



# HITLER'S COLLABORATORS

PHILIP MORGAN

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## **Advance praise for *Hitler's Collaborators***

'Focussing on Western and Northern countries in Hitler's Europe, Philip Morgan illustrates and assesses the captivating history of collaboration with the German occupier during the Second World War. It ranges from the appeasing and accommodating attitudes during the early phase of Nazi-occupation to the ambivalent role of state officials and businessmen, and finally, discusses the deplorable collusion and complicity in the deportation of Jews. Far from moralizing, Morgan's meticulous study explains the realities and reasons, as well as the consequences, of this equally diverse and disturbing phenomenon.'

**Professor Gerhard Hirschfeld, University of Stuttgart**

'In common with studies of resistance to Nazi occupation during the Second World War, the myriad forms of collaboration have largely been studied from a purely national perspective. In an overtly comparative and accessibly written approach to the subject, Philip Morgan sets out to summarize the debates on state, bureaucratic, and economic collaboration during the Nazi occupation, and provides his own distinctive analysis to explain the behaviour of all those involved.'

**Professor Bob Moore, University of Sheffield**

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Choosing between bad and worse in Nazi-occupied Western Europe

PHILIP MORGAN

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*This book is dedicated to my friends and colleagues, Mike and Lesley,  
and their wondrous joint project, The White House.*



## Preface

In my last years as a lecturer at the University of Hull, I devised and taught a final year module, 'Occupation, Collaboration, and Resistance in Northern and Western Europe, 1940–1945'. Many of the students who took the module did not 'get' collaboration, despite my efforts to make civil servants interesting. This shortage of empathy was mainly, I think, because they could not envisage anyone beyond the usual suspects, fascists and Nazis, actually choosing to collaborate with such an evidently 'evil' phenomenon as German Nazism. This book is, retrospectively, and far too late for them, in the hope that they have carried on reading.

The title and concept of the module were stolen, with his permission, from my friend and ex-colleague in European Studies at Hull, Mike Smith, after he had taken the fork in the road to university management and strategy. He had taught a module with the same title, and built up in the university library an impressive collection of foreign-language primary and secondary materials. He relished, as I did, the chance offered in a European Studies programme of tackling European history with undergraduate students who also had a facility in one or more European languages. His own contribution to the field was an article on that extraordinary Dutch political phenomenon of the early period of Nazi occupation, the *Nederlandse Unie*, with the provocative title 'Neither Resistance nor Collaboration...'.<sup>1</sup> Mike died before he could fully indoctrinate me with his approach to collaboration, and I think he would have produced a more iconoclastic view of collaboration than the one I have in this book. So, with apologies for its moderation and caution, this book is also for Mike, and for European Studies.

All the translations from French are mine. I am grateful for the help of an ex-colleague, Esther Velthoen, in translating articles in Dutch on the two most important officials in the Dutch wartime ministerial administration; and to Wendy Burke and Rob Riemsma for kindly translating the Dutch government's instructions to its top civil servants. Thanks, also, to Keith Hill,



who kept me abreast of what to read, and not read, on wartime Belgium; and to Professor Hans Otto Frøland, of the University of Trondheim, and Emeritus Professor Mark Van den Wijngaert, of the Catholic University of Brussels, for their helpful suggestions on reading for Norway and Belgium respectively. Dot Merriott, without any bidding from me, kindly tracked down the Frank Capa photograph.

I must also thank the anonymous reader of the draft manuscript for stimulating some last-minute additions to the text. I did not agree with the points that were made, but the critique enabled me to clarify and strengthen the basic argument of the book.

The greatest thanks should go to my OUP editor, Matthew Cotton, who has been patiently encouraging, compassionate, and understanding, throughout the research and writing of a book that has been rather too long in the gestation. I can only hope that he is happy with the outcome of a prolonged wait, which is as much the product of his own perseverance, as of mine.

P.J.M.

# *Acknowledgement*

I would like to thank my editor at Oxford University Press, Matthew Cotton, for his forbearance and encouragement in bringing this book to completion.



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Map 1. Vichy France, 1940-1944





# Abbreviations

|         |   |
|---------|---|
| CGQJ    | <i>Commissariat Général aux Questions Juives</i> (General Commissariat for Jewish Affairs: France)                                |
| CGT     | <i>Confédération Générale du Travail</i> (General Confederation of Labour: France)  |
| CNAA    | <i>Corporation Nationale de l'Agriculture et de l'Alimentation</i> (National Corporation of Agriculture and Food Supply: Belgium) |
| CO      | <i>Comité d'Organisation</i> (Organization Committee: France)   |
| DNSAP   | <i>Danmarks Nationalsocialistiske Arbejder Parti</i> (Danish National Socialist Workers Party)                                    |
| EEC     | European Economic Community   |
| FFI     | <i>Forces Françaises de l'Intérieur</i> (French Home Forces)  |
| Gestapo | <i>Geheime Staatspolizei</i> (Secret State Police: Nazi Germany)  |
| GMR     | <i>Groupes Mobiles de Réserve</i> (mobile reserve force)  |
| Nap     | <i>Noyautage des administrations publiques</i> (Infiltration of Public Services)  |
| NG      | <i>Nederlandse Gemeenschap</i> (Netherlands Community)  |
| NS      | <i>Nasjonal Samling</i> (National Unity: Norway)  |
| NSB     | <i>Nationaal-Socialistische Beweging</i> (National Socialist Movement: Netherlands)   |
| NU      | <i>Nederlandse Unie</i> (United Netherlands)  |
| OCRPI   | <i>Office Central de Répartition des Produits Industriels</i> (Central Office for the Allocation of Industrial Products: France)  |
| ONT     | <i>Office National du Travail</i> (National Labour Office: Belgium)   |
| OT      | <i>Organisation Todt</i> (Todt Organization: Nazi Germany)  |
| PPF     | <i>Parti Populaire Français</i> (French Popular Party)  |
| PTT     | <i>Postes, Télégraphes et Téléphones</i> (Postal Services and Telecommunications: France)   |
| RHSA    | <i>Reichssicherheitshauptamt</i> (Central Office of Reich Security: Nazi Germany)   |
| RNP     | <i>Rassemblement National Populaire</i> (National Popular Rally: France)  |
| SCAP    | <i>Service de Contrôle des Administrateurs Provisoires</i> (Inspectorate of Provisional Business Administrators: France)          |

