, why he criticised the Head of the Government (Pétain).<sup>7</sup> On the other hand, there was also praise and acceptance of his research. The historian Henri Michel wrote, 'sans ambages, il est la meilleure étude d'ensemble parue à ce jour sur l'État français, ses dirigeants et leur politique'.<sup>8</sup> For the first time since the end of the war, Paxton's research presented a new interpretation of France under occupation and exposed a collaboration which, in its many guises, had been the catalyst in strengthening the resolve of people to resist.

Although a conference of former resisters had been held in Grenoble in November 1975 during which Dr Katz, a former resister, outlined his experience as a foreigner in the

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<sup>7</sup> John Sweets, 'Chaque livre un événement : Robert Paxton et la France, du briseur de glace à l'iconoclaste tranquille', in *La France sous Vichy, Autour de Robert O. Paxton*, ed. Sarah Fishman et al. (Paris: Éditions Complexe, 2004), 34.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid. 36.

resistance, it was not until the 2nd July 1985 that a documentary entitled *Des "terroristes" à la retraite* was broadcast on French television that for the first time since the end of occupation, viewers learned that foreigners had fought in the French Resistance.<sup>9</sup> One of the reasons that this knowledge had remained hidden for so long was due in part to the fact that, in spite of the evidence produced by Paxton in the 1970s, open discussion relating to Vichy was not encouraged. The subject still aroused passionate debate and exposed the divisions and hostility prevalent amongst the many survivors of the time. In an article entitled 'Le cadavre dans le placard', François Nourissier wrote in 1974 'Après la pureté par le silence, voici venu le temps de la purification par le pessimisme et la vérité'.<sup>10</sup> Even in 1996 questions were still being raised concerning Mitterrand's association with the Vichy government of Pétain, but all Mitterrand would say was, 'the Resistance was not "a homogeneous bloc" and that the real Resistance, in his opinion, was the internal, not the Gaullist one'.<sup>11</sup> However, there are rather more tangible explanations and much more likely a combination of facts, which contributed to the subject of foreigners in the resistance remaining hidden for so long. To begin with, as the German Army retreated across France the work of the resistance groups was largely taken over by the allied armies and in many cases, the members of the Resistance were absorbed into those armies.<sup>12</sup> Moreover, when the German army had finally been pushed beyond the borders of France, the vast majority of foreigners had no reason to stay and most foreign nationals left France to continue the fight against the retreating German army, to restore sovereignty to their own and other nations in

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<sup>9</sup> Charles Katz, 'Les étrangers dans la Résistance à Grenoble', *Grenoble et le Vercors. De la Résistance à la Libération 1940-1944* (Grenoble : Presses Universitaires de Grenoble, 2003), 133.

Stéphane Courtois and Denis Peschanski and Adam Rayski, *Le Sang de l'étranger, Les immigrés de la M.O.I. dans la Résistance* (Paris: Fayard, 1989), 9.

<sup>10</sup> *L'Occupation: pourquoi tout le monde en parle*, Le Point no. 77, 11 March, 1974, 86.

<sup>11</sup> Christofferson and Christofferson, *France during World War II*, 145.

<sup>12</sup> Interview Claude Drouin, Loughborough, July 2011.

Eastern Europe. But probably above all else, amid the continuing chaos of war and faced with the all-pervading and omnipresent task of survival, their personal experiences of resistance in France were suppressed and forgotten, superseded by the more pressing needs of enduring the effects of the migratory turmoil which had been created by occupation and war. In France, de Gaulle was faced with the task of unifying a population in the immediate aftermath of liberation and foreigners and their contribution to resistance were of little importance in this vital task. More pressing than the contribution made by the foreign resisters was the unification of its people to fashion France's future political stability and so their resistance to occupation was relegated even further back in public memory. Furthermore, post-war politics also impinged on the freedom of foreigners in France to talk openly of their role in resistance. In 1945 peace in Europe was followed by the cold war. As early as 1946 Churchill delivered his 'An iron curtain has descended' speech in which he outlined his concerns regarding the sphere of influence of communist Russia and the growth in the power given to communist parties, in the countries of central and eastern Europe.<sup>13</sup>

Communism was seen as a threat to the democratic governments of the west and as many foreigners who had chosen to stay in France were communists and party members they were suspected by the French Government of being subversive revolutionaries. In an attempt to keep their communist affiliations secret former foreign resisters would have been deterred from revealing their wartime roles in the resistance and their affiliation to the MOI, the 'Main d'oeuvre immigrée'. This pre-war organisation established by the communists to give support and assistance to foreigners in the workplace would become the vehicle through which many foreign resistance groups had been formed in 1940. After the strikes of

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<sup>13</sup> Winston S Churchill, ed., *Winston Churchill's Speeches. Never Give In!* (London: Pimlico, 2007), 420.

1947 and 1948 many communist party members, including foreigners, were expelled from France. It is not clear how many left but hostility towards foreigners was evident, for example, in the mining villages in Provence and as was the case with so many foreigners, their testimonies of resistance went with them.<sup>14</sup> Eventually at the end of 1952 the MOI ceased to exist. However, according to Arthur London, one of the leaders of the MOI in 1940, even at this time, in the climate of the 'Cold War', no one was in a hurry to broadcast the fact that they had been a member of the MOI.<sup>15</sup>

According to Douzou, Henri Michel disclosed that personal testimonies by the communists were rare was also partly due to the fact they were forbidden by the party to express a personal point of view.<sup>16</sup> Hence, for a variety reasons, the testimonies of many foreigners who had been a part of the resistance were never recorded. However, Florimond Bonté, a former resister, was determined to ensure that the contribution of foreigners was not lost to future generations and in 1969 his account of German resistance was published, as a tribute to all the German antifascist colleagues he had worked alongside in the resistance.<sup>17</sup>

Even though the idea that France was a population of resisters has slowly been eroded, the vexed question surrounding the numbers involved continues to arouse comment and debate. The membership of some urban and rural resistance groups, comprising French and foreigners, was recorded but the same was not true for all groups. Due to the nature of the terrain and severe winter conditions, membership of rural groups

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<sup>14</sup> Hanna Diamond and Simon Kitson, Ed., *Vichy, Resistance, Liberation: New Perspectives on Wartime France* (London: Berg Publishers, 2005), 66.

<sup>15</sup> <http://www.groupemarat.com/pdf/marat-MOI.pdf> This site was created by former members of the group Marat which operated in Marseille.

<sup>16</sup> Douzou, *La Résistance française*, 113.

<sup>17</sup> Florimond Bonté, *Les Antifascistes allemands dans la résistance française* (Paris: Éditions sociales, 1969).

was for some a more transient occupation, for others it was of an extremely short duration, but all were considered as qualifying for membership of the resistance. So for a variety of reasons it has remained impossible to determine an accurate number of resisters involved throughout the occupation. It is equally impossible to arrive at an accurate number of foreigners within those estimates, or even if they were in fact included, but former French resisters estimate the total number of resisters to have been less than 1% of the population. As the census of 1936 included foreigners it has to be assumed that some were included within this approximation.<sup>18</sup> As the population was roughly 40 million a figure of 400,000 resisters is arrived at. However Christofferson puts the numbers of '*bona fide*' members by 1943 at 80,000.<sup>19</sup> Jackson states that the numbers in the FFI in January 1944 were approximately 50,000.<sup>20</sup> Christofferson also adds that rural areas did not have as strong a resistance movement as that which existed in urban areas at any time during the war.<sup>21</sup> He also states unequivocally that the communists did not play the major part in resistance as it had appeared during the war.<sup>22</sup> However, what is undeniable is that many hundreds of French and foreigners became resisters.

Having a clear notion of what resistance was remains largely elusive as actual definitions of 'resistance' are rare. Finding a common thread to link what the term 'resistance' means to the many individuals who took part is not easy, as there were so many different motives for joining. One definition of resistance was given by Henri Michel who, when speaking at an international conference on Resistance in Liège on 17 September 1958,

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<sup>18</sup> Interview with Danielle Debard, Birmingham, July 2011.

<sup>19</sup> Christofferson and Christofferson, *France during World War II*, 154.

<sup>20</sup> Julian Jackson, *France the Dark Years 1940-1944* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 557

<sup>21</sup> Christofferson and Christofferson, *France during World War II*, 151.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.* 156.

defined resistance as, 'une lutte patriotique pour la libération de la patrie' and 'une lutte pour la liberté et la dignité de l'homme, contre le totalitarisme'.<sup>23</sup> This definition certainly encapsulated the ideals of the many French and foreigners, who had resisted a common enemy on French soil. For the thousands of people from all over Europe who had been forced to flee their homes, asylum in France inspired and reinforced the sentiment of patriotism. This sentiment of patriotism is reflected in the definition proposed by Jean-Léon Charles. He writes, 'One may define resistance as the struggle that was conducted, first clandestinely and later on in broad daylight, by the peoples whose national soil had been forcibly occupied by foreign troops. Resistance was at the same time a patriotic war, an ideological struggle and a political fight'. Charles had served in the Belgian Resistance Intelligence, Groupe Bayard, and this no doubt reflects his personal idealism and motives for joining the resistance. The Concise Oxford Dictionary defines resistance as 'to resist', 'stop the course of, successfully oppose,' and passive resistance as, the 'refusal to comply'. These simple definitions are certainly apt descriptions of the initial surge in passive resistance, when many civilians, both French and foreigners, refused to comply with all the constraints imposed by Vichy and the German government of occupation. Unlike the definitions proposed by Michel and Charles, Jean Cassou, leader of Agnès Humbert's group, found it difficult to propose a tangible and substantial definition. He defined resistance as follows: 'For each *résistant* the Resistance was a way of living, a style of life, a life that we invented. If each of us who went through that experience had to define it, we would give it a name we would not apply to the ordinary aspects of our lives. Some would say adventure. I would call

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<sup>23</sup> Douzou, *La Résistance française : une histoire périlleuse*, 19.

that moment of my life happiness'.<sup>24</sup> Similar sentiments to those of Jean Cassou were echoed by Jacques Chaban-Delmas, also a resister and Prime Minister from 1969 to 1972. After participating in a debate following a documentary on the occupation, he turned to the camera and said, 'I want to say to all the young people watching, who do not know what it was like to be in the resistance: it was one of the greatest times to be alive'.<sup>25</sup> Many other young resisters would also join for the sense of adventure and excitement it offered.

However, in 1940 the majority of French civilians had no previous experience of resistance and therefore had no pre-conceived idea of what resistance was, leaving individuals free to invent different strategies to respond to the occupation. Many foreigners, on the other hand, would have had some experience of guerrilla warfare during the Spanish Civil War and some military combat in 1940 contributing to a diversity of resistance activities which would be conceived from 1940 onwards. There is evidence that the organisation of foreigners into resistance had already begun by August 1940, in Paris and cities in the unoccupied south.

To define the term 'foreigner', for the purpose of this study, proved to be a challenge. Arriving at a definition was complicated for several reasons. By 1936, 517,000 foreigners had acquired French nationality and it is impossible to differentiate between foreigners and French nationals with foreign names.<sup>26</sup> The confusion not only exists when trying to identify those with names which are for example of Polish, Italian or Spanish origin but is exacerbated by the fact that some French refugees from Alsace and Lorraine had names of German origin. Further ambiguity arises because Vichy introduced a law which

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<sup>24</sup> Mathew Cobb, *The Resistance: the French Fight against the Nazis* (New York: Simon & Schuster 2009), 293.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.* 7.

<sup>26</sup> Ralph Schor, *L'Opinion française et les étrangers, 1919 -1939* (Paris: Publication de la Sorbonne, 1985), vii.

rescinded French nationality from all immigrants who had arrived after 1927, with all those who had arrived before 1927 retaining their French nationality. Therefore it was decided that, for the purposes of this research, the term foreigner will include anyone living in France but who had not been born in France. However even this does not differentiate between the French Alsatians with German names and German and Austrian immigrants and refugees. Belgian refugees pose another problem, as many of their names are French in origin. Further uncertainty arises because some resisters had French names when in fact they were for example Polish, such as the photographer and resister Julia Pirotte. Furthermore, many first name French aliases were used as security by foreign resisters and in spite of rigorous research, their actual nationality is impossible to determine, a point highlighted by Bonté.

This research will focus on four distinct periods. The first will be the interwar years of the 1920s and 1930s, as research has shown that for some, the experience of the Great War would prove to be the catalyst to enter resistance in 1940. The 1920s and 1930s proved to be crucial, not only in the political evolution of France during the occupation but also as an influence on the slow evolution of resistance after June 1940. It was also the period which brought large waves of immigrants and those seeking asylum to France, many of whom would play a major role in resistance. The second chapter will concentrate on the years 1939 and 1940, when it will be seen that large numbers of foreigners residing in France joined the French army to help France defend its sovereignty. The third chapter will discuss the period 1941 and 1942, when attempts were being made to coordinate resistance. The final chapter addresses the transition of resistance from 1943 to 1944 when the tide of war began to turn in Europe, bringing with it a growing confidence of a German defeat.

By using this chronological structure problems are encountered, especially where personal accounts of resistance activities overlap a particular period, but nevertheless the advantage of this structure is that it allows for a more detailed analysis of each of the distinct phases in the growth of resistance. For example the development of rural resistance after 1943 was a very different resistance, with distinctive characteristics, contrary to that of urban resistance which had existed from 1940. It is also impossible to divorce the reality of resistance activity from the realities of everyday life. The hardship which existed generally is emphasised by Fogg who writes, 'Pétain struggled to meet the alimentary, housing, clothing and heating needs of the entire French population.'<sup>27</sup> As strangers in an area, foreign resisters were without the support of family and often were unable to make direct contact with local communities as many were unable to speak or understand French. They lacked the money to buy the basic commodities to survive and as such were even more vulnerable to denunciation.<sup>28</sup> It becomes clear, as resistance becomes organised, how often French and foreigners were dependent on each other for mutual support and would be a characteristic of many resistance groups.

Apart from making wide use of published material my research also includes interviews with former resisters and the children and grandchildren of resisters. I have also carried out research from unpublished accounts or from limited access publications, which are lodged at the 'Institut d'histoire du temps présent' in Paris. The internet has proved to be an invaluable tool for my research. More and more it is a source of individual memoirs, including letters and typewritten accounts of the time, which have been published on the

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<sup>27</sup> Shannon Fogg, *The Politics of Everyday Life in Vichy France. Foreigners, Undesirables and Strangers* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 58.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid* 59

many dedicated websites set up by the various Resistance Associations, often by former participants in the French Resistance. Very often accounts are unique references to particular events or particular groups but even so the authenticity of the facts can often be traced and verified through other testimony which has been published in print or on line. For example the provenance of on-line associations, such as the team from the site 'Marat' in Marseille, can often be verified through contact with the team maintaining the site. The Marat team have proved to be most helpful: not only is the information on their site well researched but they also sent additional material which included a copy of, *Les étrangers en France pendant la Seconde Guerre mondiale* written by Jean-Marie Guillon. The archive team from the website of Le Point, sent me a copy of an article published in March 1974 entitled 'L'Occupation: pourquoi tout le monde en parle', with a reply to the article by André Frossard dating from the time when Paxton's book had reignited discussion of Vichy France. Furthermore searching web sites has proved to be a valuable starting point for unearthing material on foreign resistance especially as researchers, who have written extensively about resistance often make only brief references to the existence of foreigners in the resistance. An increasing number of texts have now been published in France on the subject of foreign resistance and there is a growing awareness that resistance was not exclusively French.

## **CHAPTER ONE 1918-1939**

### **THE PRECURSOR TO THE DECLARATION OF WAR AND TO RESISTANCE**

The interwar years from 1919 to 1939, witnessed a period of inexorable social and political change which reverberated across Europe. This would ultimately influence attitudes to occupation and to resistance in France from 1940 to 1944, not only within the French population but also amongst the thousands of political and religious refugees who by 1939 had found refuge in France. The central research questions which this chapter will address, concern the pivotal role played by the First World War in dividing the French nation in the years leading up to the declaration of the second world war in 1939 and ultimately its response to occupation and resistance.

The questions in the first part will examine the ways and the extent to which the First World War divided the French population. What were the effects of the occupation, by German troops, of parts of French territory in the north east and the resultant destruction of the industry and towns of the region? What were the consequences and, at times, contentious effects of the re-integration into France of the former French territory of Alsace Lorraine, which had been part of Germany for almost 50 years from 1870 to 1918? This part will conclude by studying individual experiences of combat and assess whether it played a role in nurturing divisions within society and if so, did those experiences of combat from 1914 to 1918 ultimately influence attitudes to government and resistance in 1940?

In the second part, the questions will examine the extent to which the huge loss of life during the conflict divided the nation. Was a north- south divide particularly evident? How did the loss of life impact on the economic revival of post war France in the industrial north-east and the agricultural south? How extensive was the massive programme of

economic immigration into France in the 1920s? What was the nature and significance of the influence of the French Communist Party within the organisation of this immigrant workforce? This section will conclude by asking what the political consequences of France's immigration policy were in this period with the rise in xenophobia. What was the outcome of the entrenched political divisions between the extreme right and the extreme left leading up to the declaration of war in 1939?

