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## Collaboration in wartime France, 1940–1944

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This paper deals with political as well as economic collaboration. It conceptualises collaboration as a form of cooperation with the occupying power that is – at least to a certain extent – voluntary and goes beyond the search for a pure *modus vivendi*. The aim of the paper is twofold. First, it presents a synopsis of the framework and central political aspects of collaboration in France. In doing so, it points out the classic distinction between state collaboration and collaborationism, stressing, however, that this distinction is not clear-cut. Both state collaboration and collaborationism interacted with and influenced each other, as is shown by the armed collaboration. Second, the paper problematises one particular dimension of collaboration, which the historiography has rather neglected even though it was the most prevalent and crucial of factors for the occupying power: economic collaboration and especially business collaboration. Focusing on the example of the construction industry, it maps out different patterns of behaviour of companies within the framework of the German policy of economic exploitation and Vichy's economic state collaboration. Even though proper 'economic collaborationism' was as rare as proper resistance, the great majority of enterprises accommodated themselves to the new circumstances. This accommodation could, however, take very different forms. Choices were based on multiple, partially overlapping, partially contradictory logics, and both collaboration and resistance proved to be multidimensional phenomena. It is argued that collaboration is and remains a fruitful concept for the study of occupations, including economic issues.

**Keywords:** Second World War; occupation; collaboration; economic collaboration; business collaboration; business history; state collaboration; collaborationism; France; New Order; Franco-German relations

Collaboration with the enemy is not unique to the Second World War but 'as old as war and the occupation of foreign territory'.<sup>1</sup> Its present political and historiographical conception has, however, been essentially shaped by the events of the Second World War and its aftermath. While there was collaboration in all European countries occupied by Nazi Germany, the specificity of the French situation was due to the combination of two characteristics: after refusing to go into exile (as the Norwegian, Dutch and Belgian governments did) and signing a political armistice (instead of a purely military capitulation like the Norwegian, Dutch and Belgian case), the French government under Pétain did not confine itself to an inevitable technical collaboration with the occupying authorities but engaged voluntarily in political and economic state collaboration with the Reich. At the same time, it took advantage of the occupation to proceed to a regime change and a 'national revolution'.<sup>2</sup>

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In France, as in the other countries that had been occupied during the war, postwar memory cultures and public discourse, as well as historiography, focused for a long time on the resistance and its glorification. In contrast, French collaboration with Nazi Germany and the nature of the Vichy regime was not widely studied until the 1970s. Some notable exceptions include Raymond Aron's very influential and very indulgent *Histoire de Vichy*. Major contributions came from abroad, namely by Stanley Hoffmann, Eberhard Jäckel and Robert Paxton.<sup>3</sup> Taking into account Jäckel's results, Paxton showed that collaboration was primarily desired by Vichy, but not so by the Reich. Refuting Aron's 'pétainisme modéré'<sup>4</sup> and stressing Vichy's responsibility, his book (1972 English, 1973 French) caused a crucial paradigm shift. Launched by Henri Michel and the *Comité d'Histoire de la Deuxième Guerre mondiale* and intensified by the impact of Paxton's theses, important research activity on Vichy and the 'dark years' developed in France, which remains unbroken today. Among the mass of studies and syntheses, the works of Jean-Pierre Azéma, Pascal Ory, Henry Rousso and Philippe Burrin stand out.<sup>5</sup> Until the end of the 1980s, Vichy historiography focused mostly on political aspects, namely '*collaboration d'Etat*' and '*collaborationnisme*'. Since then, the adaptations and accommodations of French society, cultural and – more recently – economic issues have come to the fore.

There is no general agreement on the definition of collaboration, and different uses are made of it in historiography. Some authors even plead for not using it at all as an analytical category because of its pejorative moral and political connotations and its often polemic use.

There is no occupation without cooperation. Following Yves Durand and Werner Röhr,<sup>6</sup> I shall understand 'collaboration' to be not *any* kind of cooperation with the occupying power, but a cooperation that is, at least to a certain extent, *chosen* and not merely forced. This implies a certain room for manoeuvre and the existence of alternative options. It means that collaboration goes beyond the constraints due to forced cohabitation, beyond the cooperation that is necessary for survival, and also beyond attentism. According to Stanley Hoffmann, the term 'collaborationism' will be used exclusively for collaboration that is based on ideological identification (as opposed to state collaboration based on a *raison d'Etat*).<sup>7</sup>

The aim of this paper is twofold: first, to give an overview of the general framework and central political aspects of collaboration in France, which will allow for comparison with the other cases presented in this issue; second, to problematise one particular dimension of collaboration, which has been rather neglected by the historiography. Although it was most widespread in France and crucial for the occupying power, economic collaboration and more particularly the collaboration of private business have been oddly shunned in the literature of Vichy France. Focusing on the example of the construction industry, I will map out different patterns of company behaviour, and explore the utility and scope of the concept of 'economic collaboration' for the examination of how private businesses reacted and acted under the conditions of the occupation.

Collaboration does not exist abstractly, but means always a concrete collaboration of parts of the society of an occupied country with certain representatives of the occupying power. It must be understood within the framework of occupation history as one reaction amongst many.

## Political aspects

### *German occupation, the Vichy regime and state collaboration*

The basis for the occupation and subsequent Franco–German relations was the armistice convention dictated by the Reich and signed on 22 June 1940.<sup>8</sup> Three-fifths of France was

occupied, including the capital, the Channel and Atlantic coasts, and the most important economic centres. However, two-fifths of the territory, the Southern zone or 'Free' zone, remained unoccupied until November 1942 – a unique situation in Europe. The French government took its seat in Vichy in the south; its authority applied in principle also to the occupied zone but depended there on approval by the German military commander exerting the 'rights of the occupying power'.

