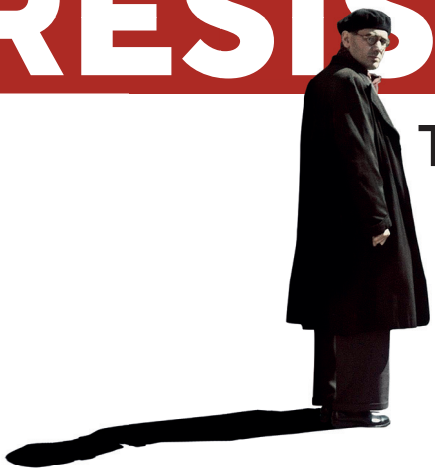
RESISTANCE



The Underground War in Europe, 1939-45

Halik Kochanski

allen lane

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Penguin
Random House
UK

First published in Great Britain by Allen Lane 2022
001

Set in 10.2/13.5pt Sabon LT Std by Jouve (UK), Milton Keynes
Printed and bound in Great Britain by Clays Ltd, Elcograf S.p.A.

The authorized representative in the EEA is Penguin Random House Ireland,
Morrison Chambers, 32 Nassau Street, Dublin D02 YH68

A CIP catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

ISBN: 978–0–241–00428–9

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To my brother Martin

Contents

PART THREE

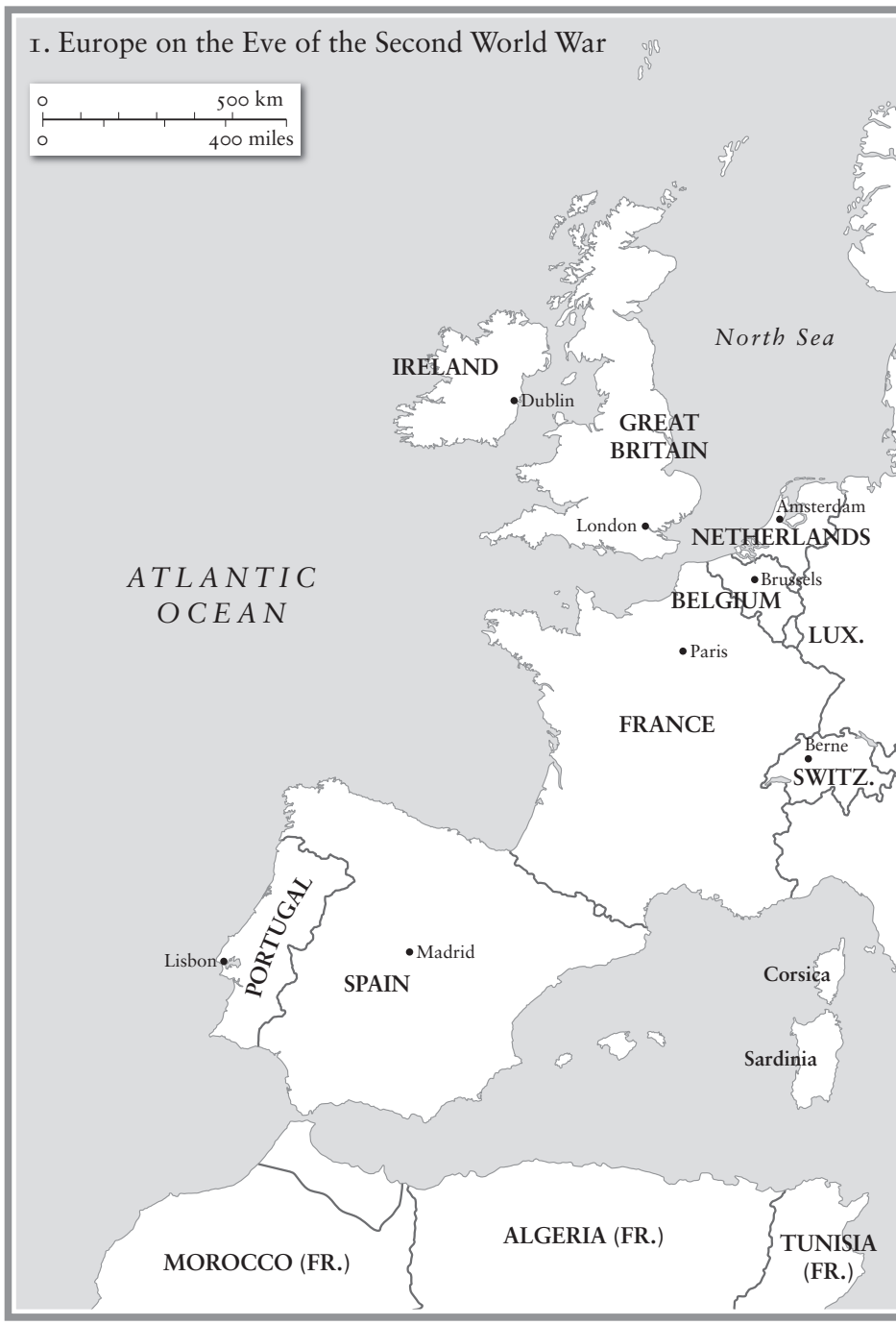
Resistance in Action

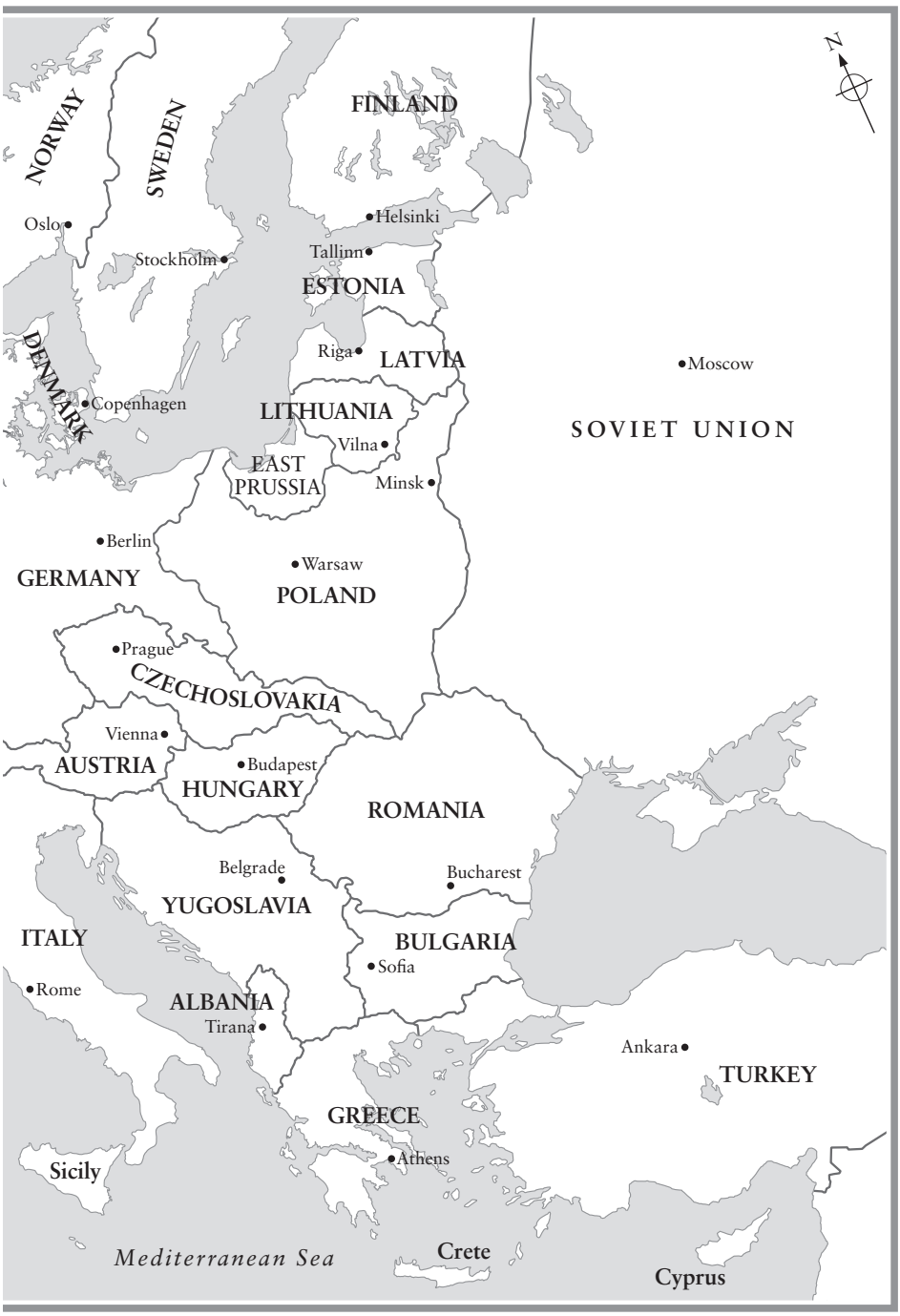
Acknowledgements

I am grateful to the following for allowing me to examine and quote from archival material in their collections: The Trustees of the Imperial War Museum; The National Archives; Yale University, The Avalon Project; The Keeper of Archives, Polish Institute and Sikorski Museum; and St Antony's College Library, Oxford. I also wish to thank the hard-working librarians at The London Library, The British Library, the University College London Library, and the UCL School of Slavonic and East European Studies Library.

I am also grateful to Professor Amedeo Osti Guerrazzi, Andrzej Suchcitz, and Declan O'Reilly for sharing with me the results of their as yet unpublished research. I would also like to thank Marek Stella-Sawicki for allowing me access to a recently discovered and authenticated Polish document.

Many people have helped me in other ways with my research, by offering advice, support, and encouragement. I had the privilege of talking to a former member of the Dutch resistance, Anton Tek, shortly before he died, and he shared some of his memories of that time. My brother Martin, to whom this book is dedicated, read endless drafts of the manuscript; former British Army officers who are now members of the British Commission for Military History shared with me their struggles in understanding the background to the conflicts in the Balkans in the 1990s which they were attempting to resolve, many of which had their roots in the Second World War; and members of the Military History Seminar at the Institute of Historical Research offered much advice and encouragement, especially David French, Philip Blood, and Major General John Sutherell. My agent Robert Dudley has been very supportive throughout the whole process of writing this book; my editor Simon Winder provided many wise, constructive, and pertinent comments; Guillaume Piketty reviewed the entire manuscript and made some useful comments; the eagle eyes of my copy-editor Richard Mason saved me from many minor errors. Any errors that remain are, of course, my own.





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Introduction

The aim of this book is to present a clear, balanced, and unified picture of the resistance in every country occupied by Germany or Italy during the Second World War. The advantage of looking at Europe as a whole is that it is possible to avoid the pitfalls of nationalism. It is natural for every nation that was occupied to take its own resistance story and retrospectively magnify its achievements: in a sense it was necessary for the post-war restoration of nationhood and self-respect. But this does tend to inflate the genuine heroism of the resistance into an epic myth, as in General Charles de Gaulle's famous speech in August 1944 which spoke of Paris, and indeed France, having been 'liberated by itself'. Moreover, a national perspective leads inevitably to claims that *x* country was the *only* one to do a certain thing, or *y* country was the *first* to do something, and this is what a Europe-wide history is able to correct. There was not, of course, a 'European resistance' as such – this would have been impossible – but there were common themes across the continent, and the balance between them varies from country to country. There were lessons to be learned, but the isolation of the conquered meant that each country or region had to decide how to respond to its occupation on its own, and the lessons it learned often could not be shared and had to be relearned elsewhere afresh. The only country which could really learn widely applicable lessons from the resistance was Germany, through its efforts to crush it.

An advantage of looking at all the occupied countries is that one can identify a very clear east/west divide in what the resistance fought for and especially in how the Germans responded. Even the Germans admitted that the Poles resisted from the first day of the occupation, largely in response to the drastic loss of nationhood inflicted by the dual occupation of the Germans and Soviets. In western Europe, however, there was a high degree of collaboration with native governments and administrations and the occupations were carried out with a much lighter hand. It can be argued that the reasons why the destruction of the villages of Lidice in the German Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia and of Oradour-sur-Glane in France are held up as examples of German brutality lie in their rarity in countries where there was a high degree of collaboration with the occupiers. In eastern Europe and in the Balkans, such devastation and mass murder

were the norm. Arguably, the severe repression which western Europe suffered at the hands of the Germans in early 1944 was not new in itself but merely the application of existing 'eastern' methods across a wider geographical area.

Two areas are often excluded from general histories of resistance: the Jewish resistance, and the German opposition to Hitler. This book covers the Jewish resistance because it is relevant to the themes explored in the text. The horror of the Holocaust affected not just the victims, the Jews, but also the bystanders, the non-Jewish populations who were suddenly exposed to the sight of the full barbarity of Nazi rule, and the apparent impotence of their native governments and administrations to save a portion of their population. The German 'resistance' is another matter and is not covered in this book. Germany was neither invaded nor occupied and in that sense there was nothing to resist. Much of the German opposition to Hitler was not anti-German and it did not want Germany to lose the war. Indeed, the aim of the actual plots against Hitler was to make Germany win, or at least save it from losing. The internal opposition within a conquering nation has nothing in common with the resistance in the countries it has defeated and occupied. Austria has been excluded for the same reason. Austria was termed 'the first victim of Hitler' by the meeting of the Allied foreign ministers in Moscow in 1943. But in 1938 the vast majority of Austrians had greeted the *Anschluss* with Germany with elation, many of them having longed for it for decades, and they fully participated in the furtherance of German war aims.

The book is divided into three parts following a broad chronology. The first part, 'Why Resist?', covers the period from March 1939 with the occupation of Czechoslovakia and Albania to the German invasion of the Soviet Union in June 1941. This is the period during which the Axis conquered most of Europe, quite possibly permanently, and the Allied armies were forced to leave the continent. It quickly became apparent that the level of resistance was dependent partly on the severity of the occupation regime and partly on the previous record of occupation suffered by each country. This is also the time when those who were pondering resistance had to consider how to resist. As one resister later explained:

> To resist, therefore. But how, when and where? There were no laws, no guidelines, no precedents to show the way. It was not like joining a church or a party or even a club. They all had rules and buildings. For resisting there were no rules and not even a skeleton of an organisation . . . [1]

The initial answers included the rescue of trapped Allied servicemen and the provision of intelligence to the Allies. Yet at the same time, others set out on a path of various degrees of collaboration with the occupiers. The majority settled for a policy of accommodation and *attentisme* – wait and see – opting to engage in neither resistance nor collaboration but to hold fire until it became clear who was going to win. As one early SOE agent in France reported, the French were 'still hoping for their [the Allies'] victory and many, many of them are willing to help but they would appreciate seeing something concrete besides retreating'.[2] During this period the clandestine press played a vital role in stressing the deleterious impact of the occupation and encouraging the people to become more resistance-minded. In Britain the Special Operations Executive (SOE) was set up, in Churchill's words, 'to set Europe ablaze', although it was clear that the fire of resistance was already burning.

The second part, 'Growing the Resistance', covers the period from June 1941, when Germany invaded the Soviet Union, to September 1943, when Italy surrendered. During this period new players appeared on the stage because the communists were now freed from the shackles imposed by the 1939 Molotov–Ribbentrop Pact and were encouraged by Moscow to engage in outright resistance to the Soviet Union's former ally, Germany. This is not to argue, as much communist historiography has done, that there was no resistance until the communists became involved. The impact of the German invasion of the Soviet Union also affected German policies in the occupation regimes across Europe, most notably through the imposition of forced labour and the Holocaust of Europe's Jews. Finally, Allied victories at Stalingrad and in the Western Desert made it clear to more people that German domination of their countries was neither permanent nor irresistible. All these factors combined to make resistance a more attractive proposition. It was during this period that the resistance began to grow dramatically. It was also the time when problems which emerged fully in the later stages of the war began to become evident, such as the debates over how to conduct resistance, the matter of command and control, and the question of whether the principal enemy was the occupier or the political opponents within the resistance.

The number of those engaged in overt resistance was still minuscule but the population as a whole was becoming more resistance-minded. This can be illustrated by two examples. In Warsaw, Jan Nowak was outside a building where a meeting with a fellow resister was to take place when he was questioned by a plain-clothed German on where he had just been. He spotted the brass plate of a female dentist on the door beside him and responded that he had just been there. The German rang the dentist's bell

to corroborate Nowak's statement: 'The unknown woman, whom I had never seen and never would see, had not hesitated for a second. She understood in an instant that someone's life was at stake', and confirmed that Nowak was her patient.[3] The second example concerns Leesha Bos, a courier in Amsterdam. While carrying a gun, ration card and blank identity cards, she fled from a German street check on a bicycle and was pursued by a German also on a bicycle: 'Like a flash I got an idea and began to whistle the first four notes of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony in C minor. This was a whistle we used in the underground: if there was a friend nearby he would answer with the second part of the phrase: "bum bum bum bum".' There followed a sudden crash of bicycles as total strangers rode into the path of the pursuing German, knocking him off his bicycle and allowing Leesha to escape.[4]

The third part, 'Resistance in Action', covers the period from September 1943 to the end of the war in May 1945. As the Soviets advanced towards Germany and the Allies landed in Italy and France, the resistance could become more open in its activities. Now its effectiveness in supporting the Allies had to be explored. The question of command and control of the resistance came to the fore, and there are many examples of the resistance independently launching actions that had little chance of success in pursuit of the overarching goal, the liberation of their own country by themselves. The question of who was the enemy re-emerges with greater power than before, as the resistance in many countries was divided on political grounds and the threat of civil war proved to be very real in the battle for post-war supremacy. Again, the question asked in the first part, 'Why Resist?', also re-emerges as Hitler's satellites, Hungary, Romania, and Bulgaria, recognizing the imminence of the defeat of Germany, wanted to change sides and hence create a resistance to the Germans; at the same time, however, they faced the uncomfortable reality of the likelihood of liberation at the hands of the Soviets and the prospect of the imposition of a communist system.

This book focuses on the resistance to Axis occupation. Therefore, the resistance to Soviet occupation in eastern Europe, which existed from September 1939 to June 1941 and then again in 1944–45, is excluded. Resistance in those countries did not end with the conclusion of the Second World War, but continued for more than forty years, until the fall of the Soviet-sponsored communist regimes in 1989, and the situation the resisters had to face, both internally and internationally, was very different.

There are many names for those engaged in resistance to occupation, such as partisans, irregulars, franc-tireurs, guerrillas, maquis, resisters. I have adopted the common terms used in the historiography – partisans in

eastern Europe and Italy; Partisans for Yugoslavia; maquis for France; and resisters as a general term. The one term avoided, except in quotations, is 'patriots', simply because this is such a highly emotive word, automatically bringing a value-judgement with it. In fact many of those who participated in collaborating movements saw themselves as patriots just as the members of the resistance did, believing that what they were doing was for the good of their country. The Germans used simpler terms – bandits in the east and terrorists in the west.

The society in which the resisters lived was of course very different from that of today. People were used to hardship and were familiar with death: for example, the supply of food was seasonal, child mortality was still high, and people generally died younger. It was a society in which people were used to making do with what they had and repairing things themselves. They would build their own radios and repair their own cars, though many still relied on bicycles and trains for transport. Most freight was transported by rail, making it extremely vulnerable to sabotage during the war. It was a much more localized and rural society in which a strong sense of community and solidarity against adversity existed: few travelled beyond their nearest town except for military service. Conscription and the prevalence of hunting meant that many men were familiar with the use of guns. In urban areas, loyalties and friendships often centred on the factories and other places of work where the same sense of solidarity often existed.

People often belonged to many associations and clubs – religious, sporting, hiking, student – which provided personal ties that could be exploited carefully to identify those others who might be keen to resist. But assumptions that all members would be like-minded could be cruelly overturned. For example, Erik Hazelhoff initially thought that all fellow members of the prestigious student corps at Leiden University would be as similarly outraged by the German invasion and the swift defeat of the Netherlands as he was, only to find that one of his friends and a fellow corps member promptly joined the Dutch SS.[5] When SOE agent Michael Trotobas was setting up the Farmer circuit in Lille he contacted his girlfriend from his time in the area when serving with the British Expeditionary Force in 1939–40, only to have his meeting place betrayed to the authorities by her father: he evaded arrest on that occasion.[6] Interest in politics was generally high. Before the horrors of Stalinism were known and accepted, communism was seen as an attractive alternative to the perceived failure of the capitalist system which was blamed for having caused the Great Depression. The right wing of politics was also strong, for example the extreme La Cagoule group attempted to overthrow the Popular Front government in France in 1937. During the Second World War some members of La

Cagoule would collaborate with the Germans, participate in the Vichy regime, or found their own right-wing parties; others would flee France and subsequently join the Free French in London or would remain in France and work in the resistance.

Pre-war society was still essentially very male-dominated and women often found a new sense of freedom and independence by serving with the resistance during the war. Few actually fired weapons but many proved their worth by undertaking the extremely perilous roles of couriers, carrying messages and contraband materiel from one group of resisters to another, as well as hiding those in danger, and working for the clandestine press. Campaigns for female suffrage had a long history in Europe, with many countries rewarding women for their sacrifices and work during the First World War with the right to vote. Similarly, the Second World War or shortly thereafter led to equal voting rights for women in the remaining countries such as France, Italy, Albania, Yugoslavia, and Greece.

The map of Europe was different at this time. After a post-First World War rebirth during which time Poland fought a succession of brief wars to establish her frontiers, the country was located further east than it is today. Cities mentioned in this book as Polish such as Lwów (Lviv), Vilna (Vilnius), and Nowogródek (Navahrudak) are now, after Poland was shifted westwards following the Second World War, in Ukraine, Lithuania, and Belarus respectively. Some countries no longer exist: the dissolution of the Soviet Union led to two of its former republics which were occupied by the Germans, the Ukraine and Belorussia, becoming independent countries. Under the pressure of the Second World War, two other countries broke up into their ethnic components: Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia. After the war both were recreated and later again dissolved after the fall of communism.

