

Also by Henri Michel

THE SHADOW WAR

Henri Michel

THE SECOND WORLD WAR

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CHAPTER 4

Concentration Camps and Genocide

HISTORIANS ask themselves what were the real motives behind Hitler's policy. Was he basically impelled by an urge for power as the Englishman Alan Bullock or the German Bracher think? In that case, the war would have been the Führer's way of extending his domination beyond the borders of Germany. As far as we can judge from the hotchpotch of ideas expressed in *Mein Kampf*, in his speeches and in *Table-Talk* in which, opportunist that he was, Hitler was swayed by current happenings and gave full rein to his fancies, that rapidly became ravings, it would seem that his ideas on mankind and nations were based on Darwin's notions of selection: in the struggle for existence the strong assert themselves; through their might, they achieve right; the weak can only acknowledge and accept their weakness. The law of life is thus the harsh exploitation of man by man and peoples by peoples. Woe unto the conquered, the degenerate, the weak, the decadent! Power was the sole driving force behind policy and it was to be achieved at the point of the sword. But what were its aims? The greatness of Germany, naturally, and the prosperity of the German people who would at last achieve their proper place in the world: on top. This objective required first of all that they rediscover their fundamental unity, that is to say overcome the various rivalries that had long hampered their power – the rivalries between parties, classes, religions and regions. But above all, it was necessary for Germany to remain pure, that is to say to avoid any contamination by impure racial elements – and first and foremost, by the Jews.

I NAZI ANTI-SEMITISM

Hitler's myth was the superiority of the Aryan master race (of which the Germans were the direct descendants) and the Aryan vocation for world domination; J. Billig rightly points out that the widespread firm belief in this myth grew out of exasperation which filled the Germans with wild rage and this rage would vent itself on any hostile elements until they were destroyed. There was no possibility of coexistence or coming to

terms with them; the struggle must aim at their extermination. In the forefront of all these enemies, uniting them and personifying them, Hitler's mythology set the Jew.

Starting from Hegelian dialectics, which they transposed or deformed, Hitler and Rosenberg saw the Reich (of Hitler) opposing the Gegenreich (of Israel); one was the antithesis of the other and the two were irreconcilable. Nordic man was an imaginary type of man endowed with fictitious virtues (based on an intellectual content so feeble as to border on puerility) – courage, heroism, a simple way of life, loyalty, devotion to the community. The Jew is his opposite; he is to the Aryan what Satan is to God. 'The Aryan,' in E. Vermeil's words, 'is the German integrated into the national community and looking at race only from that point of view. The Jew is integrated into his racial community which he sets up in opposition to all the nations in which he exerts his disruptive influence.' For this reason, moreover, the Jew is not a race but the seed of racial destruction – in a word, anti-race.

Hitler's indictment created an imaginary Jew endowed with every physical, intellectual and moral shortcoming. In the loathsome caricatures of his *Stürmer*, Streicher popularised the image of the Jew as obese and flabby, his vices were written all over his face. In his propaganda, Goebbels described him as 'like pus in an abscess, ever ready to defile pure German girls'.

According to Hitler, the Jew was responsible for all the evils that afflict nations; it was he who had invented the false egalitarianism of democracy that emasculates the strong man. He excelled in pulling the strings of all movements of an international nature – Anglo-Saxon plutocracy, Manchester School Liberalism, Marxist Communism, Freemasonry; 'The Jew,' the Führer wrote, 'has always known how to unite princes, aristocrats and the bourgeoisie at the international level; it was he who first shouted: "Workers of the world unite."'

The Jew preached a purely destructive intellectualism which was like a poison. He deprived thought of its quickening elements without which it could only be arid and dead – race, the people, the soil. He epitomised rootlessness and used it as his stock in trade. When he settled anywhere, it was only to cause harm. He had only ceased being a wanderer over the face of the earth in order to make his home amongst the great nations like a canker and devour them from within for his own profit.

On the other hand, all the higher civilisations, including the Greek and the Roman, stem from the Aryan race 'which comes from the north'; in the twentieth century, this race had blossomed forth in the German people and had found a worthy setting in the Third Reich.

German power was only possible if the Jewish peril could be exorcised once and for all. Inversely, as its power grew, the German people would

become better able to achieve immunity against this virus that was infecting it. Hitler's anti-Semitism was thus both an idea leading to action and a reality governing a policy. Racism and power were basically one and the same thing.

II THE SS

Starting with the task of protecting leading National Socialist personalities and then of keeping other parties under observation, in fact as a sort of spy and counter-espionage organisation, the 'Protection Sections' (*Schutzstaffeln der Nationalsozialistischen Arbeitspartei*) were given responsibility for internal security in the Reich when the Nazi party came to power and became one with the state. By 1934 it already numbered 50,000. The logical conclusion of this conglomeration of tasks was the appointment in 1936 of Reichsführer ss Heinrich Himmler to be head of the entire Reich police forces, completely independent of the Minister of the Interior. From 1933 onwards, a special branch, the 'Death's Head ss', had been put in charge of running the concentration camps. The war was to give the ss ever-increasing powers and turn them into the architects of the Nazi world created out of Germany's conquests.

Himmler, a small, insignificant-looking man with a neat moustache and receding chin, was in fact a fanatic; he sought neither the satisfactions of power, fame as an orator nor worldly success; as a zealous and blindly obedient supporter of Hitler, he believed in the Messianic mission with which he was entrusted. He devoted all his energies to the formation of a Nazi élite, the ss, which was to be an 'order' within the party and the state.

It was to be a racial order. As early as 1937, Himmler asserted: 'Our Nordic blood confers on us an inventive genius far above that of other nations.' Preserving the purity of this blood demanded rigorous precautions: the ss had to obtain the permission of their superior officers before they could marry; bigamy, the kidnapping of children as well as procreating them outside marriage were considered legitimate means if they were felt to be necessary. The ss were educated in special schools of their own. The whole system reached its apogee in the organisation which Himmler pompously called *Lebensborn*, the fountain of life, the source of German expansion in the world.

The selection of the ss was governed by racial criteria, purporting to be scientific but containing a great deal of nonsense. Himmler described them in these terms: 'I started by requiring a certain height because I

know that people who are above a certain height have the right kind of blood. I examined photographs of each one and asked myself the question: are there traces of foreign blood?'

Himmler also stated in 1937: 'The coming decades will see the extermination of the inferior beings who are fighting against Germany, the cradle of the Nordic race and torch-bearer of civilisation.' The conquered Slav territories enabled these words to become deeds.

Henceforth the ss would be able to operate not only as an instrument of orthodox racism but as the founder of the Nazi social order on conquered soil. 'It was,' wrote J. Billig, 'the embodiment of the myth of the master race raised to its extreme pitch of violence.'

In this function, the ss was the protector of the German state and it had sole charge of criminal justice. But by its nature it existed on the fringe of the state. Its mentality was that of a devoted and ferocious servant ready to undertake any task it might be given. The ss relieved the state and its organisations such as the Wehrmacht of the responsibility for operations that were unworthy of them. Its role was to prepare the way, by violent methods, for the Nazi colonisation of eastern Europe and to reduce the 'sub-men' to the bondage for which nature had intended them.

Accordingly, the ss diversified its organisation. It was no longer merely a group of shock troops for internal political use. From the time of the invasion of France onwards, it included armed units. These divisions were under the orders of the Wehrmacht which considered them crack troops; but the Wehrmacht was also at the service of the ss when the latter had need of large numbers of men to enforce 'Nazi order in the rearward areas'.

The ss were answerable for their conduct only to their leaders. They set up their own courts which dispensed justice according to their own ideas of honour and duty. Thus, two ss men who had summarily shot down some fifty Jews in a Polish synagogue were condemned by a field court martial to a long term of imprisonment. But, like many others of a similar nature, the sentence was not carried out. The verdict was quashed on the grounds that 'at the sight of the Jews, the accused had become aware with extraordinary intensity of the hostility of the Jews towards Germany'. So their behaviour was quite excusable, if not even praiseworthy. The ss's only link with the rest of German society was the strict terms of the oath its members took to their leaders. The transformation of the ss into a state within a state was completed when it created its own economic services. However, Himmler had absolutely no intention of directing Nazi policy; he never intervened in discussions on major questions of strategy, war economy or diplomacy. He remained the faithful servant to implement Hitler's desires and he did nothing without the latter's approval. But in reality his role was much greater because he was

shaping from within the German society of the present from which the society of tomorrow would spring.