|                |   |
|----------------|---|
| <i>SD</i>      | <i>Sicherheitsdienst</i> (Security Service: Nazi Germany)                       |
| <i>SIPO</i>    | <i>Sicherheitspolizei</i> (State Security Police: Nazi Germany)                 |
| <i>SNCB</i>    | <i>Société Nationale des Chemins de Fer Belge</i> (National Belgian Railways)   |
| <i>SNCF</i>    | <i>Société Nationale des Chemins de Fer Français</i> (French National Railways) |
| <i>SS</i>      | <i>Schutz Staffeln</i> (Protection Units: Nazi Germany)                         |
| <i>STO</i>     | <i>Service du Travail Obligatoire</i> (Compulsory Labour Service: France)       |
| <i>Sybelec</i> | <i>Syndicat Belge de l'Acier</i> (Belgian Steel Syndicate)                      |
| <i>USSR</i>    | Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (The Soviet Union)                          |
| <i>VNV</i>     | <i>Vlaamsch Nationaal Verbond</i> (Flemish National League)                     |
| <i>ZAST</i>    | <i>Zentralauftragstelle</i> (Central Ordering Office: Nazi Germany)             |

# Introduction

## Dealing with the Past

This book deals with collaboration, the most contentious, uncongenial, and divisive of the responses of occupied peoples to Nazi Germany's wartime occupation of Europe. The term itself has changed in tone and meaning during and as a result of the wartime experience of cooperation with Nazi Germany in the occupied territories. We can scarcely use the term in its positive sense of working together in partnership on a common task or towards a common aim, without acknowledging its degradation into meaning a traitorous cooperation with an enemy power in occupation of one's own country. Its treasonable connotations were evident, or at least articulated, by the time of the Allied liberation of European countries from Nazi domination in 1944–5. But in October 1940, after meeting Hitler, the head of the French state, Marshal Philippe Pétain, made not quite the first public and official announcement of the term to mean simply, and positively, the cooperation between a country and its occupying power.

Some historians have even stopped using such an apparently tainted term, preferring to find alternatives, like 'accommodation,'<sup>1</sup> which, to my mind, indicates a form or mode of collaboration, rather than another way of expressing it. Danish resisters and collaborators used the word 'cooperation' to describe the policy of state-to-state collaboration between the Danish and German governments, and then gave different intonations to the term as they used it against each other. Both contemporaries and historians in Denmark have been reluctant to employ the term 'collaboration' at all. When they did so, it again denoted a particular mode of collaboration, in this case, active collaboration in the service of enemy, rather than the generic phenomenon of collaboration itself.<sup>2</sup> But, Denmark aside, 'collaboration' was the word generally used by those who resisted the Germans, and those

who collaborated with the Germans, even when, towards the end of the war, the term was becoming a taunt and a mark of shame and dishonour. There seems to be no valid reason to abandon the term for a synonym, or a euphemism.

The important terminological distinction that needs to be made, however, is that between 'collaboration' and 'collaborationism', if only because so many historians continue to use the terms interchangeably. 'Collaborationists' were those people who chose to cooperate fully and unequivocally with the Nazi German occupiers, and did so out of a sense of ideological affinity with Nazism and of ideological conviction that this was the right thing to do. They were, above all, though not exclusively, local fascists, none of them of any significant or lasting political weight in the late 1930s, but galvanized by German military victories into believing that their chance had come. Given their poor political and electoral performance in the 1930s, collaboration with the Nazi occupier was probably their only route to power, after 1940.

The fascists' national enemies were also those of Nazi Germany: Jews, communists, masons, liberals, democrats. The German Nazi regime was taken by them as a model to emulate in their own countries, a leading example of what their own national fascist revolutions would achieve. It is the case that towards the end of the war, and *in extremis*, the Nazi occupiers had to rely increasingly on their ideological collaborators, as they effectively became besieged in the territories they occupied. In occupied Norway, Vidkun Quisling, the leader of the fascist movement, *Nasjonal Samling* or National Unity, was made Prime Minister of an NS government in February 1942. But this experiment was not really repeated anywhere else in occupied Northern and Western Europe. 'Quisling' has, unfortunately, become a concept in his or its own right, leading to an unhelpful blurring of the boundaries between 'collaboration' and 'collaborationism', to the point that 'collaboration' is taken to be 'collaborationism'.

There are good historical reasons for taking the view that Quisling is not the real face of collaboration in Nazi-occupied Europe. The local fascists clearly expected German help in bringing about in their own countries what the Nazis had themselves achieved in Germany. But their vision of a 'fascitized' Europe was one of a federated Europe of 'fascitized' and sometimes enlarged national states. The nationalism of the local fascisms, which was what defined them, cut across the prevailing German Nazi idea of incorporating Germanic peoples into a Greater Germanic empire where Nazi Germany was the core, hegemonic power. These contrasting visions

of the new Europe made for often prickly collaboration between the fascists and the occupier and its agencies, and mutual frustration and disappointment. The Germans had reservations about the collaborationists on other counts, too. They were unpopular, before and during the war, which meant they could not really deliver on anything, besides repression, and certainly could not be relied on to govern the occupied territories with any significant level of popular sympathy or tolerance. What made them unpopular, of course, was their undisguised aspiration to 'fascistize' their own societies. Quisling's quasi-governmental role irrevocably shifted the balance between collaboration and resistance in occupied Norway, and made German occupation inherently unstable and contested. This book can hardly avoid mentioning Quisling again, but it is not a book about Quisling and the like.