A few weeks after the armistice, the Third Republic ended when the national assembly voted to place full executive, legislative and constituent powers under the control of Marshal Philippe Pétain. The 'maréchal' and his government abolished parliamentary democracy and installed an authoritarian regime, called soberly 'Etat français' (French State), with Pétain becoming head of state. The new leadership proceeded to transform the French state and French society. This 'révolution nationale' aimed to revive France by curing it of the 'vices' of the Third Republic and the Popular Front, who were accused of being responsible for the French defeat. This 'national revolution' combined antidemocratic authoritarianism and reactionary traditionalisms with an ethnocentric nationalism and, despite an anti-modern discourse, technocratic ambitions of economic modernisation.

The Vichy regime was not a political-ideological bloc but a 'pluralist dictatorship'.<sup>9</sup> If it was dominated by conservatives 'at odds with the Republic', we also find in its leading circles representatives of all the other components of the prewar right-wing spectrum – the anti-republican right of Maurassian inspiration, the ultra-right fascinated by Nazi Germany, technocratic 'nonconformists', Catholics, former liberals – as well as some renegades from the anti-communist left.<sup>10</sup> Besides the allegiance to Pétain, their common ground was an obsessive anticommunism, the rejection of parliamentary democracy, the desire for political renewal, and the willingness to take advantage of the German occupation to realise it.

The German occupation policy in France was led by three main interests: to weaken France militarily and politically in a durable manner; to maintain calm and order with as few personnel as possible; and, to exploit the French economic resources maximally for their own war effort. Vichy tried on the one hand to obtain for France, through voluntary political and economic collaboration, a favourable position, ideally the role of a junior partner, within the European 'New Order' dominated by Nazi Germany; on the other hand, to realise its political and societal project. Both elements – collaboration and 'national revolution' – were inseparably linked to each other.

As Jäckel and Paxton have shown, collaboration was primarily sought by Vichy. The *Etat français* had mainly three things to offer: to defend the parts of the Empire it still controlled against the Allies; its economic resources, especially those of the Free zone; and, last but not least, its authority vis-à-vis administrations and the popularity of Pétain. To achieve its goals, the occupying power depended on the 'correct' cooperation of French administrations obeying German orders, as stipulated by article 3 of the armistice convention. However, a real state *collaboration*, which would have meant mutual commitment and accepting France as a partner, was never intended by Hitler. This did not prevent him from nourishing Vichy's hopes and exploiting its zeal to anticipate German demands. Consequently, state collaboration remained essentially unilateral and its overall results proved rather meagre for Vichy.

The longer the war lasted, the more Vichy became a pure executioner of German demands. Its autonomy and room for manoeuvre, limited from the beginning but real, diminished continuously, especially after the Allies had landed in Morocco and Algeria, and the *Wehrmacht* occupied the Free zone (November 1942). Vichy did not have much left to negotiate with, but was still required to act as executioner, as well as being a transmission belt for the exploitation of French economic and labour resources, and for the

repression of the resistance. The *Etat français*, eager to maintain at least the illusion of sovereignty and thus preferring to do the ‘dirty work’ itself, fulfilled this role until the end of the war. It never called into question the policy of collaboration, not even when its basis, the assumption of a German victory, had vanished. If collaboration had first been a strategy intended to allow for the ‘national revolution’, it was now the survival of the regime that was at stake; and its survival depended on a German victory or at least on a negotiated peace. The regime underwent a process of radicalisation, which was due to internal and external dynamics as well as direct German pressure to include collaborationist activists like Darnand, Henriot and Déat in the government, and led to a fascistisation during the last months of the occupation.

State collaboration was an important framework condition for all the other forms of collaboration, and provided them with patriotic legitimisation. Moreover, it implied that any cooperation with the Vichy regime became also to some extent indirect collaboration with the occupying power.<sup>11</sup>

#### **Collaboration d’Etat vs. collaborationism**

Stanley Hoffmann’s distinction between state collaboration and collaborationism has become common in historiography on wartime France. Whereas the former is a pragmatic, strategic choice of the presumably lesser evil based on the assumption of a German victory and guided by the *raison d’Etat*, the latter is motivated by ideological reasons and political identification with the occupying power’s cause.

Like state collaboration, collaborationism existed only inasmuch as the occupying power was interested in it. Everywhere in Europe, Hitler preferred relying on traditional elites, who were backed by large parts of the society, instead of the local fascists. Accordingly, the first interlocutor was Pétain, the popular ‘victor of Verdun’ and his government. However, when the chief of government Pierre Laval, being the guarantor of the collaboration policy in German eyes, was dismissed by Pétain in December 1940, the German ambassador Abetz started to organise in Paris a pole of political opposition. If the first goal of this enterprise was to put pressure on Vichy, it also served to multiply the propaganda for collaboration and to divide the French politically as much as possible. As a result, a landscape of numerous political parties and groupings flourished in the occupied zone during 1941–1942, which was unique in German-occupied Europe.<sup>12</sup>

Some of these organisations had already existed in the 1930s, such as Doriot’s *Parti populaire français* (PPF). Others were newly created like Marcel Déat’s *Rassemblement national populaire* (RNP). Abetz promoted even something like a ‘collaborationist left’ (Burrin) – former trade unionists, socialist pacifists and communist renegades who criticised Vichy’s reactionary policy and invoked social justice. However, they were in the minority when compared with the battalions of the collaborationist right. These shared the principles of Vichy’s national revolution but targeted Vichy for lack of resoluteness. They pleaded for collaboration without shopkeepers’ negotiations, they exalted militarism and they propagated a radical purge from French society of communists, freemasons and Jews. All groupings were ferociously anticommunist and had the credo of Franco–German collaboration in common, *conditio sine qua non* to be authorised by the Germans. Additionally, they depended financially on the occupation authorities, whose sponsoring allowed them to publish journals in large quantities.