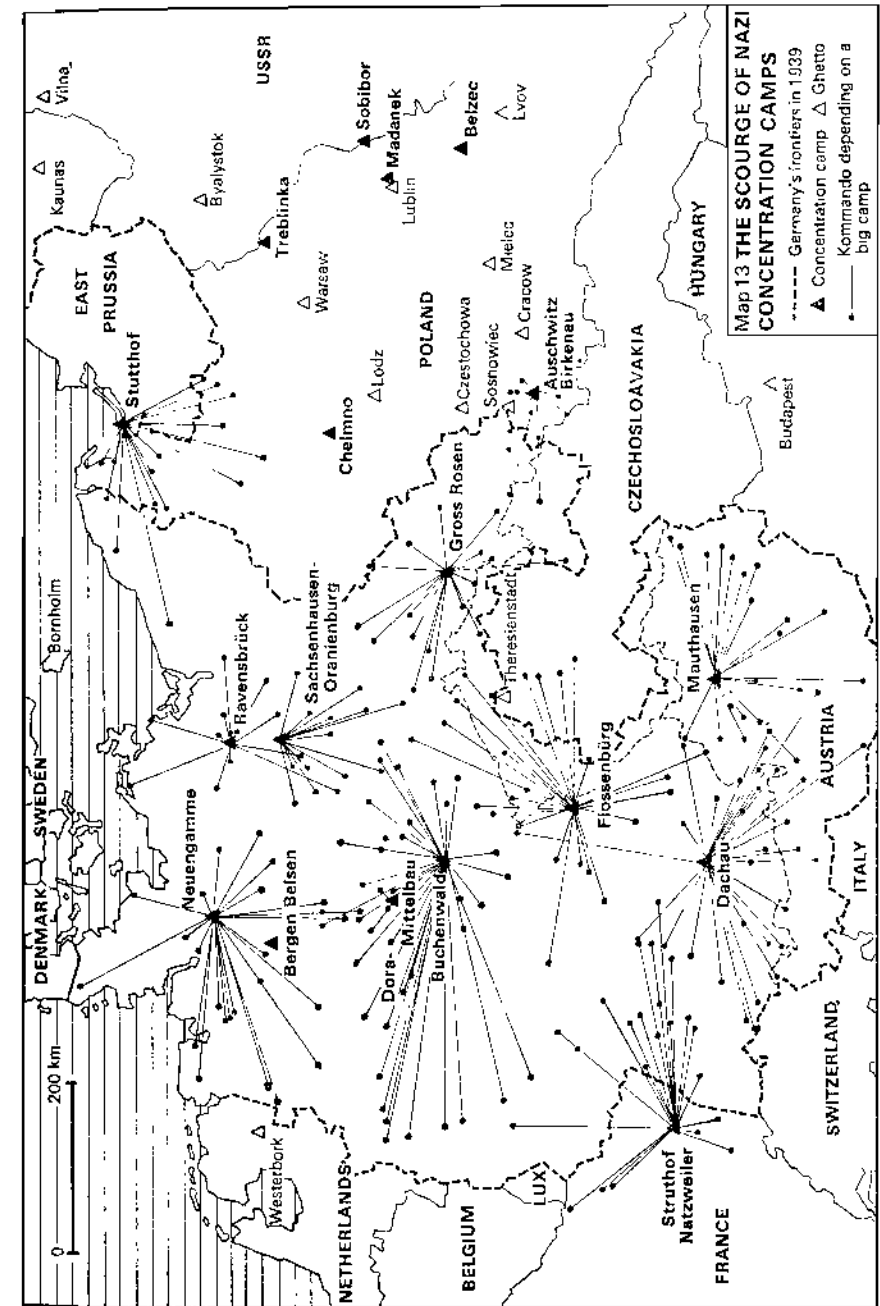
So the SS had a triple task of combating those considered unworthy, exploiting their wealth and putting them to death; and they were given every licence to carry this out and, as it were, get it working smoothly, in the concentration camps which Hitler had placed under their control as early as 1933.

III THE CONCENTRATION CAMPS

Concentration camps started in Germany as soon as the Nazis came to power. At first they were intended for those Germans who were opposed to Nazism – Communists, Social Democrats, Christian Democrats and conscientious objectors – with the purpose both of ensuring that they could not harm the régime and of ‘re-educating them’. Thus Dachau in Bavaria was opened in 1934, Buchenwald near Weimar in 1937 and Mauthausen in Austria in 1938. At that time, the Nazis tended to look on these camps as model prisons and were proud of them – photograph albums of Dachau were distributed to affiliated Nazi parties in occupied countries as an example to be followed; Mussert’s albums were discovered in Holland.

However, from the start the camps showed certain characteristics that were to be constant; on the one hand, political internees and common-law criminals were inextricably mixed, with the latter in charge of the former and holding all the minor administrative posts, thus bringing the detainees into immediate contact with them; on the other hand, ‘re-education’ took the form of systematic humiliation and bad treatment, such as to break down all resistance by completely destroying the personality.

With the war, as foreigners were added to the internal enemies of the Reich, their number increased. Accordingly, new concentration camps were built in the conquered territories. The largest of them were set up in Poland: Auschwitz, Maidanek and Stutthof. A women’s camp was built at Ravensbrück in East Prussia; other men’s camps appeared at Neuengamme near Hamburg, Flossenbürg on the Czechoslovak border and Natzweiler-Struthof in the Vosges. The central organisation was at Oranienburg-Sachsenhausen; this was where general directives were prepared and reports received from the camp commandants. Some of the camps were linked together: Buchenwald and Dora, Oranienburg and Grossrosen; and they all hived off large numbers of *kommandos* of various sizes, formed for varying lengths of time; teams of detainees would be sent there to carry out some particular job, while remaining under the administrative control of the main camp. The whole area of the Greater



Reich thus became covered with a network of concentration camps and their dependencies; Buchenwald for example controlled a hundred or so *kommandos*.

In 1941, with Himmler's assent, Heydrich, the chief of the security police, classified all the camps into four categories: the first category was for *Schutzhäftlinge* (deportees) who were likely to mend their ways; the second, for those whose output in terms of work would be poor for reasons of age or health; the third, for detainees who were more dangerous for the Reich but still useful and capable of improvement; and finally the fourth, for those who were quite incorrigible and who as a result were to suffer the harshest treatment.

In actual fact, this division into special categories, based on a purely police approach, remained a dead letter. The fact was that, as the war progressed, the development of the camps was speeded up so fast that they proved to be chronically unable to cope with the work that they received. On the one hand, the camps became international towns, Towers of Babel in which detainees of all ages were living together, drawn from every social milieu and speaking every language under the sun; thus Buchenwald housed an average of 40,000 internees. On the other hand, the first types of detainee were joined by Communists of all nations, Soviet prisoners of war, Resistance fighters described as '*Nacht und Nebel*' and the swarm of hostages or those picked up by chance or by mistake, not forgetting a few collaborators who had lost favour or fallen into disgrace with the occupying power.

Accordingly all the camps were provided with the same sort of system of hierarchy and organised on more or less the same principles. At the top was the *kommandantur*, comprising the camp commander and his deputies, housed in villas adjacent to the perimeter. ss units were responsible for guarding and employing the detainees; they comprised two main sections, the political section which held the prisoners' files and the economic section which looked after the commissariat and fixed the work required of the detainees. The ss were very few in number – at Mauthausen there were 260 for a population of 70,000. They stayed away from the detainees, apart from an occasional display of force to remind them of their presence. The day-to-day running of the whole camp was done by detainees, the *kapos* whom the ss entrusted with the subordinate posts which provided effective control of the blocks, barrack rooms, kitchens, workshops, secretarial staff and the sickroom (*Revier*). They were preferably common-law deportees.

Thus there grew up the closed universe of the concentration camp, with its own rules of living and social hierarchy. On their arrival, the deportees were shaved and stripped – in every sense of the word – dressed in cast-

off clothing which made them look ridiculous, sometimes tattooed, given numbers and made to wear distinctive signs according to their nationality and the reason for their internment; these were different coloured triangles: green for 'common-law', red for 'political', pink for the anti-social, purple for conscientious objectors, and so on, with various letters on them, T for Czech, F for French, N for Dutch, etc. The *Nacht und Nebel* sometimes wore the letters NN; they were not allowed to receive any letters or parcels; they were forbidden to walk about the camp; and they lived in isolated blocks.

In fact, as the camps became more and more congested and their accommodation and services increasingly inadequate, the fate of all the detainees became very grim. At the mercy of their *kapos*' whims, liable to corporal punishment such as flogging on the slightest pretext, underfed, exhausted by unremitting toil, with little medical care, the wretched internees in order to survive were forced to resort to dreadful internecine strife which was only slightly mitigated by a few attempts at political organisation or group solidarity. Most of the time, these attempts came from the Communists, who formed the most homogeneous and disciplined element, and first and foremost from the German Communists who had been longest in the camps and were thus the most experienced, as well as occupying more of the minor administrative posts.

These living conditions, which became harsher and harsher as the war progressed, led to a high death-rate amongst the prisoners, which increased still further when they began to be employed in the German war industry. From 1942 onwards the organising of this employment was entrusted to ss General Pohl. It gave immense power to the ss: they could hire out to industrial concerns a labour force that cost them nothing, that was unable to make any protest and that could be continually renewed, as it was increased by recaptured prisoners of war or those unsuccessfully trying to evade forced labour. Several million men were thus taken on by the largest German firms – I. G. Farben, H. Goering, Krupp, Roehling; deportees were sent to work at Dora, Laura or Thekla in secret factories built underground to avoid enemy air raids. Some of them were even employed at Sachsenhausen in counterfeiting English pounds and American dollars that were put into circulation by an Austrian businessman, F. Schwend. These notes were used to buy men's consciences or other services such as those of the spy Cicero in Turkey, who was paid (and fooled) by them. Most of these fakes were good enough to be accepted by Swiss banks.

Through its concentration camps the ss thus managed to achieve all its objectives; the camps rendered Nazi Germany's opponents harmless and made them work for the glory of the Reich while condemning them to a

lingering death; they became Germany's largest economic enterprise; as soon as war came, they moulded to their will the servile mass of 'sub-men' doomed to inescapable inferiority by reason of their racial or national origin or the fact that they had been defeated. The 'solution of the Jewish problem' increased their power still further.

IV THE FATE OF THE JEWS

Even before the war, the Jews in Germany, under the accusation of being stateless, had been subjected to discriminatory and humiliating measures; the Wehrmacht's victories now made it possible to extend these measures to the whole of occupied Europe.

The Jews were forbidden to work in the public services, to enter the liberal professions, to hold senior appointments in any organisation liable to influence public opinion – the cinema, radio, press, publishing, the theatre. Their names appeared on special census lists and they were forced to wear a yellow star; their identity cards and ration cards had to bear a distinguishing mark, as did their homes; they were not allowed to enter public places – cafés, parks, museums, theatres, cinemas or libraries. In Poland, they received reduced rations and required permission to move about.

