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Dangerous liaisons

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## Chapter 1

### MEANING AND VARIETIES

*Give me your watch and I'll tell you the time.*

*German view of collaboration[1]*

The Nazis' newspaper in Jersey, *Insel Zeitung*, was keen to publicise the fact that the islanders were enthusiastic about the occupation and keen to be Germanised:

In the course of a band concert given in the Royal Square and largely attended by children and young people, at a given moment, the bandmaster attracted the attention of his juvenile audience by calling out that he had a question to ask them. He then enquired, with an insinuating air, if they liked chocolate, requesting those who did to raise their right arms. There naturally arose a forest of eager arms. That was the moment at which the waiting photographer pressed the button. The following day the current number of the *Insel Zeitung* contained a picture showing young Jersey standing at the Nazi salute while, the caption stated, the band was playing the Horst Wessel Song, or some other patriotic air.[2]

Of course, some types of collaboration were bogus. Others, by contrast, were very real.

Governmental elites engaged in political collaboration with the Reich. Ordinary women formed sexual relationships with occupying German soldiers. And there were many forms of 'improper' behaviour in between - some that could be described as collaboration, some that could not, and some that nestled somewhere in between. In time, collaboration enveloped huge chunks of Europe, aided the Nazis in their quest to eradicate the Jewish community, and since 1945 it has left an unpleasant legacy.

But what, in fundamental terms, did collaboration mean? What were the different varieties? And how have historians conceptualised it? These are important questions to dwell on before we start to explore the phenomenon in any greater depth. We should also be aware that collaboration, as a historical phenomenon, looks very different from different angles. In the post-war period, it has been very easy, and very natural, for historians and commentators to talk in terms of 'black' and 'white' - the collaborators were the 'baddies', the resisters were the 'goodies'. We know the outcome of the war, we are aware of the horror of the Hitler regime, and we can now come to some fairly definitive judgements.

But, at the time, things were much more complex and difficult. Ordinary people and governments had no idea how the war was going to develop and had few

clues about how their decisions and choices were going to be viewed, and judged, in retrospect. This is a crucial point to make. Areas were greyer during the war, and this needs to be acknowledged.

According to the *Concise Oxford Dictionary*, to collaborate is to 'work jointly...cooperate traitorously with the enemy.' However, this standard definition requires a lot of unpacking. Some political leaders who threw in their lot with Hitler, or were forced to, genuinely believed that they could, indeed, 'work jointly' with the Führer. This was an illusion, and was proven to be so when new political [arrangements and relationships - not all identical - began to develop in the early years of the war, and then when they reached 'maturity' towards the end of the conflict.](#) The notion of 'partnership' was stillborn, and it says a lot about the mental state of some 'puppet' leaders - those individuals who headed pro-Hitler regimes across Europe - that they actually believed they could engage the Reich in genuinely 'joint' ventures. What happened in reality was quite the reverse: the Germans exploited the 'partner' states and trampled all over their independence - both political and economic. Michael Burleigh reveals that the Führer had difficulty pronouncing the word, '*Kollaboration*'. This was highly symbolic because he did not actually conceive of collaboration in the same way that others conceived of it. For him, 'domination' was the key word. This is an important preliminary point to make.

Moving on, to what extent, and in what ways, *did* politicians and other figures, 'cooperate traitorously with the enemy'? Clearly, this is a matter of interpretation. Only a minority of people collaborated as self-confessed 'traitors'. Some intellectuals, some informers, did so, but they were imbued with the most warped of ideas and ideology. Most people did not 'cooperate traitorously', but rather dealt with the occupiers because they had to and because there was no alternative. They were not 'born collaborators'; they were just ordinary folk who had to develop some kind of [survival mechanism](#), however risky and questionable in ethical terms. This is why collaboration is such a fascinating theme. It was like a spider's web that eventually trapped significant sections of the population. Some were genuine collaborators, but a sizeable proportion were not.

We must distinguish between 'official' and 'unofficial' histories of collaboration. This adds to the complexity of the subject. Sweden, Switzerland and Spain were officially neutral powers, but this has not halted the flow of post-war innuendo regarding the behaviour of governments and ordinary people in these countries. In the Balkans, it is the numbers game. Today, if you're a loyal Croat, you would probably claim that the Ustashe-run Independent State of Croatia (NDH) - Hitler's puppet administration in Zagreb - killed 'only' tens of thousands of Serbs between 1941 and 1944; if you're a Serb, you would reckon the figure to be in the hundreds of thousands. Official history, unofficial history.

In France, the situation is similar. General Charles de Gaulle, the man who came to personify the new liberated nation, was keen to foster the view that France was 'a nation of resisters', even though he and everyone else knew that this was not the case and that many French people had compromised with the Germans in a variety of spheres - either as full-blown collaborators or wait-and-see 'accommodators'. Unashamedly, de Gaulle was trying to manipulate public opinion in an effort to stabilise and solidify the post-war political settlement.