Finally the questions in the third part will consider the divisive consequences for Europe with the end of the war and the implementation of the Treaty of Versailles in 1919. How did the Treaty acted as a catalyst in creating the political maelstrom and the associated widespread social unrest in Europe, in the 1920s and the 1930s? How did this impact on political attitudes in Germany and ultimately on massive migration to France after Hitler's rise to power in 1933.

### **War Ends and France Emerges a Divided Nation**

France emerged from the Great War a demoralised and divided nation. The lasting perceptions of that war would stem from a myriad of different experiences from that time and would ultimately have the potential for cataclysmic divisions of opinion in France in 1939 and 1940. For thousands of civilians, as well as for soldiers, the encounters with the realities of trench warfare left a legacy of horrific images of the war, while for others, the effects of the war receded the further they were away from the Front. This legacy of multiple perceptions of war would eventually be a major factor in nurturing and provoking manifold responses to occupation and resistance in 1940.

For Jacques Trolley de Prévaux, a young naval officer, his lasting legacy of the Great War would be the images of the battle-scarred landscape of north eastern France with its

towns in ruins and the vestiges of its villages barely visible amid the lunar landscape of large tracts of countryside. De Prévaux was curious to see for himself what the toll on the land and on the people had been and he flew an airship along the 400 miles of the Front, from Nieuwpoort on the Belgian coast to Pforterhouse, a small village on the Swiss border in the south, to film the images below. The film records the magnitude of the destruction he and a cameraman witnessed in the summer of 1919.<sup>29</sup> The images of people trying to rebuild their lives, among the ruins of their homes in the town of Lens, appeared below their flight path and would become the catalyst which precipitated him into the resistance with his Polish wife in 1941.<sup>30</sup>

Other residents of this region, who had been forced to leave their homes and jobs to spend the war years as refugees, returned to find they had lost everything including their farms, their homes, their possessions, their land and their livelihood. Nine villages had been completely destroyed.<sup>31</sup> One example was the village of Louvemont, 11 kilometres north of Verdun with a population of 183 in 1914. Fertile farmland had been destroyed, much of it buried by continual bombing, mining, shelling and tunnelling.<sup>32</sup> Like other villages in the area, Louvemont was never re-built and for those families who were forced to start all over again, normality was not to return to their lives for years.<sup>33</sup> Another example is the town of

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<sup>29</sup> A documentary, 'The First World War From Above', shown on BBC 1, November 7<sup>th</sup> 2010. Extracts from the film, '*En dirigeable sur les champs de bataille*', filmed by cameraman Lucien Lesaint during August and September 1919, were shown in the documentary.

<sup>30</sup> Interview with de Prévaux's daughter Aude Yung-de Prévaux, in Paris and included in the documentary, 'The First World War From Above'.

<sup>31</sup> <http://virtualexhibition.1418remembered.co.uk/explore/civilians-on-the-move/exodus-14/the-french-and-belgian-exodus-in-1914.html>. Accessed January 2013.

<sup>32</sup> <http://www.remembrancetrails-northernfrance.com/learn-more/reconstruction/the-battlefield-landscape-of-1918.html>. Accessed August 2012.

<sup>33</sup> <http://www.remembrancetrails-northernfrance.com/learn-more/reconstruction/the-return-of-the-artois-refugees.html>. Accessed, March 2013. Describes life for returning refugees.

Bethune where 50% of its buildings were either destroyed or damaged in 1918.<sup>34</sup> Although re-building started in 1919, its total reconstruction was only finished in 1932. In Arras only 5% of the buildings survived the war, the rest were either destroyed or damaged.<sup>35</sup> Then there were the residents who had lived behind the Front. They had witnessed first-hand the continual arrival of hundreds of British soldiers between 1914 and 1918 and were aware of the human cost of the support given to France by those young men. Contact between French civilians and British troops was widespread as soldiers disembarked through ports situated along the northern coast of France such as Boulogne. The gratitude of the people in the North for the support which had been given by the British between 1914 and 1918 would be reflected in the pro-British stance amongst the population particularly in the north from 1939 onwards.

The population would also be divided by different cultures at the end of the war when the disputed territory of Alsace and Lorraine was returned to French administration in 1919. After being annexed by Germany in 1871, the people of this region had an alien language and culture. In 1940 and after just 20 years under French administration, attempts at the large scale assimilation of Alsace and Lorraine into the French nation had virtually failed. This was due to the fact that the people had opposed the adoption of the French language and the intrinsic French principle of the separation of state and religion had been anathema to those with strong religious beliefs. These two factors had remained obstacles to full scale re-integration largely isolating the population of this region from the rest of France.

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<sup>34</sup> <http://www.remembrancetrails-northernfrance.com/learn-more/reconstruction/bethune-a-town-designed-by-jacques-alleman.html>. Accessed August 2012.

<sup>35</sup> <http://www.remembrancetrails-northernfrance.com/learn-more/reconstruction/rebuilding-arras-old-and-new-ideas.html>. Accessed, March 2013.

These differences and divisions surfaced again in 1939 when Alsace Lorraine found itself once more on the front line. It is estimated that the French government ordered 600,000 residents from this area to leave their homes. These figures included all the residents of Strasbourg which numbered 193,000 in the census of 1931. The people were given just 48 hours warning of their impending re-location and 450,000 of these evacuees were transported to poor and often backward rural villages of the South West of France.<sup>36</sup> Their arrival often unleashed a clash of cultures and the local inhabitants accused the Alsatians of being German and treated them as foreigners.<sup>37</sup> Language and religious barriers meant the refugees were often left isolated and marginalised by the local communities. As most Alsatians and Lorrainers spoke German or a German dialect the children often had their own schools and teachers.<sup>38</sup> Unlike the homes they had been forced to leave in Alsace and Lorraine, their homes in the south were often in a poor state of repair and insanitary and tensions rose within communities.<sup>39</sup> Conflicts escalated between the two communities as the locals were accused of being 'savages and 300 years behind the times'.<sup>40</sup>

After the occupation and re-integration of Alsace Lorraine back into the Third Reich, Germany encouraged many of these evacuees to return to their homes. However between 20,000 and 60,000 people reluctantly stayed in Vichy France including those who were prohibited by the Nazis from returning home because of being ethnically French, Jewish or an alien foreign national. This number of Alsace and Lorraine refugees was increased further

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<sup>36</sup> Laird Boswell, 'Franco-Alsatian Conflict and the Crisis of National Sentiment during the Phoney War,' *The Journal of Modern History* 71 (1999): 558.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.* 559, 564.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.* 569.

<sup>39</sup> Fogg, *The Politics of Everyday Life in Vichy France. Foreigners, Undesirables and Strangers* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 56.

<sup>40</sup> Boswell, 'Franco-Alsatian Conflict', 560.

when 140,000 people were expelled by the Nazis for political or religious reasons.<sup>41</sup> After the occupation the hostility towards these refugees intensified, reinforcing the divisions within French society, which could be traced back to the process of integration after 1918.<sup>42</sup> For the people who lived in this disputed territory of Alsace Lorraine, which was now back under German administration, their divided loyalties and their allegiance to either France or Germany would become evident. Some joined in the resistance to German Nazism but it remains impossible to determine whether at the time they joined as French or foreign resisters after 1940.

Unlike the poor agricultural south, the north of France was the power house of the French economy and contained 75% of all France's industry and mining capacity.<sup>43</sup> It included France's most important coal mining region which was located in the Nord Pas-de-Calais but which at the end of 1918 emerged with its production capacity severely reduced. Before 1914, this region had supplied all of French industry with 80% of its coal. During the war some of the mines had been under German control and coal had been diverted to Germany to increase industrial production there thus reducing French output

Some experiences of the conflict were specific to small groups of soldiers but through the momentum of rumour they spread and gained notoriety amongst hundreds. One incident was that resulting from a mutiny which was staged in 1917 by a group of French soldiers. The soldiers concerned were arrested, but to prevent the mutiny from spreading, several men were selected at random by Pétain, to be executed by firing squad. For many of the survivors of this episode, their hatred of Pétain would never diminish and they would

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<sup>41</sup> Ibid. 575.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid. 578.

<sup>43</sup> H.R. Kedward, *Naissance de la résistance dans la France de Vichy : idées et motivations 1940-1942* (Seysssel: Champ Vallon, 1989), 38.

remain opposed to Pétain and his regime after 1940.<sup>44</sup> The hatred generated as a result of this incident was highlighted during an interview with Claude Drouin. He spoke of how his grandfather, who had been a part of this mutiny but had escaped the selection, remained anti-Pétainist all his life.<sup>45</sup>

So in June 1940 France would be more than just a nation divided by demarcation lines. The demarcation lines would separate a nation already divided by the experience of the Great War. In 1939 many civilians in the north had already experienced living as refugees during the previous conflict. It has been estimated that between 1914 and 1918 approximately 1,447,000 living in close proximity to the Front had spent varying lengths of time as a refugee.<sup>46</sup> It was a different story for many communities in the south who had experienced little disruption to everyday life and had been largely unaffected by the noise and danger of bombardments and occupation. For thousands of residents in the north and refugees marooned in the south after 1939, the effect of life-shattering experiences would become deeply ingrained in the mindset of the population and would be reflected in attitudes to resistance in 1940.

### **The War Weakens the Heart of the French Economy**

By 1918, an already fragile French labour force was further weakened by the catastrophic number of casualties incurred during the war. This huge loss of life, which was mainly experienced by the younger working male population, would inevitably intensify the immense economic and social pressures faced by the country. France had emerged from the war overwhelmingly in debt and needed a rapid rejuvenation and significant expansion of its

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<sup>44</sup> Ibid.75

<sup>45</sup> Interview with Claude Drouin, Loughborough, July 2011.

<sup>46</sup> Pierre Purseigle, 'A wave onto our shores: The Exile and Resettlement of Refugees from the Western Front, 1914-1918', *Contemporary European History* 16.4 (2007), 427-444.

industry to aid its recovery. Even more crucial for this recovery was the restoration of the heavy industrial capacity of the north east, which had been under German control during the war. However, due to the high number of casualties and compounded in part by a low birth rate, its labour force had been depleted.

By the end of the war over one million French soldiers had been killed.<sup>47</sup> Approximately 1,100,000 had been permanently disabled by gas.<sup>48</sup> Almost every French family mourned the loss of someone and almost three million families had to live with husbands and sons who had been severely wounded and incapacitated during the four years of conflict. The census of March 1921 verified the enormity of that loss. Even with the additional population now included from the re-integration of Alsace Lorraine the census showed that the population of France had fallen by 2,105,223 with an imbalance of the sexes between the ages of 20 and 40 years of age. With 7,321,000 women to 6,142,000 men, there was also a resultant reduction in the number of births.<sup>49</sup> Affected by these losses were 600,000 widows, 760,000 orphans and over one million grieving parents, the majority of whom lived in rural peasant communities.

As the urban population had been needed to work in industry to support the war effort, by far the largest number of soldiers had been conscripted from the ranks of the peasant farmers. This imbalance of losses led to resentment on the part of the rural peasant society which simmered on throughout the 30s and surfaced again in the 1940s. Rural society felt it had already sacrificed enough and rural resistance was virtually non-existent

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<sup>47</sup> Christofferson and Christofferson, *France during World War II*, 2.

<sup>48</sup> Schor, *L'Opinion française et les étrangers, 1919-1939*, 28.

<sup>49</sup> Stéphane Courtois and Denis Peschanski and Adam Rayski, *Le Sang de l'étranger: les immigrés de la M.O.I. dans la Résistance* (Paris: Fayard, 1989), 17.

during the early years of 1940. In fact it will be seen that even in June 1944 many rural resistance groups in the south consisted of former urban combatants.<sup>50</sup>

### **France Embarks on a Program of Large Scale Immigration**

Large scale immigration was seen as the answer for a government faced with the loss of its youth and a population made up of 1,100,000 permanently injured war veterans.<sup>51</sup> The country embarked on a massive program of immigration which reached its zenith between 1921 and 1926 in order to augment a weakened labour force and thus meet the needs of industrial regeneration and expansion. Nevertheless, it was a policy which would have serious repercussions for the government in the 1930s when unemployment, social unrest and a rise in xenophobia forced it to adopt a program of enforced repatriation. But the inevitability of war in 1939 would catapult thousands of immigrants into resistance from 1940 onwards.

Following the government appeal for foreign labourers, society in the towns, cities and villages would be changed with the influx of manual workers from many areas of Europe including Italy, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary and Spain. The appeal produced the highest immigration rate in any country in Europe at this time and was responsible, in part, for the high numbers of foreigners living in France in 1939.<sup>52</sup> Their numbers were officially recorded in 1931 as being 2,625,405 but this figure was probably closer to 3,000,000 as it was estimated that there were between 200,000 and 300,000 illegal immigrants living in the country.<sup>53</sup> The appeal for workers attracted 1,500,000 Italians who worked along the Mediterranean coast, in Paris and Lorraine. About 500,000 Spaniards settled in the south

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<sup>50</sup> George Millar, *Maquis: The French Resistance at War* (London: Cassell, 2003), 148.

<sup>51</sup> Schor, *L'Opinion française et les étrangers*, 28.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.* 35.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.* 34.

west. Over 500,000 Polish immigrants worked in the mines of the Nord Pas-de-Calais as well as in industry and agriculture. Some of the 40,000 Hungarian immigrants also worked in the mines in the North East as well as in the textile, clothing and footwear industries of Paris and the textile industries in Lyon and Roubaix. In addition 60,000 Yugoslavians were employed in the mines and building trades of the Nord Pas-de Calais and in Meurthe-et-Moselle. Many of these immigrants were attracted to France as they saw France as the country of liberty and equality, a fact which had also encouraged large numbers of White Russians, who had fled the USSR, to settle in France. Many of these immigrants were also Jewish families fleeing from Eastern Europe and its widespread endemic anti-Semitism.<sup>54</sup>

The French communist party were keen to safeguard the interests of the foreign workers, the majority of whom, but not all, were politically of the left and Jewish. To integrate the different nationalities into the workforce, they established the 'Main d'Oeuvre Émigrée', or MOE, in October, 1926. The idea of creating a recognised 'Immigrant Association' was not new as the Jewish refugees, who had previously fled Tsarist Russia, already had their own immigrant society in Paris as early as 1882.<sup>55</sup> However, with so many different nationalities and many of the foreign workers being unable to speak French, the different MOE groups were often founded on language. Eventually in 1932, the communist party changed the name of the organisation from the MOE to MOI, the 'Main d'Oeuvre Immigrée'. From 1934 to 1935 the communist party re-organised the MOI into groups based on language with each group having its own language newspaper.<sup>56</sup> Many members of the Jewish communities, who only spoke Yiddish, saw the MOI associations as a way of

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<sup>54</sup> Courtois, Peschanski and Rayski, *Le Sang de l'étranger*, 18.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid. 15.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid. 30.

integrating into the French workforce. By contrast, the large Polish community in the North East was very much centred on the Catholic Church. It will be seen that these different groups would play a major role in organising resistance to the occupation in 1940.

### **Political Turmoil in Europe Leads to Further Immigration**

The rise of communism, fascism and Nazism during the inter-war years and the resulting mass migration, would impact on French politics of the 1930s. Although the French economy survived the worst of the world-wide depression, suffering its steepest decline from 1930 to 1932, the downturn in the economy caused deep rifts between the political parties. Many French people believed that immigrants were occupying jobs which were rightfully theirs and the rise in xenophobia was sufficiently intolerable for Paul Loffler, an Hungarian exile, to write in his diary on 31<sup>st</sup> October 1931, 'La xénophobie, comme la crise, est au point culminant, et restera une tache de honte dans l'histoire du peuple français'.<sup>57</sup>

The outpourings of xenophobic and anti-Semitic rhetoric by the extreme right increased after the 6 May 1932, when Paul Doumer, the President of France, was assassinated by Pavel Gorgulov, a Russian. To avoid the growing tensions among workers the government introduced a policy of forced repatriation. France expelled 92,000 foreigners in 1932 and 73,300 Polish immigrants between 1932 and 1935.<sup>58</sup> While this large scale repatriation of foreigners was taking place, the numbers of immigrants in France continued to escalate with the arrival of 35,000 German refugees fleeing from anti-Semitism and Nazism after Hitler came to power in 1933.

In Marseille, large crowds witnessed the assassination of King Alexandre I of Yugoslavia, by Vlado Chernozemski, who it was suggested, had links to a Croatian nationalist

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<sup>57</sup> Ibid. 28.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid., 28.

organisation. The French Foreign Minister Louis Barthou, who was with the King was injured at the same time and died later.<sup>59</sup> This politically charged incident inflamed even further, right wing attitudes towards immigrants. Barthou was replaced as Foreign Minister by Pierre Laval. In January 1935 the Saar voted for a return to German administration and this led to a further 4,000 people, mainly of militant left wing Germanic origin, being accommodated in South west France.<sup>60</sup>

However, there was opposition to the right wing and the left wing Popular Front government of Léon Blum was elected in 1936. Blum was a supporter of the MOI and the immigrant associations but after taking office he failed to deliver his promise to implement a coherent policy on immigration. Unfortunately for Blum public opinion was divided by his failure to act and those on the right voiced their concerns that under his government intrinsic French values were disappearing from society. The Civil War in Spain had broken out in July 1936 and although Blum had undertaken to send aid to support the Spanish Government he was persuaded against doing so by the British Government, whose policy was one of non-intervention. The communist party immediately withdrew its support for the government which brought about the resignation of Blum in 1937. He took office again for one month in 1938, after which the Daladier anti- communist government of the right took power at which point internment camps were set up to house illegal immigrants.<sup>61</sup> Government policy created divisions between the left and the right and political instability leading up to the downfall of France in 1940.