The seizure of Jewish real estate steadily increased, on the pretext that they had themselves gained it by fraud from the countries in which they lived and which they would betray as a matter of course. This resulted in the immense swindle that went under the name of 'economic Aryanisation'; nationals of the various countries were put in charge of Jewish concerns. This transfer of property was a highly profitable business for the cover-men put up by the occupying authorities but also for the German firms which thus acquired considerable financial interests in the economy of the occupied countries.

The measures were accompanied by a campaign of vilification of the Jews through the medium of films – *Jud Süß* – lectures, exhibitions, pamphlets, newspaper articles and university teaching.

In addition to these measures designed to subject, expropriate or humiliate the Jews, they were made to form associations for the greater convenience of the German authorities. When they did not exist already, such associations were set up and the Jews were forced to join them – in France the General Union of Jews, in Holland the Jewish Council. They had the function of helping the occupying power in its decisions or implementing them. These associations sometimes published these decisions in special Jewish newspapers – the *Joodsche Weekblad* in Holland; they collected the funds required to pay the fines inflicted on the Jewish

communities; they drew up lists from which the occupier would select the names of hostages to arrest, suspects to intern or those to be recruited for forced labour. These associations controlled by leading Jewish personalities inspired sufficient confidence in their co-religionists to encourage them to greater meekness but they had little power to alleviate their fate.

In the east, the *Einsatzgruppen* revived the tradition of the pogrom. They stirred up the local population, denounced Jews for more or less imaginary crimes and encouraged plunder, shop-looting and murder. They hoped in this way to gain support for collaboration. In Poland, at Lvov, in three successive pogroms organised by means of Ukrainian nationalists and the dregs of the population, there were 10,000 victims. In Yugoslavia, 2,000 Jews were shot as reprisals for partisan operations. In Jassy on June 29, 1941, 8,000 Jews were wiped out either on the spot or after being picked up and brought in. The list of crimes perpetrated in Poland, as established by a special commission, is terrifyingly long. But this small-town butchery merely offered the SS the chance to acquire the knack; it did not offer a solution to the 'Jewish problem'.

V THE MADAGASCAR SCHEME

The purely German solution to the problem for a while consisted in letting the Jews leave the country more or less voluntarily. Whilst life in the places where they lived was made increasingly unpleasant, no obstacle was placed in their way if they wanted to seek asylum elsewhere, on the understanding that they gave up most of their belongings. In this way, several hundreds of thousands of German or Austrian Jews left their country before the war and this explains the paradox that the proportion of German Jews who disappeared during the war was the lowest in Europe. The same policy seems to explain why, in the autumn of 1940, 7,000 Jews were sent without warning from the province of Baden into unoccupied France and why there were attempts to smuggle thousands of Polish Jews over the demarcation line between Germany and the Soviet Union.

But the size of the Polish Jewish population caused Hitler embarrassment, as he explained in March 1940 to an American of German origin, Colin Ross: 'It is the difficult question of finding enough room . . . I would welcome any positive suggestion.' A solution had indeed been found to the problem of cleaning up the annexed Polish territories by transferring the Jews to the 'General Government' which became a sort of 'Jewish reservation'. But this was only a springboard for better things, as Hitler confessed to Colin Ross: 'In Lublin, the Jews are already packed as tight as sardines.'

For a while in the summer of 1940, the idea was toyed with of expelling all the Jews from Europe at the end of the war. This 'solution' would be written into the peace treaty. After some research Madagascar was chosen to receive the Jews after the 25,000 Frenchmen living there had been evacuated. Sea and air bases would be held by the Reich; the Jews would administer the rest of the island under a German governor dependent on Himmler; their European assets would provide the basis for the development of the country and for creating the appropriate infrastructures. The Jews would lose their original nationality without becoming Germans; they would be 'citizens of the mandated territory of Madagascar'.

Although this scheme was the subject of thorough discussion between all the ministries concerned, it does not seem to have been put to the Vichy government who, in accordance with the armistice convention, retained complete control of the island. Heydrich seems not to have been entirely enthusiastic. Moreover, the invasion of the USSR was to create problems that the 'Madagascar scheme' would have been unable to solve; at the same time, this invasion opened up new horizons which were to suggest other solutions to Heydrich, including 'the final solution'.

VI THE GHETTOES

One good way of segregating Jews so as to be able to strike at them more easily by cutting them off entirely from the outer world consisted in shovelling them into the ghettos that formerly existed in certain Polish and Lithuanian cities. Those who had not lived in them before the war, as well as the small local Jewish communities, were all sent there. Thus each ghetto formed an entirely enclosed Jewish world, surrounded by a wall through which the Jews passed only when they went to work in other parts of the town. Outside, the Germans set about reviving the anti-Semitism of the non-Jews; inside there were all the horrors of promiscuity – ten people to a room – forced labour, under-nourishment, raids and reprisals. When no ghetto existed, they were set up; Heydrich, the 'protector' of Bohemia, shut his Jews up in the old disused fortress of Theresienstadt; in Belgrade, Rademacher chose the gypsy quarter for the Yugoslav Jews, after rejecting the idea of an island in the middle of the Danube. More than 435,000 people were crammed into the Warsaw ghetto.

Inside the ghetto there still remained some semblance of family life and independent administration. 'Jewish councils' (*Judenräte*), appointed by the Germans, ran the community rather like municipal councils, with the help of Jewish police. They negotiated work contracts with the Nazis and issued the regulations governing the punishment of offences. Their role has been the subject of extremely diverse judgments, many of them very

critical. Some of these councils were even said to have gone as far as to draw up lists of Jews sentenced to be hanged as reprisals; most of them, by meeting German demands as well as they could, had hopes of saving their own skins and the lives of their loved ones. But Mazor stresses that many of these reluctant Quislings did rebel at great risk to themselves; some of them stirred up revolt, or, in despair, committed suicide.

In Lodz, Runkovski, a man of philanthropic bent and a former small manufacturer now in his seventies, took his position very seriously. He set up various institutions, indeed almost a small court. His picture hung in every office, like the Führer's. He toured the schools, conducted marriage ceremonies, printed a local currency and stamp bearing his own effigy. But he did not succeed in saving either the Jewish community or some of its members or himself, for the behaviour of the Nazis condemned their victims to come to tragic choices, none of which led to anything but despair.

The ghetto formed an economically closed world. In Theresienstadt, the population was divided into 'hundreds' of men and women from sixteen to sixty years old, forced to work ten or twelve hours a day under the control of a 'prominent person'. It was a caricature of joint management of the means of production. In theory, each inhabitant received free board and lodging in exchange for his work; but the shops were often empty and the ration cards rarely honoured. These extraordinary business concerns which paid their staff no wages, were hotbeds of all sorts of illicit trading. The German bosses and the 'prominent persons' took all the profits; the clever ones, the dishonest ones and the better-placed ones amongst the detainees managed to live off the black market. After November 1942, the Jewish workers in Lvov became the property of the SS, who hired them out to firms, sometimes run by Jews who were individually employers but collectively slaves.

In these communities doomed to slow extinction, the state of health of the population was deplorable and epidemics rife. Informers flourished in the atmosphere of suspicion. Yet some cultural life went on, pursued with desperate eagerness as the expression of a sort of will to live; newspapers were printed, concerts and theatre performances took place and even a grim humour sometimes appeared. At times the SS fancied themselves as patrons of the arts and supported them, even if they did send the writers and performers off to be killed next day. The ghettos were in fact, only one stage in the 'final solution to the Jewish problem'.

VII THE FINAL SOLUTION TO THE JEWISH PROBLEM

At the beginning of 1942, Hitler announced in two speeches that the Jews would be exterminated; the scheme to transport them out of Europe had

thus been abandoned. This change of heart in Nazi policy was the logical consequence of the behaviour of the SS in the USSR. Had they not been invited to 'protect the Wehrmacht' by immediately executing Jews and leading Communists – since to the Nazi mind, these were only two forms of the same enemy? After mass shootings – 34,000 in two days in Kiev – followed by cremating the bodies on vast funeral pyres, the SS had worked out a rough and ready system of itinerant gas-chambers; they asphyxiated their victims with the exhaust fumes from their lorries. But the SS found this method not very practical because the victims took too long to die and this restricted output. On request, the German chemists had produced a gas called *Zygon-B* and its rapid effect proved most encouraging when it was tried out.

It was in these circumstances that, at Wannsee, near Berlin, apparently at Heydrich's suggestion, the decision was taken to exterminate the European Jews, a decision communicated in a letter from Heydrich himself to the Wilhelmstrasse apparently without their raising any objection. The operation began in Poland, a testing-ground for the SS, and was entrusted to Globocnik, the SS chief of the Lublin district; it was given the cover-name *Aktion Reinhard* in memory of the 'great' Reinhard Heydrich who had recently been executed by the Czech Resistance movement in Prague.

The method consisted of installing, in certain camps, gas-chambers camouflaged as shower-rooms, together with giant cremation ovens. At Birkenau, in open country a few miles from Auschwitz, a complete range of buildings was constructed, after expelling everyone in the vicinity to exclude any indiscreet observers; Himmler came to inspect the building personally. The same precautions were not considered necessary at Maidanek; the camp could be seen from Lublin and Jews still alive could observe from their ghetto the smoke produced by incinerating the corpses of their comrades, in full knowledge of the fate awaiting them.

In November 1942, a few Gauleiters raised objections to the 'final solution' on the grounds that it was depriving the Reich's war economy of a valuable labour force. A middle way was found: the healthy Jews would be sent out to work until they became exhausted; the others, after periodical 'selection', would be exterminated; those who for some reason or other were not exterminated, would be sterilised – an operation based on frightful experiments on human guinea pigs taken from the concentration camps.