Who collaborated with the Nazis and their proxies? There is no simple answer to this question. It was anybody and everybody - a genuine cross-section of the population. This

is a random sample: anti-Zionist Muslims in the Balkans and the Middle East; peasants in Ukraine and Belorussia; right-wing zealots such as [Ferenc Szálasi](#) in Hungary; workers in various countries who were subject to 'labour transfers'; high-ranking civil servants in the Netherlands; Norwegian women in search of love and affection; senior Catholic churchmen like Archbishop Alojzije Stepinac in Croatia; learned French intellectuals. And an ex-resistance fighter in Serbia called Colonel Dragoljub-Draža Mihailović. Phyllis Auty says that the Germans met Mihailović at an inn near Valjevo and decided that they could use him, even though they didn't trust him fully.[3] Yes, collaboration was as secretive, sinister, dirty and amoral as this. *Why* this man and others collaborated is a complex question - one that will be dealt with in full in Chapter 3.

## I 'NARROW' AND 'BROAD' DEFINITIONS

Gerhard Hirschfeld explains that, for the most part, collaboration has been defined and interpreted (perhaps mistakenly) in fairly narrow terms. In essence, it was a political relationship between victor and vanquished, between occupier and occupied. It was exemplified best by the agreement reached by Hitler and Marshal Philippe Pétain, the French head of state, at Montoire in October 1940.[4] Here were two leaders, both attired (significantly) in military uniform and both committing themselves to a new type of political 'alliance'. Philippe Burrin says that Pétain's speech 'was formulated with great prudence: the government was "entering upon the path of collaboration" and this must at once be "sincere" and also "exclude any thought of aggression"'. [5]

According to Rab Bennett, the Marshal's government was the only one in Europe to adopt 'state collaboration' as official policy.[6] In one sense, Pétain had no choice, but in another, he genuinely believed that he was doing the right thing. Given the predicament that France found herself in, he viewed collaboration as a most 'honourable' path to tread. Hence his sincerity and pride at Montoire - symbolised by his military garb.

In one sense, Vichy France was a puppet state; in another, it was an 'independent' government. After October 1940, the ramifications of her position were significant. As Rupert Butler argues, once the 'principle' of collaboration had been conceded - and whether it meant dependence or independence in practice - Pétain was forced 'to keep going the extra mile'. [7] Some historians would argue that Vichy's policy towards the Jews - the measures enacted *without* German encouragement - was the most compelling proof of this position. One view is that because Pétain was willing to go 'the extra mile', the terms of Germany's occupation of his country were less brutal, relatively speaking, than elsewhere.

Other regimes, of course, engaged in collaboration, without formalising it in such a grand manner as Pétain did. In the early years of the war, Mgr Jozef Tiso in Slovakia, Dr Ante Pavelić in Croatia, Vidkun Quisling in Norway and General George Tsolakoglu in Greece all took on the role of puppet leaders, which basically meant that they were Hitler's proxies in their respective states. In other countries - like the Netherlands and Denmark - Hitler exerted a considerable administrative and political influence, thanks in no small part to the pro-German position taken up by some local officials. These individuals felt they were doing the right thing in working with the Führer, but some would have a fight on their hands in trying to convince others of this fact.

So far, we have conceived of collaboration in fairly narrow terms, as a

phenomenon that had its major impact in politics and government. This is understandable. It could be argued that it was in the corridors of power that collaboration was most visible and controversial. Gerhard Hirschfeld, however, is keen to broaden out the definition, to give it more depth and meaning. In 1989 he wrote: 'In the majority of cases, "collaboration" has been understood to describe political and ideological co-operation between Nazi occupiers and Fascist or semi-Fascist factions among the native population. Economic, social and cultural issues are dealt with only peripherally or are largely left to specialised studies.'<sup>[8]</sup> As will become apparent in due course, the present study also seeks to analyse collaboration as a broad, multi-faceted phenomenon rather than as something with stricter parameters.

Up until now, we have focused almost exclusively on collaboration at the 'top' of society. However, in many states, the reality of the wartime situation was that ordinary people, groups and institutions, as well as political leaders and governments, had to wrestle with the ethical dilemma that could be summarised in the following question: to collaborate or not? Alternatively, they could take up a position somewhere in between.

Ordinary people going about their normal everyday lives were forced to address the most terrible of quandaries. To frequent café bars used by German soldiers, or not? To form relationships, whether platonic or sexual, with representatives of the Nazi regime, or not? To trade with, and make money out of, the occupiers, or not?

Likewise, across Europe, social groups and institutions had to examine their collective consciences. The church: should it grant any legitimacy at all to Hitler and his puppet leaders? Trade unions: should they simply make way for Nazi-style industrial relations? The press: should it simply tow the line (or put less kindly, 'sell out') to the rigorous censorship regime imposed by the occupying authorities? At the time, these were major dilemmas, and from the relative comfort of the twenty-first century, with hindsight on our side, we should not diminish their scale and gravity. The end result was a lot of 'grey'. Only a minority of people engaged in full-blown collaboration; only a minority could claim to have avoided any contact with the Germans.