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<sup>59</sup> [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B0pyyt\\_G0U8](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B0pyyt_G0U8) Accessed August 2012

<sup>60</sup> Schor, *L'Opinion française et les étrangers*, 627.

<sup>61</sup> Martin Evans and Emmanuel Godin, *France 1815-2003* (London: Hodder Arnold, 2004), 107.

Two other factors would prove to be important in 1939 and 1940. Firstly many immigrant communists living in France had previously volunteered to join the International Brigades to fight in Spain, through their recruiting office in Paris. They faced a rigorous combat training program before being sent to join the conflict - a point which would prove to be important in designating their roles in resistance after the beginning of the occupation in 1940. When Franco eventually declared victory on 1st April 1939 many Spanish Republican refugees and many well-trained foreign communist fighters, who had fought in the International Brigades, fled from Spain and found refuge in France.

Secondly in Eastern Europe Hitler was creating discord in the post-1918 state of Czechoslovakia, which had been created out of the former Austro-Hungarian Empire and which was slowly being dismembered. Following Hitler's annexation of the Czech regions and the Slovak declaration of independence, Poland demanded and annexed the region of Teschen in 1939, a small area south of the Sudetenland in which 500,000 Ukrainians and 60,000 Poles lived.<sup>62</sup> These changes in governments and in borders prompted a massive migration of people across Europe and with Hitler's invasion of Poland in 1939 thousands of

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<sup>62</sup> Barrie Pitt, 'The Climate of Appeasement', *History of The Second World War: Britain 1935 – 1939* (1967) Barrie Pitt was an historical consultant in 1963 for the BBC production, *The Great War*. Material including transcripts of radio and television broadcasts on the First and Second World Wars can be found in the Liddell Hart Centre for Military Archives, King's College London. Reference code: GB 0099 KCLMA Pitt B. Details of material in the archive can be found at: [http://www.aim25.ac.uk/cgi-bin/vcdf/detail?coll\\_id=8877&inst\\_id=21&nv1=search&nv2](http://www.aim25.ac.uk/cgi-bin/vcdf/detail?coll_id=8877&inst_id=21&nv1=search&nv2) Accessed August 2012.

Poles joined those making their way to France. By 1939 thousands of people of different nationalities, including many who were Jewish and communists, had been uprooted from their homes and had found asylum and refuge in France. It will be seen that within the French and foreign communities, the different reactions which would emerge to the threat of invasion in 1939 and then to occupation in 1940, had been cemented during the politically turbulent inter-war years of the 1930s.

### **France Becomes Victim of its Own Creation.**

After emerging triumphant from the Treaty of Versailles in 1919 as master of Europe and heaping retribution on a defeated Germany, France had, in turn, become a defeated and humiliated nation. In a little over 20 years, France had gone full circle from being the victor to the vanquished. The research presented in this chapter has shown that the diverse attitudes to occupation and resistance in 1940 amongst the French population and within the immigrant and refugee communities, was often the result of the political and economic turbulence in aftermath of the First World War. This chapter has discussed three outcomes of the Great War which it has shown not only influenced social and political divisions within French society, but was also replicated across Europe.

Firstly, it has highlighted the fact that the Great War had become a major divisive instrument with the French population having had very different experiences of that war. The destructive war had decimated the mining industry and many towns and villages concentrated in the north east, in comparison with the south west of the country whose infrastructure was virtually unscathed by the destructive static war. With the declaration of war in 1914 many people in the north east had suffered the indignity of being forcibly expelled away from the Front by the French government and had spent the war years as

refugees, while others in the region had experienced living under German occupation and had been deported by the occupying German forces. For the people of Alsace Lorraine, particularly those under the age of 60 – 65 and now re-integrated back into France following the defeat of Germany had, unlike the rest of France, a Germanic culture and language.

Secondly the loss of life and severe injury suffered by many young men left their scars in hundreds of homes in hundreds of towns and villages. The resultant high economic immigration to supplement the much depleted workforce, especially in the agricultural south, created social problems particularly felt in the small rural villages and tiny hamlets in the south west.

Thirdly the rise of communism, fascism and Nazism across Europe, was reflected in the number of refugees who had arrived in France after 1933. This produced political divisions between the far right and the far left, rising xenophobia and unstable governments, in the period leading up to the declaration of war in September 1939. These divisions would challenge the very existence of the French, as a nation, after occupation in 1940. However, even the immigrant community within France was not immune to the political unrest which resonated across Europe. It will be seen that the declaration of war would in turn influence hundreds of foreigners to crucially, volunteer to come to the aid of France as early as 1939 to help defend its borders.

## CHAPTER TWO 1939 to 1940

### EUROPEAN MIGRATION IN TURMOIL

By 1939 the demographic changes recorded in France were testament to the mass migrations which had taken place across Europe during the inter war years. Evidence from the population statistics recorded in the 1936 census indicates that thousands of people from many countries of Europe had settled in France to escape economic poverty, social unrest and political upheavals brought about by the outcomes of the First World War.<sup>63</sup> However, the events outlined in chapter one - Hitler's invasion and annexation of Austria in March 1938, his incursion into the Czech region of the Sudetenland, Bohemia and Moravia in March 1939, the end of the Civil War in Spain on 1<sup>st</sup> April with a victory for the fascists - would render these figures obsolete as refugee numbers spiralled upwards.<sup>64</sup> Hitler's invasion of Poland followed on 1<sup>st</sup> September 1939, when Polish military personnel were ordered to make their way across Romania to France to reform the Polish army and continue the war against Germany.

The Census of 1936 recorded 275,000 foreigners as living in Paris and its suburbs.<sup>65</sup> Of these there were 87,764 Italians, a Polish community of 50,076, most of whom were Jewish and 10,130 Germans. Also included in these statistics were 33,384 Russians and 27,139 Belgians, as well as Portuguese, Romanians and Czechoslovakians.<sup>66</sup> Schor adds that by 1939 it was estimated that approximately 50,000 anti-Nazi German refugees, including 4,000 who arrived from the Saar in 1935 and 500,000 Spanish republicans had crossed into

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<sup>63</sup> Schor, *L'Opinion française et les étrangers 1919-1939*, 34.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.* 629.

<sup>65</sup> Courtois, Peschanski and Rayski, *Le Sang de l'étranger*, 429.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.* 429.

France. Overall there were a total of 65,000 Armenians and 64,000 Russians living in France.<sup>67</sup> By the time war was declared on September 3<sup>rd</sup> 1939, this burgeoning number of refugees and displaced persons in France reflected the migratory turmoil created by the expansionist program of Hitler. But it would also be these large numbers of immigrants and refugees who would pledge support for France in the face of Nazi aggression in 1939. Following the declaration of war, thousands of refugees volunteered to join the French Army, to support the defence of France against Hitler. Their response to the call to arms would become the prelude to organised resistance and therefore defines the starting point for an exploration of the role of foreigners in the French Resistance.

This chapter will deal with the period from September 1939 to the summer of 1940 to establish the events which led to the instigation of foreign resistance very early in the war. Firstly, it will investigate the scale of the response by foreigners to a call to arms to join the French army. Secondly, it will study how the French military responded to these foreign volunteers and the extent to which foreigners were incorporated into the French army. Thirdly, it will explore the magnitude of the forced eviction and expulsion of the civilian population from North East France, including Alsace Lorraine, to the poor rural villages in the south. It will outline the repercussions both for the refugees and the people living there who were forced to house the refugees, some with an alien culture and language. Fourthly, it will examine the response of the leaders of the MOI, to occupation and will show how, with the support of the French Communist Party, a centralised pyramidal system of organisation was established to co-ordinate the process of integrating many different nationalities into

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<sup>67</sup> Schor, *L'Opinion française et les étrangers*, 32.

clandestine resistance in the summer of 1940. It will demonstrate the importance of Paris as a centre for the organisation of early resistance.

Finally, it will examine the extent to which former International Brigadists, Spanish Republican anti-fascists, Jews of all nationalities and German and Austrian refugees, who had been interned in camps in the south in 1940, had been organised into early resistance. It will thus establish the extent to which foreigners had been organised into resistance in 1940 and the degree of co-operation afforded them by French

### **The Mobilisation of Foreigners**

Appeals were launched by foreign associations for volunteers to join the French Army as soon as war had been declared.<sup>68</sup> Many foreigners had arrived in France with little or no knowledge of the French language and were reliant on the MOI and associations and the foreign language newspapers they published for information. For example the communist Jewish newspaper, *Naïe Presse*, was written in Yiddish and appealed for Jewish immigrants of all nationalities to volunteer.<sup>69</sup> The Hungarian newspaper, *Szabad Szo*, meaning 'Free Speech', launched its appeal for volunteers on 6<sup>th</sup> September.<sup>70</sup> Such was the response to the appeal that the *Daily Express* reported on Monday 4<sup>th</sup> September 1939 that the Czech leaders in exile in the USA had declared that although Czecho-Slovakia was unable to provide its own army, Czech and Slovak units were being formed in Paris to fight against the Germans.<sup>71</sup> One month later, on 2<sup>nd</sup> October, a regiment of 12,000 Czechs and Slovaks had been established in Agde, in the South, which also included 400 former members of the

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<sup>68</sup> Courtois, Peschanski and Rayski, *Le Sang de l'étranger*, 65.

<sup>69</sup> André Kaspi and Antoine Marès, *Le Paris des étrangers* (Paris : Imprimerie nationale, 1989), 113.

<sup>70</sup> Courtois, Peschanski and Rayski, *Le Sang de l'étranger*, 66.

<sup>71</sup> *Daily Express*, September 4, 1939, 'Czech leaders say 'We are with you'', p.1.

International Brigade who had previously been interned in special camps in the south.<sup>72</sup> So overwhelming was the response to the appeal by the Polish community that, by 9<sup>th</sup> September, a Polish Army had been formed.

As opposed to the rapid response by foreigners to enlist, the French army was wary of incorporating communists of any nationality, or Germans, Austrians and Jews into its ranks. The French government was also concerned by the possibility of a fifth column, especially from amongst the German and Austrian refugees living in Paris and the north.<sup>73</sup> Consequently, 13,000 Germans and 5,000 Austrians, whose political allegiance was deemed to be suspect, were rounded up and transported to internment camps all over France, probably as far away as possible from the projected thrust of the German attack from the north east.<sup>74</sup> Communists and members of the MOI were also vulnerable after the Ribbentrop-Molotov Non-Aggression Pact had been signed on 23<sup>rd</sup> August 1939 and many were interned. Kedward underlines the purges against the communists and gives a figure of 38 being arrested from the area around the town of Vichy and interned in a camp at Mons in the Puy-de-Dôme and of 500 being arrested in Marseille, indicating a concentration of communists in the city, who were interned in Chibron.<sup>75</sup> Berlière and Liaigre detail the internment of communists at Châteaubriant in 1941, where, for example, many came from Paris, Clairvaux, and Poissy. Their numbers had risen steeply from 222 in May, to 579 in September, but it is not clear if these figures include Jewish internees, who were segregated

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<sup>72</sup> Courtois, Peschanski and Rayski, *Le Sang de l'étranger*, 67.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid. 66.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid. 78.

<sup>75</sup> Kedward, *Naissance de la Résistance dans la France de Vichy*, 74.

in a separate part of the camp reserved for Jews and other 'undesirables'.<sup>76</sup> They also note that a number of Spanish republicans had been interned at Moisdon in 1939.<sup>77</sup> As there were a significant number of communist refugees and immigrants living in the cities it has to be concluded that some foreigners must have been included in these statistics.

These arrests however did not deter thousands of other immigrants and refugees from volunteering, believing they should help defend the country that had given them refuge and for which many would sacrifice their lives. By 1<sup>st</sup> May 1940, more than 100,000 volunteers had been incorporated into the French Army. 33,500 German, Austrian and Italian volunteers had been allowed to join the Foreign Legion and would serve mainly in Africa and Syria. 15,000 Spanish volunteers were also allowed to join the foreign legion, of whom 900 would lose their lives at Narvik. 9,700 men had joined the infantry regiments of the 'Régiments de Marche des Volontaires Étrangers' or RMVE.<sup>78</sup> The web site 'Union des Engagés Volontaires 1939-1945' has been created to perpetuate the memory of former soldiers in the RMVE and a short film shows their camp at Barcarès in the Pyrenees. Approximately two-thirds of the RMVE were Jewish volunteers from Eastern Europe and one-third were Spanish republicans.<sup>79</sup> A further 8,878 foreigners were integrated into the regular army along with the Czechoslovakian division of 12,000 men based in Agde. The Polish army of 46,900 men formed a separate Polish division.<sup>80</sup> Polish soldiers were in combat in Narvok and many died in action in 1940. The 22<sup>nd</sup> regiment RMVE, for example, was in combat against the German army on the Somme and a monument to the men who

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<sup>76</sup> Jean-Marc Berlière and Franck Liaigre, *Le Sang des communistes, les bataillons de la jeunesse dans la lutte armée, automne 1941*, (Paris: Fayard, 2004), 31.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid. 303.

<sup>78</sup> Courtois, Peschanski and Rayski, *Le Sang de l'étranger*, 69.

<sup>79</sup> <http://www.combattantvolontairejuif.org/122.html> Accessed January 2013.

<sup>80</sup> Courtois, Peschanski and Rayski, *Le Sang de l'étranger*, 69.

lost their lives in 1940 stands in a cemetery at Misery on the Somme.<sup>81</sup> For the first time since fleeing their homeland, many refugees found themselves bound together, either in military units or in internment camps often united by a common bond of nation or language. This it will be seen would aid the organisation of these men into resistance.

By 14<sup>th</sup> June 1940, Paris was occupied and a large proportion of the population, including many foreign civilians and foreign volunteers, had fled south. During the months which followed, amid the chaos which ensued, the determination of many foreigners to resist the German occupation of France and Europe would emerge.

### **Invasion, Occupation, Resistance**

Ahead of the German invasion from the North East, the population of Paris joined the thousands already on the road. Like the thousands of European refugees before them, a large proportion of the French population of Northern France were now faced with the humiliating prospect of becoming refugees, in their own country, some for the second time in twenty five years,. Many foreigners, who had of necessity fled south to escape the advancing German army, found themselves uprooted for a second time. No statistics are available but it can be assumed that many, like Louis Gronowski of the MOI and Jacques Duclos, the leader of the French Communist Party and Jewish refugees of all nationalities, were amongst those who fled south.

The enforced exodus in 1940 would also influence people's attitudes to resistance. For hundreds of families from Alsace Lorraine and the industrial North East it seemed as though the clock had been turned back to 1914-1918. In his essay 'Mapping the Resistance: An Essay on Roots and Routes', Kedward refers to the work of Dejonghe and Le Maner and

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<sup>81</sup> <http://www.combattantvolontairejuif.org/122.html> Accessed January 2013.

'the lasting impact of close Franco-British relations in the shared experiences of soldiers and communities (in 1914-1918) on resistance in the north east in 1940'.<sup>82</sup> For the second time within twenty-five years these people found themselves on the front line of another German invasion. Some were forced to flee their homes, while others had been forcibly evicted away from the front line on the orders of the French Army and transported south. Following the capitulation, Alsace Lorraine was re-incorporated into the Third Reich with it the immediate adoption of its Nazi laws. Countless numbers of people of French nationality and foreigners, particularly Jews, were forcibly deported from what was now Germany and from the restricted industrial zone of the north east and forced to settle in the non-occupied south.<sup>83</sup> Kedward gives the numbers of refugees remaining in Vichy in October 1940 as 300,000 and most chose to stay.<sup>84</sup>

The summer of 1940 witnessed the birth of French and foreign resistance both in the occupied north and the unoccupied Vichy zone. From the early days of the occupation, ideas for resistance began to be formulated. Kedward describes how enthusiastic individuals thought of resistance as a 'dernière colonne' but remarks that this was more a theoretical concept than concrete reality.<sup>85</sup> For many Alsatians and Lorrainian refugees living in Lyon, their hatred of the Nazi occupiers, reinforced by their enforced deportation from their homes, ensured their support for the group 'France-Liberté' at the end of 1940.<sup>86</sup> In Paris, Agnès Humbert describes in her diary how the humiliation of capitulation and occupation convinced many individuals, like herself and her close friends, that they had to do

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<sup>82</sup> H.R. Kedward, 'Mapping the Resistance: An Essay on Roots and Routes', *Modern and Contemporary France*, 20:4 (2010), 491-503, 494.