All that remained was to drive the cattle to the slaughter-house door. Jews were rounded up in their thousands all over Europe, with the more or less willing co-operation of the authorities in the occupied countries; in Romania Antonescu, to his credit, delayed implementing the measures until they had become difficult to apply. In France, the poor wretches were

crammed into makeshift internment centres, in the *Vélodrome d'Hiver* after the 'big round-up' on July 16, 1942, at Beaune-la-Rolande, Pithiviers and Drancy. In Holland, it was the Westerbork camp. Thence they were transported 'eastwards' – the trains deposited them at the very gates of Birkenau.

Gradually the ghettos emptied of their inhabitants. On July 22, the *Judenrat* of the Warsaw ghettos themselves announced the beginning of the 'big operation'; by July 1943 there were no longer any Jews officially living in Lvov. On September 1 in Lodz, Rumkowski had the hospitals evacuated and the patients handed over to the Nazis. On June 21, 1943, Himmler ordered all the Jews in the *Ostland* who were unfit for work to be sent to concentration camps. In Hungary Eichmann, the man in charge of the operation, was particularly keen on sending Jews to the gas-chamber; from March to June 1944, helped by the diplomat Wesenmayer, he succeeded in deporting 400,000 Jews, at a time when the Red Army was already approaching and the Wehrmacht was finding it impossible to obtain lorries to move their troops, whereas Eichmann had no difficulty at all. This same Eichmann tried to have Dutch Jews born of mixed marriages deported to Birkenau, when Himmler considered that sterilisation would meet the case. He even ordered 1,127 Jews to be transferred from Rome to Birkenau when Hitler himself wanted them to be confined in Mauthausen as hostages. The SS had been possessed by a lust for murder.

How many Jews died in this 'final solution'? L. Poliakov and B. Mark, who are specialists on this question, are agreed with Israeli statisticians in placing the figure at 6 million, i.e. more than 40 per cent of the whole Jewish people. It is the most atrocious crime in the history of mankind, in its grievousness and its wantonness, because the death of these wretched people contributed in no way at all to the success of the German armies. They were killed as a result of an ethos based on the will to power and on racialism and applied by one of the most highly developed countries in the world with all the vast organising ability and scientific knowledge at its command, because its sense of discipline and its patriotism had been completely perverted.

VIII DID THE JEWS ALLOW THEMSELVES TO BE MASSACRED?

The immense number of Jews who died raises the question of whether, in the vast majority of cases, the Jews allowed themselves to be massacred. Could they have done anything else? It is probable that a certain atavistic

feeling based on memories of centuries and centuries of persecution, tended to produce meekness and resignation; they knew that a storm does not last for ever. By submission and prayer, the Jewish people lost many members of their race but they did continue to exist and hope for better days to come.

But in addition, the Nazis had taken all sorts of precautions. Fooled up to the very last minute, hundred of thousands of Jews went to the gas chambers still not realising what was happening; earlier on, they had left their homes or their ghettos convinced that once they had been transferred in accordance with the orders issued by their present masters they would be allowed to live in peace. The 'solution' was so unthinkable that their minds were bemused; and when their eyes opened it was too late.

The Nazis were also very skilful in their use of 'collective responsibility'. Dvorjetzky has analysed what 'the call of the woods' meant for those who were detained close to the Russian front: the promise of freedom and fighting; but their families were left behind in the towns as hostages so during the journey or in the camps and ghettos, any attempt at escape or revolt would bring out the informer, for fear of reprisals.

And finally, the inhabitants of the concentration camps were never free from observation. As Wellers reminds us: 'The detainees lived night and day in public, slept in public, washed in public, performed their natural functions in public and died in public. In this sort of congestion, secrecy of any kind was impossible.'

It is all the more remarkable that nonetheless plots and revolts did take place, motivated by bitter despair but sometimes systematically prepared. Group communities in apartment-houses or ghettos and national or political affiliation in the camps turned into resistance organisations. Though the insurrection at Lvov proved abortive, at Sobibor on the other hand, on October 14, 1943, 300 detainees managed to escape after killing nine ss. In Cracow, Bialystok and Treblinka, the ghettos were 'liquidated' after fighting that sometimes lasted several days. Above all, in Warsaw the first German attempt in January 1943 was successfully opposed by four Jewish combat groups, out of the fifty that had been organised. In April they had to call in tanks, guns and flame throwers. Fighting lasted four weeks with the attackers compelled to reduce the underground bunkers one by one by blowing up blocks of houses with high explosive. Not until May 15 could ss General Stroop announce: 'The Jewish quarter no longer exists.'

So the Jews did fight their own war during the war itself and it was difficult for them to do more than they did. But there is another question: how much did the rest of the world know about the enormous crime that was being perpetrated and what did it do to try to stop it?

IX THE SILENCE OF THE VATICAN

In London, the Allies had been informed by the Polish Resistance of what was being concocted, albeit without realising its full horror, and through the BBC they had threatened the Reich with reprisals. Even during the war, they had decided to bring the war criminals before special courts when it was ended. These threats and decisions stemmed partly from considerations of psychological warfare.

It is a fact that nobody in Europe, and probably not even the German people, fully realised the immensity of the loathsome crime of genocide being committed against the Jews, as well as the gypsies, and which also threatened the Slavs. Such a crime was unprecedented and seemed incredible in the twentieth century. The International Red Cross said nothing and managed to gain entry into the camps only at the very end of the war; this inspection *in extremis* could not alter the state of affairs. The Vatican also said nothing, thereby incurring violent criticism as well as giving rise to extremely heated debate. Its policy towards Germany, wrote F. L'Huillier, 'has caused many Roman Catholics great qualms of conscience' and 'set a riddle for almost all thinking men'. What was this policy?

When he was papal nuncio in Germany, the future Pope Pius XII had been responsible for arranging the concordat whereby the Vatican gave the Third Reich international recognition at a time when the Nazi régime had not yet achieved, through its military successes, the prestige and power which made it unassailable. It is true that later on the encyclical *Mit brennender Sorge* condemned certain excesses of National Socialism but not the doctrine itself or its underlying racialism. Nevertheless, it aroused Hitler's wrath and was made the excuse for a violent anti-Catholic campaign in the Reich.

Ever since his election, Pope Pius XII had continually shown goodwill towards Germany by his constant display of affection for the German people, for whom he felt a particular regard. Between the lines, it was possible to read a distinction between the people and its régime but this distinction was subtle rather than overt. When war became imminent, the Pope asked the weaker power, the state that was threatened, Roman Catholic Poland, to make concessions to preserve peace. Later on, by appointing ecclesiastical dignitaries to dismembered Poland, the Pope seemed to recognise the *fait accompli* that had been achieved by violence.

If we add that the Vatican never directly intervened with the German government but always confined its approaches to the Italian government and that, while continually making peaceful declarations and canvassing in favour of peace, it refused to make any concrete proposals that could only

lead to a condemnation of the aggressor, it is plain that the Vatican did little to stand in the way of Nazi policy. The invasion of Holland, Belgium, France, Yugoslavia and Greece touched the Pope's heart but called forth no protest. Faced by a constant stream of entreaty on behalf of the victims of Nazism, the Pope used every effort to mitigate the lot of the Roman Catholics, above all the priests and specifically those interned in Dachau; but he kept silent on the dreadful treatment that was being meted out to Jews. Yet it seems that by the end of 1942, he must have known all about it.

Pius XII thus showed the greatest caution in his relations with Hitler. True, this caution did not amount to pretending ignorance or, even less, showing approval. Many people who were threatened or persecuted, including many Jews, found asylum in the Vatican or in religious communities in Italy. Privately the Pope frequently referred to his concern and even to his distress. The voice of the Vatican was sufficiently outspoken in its broadcasts to inspire some of the earlier Resistance tracts circulated in France. And finally, Pius XII firmly refused to recognise the attack against the Soviet Union as any kind of crusade. But the fact remains that the only international authority that could raise its voice against the monstrous crimes of the Nazis was the Vatican, and the Vatican kept silent.

We can only surmise about the motivation behind such behaviour. Was the Pope imprisoned in a doctrine which forbade him to intervene in the affairs of another state – in fact, to give unto Caesar those things which are Caesar's? Was it this same doctrine that led him to give *de facto* recognition to the scandalous Ustashi régime in Croatia which professed Catholicism and set out forcibly to convert the orthodox Serbs living in the new state? Did Pius XII fear that he might aggravate the lot of the German Roman Catholics and priests? This meant putting the preservation of the Church before elementary principles of humanity that are fundamental to Christianity.

One is thus led to wonder whether the Vatican did not think that it was best to choose the lesser of the two evils. With his aristocratic temperament and social background and with the prevailing feeling in the Curia at the time, it is probable that Pius XII was led to find the true or most formidable enemy of Roman Catholic dogma and the Roman Catholic world in the materialism and atheism of Communism. By opposing it, in however wrong-headed a way, Germany represented western civilisation and was perhaps even its bulwark against Asia, since the Church still existed in Germany. After all, it was not all that long since the 'Red' barbarians in Spain had committed atrocities against churches and monasteries.

As for saying that the Pope's silence can be explained away as a calculation based on the likelihood of obtaining a 'real peace', this would mean

expecting too much or too little from the international hearing that the Pope's utterances could command. Whatever it did, the Vatican was entirely powerless to establish a 'real peace'. On the other hand, a firm protest by Pius XII against the extermination of the Jews, published in the Catholic Press all over the world, would not perhaps have prevented or slowed down the massacre, although in this matter there can be no certainty. What is certain is that such a protest would have been a revelation for most people and that it would have turned Roman Catholics away from collaboration and perhaps made the German Catholics less submissive, quite apart from the relief that it would have provided for millions of troubled consciences.