Some historians and commentators have made efforts to explore who took part in the resistance by attempting to define the resisters by class or occupation. These efforts have been dismissed by many of those who took part in the resistance. For example, Lieutenant Harry Despaigne described those he fought alongside in France in 1944: 'Among my own people, we had communists to start with, we had socialists, royalists, Bonapartists, Right, Left and what have you. We had Jews, Muslims, Protestants, Catholics, unbelievers; we had Russians, French, Yugoslavs, British and Americans. We were really a multinational thing.'[7] Indeed, the most prevalent feeling among those who resisted was the discovery of the sheer variety of people who worked together during the war yet who in peacetime would have had no reason to be in contact with each other. Winston Churchill summed up the situation well in a BBC broadcast from July 1940:

> This is no war of chieftains or of princes, of dynasties or national ambition; it is a war of peoples and of causes. There are vast numbers not only in this island but in every land, who will render faithful service in this war, but whose names will never be known, whose deeds will never be recorded. This is a War of the Unknown Warriors; but let all strive without failing in faith or in duty, and the dark curse of Hitler will be lifted from our age.[8]

Those who took part in the resistance were not supermen and superwomen but were drawn from all walks of life. Some of the most heroic acts of resistance were performed by people who would not have been expected – even by themselves – to be heroes of any kind at all. Relatively few lived a continuous underground existence and the majority participated in normal life while taking part in resistance activities on occasion as and when needed.

The resisters also like to emphasize that their activities in the resistance did not preclude the majority from enjoying a normal life. Jean-Pierre Lévy described their lives:

> We lived in the shadows as soldiers of the night but our lives were not dark and martial. We were young and we were gay. We loved and we made love and we laughed . . . There were arrests, torture, and death for so many of our friends and comrades, and tragedy awaited all of us just around the corner. But we did not live in or with tragedy. We were exhilarated by the challenge and rightness of our cause. It was in many ways the worst of times and in just as many ways the best of times, and the best is what we remember today.[9]

There are numerous examples of humour as the resistance loved to mock the Germans. For example, the Polish resistance, the *Armia Krajowa* (AK), was particularly adept at duplicating German posters but with their own message: so on the occasion when the Germans offered a reward of 10 million złoty for information leading to the arrests of the perpetrators of a heist which netted the AK over 100 million złoty, an AK poster appeared offering an identical reward for information enabling them to repeat the operation.[10] Or there is the sheer audacity of youths in Copenhagen who took a gramophone to the top of a high building and played at full volume 'It's a Long Way to Tipperary'.[11] Other events were accompanied by moments of sheer farce, such as when a party of saboteurs found that their positions along the railway line were betrayed in the bright moonlight by groups of curious cows revealing the location of each man. Fortunately, as the agent recalled, none of the Germans appear to have been country folk who would have recognized the reason for the behaviour of the herd. Or

again, one can feel pity for the poor radio operator huddled over his set in a hayloft struggling to hear his messages from London because of a cockerel crowing in his ear.[12]

The occasional instances of fun and humour should not distract from the awareness of the horror which was ever-present:

> Danger was always there, one lived with it even if one was not conscious of it. Also muffled or buried was the strain of being the new you, the false you, of living a parallel, a paradoxical existence, of feeling totally free but trapped, of being integrated, true to oneself and yet marginal, disloyal or outcast, helpless yet almighty, of being shattered by the fate of a friend shot in the morning and yet, by evening, having forced him out of your thoughts. Instinctively, pushing death (your own and other people's) out of your mind, for the sake of survival.[13]

The names of the German-run concentration camps such as Auschwitz, Dachau, and Bergen-Belsen are well known, but for the resistance the threat lay in incarceration within their own countries in prisons such as Fresnes, Breendonk, Grini, or Pawiak, or facing execution in places such as Mont-Valérien, Tir National, or Palmiry; names as infamous in their own countries as the German ones. Many were sent under the *Nacht und Nebel* (Night and Fog) decree without judicial process to fester unknown in the concentration camps of Ravensbrück, Buchenwald, and Mauthausen. Many of these did not return home and in some cases their fate has never been ascertained. Most resisters were arrested by the Germans or Italians, but many were betrayed by their fellow countrymen, people who were used by the occupying authorities to infiltrate resistance networks for political reasons or sometimes just for financial gain or to settle a personal score.

One of the most admirable features of the resistance in all its forms – armed, civilian, and passive – rests in the sheer resilience of those who took part. The resisters were determined to thwart the designs of the Germans, to harass them, to deny them the opportunity to ever exert total control over the peoples of Europe. As the Germans broke up networks again and again, the persistence of the resisters in their belief in the righteousness of their cause led them to rebuild the structures each time and continue to develop the membership to renew the fight against occupation so that the flames of resistance could never be extinguished.

PART ONE

Why Resist?

1

The Shock of Defeat

From the perspective of resistance it is essential to begin the narrative before a single shot had been fired in the Second World War, with the German-inspired dismemberment of Czechoslovakia in March 1939 and the Italian invasion of Albania a month later. Both these occupations reveal a great deal about the rationales lying behind the Axis desire for predominance in Europe, how they intended to rule the countries they conquered, and how the native people were likely to respond.

Czechoslovakia was a post-First World War 'successor state', born out of the collapse of the Austro-Hungarian Empire and the defeat of Germany. It was an artificial construct, based around the Czech lands which had formed the kingdom of Bohemia in the fourteenth century but had since then been under the domination of the Austrian Habsburgs, coupled with the Slovaks and Ruthenes who had been part of Hungary since the eleventh century. In addition, the northern part of the country, the Sudetenland, contained a large number of Germans, and the area around Teschen was disputed between the Czechs and the Poles. In the interwar period the country had to face the challenge of drawing together the predominantly industrialized and Protestant Czechs with the dominantly Roman Catholic and largely agricultural Slovaks.[1] A factor in Hitler's popularity in Germany was his determination not just to reverse the territorial losses forced on Germany by the 1919 Treaty of Versailles but to argue that Germany also had the right to include all Germans residing outside the country in an expanded Reich. The Great Powers had raised no objection to the 1938 *Anschluss* with Austria, so Hitler now turned his attention to demanding the incorporation of the Sudetenland within the Reich, and with the Munich Agreement of September 1938 he achieved his aim.

The loss of the Sudetenland was a death blow to Czechoslovak independence since it meant the loss of nearly a third of its territory, all of her modern fortifications, and a portion of her industry. It revealed the impotence of the Great Powers to stand up to Hitler. Only the Soviet Union had

appeared ready to defend Czechoslovak territorial integrity and these lessons were not forgotten during the Second World War. The loss of the Sudetenland fundamentally undermined the ability of the rest of Czechoslovakia to remain an independent state. The Germans and Slovaks now combined forces to weaken the country further from the outside and inside. For the Germans, acquiring the rump of Czechoslovakia represented the first stage in achieving their long-term aim, that of expanding German *Lebensraum* – living space – at the expense of the Slavs living in 'Germanic' territory. The Slovak leader and a Roman Catholic priest, Jozef Tiso, met Hitler on 13 March 1939 to discuss the possibility of establishing an independent Slovak state with German support. On the following day, Tiso issued a declaration of Slovak independence. At his trial in March 1947 he argued: 'Without the pressure exercised by Hitler, the Slovak Diet would never have voted in favour of the independence of Slovakia.'[2] Hitler had ordered the chief of the Wehrmacht, Field Marshal Wilhelm Keitel, to prepare the army for invasion of Bohemia and Moravia as early as December 1938: 'on the assumption that no appreciable resistance is to be expected'.[3] He now summoned the Czech president, Emil Hácha, to Berlin and during all-night negotiations effectively bullied him into accepting the German occupation of Bohemia and Moravia in line with Hitler's 'intention of taking the Czech people under the protection of the German Reich and of guaranteeing them an autonomous development of their ethnic life as suited their character'.[4]

German troops crossed into Bohemia and Moravia at 6 a.m. on 15 March. Prague Radio ordered the population not to resist. Peter Wilkinson, a British intelligence officer stationed in Prague, witnessed the German entry into the city:

> It was miserable weather; wet snow was falling and the sky was heavily overcast. The civilians who watched the proceedings on their way to work looked utterly defeated and gazed blankly as the troop carriers went by with the Germans, in smart uniforms and without greatcoats despite the freezing weather, sitting upright with their rifles between their knees. Some of the older people were in tears and the children on their way to school looked on goggle-eyed but there was no sign of any hostile demonstration; everyone seemed completely cowed.[5]

On the evening of 16 March, Hácha broadcast to the nation that the last twenty years of Czechoslovak independence had 'proved to be a short episode in our national history' and urged the people to accept the new state of affairs and their new masters.[6] Unnoticed at the time, the British helped the head of Czech intelligence, Colonel František Moravec, to fly himself

and eleven of his most prized colleagues out of the country. From exile the former president, Edvard Beneš, offered a very different perspective: he would fight diplomatically for the restoration of the independence and territorial integrity of Czechoslovakia, and one of his tools would be support for resistance. But this lay in the future and for the time being it was apparent to the Czechs that only a major war could change the status of their country and offer the hope of an end to the German occupation.[7]

Slovakia was now an independent country and was recognized as such by twenty-seven countries, including Britain, France, and the Soviet Union. But in practice Slovakia was effectively a German protectorate, even though it was never described as such. Germans controlled Slovak foreign policy, and German advisers present in every government department served as advisers to the Slovak ministers. A German military mission exercised a degree of control over the Slovak army.[8]

In April 1939 the Czech lands of Bohemia and Moravia were formally turned into a German protectorate with the appointment of Konstantin von Neurath as Reichsprotektor and the Sudeten German Karl Frank as state secretary. Under von Neurath there operated a Czech government with Hácha remaining as president and Alois Eliáš as prime minister. As with Slovakia, Czech independence was illusory, with German control over foreign policy, military affairs, customs, and finance, and German advisers *in situ* in every ministry.[9] The Nazi racial theorist Wilhelm Stuckart defined German policy towards the Protectorate: 'the Czechs should be treated in a conciliatory manner, though with great strictness and relentless consistency . . . The autonomy of the Protectorate should be restricted only if absolutely necessary.'[10] This was the German ideal of an occupation: German control would appear nominal so long as the native government did exactly as it was told. Eliáš was deeply concerned lest the Czechs be viewed as German collaborators. In June 1939 he secretly made contact with the exiled Czechs and informed Beneš that he and his ministers remained in office solely to protect the Czechs from the Germans, but were prepared to resign should Beneš call for it. The call was not made then and Eliáš maintained secret contacts with the Czechs in London, ultimately paying for them with his life.

Hitler was not the only statesman who resented the post-war settlements: so did Mussolini. In the 1915 Treaty of London which had brought Italy into the First World War, the Entente had promised Italy, among other things, the Albanian port of Vlorë and a protectorate over central Albania, but the post-war peace treaties restored an independent Albania under King Zog. Yet Albania was a country with fundamental internal weaknesses. The country was extremely mountainous and contained almost no

industry and conducted little trade. The population was largely tribal, split between the Ghegs of the north and the Tosks of the south, and neither tribe owed much allegiance to the central government in Tirana. Moreover, the Albanians coveted the province of Kosovo whose population was largely Albanian but had been given to the new state of Yugoslavia after the First World War.[11] The situation was therefore ripe for exploitation.

Like Hitler, Mussolini wanted more land for the Italians – *spazio vitale* – and ultimately sought to dominate the whole of the Mediterranean. The conquest of Albania was entrusted to his son-in-law and foreign minister, Count Galeazzo Ciano. On 7 April 1939 the Italian Army invaded Albania and met little resistance, except at Durrës, where 3,000 men under the leadership of Abas Kupi held the Italians at bay until tanks were brought up. Abas Kupi would later emerge as a significant leader of the resistance. Meanwhile King Zog, concerned for the safety of his wife Queen Geraldine and his two-day-old son, had first taken refuge in the American consulate before crossing the frontier into exile. Eventually arriving in London, he would be treated there as an honoured guest but *not* as the leader of an occupied country since Britain, along with many other countries, recognized the Italian occupation of Albania as final: they had long held doubts regarding Albania's ability to maintain an independent existence. The Italians set up a collaborationist government under Shefqet Vërlaci but left it few powers. Albanian ministers were appointed by the Italians, and each had an Italian adviser working with him who was directly responsible to the Lieutenant General of Albania, Francesco Jacomoni.[12]

Poland was not a 'successor state' since the country had existed as the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth until the eighteenth century when she had been subjected to three successive partitions by her rapacious and powerful neighbours, Russia, Prussia, and Austria, and effectively wiped off the map as an independent state until 1918. Poland suffered a fiery rebirth, fighting six wars with her neighbours until her frontiers were finally settled by an international treaty in 1921. Both Germany and the Soviet Union regarded Poland as 'the bastard of Versailles' and sought to destroy it. But Britain and France, disillusioned with their ability to control Hitler after the invasion of Czechoslovakia, had guaranteed Poland's existence. Therefore, if Germany invaded Poland it would mean a world war. By securing a treaty with the Soviet Union in August 1939, the Molotov–Ribbentrop Pact, Hitler put himself in a position to take the gamble. A secret protocol to the Pact effectively agreed the fourth partition of Poland.

On 1 September 1939 a new form of warfare was born – *Blitzkrieg*, or lightning war – as German armies poured across the Polish frontier from

three directions simultaneously; the Luftwaffe bombed cities and towns, columns of soldiers and refugees. Britain and France duly declared war on Germany on 3 September, but did little else. By the end of the first week Polish armies were in full-scale retreat and the first German columns had reached the outskirts of Warsaw. Despite a brave counter-attack the Poles were pushed back further to the east until, on 17 September, the death blow to the Polish Second Republic was delivered when the Soviet Union invaded from the east. The government fled to Romania, where it was interned. The Polish commander-in-chief ordered the remnants of the army and air force to make for neutral Romania and Hungary and on from there to France to re-form. Warsaw fell on 28 September, although the fighting continued in Poland for another few weeks. In France, General Władysław Sikorski headed a new government under a new president, Władysław Raczkiewicz. Poland had a long tradition of resistance to occupation and of launching uprisings, and the flame of resistance was ignited even as Warsaw fell. The Germans granted Warsaw a forty-eight-hour window for the Poles to gather together all their weapons. Young Poles hid these weapons, cleaned, oiled, and wrapped in oilskins, in the graves dug for the victims of the German onslaught. One participant, Alexander Maisner, noted: 'This entire operation was properly organised (i.e. the weapons were all listed as were their hidden whereabouts) by the nascent Polish underground army.'[13] The defender of Warsaw, General Juliusz Rómmel, had entrusted organization of the resistance to General Michał Karaszewicz-Tokarzewski before going into German captivity.[14]

Hitler's settlement of Poland reflected both his desire for *Lebensraum* and his racial policies. The Soviet Union held the eastern half of pre-war Poland and incorporated that territory into the Soviet Union. The Germans, however, split their half of Poland further. The western area, including the cities of Danzig, Poznań, and Łódź, were annexed to the Reich and divided between two new *Reichsgauen*, Danzig-West Prussia and Warthegau, ruled over respectively by two ardent Nazis, Albert Forster and Arthur Greiser. Polish Upper Silesia was added to German Silesia. The Polish populations of these areas were subjected to a racial screening and those deemed not German enough were deported during the winter of 1939–40 into the General Government, the rump of Poland now ruled over by Hans Frank, a leading Nazi lawyer.

The Czechs, although they were Slavs, were largely protected from the full impact of Nazi racial policies because of the importance of Czech war industries to the German war effort. No such protection applied to the Poles, and Poland was to become the playground and training ground of Nazi racial theories. Collaboration by Poland's administrators was neither

sought nor wanted except at the lowest level. Heinrich Himmler, Reichsführer of the SS, stated: 'It is essential that the great German people should consider it as its major task to destroy all Poles.' Hans Frank spoke of the Poles as 'the slaves of the Greater German Reich', and that Poland was to become a 'giant reservoir of labour' for the Germans. Jews were considered even lower on the ladder than the Poles, their very existence only tolerated until a more final solution to them could be devised. Education in Poland above primary level was abolished and the Germans also eradicated all symbols of Polish statehood, stealing or destroying Polish works of art. The country was subjected to economic exploitation, and by February 1941 the Germans had taken control of over 85,000 industrial concerns and over 120,000 commercial enterprises from the Poles.[15] For the Poles the answer to the question of why to resist was easy: they had to do so in order to survive.

Hitler had wanted to attack western Europe in the autumn of 1939 in order to knock out both France and Britain before turning his full attention to attack his arch-enemy, the Soviet Union. His army high command, however, persuaded him that the Polish campaign had demonstrated that the Wehrmacht needed further training and preparation before taking on an enemy with an army of the calibre of France's.

The German invasion of Scandinavia was deemed necessary because control over the lengthy Norwegian coastline would blunt Britain's strategy of naval blockade which had so undermined the war effort of the Central Powers during the First World War. Denmark lay on the way to Norway and on 9 April 1940 the Germans advanced into the country. Denmark had been neutral during the First World War and had had a history of good relations with Germany ever since the catastrophic defeat of Danish forces at the hands of the Prussians in 1864. Danish resistance to the German invasion would have been a pointless waste of life since Denmark had a small army and no strategic defence line on the frontier. The settlement with the Germans was ideal from the point of view of both sides. The coalition government under Thorvald Stauning would continue in office and King Christian X would remain on his throne. The German military presence of around 200 men was deliberately kept low-key and the German military commander, General Kurt Lüdtke, took no part in the administration of the country. Indeed, the German soldiers were instructed: 'You are not entering an enemy country but are marching into Denmark to ensure its protection and the safety of its people.' Danish-German relations were maintained through the German foreign office in the form of its ambassador, Cecil von Renthe-Fink. To all appearances, Denmark was not a participant in the war.[16]

The Germans would ideally have liked a similar solution to be applied to Norway when they invaded that country on 9 April, but circumstances dictated otherwise. In the first place the German high command was infuriated by the resistance put up by the small Norwegian forces, especially the sinking of the German heavy cruiser *Blücher* in Oslo fjord on the first day. There is evidence to suggest that the government under Johan Nygaardsvold would have settled for a solution on the same basis as the Danes had it not been for the conduct of one man, Vidkun Quisling. On the evening of 9 April, as the king and his government fled northwards, Quisling broadcast over the radio, claiming that by abandoning Oslo the government had effectively lost its right to rule and that consequently the *Nasjonal Samling* (NS) was taking over: 'By virtue of circumstances and of the national aims of our movement, we are the only people who can do this and thereby save the country from the desperate situation brought upon us by the party politicians.'[17] There is no doubt that this was treachery, and it was this treason that determined King Haakon VII not to negotiate with the Germans so long as the Germans insisted on Quisling being prime minister.[18] Consequently, on 19 April Hitler appointed Josef Terboven as Reichskommissar. An additional complicating factor was the arrival of an Anglo-French-Polish expeditionary force in Norway in the middle of April. This force initially strengthened the Norwegian defences but was ill-equipped to deal any substantial blow to the Germans and began to be withdrawn at the end of the month.

This left Norwegian affairs and indeed the Norwegians themselves in a state of considerable confusion. The Germans could see that rule by Quisling and his NS party would have little popular support. The opportunity of further negotiations directly with the king was ended when he departed for Britain with most of his ministers on 10 June. Three days later Terboven convened the Norwegian parliament to offer a compromise: in return for relieving the king of his duties and dismissing the Nygaardsvold cabinet, Terboven would stand aside and let the Norwegians govern themselves along the lines of the Danish model. King Haakon refused to accept the deal. Further negotiations over the next few months failed, and on 25 September 1940 Terboven announced the formation of a commissarial government, the deposition of the king and the abolition of the powers of the Nygaardsvold government. All political parties other than the NS were abolished, and nine of the thirteen ministers in the new government belonged to the NS. In a broadcast on the following day Quisling announced his plans: 'Our ideas are those which will be a new foundation for the rebuilding of the Norwegian state and society, and that means a new order in the pattern of Norwegian life.' In effect, Quisling and the NS planned to revolutionize Norwegian

society on the back of German bayonets.[19] Churchill spoke publicly of how 'a vile race of Quislings – to use the new word, which will carry the scorn of mankind down the centuries – is hired to fawn upon the conqueror, to "collaborate" in his designs and to enforce his rule upon their fellow countrymen while grovelling low themselves'.[20]

The combination of a high German presence and the existence of the NS lowered the prospects of resistance since clandestine activity could come to their notice quickly. The terrain of the country also militated against the build-up of resistance forces since much of it was mountainous and sub-arctic which meant scarce and vulnerable shelter and food supplies had to be secured. Finally, the course of the war suggested that resistance was futile. The lack of fighting prowess demonstrated by the Allies had not impressed the Norwegians. Men did begin to sail to Britain in small boats from the Norwegian west coast but in general, as Otto Kaurin Nielsen recalled: 'We were cautious in the beginning. We had families to take care of. Why the devil should we fight? It was stupid to try to get to England. People were lukewarm. The general concern was: How can we protect our families?'[21]

On 10 May 1940 Hitler launched his most ambitious scheme to date: the invasion of the Netherlands, Belgium, and France. The military plans were worked out in meticulous detail. The attack on the Low Countries drew the British and French armies northwards, thereby exposing the flank through which the main German attack on France, through the thinly defended Belgian Ardennes, took place. The plan worked: the Dutch surrendered after five days, the Belgians after seventeen, and the British Army began its evacuation from Dunkirk on 27 May, which continued until 4 June. Then the final phase of the battle of France began in earnest and on 17 June the new French premier, the saviour of Verdun, Marshal Philippe Pétain, stunned France and Europe by announcing that he was seeking an armistice with Germany and with Italy, which had belatedly entered the fray on 11 June.