<sup>83</sup> Kedward, *Naissance de la Résistance dans la France de Vichy*, 92.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.* 38.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.* 89.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.* 92

something. Humbert describes how Jean Cassou, a Spanish left-wing intellectual and friend, needed no persuasion to join her.<sup>87</sup> But even intellectuals had to find their way and Humbert's group, like others, had no concept of what their action was going to be. Humbert's group received advice from Boris Vildé, a Russian by birth who was in charge of the anti-German activity of the group, 'Musée de l'Homme'.<sup>88</sup> Anatole Lewitsky, also Russian, was another member of the group.<sup>89</sup> An escape network in Bethune had been set up in 1940 by Vildé.<sup>90</sup> Even as early as 1940 Humbert recognised that Vildé was working with a bigger organisation than a simple resistance group distributing tracts. It is now known he had established contacts with the American Embassy in Paris and possibly two of his contacts were in contact with MI6, but according to Cobb, files at MI6 remain closed.<sup>91</sup> On 15<sup>th</sup> November Humbert recorded that Vildé asked her to hide a British airman. On 20<sup>th</sup> November she outlined in her diary the existence of an escape route, which was already operational, through the non occupied south via Vierzon, across the Spanish Border to the British Consul in Barcelona.<sup>92</sup> These small, isolated acts demonstrate that resistance was becoming organised during 1940 and that foreigners played a key role in it from its inception.

### **The MOI Coordinates Foreign Resistance**

In Paris the organisation of foreigners into resistance was coordinated by the MOI.<sup>93</sup> Their task would be facilitated by the fact that in 1940, many foreigners were still billeted in army camps or in internment camps in the south, making contact easier. For example Louis

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<sup>87</sup> Agnes Humbert, *Résistance, Memoirs of Occupied France* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2009), 11.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.* 18.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.* 335.

<sup>90</sup> Cobb, *The Resistance, The French Fight Against the Nazis*, 53.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.* 329.

<sup>92</sup> Humbert, *Résistance, Memoirs of Occupied France*, 22.

<sup>93</sup> Courtois, Peschanski and Rayski, *Le Sang de l'étranger*, 100.

Gronowski was able to make contact with communist militants in the ranks of the RMVE at Barcarès.<sup>94</sup> The leaders of the MOI and the French communist party had fled south during the exodus to the relative safety of Toulouse. However at the end of July, in spite of the danger, Gronowski returned to Paris and with Duclos began the task of setting up foreign networks in Paris. Gronowski returned to his apartment in Pré-Saint-Gervais to re-established contact with the different nationality groups. He made contact with the Polish community, the Czechs through Nelly Stefka and Arthur London, with the Italians Ferrara and Cavazini, with Coli a Yugoslavian, and with Albert Youdine, the intermediary for the Jewish communities.<sup>95</sup> Gronowski's aim was to restructure the leadership of the MOI and at the same time set up a secure network so that safe contact could be maintained with the different national groups. He recognised that security and secrecy were essential and as early as the summer of 1940 had introduced the idea of the leaders using an alias to maintain anonymity and which was to be used in all communications. Gronowski, known as Bruno, established a network in which he was responsible for Italian, Polish and Spanish resisters. Jacques Kaminski, known as Hervé, was responsible for the Jewish, Bulgarian and Armenians communities. Arthur London, known as Gérard was responsible for Czechoslovakians, Yugoslavians, Romanians and Hungarians. The French alias disguised their origins but at least nine different nationalities were represented in this organisation.<sup>96</sup> A second layer of contacts was introduced in which Betka Brikner liaised directly with Gronowski, Marysa Melchior with Kaminski and Nelly Stefka with Arthur London.<sup>97</sup> In 1940 rules for clandestine activity did not exist and were often written as the need arose but by

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<sup>94</sup> Ibid. 78.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid. 85.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid. 87.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid. 90.

the summer of 1940 Gronowski had built up a secure network composed of many Jewish and foreign nationalities. The strong ties between the French communist party and the communist MOI, through the partnership of Gronowski and Duclos, were maintained throughout the occupation. Tight security enabled this liaison to function, except for a short break, until the Liberation.<sup>98</sup>

The policy of the newly restructured MOI during the latter months of 1940 was not just to establish networks to resist the occupation in France, but also to set up networks of resistance in other countries of Eastern Europe. One of their tasks was to organise the return to their country of origin of as many militant communists as possible, who had been interned in camps in the south of France. The MOI and the PCF (French communist party), set up three modes of escape from the south, across the demarcation line to Paris. Of paramount importance was the freedom of Czech soldiers who were former members of the International Brigades and had joined the Czechoslovak Army in France. They were stationed in Agde and believed they were going to be interned again. With the help of their French officers, the Czech volunteers were officially demobbed and dispersed around Marseilles, Gardanne and Gémenos.<sup>99</sup> Their orders were to leave France and return to their country by whatever means, to continue the struggle against oppression there.<sup>100</sup> The communist underground were so well organised that they were able to set up secure escape routes very quickly. Once across the demarcation line and in Paris, Czechs were provided with false documents and identities by members of the communist party to escape detection by the French police.

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<sup>98</sup> Ibid. 89.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid. 96.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid. 97.

The first escape route was via the German Army Recruiting Office in Paris, where the only check they had was a medical. Once in Germany they were able to desert and get back to Czechoslovakia. Their task was to make contact with other communists and re-group to organise resistance. If their return to Czechoslovakia was impossible or unsuccessful they were to remain in France and organise resistance there. By the beginning of 1941 the majority of this group of Czechs had returned successfully to Czechoslovakia.<sup>101</sup> The second escape route was set up with the help of the Slovakian Embassy in Paris. After the incorporation of the Czech regions of Sudetenland, Moravia and Bohemia into Germany, Slovakia had swiftly declared independence, but was almost immediately allied with Germany. However, as an independent state, it had an embassy in Paris, where with the complicity of the Slovak Consul, Slovaks, Czechs, Hungarians, Romanians and Yugoslavs were all given Slovak papers which enabled them to escape detection and return to their own country to continue the fight there.<sup>102</sup> The third escape route used by the MOI was set up to free former Brigadists who were interned in the Camp de Vernet. German Army Recruiting Officers went directly to the camp to recruit former members of the International Brigade. Once the men had volunteered they were transported to Paris and once there were able to take advantage of their short stay and escape. With the help of the MOI, it is known that Aloik Neuer, Otto Hromadko, Stern, Bukacek and Klecan all successfully escaped from internment in this way.<sup>103</sup>

Humbert records in late December 1940 that according to Vildé there were over 12,000 armed men in Paris and that in addition, she knew of a group of former Spanish

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<sup>101</sup> Ibid. 97.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid. 98.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid. 98.

fighters, who were in hiding in Paris and experts in explosives, who could help train them.<sup>104</sup> These facts cannot be corroborated but with such large numbers of foreigners being brought to Paris from the south, including members of the RMVE, one third of which was Spanish, it is possible that such a group existed. Large numbers of foreigners arriving in Paris would have to be sheltered, while waiting for papers and transport. However Cobb disputes the facts recorded by Humbert.<sup>105</sup> Humbert also states that the group was asked to organise these 12,000 armed men into teams of ten. Although these particulars cannot be verified it is possible there is an element of truth in what she records and that these men were in transit from the south.

Although little reference has been made to the many German refugees who had found asylum in France during the 30s, many had refused to submit to Nazi ideology and in France were integrated into the German resistance.<sup>106</sup> The German resistance association was called 'Travail allemand' or sometimes 'Travail anti-allemand' or TA. As soon as it was formed hundreds joined.<sup>107</sup> In the summer of 1940 Toulouse had already become the centre for the German communist underground resistance movement and by the autumn of 1940 they had joined with the Paris communists to organise anti-Hitler propaganda within the ranks of the occupying soldiers in the north.<sup>108</sup> According to Bonté there is a section in the archives of The Institute of Marxism-Leninism in Berlin on the German resistance organisation TA. He states that it was created in 1940 at the beginning of the occupation and

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<sup>104</sup> Humbert, *Résistance, Memoirs of Occupied France*, 29.

<sup>105</sup> Cobb, *The Resistance*, 53.

<sup>106</sup> Florimond Bonté, *Les Antifascistes allemands dans la résistance française*, (Paris: Éditions sociales, 1969), 15.

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid.* 136.

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.* 137.

membership was open to any nationalities who spoke German. The TA had already established a German network in Toulouse in the summer of 1940.<sup>109</sup>

### **Communists Dominate Foreign Resistance**

Maurice Thorez asserts it was the communists who rapidly organised a response to the repressive authority of the German government of occupation and the Vichy regime.<sup>110</sup> Thorez was the leader of the French Communist Party, but went to Moscow after the party was banned in July 1939, where he remained throughout the occupation, leaving Duclos as his representative. That the communists organised early resistance to the occupation does seem to have been corroborated for example, through the work of the MOI, which was organising foreigners into the resistance in July 1940. Several members of Humbert's group were communists, although she herself was a left-wing intellectual. Cassou, who had flirted briefly with communism in the 1930s, was a left-wing anti-fascist and they collaborated with Vildé, a communist member of the Musée de l'Homme group. Further evidence emerges in Berlière and Liaigre who cite the case of the 27 hostages shot at Châteaubriant, in 1941, some of whom, like Guy Môquet had been arrested at the end of 1940 and most of whom were communists.<sup>111</sup> Claude Drouin, the grandson of a communist resister, related how his grandfather had carried out isolated acts of resistance from the beginning of occupation in June 1940 while working as a gendarme in Paris. The testimony of Danielle Debard identifies her parents as communist resisters, who successfully participated in the resistance in Lyon throughout the occupation.<sup>112</sup>

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<sup>109</sup> Ibid. 137.

<sup>110</sup> Ibid. 15.

<sup>111</sup> Berlière and Liaigre, *Le sang des communistes*, 14.

<sup>112</sup> Interview with Danielle Debard, Birmingham, July 2010.

## **Conclusion**

The evidence presented here has shown that, the period from September 1939 to the summer of 1940 proved to be the pivotal moment in the establishment of a foreign resistance, which would endure throughout the occupation. The investigation has revealed that the declaration of war by France produced a chain reaction, which began when thousands of men from many different nationalities volunteered to join the French army and which culminated in the organisation of some of these men into clandestine resistance in 1940. The research has shown that the thousands of foreign volunteers, who had been able to join the army, had been organised by the French military into regiments and units based on nationality. Following the capitulation of the French army with the invasion of German forces in the north, many foreigners were already in training camps in the south and many others had fled south ahead of the invading German army. It was the organisation of the foreigners into regiments based on nationality groupings by the French military and the fact that many were in the unoccupied south which aided the rapid response by the communist led MOI to organising these men into clandestine resistance. The MOI had created a secure pyramidal organisation which would prove to be not only a resilient organisation but an essential one for maintaining a growing foreign resistance network across France. The MOI was also instrumental in instructing many former International Brigadists, some of whom had been interned in 1939, on methods of escape to join the resistance.

The research in the following chapters will show that the MOI, with the support of the French communist party, would continue to function successfully and build on the founding networks and escape routes established in the summer of 1940. By this stage foreign resistance had been solidly established.

## **CHAPTER THREE 1941-1942**

### **THE NASCENT RESISTANCE TAKES SHAPE**

At the beginning of 1941, the success of the burgeoning foreign resistance has to be viewed against the backdrop of a French nation still reeling from the shock and the inertia which the uncertainty of occupation by a foreign power brings to the normal everyday functions of a society. It is within this parameter that the development of resistance in general will be explored. Firstly, to determine whether the momentum of foreign participation in resisting the occupation was sustained during 1941 and 1942 and secondly, to consider the outcome, if any, the increasingly successful surveillance by the Germans and Vichy had on sustaining the effectiveness of that foreign resistance. These two broad areas of enquiry raise several questions. Of general interest is the issue of why the French resistance was so small in comparison with the foreign response. Firstly, were there fundamental issues which contributed to and fashioned the general reticence on the part of the indigenous French, as distinct from foreigners residing in France, to resist the occupation? Did the Great War have a significant relevance in cementing attitudes to resistance? Secondly, what were the particular circumstances which enabled foreigners to organise a rapid response to occupation? Did the refugees from Alsace play a role within that resistance movement? Thirdly, is there evidence that the numbers of foreign resisters increased during these two years? Were there unique circumstances, of significance to foreigners, which enabled this expansion to take place in a large, occupied and divided country? Lastly, does the evidence support the fact that foreign resistance was sustained during 1941 and 1942?

## **Resistance is Established**

Although precise numbers are impossible to substantiate, personal diaries and accounts, some written at the time, have shown that by the beginning of 1941 foreigners were indeed active participants in resistance networks. As outlined in the previous chapter, it was initially the MOI, in July 1940, which was active in this process, working in co-operation with the French Communist Party. It will be seen that French nationals and German exiles would also become absorbed into that vast diverse army of volunteers. The majority of foreigners who responded, but not all, were either politically of the left or communist but united by a determination to stop the spread of Nazi doctrine and fascism which had enveloped Europe.

## **Resistance Divides France**

By 1941, in contrast with the general population in France, the MOI had established the vital command structures necessary to continue to organise and direct the numerous groups of foreign nationals to resist the occupation. Whereas many foreign recruits had some arms and combat experience, the majority of the French civilian population, with the obvious absence of many young men who were prisoners of war, had little or no experience of armed combat. It was therefore not unexpected that lacking a strong central leadership in the Hexagon, the French population lacked a cohesive body to form immediate, effective resistance. This had been particularly palpable in November 1940, when only six Toulon citizens had responded to a call by Henri Michel and a group of socialists to appear at the war memorial on 11<sup>th</sup> November.<sup>113</sup> This epitomised the malaise of a nation which had been called upon by de Gaulle to resist, but without being told how. Even a year later, the

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<sup>113</sup> Julian Jackson, *France the Dark Years 1940-1944*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 440.

publications of the different movements still seemed to have no clear objective for their readers. In November 1941 the movement *Liberation-Nord* was still urging its readers to, “‘carry out yourself the struggle and to deliver the *patrie* from an invader who is pillaging it”, but without explaining how’ [sic].<sup>114</sup> After 18 months of occupation, publications such as *La France continue*, *Les Petites Ailes de France*, *Valmy* and *Liberté* were still describing the pillage of France as though the citizens had not yet realised what was happening.<sup>115</sup> In 1941 French resistance was still characterised as an individual moral stance.<sup>116</sup> This was exemplified during an interview conducted with a former Gaullist resister, 94 year old André Sornette.<sup>117</sup> He described how he and his friends simply scrawled the V for victory sign on walls and stood still on footpaths so that the “Boche” had to go round them.<sup>118</sup> The historian Henri Drouot kept a diary of life in Dijon under occupation. He purports not to have documented any evidence of resistance until the summer of 1942, although he records finding the occasional communist leaflet.<sup>119</sup> For a few individuals, however, action was a more productive response than the printed word. For example, Jackson cites the case of Guillan de Bénouville, who, before joining the movement ‘Combat’, joined a network, because, “‘to preach the truth that I already knew,’ was less important than, ‘to begin fighting for it.’”<sup>120</sup>

Many lives were not just disrupted by lines of demarcation, collaboration and collaborators, people were also living increasingly isolated amidst political and religious

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<sup>114</sup> Cited in: Jackson, *France the Dark Years*, 441.

<sup>115</sup> Daniel Cordier, *Alias Caracalla* (Paris:Éditions Gallimard, 2009), 312.

<sup>116</sup> Jackson, *France the Dark Years*, 441.

<sup>117</sup> Interview conducted with Monsieur André Sornette, Vaujourns, January 2013.

<sup>118</sup> The term, Boche, was used throughout the interview, by Monsieur Sornette, when referring to soldiers of the occupation army.

<sup>119</sup> Jackson, *France the Dark Years*, 439.

<sup>120</sup> *Ibid.* 440.

divisions and mistrust. This is highlighted in a testimony of a German anti-fascist resister from Alsace who, with the help of members of the French resistance, escaped from Lyon and found refuge near to the village of Dieulefit. He commented on the extreme divisions which existed between the Catholics and Protestants in the locality, which he said was ‘an immense obstacle when trying to persuade the locals to resist’ and also on the deep mistrust villagers had of people from the towns and cities which he claimed, ‘made encouraging locals to join the resistance difficult’.<sup>121</sup>

Many families were riven with religious and moral divisions, which were often compounded by the separation imposed by the demarcation lines. This is exemplified by the testimony given by Claude Drouin.<sup>122</sup> His testimony brings to the fore how experiences of the First World War impacted on decisions taken during the Occupation. His grandfather Paul Drouin, (see chapter one), had survived the random selection of mutineers chosen by Pétain to be shot as traitors, but consequently remained vehemently anti-Pétainist throughout the occupation. Because of the social deprivations he had witnessed following the treaty of 1919 he had become a staunch communist. In 1941, as a gendarme in Paris, but not knowing who to trust, he carried out isolated acts of resistance. In complete contrast, Drouin’s maternal grandfather was a farmer living 10 miles south of the demarcation line at Chalon in the Saône and Loire region. He was a fervent Catholic, a Pétainist, staunchly anti-communist and anti-resistance. He argued that ‘their futile acts of resistance’ had achieved nothing throughout the occupation, except ‘to wreak brutal reprisals on innocent

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<sup>121</sup> Gaston Laroche, Colonel F.T.P.F. Boris Matline, *On les nommait des étrangers (les immigrés dans la résistance)* (Paris: Les Éditeurs Français Réunis, 1965), 339.