And what of national governments? Should they work with Hitler in an effort to ease the burden of occupation (the notion of the 'shield' - protecting their country) or should they go into exile and fight the fight from the safety of abroad (the notion of the 'sword' - attacking the Nazis)? This issue was of particular pertinence in France. Pétain made a virtue out of his decision to stay in the country and deal with the occupiers, while de Gaulle was keen to exploit the fact that he had left to resist. Both men claimed that they had done the 'courageous' and 'patriotic' thing; the reality of course was that, in a strange and ironic way, the Marshal and the General needed each other. In Greece and Yugoslavia, the same kind of situation played itself out. The Germans invaded, occupation followed, the 'legitimate' governments went into exile, and a small group of collaborators held the fort at home.

Another way to think about collaboration is to consider the spheres in which victor-vanquished relations developed. Politics: joint action in governmental affairs and in foreign and military policy, not forgetting the posturings of the assorted

'Naziphiles' around Europe. Society: from literature to sex. Economics: trade, finance and labour transfers. And the Holocaust: the ultimate in organised race hate. All these areas will be examined in greater detail in Chapters 4-7.

But, however much we try to understand collaboration, and also try to codify and compartmentalise it, some examples of it almost defied the laws of political gravity.

### Communists and collaboration

The Nazi-Soviet Pact, signed on 23 August 1939, is one of the most infamous diplomatic manoeuvres in modern history. Even though it was signed eight days before German forces invaded Poland (the event which marked the beginning of the Second World War), it is a prime example of collaboration, or a very specific kind of collaboration, in action. The Pact, formally known as the Treaty of Non-Aggression Between Germany and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, was signed on behalf of Germany by Ribbentrop and on behalf of the Soviets by Molotov.[9] The main themes of the treaty were clear: cooperation, non-aggression and mutual guarantees. It created a situation in which the USSR (a Communist state) and Germany (a fascist state) agreed not to make war on each other. This, for most observers, was tantamount to the most insidious kind of collaboration. In essence it was a holding operation, a stalling tactic, a Machiavellian ploy designed to serve the rather crude short-term interests of both sides. As such, it can be viewed as an example of 'pre-collaboration', collaboration in advance of the term actually being coined.

Quite predictably, the Pact had tortuous consequences for Communist parties around Europe. In France, the Parti Communiste Français (PCF) was flummoxed and bemused. Its political reputation was built upon its anti-fascist militancy, yet here was the Soviet leadership - the 'wise men' in Moscow - getting into bed with Hitler. For many, the manoeuvre was almost beyond comprehension.

In Norway, the situation was not dissimilar. Between 1939 and 1941, the Norwegian Communist Party (NKP) displayed a genuine affection for the occupiers and kow-towed to them willingly, with very little interest in the ethics or morality of what it was doing. Eric Lee takes up the story: '...the small and declining NKP hailed the pact as a masterpiece of Soviet diplomacy...Recognising that a New Order was emerging in Europe, with Germany at its centre, the Norwegian Stalinists were making the case that it was in the best interests of the workers to stay at their jobs, to cease fighting, and to link Norway's economic fortunes to those of greater Germany...The Communists called for a conciliatory approach toward the German authorities.'[10]

This must have been a difficult period for the Norwegian Stalinists. In June 1941, Germany invaded the USSR, thereby consigning the Pact to the dustbin of history. This was a grave and momentous event, but at least it freed up Communists in France and elsewhere to act in line with their instincts once again. By the end of the war, the PCF was claiming that it alone had been at the vanguard of the French Resistance and, likewise, that the liberation of the country was due almost exclusively to its efforts. Likewise in Norway: 'The Communists were not involved in and could not be involved in

resistance activity before June 22, 1941, when Germany invaded the Soviet Union. But from that moment on, the Comintern ordered a one hundred and eighty degree turn in the party line. The "imperialist war" had suddenly become a "great patriotic war"..."[11]

Thus, in France and Norway - and elsewhere - we witness the strange sight of Communists collaborating with Hitler. It was a short-term, temporary phenomenon, but intriguing nevertheless. In France, the process seemed to cause the PCF untold torment; in Norway, if Lee's account is to be believed, it caused the NKP only the minimum of discomfort. The fact that Communist activists in both countries were quick to execute a *volte-face* in June 1941 simply adds to the picture of collaboration as, in the most part, a convenient, ideology-free position.

During the war, even Tito, the great Yugoslav resistance leader, considered collaborating with the Germans to gain ground politically. Nothing came of this, but it does illustrate the crazy things that were going through people's heads at the time.

#### Religious elites and collaboration

If high-ranking Communists had a case to answer, so too did senior religious figures. In the Balkans and the Middle East, Islam stands accused. Many ordinary Muslims went to fight for Hitler, and the Grand Mufti of Jerusalem, Haj Amin al-Husseini, forged a close political alliance with him. As a man of supposed integrity, Haj Amin might have been expected to stand up to the Nazis, but he saw them as a key ally in his anti-Zionist crusade. For their part, the Germans welcomed his support:

Ministry of Foreign Affairs  
Berlin, April 28, 1942  
Your Eminence  
[The Grossmufti of  
Palestine Amin El Husseini]

In response to your letter and to the accompanying communication of His Excellency, Prime Minister Raschid Ali El Gailani, and confirming the terms of our conversation, I have the honour to inform you:

The German Government appreciates fully the confidence of the Arab peoples in the Axis Powers in their aims and in their determination to conduct the fight against the common enemy until victory is achieved. The German Government has the greatest understanding for the national aspirations of the Arab countries as have been expressed by you both and the greatest sympathy for the sufferings of your peoples under British oppression.