The collaborationist groups gathered perhaps as many as 150,000 members up to 1942, when collaborationism reached its peak. If we add the late adherences of 1943–1944 and the members of the *Milice*, we can estimate that probably 250,000 French people were

collaborationists at least for some part of the war. The circle of sympathisers was much broader and is estimated by Burrin to be as much as one or two million, when analysing the sales figures of the collaborationist weekly press. Nonetheless, the activists encountered mistrust and hostility from the large majority of the population. Disaffection from collaborationism started when the Free zone was occupied, and intensified inasmuch as German occupation policy was radicalised. Collaborationists became more and more isolated within society and were targeted by the resistance. At the same time, the engagement and goals of those who continued became even more radical and their collaboration more and more unconditional.

Unlike their leaders, only a minority of the party members had a political past in the prewar period. Even the parties that already existed in the 1930s underwent a considerable personnel renewal, including the party executives. This shows that there was continuity for sure, but the evolution was neither linear nor necessary, with the occupation imposing its own logic and dynamic. Collaborationism was a predominantly middle- and upper-class phenomenon whereas industrial and agricultural workers were underrepresented. The proportion of young men of working-class origin, frequently with an unstable professional itinerary or a criminal record, increased in 1943–1944 when the upper and middle classes largely withdrew. These men made up the battalions of the emerging paramilitary formations.

Despite the differences between state collaboration and collaborationism, the distinction is not clear-cut. On the one hand, there were points of ideological overlap between the 'hommes de Vichy', the 'hommes de Paris' and the occupying power; namely, anticommunism and anti-Semitism. Vichy's state collaboration had from the beginning an ideological colouration in that it backed up the 'national revolution'.<sup>13</sup> Moreover, Vichy organised its own 'collaborationism' with the *Milice*. On the other hand, most Parisian collaborationists understood themselves as 'hommes du Maréchal', despite their criticism. If Vichy's choices were not only strategic and 'rational', the collaborationists' choices were not exclusively ideological. Based on the same assumption of a German victory, collaboration was for them also a means to pursue their personal and political ambitions, which did not necessarily mean the nazification of France, at least until 1942. The real separation occurred in November 1942 when Vichy became less zealous and abandoned any idea of co-belligerence with the Reich whereas the 'men of Paris' engaged – as a kind of a forward flight – in collaborating without limits. From 1943 onwards one could hardly remain a collaborationist without being a fascist.

As Burrin puts it, collaborationism and *collaboration d'Etat* are two branches of the same tree, both agreeing upon the necessity for 'constructive collaboration'. The difference is thus one of degree rather than one of nature.

### **Armed collaboration**

Vichy's collaboration and collaborationist activities did not exist independently of each other but interacted and influenced each other mutually. A good example of this interaction was in the field of armed collaboration, which comprised two layers: the repression of the resistance and military collaboration.

Independently of Nazi repression, Vichy had its own policy of exclusion, repression and persecution: against communists, foreigners, freemasons, Jews and the resistance.<sup>14</sup> From autumn 1940, Vichy enacted a series of repressive laws on its own initiative. The collaboration with the German police was motivated by strategic considerations (affirmation of sovereignty in the whole national territory) as well as the Vichyist ideology (anticommunism and obsession of order). It was formalised by two agreements between

Oberg, the leader of the SS in France, and Bousquet, head of the French police, in August 1942 and April 1943. As a result, French police were in the front line in a fight against ‘communists’ and the resistance in both zones that gained, in some regions, the character of a civil war during the months preceding the liberation. A newly created formation became the protagonist of this fight on Vichy’s side: the *Milice*.

The *Milice* was constituted by Laval in January 1943 as a repressive task force ‘under the authority of the head of government’.<sup>15</sup> It was the successor organisation to the pétainiste *Service d’ordre legionnaire* (SOL), and was commanded by Joseph Darnand, a former *Cagoulard*, who also became a member of the *Waffen-SS* in 1943. Until September 1943, its activity remained limited to the southern zone. To be authorised in the occupied zone, Darnand came to an understanding with the Parisian party leaders in order to jointly ask the Germans to arm the collaborationists against the resistance. The initiative was successful: the occupying power authorised the *Milice* in the occupied zone and also distributed arms to the militias of the other collaborationist groups, which were used as auxiliary forces of the German police. The *Milice* became the core unit of the anti-partisan actions conducted by the French police, often jointly with German units.<sup>16</sup>

The *Milice* comprised three components.<sup>17</sup> The leaders almost all came from groupings of the extreme right and had been fighting the ‘ancien régime’ during the interwar period. A second layer was composed of hardcore pétainists, who had joined the SOL in 1941–1942. A third group comprised young men looking for a job, ‘attracted by the exercise of authority’, some of them also trying to avoid conscription for the obligatory labour service in Germany.<sup>18</sup> With about 25,000 people in 1943, recruitment remained below prior expectations. In January 1944, Darnand entered the government as ‘secrétaire d’Etat au maintien de l’ordre’, whereby he gained control over the totality of the French police. Whereas the other police formations became less and less reliable, the *Milice* remained a striking force against the *maquis* until the liberation.

Vichy’s state collaboration did not go as far as to join the war on Germany’s side although co-belligerence was taken into consideration by both Laval and Darlan. The *Etat français* never declared war on the Allies, nor did it join the Anti-Comintern Pact (as Denmark did). Officially, it pursued a policy of neutrality and defence of French territory against any invasion (‘défense tous azimuts’). In fact, defence was only practised against the Allies when they landed in North Africa in November 1942, whereas not one shot was fired against German troops when they invaded the free zone. Moreover, Vichy allowed the Germans to enrol French volunteers.