<sup>122</sup> Interview with Claude Drouin, Loughborough, July, 2011.

civilians'.<sup>123</sup> Drouin's Pétainist grandfather maintained 'he had never ever seen a German soldier during the whole of the period of occupation', whereas his communist grandfather was emphatic that during the time he lived and worked in Paris, 'the Germans and the Gestapo were everywhere and that, aided by informers, they were in absolute and total control'. Their attitudes to resistance and their individual perceptions of the occupation, identifies the general divergence of public opinion at opposite ends of the political and religious spectrum.<sup>124</sup>

This testimony strips away the veil of historical generalities and exposes the reality of life under the constraints of occupation. These experiences were shared by thousands of other families across France. For example, for those families living in Confolens the demarcation line dissected the town and disrupted daily life for four years. In 1941 individuals and families were neither united behind a common political incentive, nor behind a common enemy and few heeded the call to resist. The few, who had felt compelled to resist in France were left without the leadership to provide a cohesive political and moral framework within which resistance could function. This was in stark contrast to the comparative ease with which many foreigners had been organised by the MOI, in conjunction with the communist party, into well co-ordinated urban resistance groups.

Although the command structures which had been established by the MOI were fundamental to the successful organisation of foreign resistance networks, four other factors appear to have played a significant role. Firstly, many anti-fascists, including exiled leaders and members of the communist parties from occupied Europe, together with former members of the International Brigades, who had fought in Spain, were in hiding in the south

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<sup>123</sup> Ibid.

<sup>124</sup> Ibid.

of France. Secondly, large, well defined national groups remained together, in the relative safety of the non-occupied zone, facilitating their organisation by the MOI. Some were soldiers in the foreign regiments formed in France during 1939 and 1940, yet others were compatriots, interned in camps. Thirdly, there were Jewish refugees, of different nationalities, many of whom were communist, but who were already familiar with the outcomes of the morally degenerate Nazi ideology. All were united by a pervasive all consuming hatred of Nazi Germany, with many having a common resolve to resist. The MOI would have targeted foreign communists who would then have been amongst the first to be organised into networks. Lastly, hundreds of Czechs and Slovaks, Polish and British soldiers were amongst the remnants of the allied armies who had successfully evaded the advancing German forces but, as they had been unable to embark from the Atlantic ports before Pétain ordered all evacuation to stop, were stranded in France. Some of these soldiers decided to stay to organise resistance.

### **Mobilisation of Czech and Slovakian Resistance**

Boris Mateline, pseudonym Gaston Laroche details the rapid organisation of the Czech and Slovak army following the capitulation of France in 1940.<sup>125</sup> Two events propelled the Czechs to act swiftly. Firstly the Czech army, which was still garrisoned in Agde, suspected it was going to be interned by the Vichy Government. Secondly, not all the Czech units which had been fighting the German advance in the north managed to escape to England and soldiers who were left behind were taken prisoner and deported to Germany. This propelled the Czech army to ensure the protection of all Czech and Slovak immigrants in France from German aggression and to prepare an active campaign against the German

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<sup>125</sup> Pseudonym verified in Bolle, *Grenoble et le Vercors*, 140.

occupiers. To co-ordinate these two initiatives the Czech army established a number of committees in different regions of France and although they were poorly equipped and communication between them was almost impossible, they had nevertheless, in early 1941, the embryonic organisation of a Czech and Slovak resistance.<sup>126</sup> At the same time they created the 'Conseil National Tchecoslovaque', or CNT, which was responsible for the co-ordination of all Czechoslovakian resistance, in every Czechoslovakian community and included political and moral resistance, as well as armed combat.<sup>127</sup> The CNT organised false identity papers, safe houses and work for all Czechs and Slovaks who were threatened with deportation. Its other function was to persuade Czech and Slovakian soldiers to defect from the Wehrmacht but as most conscripts did not know the country, could not speak French and had no French friends to help them, this proved to be very difficult to accomplish. However, the overwhelming fear for most of the soldiers was the threat of reprisals which would be carried out against their families, which prevented the soldiers deserting.<sup>128</sup> As the primary objective of the CNT was to attack the occupying army, it was intent on organising a vast secret army of fighters. The first militia group was established in Paris in 1941 and was called the 'Force Tchecoslovaque Partisane' or the FTP (not to be confused with the Francs-Tireurs Partisans or FTP). This group would be one of the most active in Paris. One member of this group was Alois Neuuer, a former political representative for the Czechoslovakians in the International Brigades who had also initiated the idea of

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<sup>126</sup> Laroche, Colonel FTPF Boris Matline, *On les nommait des étrangers (les immigrés dans la résistance)* (Paris: Les Éditeurs Français Réunis, 1965), 316.

<sup>127</sup> Ibid. 317.

<sup>128</sup> Ibid 317.

organising all immigrant Czech and Slovakian communities into groups to facilitate their organisation into resistance.<sup>129</sup>

Laroche includes the testimony of one Czech volunteer, known only by his pseudonym Enrique, which confirms the liaison which had been established between the Czech army in the south and the MOI in Paris. Enrique describes how, after being demobbed from the 4<sup>th</sup> artillery battery, 'La Nouvelle Hérault', he had been instructed to make his way to Paris in early 1941, where he joined the 'Organisation Spéciale' of the 'Force Tchèque Partisane Française' or OSFTPF. This unit had been created in September 1940 by the MOI/FTPF and was led by Bukacer. Enrique details the acts of sabotage he carried out in Paris during 1941 and 1942, with Bukacer and Zavodsky.<sup>130</sup>

The following testimony, also published in Laroche, confirms that former members of the International Brigades had joined the army and verifies the rapid response of foreigners to the threat posed by the advancing German army. It further corroborates Enrique's testimony that the command structures established by the MOI in Paris were functioning in 1940. Holdos Ladislav was a soldier in the Czechoslovakian First Artillery Regiment stationed at Sigean Lac near Agde. Before the regiment was disbanded Ladislav had organised 15 soldiers to harry the German advance from a base in the Pyrenees.<sup>131</sup> After the demarcation line had been installed this was no longer a viable scheme and his group made their way to Marseille where Ladislav received orders from his MOI leader Arthur London (see chapter two) to set up an escape route to enable his group to make their way to Paris. His group arrived there in February 1941 where he was assigned to liberating Czechoslovakian,

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<sup>129</sup> Ibid 317.

<sup>130</sup> Ibid. 322.

<sup>131</sup> Ibid. 323.

Romanian and Polish political detainees from their convoys, as they were being driven through Paris en route to concentration camps in the east. During the latter part of 1942 Ladislav was appointed as Arthur London's deputy when he then became responsible for recruiting members for the FTP and the Travail Allemand.<sup>132</sup>

These accounts confirm that at the beginning of 1941 a substantial Czech and Slovakian resistance was operational in Paris under the command of the MOI and its command structures had enabled communication to take place between Paris and groups in the south. Ladislav's story also establishes that a secure escape route had operated across the demarcation line, which enabled at least 16 men to travel from Marseille to occupied Paris. It cannot be confirmed if this was part of the same escape route as that mentioned by Humbert.

### **The Contribution of the Polish Community to Resistance**

After the German invasion of Poland, as many as 85,000 Polish troops had succeeded in reaching France, where they reformed as the Polish Army.<sup>133</sup> However, in the chaos ahead of the advancing German army, many Polish units were amongst those unable to embark from the Atlantic ports for England and were stranded in France. The reason for this is clear from Stan Scislawski's account, written for the BBC, in which he says the queue of troops waiting to embark at St Nazaire, on 16<sup>th</sup> July, was 5 miles long.<sup>134</sup>

Laroche discusses the two main Polish resistance organisations which had been created, again highlighting the importance of the MOI within its organisation. The most important of the two in 1941 was the MOI/FTP in which the Polish MOI detachments were

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<sup>132</sup> Ibid. 324.

<sup>133</sup> [http://guer-coetquidan.pagesperso-orange.fr/bisto/coet/hist\\_coe.html](http://guer-coetquidan.pagesperso-orange.fr/bisto/coet/hist_coe.html) Accessed, December 2012.

<sup>134</sup> <http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/ww2peopleswar> Accessed, December 2012.

integrated with those of the 'Francs-Tireurs et Partisans', but were organised by the central command of the MOI. The other group was known as POWN, which means, 'Polish Organisation for the Struggle for Independence', which was created especially to prepare for the liberation of Poland. At the core of its command structure were Polish army officers, who went into hiding and who did not go into combat until after 6<sup>th</sup> June 1944.

Like many children of former resisters, when Aude Yung-de-Prévaux discovered that her French father and Polish mother had lost their lives in the resistance, she set out to discover why. The results of her quest are described in her book, *Un amour dans la tempête de l'histoire*, in which she details some of the Polish resistance. One example she describes is that run by two Polish army intelligence officers Vincent Zarembski and Rygor Slowikowski, who had been stranded in the south west of France. They began by joining a group which had been organised to escort stranded military personnel across the Pyrenees into Spain and then they set up a Polish intelligence network in Marseille which they called 'Ekspozytura-France'.<sup>135</sup> This network continued to operate until the end of 1942.<sup>136</sup> The group 'Ekspozytura-France' was different to POWN as it was led by Polish resisters who had experience of working clandestinely in Poland but in which the majority of the group were French.<sup>137</sup> Another intelligence network called F2 was set up in Nice by Thadée Jekiel and Léon Sliwinski, which Yung-de-Prévaux's parents joined.

By the end of 1941, many other Polish groups had been established. The first Polish FTP group which was composed primarily of miners had been established in Lens, in the Nord Pas-de-Calais region. By the end of 1941 other groups had been established in the

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<sup>135</sup> Aude Yung-de-Prévaux, *Un amour dans la tempête de l'histoire* (Paris : Éditions du Félin, 1998 ; Le Félin Poche, 2004), 157.

<sup>136</sup> Ibid. 158.

<sup>137</sup> Ibid. 159.

towns of Arras and Béthune. There were groups operating in Ostricourt, Libercourt, Harnes, Fouquiers, Sallaumines and Noyelles as well as a group near Aubigny which was led by Joseph Szymczak, a former Brigadist.<sup>138</sup> These groups were assigned to attacking the railways and generating stations and one attack on the railway in Lille in 1942 was recorded as being very successful.<sup>139</sup>

In 1942 one group of Polish and Russian prisoners of war, who were working in villages in Lorraine, established a resistance group. Another group which had been given the name 'Stalingrad', had been set up by a group of miners working in Piennes and Loison-de-Boulogny and they had a base in the forest of Sennon. These groups would later be reinforced by Polish miners from the north of France.<sup>140</sup> The group 'Stalingrad' was responsible for burning any farms in the region which had been taken over by German settlers.<sup>141</sup> The activities of the group 'Stalingrad' does denote that the policy of the resettlement of German farmers was taking place in occupied territory other than in Eastern Europe. In 1942, fifteen members of a Polish group had formed near Montceau-les-Mines, in the Saône and Loire region, and were operating in the area of Buxy Autun.<sup>142</sup>

By the end of 1942 Polish and French resistance was well established and active in many regions. Undoubtedly, the successful and rapid organisation of resistance in the North east was due, in no small measure, to the experiences endured by the population, particularly that of the women and children during the occupation of this region by Germany during the Great War.

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<sup>138</sup> Laroche, *On les nommait des étrangers*, 170.

<sup>139</sup> Ibid. 171.

<sup>140</sup> Ibid 172.

<sup>141</sup> Ibid 173.

<sup>142</sup> Ibid 173.

## Multinational Resistance

Between 1940 and 1942 Toulouse became the final refuge for many of the predominantly Eastern European Jews, who were endeavouring to escape the persecution and roundups in the occupied zone.<sup>143</sup> Living in the surrounding areas were Italian farmers and Polish miners, who had arrived as economic migrants in the 1920s and who lived in scattered communities across the countryside. Many Polish miners were living in places such as Tarn, Carmaux, Blaye-les-mines, Saint-Benoit, Albi and Cagnac-les-Mines and many volunteers from these communities would later play their part in resistance.<sup>144</sup>

Toulouse was already an important centre for the German communist underground movement. The group FTP-MOI, known as the 35<sup>th</sup> Brigade, was already functioning in the city in 1941.<sup>145</sup> Many nationalities could lay claim to the 35<sup>th</sup> Brigade because of the different nationalities involved. However, its original founder and leader was Mendel (or Marcel, in France) Langer, a Polish Jew, a communist and a former Captain in the 35<sup>th</sup> International Brigade in Spain.<sup>146</sup> Langer, together with nine other Jewish, Polish, Romanian, Hungarian and Spanish combatants of the International Brigade, Jacob Insel, Joseph Wachspress, Abraham Mittelman, Zeff Gottesman, José Linares-Diaz, Wladislaw Hamerlak, Stefan Barsony, Luis Fernandez and Schimmel Gold, formed the core of the original group. By the end of 1942, in spite of their losses, their numbers had risen to 75 members, indicating that during 1941 and 1942 the group had probably expanded beyond that

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<sup>143</sup> Marc Brafman, *Les origines, les motivations, l'action et les destins des combattants juifs (parmi d'autres immigrés) de la 35e Brigade FTP-MOI de Marcel Langer, Toulouse 1942-1944*, 82.

<sup>144</sup> Ibid 81.

<sup>145</sup> Bonté, *Les Antifascistes allemands dans la résistance française*, 137.

<sup>146</sup> Brafman, *Les origines, les motivations, l'action et les destins des combattants juifs*, 80.

number.<sup>147</sup> As with the Czech resistance, Langer had initially deployed individuals to encourage soldiers who were serving in the army of occupation to desert. In April 1941 a German by the name of Otto Niebergall had been chosen to organise this type of resistance in France, Belgium and Luxembourg but he needed many volunteers to target all the German-speaking French, Austrian, Czechoslovakian and Polish soldiers.<sup>148</sup> However, the passive resistance carried out by the 35<sup>th</sup> Brigade changed radically when Wladislaw Hamerlak, a former member of the International Brigades, organised groups of Polish miners to sabotage the mines and steal explosives for the Brigade to use in Toulouse.<sup>149</sup>

The armed communist resistance group MOI/FTP, Compagnie Marat, operated in Marseille and the region around the mouth of the Rhône. The name of the group was chosen by the founder members of the group as they considered themselves to be revolutionaries like Jean-Paul Marat. This group was the equivalent of the armed Parisian group, 'Manouchian', whose members became known after their arrest in 1943.<sup>150</sup> Two other armed FTP/MOI groups were operational. The 'Compagnie Carmagnole' operated in Lyon and the battalion 'Liberté', made up of 40% Italians, 30% Polish and other nationalities and 30% French which operated in Grenoble.<sup>151</sup> The existence of the various groups illustrates that urban foreign resistance had been established in all regions of France.

### **German resistance**

Laroche establishes, through individual testimonies, some provided by extracts taken from a publication *Union dans la lutte*, produced by 'Allemagne libre' in Toulouse, that from

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<sup>147</sup> Laroche, *On les nommait des étrangers*, 175.

<sup>148</sup> Bonté, *Les Antifascistes allemands dans la résistance française*, 137.

<sup>149</sup> Brafman, *Les origines, les motivations, l'action et les destins des combattants juifs*, 81.

<sup>150</sup> Reply from: <http://www.groupemarat.com/>. Accessed, September 2012.

<sup>151</sup> Bolle, *Grenoble et le Vercors*, 133,134.

1943, many Germans played an increasingly important role in the resistance.<sup>152</sup> The testimony of an Alsatian, known only as ER (and already referred to in this chapter), confirms that an anti-fascist German resistance group was operating at the beginning of 1942. He relates how a training camp had been established near the village of Dieulefit and that numbers in the camp could vary from as few as five to as many as 20 because as soon as their basic training was complete the recruits were dispersed to reinforce other groups.

As with other nationalities, there was a vigorous attempt to establish German resistance. 'Travail Allemand', or TA, had been set up and by 1941 many Germans and Austrians had also enrolled in 'Travail anti-allemand' a part of the 'Front national de libération' or FNL. Their role was to help wherever a knowledge of the German language was essential such as in writing and distributing propaganda leaflets, carrying out intelligence reconnaissance and making direct contact with German soldiers.<sup>153</sup> There were three such groups in Paris. One group consisted of three young German radio operators who, as well as distributing leaflets for the TA, smuggled out guns and ammunition for the resistance. Another group of eighteen ground staff in the German Air Force was directed by a Czechoslovakian.<sup>154</sup> The third group was composed of 16 men who worked in a parts depot and who sabotaged supply by replacing parts which had been ordered with others. In addition to these groups there were also links with individuals who worked for the German

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<sup>152</sup> Laroche, *On les nommait des étrangers*, 343.

<sup>153</sup> *Ibid.* 345.

<sup>154</sup> *Ibid.* 346.

administration in Paris.<sup>155</sup> Otto Khune is probably one of the best known German resisters who formed the group 'Bonnecombe' in Lozere, in the spring of 1942.<sup>156</sup>

### **A German Soldier's Resolve to Resist**

An individual's story which illustrates the lengths many German soldiers went to in helping the French to resist the occupation. Albert Hauser was arrested when he was discovered helping the French resistance in Dijon.<sup>157</sup> Several references to events during his story suggest that his arrest and eventual escape, to join the resistance, happened at some time between 1940 and 1942. His story demonstrates the personal dangers that were faced by resisters and highlights the fact that many French people participated on the fringes of resistance, if not in the resistance itself. Resistance removed social barriers as foreigners and French resisted side by side.<sup>158</sup>

After his arrest, Hauser and his French contact were sent to Borgermoor penal camp in Germany. Hauser spent nine months of hard labour at Borgermoor and although suffering from starvation and malnutrition, he and another German prisoner, Karl, were sent to work as slave labourers in the underground caverns being excavated near Calais, for the launch of the V2 rockets. They managed to escape during an air raid but with their very distinctive shaven heads and their prison clothing their freedom would not have lasted long. They were helped by a poor French protestant woman who gave them some of her husband's clothing and instructed them to hide by day and to eat only in Catholic presbyteries. During a visit to

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<sup>155</sup> Ibid. 347.