The book concentrates on the wartime situation in occupied Northern and Western European countries, because the opportunities, or gaps, for collaboration were much more evident there than in occupied Central and Eastern Europe. Arguably the crux of the war was the German invasion of the Soviet Union in June 1941. The invasion was designed to open up 'living space' for German colonization and settlement in Eastern Europe and the Western USSR, which was Hitler's permanent solution to the perceived insecurity of Germany and the Aryan race in Europe and the world.

During the war, Hitler did, sometimes, talk privately of some colonization in Western Europe, indicating a swathe of territory from Belgium to eastern France, from where, it was thought, a Francophone population could be expelled and replaced by German farmers from south Tyrol. Parts of this area were an exclusion zone during the war, deliberately cut off from France. The French inhabitants of this zone were initially prevented from returning there after the great dispersal of the French population during the German invasion of France in the summer of 1940. The Germans set up farming colonization agencies in the area, which confiscated local farms, presumably indicating the region as a site of future mass German settlement. But, in Hitler's view of things, Northern and Western Europe were not typically and not generally seen as territory to be conquered, and then settled and colonized.

German occupation was bound to be more brutal and emphatic in areas designated for German settlement in the east than in areas that were not. There is, here, a fundamental distinction between how the Germans occupied Eastern, and then, Western Europe, which had important implications for how the occupied peoples responded to occupation. The margins for

collaboration were correspondingly greater, and for resistance, smaller, in Western Europe than in Eastern Europe. In Poland, Nazi occupation, from the start, practically excluded collaboration; the aim was to destroy, for good, the Polish state and nation, and prepare a clean slate for German colonization. In Poland, as a result, organized, armed underground resistance to German occupation was almost immediate. The Nazi authorities in annexed and occupied Poland, and in Western Russia, ruled out or minimized economic collaboration by their actions. Jewish capital and management were eliminated and excluded from the economy, and Germans took over and ran large businesses. German officials, managers, and technical experts organized and coordinated production, usually through public agencies working hand in hand in a subordinating capacity with private German companies. There was no interest in reviving local economies after war, only in plundering resources for the Nazi German war effort. Even in these circumstances, the occupying Germans were capable of squeezing out some marginal economic collaboration, sometimes pragmatically subcontracting to local firms where 'Germanization' proved to be difficult. Peasants supplied the occupying forces with food, engineers and workers put their damaged factories and mines back to work, but under the severest of constraints. As a German official from the Economics ministry put it in August 1942, 'only he who works for the German war effort will be fed by us'.<sup>3</sup> The basic point still stands. In occupied Eastern Europe, the Nazis were not interested in collaboration, did not need it, and relied on coerced change in order to realize their ideological goal of a racial empire.

By comparison, in occupied Northern and Western Europe, existing states and nations were made up, in some cases, of those the Nazis regarded as 'Germanic' peoples rather than, in the Nazi outlook, racially inferior Slavs, and were, more or less, and in some form or another, left standing. This opened up the possibility of collaboration from the start.<sup>4</sup>

Although collaboration was a widespread phenomenon, it was largely undervalued in the period after the liberation of Europe from Nazi rule. During and immediately after the war, there emerged in all German-occupied countries a convincing and reassuring view of Nazi occupation, and of people's responses to it, which came to determine how post-war governments and societies regarded and judged the experience of wartime occupation until at least the 1970s. A French broadcaster, Roger Chevrier, spoke on behalf of Charles de Gaulle's exiled Free France movement in Britain in a radio series entitled 'The French talk to the French', beamed by BBC Radio London to

occupied France. In a transmission of June 1943, he mentioned that, ‘when we refer to the “Vichy police”, it goes without saying that we are not speaking of the whole of the French police, of which, we know, the majority are behaving as good patriots, but rather of the minority of sad individuals who have deliberately put themselves in the service of the enemy’.<sup>5</sup> The war was not yet over, far from it, and the liberation of France would not be launched for another year. But the tide of war was clearly moving against the Germans. In this context, the broadcast was an appeal and a warning, calculated to drive a wedge into the loyalties of policemen to France’s collaborating government at Vichy, with the clear insinuation that their patriotic duty now lay in not cooperating with the Germans. By deliberately assuming that the situation Free France wanted to bring about already existed, the broadcaster was attempting to induce policemen, and the French in France, to move to a line of conduct that corresponded to the desired outcome. His words were also a judgement, made from the outside and in advance of liberation, on the behaviour of France’s policemen during the occupation. The framework of that judgement was to be applied to the period of occupation, and to the French people’s wartime conduct, as a whole.

You can see how this view of the occupation took hold by looking at the photograph reproduced as Illustration 1, taken by the famous photojournalist



**Illustration 1.** A woman whose head has been shaved as punishment for her ‘horizontal collaboration’ with a German soldier is hounded through the streets of Chartres, in France, shortly after the liberation of the town from German occupation in August 1944.



'Frank Capa' (an assumed name), immediately after the liberation by Allied troops of a French town, Chartres. This is just to the south-west of Paris, was and is the main urban centre of its department, or administrative district, and was occupied by the Germans with a large military garrison from June 1940 until August 1944. To my eyes, now, it is a shocking and poignant reminder of popular revenge on a 'collaborator'. It would have represented something more to contemporaries. A young woman, head shaved and carrying her baby, is being paraded through Chartres to the general derision of the town's population. Her gender does not make her vulnerable, but weak, capricious, wilful, and unpatriotic. The look on her face is fearful, but not shameful. She is being publicly humiliated for 'horizontal collaboration', sleeping with the enemy, a victim of a kind of popular rough justice, which ensured her post-war social exclusion. A Norwegian woman from a small village near Narvik in northern Norway gave birth in November 1945 to a child conceived during a late occupation affair with a German army sergeant, and took the child to Sweden to escape the fate of the woman in Chartres. 'Norway's gift to Sweden', the Abba singer Frida Lyngstad met her German father for the first time in Stockholm, in 1977.