The Dutch had not been invaded since the Napoleonic Wars and possessed a tiny army which was armed with antiquated weapons and no tanks. Furthermore the country, largely flat and intersected by waterways, was unsuitable for a sustained defence and no city lay much more than 100 kilometres from the German border. Notwithstanding these disadvantages the Dutch put up a sustained defence. Their army managed to hold off the German airborne attack on The Hague for sufficiently long to allow Queen Wilhelmina and her government under Dirk Jan de Geer to make their escape to Britain on a British destroyer on 13 May. Negotiations were

begun for the Dutch capitulation but the relevant orders did not reach the Luftwaffe in time to prevent a major bombing raid on Rotterdam which destroyed the city centre and killed at least 800 civilians. Shortly afterwards the Dutch commander-in-chief, General Henri Winkelman, offered the surrender of the Dutch armed forces.[22]

Hitler appointed Arthur Seyss-Inquart as Reichskommissar on 18 May. This caused great alarm among the Dutch since Seyss-Inquart had been instrumental in establishing the constitutional basis for the *Anschluss* with Austria and had just served as deputy governor of the General Government under Hans Frank. But Seyss-Inquart quickly allayed Dutch fears with his first address on 29 May: 'I intend to maintain Dutch laws as far as possible and to work with the Dutch civil administration, and I guarantee the independence of the judiciary. We have no desire to force a foreign ideology on the Dutch.' He also did not intend to govern through the agency of the Dutch fascist party, the *Nationaal-Socialistische Beweging* (NSB) and its leader Anton Mussert. The governance of the Netherlands was continued through the senior civil servants, known as secretaries-general. This was in accordance with pre-war directives, drawn up to deal with the possibility of invasion and occupation, which allowed them to remain in office and to resign only if the occupier's demands became too great. The German military administration was under the Luftwaffe General Friedrich Christiansen. Therefore, it appeared, on the surface at least, that life could continue as normal and that there was no urgent requirement for resistance.[23]

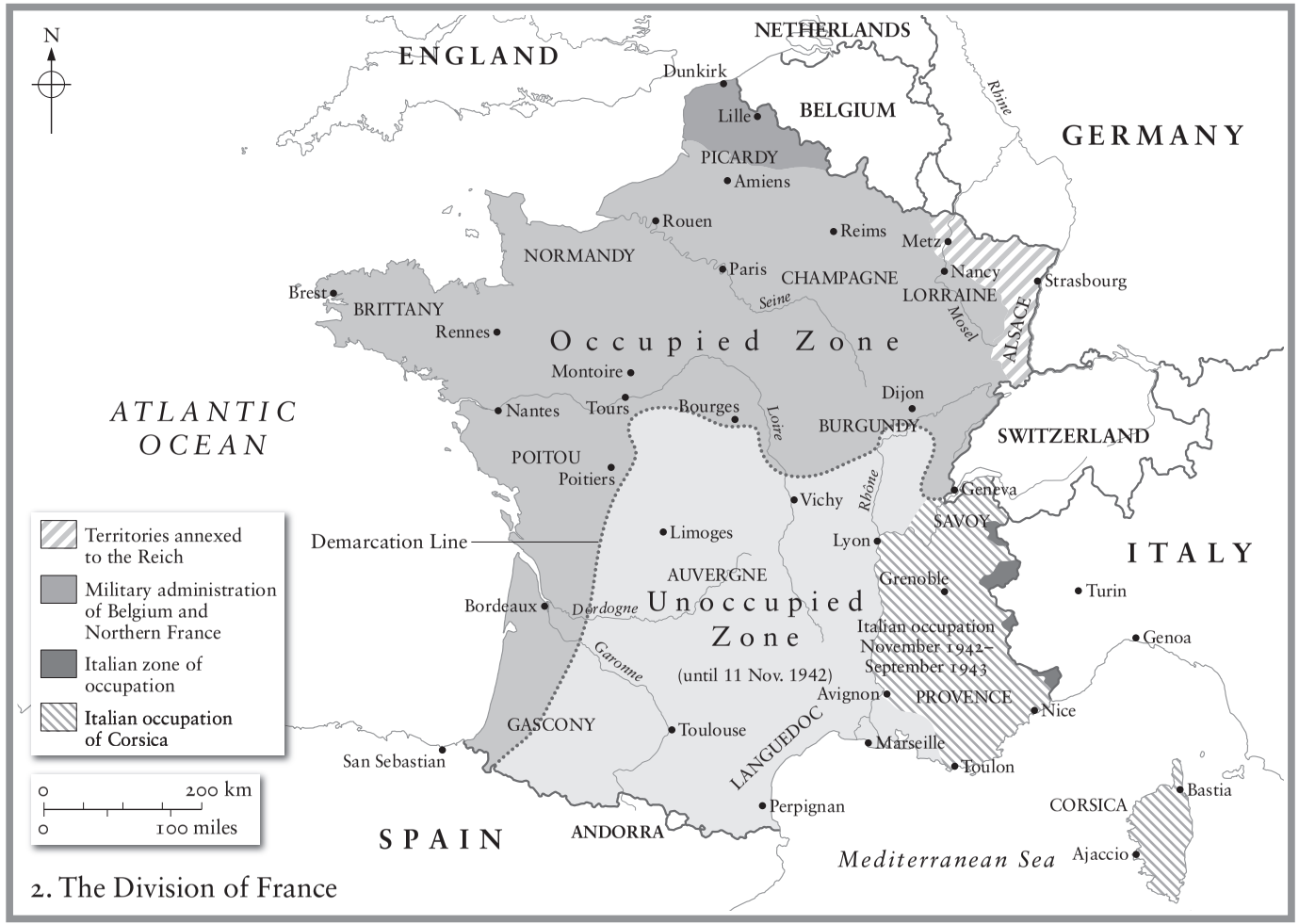
The case of Belgium was different. Almost all of Belgium had been occupied by the Germans during the First World War. This occupation had been brutal, with over 200,000 Belgian men deported as forced labour to Germany and Belgian industry being stripped. Resistance had sprung up with the creation of escape lines for Entente soldiers to enable them to reach the Netherlands, as well as effective intelligence networks. The country had been united behind its ruler, King Albert. His son, King Léopold III, was a very different man. He had hoped that the strict interwar policy of Belgian neutrality would protect the country. In fact it only led to a quick and total occupation as well as doing a great deal to damage British and French military strategy. As it became obvious that Belgium was completely defeated, the government headed by Hubert Pierlot, along with his foreign minister, Paul-Henri Spaak, left the country, first for France and eventually for Britain. Léopold surrendered his country to prevent further casualties, and then, on the advice of his defeatist military adviser, Robert van Overstraeten, remained in Brussels rather than going into exile. On 25 May Léopold explained his reasons in a letter to King George VI:

> Whatever trials Belgium may have to face in the future, I am convinced that I can help my people better by remaining with them . . . especially with regard to the hardships of foreign occupation, the menace of forced labour or deportation, and the difficulties of food supply . . . my utmost concern will be to prevent my countrymen from being compelled to associate themselves with any action against the countries which have attempted to help Belgium in her plight.[24]

Pierlot and Spaak feared that the Germans would use Léopold to lead a collaborationist government, and both were outspoken in their criticism of the king. The Belgian people, however, seemed to view the king's move with approval, leaving flowers outside the palace and wearing lapel badges with the letter 'L'. A Belgian Red Cross official warned the Belgian government-in-exile at the end of May: 'You must have no illusions, Belgium is entirely behind the king, you are detested – or, to use a rather coarse expression, you are spewed out. They consider that you have acted in an atrocious manner.'[25]

The German occupation of Belgium was characterized by its strategic importance for continuing attacks on Britain. Belgium was placed under a German military governor, General Alexander von Falkenhausen, and a military administrator, Eggert Reeder. Neither man was a committed Nazi. Much to the relief of the exiled Belgian government, Léopold refused to take any further part in government while his country was under German occupation and retired to his palace at Laeken, considering himself a prisoner of war. As in the Netherlands, the administration of Belgium was continued by the secretaries-general. Reeder worked very effectively with these men, managing to give the impression that the Belgians were free to draft civil ordinances, whereas in fact almost all were issued at the request of the Germans: 'by anchoring wartime decrees in Belgian law, the Germans expected to protect the legitimacy of the Secretaries-General and make them and their subordinates more effective tools in carrying out German orders'.[26] The areas of Belgium around Moresnet, Eupen, and Malmédy, which had been awarded to Belgium as reparations in 1920, were re-attached to the Reich on 18 May 1940.[27]

No one expected France to fall: indeed, those nations already defeated and under Hitler's heel based their future plans for eventual rebirth on the certainty that France would not fall. On paper at least, the French Army was strong, well equipped and well trained. The army, however, suffered from a defensive mentality, illustrated by the construction of the Maginot Line in the mid-1930s. Furthermore, although France had emerged from the First World War as a victor, the cost had been extremely high: 1.7



2. The Division of France

million soldiers and civilians had been killed and a further 3.5 million wounded, and a swathe of eastern France had been devastated by the fighting. In 1940 the French Army did not fight well, morale was poor, and communications with high command were frequently patchy. Therefore, on the grounds of military realities it is not surprising that Pétain asked for an armistice. Nevertheless, France could have followed the examples of other defeated nations and formed a government-in-exile. Indeed, she was uniquely well placed to do so since she possessed an empire which included a considerable part of North Africa. Yet Pétain feared a repeat of the events of 1871, when the communists had established a commune in Paris in the power vacuum following France's last defeat at the hands of the Germans. Pétain also did not believe that Britain could continue in the war alone and, by seeking peace now, he hoped to be able to negotiate a tolerable settlement for his countrymen. Largely unnoticed at the time, across the Channel, a very different voice spoke out on 18 June: General Charles de Gaulle announced his leadership of Frenchmen willing to continue the fight. Unnoticed by anyone, the French scientist Frédéric Joliot-Curie slipped out of France, carrying with him France's entire supply of heavy water – deuterium oxide – an action that would grow in importance during the war.

The German settlement of France can only be described as extraordinary. It reflected Hitler's preoccupation with security and economics. The strategic northern departments of Nord and Pas-de-Calais were removed from French control and placed under the military government of Belgium. Alsace and part of Lorraine, long disputed between France and Germany, were annexed to the Reich and administered by the neighbouring *Gaus*. A further zone on the French-German border was termed the Forbidden Zone and subject to close German control. The brief Italian contribution to the battle for France was rewarded with a strip of south-eastern France up to the town of Menton, but not including Nice, which Mussolini had coveted. Overall France was divided into two major zones: Occupied and Unoccupied. Between them ran a demarcation line zigzagging across France which was guarded by the French police with the assistance of the Germans.* In the northern Occupied Zone, the German forces were commanded from Paris by General Otto von Stülpnagel, and civil affairs were conducted principally through the German ambassador to France, Otto Abetz. In the Unoccupied Zone, the French government which had settled in the

* The line ran from the Spanish border to Mont-de-Marsan, then northwards to Bordeaux (occupied) before zigzagging across France on a line from Langon to Dole and finally dropping south to reach the Swiss border near Geneva.

spa town of Vichy theoretically governed the whole of France. The size of the Armistice Army was restricted to 100,000 men, the same figure as the permitted German army after 1919, and France had to pay substantial costs for the German occupation. The existence of the Unoccupied Zone gave the French an illusion of independence and meant that the majority of them were prepared to trust Pétain to save the country from the worst depredations of the Germans. The prospects for resistance in France therefore depended to a great extent on the level of German demands on the population, and on the Vichy regime's ability to limit them.[28]

Hitler had no territorial ambitions towards central Europe and the Balkans. In 1939 Germany concluded an economic agreement with Romania to secure the output of the Ploeşti oilfields. Through the two Vienna Awards of 1938 and 1940 brokered by Germany, the support of Hungary was secured through the restoration of many of Hungary's post-First World War territorial losses.* Germany was drawn more deeply into the Balkans simply as a by-product of Mussolini's disastrous invasion of Greece in October 1940. In November the British government upheld the terms of its treaty of guarantee with Greece and landed British and Commonwealth troops on Crete and despatched RAF units to the Greek mainland thereby bringing the Ploeşti oilfields within their reach. In early March 1941 Allied troops landed on the Greek mainland and deployed to face a German invasion of Greece from Bulgaria. Meanwhile Germany successfully wooed the regent of Yugoslavia, Prince Paul, into joining the Axis on 25 March 1941 and permitting German troops free passage through the country to attack Greece. Two days later, however, a pro-Allied coup deposed Paul and put his eighteen-year-old nephew on the throne as King Peter II. Hitler's immediate reaction was to order the invasion of Yugoslavia and on 6 April its capital Belgrade joined Warsaw and Rotterdam on the list of cities almost completely destroyed by the Luftwaffe. The Yugoslav army was no match for the Germans and the campaign effectively ended on 17 April when King Peter, accompanied by part of his government, fled the country for Egypt, where a government-in-exile was established.

Yugoslavia was a 'successor state' born out of the collapse of the Austro-Hungarian Empire at the end of the First World War. It was built around independent Serbia, and incorporated the republics of Slovenia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, and Montenegro, which had been under Austrian rule, as well as Croatia and part of the Banat which had been Hungarian, and

* The 1938 Vienna Award gave Hungary a common border with Poland. The 1940 award restored northern Transylvania to Hungary from Romania.

included part of Macedonia which had been Bulgarian, and the province of Kosovo, which the Albanians considered belonged to them.[29] This made Yugoslavia a disparate entity. In the first place it had seven frontiers – with Italy, Austria, Hungary, Romania, Bulgaria, Greece, and Albania – all of them countries which had designs on Yugoslav territory. Added to that, the country had three religions – Eastern Orthodox, Roman Catholic, and Muslim – whose mutual loathing served to divide the population. Such divisions were exacerbated by the existence of two alphabets, Latin and Cyrillic.[30] Even within Yugoslavia, land was disputed between the individual republics and the dominance of the Serbs in politics was widely resented by the non-Serb populations. The situation was ripe therefore after Yugoslavia's total collapse for Germany and Italy to carry out a thorough break-up of Yugoslavia. The divisions made then would meet with the approval of some of the population, be disputed by others, and have terrible and unforeseen consequences.

German economic and strategic requirements dominated the process of dismembering Yugoslavia: Hitler needed to safeguard Germany's access to the rich mineral resources of the Balkans, the Danube, and the strategic railway to the Greek coast. He also wanted to reward his allies for their loyalty.

The settlement of Serbia illustrates Hitler's thought processes. The country essentially maintained its pre-1912 borders, but the Banat, through which the Danube flowed, was placed under direct German military administration. Hungary regained the Bačka and Baranja areas, which she had lost after the First World War; Kosovo was given to the Italian-ruled Albanians. The rest of Serbia was ruled over by a collaborationist government headed by Milan Nedić, who offered his services to the German military commander in Serbia, Luftwaffe General Heinrich Dankelmann, on 27 August, an offer which was accepted two days later. Nedić was convinced that Germany had won the war and he wanted to protect the Serbian people, already under threat by events outside Serbia, from total German domination. His government, however, was little more than an administration, tasked with the challenge of keeping the country pacified so that the Germans could exploit it economically, unhindered by the various resistance forces which began to emerge.[31]

Italy had been promised control over territories on the Adriatic coast of what was now Yugoslavia by the Entente in the 1915 Treaty of London, but the 1919 peace settlement had reneged on that promise. Now, in 1941, Hitler promised to deliver what the Entente had failed to do. Slovenia was partitioned: Upper Carniola and Lower Styria, which had been Austrian before 1914 but were now Yugoslav, were placed under a German

administration led by Siegfried Uiberreither and Franz Kutschera, with the intention of later formally annexing them to the Reich.[32] The remainder of Slovenia, including the city of Ljubljana, was granted to Italy. Dalmatia was similarly divided, except that in this case a part was awarded to the newly independent country of Croatia, with the majority of the territory, and some of the Adriatic islands, going to Italy.[33]

The settlement of Croatia was very complex. Before the war both the Germans and the Italians had sponsored Croatian separatism. The Italians had supported Ante Pavelić, who led the Ustaše movement which was ideologically akin to fascism; the Germans, on the other hand, supported Vladko Maček, who, as leader of the popular Croatian Peasant Party, appeared to be able to guarantee widespread support for a new regime. But Maček turned out to be a patriot first and foremost and supported the head of the Yugoslav government, General Dušan Simović. Therefore, Hitler made the pragmatic decision to install Pavelić in power on 15 April 1941. Croatia was only nominally independent since both the Germans and Italians retained a large number of troops in the country with a demarcation line between them, the key Germans being General Edmund Glaise von Horstenau and the German ambassador Siegfried Kasche, with the Italians represented by a plenipotentiary general, Giovanni Battista Oxilia. The Duke of Spoleto accepted the crown as King Tomislav II but abdicated in the summer of 1943, having never even visited Croatia.[34] The Ustaše regime was revolutionary, highly nationalistic, and hostile to the presence of non-Croats within its territory. Its actions would divide the population and spark off the growth of the resistance.

After a failed Italian invasion of the country, the German conquest of Greece was concluded rapidly. The invasion began on 6 April 1941 with an advance from Yugoslavia and Bulgaria and within days the Greek and Allied forces were in a headlong retreat, beginning their evacuation from the mainland on 22 April. On 27 April German forces entered Athens and King George II left for Crete and then, after the fall of the island at the end of May, reached Cairo and established a government-in-exile. The Greek commander, General Georgios Tsolakoglou, acknowledged that his forces had been defeated by the Germans and stipulated during the surrender negotiations that the Greeks would surrender to the Germans, not to the Italians, who had not defeated them. General Wilhelm List agreed, but after Mussolini complained to Hitler, Italian officers were present at the surrender ceremony. The territorial settlement of Greece reflected Hitler's needs to reward his allies as well as guard Germany's strategic interests. German direct control was limited to a strip in eastern Thrace on the Turkish border, the port of Piraeus, the southern coast near Athens, and

Salonika in the north, leaving Italy to occupy the remainder of the country, apart from western Thrace and eastern Macedonia, which were returned to Bulgaria, restoring her losses from the Balkan Wars and the First World War. The numerous Greek islands were split between the Italians and Germans, with the Germans maintaining control over the most important ones. After the expulsion of the Allied forces Crete was predominantly under German occupation with an Italian garrison located in the most eastern part of the island. Two Axis plenipotentiaries were appointed, Günther Altenburg and Pellegrino Ghigi, and the military command was similarly split between the commanders of the German 12th Army and the Italian 11th Army.

Even before the Second World War, Greece had been a country with deep political divisions between royalists and republicans, and between the supporters of the Metaxas dictatorship and the opposition. The fall of Greece, the departure of the king, and the formation of a government-in-exile exacerbated those divisions. In Athens a number of Greek politicians were prepared to cooperate or even collaborate with the Germans, but not with the despised Italians. The German solution was to set up a collaborationist government under Tsolakoglou which was 'brought into existence to take the wind out of the sails of the government in exile'. It soon became clear, however, that this Greek government commanded the loyalty of the population of Athens only. Elsewhere royalist groups made preliminary plans for political opposition, if not outright resistance to occupation. Similarly, the considerable number of republicans across the country discussed how they could best exploit the existence of the collaborationist government and the absence of the king to further the prospects for republicanism, but were divided among themselves from the start on political grounds.[35]

The shape of Hitler's 'New Order' in Europe had now been drawn, however the picture remains confused because there was not one system operating throughout the continent, but several. There was the clear desire to permit native governments – in the Czech Protectorate, Slovakia, Norway and Denmark – to continue to run their own affairs to a great extent, though, with the exception of Denmark, subject to close German oversight. In Belgium and the Netherlands the Germans were content to work with the native civil service, which attempted to follow a policy of obeying German decrees while making efforts to protect the population from the full impact of German demands. This has been termed *la politique du moindre mal*, the policy of doing the least harm. In France, however, as will be explained in greater detail in the following chapter, Pétain and the Vichy regime set out to build 'an authoritarian, anti-semitic, corporatist, and

clerical regime that would break with the ideals of the French Revolution and the principles of the Republic'.[36]

Nazi racial theory was the principal determinant of how the Germans would treat the conquered peoples. Various nationalities would be wooed on the grounds that they were 'Aryans', such as the Dutch, Norwegians, and Flemings: the French were seen as intermediate, being neither Aryans nor the despised Slavs. The full impact of racial policy fell in the east, where the Slavs and Jews were viewed as *Untermenschen*, people to be fully conquered and then eradicated to make space for Germanic *Lebensraum*. As Seyss-Inquart explained on leaving his post in Poland to serve as Reichskommissar in the Netherlands: 'In the east we have a National Socialist mission; over there in the west we have a function. Therein lies something of a difference!'[37] The Italian approach to *spazio vitale* was different. Whereas for the Germans, the acquisition of *Lebensraum* necessitated the annihilation of the existing population, or at least its transfer out of the area, for the Italians *spazio vitale* was part of a long tradition of imperialism stretching back to the original Roman Empire, which had been refined more recently in the nineteenth century by the British and French empires, whereby 'the occupier of conquered territories transferred its political, social, cultural and economic system to them'.[38]

War and the ensuing redrawing of frontiers caused an immense dislocation of populations. In Poland many people found themselves on the opposite side of the German-Soviet demarcation line from their homes. It was possible to get permission to move between the zones but this took a long time to obtain. Overcrowding in the General Government was worsened by the precipitate arrival of over one million Poles, expelled from their homes in the western provinces now annexed to the Reich. Indeed, such chaos was created that Hans Frank himself called for a halt to the evictions until accommodation could be provided for the incomers.[39]

The invasion of the Low Countries and of France sparked off an exodus of around eight million people fleeing south away from the German armies, and this exodus remained in the memories of all those involved either as refugees or as witnesses:

> It was an unbelievable sight, a long, slow, jostling river of trucks and wagons, sleek cars and jalopies, all piled high with furniture and cherished possessions, from a bird cage to a grandfather clock to a statue of the Virgin Mary. There were stalled cars surrounded by distraught families, cars overturned in ditches. There were soldiers who had thrown away their weapons as they trudged along, grey with fatigue and dust. There was a cyclist with his dog

> bound to his luggage rack like a parcel. A family of peasants from the north lay on the ground in the shade of their wagon, their horses grazing at the side of the road. I remember their children asleep on the road, with their plump rosy cheeks, their flaxen hair in the dust. The sun beat down. We spent as much time stopped as moving.[40]

It is therefore hardly surprising that many greeted Pétain's announcement of his request for an armistice with relief. Jean-Pierre Lévy, later to be active in the resistance but then a reserve artillery lieutenant in the thick of the fighting, recalled: 'It's sad to say, but, alas, it's the truth: around me there was widespread relief at the announcement of the news [armistice]. Soldiers and officers were in favour of ceasing hostilities and did not hide it. Everything happened in a virtually unanimous consensus.'[41]

After the armistice was signed in France, the long-drawn-out process began of trying to get the refugees back to their homes. At the end of June 1940 a decree signed by Pierlot instructed all Belgian government departments and their civil servants to return to Brussels. Pierlot also made plans for the demobilization and repatriation of Belgian troops in France, but Léopold, still smarting from the government's attacks on him, deemed it more politic to allow the International Red Cross to handle the repatriation of Belgian soldiers and civilians.[42] The confused position of the French who were refugees within France was compounded by the division of France into different zones, and not all were allowed to return home. Those who had fled from Paris and the area surrounding the city, or from between the Seine and the Loire, were free to return home. But those whose homes lay between the Seine and the Somme could return home only if they were employed in public services or in agriculture. Those who lived in the areas placed under the military government operating from Brussels – Pas-de-Calais and Nord – were unable to return home under any circumstances.[43] About two-thirds of the 420,000 refugees from Alsace-Lorraine returned home with German encouragement. There they were subjected to an increasing amount of pressure to become Germanized.* In November 1940 about 70,000 Alsatians and Lorrainers who resisted Germanization were expelled and taken by special trains to Lyon.[44] The University of Strasbourg relocated to Clermont-Ferrand, where many of its students and professors would later become involved in the resistance.