The *Légion des volontaires français contre le bolchevisme* (LVF) was founded after the German invasion of the Soviet Union. The collaborationist parties ran the recruitment. However, the majority of the volunteers were not party members. In autumn 1941, the German military administration estimated the percentage of ‘idealists’ (i.e. collaborationists) to be 30–40%, while the others were unemployed persons and adventurers, most of whom had broken careers and life paths.<sup>19</sup> A total of 13,400 people volunteered for the LVF, of whom 5800 were enrolled, the others being rejected for health reasons or their police record.<sup>20</sup> Not only was the final result disappointing, but it is worth noting that the numbers remained below German expectations *from the beginning*.<sup>21</sup> The same occurred when the occupation authorities tried to recruit, from July 1942 onwards, 3000 volunteers for the *NSKK-Motorguppe Luftwaffe* to be brought into action in Russia: until mid-April 1943 only 1430 persons judged fit for service could be enrolled, amongst whom were many former LVF members.<sup>22</sup>

Additionally, the *Waffen-SS* recruited 3000 French up to the summer of 1944 (probably twice as many volunteered). Again, only a minority seem to have enrolled

primarily because of political motives. Some were recruited among the conscripted of the STO, partially under pressure; some small criminals were given the choice between prison and enrolment. To these must be added 1800 *miliciens* and hundreds of collaborationists who formed the SS division *Charlemagne*, set up in late 1944.

Accordingly, about 12,000 French fought in German combat units. Another 10,000 French joined the auxiliary formations of the *Wehrmacht* stationed in France (*Kriegsmarine*, *NSKK-Motorgruppe Luftwaffe*, *Organisation Todt*), where they generally served as armed guards. Hence, we can estimate that at least 40,000 volunteers were willing to wear a German uniform, with the compliance of Vichy, who tried to make political capital out of it. The reasoning behind volunteers' decisions to join the Germans seemed to have often been personal and similar in content to those French who volunteered to work in Germany. Of underprivileged social origin, having a broken life path and a low level of education, they were seduced by German propaganda and the impression of German force.<sup>23</sup>

### Economic collaboration

Among all forms and fields of wartime collaboration, economic collaboration is probably the most difficult to grasp. Where does the indispensable searching for a *modus vivendi* in order to ensure the maintenance of economic life and the supply of the population end, and where does economic collaboration begin? This conceptual difficulty, in addition to the tendency to make it a taboo subject and the problem of finding adequate sources, may explain why economic collaboration and *a fortiori* the role of private business play only a minor role in the literature on collaboration in Nazi-occupied Europe. This relative disregard of the subject is all the more surprising as economic collaboration was the one 'Berlin liked best',<sup>24</sup> for it was crucial for the German war economy and the ability of the Reich to continue the war until May 1945.

These general observations apply particularly to France, which played an outstanding economic role within Hitler's Europe. Economic aspects of collaboration had long been the forgotten child in Vichy historiography until new research emerged on the subject in the 1990s,<sup>25</sup> which was amplified by the debate on French responsibilities for the spoliation of Jewish property. Besides economic 'aryanisation',<sup>26</sup> this new wave of research focused particularly on private business and has been promoted notably by the CNRS research group on 'Les entreprises françaises sous l'occupation' since 2002.<sup>27</sup>

How did French business react to the new circumstances? The French economy was dominated by small and medium-sized enterprises, and there were no less than 3.5 million companies in 1938 (including shopkeepers and tradesmen).<sup>28</sup> During the war, these faced different problems depending on size, structure, geographical implantation and sector. Therefore, we have to keep in mind that generalisations can only indicate tendencies. Nonetheless, some global observations can be made. First of all, the knowledge that Nazi Germany was the motor of the whole French economy does not seem to have caused any serious reluctance among the great majority of French enterprises. As the great majority of the French population, they at least accommodated themselves to the new situation, which meant for many of them cooperating with German institutions and firms – in a way and to an extent that could vary considerably from one to another. To describe this cooperation, French historiography frequently uses a typology that distinguishes three forms of 'collaboration'<sup>29</sup>:

- (1) 'collaborationnisme économique' (economic collaborationism) of companies whose direction collaborates because of political-ideological identification;
- (2) 'collaboration-profit' (collaboration for profit) of firms cooperating willingly for economic opportunism;



- (3) ‘collaboration-survie’ (collaboration for survival), which aims to prevent the disappearance of the company.

These categories are ideal types, and the limits are far from being clear-cut, as we shall see. Most authors agree that proper economic ‘collaborationism’, as well as economic resistance, were rare.<sup>30</sup> Beyond these two minorities, the vast majority of French businesses manoeuvred between adaptation, survival and seizing opportunities. It is in analysing the behaviour of this majority where the main challenge for historians lies. Inquiries about business collaboration must not confine themselves to establishing *how much* the firms worked for the occupier; one must also examine *how* the cooperation took place. Who were the partners on the German side? How was the contact established? What room for manoeuvre did French companies have?

I will examine these questions focusing on the example of the construction industry. This sector has been neglected by the recent research on enterprises and Franco–German business relations under the occupation<sup>31</sup> even though it covered as much as half of the volume of works carried out by French industry for the Germans.<sup>32</sup> Moreover, no other industrial sector working primarily for German purposes employed as much – free and forced – labour. The activity of private business must be placed in the context of both German policy of economic exploitation and Vichy’s economic state collaboration.

### ***The exploitation of the French economy and Vichy’s economic policy***

Three general evolutions characterise the French economy during German occupation. The first observation is a global decline of industrial production, reaching its lowest level in the whole of the twentieth century. Second, the part of the French economy that produced for German purposes increased constantly, although remaining distinctly inferior in the southern zone, which was not under direct German control until November 1942. Production for German purposes constituted a third of industrial production on the eve of the Allies’ landing (50% in the northern zone). Third, notwithstanding the global decline in production, some sectors and enterprises managed to expand during the occupation, i.e. precisely those in which the Reich was most interested.<sup>33</sup>

In the last two years of the occupation, French industry became an ‘indispensable part of the German war economy’.<sup>34</sup> In 1943, France provided 40% of the war material that was produced in the occupied territories on German orders, but also important food and clothing supplies as well as consumer goods. After four years of occupation, orders to a value of approximately 10 billion Reichsmark had been given to French industry, and more than 60% of them had been executed.<sup>35</sup> This percentage is all the more notable when one takes into account the fact that many orders were given very late and just as production had increasing difficulties due to lack of energy, sabotages, air raids and interruptions of transport. This invalidates at least partly the argument that has sometimes been put forward and according to which French firms accepted orders but did not execute them.