The woman in Chartres was also being punished for working for the Germans. Many of the women who had liaisons with German soldiers and officials were secretaries, hotel maids, laundresses, waitresses, women in daily, mundane contact with men of the forces of occupation, as they would then be, of course, with the men of the invading Allied armies. The man in the uniform and tin hat in Capa's photograph, taunting the woman as he walks alongside her, was a member of the *Forces Françaises de l'Intérieur* (FFI or French Home Forces), the umbrella Resistance 'army'. He completes the image of a town of resisters, and of self-liberation; you will notice that there is not a liberating Allied soldier in sight. A populace united in resistance to the occupiers takes its justified revenge on the lone figure of a woman who collaborated intimately with them. This is the way myths are made.

The photograph, taken on its own, is almost bound to be misleading. Capa's collection of photographs capturing the liberation of Chartres shows that several groups of women were identified for the shaving of heads ritual. One estimate is that between 10,000 and 15,000 French women were punished for having sex with Germans in post-war judicial and professional purge proceedings, and that probably tens of thousands of French women had sexual relationships with Germans during the occupation. The German

SS estimated that there were between 50,000 and 70,000 children resulting from such liaisons.<sup>6</sup>

Yet Capa's image entered and helped to shape the post-war reading of wartime occupation, that a patriotic, resisting majority had liberated itself from German occupation and its handful of unpatriotic collaborators. The consensual view of an overwhelming majority of resisters and a small, exiguous minority of collaborators was an entirely understandable version of events. The war was seen in all the occupied, and now liberated, countries of Northern and Western Europe as an extraordinary, abnormal experience. The occupying force was Nazi, as much as German, which introduced an unavoidable moral dimension to people's conduct during the war. Nazism, as an ideology and totalitarian system of rule, was regarded as being so 'evil' that it *had* to be resisted. It was a question of either cooperating with an 'evil' system, which was 'bad', or resisting it, which was 'good'. There were, or could not be, any qualification of these two responses. The only choice under German Nazi occupation seemed to be accepting and, therefore, collaborating with Nazism, or rejecting it, and then resisting; either collaboration or resistance. I do not think that the concept of 'evil' has any place in historical analysis; it simply short circuits any attempt at a meaningful examination of human conduct and motivation. But Nazism was an inhumane and morally repugnant ideology, and the nature of Nazism has led to very polarized and categorical terms of reference being used to study and analyse the war years.

Again, post-war recovery and reconstruction required governments and societies to re-create a sense of national unity, bring about a social pacification and reconciliation, even foster a deliberate obliviousness to the hatreds and divisions engendered and exacerbated by wartime occupation. The point can be made in obvious and self-evident ways. Where was the utility, and gain, in investigating and punishing businesses for entering into war contracts with the German occupier, when that would damage the post-war revival of the economy? In a speech made in September 1945, a short time after liberation, the Dutch Minister of Transport attempted to draw a line under the war experience for his audience of state employees. His speech commemorated the 1944 railway workers' strike against German occupation, a significant and effective act of resistance. Workers, he said, should not be blamed for working throughout the occupation; it was their honourable duty to carry on working, since maintaining the country's transport system had salvaged the network for national post-war use. At heart, he

concluded, the railway workers were 'resisters', neglecting to mention that railway employees had transported young Dutch men to forced labour in Germany, and had transferred Dutch and foreign Jews to transit camps, for deportation to the death camps in the East.<sup>7</sup>

The myth of a resisting nation, common to all once-occupied countries, was also a way for people in the immediate post-war period to cope with a multifaceted national humiliation constituted by military defeat, occupation, and liberation by foreign armies.<sup>8</sup> It was a myth enabling national redemption. The myth was essential to post-war reconstruction in a political, as well as a moral and economic, sense. The post-war political recovery of West European countries was based on a rejection of Nazism and all it represented. A post-war political consensus resting on anti-fascist and democratic foundations practically demanded that the history and memory of the wartime experience be assessed in the polarized but asymmetrical terms of a resisting majority triumphing over a collaborating minority.

Historiographically, and in terms of popular consciousness, things began to change in the 1970s, 1980, and 1990s. In part, this was down to a boom in the collection and dissemination of holocaust survivors' memories, and more generally of elderly people's memories of wartime. Accumulatively, these memories contested, fragmented, and nuanced the consensual myth of a resisting majority. Films, at another level of popular cognition and self-awareness, also changed the way people perceived life under German occupation, and the ways in which historians approached the experience of occupation.

The ground-breaking film in France was Marcel Ophüls', *Le Chagrin et la pitié* (*The Sorrow and the Pity*), commissioned by French State TV and completed in 1971. But it was banned from a TV showing for a decade, revealingly in the words of the head of the French broadcasting body, because 'certain myths are necessary for a people's well being and tranquillity'.<sup>9</sup> Purporting to be a documentary, Ophüls's mesmerizing four-hour-long film focuses on the town of Clermont-Ferrand, in south central France, during the war. It provides a skilful and highly manipulative mix of contemporary newsreels and interviews with both big shots and ordinary people. There is nothing in the film from or about de Gaulle. It offers a remorselessly unheroic representation of the French people under German occupation. The German ex-military commander in Clermont boasts of how well his troops were received by the local population; two secondary schoolteachers haltingly reminisce about the sacking of Jewish colleagues from their *lycée*, with nobody on the staff objecting

to their removal; a local peasant complains about the *maquis* (armed resistance bands living off the land) stealing his chickens, and calling down on his community, by their presence alone, the full weight of repression of the German and Vichy police; Maurice Chevalier, France's most popular performer and a very public partisan of the Vichy regime, delivers a sickly sentimental song about how beautiful France is; a contemporary newsreel shows the trial of the head of the Pathé film production company, later deported to his death, portraying him as a Jew and a pornographer.