Within the German-occupied Yugoslav Slovenian provinces of Upper Carniola and Carinthia an aggressive policy of Germanization was launched and the Slovene language was banned for official use. Those who

* Alsace and Lorraine had been under German control between 1870 and 1918.

were deemed unfit for Germanization were expelled southwards. In June 1941 the Germans reached an agreement with the Croatian government which forced the Croats to accept the majority of those expelled and in return permitted Croatia to expel an equal number of Serbs into Serbia: 'For one week, trains from the region of Gorenjska, filled to capacity with Slovene intellectuals, political leaders, priests, and other influential individuals, including their families, travelled through Ljubljana to unknown destinations in Croatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, and Serbia.'[45] The Ustaše regime in Croatia could not cope with the massive influx of Serbs and began killing them. It has been estimated that at least 500,000 Serbian men, women, and children were murdered on a variety of pretexts during 1941. Within the Italian-occupied zone in Slovenia and in annexed Dalmatia the Italians launched a massive programme of Italianization and imported fascist organizations into the region.[46] The upheaval caused by the population transfers in the Balkans stimulated the rapid creation of a resistance to the occupiers.

Throughout Europe, there was, of course, a significant portion of the male populations whose return home was considerably delayed, in many cases until the end of the war – the prisoners of war. The Germans took 694,000 Polish officers and soldiers prisoner at the end of the 1939 campaign. The 30,000 officers were sent to POW camps throughout Germany to sit it out until the end of the war. In spring 1940 the rank and file were released from their POW status and became slave workers in Germany, under stringent regulations. The Jews were segregated in the POW camps before being demobilized and returned to Poland, where they were forced into the ghettos being established by the Germans.[47]

In stark contrast, the Danish Army was allowed to continue in existence. Most Norwegian and Dutch POWs were released on parole, subject to recall in case of resistance to German rule in their countries. With regard to the Belgians, the Germans pursued a policy of divide and rule by releasing the Flemish POWs, racially closest to the Germans, first, before allowing a number of French-speaking Walloons to return home at a later date. A similar racial theme was present in the treatment of the Yugoslav Army. Those POWs who came from Croatia, the regions of Slovenia administered by Germany, or from Montenegro were allowed to return to their homes. This meant that of the 181,000 Yugoslav POWs remaining in Germany and the 10,000 in Italy, 90 per cent were Serbs.[48] Two million Frenchmen had been made prisoners of war on the fall of France. Some essential agricultural and industrial workers and First World War veterans were later released, but at least 1.5 million men remained stuck in camps in Germany. These were effectively hostages held by the Germans to ensure

the cooperation of the French government; pawns in a complex bargaining game.

The members of the French armed forces who were not in France when the armistice was announced faced the greatest dilemma: should they return home to their families and live under German occupation or the Vichy regime, or should they rally around de Gaulle and remain in exile facing an uncertain future? There were about 18,000 French sailors in Britain in June 1940, and only 50 officers and 200 sailors chose to join de Gaulle while the remainder were repatriated by the British. The ratio was similar in the army.[49] Britain had little concern about the French Army (though de Gaulle of course did) but was principally concerned with the powerful French Navy, which was based in Toulon in France, Alexandria in Egypt, and Mers-el-Kébir in Algeria. Admiral François Darlan had promised the British government that he would not allow the French fleet to fall into German hands. The British did not trust the notoriously anglophobe Darlan, and the risk of allowing the French fleet to fall under German control was so great that Churchill took the difficult decision to order a Royal Navy attack on Mers-el-Kébir on 3 July 1940. The sinking of the French fleet there and the death of so many French sailors deeply shocked the French both on the mainland and in exile, and divided their loyalties. Admiral René Godfrey, who commanded the French squadron at Alexandria, explained the problem he faced in a letter to the British admiral commanding in the Mediterranean:

> For us Frenchmen the fact is that a government still exists in France, a government supported by a parliament established in non-occupied territory and which in consequence cannot be considered as irregular or deposed. The establishment elsewhere of another government, and all support for this other government, would clearly be rebellion.[50]

Godfrey agreed to allow his squadron to be interned. Royal Navy prize crews took over the French ships in British ports in July 1940. The clashes of loyalties among the French were further illustrated by the failure of de Gaulle to rally Senegal to the Free French cause during the ill-fated Dakar expedition in September 1940. Worse still, a joint British-Free French attack on Syria in June and July 1941 led to Frenchmen fighting each other. After the British had secured the country 32,000 French soldiers chose repatriation as opposed to a mere 5,600 who joined the Free French.[51]

These choices are understandable given the situation at the time. In 1940 the evacuation of Britain's small expeditionary force from Dunkirk, the poor performance of her army in all theatres, and the likelihood that Hitler

would invade Britain in the near future all combined to counsel against flight to Britain. Arthur Koestler, trapped in France, wrote:

> We did not know that England would carry on the fight alone; nothing in her conduct during the last pre-war decade, nor in the first nine months of actual war, led one to suppose it; and we did not know that, even should she carry on, we would be wanted to help, as was our duty, and be given the shelter, which was our due.[52]

In due course the performance of the RAF in the Battle of Britain lifted the spirits of the people in Europe. It now appeared, as one Norwegian observer wrote, that 'England held on: England could lose battles, but not the war.'[53] But it was equally apparent that the war would be a long one, and in the meantime the peoples of Europe had to find a response to the presence of their occupiers.

2
Choices

The occupation was painfully visible. There was the sheer physical presence of the occupying forces as well as the draping of all public buildings with scarlet banners bearing the swastika. The occupiers took over not just public buildings but private dwellings too, either as billets for the soldiers or, in the case of Warsaw, an entire residential quarter where people were thrown out of their houses at a moment's notice so that only Germans would live there. German street signs and notices appeared everywhere: not only were they in a foreign language but the use of bold gothic script emphasized the alienness of them. A Czech soldier who escaped from the Protectorate after living a year under occupation described what it was like:

> Foreign occupation changes every detail of one's whole life – not only public life, but ordinary, daily, private life. It is not only a question of politics and political activity; even the most simple, unpolitical person is affected. Everything you look at has the hand of occupation upon it. You are ordered about by notices in the street, new notices and new orders, or perhaps just ridiculous and outrageous translations of your own notices continuously hit you in the face. Every time you pass these inscriptions you are forced to realise afresh that you are no longer master of your own country, no longer at home in your own home.[1]

Contact with the occupying powers was unavoidable since papers had to be obtained, ration cards secured, and so on: 'We could not stir an inch, eat or even breathe without becoming the accomplices of our enemy.'[2] Léon Blum, a former prime minister, described the situation in France, which was equally applicable across Europe: 'The country remained silent and inert. It was still suffering the effects of shock, using the word in its pathological sense, in other words from a sort of anaesthesia.'[3] As people began to emerge from this state they faced a number of choices.

Before the war almost every country in Europe had had a fascist party

but in the age of democracy none had achieved any significant political following. Now, however, the upheavals caused by military defeat and occupation presented new opportunities for power based on collaboration with the occupiers. The German response varied country by country. In Poland, an approach made by Władysław Studnicki, an advocate of Polish-German cooperation during the First World War, was rejected by the Germans since Poland was to cease to exist and no collaborators were sought. Indeed, Studnicki found himself imprisoned by the Germans.[4] With regard to Denmark, the Germans were content to work with the existing government and saw no reason to encourage the two Danish fascist parties – the Danish National Socialist Party led by Jens Møller or the Danish National Socialist Workers' Party led by Frits Clausen. In fact Clausen himself turned down calls by his party members to join the government, on the grounds that he 'did not want to ride on German bayonets like Quisling'.[5] (Quisling's conduct will be considered below.) Similarly, the Germans felt that in the Protectorate they could work with Hácha and so when the tiny Czech fascist party, the *Vlajka*, attempted to take over the government in August 1940, the German response was to crush the party and send some of its members to concentration camps.[6]

In France too, the Germans rejected the offers of unconditional collaboration which were made by several parties. The two most active parties proposing collaboration were the *Parti Populaire Français* (PPF) led by Jacques Doriot and the *Rassemblement National Populaire* (RNP) led by Marcel Déat. There were also several minor parties equally keen to cultivate the Germans. A new party was even created on 1 October 1940 – the *Mouvement Social Révolutionnaire* (MSR) under Eugène Deloncle. After the war political collaborators such as Georges Albertini, who had been close to Déat, and Jacques Benoist-Méchin of the PPF, justified their collaboration on the grounds that they believed they could limit the damage caused by the occupation to France and raise France 'to an honourable place in the new scheme of things'. The dangers posed by the members of these parties became evident during the war. For example, a May 1941 report by the Vichy minister of the interior noted that 80 per cent of German spies arrested in the Unoccupied Zone since the armistice were Frenchmen. Later research revealed that many of these traitors had strong links to the PPF.[7]

The Germans had no need to rely on these parties at the beginning of the occupation, because there appeared to be every chance that the Vichy regime would do as it was told, as is shown by Pétain's speech following his meeting with Hitler at Montoire in central France on 24 October 1940: 'A collaboration has been envisaged between our two countries. I have

accepted the principle of it. The details will be discussed later.'[8] Historians have argued ever since of the exact meaning Pétain ascribed to 'collaboration'. It is clear that Germany held all the cards in any discussions on collaboration. The Vichy regime hoped for an amelioration of the demarcation line, a reduction in the occupation costs and the release of their POWs. But the Germans knew that these were the most powerful weapons in their armoury when it came to dealing with the French. For example, the chief French negotiator on the armistice commission, General Charles Huntziger, was informed by General Otto von Stülpnagel that the demarcation line 'is a bit we have put into the horse's mouth. If France rears, we will tighten the curb, and we will slacken it accordingly as France proves amenable.'[9] German suspicions concerning the sincerity of Vichy's policy of collaboration were confirmed when on 13 December 1940 Pétain removed Pierre Laval from his post as prime minister because Laval was 'guilty of having pursued a policy of voluntary collaboration with excessive zeal and dangerous concessions'.[10] However, after Pierre-Étienne Flandin had briefly followed Laval as prime minister, the position went to Admiral Darlan, who again pursued a policy of collaboration to win over the Germans again. The Paris Protocols of May 1941 marked the high point of Vichy's negotiating strategy with Germany: the Germans accepted the offer of the use of French bases in Syria and North Africa in return for a reduction in the occupation costs and the return home of those POWs who were veterans of the First World War. But the successful Anglo-Free French invasion of Syria in June and July damaged this agreement irrevocably: there was some reduction in the occupation costs and a number of POWs were released, but the Germans no longer trusted the Vichy regime. Pétain concluded that the policy of collaboration was 'an immense labour, which requires on our part as much will as it does patience'.[11] Ultimately, however, French collaboration never worked, because the Germans would not allow it. This in turn damaged Pétain's personal prestige and in due course allowed the resistance to exploit his and Vichy's failures in order to win support.

In the Netherlands and Belgium, the Germans offered a different approach towards the overtures made by the Dutch fascist party, the NSB under Anton Mussert, and the two right-wing parties in Belgium, the Flemish nationalist party, the *Vlaams Nationaal Verbond* (VNV), under Staf de Clercq, and the Walloon Rexist Party (Rex) led by Léon Degrelle. None of these parties was to be projected into government but they could be useful to the Germans in other ways, ways which would make them the principal enemy of the resistance for much of the war. In the Netherlands, members of the NSB were promoted into high positions in local government as

being more reliable than the incumbents who owed their loyalty to the queen and the government-in-exile. Seyss-Inquart also gave official approval to the NSB's paramilitary wing, the *Weer Afdeling* (WA), which could be used to crush any future resistance.[12] A similar policy was adopted in Belgium, where the Germans pursued the subtle tactic of ensuring that the VNV and Rex took over the national and local administrations by lowering the retirement age from sixty-five to sixty, thereby at a stroke of the pen removing many senior old-regime stalwarts from office. A key figure here was the minister of the interior, the willing collaborator Gérard Romsée, to whom more and more responsibilities, particularly over the police and gendarmerie, were given. Romsée ensured that the new burgomasters and aldermen appointed came from the ranks of the VNV and Rex. It appears that the Belgians supported a degree of collaboration: the membership of Rex increased to about 15,000–20,000 by the end of 1940; the VNV did even better with an increase from 25,000 in May 1940 to 70,000 on the eve of Operation Barbarossa in June 1941.[13]

The appearance of native collaborators presented a new enemy for the resistance, but one which was more accessible than the occupying forces. The effect has been summarized by the historian Henri Michel:

> Collaboration, as well as occupation, was thus a factor in moulding the character and action of the Resistance. In the first place it meant that both in the order and importance of resistance activities priority had to be given to counter-propaganda – the battle of the mind had to be won before the battle on the ground. Secondly, collaboration meant that a merciless civil war was added to the war between occupiers and occupied.[14]

Most of these battles lay in the future. In the meantime, the people had to learn how to live with the occupier and this led to more subtle forms of collaboration, as described by a Czech journalist, Jan Stránský: 'If we cannot sing with the angels we shall howl with the wolves . . . If the world is to be governed by force rather than by law, let our place be where there is greater force and greater determination. Let us seek – we have no other choice – accommodation with Germany.'[15]

People were forced into economic accommodation because they still needed to work in order to feed their families. Since the Germans soon became the principal source of employment, simply by placing the orders for goods and services, not necessarily by taking over enterprises and running them directly, this meant many people ended up working for the Germans in one way or another. It should be remembered that Europe was just emerging from the Great Depression and unemployment was still at a high level, a situation made worse by the return of demobilized soldiers.

The Germans encouraged workers to come to Germany, exploiting the pre-war tradition of cross-border working. Here again the difference between eastern and western Europe quickly became evident. Before the war, for example, Polish agricultural workers had crossed the frontier to bring in the harvest in Germany, and had been welcomed and treated as equals. Now, however, Nazi racial ideology poisoned what had previously been a peaceful relationship. Not only did the Germans make such extreme demands in terms of the numbers of Polish agricultural workers but once in Germany they were treated as slaves and were subject to strict controls regarding movement and conduct.[16] In contrast, workers from western Europe were welcomed into the factories of the Reich and offered good wages and living accommodation. In the years before the Allied strategic bombing campaign had any significant impact on industry in Germany, work there was an attractive option for the unemployed workers of western Europe. It has been estimated that by August 1941 there were over two million volunteer workers from across Europe working inside the Reich.[17]

Employers faced similar choices. They could either close their factories or go out of business voluntarily, thereby increasing unemployment in their own countries and ruining themselves, or accept contracts to produce war materiel for the Germans. The evidence suggests that the overwhelming number of employers chose to work for the Germans. The French, Czechs, Dutch, and Danes proved particularly adept at securing contracts to produce supplies for the German war industry. The importance of the Czech industries had the welcome effect for the Czechs of abating the impact of the effects of Nazi racial doctrine. The Germans could forget they were dealing with Slavs when they needed the goods they were producing.[18]

Working for the Germans brought benefits over and above simple business survival. For example, after the war, Richard Fiebig, head of the central contract office in the Netherlands, confessed:

> In the war there was the chance to modernise one's own industry, extend firms, gain modern technical procedures at no cost, develop [one's] own ideas further, keep people in employment and, not least, make reasonable profits which enabled the national budget to fulfil its duties through taxation.[19]

For the resistance, the existence of so many factories in their countries producing for the enemy presented opportunities for sabotage. It will be seen later that some employers were prepared to assist the resistance in the sabotage of their own factories, while others were not, arguing that the destruction of their factories would have the unwelcome effect of just providing the Germans with the excuse to draft more workers into the Reich.

There were possibilities open for racial collaboration. Those whom the

Nazi ideologues considered racially pure or valuable, such as the Nordic Danes and Norwegians, the Dutch, and the Belgian Flemings, were to be treated well or indeed cultivated as future partners in the New Order. In the east, however, the situation was more complex. Whereas the Nazis were universally hostile to the Slavs and Jews, they were faced with the problem that in both Poland and Czechoslovakia there had been an intermingling of the Aryans and Slavs and that there was a substantial portion of the population which had some German ancestry. These people could offer themselves willingly for Germanization and in return would receive all the economic and social advantages that such status brought. The only disadvantage was the liability of the Germanized males to be called up for military service in the Wehrmacht.

In the Protectorate, the Sudeten German leader Karl Frank declared in March 1939 that 'A German national is one who himself professes allegiance to the German nation, as long as this conviction is confirmed by certain facts, such as language, education, culture, etc.' By December 1941 the prospect of better employment and higher rations led around 80,000 Czechs to declare themselves voluntarily to be German. This fed into long-standing tensions and grievances between Slavic and Germanic elements in the region. The Czech resistance was shocked by the conduct of these people and issued a stark warning: 'The Germans are opening new German schools where there used to be none. This is your business, women. It is in your hands whether our children grow up to be Czechs or Germanized, patriots or traitors.' The warning was ignored, and the numbers opting to become German increased as the war progressed. After the war it was estimated that one in twenty-five Czechs had registered as German at some time during the conflict.[20]

There were also a substantial number of Polish citizens who had German ancestry. Poles were appalled to discover that some of their neighbours 'suddenly heard the call of their German blood', and became *Volksdeutsche* rather than Polish; some even joined the SS. In contrast to the Protectorate where registration of German nationality was entirely voluntary, though encouraged, in the annexed regions of the former Polish republic the German authorities began the process of systematically categorizing the population according to race in March 1941. The *Volksliste* placed 2.2 million Poles into one of four categories. The first two categories were considered German enough to be immediately eligible for conscription into the Wehrmacht. The third category covered 'persons of German descent' who had 'developed connections with Polish nationality', to whom German citizenship was only granted conditionally. In late 1941 the men from this category were conscripted into the Wehrmacht and served for the most

part unwillingly. Later in the war this fact was recognized by the Polish resistance, which helped these men to desert, and by the French resistance, who encouraged them to desert with their weapons and to join the resistance. The final category covered those of German descent who insisted that they were Poles and whom the Germans therefore regarded as renegades.[21]

Political accommodation with the Germans was pursued in both Denmark and the Protectorate. The Danish government went to great lengths to placate the Germans and to fend off the need for a full German occupation with the passage of a number of laws. In July 1940 the Danish parliament passed a law against the publication of anything 'that might be considered harmful to Denmark's relations with foreign countries'. In the first half of 1941 a series of laws made sabotage or giving assistance to the resistance punishable by death.[22] In the Protectorate, the Czech government was increasingly forced to make compromises which drew it closer to outright collaboration. For example, in the spring of 1940 Hácha signed an oath of allegiance to Hitler in response to the German threat to execute students who had been held in German concentration camps since an outbreak of resistance the previous year. Hácha then went further and welcomed prominent and active promoters of collaboration into his government. Foremost among these was the education minister, Emanuel Moravec, who was now given a free hand to nazify the education system.[23] The Germans saw the conduct of these governments as a model of accommodation.

In the Netherlands, talks to establish a collaborationist government in 1940 foundered over Dutch demands for political independence and continued loyalty to the Crown. Nonetheless, there were advocates of a high degree of political accommodation if not outright collaboration. For example, the Dutch prime minister, Dirk Jan de Greer, had accompanied Queen Wilhelmina into exile before concluding that Germany had in effect won the war and returning to the Netherlands.* He produced a pamphlet, endorsed by the Germans, called 'Synthesis in War', which urged the Dutch to collaborate.[24] Similar collaboration was advocated by a former prime minister, Dr Hendrik Colijn, who also wrote a pamphlet advocating if not collaboration then at least accommodation with Germany: 'we will have to accept a German instructor on political, economic and social questions, even if this means that we have to copy him'.[25] The German response was delayed by the emergence of other factors: the start of a mass movement in the

* De Greer was sent from Britain to the East Indies with a diplomatic package but absconded during the scheduled stopover in Lisbon and the Germans repatriated him via Berlin.

Netherlands, mirroring a similar development in the Protectorate, and the attempts at 'national revolutions' being made in Norway and Vichy France.

The collapse into total defeat forced many in the occupied countries to question the validity of liberal democracy. Interwar governments across Europe had often been short-lived and weak, while the sheer number of political parties had led to a focus on government-making rather than government itself. When these weak regimes proved incapable of coping with the Great Depression in the 1930s, the political right and left grew in strength at the expense of the upholders of liberal democracy. On top of this, these weak governments had failed to avert the outbreak of war and then been manifestly incapable of defending their countries against armed aggression. Finally, many of the governments had now gone into exile, leaving a vacuum to be filled back home.