I have therefore the honour to assure you, in complete agreement with the Italian Government, that the independence and freedom of the suffering Arab countries presently subjected to British oppression, is also one of the aims of the German Government.



Germany is consequently ready to give all her support to the oppressed Arab countries in their fight against British domination, for the fulfilment of their national aim to independence and sovereignty and for the destruction of the Jewish National Home in Palestine.

As previously agreed, the content of this letter should be maintained absolutely secret until we decide otherwise.

I beg your Eminence to be assured of my highest esteem and consideration.

(Signed) Ribbentrop[12]

This was an unusual link-up - one founded on opportunism and a mutual distrust of the Jews. Haj Amin did not represent a state, but as the Grand Mufti he was a significant figure in moral and political, as well as religious, terms. His links with Hitler tell us that alliances were as much about common enemies as anything else.

There is disturbing evidence linking the Catholic Church to the Nazi regime. The accusation is that across Europe, the Church, or elements within it, condoned Nazism because it did not condemn it strongly enough. In some contexts, the value system of the Church coalesced with that of the Nazi-backed authorities; in others, individual priests or orders helped to protect war criminals in the post-war years. In Slovakia, there was the bizarre spectacle of a cleric - Tiso - heading up the puppet regime. But it is difficult to generalise: there was no one across-the-board response.

The issue of the Jewish Councils, and their behaviour during the wartime period, is also of considerable interest. The Nazis established Councils in Germany and also in other countries. They were representative bodies, staffed by members of the Jewish community. Hitler regarded them as 'intermediaries' in the Final Solution. Clearly, those Jews who became involved in the work of the Councils did all they could to obstruct the Nazis in their policy of persecution, but simply by taking up an 'official' role in the Holocaust, these people were leaving themselves open to criticism and condemnation. They were placed in a tortuous situation and the charge that was eventually thrown at them was grave: they aided and abetted the Nazis' programme of genocide against their own.

There was also collaboration *within* the Reich. As Daniel Goldhagen makes plain in his path-breaking work, *Hitler's Willing Executioners*, ordinary Germans invested a lot in Nazism and played their part in making the regime work, sometimes quite enthusiastically.[13] Economic and military elites had an interest in accommodating Hitler after 1933. The religious authorities also found themselves in a quandary. DG. Williamson argues that their chief interest lay in maintaining their independence rather than opposing the Reich.[14] Of course, there were individual priests of all denominations who executed heroic deeds in the name of anti-Nazism, but church leaders, on the whole, were hamstrung. Stephen Lee is even more disparaging: 'The Protestant Churches were prepared to welcome the arrival of the Nazi regime, regarding the



Weimar Republic as un-German and ungodly...The Catholic Church was also willing to collaborate with Hitler in 1933. The Centre Party, still a political arm of Catholicism, had supported Hitler's Enabling Act (March 1933) in return for certain religious guarantees from the government.'[15]

The conclusion must be that few religious groups and institutions had a totally clean conscience.

### Justifying collaboration

For those who engaged in collaboration, of whatever type, the key questions were these: how could they rationalise their behaviour and how could they justify it to themselves and to the wider world? It was a big challenge, but strenuous attempts were made to square the circle, to explain what many commentators considered to be the unexplainable. There was a constant refrain: the circumstances of war and occupation had brought with them new and unpleasant dilemmas.

Ordinary men and women in occupied countries claimed they couldn't help but acknowledge, and thus accept, the German presence. They were not collaborating as such; merely trying to 'survive', 'get by' and 'earn a living'. At times, it was difficult for these people to sound convincing. Was it not the writer Simone de Beauvoir who stated, 'In Occupied France the mere fact of being alive implied acquiescence in oppression'?[16] Of course, in an ideal world, all members of society would have stuck to the straight and narrow, and kept their principles intact; but the situation between 1939 and 1945 was not ideal, and attitudes and behaviour varied accordingly.

In a similar manner, civil servants such as Hans Max Hirschfeld in the Netherlands implied that they had no alternative but to work with their German masters. They were doing a job, filling a void, and - in their own minds, at least - not compromising themselves too much by working with the Germans on a purely administrative level.