Louis Malle's 1974 film *Lacombe, Lucien* had a similarly deflating impact on how the French people conventionally viewed the experience of occupation. Painstakingly authentic in its staging of a typically French small town and its rural hinterland in 1944, it was apparently based on a story told to Malle by a local farmer while Malle was staying in his second home in the French countryside. The film gives us a crushingly amoral portrait of a violent, inarticulate young man on the make. Turned down for the Resistance by the local teacher, whom he later betrays, he accidentally finds a literal and a psychological home in the hotel headquarters of a heterogeneous group of misfits working against the Resistance as agents of the German *Gestapo*. In Malle's film, resistance and collaboration are no longer polarized categories of behaviour, in a situation where people certainly made choices, but ones determined by the force of circumstances and opportunism, rather than any considered moral or principled stand.

The transforming power of cinema was particularly felt in the French revision of its wartime history, but its influence was experienced elsewhere, as well. In the Netherlands, for example, a rich vein of films in the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s punctured both the heroic resistance myth and the post-war drift into obliviousness about the war. Some of them sought to convey the same imaginative truth of Malle's films about the war in France, exploring the grey areas between the apparently polar opposites of collaboration and resistance, and sceptically questioning the motivations for people's behaviour and conduct during the country's occupation.<sup>10</sup>

In time, the private, now public, memories of the war interacted with other revelations about the past, emerging, for instance, from the trials of Frenchmen for wartime crimes against humanity, and helped to change the official memory of the war. In 1995, the President of France, Jacques Chirac, commemorating the anniversary of the round-up of Jews in Paris in 1942, acknowledged and apologized for the role of the wartime French state in the deportation from France of French and foreign Jews.

The shift of perspective on wartime occupation is especially marked in France and Denmark among the occupied countries of Northern and Western Europe. But it is less evident in Norway, where the reasons for the survival of the post-war 'nation of resisters' story should become evident in the course of this book. A French historian of collaboration in France during the war can argue that, 'taken to the extreme, every Frenchman who remained on territory occupied by the German army or that was under its control had, to some extent, "collaborated"'.<sup>11</sup> The transformation of France from a 'nation of resisters' to a 'nation of collaborators' is now complete.

The great majority of people, apparently, did nothing during the occupation to expel the Germans from France, an inertia that amounted to acquiescence, and functionally, 'collaboration'. An absence of 'resistance' becomes a factor of 'collaboration'. Apathy is taken, here, as passive support for the situation as it was, and represents a form of consent to German occupation. Doing nothing could equally, it seems to me, denote a resigned dislike or antipathy towards the occupier—in other words, a non-active form of dissent or opposition, and hence, a kind of 'resistance'.

This is a terminological and conceptual quagmire, from which one can at least draw one certain and one speculative conclusion. Those who collaborated or resisted by doing something, as opposed to doing nothing, 'active' collaborators and resisters, were undoubtedly minorities in the population as a whole. This might suggest that, for the great majority of people under occupation, life was neither a matter of collaboration, nor one of resistance. The problem with this rather too neat formulation is that the war and German occupation were extremely intrusive in their impacts on peoples' daily lives. There was widespread penury arising from wartime shortages and increasing German demands on the economic and manpower resources of occupied countries. People, as a result, were obliged to have often difficult and uncomfortable relations and contacts with those in authority, whether German, national, or local. If people in straitened wartime circumstances did what they had to do in order to survive, and often found themselves acting inconsistently from one encounter to the next, then it is at least questionable whether terms such as 'collaboration' and 'resistance' can convey the sense of the wide range of behaviours necessary to ensure survival in tough times. It might be more illuminating, and closer to the reality of choices people made under occupation, to assess collaboration and resistance on a continuum of attitudes and conduct, with armed resistance and collaborationism at the two extreme ends of the line. This might

work rather better than the usual collaboration/resistance axis, which presumes a once and for all choice on one side or the other of the great moral divide between the two. We need, perhaps, to remind ourselves of the wise, humane, and, it must be said, unpopular words of Václav Havel, the Czech writer, intellectual, and dissident who became the first democratically elected president of Czechoslovakia. Reflecting on life in what he called ‘post-totalitarian’ society, he argued that the system that oppressed people was sustained by the people themselves, who were simultaneously its victims and supporters. The division between victim and perpetrator ran through individuals, and was not something that separated one individual from another.<sup>12</sup>

Life is often a messy affair, and historians face the occupational hazard of failing to convey the messiness of people’s conduct in the past by simply doing their job, writing histories that are clear, coherent, rational, and have a beginning and an end. My way out of the intricacies of wartime behaviour under occupation is to concentrate on the collaboration of two groups, civil servants and businessmen, who were required to collaborate with the German occupiers, and also chose to do so. In meeting this obligation and rising to the opportunity to collaborate, they faced the most difficult choices and dilemmas in dealing with the various Nazi authorities and agencies that were responsible for gearing up the economies of the occupied territories to the German war effort, and setting up a Nazi European New Order.