Hácha led the way when, on 21 March 1939, he dissolved the Czech parliament and banned the activities of all political parties. In their place he proposed the establishment of a mass political movement – *Národní Souručenství* – National Solidarity, which would be led by a fifty-member committee. At the committee's first plenary meeting Hácha announced:

> You must keep one aim and one aim only before you. You must prove that the Czech people, which has hitherto been divided into warring groups and conflicting tendencies, will remain for ever a united people with a historical mission and full right to an individual existence.[26]

This mission itself was vague, with references to plans to increase the birth rate, to protect agriculture, to restrict liberalism, to reject socialism and communism, and to exclude Jews from public life. Membership was open to all adult males except Jews. National Solidarity proved to be extremely popular, and by May 1939, 98 per cent of the male population had joined it; by that December there were nearly 9,000 local parties and over 80,000 party officials.[27] But the meaning of National Solidarity was never clear. The American attaché in Prague wrote that the movement had been 'interpreted by the rank and file of the Czechs as an opportunity to demonstrate their numerical strength and their enthusiasm in the face of the German domination'.[28] But enthusiasm for what? It appears that Hácha envisaged the movement as a means of shoring up the authority of his government, and as a way of assuring the Germans that the Czechs were on their side. Indeed, the chairman of the movement told a party meeting in Prague shortly after the fall of France: 'The nation realizes that it is part of the Reich; it wants to be an integral element of the Reich, and it wants to work towards [that end].'[29]

This suggests that National Solidarity was a collaborationist movement. But there is also evidence to indicate that it could have been viewed as a nationalist movement which might undermine the authority of the German Reichsprotektor, von Neurath. Certainly the Germans were aware of the potential threat posed by the movement. Their response was to force Hácha to accept seven overt fascists into the ruling committee; but even so, Karl Frank remained suspicious of National Solidarity and was concerned that 'the Czechs were closely uniting and concentrating'. In spring 1942 von Neurath's replacement as Reichsprotektor, Reinhard Heydrich, ordered the dissolution of the committee. The movement continued in existence but it had lost its impetus and its achievements were negligible.[30]

Defeat and occupation encouraged leading Dutchmen to consider how best to replace the weak political system of the pre-war years, which had been drawn along religious differences and had led to twelve governmental crises. The solution chosen was to create a broad-based political movement, *Nederlandse Unie*, which was established on a number of broad premises, not all of which complemented each other.[31] Colijn participated in the early discussions but the party was actually founded by Professor Jan de Quay of the Catholic Party, the Queen's Commissioner, Johannes Linthorst Homan, and the police chief of Rotterdam, Dr L. Einthoven. The founding proclamation in July 1940 contained the statement that the purpose of the organization was 'to gather all patriots . . . in loyal attitudes towards the occupying power', but that it would also uphold Dutch national independence. The new party would overcome the political divisions of the pre-war years and ensure economic strength through a corporative structure. The Dutch people flocked to join the new movement, 250,000 in the first two weeks of recruitment, and by February 1941 the membership of *Nederlandse Unie* stood at 800,000, whereas in contrast the NSB's membership was only 100,000. A new weekly journal, *De Unie*, discussed a wide range of issues facing the Dutch people under German occupation.[32]

The popularity of *Nederlandse Unie* suggests that it was viewed by the Dutch as a nationalist movement, this despite the fact that it had removed references to the popular House of Orange at the request of the Germans. It was also seen as an essential bulwark against the danger of rule by the NSB. Seyss-Inquart, on the other hand, saw the movement differently. Since he recognized the fact that the NSB was too small to be imposed on the Dutch people, Seyss-Inquart welcomed the creation of *Nederlandse Unie* as 'a concentration and revival movement which could win over a large section of the population for "political collaboration" on the basis of an induced free will'. The impossibility of reconciling the differences

between nationalism and collaboration led to the decline of the movement. The leadership of *Nederlandse Unie* attempted to make some concessions towards collaboration, for example by banning Jews from full membership and warning members against participation in resistance activities. But the crunch came with the German invasion of the Soviet Union in June 1941. The *Nederlandse Unie* declined German requests to proclaim its support for a crusade against Bolshevism, on the grounds that the Netherlands and the Soviet Union were allies, so the Germans first banned publication of *De Unie* for six weeks and then subjected it to close censorship. The recognition that collaboration came at a price too high to pay led to the leadership of the party choosing to dissolve the party rather than be drawn into further collaboration with the Germans. By the end of 1941 the NSB was the only permitted political party in the Netherlands. Many of the most active members of *Nederlandse Unie* went on to become prominent members of the Dutch resistance.[33]

In Norway, there was a willing and active collaborator ready to work closely with the Germans in the shape of Vidkun Quisling. Reichskommissar Josef Terboven had sidelined Quisling after his precipitate attempt to take over the government on the day of the German invasion. Yet at the same time Terboven also indicated his support for Quisling by banning all political parties other than his *Nasjonal Samling*. Quisling, for his part, retained his ambitions intact, and in a speech on 26 September 1940 set out the programme of the NS: 'Our ideas are those which will be a new foundation for the rebuilding of the Norwegian state and society, and that means a new order in the pattern of Norwegian life.' His early attempts to incorporate industries and professions into single organizations, beginning with agriculture, education, and the law, met with resistance, culminating with the resignations of the members of the Supreme Court in December 1940. This warned Terboven to be cautious in giving too much power to Quisling and the NS.[34] In February 1942, in the changed circumstances of a protracted war, Terboven appointed Quisling head of the government and gave him the freedom to impose his concept of a national revolution on the Norwegian people. The reaction of the population, to be covered later, would prove to be an extraordinary demonstration of civil resistance.

Before Quisling could begin to impose his revolution a crucial decree was enacted: in order to participate in public life, membership of the NS was obligatory. The result was that by 1942 the party had trebled its membership to a peak of around 100,000 people. Because membership of the NS was essential for many people to retain their jobs, it is not clear to

what extent this vast increase in membership represented approval of collaboration with the occupying Germans, support for Quisling's programme, or was just a pragmatic move to achieve the means to live. For example, Gunvald Tomstad joined the NS to provide cover for his real work as the radio operator for a key intelligence group in southern Norway. He told his mother: 'No matter what evil you hear spoken of me, no matter what contemptible things you see me do, you and you alone are to know that I am serving my country, and the mean things I do and am, I am and do because someone must pay the price of freedom.'[35]

Of all the defeated peoples in Europe, the French faced the greatest number of choices when considering their response. Philippe de Vomécourt, an early resister, noted the reaction of his friends to the announcement of the armistice:

> There were a dozen or more people in the room at the time, and their reactions to the speech were a reflection of the way in which France was to be divided even to this day. That was the start of it all, although many Frenchmen, who gave their support to Pétain then, were to change their minds later. For some of the people in the room it was enough that Pétain should offer them peace . . .
>
> There were other Frenchmen, including a handful in my home that day we heard Pétain's first message, who could not accept that France should make obeisance to the invaders. Although at the moment their reaction was wholly instinctive, and as yet incapable of translation into any coherent plan for action, they believed that the renaissance of France could be achieved only by resistance to the Germans.[36]

For the latter category, de Gaulle would become their leader, but at that moment he was largely unknown to the French public.

Indeed, one of the principal challenges facing those who opted for resistance from the first hour was how to overcome the cult of personality erected around Pétain, the victor of Verdun:

> Pétain's influence did enormous damage to the Resistance. His hold over the families of prisoners of war was very strong. The trouble was that people's bitterness about the defeat didn't make them want to do something active to change the situation but made them even more submissive to Pétain. They also thought he was playing a double game and was getting ready to defeat the Germans.[37]

Pétain's portrait was displayed everywhere: post offices in the Unoccupied Zone sold over a million copies in two weeks, and a new national hymn,

'*Maréchal, nous voilà!*' replaced the *Marseillaise*.[38] He became 'an idol, a way out, an excuse' for the defeat.[39] This cult of personality was so successful that even early resisters like Henri Frenay would find it hard to shake off their loyalty to Pétain. Furthermore, even as Vichy's policies became more controversial and likely to stir resistance, many people then and indeed after the war continued to distinguish between Pétain, whom they continued to revere, and those who had worked under him, especially Darlan and Laval, whom they blamed.

One of the first steps the Vichy regime took was to end the French Third Republic in July 1940, when all but ninety-seven deputies voted it out of existence.[40] The Third Republic, born after defeat at the hands of the Germans in 1870–71, had been plagued by unstable governments and scandals throughout its existence, and was largely unmourned at its death. The Vichy regime was recognized as the French government by over forty governments, of which six, including the United States, had embassies in Vichy.[41]

Vichy acted swiftly to attempt to counter the threat from de Gaulle, the man Pétain described as 'a viper I clutched to my bosom'.[42] De Gaulle was ordered to return to France the day after his speech on 18 June 1940 calling for Frenchmen to rally round him. Over the next weeks his temporary rank of general was cancelled, then he was compulsorily retired on grounds of discipline, and finally on 28 June de Gaulle received notice to appear at a prison in Toulouse within five days to await trial for inciting mutiny. In his absence the military court sat on 4 July and de Gaulle was found guilty *in absentia* and sentenced to four years' imprisonment and a fine of 100 francs. The regime felt that the sentence was too lenient so a new tribunal met at Clermont-Ferrand and on 2 August condemned de Gaulle to death for desertion and joining the service of a foreign power. Pétain confirmed the sentence, though with the stipulation that it would not be carried out.[43]

There was a widespread desire to find someone to blame for the defeat: 'Ordinary soldiers blamed their officers, the General Staff blamed the politicians, the politicians of the Right blamed those of the Left and vice versa, the government of Pétain blamed the ministers of the Popular Front, they in turn blamed the army, most people blamed the Communists, the Communists blamed the internal Fascists, and the Fascists blamed the Jews.'[44] On 30 July 1940 Pétain empowered the Supreme Court to 'judge whether the former ministers, or their immediate subordinates, had betrayed the duties of their offices by way of acts which contributed to the transition from a state of peace to a state of war before September 1939, and which after that date worsened the consequences of the situation thus created'. The period to be examined lay from 1936 and the start of the Popular

Front government to 1940 and the armistice. The defendants included Léon Blum, Édouard Daladier, the former commander-in-chief, General Maurice Gamelin, and the former minister of air, Guy La Chambre. The opening of the trial in Riom was delayed until February 1942 and was suspended a month later since embarrassing evidence about budgetary cuts made to the armed forces during Pétain's term of office was beginning to emerge. The trial was formally abandoned in February 1943.[45]

One striking feature of French life had been the extent to which substantial elements in the Catholic Church remained antagonistic to the often aggressively secular Third Republic. After the armistice, the archbishop of Toulouse, Jules-Géraud Saliège, preached a sermon in which he asked:

> Have we suffered enough? Have we prayed enough? Have we repented for sixty years of national apostasy, sixty years during which the French spirit has suffered all the perversions of modern ideas . . . during which French morality has declined, during which anarchy has strangely developed.[46]

Vichy's solution was to carry out a National Revolution: 'To an extent unique among the occupied nations of Western Europe, France went beyond mere administration during the occupation to carry out a domestic revolution in institutions and values.'[47] It was, in every aspect, a reaction to the defeat, to the weaknesses of the governments of the Third Republic, to the rise of the power of organized labour, to the increase in immigration and arrival of refugees, to the anti-clericalism of the Third Republic, and, in general, to the modern world. It was essentially an attempt to turn back the clock to what was perceived as a happier world: the slogan '*Travail, Famille, Patrie!*' was to replace the revolutionary '*Liberté, Egalité, Fraternité!*' Over a remarkably short period of time Freemasons and Jews were barred from public office and trade unions and employers' associations were banned. The result was the dismissal of over 2,000 civil servants, and 3,000 French Jews were forced out of public office.[48] The anti-clerical laws that had ousted the Catholic Church from state-run schools were repealed, and teachers now had to provide religious instruction. As educators of the next generation, their attitude towards the National Revolution was closely monitored.[49] Vichy's xenophobic attitudes were illustrated by the work of the Commission for Denaturalization which began work in July 1940 and eventually revoked French nationality, and therefore protection, from over 150,000 foreign-born French citizens, many of whom were Jews. Without any prompting by the Germans, Vichy also enacted the first statute against the Jews in October 1940.[50]

The Vichy regime set up a number of organizations to replace those structures it had dismantled and to spread the word about the revolution.

In place of trade unions and employers' associations, a corporative structure was constructed, built around branches of industry or professions.[51] The *Chantiers de Jeunesse* were created to organize the 70,000 twenty-year-olds who could not undertake military service in the much-reduced Armistice Army but needed to be kept occupied in some way. Their main tasks were road-making and forestry and their role was economically helpful to France. However, later in the war the existence of the *Chantiers* organization made it easier for the Vichy regime to attempt to fulfil German demands for French labour, and this sparked opposition.[52] A more controversial organization was created by grouping together various veterans' associations under a new body, the *Légion Française des Combattants*. The government hoped that this organization would help uphold the National Revolution and counter any resistance to it. At its peak the Legion had 1.5 million veterans enrolled in the Unoccupied Zone alone, yet this figure concealed the fact that the majority were veterans from the First World War and not from 1939–40. The Legion became implicated in the more controversial aspects of Vichy, collaboration with the Germans, and especially action against the resistance. The *Service d'Ordre Légionnaire* (SOL) evolved from the Legion and its main purpose was to counter the resistance and other activities damaging to collaboration; out of the SOL grew the political paramilitary organization called the *Milice*, which was arguably the greatest danger the resistance faced.[53]

The National Revolution was French by design and implementation. In no way was it imposed on France by the Germans, nor were the more controversial aspects of it, such as the anti-semitic laws, demanded by the Germans. But the regime at Vichy certainly accepted the dominance of Germany within Europe and, as the only European power to be granted an armistice, desired to reach an understanding with Germany and to secure France's position within the new Europe. This drew the Vichy regime into a policy of collaboration with Germany. Yet it has been noted that 'the question was not whether there should be collaboration but in what direction and to what extent it should be pursued, and the major problem in 1940 was not how to persuade the French people to accept it, but how to persuade the German Government to agree to it'.[54] Hitler did not intend to permit France to become 'a full partner either in the prosecution of the war or in the elaboration of a New European Order'.[55] France was seen as a potential threat to continued German dominance in Europe, and Hitler never forgot that Germany and France had been at war with each other three times over the last century. What Hitler wanted from France was for the French to remain silent while he prepared for war against Britain, and to permit the economic plundering of the country. The development of

widespread resistance in the Unoccupied Zone would depend to a great extent on the Vichy regime's ability to mitigate German demands on the country. So long as the majority of the people continued to believe that Pétain was their saviour, then resistance would be slow to develop in the Unoccupied Zone.

Across Europe, the most prevalent attitude was undoubtedly one of *attentisme*, of waiting to see what would happen. There was a general feeling that: 'However you looked at the problem, the match had been played and lost. Without admitting that we were permanently defeated, it was necessary to retire and wait until better days. To stand obstinately against the defeat made no sense. The important thing was to know in what way to retire' or 'to come to terms with yesterday's enemy is not cowardice but wisdom, as well as accepting what is inevitable'.[56] This attitude is entirely understandable since German and Italian forces were in occupation across the continent and the surviving Allied armies had retired in a state of considerable disarray. It was clear that the war, and therefore the occupation, would be lengthy and so overt resistance seemed a pointless response. Nonetheless, there were people who opposed the occupations from the start, from a variety of motives. It was a response broadly defined by a Dutch resister, Erik Hazelhoff: 'In the life of every person there are moments when he says to himself: "Tja, this won't do." And then he does something.'[57] But people needed to know that they were not alone and they needed to know what to do, and one way of solving both problems was through the development of the clandestine press.

3
The Clandestine Press

One of the first actions of the occupying authorities was to seize control of the press, both newspapers and periodicals, in order to control both the news and the climate of opinion. In most countries this control was exerted through the licensing of papers and the imposition of strict censorship over the contents. Some pre-war newspapers continued in publication, such as *Le Soir* in Belgium and *Le Figaro* in France, with articles written by the same journalists. Elsewhere, the Germans might authorize the creation of new newspapers, such as *La Nation Belge*, edited by a former Rexist in Belgium, or *Nowy Kurjer Warszawski* in Poland. A clandestine press developed to contradict the messages carried in the official press. This 'battle of the mind' was waged by the resistance from the start of the war, when tiny numbers of clandestine newspapers were produced under conditions of great difficulty, to grow into, arguably, one of the most important examples of resistance throughout the war.

The clandestine press was complemented by the broadcasts of the BBC from Britain which reached every country. Control of the content of these broadcasts was given to the Political Warfare Executive (PWE), working with a committee which included representatives from the Foreign Office, SOE, the War Office, Admiralty and Air Ministry. Although many of the senior personnel in each country's section were British, émigrés tended to make the actual broadcasts.[1] The effect of the BBC cannot be overestimated:

> The BBC brought people together as well as inspiring action. It acted as a powerful vector and amplifier of the resistance. By the very fact of talking about it, the BBC conferred a national reality on the resistance, giving the impression, however misleading in the early days, of a coherent organisation.[2]

Many of those who listened to the BBC could be termed 'armchair resisters' who undertook no other act of opposition to the occupying forces. Yet

listening to the BBC was still important to these people in order to instil the mindset necessary for future action: if not to undertake resistance directly, then to support those who did.[3]

The importance of the clandestine press is demonstrated by the fact that it appeared in every country almost immediately after the occupation had begun. In the case of the Protectorate, the paper *V boj*, the mouthpiece of the resistance group ÚVOD, began publishing in 1939, even before the outbreak of the Second World War. Despite frequent arrests of its editors, it continued publication throughout the war and was joined by the communist *Rudé právo* after the German invasion of the Soviet Union.[4] Less than two weeks after the surrender of Warsaw the first edition of *Polska Żyje* appeared on 10 October 1939, followed on 5 November by the standard-bearer of the underground, *Biuletyn Informacyjny*.[5] In Belgium the secret newspaper *La Libre Belgique*, first published in German-occupied Belgium during the First World War, resumed publication in July 1940 under the editorship of Paul Stuye.[6] In the Netherlands, the first issue of the main underground paper, *Vrij Nederland*, was printed on 31 August 1940, Queen Wilhelmina's birthday.[7] The earliest underground papers in France were *Pantagruel* and *Libre France*, appearing in October 1940 in Paris, and *L'Homme libre*, which later became *La Voix du Nord* that November.[8] In the autumn of 1941 in Yugoslavia, the two resistance leaders, the Četnik Draža Mihailović and the Partisan Josip Tito, started the *Glas Ravne Gore* (Voice of Ravna Gora) and *Borba* (Fight) to promote their movements.[9] Even the Channel Islands, whose size restricted resistance, produced two publications, the Guernsey Active Secret Press (GASP) and the Guernsey Underground News Service (GUNS).[10]

The importance the resistance attributed to the underground press can be demonstrated by the sheer number of publications produced by each country. For example, about 1,200 titles of different newspapers and periodicals can be found in the Polish archives; over 800 in Norway; 500 in Belgium; 1,200 in the Netherlands; 800 in Denmark; and at least 1,000 in France.[11] Many of these were short-lived as the Germans arrested the editors, but some grew to be mass-circulation papers of 300,000 copies per issue, thereby rivalling the official press.*

Even as the first clandestine newspapers were being produced, privately published tracts appeared in several countries advising the population on how to behave towards the occupier. The best known of these is the *Conseils à l'occupé – Advice to the Occupied* – produced in the summer of 1940 by

* A list of some of the major publications in each country can be found under the preceding endnote.

a French journalist, Jean Texcier. Most of the thirty-three items of advice covered the subject of how best to ignore the presence of the occupier, such as avoiding patronizing establishments which welcomed the Germans. But the attitude to take towards the official press was also covered: '14. The reading of newspapers has never been advised as a method of learning to express oneself correctly in French. Still less today, the Paris dailies do not even *think* in French.' *Advice to the Occupied* concluded with:

> 33. It's useless to send your friends to buy this 'Advice to the Occupied' at the bookshop. No doubt you have only one copy and wish to keep it. All right, make some copies and your friends may copy theirs in turn. It's a good occupation for the occupied.[12]

Similar advice was offered by anonymous authors in Norway and Denmark, each with an emphasis suitable for its particular country. The *Ten Commandments for Norwegians* opened with an exhortation to obey King Haakon and to hate Hitler. It counselled the population to denounce traitors and followers of Quisling.[13] The Commandments were directed less at conduct towards the Germans, rather against Quisling and members of his NS party which was determined to take over the country. The *Ten Commandments from a Dane* addressed the challenge faced in Denmark posed by the seemingly benign German occupation. The Germans allowed the Danes more freedom than in any other occupation, anticipating that a quiescent population would continue to work in industries which served the German war machine. Hence three of the Commandments urged the workers to 'do bad work for the Germans'; 'practise working in slow motion for the Germans'; and 'destroy all the tools and machines that could be useful to the Germans'.[14]

It is impossible to know how many people actually saw these tracts at the time, but for those who did it could have an important effect. When Agnès Humbert, involved in the Musée de l'Homme resistance network, which produced an early clandestine newspaper, *Résistance*, came across a copy of the advice, she recorded her reaction in her diary:

> A glimmer of light in the darkness . . . Now we know for certain that we are not alone. There are other people who think like us, who are suffering and organizing the struggle: soon a network will cover the whole of France, and our little group will be just one link in a mighty chain. We are absolutely overjoyed.[15]

This suggests that one of the principal aims of the early clandestine press was to inform people that the resistance existed and to define what it stood for:

> Resistance means above all to act, to be positive, to perform reasonable and useful things. Many of you who have tried are discouraged because you think you are powerless. But some have formed themselves into groups, scattered and weak . . .
>
> Group yourselves in your homes with those whom you know. Choose your leaders. They will find other groups with which to work in common . . . Your immediate task is to organise yourselves so that you can, when you receive the order, take up the fight again. Find resolute men and enrol them with care. Bring comfort and decision to those who doubt or who no longer dare hope.[16]

Above all, the message from the early issues of the newspapers was not to despair, the country might be defeated but the war still continued, and patience was needed before liberation would occur on the occasion of Germany's ultimate defeat.

From east to west, those involved in the clandestine press quite separately came to the same conclusions on the aims of the publications. For example, the editor of the Polish paper *Biuletyn Informacyjny*, Aleksander Kamiński, issued a set of editorial rules, the first of which was largely followed by the clandestine press across Europe:

> 1. Information not agitation; Poles do not need encouragement to resist the Germans or cultivate their patriotism. People deprived of radio sets and the Polish press want to know what is going on in the world and in the country. This information should be provided succinctly and faithfully. The way of presenting facts offers an opportunity which should be exploited wisely (but with moderation) for the purpose of propagating desired behaviours and attitudes.[17]

Lucie Aubrac, involved in *Libération-sud* in France agreed: 'We simply had to tell people what was happening. The Germans gave out much misinformation. On the other hand, there was information the Germans did not want the French to know. They were pillaging and looting our country.'[18] So, while the official press might blame the British blockade for shortages of food and other goods, the clandestine newspapers listed what the Germans had seized and publicized the differences between the rations received by the Germans and those distributed to the natives. On numerous occasions the clandestine press issued advice on specific issues. For example, the Poles were told not to relinquish the warm clothing and boots the Germans demanded in the winter of 1941–42.[19] The Dutch press advised people to hide their silver, bronze, and copper when the Germans ordered the requisition of the metals.[20] During 1942 and 1943 when the Germans

began conscripting forced labourers across Europe, the clandestine press made clear calls for evasion of the measure. In a special edition, the Dutch paper *Het Parool* called on the soldiers not to report for re-internment as ordered in spring 1943, pointing out that it would be difficult for the Germans to arrest 300,000 former servicemen.[21]

The clandestine press also served a function in the identification of who was the enemy. For much of the war, the principal targets were the collaborators, and *Défense de la France*, for example, urged direct action against them: 'The assassination of a collaborator is a liquidation, not a murder. In the absence of military courts, spontaneous justice must be meted out to traitors.'[22] The same newspaper warned those women guilty of 'horizontal collaboration' of their future fate after liberation: 'You so-called French women who give your bodies to a German will be shaved, with a notice pinned on your backs *Sold to the enemy*! So will you shameless girls who trip around with the occupiers be shaved and whipped. On all your foreheads a swastika will be branded with hot iron.'[23] In Norway, the Netherlands, Belgium, and Denmark the clandestine press published lists of the names of collaborators along with the documentation to be used in post-war trials.[24] As the clandestine press gained access to better printing presses, it served an essential function in warning the population of particularly active traitors, printing not only physical descriptions and lists of aliases used, but also on many occasions photographs too. At the same time, the clandestine press clearly identified the Allies and the governments-in-exile as the supporters of resistance. News of the progress of the war was severely restricted in the official press, especially as the stream of German victories began to turn into a string of defeats, so the clandestine press filled the gap, publicizing news gleaned from the BBC. Some secret newspapers were little more than a series of BBC bulletins printed up for wider distribution and also included verbatim speeches by Churchill, Roosevelt, and other national leaders.