<sup>156</sup> <http://memoires-France-Allemagne-docs.blogspot.co.uk/2008/03/les-trangers-dans-la-rsistance-francaise.html> Accessed December 2012.

<sup>157</sup> Albert Hauser, *la croisée des chemins. Document*, ARC 1000-No. 31. Institut de l'Histoire du temps présent, Paris.

<sup>158</sup> Jackson, *France the Dark Years 1940-1944*, 478.

a dentist he learned of the Dieppe landings which had taken place that day (19<sup>th</sup> August 1942). Eventually the two men arrived in the department of the Yonne, where they stayed with the local resistance leader, l'Abbé Edmond Henri. By day the resisters hid in the forest and the farmers provided them with food and passed messages for them, but at night the village became a hive of activity. After the liberation of the Midi, Hauser and Karl were sent to a local maquis group led by a Spaniard with the pseudonym of Castagne. As will be seen in chapter four, Hauser's resistance continued but, his story confirms the cooperation which existed between French and foreigners. In this case, Castagne was in all probability a former Brigadist.

### **Austrian Resistance**

In October 1942 the 'Austrian Nation Front' or FNA was formed by a group of 40 people living in the extreme south of Austria. The FNA became the central organisation for Austrian resistance in France.<sup>159</sup> The work of the FNA was identical to that of the TA. They wrote leaflets which were aimed especially at the Austrian soldiers in the German Army and tried to persuade Austrian soldiers to form resistance groups in their units. There is evidence that this type of action was successful as one Austrian alpine regiment stationed at Versailles protested about conditions and refused to continue to serve with the Wehrmacht. The unit was disbanded and the soldiers were quickly dispatched to other regiments, including some who were sent to the Front in Tunisia where they then deserted to the Allies. In another example, thirty men of an Austrian intelligence company stationed at Saint-Germain-en-Laye had joined the 'Front autrichien de la Liberté nationale' or FLAN. They listened to the radio broadcasts by the Allies and then distributed leaflets carrying the full transcript of the

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<sup>159</sup> Laroche, *On les nommait des étrangers*, 354.

broadcasts. Yet another group of airmen stationed on the aerodrome at Villacoublay sabotaged engines and materials and stole arms and munitions for the resistance.<sup>160</sup> In Bordeaux, Austrian soldiers who were part of a company of cyclists together with an infantry regiment are recorded as having distributed leaflets and responsible for writing slogans on walls such as, 'Vive le Front Autrichien de Liberté Nationale! A bas Hitler!' These Austrian soldiers eventually mutinied and many were arrested by the Gestapo and deported to the Eastern Front. However the Russians reported three weeks later that the Austrians were distributing FNA leaflets amongst the Russian soldiers.<sup>161</sup>

The examples given here illustrate the importance of FLAN in the growth of Austrian resistance and the success of the 'Front autrichien de la Liberté nationale' within the Austrian ranks of the German Army.

### **Did foreign resistance remain effective?**

Research suggests that whereas the occupation of France strengthened the ties of foreign communities and their willingness to resist, it served only to deepen and widen the gulf which already existed between the protagonists of opposing political and religious ideology within French communities. Indeed a climate of mistrust emerged and so, devoid of a single unifying ethos, the nation failed to make a radical response to the occupation. The small and fragmented French resistance, which was established, seems to be in stark contrast to that created by the vast number of refugees in France, who volunteered to resist.

However other factors had also played a part in producing these differing responses to occupation. Of importance was the Great War, the influence and outcomes of which had spanned the years from 1919 to 1940. It had already played its part, not only in destabilising

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<sup>160</sup> Ibid. 356.

<sup>161</sup> Ibid 357.

French society prior to the occupation of 1940 but also in destabilising Europe; as evidenced by the large European refugee population in France in 1940. Testimonies reveal that although individual experiences of the Great War or its outcomes continued to play a part in influencing individual attitudes to resistance, such as the rapid response by the people of the North east, other factors had also been significant in the establishment of foreign resistance organisations and resistance groups, which were operational during 1941 and 1942.

Of importance in their organisation was that many foreigners, who of necessity had been forced to flee from Nazi and Fascist persecution, were already united by a common bond, such as nationality, communism, Judaism or statelessness. Many resistance volunteers originated from groups with fraternal ties, such as from the ranks of the French army, as former combatants in the International Brigades in Spain, or as prisoners in internment camps, or even as in some cases, ethnic conscripts in the German army. Many economic immigrants, who had arrived in the 1920s, were already living and working in well-defined communities in the rural areas of the unoccupied south and so were more easily organised into resistance while minimising the threat of denunciation. In addition many refugees had also joined the exodus from the north to escape the German invasion and occupation and had remained in communities in the cities in the unoccupied south and were organising resistance at this time. Testimony also indicates that German refugees from Alsace, who had fled to the south, were participating in resistance.

The evidence presented suggests that for a variety of reasons the different nationalities, had establish well-co-ordinated resistance organisations, which enabled them to sustain that resistance during 1941 and 1942. The examples given, which have outlined the work of the several national resistance groups, indicate that there was no shortage of

volunteers to make up groups and to take the place of those killed or captured in combat. This was especially evident with the recorded increase in the numbers joining the 35<sup>th</sup> Brigade. A point to consider here is the fact that French civilians were without the support of their younger experienced soldiers, as their army had been taken prisoner and deported. In contrast former combatants of the International Brigades and many of the volunteers who had joined the French army were skilled, if not experienced, combatants.

Without doubt, individual testimony indicates that the chain of command, which had been set up by the MOI in Paris, played a crucial role in enabling foreign resistance groups to function and for resistance to be sustained across France. The evidence suggests that volunteers were undeterred by the losses incurred by attacks against their groups by the Vichy and German forces and that foreign resistance had flourished during 1941 and 1942.

## **CHAPTER FOUR 1943-1944**

### **THE RESOLVE AND RESILIENCE OF RESISTERS**

From 1943 onwards, with the active collaboration of the Vichy government and Germany, the hunt for and increased surveillance of members of the resistance in the south was intensified. However, even in the face of this growing threat, evidence suggests that individuals still demonstrated the resolve and resilience to continue, even though it was still very much within an indeterminate time frame - the end of German occupation was not in sight.

Even though it has been shown that foreign resistance had grown and had functioned independently during 1941 and 1942, it was, nevertheless, the case that it was at times dependent on French support. In order to investigate if these two facts remained true during 1943 and 1944, it is necessary to investigate whether foreign resistance did indeed continue to prosper. If this is shown to be the case, did changing circumstances influence the modifications foreigners made to the style and the dynamic of their resistance and to what degree was French support implicit in this organisation?

In order to answer this, five questions will form the basis of this discussion. Firstly, what were the consequences for the organisation and growth of foreign resistance of the introduction of the STO by the German government and the French scheme to bring about a co-ordinated and united resistance under the control of the CNR? Secondly, how successful were the organisations, which had been put in place by foreign national groups to co-ordinate resistance, in enabling resistance to grow? Thirdly, did desertions from the German army in 1943, but more particularly in 1944, bring about a surge in the number of foreign resisters? Fourthly, does the evidence suggest that there was a corresponding increase in

the numbers of French resisters? Lastly, can the resistance uprising, after the allied landings in Normandy on the 6<sup>th</sup> June, be judged as a truly spontaneous event and to what extent were foreigners a part of this?

### **Developments in the Organisation of Resistance**

Although the beginning of 1943 was a turning point for the resistance, it was still very much a minority occupation. Cordier refers to a communiqué sent to London by Moulin at the beginning of 1943, in which Moulin wrote, 'La Résistance est ultraminoritaire in France'.<sup>162</sup> After the introduction of 'le service du travail obligatoire' or STO on 16<sup>th</sup> February 1943, hundreds of young men fled into the mountains of Savoie, Isère and Puy-de-Dôme to escape deportation. A few joined groups of foreigners already in hiding, including Spanish refugees and antifascist refugees from Eastern Europe, but these were not resistance groups.<sup>163</sup> Although Jackson states that the introduction of the STO accelerated the growth of resistance, this was not the reality at the beginning of 1943.<sup>164</sup> It is probable that the resistance saw the defections as an opportunity to increase numbers, but analysts have estimated that only 10% of all STO evaders actually joined the maquis.<sup>165</sup>

However, the STO evasion would transform resistance tactics. The possibility of detection and capture, for individuals already in hiding, increased with the continued arrival of evaders. The ability to redeploy rapidly to avoid capture was a method used increasingly effectively by these small groups of foreigners. The leaders of the FTP/MOI recognised the potential that rural locations afforded resisters. Rural groups made use of the flexibility that rapid redeployment provided to engage in a more effective resistance. The added security

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<sup>162</sup> Cordier, *Alias Caracalla*, 752.

<sup>163</sup> Jackson, *France the Dark Years 1940-1944*, 484

<sup>164</sup> Ibid. 480.

<sup>165</sup> Cordier, *Alias Caracalla*, 828.

provided an effective antidote to the increasingly successful surveillance and capture of urban resisters and the order was given for the FT groups to relocate. In May 1943 two groups of maquis, 'Groupe de la République tchécoslovaque' and Groupe Édouard Benès had already been established in the region of the Pyrenees.<sup>166</sup> During June and July, other groups of FTP/MOI continued moving out of the towns and cities, leaving behind small skeleton groups to continue operations as before.<sup>167</sup> An apparent surge in resistance numbers was due to the relocation of existing groups and a change of combat strategy. As Kedward writes, 'in January 1943 the maquis did not exist but by June it was everywhere'.<sup>168</sup> To support this change in strategy the southern resistance movements set up the 'National Maquis Service' or SNM.<sup>169</sup>

Another development first proposed in January 1943 was to set up a stronghold in the Vercors.<sup>170</sup> Many antifascist Italians, Czechs and Romanians would eventually become part of the Vercors resistance.<sup>171</sup> However, although some progress had been made by the beginning of June, the commander of the Vercors maquis had been compromised and all work and communication ceased for a time, delaying progress.<sup>172</sup>

With their differing ideologies and strategies the movements of the north and south had been left more or less to their own devices during the previous two years.<sup>173</sup> The movements 'Combat', 'Libération' and 'Francs-Tireurs' were fierce rivals and as a consequence there were countless, uncoordinated groups of resisters operating all over

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<sup>166</sup> Laroche, *On les nommait des étrangers*, 318.

<sup>167</sup> Ibid. 176.

<sup>168</sup> H.R.Kedward, *In Search of the Maquis, Rural Resistance in Southern France 1942-1944* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2003), 30.

<sup>169</sup> Jackson, *France the Dark Years*, 453.

<sup>170</sup> Cordier, *Alias Caracalla*, 749.

<sup>171</sup> Kedward, *In Search of the Maquis*, 33.

<sup>172</sup> Cordier, *Alias Caracalla*, 1069.

<sup>173</sup> Ibid. 468.

France.<sup>174</sup> It is generally agreed that an attempted armed uprising at this time would have been futile as there were so few resisters in June 1943.<sup>175</sup> Cordier as well suggests that non-combative movements were incapable of mounting any guerrilla action.<sup>176</sup> Communication between individuals was laboriously slow as information was, of necessity, carried at great risk by individual couriers. It took days to set up meetings, even between individuals living in the same town and resisters were left in danger behind almost impenetrable walls of security.<sup>177</sup> France was still a divided nation and attitudes of many people towards resisters had not changed radically. René Terrisse reinforces this point in his account of the politics and resistance in Bordeaux. Terrisse has researched the resistance in an effort to discover why his father, who had been a member of the resistance network 'Gallia', was denounced and deported to Hersbruck in Germany, where he died. In just one example, Terrisse notes that by the time of the Liberation, two men had between them denounced over 100 resisters in Bordeaux and were ultimately responsible for the deaths of many of those arrested.<sup>178</sup> Cordier notes that the number of resisters arrested has been confirmed as 100,000 out of 300,000. These figures illustrate the magnitude of the threat of arrest, the fragility of the resistance networks and the verification of how few resisters there actually were.<sup>179</sup>

At the beginning of 1943, with the whole of France now under occupation, Jean Moulin, who had arrived in France in 1942, was still endeavouring to persuade the several resistance movements of the north and the south to unite under the umbrella of a

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<sup>174</sup> Jackson, *France the Dark Years*, 470.

<sup>175</sup> Cordier, *Alias Caracalla*, 1111.

<sup>176</sup> *Ibid.* 657.

<sup>177</sup> *Ibid.* 557.

<sup>178</sup> René Terrisse, *Bordeaux 1940-1944*, (Éditions Perrin, 1993), 219-220.

<sup>179</sup> Cordier, *Alias Caracalla*, 455.

'Resistance Council'. According to Cordier, "Après la lune de miel en 1942, les chefs des deux zones s'opposèrent à Moulin en 1943 à cause de sa fidélité au général de Gaulle, dont il appliquait strictement la politique. Ce fut le coeur du conflit."<sup>180</sup> In the north Moulin was seen as a man of the past and in the south a man of De Gaulle.<sup>181</sup> It becomes clear in 1943, that the fragmented French Resistance still lacked the dynamic force that amalgamation and a united strategy would bring to opposing both the occupiers and Vichy.<sup>182</sup> The 'Conseil National de la Résistance', or CNR, which met for the first time in Paris on 27<sup>th</sup> May 1943, failed in its objective and only represented a quarter of all resistance.<sup>183</sup> It appears little progress had been made, as even in June there was little or no trust between the individual movements.<sup>184</sup> Hauser writes that in the summer of 1944, at a crucial stage in the liberation of France, the leaders of the resistance groups operating in the vicinity of Auxerre could not agree on tactics and were clearly operating as disparate groups.<sup>185</sup> Terrisse details the confusion which reigned amongst those resistance groups which were still operational in the area of Bordeaux in May and the beginning of June 1944. He writes that at this critical time, groups did not know who did what, or who was in command, a situation compounded somewhat by the animosity directed towards the non-French leader Roger Landes of the SOE.<sup>186</sup>

However what does emerge in May 1943 is that a small, fragmented French resistance exists, purportedly under the umbrella of the CNR, but in which there was no obvious representation of, or recognition of, the foreign resistance movements within its

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<sup>180</sup> Ibid. 416.

<sup>181</sup> Ibid. 1061.

<sup>182</sup> Jackson, *France the Dark Years*, 451.

<sup>183</sup> Cordier, *Alias Caracalla*, 1012.

<sup>184</sup> Jackson, *France the Dark Years*, 456.

<sup>185</sup> Hauser, *A la croisée des chemins*.

<sup>186</sup> Terrisse, *Bordeaux, 1940-1944*, 270.

structure. Nevertheless, it was within this very tenuous and fractious system that foreigners continued to resist.

### **Foreigners and the Organisation of Resistance**

In spite of the absence of foreign representation on the CNR, national groups had already established six resistance movements in France to co-ordinate foreign resistance. One Polish movement was integrated with the FTP, but organised by the Polish central command of the MOI. The other movement, POWN, was preparing for the eventual liberation of Poland, after the liberation of France. The movements had their own newspaper, *l'Indépendance*.<sup>187</sup> The two anti-fascist, anti-Nazi German movements which had been set up were: 'Travail anti-allemand', which was part of the 'National Liberation Front' or FNL and 'Comité Allemagne libre pour l'Ouest', or CALPO.<sup>188</sup> This movement was designed specifically for the coordination of German resistance, but it was only formally recognised by the CNR in June 1944.<sup>189</sup> It is impossible to determine the exact numbers of Germans who joined this organisation, but it is known that members of CALPO were operating in Paris and in 25 departments across France.<sup>190</sup> Its main function was to draft proposals for a post-war German government which would be anti-fascist and democratic.<sup>191</sup> The official newspaper of CALPO was the *Unser Vaterland* and its anti-Nazi propaganda was distributed amongst soldiers in the German Army.<sup>192</sup> The Czechoslovaks had set up the 'Conseil National Tchecoslovaque' the CNT, and the Austrians had formed the 'Front National Autrichien', the FNA.

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<sup>187</sup> Laroche, *On les nommait des étrangers*, 173.

<sup>188</sup> Bonté, *Les Antifascistes allemands dans la résistance française*, 48.

<sup>189</sup> Ibid. 160.

<sup>190</sup> Ibid. 171.

<sup>191</sup> Ibid. 147.

<sup>192</sup> Ibid. 166.

It becomes clear in Albert Hauser's story that CALPO was functioning in the summer of 1944. Hauser recalls how he was escorted to Paris to meet with CALPO which then dispatched him to join the Bir-Hackeim resistance near Clermont l'Hérault.<sup>193</sup> According to the testimony of Robert Bonnafous it was this maquis of 300 members which liberated Montpellier in 1944.<sup>194</sup> From 1943 onwards, foreign resistance was centrally organised through the several foreign resistance councils which had been established.