CHAPTER V

Collaboration

THE Hitler régime needed to keep the German people well in hand and to win the greatest possible support abroad; its prestige required this as did the successful conclusion of the war. Propaganda, inspired and controlled by Goebbels, was thus one of the pillars of its policy. Helped by the Wehrmacht's successes, the pre-war European Fascist parties gained many members, and hopes of victory as well as subsidies from the victor brought others into being. In the occupied countries, these parties acted as henchmen for the German authorities; in the satellite countries, if they were not themselves in the seat of power, the threat that they represented to their governments made the latter more ready to submit to the Germans' requests. Only in Poland and the Soviet Union did Nazi policy do nothing to play down its determination to exterminate its ideological and racial opponents and thus sow discord in their ranks. In those two countries collaboration was a dismal failure.

I THE VOLKSDEUTSCHE

In various countries, the German minority, the *Volksdeutsche*, provided the spearhead for Nazi penetration. Hitler insisted on their being granted autonomous status, so that they should keep their 'Germanity' by retaining direct links with the Reich. Thus F. Karmasin in Slovakia made no secret of the fact that he was a German agent and took his orders from Ribbentrop. The Slovak Germans were represented in the government by a Secretary of State and they levied their own taxes for their own purposes.

In Croatia, Dr Branimit Altgayer had been granted authority in all matters concerning the Germans; but those Germans who were officials in the Croat state took their oath to Hitler. The Germans had the right to wear Nazi insignia, to use the Nazi salute and to sing Party songs.

In Romania, the status of the German minority in Transylvania had been settled on August 30, 1940, in Vienna by a special protocol. It was completed by an agreement between Antonescu and A. Schmidt, leader of the minority, which gave it the status of a public corporation having the right to issue its own laws.

In Hungary there existed a 'National League of Germans', with Franz Basch as its leader; it had its own schools and was proportionally represented in the government service. But the Hungarian government, jealous of its own authority, had refused to grant it special status and its members were not allowed to wear the swastika.

II GOEBBELS' PROPAGANDA

In theory German propaganda was shared between various organisations. The Führer had made foreign propaganda the preserve of Ribbentrop and the Wilhelmstrasse; Dietrich was in charge of the press; Max Amann, one of the Führer's most trusty lieutenants, was responsible for the Party press; and finally, the Wehrmacht had its own propaganda service. In theory, that left very little for Dr Goebbels, who bore the title of 'Propaganda Minister' – merely the cinema and the radio, for internal use only. But in fact, it was he who set the tone and in practice he finished up, if not in complete control, at least guiding everything along his own lines.

This half-failed intellectual – he had not succeeded in achieving fame despite having published thirty or so books and pamphlets – was one of Hitler's earliest companions. He had greatly contributed to fabricating Hitler's legend and the latter had to some extent modelled his attitude on the image of himself popularised by Goebbels. An efficient propagandist, a brilliant speaker and orator and a splendid actor, capable of pleading the most conflicting causes in quick succession, Goebbels had more cleverness and ambition than real conviction; he thought Rosenberg a complete and utter idiot. Cultured and intelligent, he was also a mass of complexes, vain and unscrupulous. He had defined his function in one sentence: 'I had to keep up German morale.' It was a good pretext for poking his fingers into every pie – the shortage of warm winter clothing for the troops in Russia, the size of the potato crop or racial purity.

Goebbels regularly wrote the editorial for the weekly *Das Reich*. But above all, he had the radio and he knew how to use it; his broadcasts went out for eleven hours every day to the North Americans; there were eight hours for Africa and a whole programme for the British in preparation for a landing in the British Isles. In the occupied countries he introduced propaganda services to replace those run by the embassies or the Wehrmacht. They purged the libraries; controlled the press – 'an armful of directives every day', Bonnafous, the Vichy Minister of Information used to say; founded or backed newspapers; supervised the cinema news programmes; acquired interests in publishing houses, cinema and gramophone-record firms, news agencies and even printing presses; formed large numbers of cultural associations to spread the good (Nazi)

word; produced films and organised anti-Masonic, anti-Semitic or anti-Bolshevik exhibitions; spread 'German culture' by means of weeklies, reviews, concerts and lectures; invited scientists, artists and men of letters to tour Germany; nor did they neglect fashion.

Goebbels was the inventor of the Nazi ritual; it was he who had perfected the giant Nuremberg rallies with rolling drums, flags, spotlights and endless parades of troops in uniform. For him, a human being was a collection of passions and instincts and it was to these he appealed and not to reason. On this point he was at one with Hitler, who considered the masses devoid of any sense of freedom, toleration or decency; they were unintelligent and needed to feel themselves dominated; it gave them a feeling of peace and security.

The scene of the mass rallies was carefully chosen for its historical associations or the possibility of cramming it with people, thus making it easier to create a collective spirit. Noises off-stage, marching songs, inspired applause amplified by loudspeakers, the march-past in columns ten deep, aroused and sustained enthusiasm so that the individual sank into the mass and lost his ability to think or criticise, all turned into uniformed automata caught up in a lasting delirious hysteria.

There was no question of telling the masses the truth. On November 10, 1938, Hitler had told German journalists in these explicit terms what their duty was: 'The rightness of the leaders' attitude must be continually stressed as a matter of principle.' Accordingly no matter was ever thoroughly explored; arguments were replaced by slogans of an alluring simplicity; by the continual hammering home of the same associations of words all the time, people came to believe what they heard.

Consequently, in order to be effective, propaganda restricted itself to a few well-chosen themes: extravagant praise of the Führer, and emphasis on the obnoxious nature of his enemies, the Jews and the Marxists. Before the war, Hitler had been presented as the great friend and comrade, a hero combining charm and strength, the modern Siegfried. When war came, he became a national symbol, the skilled statesman able to handle any political, diplomatic or economic problem, the infallible leader. When setbacks began to occur, he remained the protector, the shield and buckler of the people, the saviour. Thus Goebbels praised him as being the 'watchword of all who believe in Germany . . . the redeemer . . . the leader who understands the people and fights on their behalf'. The NS *Frauenwarte*, the official organ of the association of National Socialist women, wrote simply: 'You owe everything to the Führer, your wages, the blue sky above, life.' Children recited a prayer with these words: 'Führer, my Führer, my Faith, my Light, it is to you I owe my daily bread.' Even the Führer's style was considered as a model; Goebbels praised him as 'the cultivator of the German language'.

At first the Jew was put forward as a man without a country, a ferment of dissolution amongst peoples. Then, when the paradoxical alliance of the Communist Soviet Union and the capitalist Anglo-Saxon countries came into being against Germany, the Jew became the connecting link explaining this monstrous union. As part of its pretentious rubbish, German propaganda tirelessly brandished the spectre of the 'Jewish-plutocratic-Marxist-Masonic conspiracy.' There, too, Hitler had shown the way; he had the knack of tarring all his opponents, however different they might be, with the same brush so as to appear all the nobler by contrast. In *Mein Kampf* he had expounded his belief that the bigger the lie, the more likely it was to be believed.

III THE COLLABORATORS IN OCCUPIED EUROPE

The German 'New Order' was not without its attractions for various categories of people in the occupied countries. More than one captain of industry rejoiced in the elimination of social conflict, the banning of strikes and the vast market that might be expected from a German Europe. In every country anti-Semitism was glowing with a quiet fire that needed little to make it flare up anew. The property-owning classes and above all the petty bourgeoisie looked on Fascism as championing a social order based on private property. The Churches were tempted by the thought of the final elimination of atheistic and materialistic Communism. More than one aesthete was taken in by the virility, the martial look, the healthy physique and the splendid bearing of the victorious young German warriors: did not Drieu la Rochelle sing the praises of the 'tough Nazi fighter who can regenerate mankind and who is a combination of American gangster, Foreign Legionary and aircrew' in short 'a man who believes only in acts'? Even Nazi Germany's social achievements compared with those of the liberal democracies were not without attractions for trade unionists. And even when no ideological sympathy existed, the distribution of generous largesse by the occupying power was an excellent method of making converts and enlisting supporters. Thus the Gestapo found it easy to recruit auxiliaries sometimes even from the criminal classes. In a word, in every country groups of collaborators became legion, all fashioned more or less on the same model.

In all the groups the dominant figure was the leader, the infallible master of the masses; everywhere the attempt was made to enrol the whole of the population into territorial and co-operative organisations of a paramilitary type; everywhere there were myths, rituals and slogans rather than ideas; everywhere appeal was made to violence,

fanaticism and terror; the virtues of discipline, blind obedience and sacrifice to the good cause were praised to the skies. The gestures, the dress – the coloured shirt – the ceremonial, the hierarchy and the vocabulary were all copied from the Nazis.

Thus in occupied Europe there appeared a sort of anti-Semitism that was imported and imitated from Germany rather than properly indigenous – for example, it did not exist in Italian Fascism. So we find such strange perversions as nationalist groups whose members had joined out of fear or even hatred of Germany turning into fanatical supporters of a German-dominated Europe. The first result of which was their acceptance of the occupation, exploitation and obliteration of their own country.

Yet each of these groups proclaimed itself 'national'. Was it a relic of patriotism, at least in words, or their desire not to alienate conservative elements? In any case, the 'programmes' of the various Fascist parties were singularly close to one another. They all demanded: a 'strong government' led by a 'strong man'; social order within a framework of political and economic stability; the 'solidarity' of all classes that was jeopardised only by the demands of the people, supported or incited by the workers' parties and trade unions; precedence of national over sectarian interests and of collective groups over individuals. Europe became the theatre of a 'Fascist international' where the same play was performed all the time, imported from Germany and having the same mass methods of indoctrination, the same enemies to be fought and the same passionate fury in shooting them down. The only national differences lay in the relative roles that German policy assigned to its puppets in each country.