One important purpose of the clandestine press was to publicize the actual existence of a resistance movement. Indeed, in France in particular, groups came together for the specific purpose of producing a newspaper, and their editors were often the leaders of the resistance group.[25] Henri Frenay, leader of *Combat*, wrote after the war: 'People sometimes forgot the name of our movement but never that of our newspaper.'[26] In general, this link between resistance groups and underground newspapers had a beneficial effect, but there could also be criticism of the sheer number of papers produced. For example, Stefan Korboński, head of the civil resistance in Poland, complained: 'The publication of a newspaper was almost a certificate of importance to even the smallest organisation, for it gave it a position in the underground world.'[27]

The fact that most resistance movements had their own newspaper may suggest that the resistance as a whole was fragmented, but in fact the evidence is that the press could act as a unifying factor. The head of the Polish resistance, the AK, Tadeusz Bór-Komorowski, suggested: 'One of the chief aims of propaganda was to bring about as nearly as possible complete harmony and comradeship between all ranks of our organisation, the members of which originated from very diverse social spheres and professed a multiplicity of political opinions.'[28] The same unity of purpose could apply to those who read the clandestine output. Frenay noted: 'A solidarity of complicity was cemented among all those who received our sheets.'[29] Philippe de Vomécourt noted the value of the papers for the readership:

> They expressed the thoughts that a man might fear to speak aloud; they assured him that, far from being alone, he was one of an already large 'army', which was growing every day. They gave cohesion to the idea of Resistance. They were the cement that bound together the individual units of the Resistance.[30]

Such sentiments could cross international frontiers. Ada Gobetti, a member of the Italian resistance, noted her joy at receiving copies of the French underground papers *Combat* and *Franc-Tireur*: 'It made me emotional to see this tangible sign that they were fighting a battle elsewhere too, with the same spirit as ours.'[31]

The creation, printing, and distribution of the underground press also served as a training ground for the resistance movements. The challenge of operating a printing press in secret necessitated tight security and the formation of small units to guard the premises housing the press. These units developed the sort of discipline essential for the formation of sabotage groups later in the war. Logistics had to be learned: editorial content had to be gathered and delivered to the press; paper and ink obtained without arousing the suspicions of the police or the German authorities; and methods found of warehousing the newspapers once printed, before the distribution network began its work. Betrayal was possible at every point. The nucleus of every group producing a newspaper had to learn how to reach out to strangers who could provide assistance in some element of the process. As Claude Bourdet explained: 'It was the instrument that could measure the sentiments of someone you were hoping to make a sympathizer; it was also the first mode of action and, for many militants, the only likely means of practical action for many long months.'[32] This provided useful practice essential for recruitment of more members and identification of infiltrators. The distribution of the output was of less risk and served as a helpful exercise for novice members of a group. Printing presses

could also be used to produce false identity documents. These were first given to the central members of resistance groups, before being extended to other groups under threat, such as evading Allied servicemen, those hiding from forced labour, and the Jews.[33]

During the period of total German domination in Europe the underground press largely avoided calling for direct action against the Germans, but by 1943 as the tide of the war began to turn against the occupying force the tone of the press changed. In Poland, for example, *Biuletyn Informacyjny* provided detailed reports on resistance activity.[34] In March 1944 *Défense de la France* published an editorial, 'A Duty to Kill', which called upon Frenchmen to:

> Kill the German to cleanse our territory, kill him because he kills our own people, kill him to be free. Kill the traitors, kill those who betray, those who aided the enemy. Kill the policeman who has in any way helped arrest patriots. Kill the men of the Milice, exterminate them, because they have chosen to hand over French men and women, because they have embraced betrayal. Shoot them like mad dogs on the street corners. Hang them from the lampposts, following the example of Grenoble. Destroy them like vermin.[35]

That month Albert Camus, writing for *Combat*, warned those French people who thought that the war was no concern of theirs, that the Germans' practice of reprisals involved a slaughter of innocent people: 'There is only one fight, and if you don't join it, your enemy will nevertheless supply you with daily proof that the fight is yours.'[36] After the Normandy invasion of June 1944, the clandestine press in France and the Low Countries printed Allied communiqués, orders from the Allied military authorities, and, in the case of the Netherlands, instructions from the government-in-exile. As liberation approached across Europe, the clandestine press played a vital role in printing so-called 'paroles' or advice on conduct as the Germans either retreated or prepared to lay down their arms, notably in Norway.

The first issue of *Libération-sud* announced in July 1941: 'Tomorrow will be the time for political doctrines. Today our objective must be to escape the wretched condition of a conquered people.'[37] By the next year, however, the clandestine press across Europe was already beginning to consider the future. Throughout Europe there appeared to be a desire to break with the past, including an examination of what had been wrong with the pre-war systems of government and economic management, in order to make plans for a better future. As *Franc-Tireur* stated in March 1944: 'Who would dare to impute to those masses who have risen in

Europe against Nazi rule that they are fighting for a revival of a past whose profound weaknesses and irrevocable collapse they have experienced? Their goal is a new world!'[38] The discussion in the papers was along two broad themes: a new form of internal government; and relations between different nation states.

There was a widespread rejection of the pre-war political systems. In Poland the underground government and therefore its press was run by members of the pre-war opposition parties who strove to develop programmes which would move Poland back towards a liberal democracy and away from the pre-war authoritarian *Sanacja* regime. In this sense, the underground government was in tune with the Polish government-in-exile whose leader, Władysław Sikorski, was also distancing himself from the pre-war regime. Not all governments-in-exile were happy that the resistance was discussing the shape of future government. Radio Free Belgium criticized *La Voix des Belges* for such conduct. In response a clandestine newspaper warned the government:

> When you return, you will find us older and that we have endured much. You have not been able to follow the evolution of the people for four years. You will meet men transformed by four years of fighting, men who have learned to show themselves intransigent . . . you have not suffered under the Nazis nor seen the traitors in action.[39]

Queen Wilhelmina announced that she would consult with the Dutch resistance on the formation of the first post-war cabinet. Reassured by this, the Dutch papers considered whether the cooperation between Protestants and Roman Catholics, notable in the resistance, could continue after the war. This would make a break with a pre-war political and social system divided along religious differences.[40]

The future organization of the economy occupied the minds of underground editors. The communist paper *Franc-Tireur* in its first editorial in December 1941 tried to appeal to a broad swathe of opinion:

> We want to found after the war a new regime, a synthesis between authority and liberty, a true democracy cleansed of the bumblings of political parties and the domination of the trusts and the financial powers. We want neither a military dictatorship, nor a religious dictatorship, nor a proletarian dictatorship, nor a capitalist dictatorship.[41]

The Dutch press devoted much attention to economic matters, with opinions ranging from the communists' desire for the nationalization of all the means of production to the socialist call for the nationalization of only selected industries.[42] The French resistance press also focused on economic

matters. Socialism and more worker control and input into management decisions were seen as keys to the future, as a means to achieve a new economic system 'between the last perilous starts of an old moribund capitalism and the youthful excesses of a Marxism still too sectarian and rigid', as *Libération* expressed it. The result of these considerations was a series of *Cahiers*, discussion documents for the establishment of a post-war France. In London, the Free French were producing similar documents.[43]

Appeals to nationalism were vital in triggering resistance to the German occupations, but when considering the shape of the future the underground press urged greater internationalism. In December 1942 *Het Parool* stated the lines along which various clandestine papers were thinking with the greatest clarity:

> This war should be seen as the ultimate crisis of the sovereign state. If the fighting is not to be in vain, the war must result in a European cooperation between states that are ready to cede part of their sovereignty to secure collective sovereignty. A new super-organ must follow – whether a European directorate or a federation – with the power to enforce the collective will and ensure peace. Not a super-organ that dictates all life in Europe from one central point as the Nazis would like to do, but one that leaves the continental national units sufficient autonomy and self-determination.[44]

Just how much power should be taken away from nation states was, however, viewed differently in each country. The Poles appeared to be most keen for post-war federations, whereas the French wanted cooperation restricted to the economic sphere. The inherent weaknesses of the League of Nations were widely recognized and much discussion was centred upon the need to find a place for a future European federation within the framework of a new, more powerful world organization which, unlike the League of Nations, would have the means at its disposal to maintain peace.[45]

Books were also an important output of the clandestine press, with the Dutch and the Poles being particularly active. Whereas the Dutch focused on nationalist literature and a high number of anthologies of poetry, the Poles had to respond to the Germans' complete control of all the means of publishing in Poland, as well as to the closure of libraries and bookshops. The AK set up its own publishing unit in Warsaw and Cracow. These books, manuals, and pamphlets carried the mark KOPR – *Komisja Propagandy BIP w Warszawie* (Propaganda Committee of the Bureau of Information and Propaganda in Warsaw), and a colophon of an open book together with the initials AK. This unit oversaw the production of everything from school textbooks for the underground schools and military manuals for the underground army to literature, poetry, and plays, all vital

to maintain the existence of the Polish state, albeit in secret and underground. Whereas the Dutch titles were normally under 100 copies per edition, the Poles were better organized and normal print runs were 2,000–3,000, and occasionally as large as 6,000.[46]

Two books stand out in particular for further analysis. The first is *Le Silence de la mer* (*The Silence of the Sea*) by Vercors in France. The second was not even produced in an occupied country but had an important impact on the resistance nonetheless – John Steinbeck's *The Moon is Down*.

Vercors was the pseudonym of a satirical cartoonist and engraver, Jean Bruller, who had never written a book before. Vercors decided to write the book in 1941 because:

> There were French writers who collaborated. We needed to counter them by urging silence. The idea for my book came from the German Ambassador Otto Abetz, who had drawn up a list of forbidden authors – principally Jews, Communists, and those with a left-wing political orientation.[47]

The story is a political parable about a man and his niece, landed gentry in Brittany, who had a friendly German officer, Werner von Ebrennac, billeted on them. The uncle is the narrator and explains that 'By tacit agreement, my niece and I had decided to make no changes in our life, even in the smallest detail, just as if the officer didn't exist, as if he had been a ghost.'[48] Every evening the young officer tries to make conversation with the French pair, explaining how much he loves France and French literature. He believes in maintaining friendly relations between the French and Germans until a visit to Paris opens his eyes to German intentions as practised in the east. Each night the officer used to retire wishing the pair a good night but, after narrating what he has learned in Paris from his colleagues, the officer withdraws with an *Adieu* and leaves the next morning.

Le Silence de la mer was the first book produced by the underground publishing house Éditions de Minuit. Jean Paulhan was behind the project and received funds from a Paris paediatrician, Robert Debré. The manuscript was initially typed up on thin paper by Dexia, Countess Elisabeth de la Bourdonnaye, and then published as a sixty-page book on thick grey paper with about 300–400 copies. By autumn 1942 a copy had reached London, where it was reprinted and given worldwide distribution. Éditions de Minuit went on to produce a further sixteen books before the liberation.[49]

The American author John Steinbeck wrote *The Moon is Down* as a piece of propaganda at the direct request of the head of OSS, Bill Donovan, in autumn 1941, before the United States was even in the war. It was published in the US in March 1942 just as the country was reeling from the

attack on Pearl Harbor the previous December and the defeats in the Pacific. The book tells the story of a small town in occupied Europe, most probably Norway, where a German unit descends on the town to guard the mine and keep it operating. The story shows the challenges posed by invasion and occupation, for both the occupiers and the occupied. The defeat of the town's defending forces came about through the treachery of one of the inhabitants, who is then rejected by the occupying German authorities. The Germans attempt to be friendly to the defeated people and initially establish good relations with the mayor and the local doctor. But then the occupation turns sour when a German is killed by a native miner and the Germans ask the mayor to pass the death sentence. The shock this produces means that a clear line is drawn between occupiers and the occupied, and relations are kept businesslike rather than amicable.

For some of the American critics the portrayal of the Germans as friendly and as human beings was too much, just at the time when the United States was starting military operations. But the book struck a chord with the resistance in the occupied countries, who, after all, had direct experience of the Germans. The book was translated into Norwegian, Danish, Dutch, and French. The Norwegian edition was translated in Sweden and printed there in late 1942 on very thin paper and smuggled into Norway. It proved so popular that a mere five weeks after liberation, a legal edition was published in two printings of 10,000 copies each. The Danish edition was translated at the end of 1942 by two students working with an English dictionary in one hand and a glass of beer in the other. The text was then mimeographed and distributed through a Copenhagen bookseller, Mogens Staffeldt, before proving so popular that other bookshops sold it too as well as large businesses such as shipping companies and banks. The Dutch edition was translated and produced in early 1944 with a print run of over 1,000 copies. The proceeds from the sales went to a resistance group which was supporting actors and actresses who had refused to join the Nazi-sponsored cultural guild and were therefore unemployed. The French edition was published in February 1944 by Éditions de Minuit.[50]

As well as publishing to their own populations the resistance targeted the Germans themselves directly with black propaganda. Much of this material was supplied from Britain, crafted by PWE and distributed by SOE teams. An example of this practice occurred in Norway, where two SOE teams of three men apiece operated in Trondheim and Oslo in 1944. Around 280,000 stickers and 270,000 pamphlets were distributed. The stickers appeared on lamp posts, shop fronts, and on one spectacular occasion, in every tram in Trondheim. A black newspaper pretending to be the official press of the *Deutsche Freiheits Parti* was produced in an attempt

to recruit Germans who already believed that the war was lost.[51] The Poles were especially active in the dissemination of black propaganda with around 1,000 people engaged in the scheme, dubbed Operation 'N'. This operation was directly overseen by the underground's Office for Information and Propaganda. It involved the production of journals like *Der Soldat*, *Der Klabautermann*, and *Der Hammer* in German to be distributed to the Wehrmacht and German administration not only in the General Government, but also behind the lines on the Eastern Front and in the annexed western areas of Poland, and even penetrating into the Reich itself. Around 25,000 to 30,000 items of black propaganda were distributed per month.[52] In early 1943 the underground printed a counterfeit edition of the German-sponsored *Nowy Kurjer Warszawski* newspaper. It was identical to the German copy in every respect – format, print, and appearance. Only the contents differed with a statement of the military situation on all fronts, details of underground activity within Poland, a speech by Churchill, and a number of articles derogatory to the Germans. The stunt was repeated on Poland's national day, 3 May 1943, and included an appeal for the day to be treated as a public holiday which was extremely successful.[53]

The Belgians undertook an impressively planned and executed stunt on Armistice Day 1943 – a fake edition of the German-controlled main evening newspaper, *Le Soir*. The operation was overseen by the resistance group *Front de l'Indépendance*. Money was raised for the special printing of about 50,000 copies, and the owner of a large printing press, Ferdinand Wellens, agreed to do the printing. An employee of *Le Soir* and member of the Front, Théo Mullier, stole a mould of the masthead of the paper and provided a list of news kiosks and other distribution points. Distribution was vital for the success of the ruse. The kiosks were used to receiving copies at a set time, so much thought was given to the challenge of delaying the printing of the official *Le Soir* in order to provide a window for the fake *Le Soir* to reach the kiosks first. Sabotage of the printing press was rejected because it would endanger the workers in the plant. Another option was to request the RAF to bomb Brussels that afternoon because as soon as the air-raid sirens were sounded the electricity was cut off in the city, which would stop the presses of *Le Soir*. The RAF agreed to undertake the operation if possible, but in the event arrived twenty-four hours too late. This forced the resistance to adopt its back-up plan of setting fire to some delivery vans and blocking in others to delay the distribution of *Le Soir*. The ruse worked. The fake *Le Soir* arrived at the kiosks only fifteen minutes before the real one, sufficient time for 5,000 copies to have been sold before the Gestapo realized what was happening. A further 45,000 copies were sold throughout Belgium. The Germans

hunted down the perpetrators and Ferdinand Wellens and Théo Mullier were both caught by the Germans and died in prison. In total, seventeen of the team of twenty-two involved in the project were killed.[54]

The production of the clandestine press was no easy task since the Germans imposed strict controls over the sale of newsprint and ink. This was followed by a prohibition on the sale of stencils and duplicating machines. Consequently the early output of the underground press was limited in size. For example, in France, Raymond Burgard produced the first two issues of *Valmy* using a child's printing press, and Christian Pineau typed the first issue of *Libération* in December 1940 on his own typewriter.[55] The first issues of most publications were produced with mimeograph machines which required the use of wax stencils and a copious amount of ink. Indeed, Frenay noted of the first machine obtained by *Combat*: 'It was a truly comical contraption. Sometimes it devoured four or five sheets at a time, then it would refuse to take any paper at all. Often – and always at the least expected moment – it would vomit Niagaras of ink.'[56] Frustrating this must have been, but it was also dangerous since the presence of ink on someone's fingers could reveal to the police or Germans that the person was engaged in a surreptitious printing project. The next stage up was the rotary press, which usually used metal plates. These could produce 800 copies before the stencil had to be replaced, a vast improvement on the limit of 100 imposed by the fragile wax stencils. But the rotary presses had disadvantages, namely that a special typewriter was needed to produce the metal stencils and the presses themselves were noisy and large and therefore difficult to conceal.

Large-scale production of newspapers required access to printing presses. The typesetting of the lead would normally be carried out in a separate location from the press itself. The typesetting process was noisy and required regular movements backwards and forwards to insert the lead type and frequent knocking of the type to ensure an even surface. Typesetters tried to minimize the danger by wearing slippers to muffle their movements, and reduce the noise of the knocking by striking at small areas at a time. This of course meant that the production of each newspaper took a long time, one of the many reasons why most of them were only two to eight pages long. Obtaining the lead type was a challenge in itself. In the Netherlands one of the main foundries producing type blocks inadvertently assisted the underground press by deciding to offload its stock of out-of-date gothic typefaces, which were promptly put to use by the underground press.[57] The completed plates then had to be transported clandestinely to the hidden location of the printing press. The plates were heavy and the sight of women

and men carrying heavy loads in the street might attract suspicion. One woman in France placed ninety kilos of lead in the pram carrying her sleeping child and she recalled that the lead was so heavy that the pram springs scraped the pavement and made movement extremely difficult. In the Netherlands the clandestine paper *Trouw* used Javanese students to carry the type. Although these men appeared to be of a light build, they were weightlifters and knew how to carry a heavy suitcase unobtrusively.[58]

The use of mimeograph machines had become widespread before the war and so it was fairly easy to locate one to use in secrecy. For example, the Norwegian underground paper *For Friheten* was produced on the mimeograph at Trondheim High School; *Résistance* was printed on the mimeograph located in the Musée de l'Homme, and *Défense de la France* began production in the cellars of the Sorbonne.[59] One Dutch newspaper was printed on a machine situated in the middle of a helpfully noisy dog pound while another Dutch paper, *Je maintiendrai*, was started in the attic of the Permanent Court of International Justice at The Hague.[60]

The larger the printing enterprise, the more care had to be taken to find a suitable location. By late spring 1943 *Combat* was being printed in a former cement factory outside Lyon which was half underground:

> This covered the noise somewhat and concealed our activities. But we still had to build a wall around the room with the presses. The 'laboratory' had been given a rather vague name: Bureau of Geodesic and Geographic Studies, suggesting a Parisian firm doing research. That way, we could get telephone service and electricity. The shop had two heavy professional presses. One enormous monster [that] Vélin put in working condition weighed five tons; there was also a newer, automated machine.[61]

In Poland, *Biuletyn Informacyjny* was produced in seven printing shops in Warsaw. One was located in the specially excavated cellar of a private house where electricity was taken from the main grid, but the air quality in the cellar was extremely poor.[62] *Défense de la France* housed its powerful Teisch printing press in a factory run by the parents of two of the group's members. The machine was located in the mail room and, when not in use, was concealed by an enormous crate moved using a system of pulleys.[63]

Obtaining ink and paper on the black market was expensive, and raising funds for publishing newspapers could often be the starting point for someone embarking on resistance. For example, in the Netherlands, Herman Friedhoff began his clandestine life by raising funds for *Het Parool*, and found it more difficult than expected: 'I discovered that few people were ready to back sympathetic words with hard cash . . .'[64] In Denmark, Monica Wichfeld was first initiated into the resistance when asked by a lodger on

her estate to raise funds for the newspapers *Frit Danmark* and *Land og Folk*.[65] The Polish and Norwegian governments-in-exile and the Czech National Committee all provided funds for the clandestine press. Towards the end of the war, the Dutch government followed suit. Some newspapers refused to accept funds from abroad. In February 1943 *La Voix des Belges* proudly announced: 'Never – we've said it before and we say it again – has our newspaper received from anyone, whether Allies, government, political party, company or private individual, a single centime as a subsidy.' Like many of the French papers, it relied on voluntary contributions or subscriptions from individuals.[66] Newsprint was obtained from a variety of sources, with differing degrees of legality. There were outright thefts from the collaborationist press and hold-ups of lorries carrying paper. Sometimes those working for the official press could be bribed to 'lose' quantities of paper or to manipulate the permitted wastage quota. Some underground movements set up fake companies which could legally purchase paper that was then turned over to the production of the clandestine press.