### **Under Threat but Foreign Resistance Continues**

By 1943, the general population in France knew of the existence of resistance movements which had grown up around the production and distribution of news-sheets. However, the only testament to the existence of foreign combat resisters was usually an article in a newspaper reporting their arrest, deportation, or execution. One armed group of 23 foreign resisters, which emerged from anonymity in 1943, was the Parisian group Manouchian. Their capture, which was publicised on the German poster *L'Affiche rouge* as part of the ongoing anti-Jewish, anti-communist and anti-foreigner Nazi propaganda, revealed that foreigners were resisting. Their trial, reported in *Le Matin* on 21<sup>st</sup> February 1944 and again the following day, drew attention to their existence.<sup>195</sup> Manouchian, who had joined the French communist party in 1934, had been responsible for the Armenian section of the MOI, but following his transfer to the FTP-MOI in February 1943 he was appointed director of military operations in Paris in August.<sup>196</sup> His group survived until 23 members were arrested in November. Nineteen members of the group were

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<sup>193</sup> Hauser, *A la croisée des chemins*.

<sup>194</sup> Kedward, *In search of the Maquis*, 246.

<sup>195</sup> *Le Matin*, lundi 24 février, 1944. Accessed 10th August 2012 at: <http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k5879613>

<sup>196</sup> Courtoise, Peschanski and Rayski, *Le Sang de l'étranger*, 325.

foreigners, eleven were Jewish and included two Armenians, one Spaniard, one Romanian, three Hungarians, three French, five Italians and eight Polish, all of whom were executed. Through their arrest, trial and execution, the Manouchian case provides the irrefutable evidence that foreigners were engaged in resistance, in the Paris region in 1943.

Throughout 1943, several other groups continued to operate. The FTP/MOI group, known originally as the 35<sup>th</sup> Brigade, continued to operate in Toulouse but was now known as 'Brigade Marcel Langer', or Mandel Langer, in recognition of the Polish leader who was arrested and shot on 23<sup>rd</sup> July. The membership of this group had been reduced to 75 at the end of 1942 but had risen to 203 by early 1943. A Polish miner, Pawel Balicki from Roche-en-Doulin, then led the group which carried out successful attacks on several mines such as the one at Grand Combe Laval La Brousse.<sup>197</sup> This then led to other notable successes including the derailment of a train near to Grand Combe. However, in the spring of 1944, the group was destroyed following the arrest of many of its members and all operations ceased. According to Marc Brafman, a Polish Jew and a member of the Brigade, the group would not have functioned after Langer's arrest in February 1943 had it not been for Wiktor Bardach, a Jewish officer in the Polish army in France in 1940.<sup>198</sup> As an army officer he kept meticulous records and detailed the sabotage carried out during 1943, including the destruction of 27 trains.<sup>199</sup> It is from accounts such as these that the contribution to resistance of Polish miners and army officers, who were stranded in France in 1940 are known.

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<sup>197</sup> Laroche, *On les nommait des étrangers*, 175.

<sup>198</sup> Marc Brafman, *Des Juifs dans la Résistance* 84.

<sup>199</sup> *Ibid.* 86.

In Marseille, the FTP/MOI communist group Marat continued to function.<sup>200</sup> Some evidence of its activities has been preserved because of the resolve of Julia Pirotte, a photographer working for the periodical *Dimanche Illustré*. In spite of her name, Pirotte was a Polish Jew. She had left Poland to escape poverty, but on her way to France illness forced her to stay in Belgium. While there she studied photography, married and became a Belgian citizen, but fled to Marseille in 1940 where she and her sister joined the resistance. As a photojournalist for *Dimanche Illustré*, she was allowed to travel without restrictions and this gave her the cover to smuggle weapons, carry underground publications and forge documents for the group. Perhaps, even more importantly, her photographs record for posterity the images of some of the foreigners in the Maquis groups during the summer of 1944 and record the participation of foreigners in the liberation of Marseille.<sup>201</sup> Although Pirotte's life and some of her photographs taken of the resistance are well documented on websites, current research on her work as a photographer by Hanna Diamond and Claire Gorrara is stimulating a wider interest in the role of foreigners like Pirotte in the resistance of 1940s France.<sup>202</sup>

The details of the Polish network F2 are discussed at length by Aude Yung de Prévaux in her recent book, as mentioned in chapter three.<sup>203</sup> The network F2 was set up by Thadée Jekiel, who had been sent to Marseille by the Polish Intelligence Headquarters in London. The first group he created was named 'Azur' and this was established in Nice and formed the hub of the F2 network. On Boxing Day 1942, thirty members of the network were arrested

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<sup>200</sup> Information was provided by the team which produces the website 'Marat'. Their role is to preserve the memory and the contribution made to resistance by foreigners in Marseille and the Bouches-du-Rhône.

<sup>201</sup> [http://www.culture.pl/web/english/visual-arts-full-page//eo\\_event\\_asset\\_publisher/Ny17/content/julia-pirotte](http://www.culture.pl/web/english/visual-arts-full-page//eo_event_asset_publisher/Ny17/content/julia-pirotte). Accessed, August 2012.

<sup>202</sup> Hanna Diamond and Claire Gorrara (2012): *Reframing War: Histories and Memories of the Second World War in the photography of Julia Pirotte*, *Modern and Contemporary France*, 20:4, 453-471

<sup>203</sup> Yung-de-Prévaux, *Un amour dans la tempête de l'histoire*, 182.

and the group was almost destroyed.<sup>204</sup> 'Azur' was immediately closed down, so that new security systems could be implemented. Aude Yung de Prévaux charts the growth of the new F2 network through the role of her father, Jacques Trolley de Prévaux, the naval pilot who photographed the ruins along the Western Front from an airship (see chapter one). He eventually joined the Polish group F2 in April 1942, with the pseudonym of Vox.<sup>205</sup> F2 was an intelligence network composed mainly of French Francs-Tireurs, but had been founded and was led by Polish resisters. A point of interest is that Marcel Abraham, who had been one of the founder members of Humbert's resistance group in August 1940, had, of necessity, fled south to his family in Toulon after her arrest. He was a member of Francs-Tireurs and frequently met with de Prévaux, a Gaullist.<sup>206</sup> De Prévaux was appointed as Sliwinski's assistant and was responsible for recruiting French resisters, into the network.<sup>207</sup> A new group, code named 'Anne' became operational in May 1943 with de Prévaux as the leader.<sup>208</sup> Within a period of two months four groups had been formed, named 'Cécile', 'Madeleine', 'Félicie' and 'Anne', which covered most of France.<sup>209</sup> However, the authorities had identified the existence of the F2 network and following a number of arrests, the whole of the network 'Félicie' was captured in June 1943. The following March, de Prévaux and his Polish wife Lotke, who had been the courier for F2, were arrested. They were imprisoned and shot on the evening of the 19<sup>th</sup> August 1944, together with 22 other resisters.<sup>210</sup> The network F2 and de Prevaux had always liaised with Polish intelligence in London.<sup>211</sup>

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<sup>204</sup> Ibid. 182.

<sup>205</sup> Ibid. 152.

<sup>206</sup> Ibid. 153.

<sup>207</sup> Ibid. 177.

<sup>208</sup> Ibid. 193.

<sup>209</sup> Ibid. 195.

<sup>210</sup> Ibid. 204.

<sup>211</sup> Ibid. 165.

There is evidence that other Polish resisters continued to be active. It is known that one group of sixteen FTPF resisters had been led by Joseph Jurgiewicz, and then Jablonski. Their existence is only known of because the group was denounced and captured at the end of 1943. However, before their capture they had sabotaged a railway line and derailed a train, in the forest of Vicoigne, carrying German soldiers.<sup>212</sup> In August 1943, five Polish soldiers deserted from the German army and contacted a Polish resistance group from Raismes. The deserters were escorted to the maquis in the Ardennes where, according to Laroche, they formed the core of one of the best resistance groups.<sup>213</sup> A small group of 15 Polish resisters had been active in the area of Buxy Autun since 1942 but by the middle of 1943 their numbers had risen to 150 when of necessity they were then divided into smaller groups.<sup>214</sup> One significant achievement was the destruction of the locks on the Central Canal in the town which stopped all navigation along the canal until after the Liberation. An FTPF Polish group of 24 which operated from their base at La Mur in the region of Grenoble had been led by Léon Geist until he was killed on 6<sup>th</sup> July 1943.<sup>215</sup> Several memoirs are reproduced by Laroche, one of which is by Joseph Walczak. He recalled the time in October 1943 when he and a colleague, Mietek Stoczek, formed a new group (suggesting they were already in a group) with four Russian prisoners of war at Saint-Bannel-de-Joud. They were led by a man named only as Bargiel and although they were poorly armed they joined up with a French group in April 1944 and freed 30 internees from the Camp at La Guiche.<sup>216</sup> Polish groups continued to operate in the area of the mining centre of Courrieres and

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<sup>212</sup> Laroche, *On les nommait des étrangers*, 171.

<sup>213</sup> *Ibid.* 171.

<sup>214</sup> *Ibid.* 173.

<sup>215</sup> *Ibid.* 173.

<sup>216</sup> *Ibid.* 174.

Noyelles. On Easter Monday, 1944, they destroyed 17 trains in a locomotive depot at Courrieres, 12 trains at Denain and a rail bridge between Haveluy and Denain. They successfully sabotaged the mines at Mazingarbe, Lens and Dechy which stopped all production until the end of occupation. They also attacked the Radio station on the aerodrome of Dechy and the generating station at Sin-le- Noble.<sup>217</sup>

These few brief examples of Polish resistance groups provide little detail of the people involved or if in fact they were all Polish resisters, but they do demonstrate how the determination of foreign resisters continued and enabled resistance to grow, in spite of the capture and destruction of many groups. It is estimated that 40,000 suspected resisters were arrested in 1943.<sup>218</sup>

### **Desertion Grows in the Wehrmacht**

In 1943 there were signs of growing disillusionment amongst the officers of the Wehrmacht. In Bordeaux, it is known from records that nine German officers occupied an arsenal in the port but they were arrested and condemned to death by a military tribunal in 1943.<sup>219</sup> A year later, on 22<sup>nd</sup> August 1944, an artificer by the name of Heinz Stahlschmidt acted alone to destroy an arsenal in Bordeaux to prevent the port from being destroyed. He was not as successful as he had hoped as there were several other arsenals in the area, but he deserted the army and was protected by the resistance.<sup>220</sup> By 1944 hundreds of Germans, some of whom had been members of the International Brigades in Spain or had deserted from the German Army, were operating within French resistance groups.<sup>221</sup> The movement

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<sup>217</sup> Ibid. 172.

<sup>218</sup> Max Hastings, *Das Reich* (London: Michael Joseph Ltd., 1981), 49.

<sup>219</sup> Bonté, *Les Antifascists allemands dans la résistance française*, 161.

<sup>220</sup> Terrisse, Bordeaux, 290.

<sup>221</sup> Laroche, *On les nommait des étrangers*, 336, 337.

'Allemagne libre' for the west, which had been established in August 1944, broadcast information to German troops, by the 'Emetteur populaire allemand'. From their centre in Paris broadcasts were transmitted to Lyon, Marseille, Toulouse, Montauban and Castres.<sup>222</sup>

### **Deserters Join the Maquis**

Laroche gives details of soldiers deserting the occupying army, to join the maquis. Several factors enabled troops to do this. Firstly, because of continuing defeats on the eastern front, divisions such as Das Reich had been withdrawn to France to re-group. Heavy losses had been sustained by this division and consequently many of the soldiers arriving in France were young recruits drawn from many different nationalities including Hungarians, Romanians and Alsatians. These vulnerable young men were easier targets to persuade to defect to the resistance.<sup>223</sup> Secondly, maltreatment of prisoners led in one case to two Ukranian battalions comprised of former Russian prisoners of war arriving in France with a deep hatred of Germany and looking to desert. The soldiers who had been captured and imprisoned in camps in East Prussia where they suffered from malnutrition believed that by joining the Wehrmacht their chances of survival would be improved. Thirdly, foreign resistance organisations were targeting soldiers and so the newly arrived soldiers knew of the existence of organisations which would help them defect.

One example Laroche provides is that of a company of Yugoslavians who deserted and joined a Polish resistance group at Woeuvre in Lorraine. Together these two groups attacked the German garrison and helped to secure the liberation of Woeuvre and in the process took 200 prisoners.<sup>224</sup> At Brive, in the Corrèze, 350 officers and men deserted and

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<sup>222</sup> Ibid.336.

<sup>223</sup> Farmer, *Oradour, arrêt sur mémoire*, 52.

<sup>224</sup> Laroche, *On les nommait des étrangers*, 173.

joined the resistance, taking with them all their arms and ammunition.<sup>225</sup> In May 2011, General Dinechin gave a talk in Cannes, in which he described how two well-armed Ukrainian horse drawn Battalions of the 30<sup>th</sup> Division of the Waffen SS, arrived in Franche-Comté on the 15<sup>th</sup> August 1944 and apparently already intent on deserting. They were deployed to Fresnes St Mames and Valdahon in the Haute-Saône where the Ukrainian officers contacted Simon Dillon, the director of a local dairy and a lieutenant in the FFI. The defection, had been arranged for the 27<sup>th</sup> August, only twelve days after their arrival when they had to defend themselves from an attack by a German regiment in the vicinity. Afterwards their German uniforms were dyed blue in the vats in the dairy and these well armed battalions fought alongside the men of the FFI.<sup>226</sup> Otto Kuhne, who had established the group 'Bonnecombe' in Lozère in 1942, joined three German maquis groups together known as the maquis 'Montaigne' at the beginning of 1944 and then in June 1944 he led a group of more than 2,000 MOI - FTP maquis in the Ardèche. It can be assumed that many were deserters from the Wehrmacht. In his memoirs, François Rouan describes how he was the leader of a maquis of German ant-fascists which joined with the Bir-Hakeim group.<sup>227</sup> An article describing the resistance in Lozère relates how a group of 43 Armenians deserted the German army in July 1944 and fought with the FTP. At the moment of liberation there were 400 Armenians in an MOI group of 600 resisters at which point they regrouped and formed the 'Premier regiment de partisans soviétiques en France'.<sup>228</sup>

A report written by Major Davies, a British liaison Officer operating in the South West of France, describes how the uprising by the resistance had been well planned and organised

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<sup>225</sup> Bonté, *Les Antifascistes allemands dans la résistance française*, 161.

<sup>226</sup> Talk given by General Dinechin, at a meeting of an ex-service men's' association in Cannes, May 2011.

<sup>227</sup> Kedward, *In search of the maquis*, 242.

<sup>228</sup> [http://www.lyceechaptal.fr/telechargement/Concours\\_de\\_la\\_Resistance\\_2010](http://www.lyceechaptal.fr/telechargement/Concours_de_la_Resistance_2010). Accessed, December 2012.

in advance. He details the organisation of the maquis of the Toulouse area into a 7,000 strong force named the 'Division Légère de Toulouse'. This division was moved by train to the north of Vichy. Other maquis from Montpellier, Limoges and Clermont Ferrand and known as 'Le Groupement Mobile du Sud-Ouest' combined with the Toulouse Company and formed a force of 20,000 men to support the allied landings in the south of France.<sup>229</sup> Major Davies also records his meeting with a group of Georgians who had deserted and formed their own maquis near Albi and who even had time to give a concert to the locals.<sup>230</sup>

The notes kept by the Maquis de Varbre provide evidence of the plurality of resistance and of the rapid surge to the maquis by the French after June 1944. At the end of 1943 the Maquis de Varbre had 25 members which had only risen to 37 by 5<sup>th</sup> June. However, after 6<sup>th</sup> June membership surged to more than 450 and included 55 foreigners comprised of 16 Polish, 12 Germans, seven Romanians, six Spanish, four Russians, three Czechs, a Belgian, a Hungarian, a Swiss and a Turk. Yet by the end of August the group had virtually ceased to exist, with only eleven registered members between the 1<sup>st</sup> and the 5<sup>th</sup> September.<sup>231</sup> How effective the additional French volunteers were can only be speculated, as there are no details of what action they were part of, but they would have presented little effective opposition, for example, against an armoured division such as 'Das Reich' with over 15,000 men.<sup>232</sup>

Millar describes how the hunt for the maquis continued unabated even after 6<sup>th</sup> June 1944 and how ineffective and powerless the small groups of French maquis were against the still powerful retreating German army. Many groups were ill-prepared for combat and some

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<sup>229</sup> <http://maquisdevabre.free.fr/mvdocs-rpdavies.htm>

<sup>230</sup> <http://maquisdevabre.free.fr/mvdocs-reg.htm>

<sup>231</sup> <http://maquisdevabre.free.fr/mvdocs-reg.htm>

<sup>232</sup> Farmer, *Oradour*, 52.

individuals were still considering forming a maquis, even though staying one step ahead of the hunters dominated their life, with little opportunity for engaging the enemy.<sup>233</sup> Max Hastings records in his book, *Das Reich*, that in 1944, Hiller, an SOE agent, wasted too much time dealing with ‘internal disagreements’ within the resistance and he quickly realised there was no specific operational plan on the effective use of the stocks of arms, dropped by parachute.<sup>234</sup> Other resistance groups such as the F2 network were intelligence groups and many networks had ceased to exist after the arrests of their members in 1943 and those remaining were not equipped for combat.