There is also the interesting case of the Ustashe and the Chetniks in Yugoslavia. As the puppet government, the Ustashe ruled Croatia with an iron fist; the Chetniks in Serbia also ended up collaborating with the Germans. Brian Hall, exploring the politics of Yugoslavia in the 1990s, says:

The Croats had been right when they said many more Serbs were now openly calling themselves Chetniks than there were Croats calling themselves Ustashas. But although Tito's post-war government had demonised both of its former enemies, the Chetniks had had, on the whole, a more understandable rationale for their actions. Whereas the Ustashas had been enthusiastic collaborators with the Nazis from the beginning, and had begun the ethnic slaughter, the Chetniks, though anti-Croat - especially after what they considered the Croatian betrayal of their Yugoslavia - concentrated at the beginning on fighting the Germans. However, they viewed as their sacred mission the preservation of the Serb nation, so when the Germans

started shooting fifty Serb peasants for every dead German, they pulled back [and began to collaborate].[17]

It is as if there were 'good' collaborators (the Chetniks - preserving Serb lives) and 'bad' collaborators (the Ustashe - doing Hitler's dirty work with vim and vigour). This is another interesting perspective on the issue.

Hall goes on to liken the collaboration of Mihailovič's Chetniks - originally a resistance force - to the collaboration of the Danes. He says there was a common philosophy: 'We will accomplish nothing by fighting so powerful an enemy except our own destruction.'[18] This was one important rationale for colluding with the erstwhile enemy (in the case of the Chetniks - the Germans and the puppet government of General Milan Nedič).

Then there were political leaders like Pétain who argued that by collaborating with Hitler on a governmental level, they were in fact 'shielding' their countries from the worst excesses of Nazism, and thus should be admired rather than castigated.

The case of General Tsolakoglu in Greece is pertinent. He surrendered to the Germans in April 1941 and thereafter 'proclaimed his readiness to serve the "Führer of the German people"; a government that he headed, he assured the Germans, would be supported by all the senior generals of the Greek army.' And in a manner reminiscent of Marshal Pétain in France, he began his first public proclamation as leader with the words: 'We are known to you as soldiers and patriots'.[19]

Thus, here were two men who had 'sacrificed themselves' to their respective nations at a time of national disaster. There was gentle irony in the fact that two military men had emerged as 'saviour figures' in the aftermath of military defeat and humiliation, but not unexpectedly, the blame was shifted rather adroitly to the politicians of the 1930s, whose policies and politics had been misguided, and who had 'failed' in their own primary duties.

Gerhard Hirschfeld, however, ridicules the type of thinking that high-level collaborators, like Tsolakoglu and Pétain, engaged in, and the justifications they attempted to put forward. He says that collaboration did not moderate suffering, but actually increased it.[20] As examples of this, Vichy's contribution to the Holocaust and its commitment to sending French workers to Nazi Germany is cited, and this evidence tends to validate the 'extra mile' thesis mentioned earlier.

At the same time, however, we must recognise that some political leaders all too easily pigeon-holed as collaborators *did* engage in 'spoiling tactics'. Tiso, the man who Hitler regarded as his puppet in Slovakia, had a corporatist-clerical agenda that he wished to implement regardless of the Nazis' plans for his country. As such, in power he proved to be anything but a soft touch. Rather, he was difficult to deal with and independent in his thinking.

In France, Pierre Laval - Pétain's chief minister - prided himself on his awkwardness. Throughout the years of occupation, he was quite open in the way that he talked about his close relationship with Otto Abetz, the German

Ambassador to France. But, he did not want to go down in history as compliant in all spheres, and the testimonies of some of his colleagues do give the impression that he tried to obstruct the Germans. Henry Cado, director-general of the French police, has revealed what Laval said to him when he (Cado) took up his post: 'They will make demands; you must make demands'.[21]

There were other types of collaborators who did not feel the need to apologise for their actions, or seek to justify them. The 'collaborationists' - those who bought into the ideology of Nazism - believed passionately in what they were doing, and were committed to 'long-term and unlimited cooperation'.[22] The truth is that these people wished to glorify their actions rather than excuse them. Perhaps the collaborationists were the *real* collaborators.

## II CONCEPTUALISING COLLABORATION

As might be expected given the contentiousness of collaboration as a political strategy, commentators have spent a lot of time and energy in conceptualising it. There are many and various approaches - individual writers and historians have their own personal emphases - but there is also an element of agreement and consensus.

Butler focuses on Hitler's allies in Eastern Europe. He labels them 'jackals'; in other words, leaders who assisted 'another's immoral behaviour'. On balance, he concludes that individuals like King Boris in Bulgaria and Admiral Miklós Horthy in Hungary were 'moderates' when compared to the fanatics who succeeded them in the later stages of the war.[23] In fact, there is an argument that says 'Hitler's allies' were not collaborators at all. Rather, we should view them as what they actually were: sovereign states that were neither occupied nor subjugated by Hitler. According to this line of thinking, allies were allies, not collaborators.

According to Bennett, collaboration - proper collaboration, pursued by out-and-out collaborators, not allies - was about the 'national interest'. During the wartime period, this phrase was utilised frequently by Quisling, Pétain and other collaborators. They believed that the 'national interest' - a vague, abstract concept at the best of times - gave political leaders like themselves the right to treat individuals (especially Jews) as pawns in (what they viewed as) a complicated but absorbing political game. Needless to say, policies based on 'national interest' were almost totally devoid of moral and ethical considerations.