Distribution of the press from the printing presses to warehouses or other storage facilities required great care and risk. In Warsaw the movement of *Biuletyn Informacyjny* from the printing press to the warehouses was a quasi-military operation:

> Usually, empty beer barrels were used or wooden cases bearing the name of some manufacturer. They had to be so well and tightly closed that it was impossible to see the contents without taking the thing to bits. They were removed on ordinary push-carts, which were then in use in Warsaw for every kind of goods. Near the push-cart, among the passersby, an armed escort would watch over the precious load. If anyone insisted on seeing the contents, a shot was the only way of finishing the argument.[67]

In France, the communist newspaper *Humanité* was distributed via the railway network. In the Netherlands and in Norway, some postal workers proved willing to take the risk of transporting bundles of newspapers.[68]

The distribution of individual copies of newspapers was often used as a test of nerve for novice resisters. For example, Hortense Daman started out as a distributor for *La Libre Belgique* before becoming a courier for the resistance.[69] In Norway *For Friheten* was distributed to subscribers only, with each subscriber being given a unique security number. The newspaper itself would be placed in his mailbox and if the correct number was not written on the paper then he knew it had been planted by the Gestapo and did not collect it.[70] Other distribution methods were more random. In Poland, copies of underground newspapers would be concealed inside an official paper for willing recipients, who would then be told by the seller that

'there was something very interesting inside'.[71] On 14 July 1943 *Défense de la France* undertook a successful and well-organized stunt by sending teams under guard to scatter copies of the newspaper in carriages on the Paris Metro. On another occasion the newspaper was distributed from 'a front-wheel drive cabriolet moving slowly up the Champs-Élysées delivering fistfuls of the paper from the running-board to café terraces'.[72] But not everyone wanted to read the clandestine press. Metod Milać and his brother distributed the first issues of a secret Yugoslav newspaper in Italian-controlled Ljubljana and found that their neighbours secretly returned the newspapers to them but did not betray them to the authorities.[73] Eva Rogers was given copies of *De Frie Danske* to distribute and recorded: 'I feel guilty because I am not sure that I know even that many people who might wish to know the truth, but in the end I decide people must be told, and if they are sensible and don't leave the papers lying around they won't come to any harm.'[74]

The Germans naturally attempted to curtail the activities of the clandestine press by arresting editors and printers. Almost all of the early clandestine newspapers produced in German-occupied France were badly hit by arrests before the end of 1941.[75] The editor of *Voix de Belge*, Camille Joset, was arrested in 1942, but continued to write articles from prison which were smuggled out and printed. In May 1942 the Gestapo happened to stop a van carrying *La Libre Belgique* from Brussels where it had been printed to Lille and found an address book on the driver containing the addresses of about twenty dropping-off points. The Belgian paper *Liberté* was also hit by a number of arrests in June 1942.[76] In the Netherlands *Vrij Nederland* and *Het Parool* were frequently badly affected by arrests of their editorial teams.[77] It is impossible to know for certain the number of people arrested and either imprisoned or executed for activities concerned with the clandestine press. Estimates have been made suggesting that, for example, at least 770 people died because of their work on the secret presses in the Netherlands alone, and over 2,000 people in Belgium.[78]

For all its efforts, the clandestine press could only reach a limited number of people. The broadcasts of the BBC from Britain could, however, reach a far wider audience since radio ownership was widespread in many countries, particularly in western Europe. There are many stories from across Europe narrating how the streets would empty at a certain hour as everyone rushed home to listen to the BBC.* The Germans responded with

* On 1 January 1943 BBC broadcasts to France lasted for 5½ hours; Italy, 4¼ hours; the Netherlands, 2½ hours; Poland, 2 hours and 10 minutes; Czechoslovakia 1¾ hours; and so on down to Albania which was allocated 15 minutes.

widespread bans on listening to foreign radio stations. For example, every owner of a radio in the Protectorate received a gold-coloured plate emblazoned with the words 'Listening to foreign broadcasts is punishable by death'.[79] In France listening to the BBC was banned in the Occupied Zone in October 1940 and in the Unoccupied Zone a year later, yet in the summer of 1942 it was estimated that 75 per cent of the population of Rennes, in the Occupied Zone, were regular listeners.[80] In Denmark, where the population was permitted to listen to foreign broadcasts, a report in October 1941 noted that the engineers in the control room of Copenhagen's electricity supply were seeing a significant spike in consumption at 18.15 as a significant number of people tuned in to the BBC.[81] The possession of radio sets was prohibited in Poland in October 1939 and on the west coast of Norway in September 1941. This led to the birth of 'professional listeners', people who would note down BBC broadcasts in shorthand and then disseminate them either orally or through the clandestine press.[82] The Germans attempted to block the BBC through jamming but met with limited success. In the Netherlands the effect of jamming could be reduced by the use of noise suppressors, although the sound quality remained poor, and the Danes proved particularly adept at sabotaging German jamming operations.[83] The BBC was not the only foreign station listened to by people in the occupied countries. In 1942 Stalin sanctioned the first radio station to broadcast to a foreign country, Radio Free Yugoslavia, operating from Tiflis. This was followed by Radio Kościuszko for Poland and Za slovenskú Slobodu for Slovakia.[84] Swiss radio broadcasts were also popular in southern France.

Black radio stations, pretending to broadcast from the home country but in fact operating in Britain, were also established. Perhaps the most effective of these was Świt, operating into Poland. This was launched in 1942 and each day the underground would radio London with the latest news, which Świt would then beam back to Poland. This gave the impression of such up-to-date news that many assumed that Świt could only be operating within Poland.[85] The Czechs had managed a similar kind of operation for a period in 1940 when a transmitter, Nazdar, transmitted to London and its contents were re-broadcast by the BBC Czech Service to a wider audience.[86] Two transmitters, Christo Bolev and Naroden Glass, gave the impression of broadcasting from within Bulgaria, but in fact were operating from Moscow.[87] Black radio stations also broadcast into France: Radio Catholique to parish priests; Radio Travail to industrial workers and trade union leaders; and Radio Inconnu, which was aimed at the Unoccupied Zone and was overtly hostile to Pétain and the Vichy regime.[88]

The BBC served a vital function in serving as a link between exiled

governments and personalities and their home country. For example, Queen Wilhelmina's speeches on Radio Orange committed her government-in-exile to support the home resistance. In Norway: 'The role of the BBC was tremendous. The importance cannot be overestimated of the effect of the King speaking to the people. The role of symbols such as the King, the Flag, and the Constitution was monumental.'[89] Edvard Beneš was an immediate beneficiary since even before his Czech National Committee was recognized as a government-in-exile in 1941, the former president and his allies were given radio time on the Czech BBC programmes. This enabled the Czechs to understand that Beneš was leading the fight for liberation and for the recognition of the integrity of Czechoslovakia. The main Czech resistance organization, ÚVOD, promoted news of the timing of the BBC broadcasts through the underground press and with stickers in phone booths. The effect could be seen when the BBC called for a boycott of the official press during the week of 14 September 1941. Sales of the official newspapers in Prague dropped by 70 per cent, and by between 25 and 50 per cent elsewhere in the Protectorate.[90]

The BBC arguably put de Gaulle on the map as the leader of the Free French. The BBC broadcast two programmes to the French: Maurice Schumann spoke on behalf of the Free French for five minutes a day, followed by the programme *Les Français parlent aux Français*, run by a team led by Michel Saint-Denis, known as Pierre Bourdan. De Gaulle himself gave a total of sixty-seven broadcasts over the BBC. The effect of these broadcasts could be seen when a call made in December 1940 for all French people to remain indoors for a specific hour on 1 January 1941 met with a noticeable response despite the German efforts to tempt the population out with the promise of a delivery of potatoes during that hour. Even more successful were the calls for demonstrations on May Day in 1942. Around 100,000 people gathered in Marseille and in Lyon as well as other smaller demonstrations elsewhere in France. The calls for demonstrations on 14 July 1942 were even more successful with a total of over 1.5 million people taking to the streets in a show of nationalism.[91]

Undoubtedly the most successful visual demonstration of the power and wide reach of the BBC was the success of the 'V' campaign. This was the brainchild of the BBC Belgian editor, who made the suggestion of writing 'Vs' everywhere in a broadcast to Belgium on 14 January 1941.[92] That spring the campaign was extended throughout Europe. The effect was immediate: 'At the moment all over the Protectorate there is a flood of V-symbols, on clothes and ribbons, painted in white on house doors, monuments, on street asphalt in all localities up and down the land, everywhere.' The Czechs adopted the 'V' as the first letter of *vítězství*, meaning

victory. They even created a whole sentence made up of Vs: '*Věřit ve vítězství velkého vůdce je velká volovina*' ('To believe in the victory of the great Führer is absolute rubbish').[93] In Denmark and Norway the Vs signified *Vi Vil Vinde* ('We will win'). The Norwegian resistance had a coup when *Vi Vil Vinde* was written in mud on a road, photographed by the RAF and then used on a 20-øre stamp issued by the Norwegian government-in-exile. The Norwegian resistance also sent V stickers to all post offices with a letter, purportedly signed by the local NS organization, which instructed the staff to display the stickers prominently. This was done, even though the staff probably knew that the instruction really came from the resistance. There was no word in Polish suitable for the V to be used but V-signs nonetheless proliferated, often with the addition of 'erloren' to make *Verloren*, meaning 'lost' in German.[94]

Josef Goebbels, the Nazis' propaganda minister, made the error of attempting to take over the V-campaign: 'To respond to English propaganda, the Germans have decreed that V is supposed to be the sign of German Victory. Everywhere they have raised big white flags decorated with a monumental V, and pasted red posters with a black V over the swastika.' Goebbels wanted to suggest that the V stood for the fictitious German pagan god Viktoria or was a reference to Caesar's '*veni, vidi, vici*'.[95] German efforts to eradicate the resistance inscriptions of the V could have an unintentional effect:

> All along the Seine, between the Porte du Carrousel and Place de la Concorde, all the plane trees are displaying a big V around a cross of Lorraine carved deep into their bark . . . The occupying authorities had the inscriptions tarred over, but that makes them still more visible. The black stains attract the eye.[96]

In Louvain, Gaston Vandermeerssche drew a huge V-sign in whitewash on the square in front of the German Kommandantur. The whitewash seeped between the cobblestones, making it impossible for the Germans to eradicate the V-sign entirely and the square was closed to public access until the sign had disappeared.[97] On 27 June 1941 the BBC began using the opening bars of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony as the interval signal for its European service. It had been noticed that the first notes matched the Morse code for the letter V – dot, dot, dot, dash: 'From now on those four notes, those four beats, will be the rallying sign of hope in the prison of Europe . . . A rhythm is contagious in a way that an inscription is not.'[98]

The production of the clandestine press was started by individuals before being taken over by resistance organizations. Its value as the means of disseminating information and opinions was widely recognized and in

some countries efforts were made to supervise the underground press to ensure that the newspapers all carried the same message to their readership as liberation approached. The process was begun in France in April 1942 when de Gaulle's official representative in France, Jean Moulin, set up a *Bureau d'Information et de Presse* (BIP) under the control of Georges Bidault. The primary aim of this organization was to link the secret press in both zones and to make the whole process of news production more professional. Later in the war the BIP issued daily bulletins to all the editors of the clandestine press.[99] The Norwegians also established a press secretariat in 1942. One editor sat on the Home Front committee and assumed responsibility for issuing the Home Front's daily orders or paroles to the whole underground press. The secretariat was subjected to several Gestapo raids, notably in November 1943 and February 1944, but replacements were quickly found.[100] In September 1943 Børge Outze, a crime reporter on the official daily newspaper *National Times*, created the Danish Illegal Press Coordinating Committee. This produced a daily bulletin *Information*, which was not only distributed within Denmark but also sent to Sweden, from where it could be sent around the world. Outze himself was captured by the Germans in October 1944 but obtained his release by promising to work for the Germans against the communists, whereupon he promptly departed for Sweden. His replacement Sigvald Kristensen ensured that *Information* was published for the remainder of the war and indeed into peacetime.[101]

The very fact that the clandestine press grew to become the principal medium through which the resistance and government-in-exile could issue orders to the populations on their expected conduct throughout the occupation, and especially on the eve of liberation, shows its very power and success. The resistance in Europe as a whole had its share of successes and failures, but when it came to winning the 'battle of the mind', this must be seen as one of its principal achievements.

4
Escape from Occupied Europe

As much of Europe collapsed into a deep state of despair caused by the rapid German conquests, there still remained a significant number of soldiers and airmen trapped in Europe who wanted to continue the fight. These fell into two categories: evaders who had never fallen into German hands, and escapers, those who had been captured but had then absconded from prisoner-of-war camps or from columns of POWs being marched to Germany. Added to these two categories were those interned, either in still-neutral countries such as Romania and Hungary, or under the terms of the armistice in France. At the beginning the majority of evaders and escapers were soldiers trying to reach Britain to join their national armed forces. Later, however, the majority were airmen, shot down over occupied Europe as the Allied strategic bombing campaign of Germany intensified. Many of these men found people willing to assist them to reach Spain across the Pyrenees as the first step on their journey back to Britain, and so the escape lines were formed.

In December 1939 a section of the War Office called MI9 was created under Major Norman Crockatt. Its remit was wide, encompassing the collection of intelligence regarding the locations of POW camps housing British officers and men and the briefing of servicemen on how to evade capture. This included recommendations on how to pass as a local, which European fauna and flora could be safely eaten, and the provision of escape kits which contained maps printed on silk, a tiny compass, and many other useful pieces of kit. Efforts were also made to smuggle escape material into POW camps, concealed in permitted items.[1] In the summer of 1941 a subsection of MI9 was created, called Room 900 after its War Office address, which was staffed by two men who had first-hand experience of escape lines. One was Jimmy Langley, who had worked in Marseille before being repatriated having lost an arm during the battle for France. The other was Airey Neave, the first British officer to make a successful home run from the supposedly escape-proof POW camp in Colditz Castle in eastern Germany.

It is very difficult to estimate the numbers of people who escaped from France and the Low Countries during the war. The figure of around 3,000 airmen is much quoted but to these must be added the many Allied soldiers who had been left behind in France in 1940 and made their way successfully out of that country to Britain. The escape lines also did not deal exclusively with servicemen. A large number of civilians also utilized them, whether they were Jews fleeing the round-ups, Frenchmen seeking to join the Free French forces, or young men evading conscription for forced labour. This chapter will focus on escapes from the countries which fell to German domination in the period from 1939 to 1941 – Czechoslovakia, Poland, Norway, the Channel Islands, the Netherlands, Belgium, France and Greece. The story of the escapes and evasion of Allied personnel from Italy and Yugoslavia is intricately tied up in the wider story of the progress of the war and will therefore be covered later.

Working on escape lines was not necessarily seen as an act of resistance by the helpers, but often as a humanitarian gesture. For example, a resistance leader in France, Philippe de Vomécourt, suggested that:

> Many of those who organised or aided the escape routes drew a distinction in their own minds between helping people to escape and committing what they considered 'crimes' against the Germans and the spirit of the Armistice. To them, there was a difference in kind between helping troops – French or British prisoners, aircrew, or any other 'active' troops – or political or racial refugees, to escape from the Germans, and the commission of sabotage. The first they considered a duty; either a patriotic duty or a humane one. The escape routes attracted helpers who, by religious conviction or for other sympathetic reasons, could not contemplate the abetting or carrying out of sabotage.[2]

Denys Teare, an RAF evader, identified another possible reason why so many people helped: 'because it was the only contact they had with the opposition to the Germans. Our bombers passing overhead on their way to Germany were a sign of hope for the future, of freedom, and that's what we represented.'[3] After the war Donald Darling estimated that in the Low Countries and France alone about 30,000 people had been involved in working on various escape lines.[4] This figure is, however, far too low because it only covered those lines working to get British and American airmen home and not those who worked on lines helping other nationalities and non-service personnel.

Various features appear in regard to the operation of escape lines which will be evident again and again in the broader resistance narrative. The first is the sheer resilience of those involved. As will be shown below,

working on escape lines was an extremely hazardous business and at least 500 people died either through trial and then execution or as a result of the appalling conditions in concentration camps and German prisons. In September 1941 the German commandant in France, General Otto von Stülpnagel, issued a notice that helping Allied aircrew would result in death for the males involved and deportation to concentration camps for the females. He also offered a reward of up to 10,000 francs to anyone who apprehended a downed airman or contributed to his capture.[5] This leads to the second problem, that of traitors. The escape lines were vulnerable to penetration by Germans posing as airmen and steps were taken to lower this risk, but great damage to the escape lines was also caused by several traitors who would then often go on to inflict a similar level of damage on resistance networks. Yet the escape lines continued to operate despite being repeatedly penetrated. Cécile Jouan of the Comet line commented:

> Was it a taste for danger that drove us on? There was plenty of that. But what was at the heart of it? A malicious delight in irritating the occupier. That was part of it too of course, but only a little. Above all it was the joy, the thrill of feeling useful, the camaraderie of battle and the exaltation of this unforeseen conflict, in which all our weapons were born of love.[6]

Arrests ran at such a high level, particularly after the German invasion of southern France in November 1942, that the helpers began to consider how they would respond when they were arrested, not *if* but *when*. The work of the escape lines in France and Belgium only came to an end on the eve of D-Day when the movement of evaders by train became too dangerous as the railways were targeted by both Allied air bombardment and local sabotage.

The Czech and Polish soldiers who left their occupied countries during the bitterly cold winter of 1939–40 to join their new national armies being formed in France may be termed as absconders rather than escapers since they were not in captivity. The Czech armed forces had been disbanded after the German occupation but the servicemen had not been interned. They were therefore free to travel to Hungary, where the Czech underground had established an outpost in Budapest, sharing the same building as the French Embassy, before crossing into still-neutral Yugoslavia and Italy on their way to France. It is not clear how many Czech servicemen chose to take this route.

The Poles, on the other hand, had been interned in Romania and Hungary in large numbers after they had crossed those frontiers at the end of the September 1939 campaign. Yet the cost of maintaining these men was

prohibitively expensive and so the authorities turned a blind eye to the 'escapes' of the Polish servicemen. The Polish Embassy in Bucharest was full of 'well informed and enterprising people, scheming, wheeling, dealing, bribing and doing everything they could to get everybody out of Romania before the Germans took over the country'.[7] Around 2,500 soldiers and 1,300 airmen left Romania during October 1939 and the following months. Some headed for the Black Sea ports of Constanța and Balcik and made their way to the Lebanon, where a Polish division was formed. Others travelled overland through Yugoslavia and Italy to France. The Hungarians were notably helpful in facilitating the escape of their Polish guests. The Polish military attaché in Bucharest, Colonel Jan Emisarski-Pindelli, organized the evacuation office and worked in close collaboration with Jozef Antall, an official in the Hungarian Interior Ministry, and with the Hungarian-Polish Committee for the Care of Refugees. Stanisław Maczek, later to command the 1st Polish Armoured Brigade, recalled that 'the Hungarian delegate to the Polish staff, in a confidential face to face conversation with me, promised that the Hungarian authorities would turn a blind eye and will not interfere with the evacuation of brigades to France, so long as it was cautious, quiet, and carried out in small units'.[8]

After the fall of France the Germans had taken prisoner around 1.5 million Frenchmen and about 40,000 British soldiers. Many of these were despatched to POW camps in Poland and the Protectorate and some of them escaped, relying on local people to help them reach the frontiers. The Vichy Embassy in Budapest was prepared to supply passports to escaped French POWs attempting to reach the Lebanon but relied on local guides to get the men across the frontiers. One of these guides, Vera Laska, recalled:

> The borders were heavily patrolled, but the border guards were no match for us, especially those hailing from flat Hungary. They were like fish out of the water in the mountainous terrain that we knew as the palms of our hands from years of camping and skiing. They got easily tired and lost; on skis they made a pretty ridiculous picture.[9]

Many of these guides were women, and this was true for escape lines in general, because women were less likely to be suspected of being engaged in clandestine activity.

In Poland several organizations sprang up to encourage and help British POWs to escape. One, based in Bydgoszcz in the region of Poland annexed to the Reich, smuggled the POWs from the camps in lorries and arranged for them to board ships bound for neutral Sweden. Another, the Anglo-Polish Society, was based in Warsaw and operated an escape line which

ran through southern Poland into the Protectorate and finally into Turkey via Romania. In the middle of 1942 the Gestapo penetrated the organization and brought its activities largely to a halt by arresting the main participants. One, however, Mrs Markowska, remained at liberty and continued to shelter escaped British POWs. Some of these went native and became engaged in the Polish underground, the *Armia Krajowa*. Corporal Ronald Jeffery joined an AK intelligence cell and, after that was broken by the Gestapo in May 1943, reached the sanctuary of Sweden. Another, John Ward, stayed with the AK and would go on to provide valuable reports on the Warsaw Uprising during August and September 1944.[10]

The Norwegians had become thoroughly disillusioned with Britain after the poor performance of the British Army during the brief 1940 campaign, but after the Battle of Britain demonstrated that Britain would continue in the war Norwegians made considerable efforts to reach Britain across the North Sea. Oluf Reed Olsen, who would return to Norway as an intelligence agent, noted:

> The plan for the voyage to Britain, however, was to prove rather more complicated than we had at first thought. It was no simple matter to obtain a serviceable boat. The Germans had long ago become alive to the increase in the traffic from the west coast of Norway over to Britain; fishing boats were always disappearing, and the British wireless reported the arrival of many refugees from Norway.[11]

The Germans increased their coastal patrols, and boats needed a special permit to sail outside the harbours. David Howarth, who created a transport service running between the Shetland Islands and Norway, noticed other difficulties: the Germans extinguished the lighthouses and restricted fishing to a zone of fifty miles from the coast which was patrolled by air. Furthermore, collecting escapers in remote locations risked betrayal to the Germans by the local quislings.[12]

The North Sea crossing was very hazardous. In total around 3,300 men, women, and children reached Britain in fishing boats which were not designed to cross such an expanse. Those setting out from the area between Molde in the north and Haugesund in the south headed for the Shetland Islands, while those from the far north sailed to Iceland, and those in the south for Scotland. The men who escaped either joined the Norwegian armed forces or like Reed Olsen and Odd Starheim would join SOE and then return to Norway to carry out resistance. In March 1942 Starheim engineered an audacious hijacking of a coastal steamer, SS *Galtesund*, and reached Aberdeen with important agents aboard. Among them was Einar Skinnarland, who held vital information about the heavy-water plant at

Vemork. The human cost of these voyages was high and 308 people died in their efforts to escape, mostly at sea during storms, or were captured by the Germans. About fifty of those helping the escapers either were executed by the Germans or died in prison. In total, around 10 per cent of those who tried to leave Norway by the sea route died in the attempt.[13]

Many young men from the Channel Islands made their way to Britain after the outbreak of the war in September 1939 to enlist in the armed forces or the merchant navy. They were joined by more after the British government demilitarized the islands in June 1940 and the two British battalions stationed there returned to Britain. Once the Germans had occupied the islands, research has shown that a total of 228 people attempted to escape, of whom sixty-three left Guernsey and thirty-eight left Jersey to make the long dangerous voyage to British shores in the period before the end of September 1940. After this, the Germans mined the coastlines or established prohibited zones. Fishing was restricted to designated harbours, in registered boats, and only during the hours of daylight.