The occupying power used three main strategies to exploit France economically: (1) pillage and spoliation as a short-term strategy; (2) the development of French production in order to increase long-term benefits for the German economy; and (3) the transfer of labourers to Germany. These strategies, although contradictory in principle, were often applied simultaneously. Pillage and spoliation were practised massively only during the first weeks. Nevertheless, they never ceased completely until 1944. While they were not very important quantitatively, they had an important function as a means of pressure, since French firms risked, in case of unwillingness to carry out German orders, their equipment and material being confiscated.

The institutions of the occupying power imposed various direct and indirect means of pressure and coercion to enforce their economic policy vis-à-vis Vichy and French firms. On the one hand control could be taken of the distribution of raw materials, machines and tools could be requisitioned, workforces could be deported and firms could be fined or closed. More extreme measures included the arrest of entrepreneurs or managers and – though extremely rare in number – their deportation to prisons or camps in Germany. Yet mere use of coercion and force would have been neither sufficient nor efficient. The desired results required agreements and negotiations (between unequal partners, it is true), for which the willingness of economic elites, specialists and technicians to cooperate was a vital precondition. Without a fundamental willingness to collaborate on behalf of both the Vichy administration and French private business, this extent of exploitation would not have been possible.

Economic, and more specifically industrial, collaboration was a key element of Vichy's state collaboration and had been conceived of as such already in the summer of 1940.<sup>36</sup> The intentions were both political and economic. Politically, Vichy aimed at strengthening its position towards Germany. In economic terms, its long-term objectives were twofold: to place the French economy in a favourable position within the future European 'greater economic space'; from a domestic perspective, to reorganise and modernise the French economy and profit technologically from the more advanced German industry. From a short-term perspective, it was a means to protect material and workforce against requisition, ensure the continuity of economic life, and limit the invasion of German capital. This is why Vichy, in principle, encouraged firms to accept German orders, but tried to keep economic collaboration under state control and make any business cooperation dependent on state agreement. This was the prerequisite for making political capital out of it in the negotiations with the occupying power in order to obtain economic services in return ('politique des contreparties'). Especially after 1942, industrial collaboration was the 'trump card' (Radtke-Delacor) of Vichy's state collaboration.

Entrepreneurial interests partly overlapped with the regime's concerns, since both were, in principle, interested in the survival of the firms, preservation of material and protection of workers – especially skilled workers – against deportation. Moreover, for many products Germany was the only possible market, and accepting German offers gave access to scarce raw materials. Hence, producing for Germany was a means to ensure the survival of the firm. But it was also a lucrative business because the German clients paid well. Big businesses did not wait for the Vichy government's instructions, as many entrepreneurs got in touch with German authorities and firms as early as the summer of 1940, some being contacted by the German side, others taking the initiative themselves, sometimes renewing prewar cooperation. In the end Vichy was often pushed by both French firms and German occupation authorities to approve sales orders *a posteriori* after German and French companies had already agreed upon them.

The interests of the Vichy regime and French businesses converged in many aspects without being identical. At least in the beginning the *milieux d'affaires* largely approved of the new regime. Besides anticommunism, the rejection of the republic was a widespread phenomenon among economic elites, at least the way it presented itself in the 1930s.<sup>37</sup> To this must be added a desire for social revenge after the shake-up of entrepreneurial authority by the strike movement of 1936 and the Popular Front government's social legislation. If the entrepreneurs welcomed the eviction of the workers' movement by the new regime, their positions were divided about Vichy's dirigisme, corporatism and rationalising ambitions as expressed in the *Charte du Travail* and in the creation of 'Organisation Committees' (*Comités d'organisation*), each of which grouped all businesses of the same profession on the basis of compulsory membership.

Undoubtedly, economic state collaboration is an important explanatory factor for the willingness of French companies to collaborate: it offered a legal framework and patriotic legitimacy to do business with German firms and the occupation authorities, encouraged hesitating entrepreneurs to cooperate, discouraged the reluctant ones, and served to justify collaboration inside and outside the firm. On the other hand, the impact of Vichy's ambitions in domestic economic policy must be relativised. In fact, the adverse economic conditions created by the occupation seem to have been more of a decisive factor, as well as German control,<sup>38</sup> whereas Vichy was incapable of controlling businesses as it may have wanted. Hence, very often 'businessmen ran their own show' in the Organisation Committees.<sup>39</sup> Here, the representatives of big businesses frequently dominated even though recent research draws a more differentiated picture of the committees by showing that also medium-size enterprises could play an important role, especially in the – numerous – sectors of the French economy in which concentration was still low.<sup>40</sup>

### *The French construction firms working for the occupier*

The three characteristics of the French economic evolution I have pointed out apply to the construction industry in particular. While the general level of production decreased – due to penury, the loss of international markets and German restrictions of domestic demand – German works reached about 50% of the global turnover in 1942 and 80% in the first half of 1944.<sup>41</sup> Despite the overall decline in activity, construction boomed in the coastal regions thanks to German projects and was the only sector of the French economy in which a considerable number of new firms was created.