For his part, Primo Levi, the Italian anti-fascist writer, has talked about a 'grey zone' in which collaboration took place - a notion that seems to capture the ambiguities and dilemmas implicit in pro-German behaviour.[24] Here we have to remember that there were different varieties and degrees of collaboration, and that sometimes it was simply a last resort or a 'front'. Nothing was ever cut and dried. Peasants and members of the intelligentsia in Ukraine engaged in military collaboration, but claimed that they were inspired by hatred of the Soviets rather than admiration for the Nazis. It is alleged that the French socialist, François Mitterrand, worked for the Vichy regime; yet four decades later he was elected his country's president and served for two full terms (1981-95). How do we explain and rationalise these two very different scenarios?

The experience of occupation forced 'choices' on *all* individuals, argues JF.

Sweets.[25] In his work, Istvan Deak explores the same theme. He says that for ordinary people there was a choice - accommodation or opposition - but for some communities, like the Jews and gypsies, there was no choice.[26] This line of thinking highlights the enormous moral consequences of Nazi hegemony. It impacted on the lives of everyone. Men, women and children had to stand up and be counted. In reality, even some Jews had a choice. In Germany, the Jewish Councils opted to cooperate with the Nazi authorities, to help in the round-up of Jews. For some observers, this was easily the most disgusting form of collaboration.

During the post-war period, collaboration became a political football. As we will discover in Chapter 8, those on the left demonised it; some on the right and far right sought to justify it.

### Pluralising collaboration

As we have noted, collaboration is an umbrella term, and as such, we should certainly think of it in the plural rather than the singular. 'Unpacking' the term, however, brings its own problems. How many sub-varieties of collaboration are there? Where are they quite distinct and where do they merge? What commonalities are there? At a push, it is possible to delineate six main variants of collaboration.

*'Heart-and-soul' collaboration:* This is closeness to Nazism on an ideological plane - not *doing* anything as such, just *believing* that Hitler and Nazism were the future. This equates to Werner Warmbrunn's concept of 'voluntary' collaboration and Werner Rings' notion of 'unconditional' collaboration:

A strange and motley crew rallied beneath the banner of unconditional collaboration: Marcel Déat, the socialist philosopher; Kaminsky, the Russian general; Fritz Clausen, the Danish doctor; Vidkun Quisling, the ex-staff officer and diplomat; Jacques Doriot, the ex-Comintern official; Léon Degrelle, the Catholic fascist; and numerous others - a bewildering assortment of characters, motives, ambitions, and political bankrupts. It is nonetheless possible to generalise. 1. In no occupied country were extreme collaborators granted the recognition and authority they had banked on. 2. Whether as supernumeraries, soldiers, aids to administration and repression, or political pawns in the hands of the occupying power, they were always in the minority and always on the sidelines. 3. Under German occupation, their average support amounted to no more than 2 percent of the indigenous population.[27]

In essence, this type of collaboration is about conviction and belief, genuine collaboration perhaps. If we were to resort to a colloquialism, we would talk about a 'meeting of minds'.

In the context of the Netherlands, Warmbrunn talks about 'collaboration with the Germans to the detriment of humanitarian considerations or Dutch national

interest, motivated by National Socialist convictions or by a desire for personal gain.' For him, this kind of collaboration is akin to treason.[28] In the context of France, historians now distinguish between 'collaborationism' (this 'unconditional' ideological closeness) and 'collaboration' (working with the enemy on a purely practical and logistical level). It could be said that any phenomenon that gives birth to a new piece of terminology has to be taken seriously.

*The 'shield' philosophy:* Bennett talks about collaborators who wanted to 'protect' their country and 'avert the worst'.[29] Others refer to 'neutral' or 'reasonable' collaboration. Rings uses the first term and Warmbrunn the second in trying to describe the same kind of attitude - in effect, retaining a handle on local administration for the 'greater good'. In practice, this meant working faithfully with the occupiers and putting into effect all routine edicts that emanated from them. The Jews who served on Jewish Councils - the administrative bodies set up by the Nazis - believed in protecting their own kith and kin. They weren't staffing these organisations because they wanted to speed up the Holocaust, but because they wanted to minimise it in whatever way possible.

Governments in Holland, Norway and Belgium all made a point of carrying out administrative duties, but not legislating.[30] This was the 'shield' philosophy in action. It could be argued that Hans Max Hirschfeld, a senior civil servant in the Netherlands (he held the post of secretary-general for economic affairs), personified this type of collaboration, or non-collaboration as it should be known perhaps. He attracted much flak, but he always maintained that it was important for his country to carry on functioning properly during the occupation. He argued that if he had a role to play in this, so be it. In France, Pétain and Laval put great faith in the 'shield' philosophy, but Gerhard Hirschfeld is not convinced; he argues that France, more than any other country, actively supported the German war effort.[31]

*'Conditional' collaboration:* This was a shrewd strategy, a halfway house between resistance and total collaboration: 'The conditional collaborator says: "I cooperate with the occupying power although I endorse only some, not all, of the National Socialist doctrines. Subject to that proviso, I am ready and eager to collaborate faithfully because I wish to change the circumstances that dictate my attitude."'[32]

Whether they were conscious of it or not, many ordinary people would have played the role of 'conditional collaborators'. Their instincts told them to obey the new authorities in place; their consciences told them that the new rulers were illegitimate. This was the dilemma. They hoped that the liberation, when it came, would vindicate their pragmatic positioning *vis-à-vis* the occupying power.