Concentrating on state officials and businessmen, the occupied countries’ administrative and economic elites, can be justified in two ways. As should be clearer from Chapter 1, which considers the post-liberation purges of collaborators, they were the most significant of collaborators: their choices affected, for worse and less worse, the livelihoods and security of their fellow countrymen for the duration of the war. Because collaboration was a matter of considered policy for these groups, the reasons and motivations for their collaboration are more discernible and accessible, and more open to meaningful rather than speculative analysis. It is certainly more productive than, for instance, delving into the mind of the young Norwegian man who joined the German *Waffen* SS, or of our fictional but perhaps authentic would-be resister and accidental collaborationist, Lucien Lacombe.

Collaboration, as with the range of responses to occupation, was necessarily conditioned by the unpredictable and non-uniform ways in which the Nazis decided to rule their conquered territories. This is why Chapter 2 examines the occupation regimes foisted on the North and West European

countries, and their relationship, if any existed, to Nazi projections of a European New Order.

The book tries to explain the reasons for collaboration with the Nazis by analysing it as a practice that had to be adapted over time and under the impact of dramatically changing circumstances. It also attempts to explain the rationale and consequences of collaboration in respect of the Nazis' most infamous occupation and New Order policies applied across Europe from 1942, which resulted in the deportation of tens of thousands of West European workers to Nazi Germany, and the genocide of Europe's Jews.

The approach is broadly comparative, one of the toughest things to pull off as a historian. But sometimes, within the basic chronological division between 1940–2 and 1942–5 of Chapters 3–7, I have to deal with countries one after the other, reflecting the different ways in which the Nazis occupied the countries they had conquered in 1940. There is less material on Norway compared to the other countries. This is a consequence of the language barrier, the relatively narrow base of published research, only now being rectified by a big project on economic collaboration in occupied Norway, and Norway being the country that corresponded more closely than the others to the stereotype of a 'nation of resisters.'

# I

## Starting at the End

### Liberation and the Post-War Purges of Collaborators

There was a great deal at stake in the purges of collaborators that occurred before, during, and after the Allied liberation from Nazi occupation of the countries of Northern and Western Europe in 1944–5. The unavoidable settling of accounts with a harrowing recent past had somehow to be dovetailed with an immediate and longer-term future of post-war recovery and reconstruction. The tension between handling the past and projecting the future ran through the purge process in each of the newly liberated countries.

Impending liberation, and liberation itself, released popular anger, despair, and resentment at the deprivation and suffering people had directly experienced during and as a result of an increasingly harsh German occupation. Popular demands for justice, retribution, and recompense were directed at those who had aided and abetted, and were seen to have benefited from, the Nazi occupation. Internal resistance movements had both fuelled and channelled popular hostility to collaborators. They warned collaborators of all hues that they would pay for their collaboration, in the expectation that the threat would deter any further collaboration. They drew up black lists of people to be purged at liberation. Some, if not all, resistance movements saw their role as extending beyond liberation to the shaping of a new post-war society. For them, the purging of collaborators, especially of political, administrative, and economic elites, the establishment, was an essential element of the post-war recasting of politics, economy, and society on progressive and egalitarian lines. Resistance movements that felt this way were quite deliberately widening their attacks on wartime collaboration to a critique of the pre-war structures of power. The continuity between the interwar period



and the war lay in the systemic failure of the country's elites to prevent the Depression, the rise of fascism, and the coming of war.

The returning governments-in-exile, and the ever-present Danish government, representative sections of the political establishment, after all, were understandably wary of the radical reforming aspirations of some resistance movements. But they conceded that it made sense to cleanse the countries of the stains of occupation that they had largely experienced at a distance. This would be the basis of a renewal of post-war political, economic, and social life on humane, anti-fascist, and democratic values. The governments-in-exile also needed to re-establish their legitimate right to govern after years of enforced absence. A purge of those who had collaborated with the enemy was a clear way of making credible their authority over liberated territory, and restoring the confidence between government and governed necessary for the recovery of a shattered national political and economic system.

These high stakes explain why the post-war purges were themselves a source of enduring political and social conflict in early post-war Western and Northern Europe. The popular verdict on the purges, as they proceeded, was that too little was being done, and too slowly. People suspected, or assumed, that this apparent leniency and delay were a matter of deliberate self-limitation by governments. The perceived softness of the purges was also a factor in the often tense post-liberation relations between returning governments and some of the resistance movements, especially those on the left. It strained the cohesion of post-war coalition governments of national unity broadened out from the anti-fascist political parties to incorporate representatives of the Resistance. Left-wing parties were for a radical and far-reaching purge of collaborators, as part of a general national regeneration. Centrist and right-wing parties were usually for a purge limited in time and scope, in order not to damage a process of national reconciliation and restored unity, and to enable public administration and business to contribute to an orderly reconstruction of their countries.

These conflicts, prevalent throughout newly liberated Northern and Western Europe, had the greatest impact on the transition from war to peace in Belgium, where continuing internal divisions over the position of the monarchy were as complicating a factor in Belgian politics as they had been at the start of the German occupation. Popular protest and discontent, in part fed by anger over the purges, persisted into the summer of 1945, and raised doubts about the suitability of entrusting the country to the returning

government-in-exile rather than to an Allied military administration. The Belgian coalition government of national unity was reconstituted in February 1945, with the Catholic party effectively excluding itself because of its moderate approach to the purges. The political ramifications of the purges affected in turn the reach and duration of the purge process itself, in a virtuous or vicious circle, depending on the political perspective.

Becoming Belgian Prime Minister in February 1945 as an apparent hardliner on the purges, the Socialist Achille Van Acker later declared that 'you cannot reconstruct on the basis of hatred'.<sup>1</sup> His government tried to draw out some of the political and popular poison of the purges by revising in a moderate way the categorization of what were culpable acts of collaboration, and attempting to speed up the process. The Catholic party campaigned electorally in Flanders for the amnesty of wartime collaborators. It was here that Belgium's special circumstances made it difficult to close the wounds reopened by the war. Belgium had been occupied by the Germans in both world wars, and during both occupations the occupier had deliberately favoured the country's 'Germanic' Dutch-speaking Flemings over the francophone Walloons. In the Belgian case, the official post-war myth of a victimized and resisting nation strained to sublimate long-standing divisions between the country's linguistic communities, now exacerbated by the impact of Nazi occupation. But that is the point and purpose of national myths, to create a perception of events that need not be really or entirely accurate, as long as it is authentic enough to justify a country's renewed sense of itself.