The firms in the building sector were organised in the *Comité d'organisation du bâtiment et des travaux Publics* (COBTP). It united two segments: 161,000 building craft enterprises (*bâtiment*, census of 1941–1942), generally small businesses working for private clients, and about 3000 firms engaged in public works (*travaux publics*), whose main clients were the state, public administrations and the armed forces.<sup>42</sup> It is above all the second segment that cooperated with the occupier, which is why I will focus upon it.

The biggest part – by far – of the cooperation with German institutions concerned building projects in France. However, few French firms also worked in the Reich or in other occupied countries. The activity outside France was in fact mostly pure 'labour rent', by which German firms and administrations tried to meet the problem of labour shortage. This was the case of *Entreprise Générale de Travaux Publics* deciding in December 1942 to send a team of 200 workers to the sites of the *Arbeitsgemeinschaft Donauschleusen Persenbeug*, a consortium led by *Grün & Bilfinger* (Mannheim).<sup>43</sup> It was also the case that several French enterprises entered into contracts with the German civil administration of 'Lothringen' that concerned employing teams for the 'reconstruction' (Wiederaufbau) of the de-facto-annexed département of Moselle.<sup>44</sup> The company *Sainrapt & Brice*, frequently cited as *the* example of a 'notorious and willing collaboration',<sup>45</sup> had several construction sites in the Reich between 1942 and 1944 (and also one in the Netherlands, as subcontractor of *Siemens-Bauunion*). In two cases, the firm even went as far as to sign contracts of association, both with the German major *Hochtief*. This was rather exceptional, for German firms generally subcontracted to French companies but did not enter into partnerships with them.<sup>46</sup>

Yet, the vast majority of German construction works in which French companies were involved were carried out in France. Here the expanding German building projects became gradually the most important field of activity. The most important clients were the three parts of the *Wehrmacht* (army, air force, navy) and – in particular and increasingly – the

Organisation Todt. Established in 1938 as a central office to manage the construction of the *Westwall*, the Organisation Todt (OT) executed military, civilian and industrial infrastructure projects for all of occupied Europe. In France it worked above all for the Wehrmacht (fortifications, bunkers, submarine bases, airports, launching platforms for the *V-Waffen*, but also repairing works, development of ore deposits and delocalisation of industries). Its central project was the edification of the Atlantic Wall, which from 1942 on became the main construction project of the French economy.<sup>47</sup>

At least 500 German companies worked for OT in France. To these must be added at least the same number of French, as well as some Belgian and Dutch companies.<sup>48</sup> The Wehrmacht employed approximately as many firms as OT, and also the other German institutions in France had recourse to local construction firms. Thus, even if we take into account the fact that some big businesses worked for different German institutions at the same time, we can conclude that a minimum total number of 1000–1500 French companies worked on German construction projects during the occupation – as estimated by British intelligence<sup>49</sup> – but probably even more.

Who were these companies? We can make two observations. First, although most of them had already existed before the war, a notable proportion were newly created. As a result, the number of public works enterprises was almost 20% higher in March 1945 than in 1939.<sup>50</sup> Frequently, the only purpose of these new firms was to profit from the 'effet Todt'.<sup>51</sup> Some of these 'mushroom enterprises' were fake construction firms having no machines and know-how and doing nothing but recruiting workers and renting them out to OT.

Second, it is not obvious what a 'French' enterprise actually was. Some collaborating firms were in fact branches or subsidiaries of German companies. A prominent example was *Siemens-France*, which had already existed before the war and installed electrical wiring and fittings for OT and the *Wehrmacht* all over France during the occupation.<sup>52</sup> Further German companies established subsidiaries on French territory in 1941–1944. Other new foundations were subsidiaries of French companies.<sup>53</sup> But the opportunities created by the German works also motivated individuals to set up their own business. If the majority of these were French, we find also many citizens of third countries, especially Italians (who had come to France before the war),<sup>54</sup> and Germans. One of the latter was the engineer Alexander Carroux, a crafty as well as dubious entrepreneur who came from Mannheim to Paris in February 1942 as an agent of several German building material companies whose products he promoted. His business 'technically advised' OT and the German Navy and supplied seals for their constructions, furthermore it 'organised' various kinds of supplies and material for them, probably from the black market. In 1943, Carroux also established, with a partner, a Franco–German construction firm for works with the Organisation Todt.<sup>55</sup>

What makes an enterprise French or German? The sole registration in the commercial register? The nationality of the entrepreneur, or of management and cadres? The distribution of capital? Although most of the cases are clear, this problem adds to the complexity of economic collaboration. The question of nationality also caused confusion within and between the German institutions. The military administration employed in principle a purely formal criterion – a business was French if registered in France – to decide which tax and labour legislation was to apply. Doubts arose nonetheless, for instance in the case of the enterprise *Rittmann*, set up by a German in France, registered in the French commercial register, working primarily for OT and the German Air Force, and posing sometimes as a German, sometimes as a French firm, depending on what was more favourable.<sup>56</sup> The Organisation Todt, for which reliability counted more than formal categories, treated both *Rittmann* and *Carroux* as German.

Still, being legally categorised as a German firm was advantageous in terms of social and tax legislation. This is why Louis Gaertner, head of *Compagnie française du Bâtiment et des Travaux publics*, which had only been set up in 1939 but carried out the highest volume of German works among all French construction firms,<sup>57</sup> also founded a German law company in Nuremberg, whose purpose was to execute further German construction works in France.<sup>58</sup>

The development of the French construction sector was ambivalent. On the one hand, the overall decline in production corresponded generally to a decrease in turnover, productivity and profits on a business level.<sup>59</sup> Many firms were condemned to underemployment or inaction.<sup>60</sup> On the other hand, the German projects offered opportunities, and not only in terms of profits. They gave newcomers the possibility to set up their business, and especially allowed (but not exclusively) young firms to expand, obtain machines, material and workforce, shake off competitors, and thereby position themselves favourably within the sector.