According to Rings, there were many excellent examples of conditional collaboration: in Norway, where ordinary folk followed a 'third way' between resistance and collaboration; in Holland, where the Netherlands Union - a new body - blended pro-German and anti-German sentiments; and in Denmark and France, where the governments made it official policy. He also highlights the case of 'Red Army officials and Communist Party officials' who engaged in this specific type of collaboration after they had been taken prisoner.[33]

*'Tactical' collaboration:* This almost merged into conditional collaboration. Bennett calls this 'the double game', a manipulative and duplicitous tactic. In a sense, tactical collaboration was about out-bluffing the Germans. The strategy was used in the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia and Denmark. John Wuorinen portrays the Danish attitude as intelligent: 'Realistic adaptation to existing circumstances called for collaboration. The five years of the occupation offered repeated tests of the Danes' adaptability and capacity for defining the limits of their accommodation of the Germans. Much had to be yielded between 1940 and 1945, but a great deal was saved.'<sup>[34]</sup>

Whether the Danes knew it or not, they were engaging in tactical collaboration. When Stalin signed the Nazi-Soviet Pact in 1939, he was doing so as part of a strategy - even if it backfired in the end. Likewise, when the Jewish Councils cooperated with the Nazis, they were making a calculation, however mistaken and ill-judged. In France, René Bousquet made his name as a minister in the pro-Nazi Vichy government, but in 1949, when he came before the High Court of Liberation Justice, he was given a light sentence because of the help he had also given to the Resistance. Thus, as a ploy, tactical collaboration could be viewed as both cynical and smart. It was one of the many 'grey zones between the 'black' and 'white' of resistance and collaboration.<sup>[35]</sup>

*'Submission...on the grounds of superior force':* This type of collaboration was about coming to terms with reality, about recognising outright political and military superiority. Warmbrunn argues that this position was equivalent to 'accommodation', accepting the status quo, however unpleasant. In turn, Gerhard Hirschfeld says that 'accommodation' was a kind of staging-post on the road to collaboration proper.<sup>[36]</sup> He goes on to argue that one of the most accomplished exponents of 'accommodation' was Dr Hendrik Colijn, a noted Dutch politician. After his country had been invaded by the Germans, he set up the Nederlandse Unie (Netherlands Union), a body that envisaged working with the occupiers rather than instinctively opposing them. Colijn's philosophy was based on realism and practicalities, and when it looked like Hitler might win the war, the Union's recruitment figures started to increase. We could also cite the example of the Dutch Calvinist newspaper, *De Standaard*. It adopted a policy of 'non-resistance' during the war, and paid the price afterwards.<sup>[37]</sup>

This variant of collaboration links into the attitude known as 'passive acquiescence'. This was the reality of the wartime experience for many people, and is one that the French novelist, Simone de Beauvoir, articulated in extremely vivid terms.<sup>[38]</sup> Experience was also to demonstrate that some civil servants and some newspaper editors were susceptible to this kind of collaboration.

*Attentisme:* In reality, this position was not dissimilar to that taken up by Colijn, the Netherlands Union and other 'accommodators'. In the early years of the war, *attentisme* was probably the most common attitude on display. Gerhard Hirschfeld defines it as 'a cautious waiting approach, a form of playing for time'.<sup>[39]</sup> As such, it has little in common with 'full-blown' collaboration.

A good example of this attitude in action came in Belgium. In 1940, King Leopold III capitulated to the Germans, and throughout the post-war years he was ridiculed for his 'gutless wait-and-see policy'. As Els Witte, Jan Craeybeckx and

Alain Meynen have argued, those on the left had plenty to go on: 'They criticised the pre-war policy of neutrality...his visit to Hitler in Berchtesgaden, the frequent and close contacts of his entourage with collaborating circles...the deportation of the royal family ahead of the liberation, the fact that the king had not condemned the persecution of the Jews and the forced labour deportations in public, and his refusal to back the resistance.'[40] In short, the monarch was over-cautious and unheroic in his wartime stance, and by 1951 the fall-out from his actions, or non-actions, forced him to abdicate.

In summary, it would be accurate to say that, whatever the dictionary definition of the word, collaboration has been interpreted, at the time and since, in wildly differing ways - from an 'honourable' course of action (Quisling, Pétain) to a callous, sinister and Machiavellian operation (most historians and twenty-first century observers). It was a multifarious phenomenon. There was genuine collaboration but also forms of collaboration that weren't really collaboration at all. In the end, the activity of collaboration was subject to gradations (some individuals were executed for their wartime behaviour; others were simply let off).

We could actually go further and suggest that there were as many types of collaboration as there were individual collaborators. Everyone had their own, very personal way of 'doing business'. Haj Amin, the Grand Mufti of Jerusalem, was obsessed by the issue of the Jews; Stalin sought a diplomatic breathing-space; the ideological collaborators wished to make a statement of political intent; Dr Colijn of the Netherlands Union and officials of the various Jewish Councils were determined to work alongside the Germans in an effort to 'tone down' the harshness of their rule; puppet leaders like Quisling and Pavelić wanted a taste of power, however hollow and derivative. Many collaborators, many different types of collaboration.