In Norway, Quisling had the sad distinction of giving his name to a whole category of traitors. In fact his Fascism was, if such an expression is possible, the purest sort of all, because it sprang neither from economic uncertainty nor national emergency nor even from self-interest but from belief, a rather naïve belief indeed, in all the tawdry myths with which Nazism had decked itself out. Quisling believed in the Aryans, in the Germanic racial community which was to bring together the Scandinavians and the Germans. He was a missionary rather than a politician.

Quisling provided the occupying power with its first experience of collaborating with local pro-Nazi elements. It helped it to work out the appropriate methods of behaviour: use the Nazis to infiltrate the government services and win them over by eliminating the hostile elements within them, thus avoiding a direct takeover, which would be not only tricky but burdensome and dangerous; thus the unpopular measures put out by the occupying powers had a better chance of being acceptable to public opinion since they would appear to have been agreed upon and applied by fellow citizens. But should the collaborators fail to fulfil the

role allotted them they would be ruthlessly swept aside, however loyal they might be.

Quisling learnt this to his cost in Norway as did Mussert in Holland. Both of them were either brought on or sent off the field according to whether they were still useful.

Thus Mussert had the notion that the Reich would help him to create a Greater Holland stretching as far as Flanders in France and which would be a sort of western marches of Greater Germany while retaining a certain amount of independence. But he ran up against thinly disguised German designs to annex Holland and learnt the sad lesson that a Nazi can always find someone more Nazi than himself. His acceptance of defeat did not prevent Seyss-Inquart from subsidising dissident groups supporting a straightforward annexation of Holland, led by Rost van Tonningen.

In Belgium the defeat of the democracies had led the Flemish nationalists to think that the death knell of French influence, under which they considered that they had been suffering for many years, had finally tolled. This ethnic and linguistic group which felt politically and economically bullied made common cause with Nazism as much to satisfy its claims as through ideological sympathy. In fact, it was really the inherently brittle nature of Belgium that was being confirmed and aggravated by events.

Paradoxically enough, the Walloon Fascists, the 'rexists' who predated the invasion, found themselves led by the internal logic of their action to the blatant aberration of proclaiming Belgium's 'Germanity of blood and soil'. The point was that, in the Nazis' eyes, Quisling, Mussert and de Clerk were Germanic; but Degrelle was not. Therefore he had to go further and shout louder and commit himself more deeply than the others. In every country, the Fascists found themselves caught up in a sort of inevitable spiral; faced by the threat of those who were more extreme and servile than themselves, they had steadily to increase their offers to the occupying power.

French Fascism was more complicated because there was no French Führer and it had split up into rival groups; on the other hand, it comprised elements from the traditional Left, the radicals and Socialists and sometimes the Communists. Indeed, the Vichy régime had drawn into its orbit the French right-wing reactionaries. So in the northern zone, we find the anti-militarist G. Suarez's *Aujourd'hui*, the anti-clerical Socialist sympathiser and radical R. Château's *La France au travail*, the syndicalist G. Dumoulin's *Atelier*, all denouncing the clericalism, the paternalism, the militarism and the jingoistic nationalism of the Vichy rulers and all subsidised by the ambassador Otto Abetz who used them to exert pressure on the Vichy leaders. The most powerful of these groups was the *Rassemblement national populaire* of the former Popular Front minister Marcel Déat, who in his *L'Oeuvre* attacked the Jews, the Anglo-Saxons,

the *Action française*, Communists and Liberals in the best Goebbels style and advocated a planned economy, the protection of the race, the integration of France into a German Europe and French participation in the war on the German side.

There were other groups more in line with pre-war French Fascism: the ex-*Action française* R. Brasillach and his team who ran *Je suis partout*, Deloncle's *Comité secret d'action révolutionnaire*, consisting of *cagoullards*,¹ Bucard's *Parti franciste* and above all, Jacques Doriot's *Parti populaire français* whose spokesman was the writer Drieu la Rochelle. Before the war, the PPF had tried to win over the mass of workers by demanding nationalisation of certain industries and calling itself socialist in order to thwart the workers' parties. Under the occupation it became more and more the defender of peasants and small property-owners, as well as small traders and artisans, by espousing their grievances against the large firms. It claimed that by doing this it was fighting against French decadence by attacking international capitalism or Marxism. But violence could not add up to a programme. The 'physical revolution' preached by Drieu la Rochelle – sport for all, holidays and back to nature – was not really adequate either to provide a programme for industry or society.

Rommel's advance towards Egypt had aroused certain hopes amongst the Arab nationalists. Hadj Amin al Husseini, the Grand Mufti of Jerusalem, had become a Nazi supporter and taken refuge in Berlin after the failure of Rashid Ali's revolt. The Germans had acknowledged his right to create a Palestinian state and solve the 'Jewish problem' there according to ethnical and religious criteria similar to the solution that was being achieved in occupied Europe. The Mufti delivered himself of fanatical propaganda on the Berlin radio; he was the mediator between the Reich and Italy on the one hand and Farouk in Egypt or Bourguiba in Tunisia on the other.

All these Fascist groups developed in similar ways. Hitler intended them to be his loyal henchmen or even slaves. They provided the men of action to do the occupying power's dirty work; they carried out police or reprisal operations against their compatriots – raids, arson or murder; they were the purveyors of the future inmates of concentration camps.

Thus they came to an ever increasing extent within Himmler's purview and they vied with each other in their eagerness to recruit volunteers for the anti-Bolshevik crusade. They became *Waffen ss*, 'the shock troops of the new order'. In France the 'Legion of French Volunteers against Bolshevism' was formed in which Doriot served for a while. Twenty thousand supporters of Mussert served in the German Army and several thousand in the police; Mussert had suggested raising 300,000 men to be sent to Russia, but Hitler refused for fear that they might not be amenable

1. Literally 'hooded men'; an extreme right-wing group.

enough. De Clerk became head of a 'Flemish Legion' officered entirely by Germans, and Degrelle of a 'Walloon Legion' which he took off to the Ukraine. Quisling divided the members of his anti-Bolshevik Norwegian legion between the Russian front and the internal front against his compatriots. The Grand Mufti recruited a Moslem Legion which goose-stepped in a Berlin parade together with Bosnians or Soviet prisoners of war from Azerbaïdzhan and Turkestan.

All these volunteers wore German uniform and took an oath to Hitler, 'the Führer of Germany'; the Flemings even took an oath to Himmler. These nationalists had become the mercenaries of the power that was occupying their country. The same fate was in store for the collaborators in the satellite states.

IV THE SATELLITES

In Romania, the Germans continued to maintain their trust in Antonescu, holding the 'Iron Guard' up their sleeve should need arise. Antonescu had set up a personal dictatorship accepted by young King Michael. His government consisted of officers, civil servants and experts, all of them responsible to him. But despite Goebbels' persuasion, the *Conducator* did not establish 'single party' rule, although the 'historical parties' remained banned – according to Mr Popescu-Puturi, Maniu and Bratianu, the leaders of these parties, had advised their members to accept the régime.

This régime was, however, in many respects a Fascist one. Popular assent was obtained by organised plebiscites. Freedom had been suppressed and there were thousands of arrests and internments. Nazi-type organisations – corporations, youth movements and 'Work and Light' cultural propaganda – brought the régime into line with that of the Reich.

Von Killinger, the new German ambassador, had been recommended to Antonescu by Hitler as an 'adviser'; in fact, no important measure could be passed without his approval. On the list of the staff of the German ambassador there was a 'police attaché'. The Romanian ministry of propaganda had been reorganised by Goebbels' 'experts', so that the press was tightly controlled and directed by the German ambassador and German culture became predominant in the theatre, music, literature and the fine arts. By meekly agreeing to send workers to Germany and allowing the Romanian units in the USSR to be used as the Wehrmacht generals saw fit, Antonescu had turned Romania into the perfect satellite.

In Hungary, the Germans had allowed the pre-war political régime under the Regent, Horthy, to continue. They felt some affinity with it in view of the veiled dictatorship it had set up and its anti-Semitism. But the

independent spirit of the Magyars did not fail to cause them some concern. Accordingly, they were keeping note of Ferenc Szalassi's Arrow Cross movement.

Szalassi recruited his supporters from the lower ranks of the army and the lower middle classes. But he also made an impact on the industrial proletariat, which lacked any political or trade union organisation – particularly amongst the miners and unskilled workers. The movement had obtained twenty-five per cent of the votes in the elections and returned forty-nine members of Parliament. Compared with the conservative Hungarian ruling classes, the Arrow Cross seemed like a revolutionary mass movement.

As such, the movement gave Admiral Horthy and his associates cause for concern. They made no secret of the fact that they would forcibly oppose any attempt on Szalassi's part to achieve power. Although the Germans openly supported and subsidised Szalassi and succeeded in obtaining his release from prison, they did not immediately try to force this issue. They did not need to do so as long as the Hungarian government showed its loyalty as an ally in the struggle against the USSR.

On the other hand, in Croatia it was the Fascist Ustashi party that took over power under its leader Ante Pavelić, who had been the instigator of King Alexander's assassination and who was proclaimed *poglavnik* of the Croatian state. This was because Matchek, the head of the Croatian peasant party, had rejected the advances of the Italian occupying authorities. Pavelić instituted a reign of terror against the Serbs living in Croatia, the Communists, the Jews and the gypsies. He set up concentration camps at Jasenovac and Stara-Gadićoka, in which the inmates were regularly slaughtered. The entire populations of some localities inhabited by Serbs were massacred, such as those of the village of Suvaja in July 1941.