This meant that only around thirty people attempted to leave the heavily fortified islands in the period before D-Day. In November 1940 a Jerseyman, Denis Vibert, rowed to Guernsey as the first stage of his effort to reach Britain. The winds changed and he was unable to progress further, caught influenza and abandoned his escape attempt. A year later he was successful and was picked up by a British destroyer off Portland Bill, having rowed for three days without food after the engines on his dinghy had failed. The escape attempt from Jersey by three teenagers, Peter Hassall, Dennis Audrain, and Maurice Gould, ended in tragedy. Their boat was swamped soon after they started out and Audrain was drowned. Hassall and Gould were caught by the German police on their return to shore and deported to Fresnes prison where Gould died. (Hassall survived the war.) Guernseyman Fred Hockey and his seven companions were spotted by a German plane which dropped a flare:

> Terrified, the men lay flat on the bottom of the boat and held their breath. It was like daylight until the flare burnt out and the men could not understand why they were not seen. They continued on their hazardous journey and at 4 a.m. their engine broke down. This was repaired and on they went. It was foggy which made navigation difficult, but on the credit side the fog was a cloak that hid them from the enemy.

They reached the Devon coast after a nineteen-hour voyage. The Germans carried out reprisals by ordering severe restrictions on fishing, a major step since the islanders relied on the fish for food now that they were cut off from supplies from Britain and France. Furthermore, there was the threat

that all men of military age would be deported from the islands. Indeed, in September 1942 deportations of foreign-born men and their families were carried out. These threats meant that the news of successful escapes often met with disapproval from the islanders and their British administrators, who feared the measures the Germans might carry out against them. The sheer isolation of the Channel Islands and the very high German-islander ratio, since the islands formed part of Hitler's Atlantic Wall, made the islanders feel extremely vulnerable and acted as an effective brake in the development of resistance in Guernsey and Jersey. On the other hand, after D-Day the proximity of the liberated coast of France to Jersey acted as an inducement for more escapes.[14]

British servicemen accidentally left behind in Greece and on Crete at the conclusion of the unsuccessful British campaigns in 1941 found people willing to shelter them and prevent them from being sent to POW camps in Germany. MI9's station in Cairo, known as A Force, organized escapes from the Greek mainland and by March 1942 operated five chartered caiques ferrying the escapers across the Aegean to the west coast of Turkey. Lieutenant Commander Noël Rees, the British vice-consul at İzmir, set up a clandestine base near Çesme in Turkey. He was assisted by Commander Vladimir Wolfson, the naval attaché in Istanbul, and by Major General William Arnold, the military attaché in Ankara. Operations were assisted by the fact that the Turks turned a blind eye to the sailings, and the long Greek coastline and numerous offshore islands made it extremely difficult for the Germans to mount sufficient patrols to interdict the caiques.[15]

On 26 July 1941 Commander Francis Pool was landed by submarine to organize the evacuation of British servicemen from Crete. These were being well looked after by the locals because:

> The Cretans deemed it a sacred duty to look after these [Allied] soldiers by whose side they had fought and whom fortune had brought from their far-off country to wage war and to shed their blood on our mountains. We gave them food and clothing so that they could discard their uniforms and move about more freely, and hid them in the most suitable places.[16]

One of these hiding places was the monastery of Preveli, whose abbot agreed to allow it to be used as a gathering place for the escapers. Most reached the monastery after passing through the village of Asi Gonia, at the eastern end of the White Mountains. Two men who would later become involved in British operations to create resistance in Crete, Petro Petrakas and Colonel Andrea Papadakis, were based in or near the village and made their first contacts with the British during these evacuation operations. Francis Pool left Crete by submarine in August having evacuated at

least 130 men. One of them, Jack Smith-Hughes, soon returned as the first SOE agent on Crete. Pool's replacement, Monty Woodhouse, arrived in the autumn of 1941 and in the six months before his departure in April 1942 continued to arrange escapes. He found the process deeply frustrating because 'the few boats which called on the south coast usually landed at different points from those I had indicated'. Woodhouse would go on to play an essential role in the resistance on the Greek mainland.[17]

The rapid conquest of the Netherlands, Belgium, and above all France by the Germans left a substantial number of Allied troops stranded on the continent, notwithstanding the evacuation from Dunkirk. Those captured by the Germans were held in makeshift camps in France and Belgium until camps in Germany and occupied Poland had been prepared for them. Many others, British, Polish, French, and Belgian, were never captured and made their way towards the south of France hoping to find shipping to take them to Britain or to make the arduous crossing of the Pyrenees and reach either Lisbon or Gibraltar. Under the terms of the armistice, the Vichy authorities were required to disarm and intern all Allied servicemen in Fort St Jean in Marseille, St Hippolyte du Fort at Nîmes, and La Turbie near Monte Carlo.

The first efforts to assist these escapers and evaders were the result of decisions taken on the spur of the moment, such as picking up a soldier or airman by the side of the road and giving him shelter, or seizing a man out of a column of POWs being marched into captivity. An American woman, Etta Shiber, and a British-born woman, Kitty Bonnefous, were returning to Paris after the armistice when they came upon a British pilot, William Gray, and smuggled him back to Paris in the boot of their car. This led them to use their contacts to smuggle him across the demarcation line. One contact they made was with a priest, Father Christian Ravier, whose church in the Somme district was caring for around 1,000 British servicemen hiding in the woods. By the end of October 1940 this hastily constructed escape line had enabled about 100 men to reach the Unoccupied Zone. Mary Lindell had served with the French Red Cross driving ambulances during the French campaign. After the armistice she made use of the fact that families had become separated to set up a system whereby she would receive German permission to drive a child to the south to be reunited with its parents and would be accompanied by a mechanic, who was actually a British serviceman. She also made contact with farmers in Ruffec whose farms straddled the demarcation line and who were willing to assist evaders in crossing the line. All three women were ultimately arrested in 1941 and sentenced to a few months in prison. Etta Shiber was exchanged for a German spy held in the United States in 1942. Mary Lindell was released

in November 1941, reached Britain in July 1942, and returned to France later that year to set up a more formally organized escape line operating under the name Marie-Claire. Kitty Bonnefous survived imprisonment but Father Ravier was sentenced to death: he was rescued from prison by the resistance and resumed his assistance to the escape lines.[18]

Some of the early helpers of evading Allied servicemen later went on to become more deeply involved in the resistance. Germaine Tillion first became involved in resistance when running an escape line in eastern France for escaped French POWs with Colonel Paul Hauet, which helped around 5,000 men reach their homes by the middle of 1941. Another network in eastern France, in German-annexed Alsace, was run by Lucienne Welschinger, and helped several hundred French escapers to reach their homes. Their most famous passenger was General Henri Giraud, who escaped from his POW camp in the castle of Königstein near Dresden in April 1942 and later reported: 'The Alsatians were ready not only to give a prisoner money, but to risk their lives for him. Without knowing a single person there or being helped by any organisation, I passed right through Alsace without problem.' Welschinger was later caught by the Germans and executed in Strasbourg in January 1943. The American former State Department clerk and now correspondent for the *New York Post*, Virginia Hall, had served in France in May 1940 as an ambulance driver before escaping into Spain and reaching Britain where she was recruited by SOE and returned to Lyon in September 1941. Her flat not only became the centre of SOE activity in unoccupied France but she also had contacts with those who were already working on or financing escape lines such as Robert Leprevost and George Whittinghill, the United States vice-consul. British airmen were advised to head for the American consulate in Lyon to make contact with Virginia, who would arrange their onward journey.[19]

The list of the early escape lines is simply too long to enumerate: some focused on certain nationalities while others took servicemen belonging to any Allied nation.[20] What these early lines all had in common was their destination – Marseille:

> Marius, patron saint of all liars, is also the patron saint of this city, which had a reputation for criminal activities second only to Chicago, and like Chicago it was controlled by gangsters. Add to all this a police force whose loyalty to Marshal Pétain and the Government of Free France was doubtful, representatives of the German and Italian Armistice Commissions and a battalion of the Bersaglieri which Mussolini sent to show the flag, and you will have the background of the city which was to be the first operational centre of allied escape and evasion from France.[21]

When Stanisław Maczek and his party of evading Poles from the armoured division reached Marseille in July 1940 he noted that the city was overcrowded with men dressed in civilian clothes whose bearing could not conceal the fact that they were soldiers hoping to get out of France and re-enter the war. Maczek himself reached Britain via Morocco and Lisbon.[22]

The Poles used small wooden sailing ships known as feluccas to extract their countrymen from the Mediterranean coast. The British contacted the Poles and, under Captain Frank Slocum, a successful operation was mounted to collect a party of fifty British evaders from Canet-Plage near Perpignan in July 1942. Two other operations later that year rescued over 100 RAF airmen and commandos who had escaped the debacle of the Dieppe raid that August. The feluccas were also used to land SOE agents in France. When the Germans invaded the south in November 1942 the Polish officer in charge of the feluccas, Lieutenant Jan Buchowski, was forced to write to his superior:

> The French coastline is in all likelihood very strongly guarded by the Germans, so that the idea that a vessel might lie 30–40 miles offshore for the three days needed and remain unnoticed is unthinkable. The French patrolled a coastal strip of about 5 miles; it must be assumed that the current German patrols are covering 100 miles. The vessels used in clandestine work are fishing boats, which are very slow (7 knots). If there has been good observation from the air, a patrol ship can always be sent to check the identity of the vessel. Moreover, the Axis powers will be especially suspicious of a vessel travelling along a north-south route.

Felucca sailings were therefore suspended, but small-scale collections of men continued so that by the end of the war the Polish operation had carried at least 600 men into or out of occupied Europe.[23]

Central to British operations in Marseille was the Seamen's Mission at Rue de Forbin run by the Scotsman Donald Caskie, the minister of the Scots Kirk in Paris, who had joined the exodus south in May 1940. The mission supplied the escapers and evaders with food and shelter. Caskie was assisted by an evader from the Highland Light Infantry, Captain Ian Garrow, who had contacts with the United States consul and with wealthy expatriates. Among these were Louis and Renée Nouveau, who allowed their flat on the Quai Rive Neuve to be used to house Allied servicemen, and Nancy Fiocca, whose husband Henri financed many of the escapes. Nancy would later return to France as Nancy Wake, an SOE agent.[24]

The SOE began smuggling agents back into France in early 1941 by sea, and a misadventure befalling an operation in April 1941 led to the

founding of one of the great escape lines – the Pat line. A Belgian doctor, Albert-Marie Guérisse, was forced to swim ashore and was arrested by the French. He claimed that he was a Canadian airman called Patrick O'Leary. He was duly sent to St Hippolyte du Fort, where he made contact with Garrow, who arranged his departure from the fort and into Marseille to help him with the escape line. Caskie described 'O'Leary' as:

> . . . one of the bravest men I have ever known. Gay and fearless, his sense of humour led him to enjoy situations so nerve-racking they might have stopped the stoutest heart. But he was strict, kindly and protective to those under his command: fighting the enemy he was entirely ruthless . . . His efficiency was awe-inspiring. All arrangements for his operations were worked out to the minutest degree. Each man knew his task thoroughly.

The line ran from the north, where Jean de la Olla and his assistants Jacques Wattebled and the Fillerin family gathered together evading airmen. Abbé Pierre Carpentier used his private printing press in Abbeville to supply them with false papers and Madame Arnaud operated from her farm at Les Tuyères to get the evaders across the demarcation line. In the south there were plenty of helpers ready to get the men to Marseille. From there the men would be sent to Toulouse where an elderly Frenchwoman, Françoise Dissart, controlled a group of Pyrenees guides who would take the men into Spain where the British vice-consul Donald Darling would arrange their onward passage.

The operation of the Pat line was so successful that it is unsurprising it attracted the attention of the Vichy police and of the Germans. The first victim was Garrow, whom the French arrested in October 1941 on the charge of supplying intelligence to the British and interned in Mauzac prison, which also housed the early F Section SOE agents caught that year. O'Leary arranged Garrow's escape and escorted him to the Pyrenees where O'Leary bid farewell to Garrow with the words: 'Can this go on much longer?' At the end of April 1942 the French authorities, who had long had their suspicions about the Seamen's Mission, gave Caskie ten days to close the mission. Caskie left for Grenoble and the flats belonging to Louis Nouveau and Dr Georges Rodocanachi took over as shelters for the evaders. The first two radio operators sent to the Pat line were arrested by the French police in the course of 1942. In November 1942 the Germans invaded southern France, creating extremely difficult operating conditions for the escape lines. The Vichy police had arrested only a few evaders and their helpers but the Germans were more determined to stop the radio traffic by using radio-detection vans. In October 1942 a young Australian, Tom Groome, arrived as a radio operator for the Pat line until January

1943 when a German direction-finding team caught him operating his set. He managed to send a signal to Britain warning that he had been arrested (he survived the war) and his courier quickly notified O'Leary.

But the real damage done to the Pat line came through treachery, most notably through one person. A man calling himself Captain Harold Cole, who alleged that he had been left behind after the Dunkirk evacuation, had made contact with the Pat line and offered to escort evaders to the Pyrenees. Enquiries in London revealed that there was no such captain but noted that a Sergeant Cole had absconded from his regiment taking with him the funds of his mess. It later transpired that he was well known to Scotland Yard. Such criminality did not automatically exclude him from being used as a guide, and some of the men who made successful trips into Spain with his help sang his praises. But in the autumn of 1941 suspicions began to grow around Cole's activities. There were unexplained arrests of men as they reached a safe house in Perpignan; Cole had been seen in Marseille when he was supposed to be in the north of France; and, finally, he had not given money to a helper called Duprez in Lille. Caskie had his own suspicions regarding Cole: 'Cole was, I felt, a half man and when the unresolved half was defined he might be a traitor.' In November 1941 Cole was confronted with the evidence against him at a meeting with O'Leary and three helpers on the line, Bruce Dowding, Mario Prassinos, and Duprez at Dr Rodocanachi's flat. Caskie wrote later:

> To my knowledge, O'Leary had decided to kill him that night. Pat and his lieutenants were certain that the case against Cole was complete. His movements in certain areas coincided with betrayals or were close enough to make it likely that he had been more than a possible traitor. All other members of the organisation had been checked. Only Cole remained ambiguous.

During the heated discussion O'Leary beat Cole and threatened to kill him, but Cole escaped from the flat. Efforts were made to warn all who had come into contact with Cole but it was too late. One after another the vital links in the chain were broken in December, starting with Abbé Carpentier and including Dowding and Duprez, and eventually around fifty people were caught by the Germans owing to Cole's treachery. In May 1942 Cole himself and his young French wife Suzanne were arrested by the Vichy police in Lyon. In prison Cole admitted to Suzanne that he was a traitor and, after her release in August, she discovered that he had stolen goods and money from her three aunts in Paris and northern France.[25] Following the German invasion of southern France, Cole worked willingly for SS-Sturmbannführer Hans Josef Kieffer, head of the *Sicherheitsdienst* (SD) in Paris, the director of operations to capture SOE agents, escaped POWs,

and resistance fighters. It is alleged that Cole assisted in the capture of around 150 members of the resistance.* O'Leary escaped the net the Germans spread as they followed the contacts supplied by Cole. But treachery on the line did not stop there. In January 1943 Louis Nouveau was approached in Paris by a man calling himself Roger le Neveu, known also as Roger le Légionnaire, who offered to escort airmen south. The first two parties reached the foot of the Pyrenees without trouble but the third, which Nouveau had joined, was suddenly arrested when changing trains at St Pierre des Corps, a suburb of Tours. These arrests were followed by more in Paris. In March, Roger le Légionnaire reached Toulouse and met O'Leary who questioned him about the arrests in Paris. Suddenly O'Leary found himself under arrest by the Gestapo. The arrest of O'Leary effectively meant the end of the Pat line. It had helped around 600 soldiers and airmen reach freedom, and the last travellers along the line were Major Herbert Hasler and Bill Sparks, the two survivors of the Cockleshell raid. At least thirty helpers, including Abbé Carpentier and Dowding, were executed but O'Leary, Nouveau, and Groome survived incarceration in German camps. O'Leary's betrayer, Roger le Légionnaire, would go on to betray many more members of the resistance.[26]

SOE's French Section set up a subsection, DF, led by Leslie Humphreys, to set up escape lines across France for Allied personnel. DF became a separate section of SOE in the spring of 1942. One of its agents, Victor Gerson, established a particularly successful line known as Vic in April 1942, having already served one mission for SOE in France. His Chilean-born wife Giliana Balmaceda had visited France for three weeks in May and June 1941 taking advantage of her Chilean passport to collect a treasure trove of the numerous documents essential for life in Vichy France, thus enabling F Section to equip its agents properly. The Vic line survived until its operations were called to a halt by the proximity of D-Day in the spring of 1944. Its longevity was due largely to the extensive security procedures insisted upon by Gerson and to the fact that his principal assistants George Levin and the Racheline brothers were all Jews, as was Gerson, and were therefore more prepared to pay close attention to security since they were vulnerable to arrest not only as organizers of an escape line but simply as Jews. Furthermore, the Vic line was not a single entity but

* Cole fled Paris as the Allies approached in August 1944. In June 1945 he reappeared in Germany claiming to be a member of a special Allied unit but his fraud was detected and he was sent to prison in Paris from which he escaped in November. In January 1946 the French police found him hiding in a flat above a bar in Paris and he was shot and killed while trying to escape.

three – two lines lay unused and were to come to life only if the first was endangered or cut. Richard Christmann, a notorious Dutch collaborator and traitor whose exploits will appear on several occasions later, attempted to penetrate the Vic line and indeed got as far as Lyon along it before meeting Levin and Gerson, who made their suspicions of him so obvious that Christmann returned to the Netherlands to cause further damage there. Later DF lines included Greyhound/Woodchuck run by George Lovinfosse and Pierre/Jacques under Guido Zembsch-Schreve.[27]

By the spring of 1943 Allied air raids on the German U-boat pens on the French Atlantic coast had resulted in a large number of airmen being forced to bale out, land in Brittany, and hope for a passage out of the country. The Pat line had unsuccessfully tried to set up a branch in Brittany but had made an important contact with the principal leader of the Brittany resistance, François Le Cornec, who lived in the village of Plouha on the north coast, about fifteen miles from the nearest town and rail junction, St Briac, and only two miles from the coast. Plans were made to extract the airmen from the Brittany coast using motor gunboats or MTBs based on the Cornish coast. In February 1943 a White Russian, Vladimir Bouryschkine, 'Val Williams', who had previously worked on the Pat line, and his radio operator, Ray Labrosse, were dropped near Paris to arrange the escape of the evaders in Brittany – Operation Oaktree. The first effort to arrange a seaborne evacuation on 29 May 1943 failed because Labrosse's radio had been damaged during their parachute drop. Bouryschkine then tried to send the party of ninety airmen south but was arrested on 4 June near Pau, in the foothills of the Pyrenees. He was brought back to the prison in Rennes where he realized that the Gestapo had extensive knowledge of his network, probably supplied by Roger le Légionnaire. Bouryschkine escaped from prison, breaking his leg in the process, but reached Paris where the network had not been penetrated. Labrosse escorted the twenty-four airmen trapped in Brittany south to the Pyrenees and crossed the mountains with them. Despite the security of the Paris section of the line, Bouryschkine's successor, a survivor from the Dieppe raid, Lucien Dumais, was instructed not to use any of Bouryschkine's contacts in Paris.[28]

Dumais arrived in France with Labrosse in November 1943 to set up what became known as the Shelburne line.* He made contact with Labrosse who convinced him, against London's warnings, that a member of the Paris network, Paul Campinchi, was trustworthy and was currently caring for a number of airmen in Paris. Dumais then went to meet Le Cornec to explain the plans for sea evacuations from the Brittany coast. Dumais was

* Also known as the Shelburn line.

carrying a briefcase filled with 4 million francs and discussed with Le Cornec how to pay the helpers:

> Seeing all this money, they imagined I was going to dish it out by the fistful. I could not pretend that they were getting paid adequately for the risks they were taking; those were beyond computation. But we did not want anybody working purely for money. We paid a good wage, plus expenses, and to overpay had its own dangers. Some people lose their heads when they get a bit of money, start drinking heavily, and then talking. In addition, if a number of people in a small town suddenly appeared flush, the word would quickly get around and suspicions might be aroused.[29]

Security had to be tight because of rumours that Roger le Légionnaire was active in the region again. The first operation, codenamed Bonaparte, was scheduled for the night of 15 December 1943. A gale meant a postponement for nine nights, during which the nineteen men had to be hidden locally. To reach the beach five miles north of Plouha the men had to slide down a steep 100-foot cliff, a process managed largely on their bottoms. The instructions given were: 'lie on your back, spreadeagle. Dig in your heels. If you hear rocks falling from above, cover your head immediately'. All this had to be accomplished in silence since there were German guard posts nearby. A second operation was undertaken on 26 February 1944 and included one RAF fighter pilot who had been shot down only five days earlier. Three further operations ran in March and one in April before the Germans became aware of what was happening under their noses and laid a wide minefield along the cliff top. Their actions were noted by locals who recorded the precise location of each mine. London then sent over mine detectors and operations continued as normal – each night the mines would be marked with a white cloth which would be removed after all the men had passed through the minefield.

By the end of March 1944 the Shelburne line had sent 118 airmen back to Britain. The operations had not been without difficulties. The pre-D-Day Allied bombardment of the French railway network meant that airmen became trapped in Paris and Dumais 'sometimes wondered whether I wouldn't end up having an air force of my own in France'. On 7 June Dumais was ordered by London to go to Brittany and to stay there until the Allies reached him. With the railways out of operation from Allied bombing and resistance sabotage, Dumais had to cover the 400-mile journey by bicycle. The Shelburne line continued in operation until the end of July, arranging the evacuation of airmen and members of the French SAS parachuted into Brittany after D-Day as well as a French general who was indignant at being collected from his hiding place by a horse and cart.