Denmark was the country at the other end of the spectrum to Belgium. Here, post-war political and popular tensions over the purges were more muted than elsewhere. In part, this was down to the merger between the Danish Resistance, whose leaders formed a so-called Freedom Council, and the Danish government, from early 1945, prior to the liberation. This fusion of Resistance and governments in order to plan and prepare for the post-war period of recovery and reconstruction occurred in France and Norway, too. Partly because of the rapidity of the Allied liberation of the country in September 1944, it did not take place in Belgium, which goes some way to explaining the open conflict over the purges between the returning government-in-exile and some resistance movements. One of the reasons for, and outcomes of, the alliance between the Freedom Council and Danish government was agreement on how to handle the purges. These had to be limited in scope in order to enable a full post-war public justification of the

government's official policy of collaboration sustained throughout the occupation, or at least to the German suspension of parliamentary government in the summer of 1943.

The pre-emptive agreement on the extent of the purges was reflected in the relatively organized and orderly way in which the purges were initiated. Apparently, on 9 May 1945, the day after the German surrender, special units under Freedom Council command got into their cars armed with lists and files, and proceeded to arrest and intern about 22,000 'selected' collaborators. In Denmark, the consensual myth of resistance was easily embedded into post-war popular consciousness.

In March 1947, the broad post-war anti-fascist coalition in Belgium finally broke up altogether. Those parties most opposed to how the purges had gone, albeit from very different political perspectives, the liberals and the communist party, left governing to a Catholic and socialist coalition. By this time, Belgium was part of a wider trend. The wartime and post-war anti-fascist alliances were dissolved across Western Europe in 1947–8, as its politics took on a cold-war mould. The coalescing of democratic politics around the motif of anti-communism in the late 1940s involved the exclusion from the arc of government of communist parties that had played a significant part in the armed resistance to Nazi occupation. If communists were frozen out, the coming of the cold war also contributed to the scaling-down of the purges and official amnesties for already punished collaborators, and a more general desire to forget the divisive nature of wartime occupation in face of a perceived greater existential threat to Western civilization.

The purges occurred in what can be regarded as two stages, the one merging into the other. The first stage was, as the French called it, 'l'épuration sauvage', or 'wild purge', which started more or less spontaneously as invasion and liberation by Allied armies proceeded. A form of popular rough justice, punishment was meted out by local people and by resistance groups exercising a vigilante vengeance on their behalf. It could be lethal. Figures inevitably vary, but perhaps up to about 10,000 people were lynched in France before, during, and after liberation in 1944–5.<sup>2</sup> The targets were mainly informers, a particularly hated kind of collaborator throughout occupied Europe, and men enlisted in the collaborationist police force, the *Milice*, set up by the Vichy government to counter and repress resistance activity.

More generally, this stage of the purges took in people who were perceived to have benefited or profited from, or been advantaged by, occupation, in any way, big or small. It extended to people who had socialized with, been

familiar with, or been friendly or sympathetic to the occupier. A resistance news-sheet in the northern French port of Le Havre urged the town's population to treat as 'collaborators' all those shopkeepers who had solicited German business by placing German-language signs in their shop windows.<sup>3</sup> Denunciation was rife. It often led to the local resistance group arresting and detaining people who were then dealt with (and often released without charge) by more formal police investigation and court proceedings, later. But denunciation was usually enough to provoke the public outing and humiliation of 'collaborators', such as occurred in Chartres's treatment of girlfriends of Germans. Staff of a firm, or a post office, ganged up on unpopular colleagues and pressurized their employers to sack or transfer them, as punishment for their alleged wartime attitudes and conduct.

The 'wild purge' was bound to be a localized phenomenon, since it was sustained by local knowledge and rumour, and expressed pent-up popular resentment at what were condemned as contemptible and damaging attitudes and behaviour experienced in the daily small encounters of wartime life. Denunciation and public shaming ostracized unworthy individuals from the community, and, in effect, was a way of restoring what was left of communal solidarity after the divisive and disruptive impacts of war and occupation on local societies.

Some Scandinavian historians have been rather complacent about the extent of the 'wild purge' in Denmark and Norway. But, although perhaps not reaching the levels of vindictiveness of incidents in France, Belgium, and the Netherlands, it most definitely occurred, as illustrated by the treatment of Frida Lyngstad's mother in Norway.

The other stage of the purges was a more formal one. There was a legal process enacted within the judicial system, involving police investigation and courts, whether military or civilian. This overlapped with an extra-legal process where the civil service and then occupational groups (doctors, employers' associations, for example) set up their own purge commissions to investigate the conduct of public employees and professionals.

The 'wild purge' affected the formal purges in several ways. It fed popular demands for a radical clear-out of the country's administrative and professional elites, at a time when new post-liberation governments were hoping to effect an orderly transition to 'normal' life through the good services of these very elites. It filled the internment camps and prisons with people who had been fingered by popular disapprobation and accusation. They now had to be handled by a judicial or quasi-judicial procedure, inevitably

slowing down a process that governments needed, for the sake of national recovery, to be as speedy and decisive as possible.