French enterprises participated in German construction projects in five different forms:<sup>61</sup>

- (1) by working directly for a German authority as a contractor;
- (2) as subcontractor of a German company;
- (3) as subcontractor of another French company being itself a contractor of a German 'client';
- (4) as part of a consortium of French enterprises;
- (5) in association (*Arbeitsgemeinschaft*) with a German company.

Contrary to what is often said in the literature, French firms could directly conclude contracts with the Organisation Todt as early as in 1941 (not only in 1944!).<sup>62</sup> It is true, though, that this practice was rare until late 1943, OT and the *Wehrmacht* preferring to contract to German firms, not least for security reasons. The practice changed inasmuch as the capacities of German enterprises no longer sufficed. Nevertheless, the most common pattern remained that of a German contracting firm subcontracting to French firms while Franco–German associations comprised mainly big businesses. Hence, the collaboration of French public works enterprises can also be analysed in terms of Franco–German business relations.

#### ***The beginning of cooperation: how was contact established?***

We can assume that the behaviour of enterprises was, at least to a certain extent, path-dependent. Of course, there was neither a one-way road nor a necessary evolution, as indicated by the turnover figures of the public works companies which had to justify themselves for collaboration before the *Commission nationale interprofessionnelle d'épuration* (CNIE): some firms carried out a significant volume of German works in 1940–1941 but took no more part in the construction of the Atlantic Wall in 1942–1944.<sup>63</sup> However, once integrated in the machinery of the German construction programmes, it became generally more and more difficult for an enterprise to back out. If we accept the assumption of path-dependency, the first contact with German institutions and the first basic decision to carry out German orders become particularly important. One can map out four main patterns of how contact was established.

(a) *Unmediated contacts between big businesses.* Especially in the case of big companies, contact was often established directly between enterprises without the interference of German or French administrations. This was facilitated by the fact that many of the big firms knew each other from Franco–German cooperation projects from the interwar period. Most of these

projects had been conducted within the framework of the Dawes Plan (1924), which had allowed Germany to pay its reparation debt in kind, notably through participation in construction works in France and its colonies. These had usually been carried out by a consortium of several German and French companies, cooperating administratively, financially and technically. As a result, the German majors knew the resources and potentials of the leading French enterprises. Hence, wartime cooperation on a big business level was very often a reunion, but under a very different balance of power. The number of re-established connections is striking:<sup>64</sup> both German and French enterprises preferred to cooperate with partners they already knew. It can be assumed that on the French side the fact that the cooperation took the form of resuming a pre-existing partnership lowered the inhibition level – if it existed at all – to start doing business with representatives of the occupying power.

The initiative came predominantly from the German side, but not exclusively, as the example of the planned partnership of *Dyckerhoff & Widmann* in the *Société de Construction des Batignolles* shows.<sup>65</sup> Both companies had cooperated within the framework of the Dawes Plan, but also beyond it in Yugoslavia. In spring 1941 representatives of *Batignolles* got in touch with *Dyckerhoff & Widmann* to ask for help with liquidating its business in a by then occupied and dismantled Yugoslavia. Presuming the mechanical equipment to have been lost, *Batignolles* wanted to at least ensure the business's financial liquidation. *Dyckerhoff & Widmann* was not only keen on acquiring this equipment, but had also an 'interest in getting in touch with a leading French construction company with regard to future works in Africa or elsewhere, in order to eliminate, by forming consortia, as far as possible the unhealthy competition having existed on the international building market before the outbreak of this war'.<sup>66</sup> For this purpose, the German firm should have taken over 30% of *Batignolles*' capital. Thus, *Dyckerhoff & Widmann* tried to improve the shining hour by expanding and conquering new markets in the light of a propitious political and economic power relation. However, *Batignolles* lost its interest in the course of 1941 because the new Croatian state had meanwhile opened the liquidation process, so the project was not pursued any further. This episode demonstrates that despite the highly asymmetrical power constellation the French company had not lost its entrepreneurial freedom of action.

(b) *Taking over of French sites.* The German authorities continued, for their own benefit, numerous projects that had already begun before the war, such as the extension works in the French ports. Here, the *Kriegsmarine* often simply took over the sites, including the builders. In perfect accordance with Vichy's logic of collaboration, the French administrations not only provided lists and information on these firms, but also encouraged them to remain on the sites. This was, for instance, the case in the harbour of Brest, where two subsidiaries of *Enterprises Campenon Bernard* (ECB) had conducted important works since 1935. Threatened with requisition, ECB carried on its activity in conformance with competent officers of the French navy ministry, who preferred the works to be continued by French companies (rather than German) and the latter to save their equipment and personnel.<sup>67</sup>

(c) *Centralised measures.* Assisted by the Vichy institutions, the occupation authorities took centralised measures from August to September 1942 to involve French companies, and thereby their workforce and equipment, in the German building programme. A prerequisite in the systematic 'Firmeneinsatz' (firm deployment) was a listing of the suitable public works enterprises in the occupied zone and their potential. This was organised by the COBTP after the German plenipotentiary for construction had guaranteed

that the firms and their personnel would not be requisitioned for works in Germany.<sup>68</sup> An analogous procedure followed in the southern zone in spring 1943.<sup>69</sup> The mobilisation of French firms and the relations between Organisation Todt and private business were increasingly institutionalised and formalised through liaison offices, notably the *Service de liaison et de défense des entrepreneurs français auprès de l'OT*. Within the framework of OT, the centralisation was – at least in theory – completed in late February 1944 when it was stipulated that subcontractors had to be assigned to the contractors by OT.<sup>70</sup>

(d) *Contacts in local contexts.* Especially in the case of small businesses, contacts were often established ad hoc with local OT or *Wehrmacht* offices or with German firms operating in the region. The initiative could come from the French and the German side. Sometimes connections with OT or a German building company even preceded and motivated the creation of a construction firm, as in the cases of the enterprise *Bonneau* in Bordeaux and *Cavazzoni et Prigent* in Brittany.<sup>71</sup>

What room for manoeuvre did the French companies have once the relationship was established?