### **A Defiant and Burgeoning Foreign Resistance to the End**

The discussion in this chapter has shown that two French initiatives were influential in the organisation of foreign resistance during 1943 and 1944. In February 1943 no-one would have foreseen the dramatic change which would be brought about in its organisation with the introduction of STO. The evaders of the STO had fled into hiding, finding refuge in remote locations in the mountains, to avoid being deported to Germany. These isolated rural locations provided the evaders with an environment in which they could hide and then redeploy rapidly to different locations, to escape the ever increasing searches for them by Vichy and German forces. It was this ability to move quickly and easily around the mountainous terrain, which was recognised by the foreign organisations as being advantageous for their resistance groups and which helped change the perception of resistance. The foreign organisations moved their urban groups into the mountains where they were re-organised into a mobile rural guerrilla force known as the Maquis, to continue the combat from there. The name ‘Maquis’ remains synonymous with French resistance. A

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<sup>233</sup> Millar *Maquis*, 150.

<sup>234</sup> Hastings, *Das Reich*, 51.

second French initiative to produce an organisation to unify French resistance was not as successful as had been anticipated. Evidence suggests that whatever unification the CNR did achieve it did not directly include foreign resistance organisations. The example of the F2 Polish intelligence network indicates that a part of foreign resistance is known to have continued to operate in isolation from the CNR.

My research has also indicated that foreign resistance expanded because of the several well organised national movements set up to co-ordinate foreign resistance. Examples, such as that of Hauser, demonstrate how their hierarchical systems of contact enabled the work of foreign resistance groups to be maintained across France. Hauser was deployed from a resistance group operating near Dijon, to the German organisation CALPO in Paris and finally to the Bir-Hakeim group in the South West. Other examples which suggest the close co-operation which existed between these different national organisations is borne out by the composition of the multinational groups such as the 35<sup>th</sup> Brigade and the Manouchian Group.

However the one key factor which brought about increasing foreign involvement in the resistance was the growing number of different national groups in the German army who deserted to join the resistance. This began in 1943 but gathered momentum in 1944 in the months leading up to the allied landings. Several examples have been cited but one such group was a group of Yugoslavians who deserted and reinforced a Polish resistance group. Amongst these numbers must be included several German officers who attempted resistance from within the army and many others who deserted, for example, the resistance group led by Otto Kuhne in Lozère. Other examples include prisoners of war who escaped

detention, such as the four Russian who joined a Polish resistance group in the North East of France.

If the numbers recorded by the French Maquis de Varbre group reflect the general level of French resisters in other groups, then it would indicate that French resistance numbers during 1943 and 1944 remained very small. Right up to the eve of the allied landings on June 6<sup>th</sup> there were only 37 members (two more than in January 1944), who were registered as being part of the Maquis de Varbre and this evidence suggests that French resistance would, in isolation, have been an impotent force against the German Army.

It is clear, from the report written by Major Davies, that the logistics of organising the many foreign and French resistance groups in the south into an effective fighting force of 20,000 men had obviously been planned well in advance of the allied landings in June 1944. His report suggests, that what appeared to be a spontaneous French resistance uprising had in all probability been orchestrated several months before and numbers imply that many foreigners would have been included in this force. His report, along with other examples, such as that of 400 Armenians who re-grouped as a regiment of Russian partisans, indicates that foreign resistance groups were gradually re-organised and absorbed into the allied army in France. Moreover, even the liberation of Paris was not entirely achieved by French resisters. The evidence describes the liberation of the 16<sup>th</sup> arrondissement of Paris by a force of FTP Czechoslovaks (Force Tchecoslovak Partisans), who in all probability had been part of the Czechoslovak army in Agde in 1940.

Without the participation of foreigners, the French resistance would not have provided a force sufficiently large to liberate Paris or other towns in France - despite the

declaration by de Gaulle on 25<sup>th</sup> August 1944 at the Hotel de Ville de Paris: 'Paris martyrisé!  
mais Paris libéré! Libéré par lui-même'. <sup>235</sup>

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<sup>235</sup> Douzou, *La Résistance française: une histoire périlleuse*, 30.

## CONCLUSION

This study set out to examine the role of foreigners in the resistance in France. Initially, three broad areas had been identified as a starting point for this research. The first was to determine the factors which led to hundreds of foreigners being able to join in the resistance to occupation. The research was widened to establish who the foreigners were, if they could be readily identified and why so many thousands of peoples from across Europe were living in France in 1940. This then led the research back to 1919 and the conditions prevailing in Europe at the end of the First World War and the implementation of the Treaty of Versailles, as a link had been identified between these two events and the establishment of foreign resistance in France in 1940. Firstly, the ending of the Great War and the implementation of the Treaty of Versailles combined to aggravate the widespread poverty which had engulfed communities across Europe and which led to the widespread economic migration of thousands of people in search of work. Many migrants found work in France in the 1920s, as thousands of men were needed to fill the void left in the workforce created by the high death rate amongst the young French soldiers during the war. Political instability was symptomatic of the time and was especially evident in Germany, where the spread of communism led to political unrest. This political and social instability slowly spiralled out of control across Europe leading to fascist dictatorships, first in Italy and then in Spain in 1939. In Germany, Hitler's Nazi party assumed power in 1933 when the implementation of Nazi policy and the persecution of Jews and communists gradually spread beyond Germany's borders and out across Eastern Europe. As Hitler's quest for European dominance gathered momentum a tide of refugees fleeing from Nazi and fascist persecution arrived in France in the 1930s. This research has shown that it was a combination of these two migrations which

provided the organisers of foreign resistance throughout the occupation, but especially in 1940, with the enormous reserves of man power to draw from.

The second important element was to identify what factors propelled foreigners to join the resistance and the extent to which they participated in resistance to Nazi German occupation after 1940. This led the research to the period following the declaration of war by France in 1939 when it demonstrates that the fact that thousands of foreigners successfully volunteered to join the French army proved to be a pivotal event in the organisation of foreign resistance in 1940. This then widened the scope of the investigation to explore which foreigners volunteered to resist the occupation and how foreign resistance was organised, especially during the first few weeks and months of the occupation of 1940 and early 1941.

The final element of this study was to explore the growth and sustainability of foreign resistance and examine more specifically the role of foreigners within the resistance from 1940 to 1944. Trying to determine these two aspects of foreign resistance was more difficult to accomplish. I identified four distinct phases in the development of resistance which could be used as a framework to research specific examples of foreign resistance in order to explore the role and extent of foreign resistance.

This research has shown that foreign participants in the many resistance groups were either drawn from the different communities which had arrived in France, during the inter-war years as economic migrants in the 1920s, or from the thousands of mainly Jewish and communist refugees, who had fled their countries across Europe to escape fascism and more especially the rigorous pursuit by the supporters of German Nazism during the 1930s.

The precise date when foreign resistance started cannot be identified but the first steps in its creation began, indirectly, in September 1939 when thousands of foreigners volunteered to join the French army following the declaration of war which then became the starting point for this study. It has been shown that there was a link between the foreign units so formed and the subsequent enrolment of some of those men into the resistance following the fall of France and the disbandment of the army in 1940. The successful transfer of former soldiers into clandestine resistance was anchored, in part, to long held traditions of close national or religious community ties in Paris. Kaspi and Marès state that Paris had been recognised for centuries as a refuge and the capital of political freedom for refugees and that several identifiable enclaves had grown up around the city, in which cultural identities had been preserved through a variety of associations.<sup>236</sup> Research suggests that it was through these strong ties of cultural identity that the foreigners could be targeted by the MOI leadership in Paris. The MOI, which was a pre-war communist association, was instrumental in organising foreign resistance from the summer of 1940 through to the liberation of France. Many national groups, or groups with close cultural ties, had remained together in the now disbanded army units which facilitated their organisation into clandestine resistance. Other similar groups from which clandestine resistance groups were established were former communist International Brigadists, Spanish republicans and German and Austrian nationals and Jews who had fled Nazi persecution but who had been interned in camps in 1939. Incredibly, it is known that in the summer of 1940, almost all of the 12,000 former members of the Czech regiments stationed in the south travelled north across the demarcation line to Paris, where they were organised by the MOI into clandestine

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<sup>236</sup> Kaspi and Marès, *Le Paris des étrangers* (Paris : Imprimerie nationale, 1989), 7.

resistance. Accounts such as that written by Aude Yung–de Prévaux, identify former soldiers in the Polish army, who after being stranded following the capitulation of France, organised resistance first in the Pyrenees and then in Marseille.<sup>237</sup> It is known that an indeterminate number of economic immigrants, who had arrived in France in the 1920s to work in the mines in the Pas de Calais and in the south, joined in the resistance by sabotaging mines and supplying resistance groups with dynamite.<sup>238</sup> Both Kedward and Jackson confirm the participation of Spanish exiles in the resistance,<sup>239</sup> as does a former resister at a conference in 1975 who stated that almost all of one group of Spanish republicans was killed in action in the Vercors.<sup>240</sup> It is known that Russian exiles like Boris Vildé, who was mentioned only briefly by Humbert in her accounts of early resistance, most probably had a substantial intelligence role in the resistance in 1940. The investigation of the role of Russian exiles in the resistance throughout the occupation needs further exploration but nevertheless what can be verified is the existence of a group of 30 former Russian prisoners, who according to Millar had apparently escaped from captivity near to Strasbourg and who, although with probably rather different motives, had joined the maquis under the leadership of a Frenchman.<sup>241</sup> It is known that Alsatians were part of the resistance, but the significance of the re-annexation by Germany in influencing Alsatian resistance is hard to gauge and many who spoke German were often identified as being German. For most foreigners, participating in the resistance gave them the opportunity to combat the German army to expel Nazism from occupied France as a first step to enable them to return home and live

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<sup>237</sup> De Prévaux, *Un amour dans la tempête de l'histoire*.

<sup>238</sup> Dr Charles Katz, 'Les étrangers dans la Résistance à Grenoble', *Grenoble et le Vercors* (Grenoble : Presses Universitaires de Grenoble, 2003), 133.

<sup>239</sup> Kedward, *In Search of the Maquis*, 118; Jackson, *France the Dark Years*, 495.

<sup>240</sup> Katz, 'Les étrangers dans la Résistance à Grenoble', 139.

<sup>241</sup> Millar, *Maquis*, 200.

without fear. Examples referred to in the study identify that a large network of foreign resistance groups was established across France throughout the occupation. These covered a whole spectrum of resistance from intelligence gathering, combat and political subversion.

There is evidence too that in addition to the MOI the organisation of foreign resistance was co-ordinated by the various National Associations which had been created to co-ordinate resistance. However, it appears that Moulin's attempts to unify the resistance failed the foreign resistance in the sense that the several foreign organisations were excluded from negotiations and from the establishment of the CNR. What emerges is that the foreign organisations continued to function independently although this has not been possible to establish conclusively. Although not all foreign resistance was organised by the communist led MOI from Paris, it is difficult to ascertain the sphere of influence of each of the foreign associations. For example evidence shows that other groups such as the Polish led F2 group in Nice, which worked independently of internal associations, received their orders directly from London.

Although it would in all probability be impossible to quantify with precision the actual numbers of foreign resisters, important accounts such as those collated by Boris Matline verify that foreign resistance groups operated throughout the occupation.<sup>242</sup> It is known that some groups, like the 35th Brigade, were numbered in hundreds, while Millar describes several French maquis groups in June 1944 as being less than ten. Dr Katz, a former resister gives a number of 40,000 foreigners who were either members in the FTP or in the 'Milices ouvrières et patriotiques', but which did not include the FFI.<sup>243</sup> While it has been noted that the formation of the Maquis in 1943 was perceived as a growth in resistance numbers, it

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<sup>242</sup> His pseudonym was Gaston Laroche.

<sup>243</sup> Katz, *Les étrangers dans la résistance à Grenoble*, 133.

was, according to Laroche, a former foreign resister and a Colonel in the FFI, a re-location of foreign urban resisters to rural locations. Furthermore resisters moved between groups, groups joined other groups and membership was often of a transitory nature and so as was the case with French resisters, collating exact numbers in foreign groups can only ever be guesswork.

On the other hand the establishment of the Maquis in 1943 did bring about a radical change in foreign resistance tactics in 1944 when there was also an increase in the numbers of foreign resisters operating in the south with the desertion to the maquis of several national groups from the German army. This area could well be pursued further but research has established that in addition to the desertions of the Austrian regiment already mentioned previously it is known that two well equipped battalions of Ukrainians, numbering in their hundreds either joined or formed Maquis groups.<sup>244</sup> However, mass desertions did not always lead to the soldiers joining the maquis as illustrated in the case of the desertion of a Battalion of Waffen SS at Villefranche in September 1943. This had been orchestrated by a group of Croatians who had been forced to enlist but following the mutiny only a few a Croatians joined the resistance the remainder simply disappeared.<sup>245</sup>

Changes in the way resistance groups operated was confirmed in a report produced by Major Davies in 1944 in which he records that 7,000 resisters from the area around Toulouse had been organised into an army ahead of the allied landings in Provence in August. At the same time this suggests that the general uprising was not a spontaneous

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<sup>244</sup> Wolodymyr Kosyk, *Les Ukrainiens dans la résistance française* (Paris: Publications de l'Est Européen), 6. L'Association Nationale des Anciens Combattants de la Résistance, Comité régional Alsace, 1998, *La résistance allemande contre le nazisme*, 189 – 193.

<sup>245</sup> Mirko D Grmek and Louise L Lambrichs, *Les Révoltés de Villefranche* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1998), 263. The three publications in footnotes 245, 246 are archived in the IHTP Paris.

phenomenon but one which had been orchestrated in the south well in advance of the allied landings. Although Davies does not identify the composition of that army, it has to be assumed that some would be drawn from the foreign resistance groups which operated in the area around Toulouse. Nevertheless, individual resistance groups were still operating at the same time as others were being organised into an army and their operations to liberate towns seem to have been organised at a local level. Laroche has recorded several detailed accounts of the liberation of French towns in the south by foreign resistance groups as well as the account of the role of the Czechs who liberated the 16<sup>th</sup> arrondissement of Paris.

It was originally seen as being vital to this study to establish, precisely, who those foreigners were, as distinct from French nationals, but this proved to be an impossible goal and a more pragmatic interpretation became necessary. Some of the difficulties which were encountered can be illustrated, for example, in the photographs taken by Julia Pirotte during the liberation of Marseille when several of her photographs clearly identify some of the resisters as being Jewish and of East European origin. However, what cannot be determined is whether those resisters were refugees from the late 1930s and therefore by definition foreigners, or immigrants who had obtained French nationality, or even if such a distinction is necessary. Moreover direct references to individual resisters proved to be unreliable in establishing foreign nationality. For example, it is not immediately obvious that Julia Pirotte, a member of the group Marat in Marseille and Lotke de Prevaux, who worked for the group F2 in Nice, were Polish as was Marcel Langer the founder of the 35<sup>th</sup> Brigade resistance group in Toulouse. Boris Matline a former resister published his book on resistance in 1965 using his resistance pseudonym of Gaston Laroche. Accordingly, for the

purpose of this study producing a precise definition of a foreign resister, if that would ever be a practical or necessary proposition, proved to be an unattainable goal.

This fascinating investigation into foreign resistance in France, although of necessity limited in its scope, has only succeeded in exposing the 'tip of the iceberg' of foreign resistance. Nevertheless, it has been able to conclude that in many instances, attitudes towards resistance in France in 1940 had stemmed from the consequences of the First World War, which had succeeded in creating the conditions during the interwar years which contributed to the different responses to resistance. The communist foreigners for example, saw their actions as an outcome of war and believed that armed resistance was a necessary response to occupation.

It has only been possible to record a very small sample of the many foreign resistance groups which had operated in France and the resisters who participated in that resistance and those who lost their lives. This research has not only demonstrated the enormous contribution foreigners made to clandestine resistance during the years of occupation but has also, importantly, identified the multinational membership of many resistance groups which operated alongside the French resisters on French soil during the four years of occupation in groups of MOI/FTP. This study has not attempted to assess the success, or otherwise, of foreign resistance in France. Jackson concludes that, 'not that liberation could not have occurred without it [resistance], but precisely that it could have done'.<sup>246</sup> [sic]. But for those resisters who took part and survived and those who lost their lives taking part in this clandestine campaign, it has to be acknowledged that their willing participation was a moral stance against tyranny.

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<sup>246</sup> Jackson, *France the Dark Years*, 557.

After the liberation of France, most of the foreign resisters left to continue the armed struggle to liberate occupied Europe. In the chaotic aftermath of the peace, the fear of the spread of communism replaced the fear of the spread of Nazism and so the contribution that the thousands of communist foreigners made to the resistance in France was largely forgotten. It was only in 1975, three decades after the liberation of France, that Pierre Bolle brought together former resisters to present their individual experiences of resistance in the area of Grenoble. This gave former resisters like Dr. Charles Katz the opportunity to talk about and record their experiences as resisters during the occupation. Much research has been carried out since that time and details of individual resistance experiences have been published on the internet. Contact with the resistance associations, who maintain the sites, has ascertained the authenticity of the testimony which has in no small measure contributed to the writing of this study. Several books have been written about the foreign resisters which are often based around the politics of communism. In writing my study I have tried to separate the political dogma from their role in the resistance. I have not been able to discuss in depth the role of the Jewish foreign resisters and their influence on resistance which needs further research. However it is my sincere hope that this investigation has in some small way contributed to the research into foreign resistance in France from 1940 to 1944.

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