Now that we have explored the meaning, or meanings, of the term, it is time we moved on to the 'story' of collaboration. What actually happened? When did collaboration emerge as a discernible phenomenon? What were the main landmarks in its history?

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[1] R. Butler. *Hitler's Jackals* (London, Pen and Sword, 1998).

[2] RCF. *Maugham, Jersey under the Jackboot* (London, WH.Allen & Co., 1946), p.40.

[3] P. Auty, *Tito: A Biography* (London, Pelican, 1974), p.230; RD. Kaplan, *Balkan Ghosts: A Journey Through History* (New York, Vintage, 1996), p.20.

[4] G. Hirschfeld & P. Marsh (eds.), *Collaboration in France. Politics and Culture during the Nazi Occupation 1940-1944* (Oxford, Berg, 1989), p.2.

[5] P. Burrin, *Living with Defeat: France under the German Occupation* (London, Hodder Headline, 1996), p.101.

[6] R. Bennett, *Under the Shadow of the Swastika: The Moral Dilemmas of Resistance and Collaboration in Hitler's Europe* (New York, New York University Press, 1999), p.55.

[7] Butler, p.59

[8] Hirschfeld & Marsh, p.3. The point is echoed in G. Hirschfeld, *Nazi Rule and Dutch Collaboration: The*



Netherlands under German Occupation, 1940-1945 (Oxford, Berg, 1988), p.3.

[9] For the full text, see The Avalon Project ([www.yale.edu/lawweb/avalon/avalon.htm](http://www.yale.edu/lawweb/avalon/avalon.htm)): Nazi-Soviet Relations 1939-1941 - Treaty of Nonaggression Between Germany and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics.

[10] [www.geocities.com/CapitolHill/2808/norway.html](http://www.geocities.com/CapitolHill/2808/norway.html).

[11] [www.geocities.com/CapitolHill/2808/norway.html](http://www.geocities.com/CapitolHill/2808/norway.html).

[12] [www.eretzyisroel.org/~jkatz/nazis.html](http://www.eretzyisroel.org/~jkatz/nazis.html).

[13] DJ. Goldhagen, *Hitler's Willing Executioners: Ordinary Germans and the Holocaust* (New York, Knopf, 1996).

[14] DG. Williamson, *The Third Reich* (London, Longman, 1995), p.87.

[15] SJ. Lee, *European Dictatorships* (London, Routledge, 2000), p.185.

[16] S. De Beauvoir, *The Prime of Life* (London, Penguin, 1965), p.470.

[17] B. Hall, *The Impossible Country: A Journey Through the Last Days of Yugoslavia* (London, Penguin, 1994), pp.108-9.

[18] Hall, p.109.

[19] M. Mazower, *Inside Hitler's Greece: the Experience of Occupation, 1941-44* (Yale, Yale University Press, 1993), pp.18-19.

[20] Hirschfeld & Marsh, pp.12-14.

[21] Quoted in *France during the German Occupation, 1940-44, Vol.II* (California, The Hoover Institution, c.1947).

[22] Hirschfeld & Marsh, p.10. See Chapter 4 of this study for more on the collaborationists.

[23] See Butler.

[24] Bennett, p.56-7.

[25] See JF. Sweets, *Choices in Vichy France* (O.U.P., New York, 1994).

[26] See [www.columbia.edu/~id1/832new.htm](http://www.columbia.edu/~id1/832new.htm).

[27] W. Rings, *Life with the Enemy: Collaboration and Resistance in Hitler's Europe, 1939-1945* (London, Doubleday, 1982), pp.104-5.

[28] W. Warmbrunn, *The Dutch under German Occupation, 1940-1945* (Stanford, Stanford University Press, 1963).

[29] See Bennett.

[30] [www.black-schaffer.com/info/classes/hist53/paxton\\_chapter\\_14.html](http://www.black-schaffer.com/info/classes/hist53/paxton_chapter_14.html).

[31] Hirschfeld & Marsh, pp.12-14.

[32] Rings, p.106.

[33] Rings, p.106-7.

[34] JH. Wuorinen, *Scandinavia* (New Jersey, Prentice Hall, 1965), p.75.

[35] G. Hirschfeld, *Nazi Rule and Dutch Collaboration: The Netherlands under German Occupation, 1940-1945* (Oxford, Berg, 1988), p.7.

[36] Hirschfeld, p.57; Hirschfeld & Marsh, p.8.

[37] See Chapter 5 of this study.

[38] [www.black-schaffer.com/info/classes/hist53/paxton\\_chapter\\_14.html](http://www.black-schaffer.com/info/classes/hist53/paxton_chapter_14.html).

[39] Hirschfeld & Marsh, p.7.

[40] E. Witte, J. Craeybeckx & A. Meynen, Political History of Belgium: From 1830 Onwards (Brussels, VUB University Press, 2000), p.179.