Pavelić, who was protected by Mussolini, recognised the Italians as owners of most of the Dalmatian islands and coastline; he even accepted an Italian protectorate over Croatia and it was intended that a member of the house of Savoy should become its king; but the Duke of Spoleto never ascended his throne. The fact was that the Ustashi's atrocities had finally disturbed and aroused the indignation of their Italian protectors themselves, despite the help that they provided them in their struggle against Tito's partisans.

V COLLABORATION IN THE SOVIET UNION

Collaboration in the USSR is a question which Soviet historians seem disinclined to treat; they restrict themselves to a wholesale condemnation

of it as treachery, while playing down its extent and its effects. However, although all the offers made to the Poles – apart from a few isolated neophyte Quislings, like the publicist Ladislas Studnicki – had been spurned, so much so that for example, even Poles fairly close to the Nazis ideologically fought against them in the National Military Forces (NSZ), it seems that on the contrary the Wehrmacht was not always entirely unwelcome in the USSR, especially in the western territories inhabited by non-Russians.

Thus a few thousand Estonians enlisted in the Wehrmacht or in the Finnish Army and fought outside Leningrad. In the Ukraine, national councils were set up which formed combat groups. Finally, in contrast to the fierce fighting spirit of most of the Red Army units, some of them, consisting of Armenians, Tartars, Caucasians and Moslems, proved much less keen, as was shown by the abnormally high number of prisoners captured.

On the initiative of General von Schekendorff, commanding the rear area of Army Group Centre, seven armed battalions and 200,000 auxiliary volunteers (*Hilfswillige*) were raised among the Soviet prisoners of war. The *Hilfswillige* were not armed but were employed in the Wehrmacht's auxiliary services, wearing German uniforms. In the course of the war, their number grew to 650,000 out of several million POWs; but these poor hungry wretches were impelled less by the idea of voluntary service than by the desire to escape their miserable fate.

By adopting these measures, the Wehrmacht was acting rather on its own. In the USSR the instructions of the occupying authorities were always to exercise extreme rigour to the point of collective extermination. The nationalists of other races were consequently caught between 'the hammer and the anvil'. Thus some Ukrainians, under A. Melnyk, continued to support collaboration despite everything; but others, such as Stephen Bandera and Mykol Lebed began to distrust Nazi Germany as much as Bolshevik Russia, the more so as their first moves – the proclamation in Lemberg of a provisional Ukrainian government combined with a sort of pre-Parliament – were disowned by the Germans. Some Ukrainian nationalists joined underground anti-German organisations, so that in June 1942 Hitler categorically forbade the formation of *Ostbataillons* and was reluctant to agree to the use of auxiliaries. He was afraid of putting arms into his opponents' hands.

However, some German leaders had the impression that a great opportunity had been lost. This was apparently Goebbels' view and above all, Sauckel's, whose efforts to recruit labour for the Reich were hampered by the severity of the occupation. In October 1942, Rosenberg's political deputy, Otto Bräutigam, who was in charge of relations with the branch of the Wehrmacht concerned with occupation matters, even spoke up against the way Soviet POWs were treated; he described it as 'a great

tragedy'; he considered it the cause of 'the increase in the Red Army's powers of resistance' and as a result responsible for the 'death of thousands of German soldiers'. Bräutigam urged on Rosenberg the need to create a Russian 'anti-régime' consisting of native Russians of standing. He was backed by officers such as Colonel Stauffenberg and the head of the Wehrmacht's propaganda services, Colonel Martin. Then, at the end of the summer of 1942, General Vlassov was captured. This Soviet army commander had had a brilliant career. As a former deputy to Chiang Kai-shek's Russian military adviser, he had received the Order of Lenin at the age of thirty-nine and had ably defended Kiev in September 1941. Then he had been put in charge of the military government in Moscow when the capital was in grave danger. Finally, he had received the order to relieve Leningrad; his army had been surrounded and, famished and exhausted, had been forced to surrender. It seems that Vlassov had been revolted by Stalin's harsh directives and the great losses that they entailed; although he would not desert, he had refused to be taken out by the aircraft that had been made available for him after the rout of his army.

Vlassov accepted Colonel Martin's suggestion of forming an anti-Stalin 'Russian Committee'. At the beginning of 1943, he issued a manifesto from Smolensk containing fourteen points: the recognition of the freedom of the peoples composing the USSR, the reintroduction of private property and political and religious liberty, the return of the land forming the *kolkhozes* to the peasants; in a word, he was advocating something that was not Stalinism but not capitalism either. As for the Jews, Vlassov adopted Hitler's approach in all its severity and proclaimed that there would be 'no room for Jews in the new Russia'.

Vlassov was welcomed sympathetically by the German officers and often by the local population. Rosenberg gave him his support, albeit reluctantly, for he favoured the dismemberment of the USSR whereas Vlassov merely wanted to give greater autonomy to the various peoples, which did not win him the sympathy of the Baltic or Ukrainian nationalists.

At the end of the day, Hitler restricted his role to being an instrument of propaganda to increase the number of desertions from the Red Army. No important operation was ever entrusted to the Russian National Committee. Vlassov's propaganda was even kept under close watch: the Germans took the precaution of editing and publishing the newspapers representing his movement. Displeased by some of Vlassov's statements in the course of an official tour, Keitel even ordered the general to be transferred to a prisoner-of-war camp. The fact is that in the USSR, Nazi anti-Communism and racialism were not just propaganda but the expression, indeed the very heart, of German policy, even to the detriment of the military operations, where a Wehrmacht victory seemed, indeed, in hardly any doubt at the moment.

VI THE VICHY REGIME AND COLLABORATION

The almost limitless victories of the Wehrmacht reinforced the Vichy government in its conviction that Germany had won the war. It was true that the encroachments of the occupying authorities, such as the annexation of Alsace-Lorraine and forcible German participation in the French economy, still raised a tremendous stir, in Wiesbaden, however, rather than in Vichy. But the Germans had three infallible ways of bringing pressure to bear on the Vichy government: at the slightest hint of opposition, they closed the demarcation line, or used open blackmail regarding the fate of the million French prisoners of war, or set the subsidised press of the collaborators in the northern zone at the throats of the Vichy government.

Although he merely had the title of Vice-President of the Council of Ministers, Admiral Darlan had in fact been leading the government since February 1941. He had introduced three former members of the PPF into it – Pucheu, Benoist-Méchin and Marion; the first two made no secret of the fact that they were staking their careers on the success of collaboration and the third frankly advertised his Fascist views – and he was in charge of information and propaganda. As for Admiral Darlan, it would seem that he has, mistakenly, been considered as a sort of enigmatic sphinx. This naval man who had frequented Republican political circles – unusual behaviour for one in his position and regarded with suspicion – was indeed cold and cautious, despite being a southerner. He possessed great organising ability but was lacking in general culture and political experience and above all, his mind was already made up: the United States would not be ready to make war before the Germans had completed their victory. As for Britain, the Admiral's personal enemy, she was exhausted and in her final death throes. Marshal Pétain was aging and his natural tendency to let his collaborators take over responsibility at awkward moments, even if he then disowned or replaced them at the appropriate moment, left Admiral Darlan in charge of French policy.

Internally, the national revolution was touched up somewhat to bring it closer to Fascism, although neither the single party system nor the single youth movement was ever adopted. First of all, police repression was stepped up; at the beginning of 1942, 50,000 opponents of the régime were imprisoned and 30,000 interned in improvised camps; the Communists, the Gaullists, the foreign Jews and the 'unorthodox' were the main victims; the first of these in particular were despatched to twelve Algerian camps to be subjected to exhausting hard labour. When the Socialist Marx Dormoy, the former Popular Front minister, was assassinated by members of the PPF in July 1941, although a police investigation was

ordered, it proceeded with leisurely caution. The murderers were arrested but their investigation took so long that two years later their trial had still not started.

Justice moreover now took its course in ways that were very different from those under the Republic. When attempts on the lives of the occupying troops began, a law on 'Communist plots' was applied retrospectively; instructions were issued that Communists who were already in prison when the attacks were made and thus had nothing to do with them, were to be sentenced to death by special courts. The Marshal set up a political Council of Justice; it was to advise him on bringing those responsible for the defeat before a Supreme Court of Justice at Riom; but on his own initiative the Marshal condemned those alleged to be guilty - Paul Reynaud, Léon Blum, Edouard Daladier and General Gamelin - to be interned before the Court of Justice had pronounced any judgment, in fact even before it had met.

In Fascist style, an oath of allegiance to the person of Marshal Pétain had to be taken first of all by the military, then by the judiciary - only one member refused - and finally by every official without discussion. The organisation of the economy became noticeably more corporative in nature. The *Charte du Travail* (Labour Charter) in its final form was different from René Belin's earlier scheme; *syndicats* (trade unions) continued to exist but they were unified and militarised, because the trade union delegates were no longer elected but appointed. Although not acknowledged as such, a sort of state control arose, partly through force of circumstance, partly because of the 'young technocrats' that Darlan liked to see around him. Thus, it was the government that fixed the minimum wage and appointed the members of the governing bodies of the professional organisations. As a first step towards government by notables that the national revolution was theoretically committed to setting up, an appointed National Council was created to advise the government; to avoid any similarity between it and a republican assembly it was to meet only in exceptional circumstances and would work mainly through its 'departments'. On the other hand, a further step was taken towards a totalitarian régime by forming, within the Ex-Servicemen's Legion, a *service d'ordre* (SO), to maintain good order and discipline, whose uniform and function were an unfortunate reminder of the way in which the SS had come into being.

These internal Fascist tendencies of the régime went together with an outspoken desire to collaborate. Marion instructed the press to publish nothing that might stand in the way of collaboration.