Finally, and most interestingly, at least for the historian, the 'wild purge' served to direct popular anger at perceived bad attitudes and behaviour, which might not have been criminal according to the law, but were, nevertheless, seen to be immoral and unworthy. This line was often pursued in the more formal purge investigations. The public employment and occupational purge commissions, especially, considered not only failures or inadequacies in the performance of people's jobs and professions, but also attitudes and mentalities regarded as reprehensible. People were held accountable for views and opinions that might have been aired casually in the workplace, even though they had little to do with work. Government officials could have their cases dealt with by both a ministerial purge commission, and then by the courts, and punished by both. The purge commission offered, perhaps, some kind of security for the officials. It was internal to the specific public service employing the officials, and would presumably have some empathy for the challenges faced by civil servants during the war. But the commissioners would still judge them for non-criminal attitudes and activities, for, say, remarks passed in the office on a particular occupation policy, or Allied bombing raids, or the resistance. This aspect of the formal purge process greatly extended the range of *thoughts* and actions regarded as 'collaborating', introduced a moral dimension to collaboration, and gave considerable nuance to what might have been a rigid and inflexible procedure.

The purges in each country lasted longer than the post-war governments wanted or expected. By the time they were more or less completed, the prisons were already being emptied of people who had served all or part of their sentences for various acts of collaboration. Retrospectively, to have nearly finished the legal job by, for example, late 1947 in Belgium and France, and late 1948 in the Netherlands, seems pretty impressive. The length of time spent on the process is explained by the huge number of cases to be investigated, and then tried, and the sheer complexity of the cases under investigation. These cases were handled not so much by a police and judicial system, which was being reconstituted in difficult post-war conditions, and which itself 'needed' purging. All countries had extraordinary judicial arrangements, planned for and rapidly put in place by the new governments after liberation. So, for instance, in Belgium, the government-in-exile had deliberately decided to entrust the post-war purges to a ramified system of special military tribunals, rather than the civilian courts. Here, military

prosecutors were confronted by files on 405,000 people accused of collaboration, equivalent to about 7 per cent of the country's adult population; over 57,000 prosecutions were launched. In the Netherlands, the special courts had a military presence, but they and the popular tribunals were civil bodies, and the bulk of the purges were actually conducted in various purge commissions. But, even so, the workload was staggering. According to the Dutch Ministry of Justice, there were about 150,000 arrests, and 450,000 investigations.

As political and popular pressures associated with the purges began to ease, governments did all they could to accelerate and close down the process, without exposing themselves to too much criticism for doing so. Laws and decrees covering collaboration, some pre-dating the war and some composed during the war itself, were reviewed and revised even as cases continued to come to court. It became clear that they were just too tough and too inflexible to apply to complicated cases. Prosecutors bundled cases of a similar minor nature for out-of-court settlements, offering light sentences in lieu of a trial. Prison sentences were reduced, favouring those defendants who calculated that, by stringing out their cases, they might be treated more leniently.

In my tentatively held view, the figures and estimates of the number of people who were sentenced or punished for collaboration give a pretty fair indication of the extent of collaboration in each country. This is partly because, taken together, the courts and the purge commissions investigated and penalized conduct deemed to be culpable in both a criminal and a non-criminal sense. They also imposed a wide range of penalties on collaborators, ranging from the death sentence (often not actually carried out), through long and short terms of imprisonment, to withdrawal of civic rights, dismissal from employment, loss of pension, 'retirement', suspension from work, demotion, and transfer.

However, given the highly political character of the purges, it must be conceded that what the figures really show is the comparative severity of the purges in the countries involved. So, for what they are worth, here goes. According to Novick, 94 per 100,000 of population were imprisoned for collaboration in France, 374 in Denmark, 419 in the Netherlands, 596 in Belgium, and 633 in Norway.<sup>4</sup> The loss of civic rights, often combined with other sanctions, including prison, affected both 'criminal' and 'non-criminal' collaborators, and therefore involved people culpable of less serious acts of collaboration. Here, the incomplete figures are of 70,000 people being

punished by loss of their civic rights in Belgium, 107,000 in the Netherlands, 90,000 in France, and about 30,000 in Norway.<sup>5</sup>

Perhaps all the figures confirm is that collaborators were a significant minority of the population, as were resisters. More can be gained from looking beyond the global numbers to consider those who were purged, and what they were punished for. The obvious targets, the 'traitors', were tried the earliest and punished the most severely. These were the leaders, ministers, and top officials of the collaborating Vichy government of France, and of the collaborationist NS government in Norway. Philippe Pétain, Vichy's head of state, Pierre Laval, Vichy's prime minister in 1940–1 and again in 1942–4, and Vidkun Quisling, NS leader and prime minister from 1942, were sentenced to death. Pétain's sentence was commuted to life imprisonment.

The concern of de Gaulle's Provisional Government was to establish its own right to govern by denying that of Vichy, regarded as a *de facto* state, where the official policy of collaboration with the Germans was, by definition, illegitimate. This could not apply, of course, to the collaborating government in Denmark, which remained the recognized legitimate authority throughout the occupation. Its leaders could not be held accountable, legally or otherwise, for their collaboration. The matter was hived off to a parliamentary commission in June 1945. MPs judged their own behaviour during the war in secret proceedings, and unsurprisingly concluded in 1953 that there was no reason for any legal prosecution of wartime coalition government ministers and top officials.

The other self-evident targets of the purges were people I have identified as collaborationists, collectively guilty of collaboration as leaders and members of fascist parties, or of collaborationist groups and organizations, which included police formations working with or for the German *Gestapo*, and men who joined German military and paramilitary forces, like the *Waffen SS*. The Norwegian purge was particularly hard on NS members. Irrespective of whether they were active or passive members, they were automatically indicted for collaboration, largely because NS became, uniquely in occupied Northern and Western Europe, the party of government under German supervision. Pre-war membership was seen as being more reprehensible, even though NS was a legal party, because it apparently demonstrated a degree of ideological commitment rather greater than what might have been an opportunistic wartime adherence to the governing party.