One sign of this tameness was the stricter application of the anti-Semitic laws. A quota was fixed for the number of Jews to be admitted into the liberal professions - for lawyers it was two per cent. The 'Aryan-

isation' of Jewish concerns in the occupied zone proceeded according to the rules laid down by Vichy and under the supervision of French officials. A 'Legion of French Volunteers against Bolshevism' was raised in the northern zone; it was a private foundation, the work of the collaborationist movements but it received the blessing and the encouragement of the French head of state.

Would matters reach the stage of military collaboration? Admiral Darlan was still tending that way, despite the abortive 'Paris protocols'; and Weygand's recall from North Africa reassured the Germans. In January 1942, Rommel was once again in difficulties in Libya and he withdrew; Benghazi was recaptured by the British. It seemed the *Afrika Korps* might have to retreat to Tunisia. The Vichy government showed concern and negotiations were started between Abetz and Darlan's envoy, Benoist-Méchin. On the French side there exists no written evidence about them and they are known only through remarks made by the negotiator. But on the German side, the matter appears quite plain: Abetz communicated to Berlin a proposal from the Vichy government that it would enter the war against Britain. He stated explicitly that this proposal had been unanimously approved. But Rommel's situation recovered and Hitler, true to his principle of not creating a running sore in French Africa or, more accurately, of not opening the door to the British Army, did not proceed further with Vichy's proposal; once again, he did not need to.

So Darlan failed to reap any benefit from his policy of collaboration; he succeeded neither in obtaining the return of any large numbers of French prisoners nor any relief from the financial and economic burden imposed by the armistice convention. It seemed this was perhaps because he was *persona non grata* with the Germans, and especially with Abetz. For in Vichy they did not realise that the Germans were neither able nor willing to grant concessions to France, whatever leaders she might have. It was thought that Pierre Laval enjoyed their trust and that he was the one man to meet the situation; so in April 1942 he returned to power. The German leaders were so unenthusiastic, however, that Goering even urged him not to accept, although Abetz was delighted. This return made up for his personal failure on December 13, 1940.

Pierre Laval made no secret of the fact that he would intensify the policy of collaboration. He would have a free hand because the Constitutional Bill no. XI conferred on him 'effective control of France's internal and external policy'. Pétain had finally become the 'figurehead' that Laval had wanted him to be as long ago as June 1940. Pierre Laval brought new blood into the government; the Marshal's earlier ministers either resigned or were dismissed by him; two convinced supporters of collaboration, A. Bonnard and Bichelonne were appointed, one to 'condition' French

youth, the other to control the economy in the way likely to prove most satisfactory to the Germans.

With the same purpose in mind, Laval took four crucial decisions. He used the whole weight of Vichy's information and propaganda services to requisition labour by luring Frenchmen to volunteer for work in Germany; he thought up the idea of older prisoners being 'relieved' by young workers; when the supply of volunteers for Germany began to run dry, he threatened and punished defaulters and set the French police on to them. He changed the 'Legion of French Volunteers' into the 'Tricolour Legion', thus giving it an official status. He instructed the French police to carry out massive round-ups of foreign Jews, both in the southern and in the occupied zones. Finally, he allowed the Gestapo to track down French resisters in the southern zone, especially those passing clandestine radio messages to the British believing that they were safe from the Germans.

Pierre Laval was a loyal supporter of Nazi Germany, and his loyalty never swerved. He expressed it in the plainest possible terms: 'I want Germany to win' he stated in June 1942. The next clause provides the explanation of this wish: 'since otherwise Bolshevism will triumph in Europe'; but this clause in no way reduces the gravity of his statement nor does it make his intention less obvious.

VII THE FRIENDSHIP OF SPAIN

During the war against France, the Spaniards had shown themselves actively friendly towards the Axis. Franco had been anxious to preserve the neutrality of his country exhausted by civil war and despite his fears that if the war were protracted the Anglo-Saxons might carry it into Spanish territory, he was bound to Germany and Italy by obligations that were too recent for him not to oblige them in his turn. He had agreed to allow German submarines to refuel in Spanish waters and for radio and meteorological stations to co-operate with the Luftwaffe. This had not prevented the Germans from expressing their dissatisfaction and Goering had sharply criticised the Caudillo for not entering the war.

After the defeat of France some Spaniards felt that the time had come to help themselves to some of the French colonies. Serrano Suñer became Foreign Minister instead of General Beigbeder, who was thought to be too neutral, or even anglophile. But in October 1940, in Hendaye, Hitler refused to pay the high price that Franco set as a condition of participating in a coalition to take Gibraltar from Britain and carry the war into Africa via the French colonies. As a result the relations between the Axis and their debtor cooled off.

The entry of the Wehrmacht into the USSR clarified the situation; the focal point of the war was now definitely moving away from the Iberian peninsula. Hitler was now no keener than Franco to see Spain turn into a battlefield where her weakness, like that of the French colonies, could only tempt the Anglo-Saxons to make a move.

This did not affect the question of ideological solidarity; the very day that the German-Soviet war started, a mass demonstration took place in Madrid in front of the British Embassy, shouting: 'Gibraltar'. Franco raised no objections to transferring workers to Germany; he merely negotiated on their behalf the most favourable possible terms. Since Bolshevism was for him the implacable enemy of Christian civilisation, of which Spain was the champion, in reply to Hitler's appeal for an 'anti-Bolshevik crusade', Franco sent the 'Azul Division' to fight in the USSR; its strength rose to 60,000 men. In addition, rare metallic ores, such as wolfram, were reserved for the Reich.

All this time, the Anglo-Saxons were working out more or less realistic schemes for occupying the Canary Islands; but at the same time, Churchill did not hesitate to hint at a future settlement with Spain after the war, at the expense of the French colonial possessions. Franco refused to be tempted; he remained true to his ideological friends and made the theatrical gesture of offering the 'breasts of a million Spaniards' to form a bulwark in Berlin should the need arise. Such grandiloquence made no positive contribution towards collaboration that was of a sentimental rather than an effective nature.

VIII SWEDISH SUPPLIES

The Swedes had been terrified to see the war coming closer as a result of the Finnish and Norwegian campaigns. They had succeeded in preserving their neutrality by failing to respond to their neighbours' appeals for help. Germany's victory had insured them against the risk of becoming an operational theatre but inevitably made them henceforth dependent on Germany. Being unable to refuse the Reich's requests, Sweden attempted merely to limit their extent and to obtain the best possible terms in return.

From 1940 onwards and throughout the whole of the war, Sweden supplied Germany with almost all the iron ore that she mined but did not herself smelt, that is, about 9,000,000 tons a year. After raising certain difficulties, she agreed that the Wehrmacht's equipment and troops on their way to and from Norway should be transported by rail over her territory or by ship through her territorial waters. Between July and December 1940, 130,000 men and more than 500 railway trucks passed through in both directions. In June 1941, when a whole German division

with all its men and equipment went over Swedish territory to take up its positions in Finland on the Soviet tundra, Swedish neutrality became really nothing more than a polite fiction, particularly as German aircraft were flying over her air space without let or hindrance.

Nonetheless, Sweden set a limit beyond which she would not go; she refused to sign a political treaty with Germany and she would not accept the Reich's suggestions that she should become, officially and in writing, an economic unit in Germany's Europe, even if, in fact, she was one. Her policy brought her not inconsiderable advantages: she paid for German coal at one-third the price paid by Switzerland; although, as in other countries throughout Europe, her balance of payments with the Reich was in deficit, it was quite a bearable one.

In compensation, Sweden did not pursue the British agents operating in her territory with any great zeal; she gave shelter to Danish and Norwegian resisters; she gave asylum to Jews who were being hunted down in Denmark. In short, she endeavoured to give the least possible dissatisfaction to the Allies, who alleviated the blockade somewhat in her favour. This did not prevent the Baltic from becoming a German lake.

The same thing happened in the Black Sea. Although Turkey had been a creditor in her clearing account with Germany even before the war, and though she was afraid of supplying goods without receiving any equivalent return, she applied the clauses of the trading agreement signed in June 1940 with scrupulous exactness. She provided the Reich with grain, oil seed and scarce metallic ores. Von Papen, the German ambassador, was extremely active and he laid down the law in Ankara. As long as the Wehrmacht successes continued, it would be difficult for small states not to submit to the law of the conqueror.

CHAPTER 6

Resistance Movements Begin

THERE was resistance to the occupying power throughout Europe. It could be found in every occupied country, but it was never unified or co-ordinated. This enormous Trojan horse in the heart of enemy territory was, of course, used by the Allies but with some mistrust. Yet in every country the resisters were much alike. First of all, they were anti-German; Italian occupation was relatively restricted and milder. All the resisters were motivated by two feelings: patriotism and the hatred of foreign or national Fascism; their war was at one and the same time a political struggle and military combat, ideological as well as patriotic. Consequently the resisters hounded down collaborators who were the friends of the enemy; resistance turned into civil war and sought to take over power.

Resistance warfare was ruthless; since the occupier had made terror a method of government, the partisans replied with counter-terror – the Germans, incidentally, called them 'terrorists'. It was a total war, based on a rudimentary sort of Manicheism: you were either for or against the occupier and those in between, the ones who were neutral or lukewarm, were fated to disappear because sooner or later they were forced to take a decision. Finally, the Resistance army was born under the sign of poverty; it lacked weapons, money and trained personnel; all it could do was to produce as many 'pin-pricks' as possible, without expecting to gain any real victory; it was incapable of winning the war and it was often merely an advance party that had to be sacrificed, doomed never to enjoy the victory for which its sacrifices had prepared the way; its losses were, proportionately, very high.

I THE METHODS OF THE RESISTANCE FIGHTERS

In every country the resisters found themselves in basically similar situations; they were all volunteers, often thrown entirely on their own resources. Their groups were always very unstable; for want of experience and precedents, they had to work out their own methods of fighting.

Passive resistance was an early form, before the resisters had gained any