#### ***Options and room for manoeuvre***

The potential influence of French construction firms can be divided into three categories: the freedom of action vis-à-vis the German 'client', especially the Organisation Todt; the scope of action within the relations between German and French firms; and finally some informal room for manoeuvre.

It is worth noting that the question of freedom of action has to be posed for German enterprises, too, for they could not simply back out of OT and withdraw their personnel and equipment from France. However, big businesses, in particular, could exert their influence at the top level inside the *Wirtschaftsgruppe Bauindustrie*, on the cooperation of which OT and the *Wehrmacht* depended. Also, they were closely involved in the conception of the contracts. Nothing was decided *against* their interests, at least until 1944. Moreover, German companies could exert influence on the local and regional OT echelons, with which their construction teams in France increasingly fused.

The French companies had no influence on the contractual framework conditions inside OT. The *Service de liaison et de défense des entrepreneurs français* functioned mainly as the transmission belt of OT's demands, and it was no accident that it was directed by the entrepreneur Francis Drouard, whose business was one of the public works enterprises that collaborated the most.<sup>72</sup> The German contractors had the whip hand vis-à-vis their French subcontractors, whom they supervised and controlled on behalf of OT. This concerned the allocation of workers and material. Besides, French entrepreneurs complained that the German firms creamed off the major part of the profits and protracted payments, which was considered a serious problem in the OT headquarters in France.

But this does not mean that the French enterprises had no influence in their relation to the German ones. The latter were dependent on their subcontractors working appropriately and on time to obtain further orders. There is evidence that German contractors were willing to refer French complaints and requests to OT, and stood up for French subcontractors, for instance to prevent the requisition of personnel to work in Germany.<sup>73</sup> In fact, there were concurrent interests. The enterprise *Rittmann* pointed out explicitly and repeatedly to its subcontractor *Canal et Schuhl* that both had a shared interest in executing the works in due time to obtain further orders from OT.<sup>74</sup>

Moreover, French enterprises were not confined to remain subcontractors. Resources permitting, they could associate themselves with German companies or work for German clients directly, provided that they were considered 'reliable'. It was also possible without major negative consequences to reject German offers or choose among them, at least for a firm that disposed of valuable capacities and know-how appreciated by the Germans, as the examples of ECB and *Sainrapt et Brice* show.<sup>75</sup> Refusing offers from German firms did not entail any sanctions; and no French enterprise was obliged to work in the Reich. Finally there were public works companies that managed to survive without accepting a significant volume of German orders, such as *Fougerolle* or *Société Anonyme Hersent*, yet at the price of heavily reduced activity.<sup>76</sup>

During the occupation years, the room for manoeuvre for French enterprises evolved in an ambivalent way. On the one hand, they became narrower and narrower in so far as German pressure intensified, contacts were institutionalised, French works were less and less available as alternatives, and the allocation of labour and material became more and more restrictive. On the other hand, OT and the *Wehrmacht* increasingly depended on the building capacities of French enterprises, which could improve the latter's bargaining position and open up options. *Campeon Bernard* was first a subcontractor of the enterprise *Julius Berger* in Brest, and then became its partner in the form of the consortium *Bergcamp*, which worked on the submarine base at Bordeaux and built a lock on the Garonne. Both firms had already cooperated during the interwar period. Also *Sainrapt et Brice* had first worked as a subcontractor of *Julius Berger*, in Tréport in 1942. This subordinate position did not satisfy Pierre Brice's ambitions, though, and the firm later entered into partnerships with German companies, also in the Reich as we have seen.<sup>77</sup>

Not least, French enterprises had informal room for manoeuvre. This concerned accounting, quality and speed of execution, the diverting of material and manpower to French construction sites, as well as the (de facto) working conditions, the protection of young workers against requisition, the harbouring of STO evaders, and transmitting of information to the resistance. Because of a lack of personnel, German control was in practice very loose. This resulted in various opportunities presenting themselves, most of which were gladly taken.<sup>78</sup> Yet, they could be used differently: to the occupiers' favour or disadvantage, but above all to the favour or disadvantage of the workers.

### ***Why enterprises cooperated***

The reasons why enterprises cooperated, or collaborated, with representatives of the occupying power have been widely discussed in the literature. The first lesson we have to learn when dealing with this issue is to accept complexity, even at the price of obtaining less satisfying – because they are less unequivocal – answers.

Causes, reasons and motives are multiple and generally overlap with each other. To begin with, the borderline between 'collaboration for profit' and 'collaboration for survival' is difficult to draw. The aim of running a business in a capitalist economy is to make a profit, and profitability is at least in a long-term perspective a condition for the survival of a firm. There are, however, clear cases of collaboration that aimed exclusively at taking advantage of the situation, such as the 'mushroom firms'. The situation of the occupation created sectoral and local opportunities, which attracted economic adventurers. As for the old-established companies, the German works allowed them to compensate (sometimes partly, sometimes more than fully) for the declining domestic demand and the loss of traditional markets.



Whether a business is entitled to ensure its persistence at any price or whether there are limits to the legitimate pursuit of economic survival is a moral and political question (potentially turning into a legal one) and will not be discussed here. Entrepreneurs, as well as their personnel, had a natural interest in keeping their firms in existence and maintaining their activities. There were good and honourable reasons to accept German sales orders, an important one of which was to prevent the personnel from being requisitioned and deported to Germany – be it for humanitarian or utilitarian reasons (skilled workers being a scarce resource) or both. This met with the interests of the labourers, who often refused to work *in* Germany, rather than refusing to work *for* Germany. Many young Frenchmen tried to find employment on OT sites because these protected against requisition.<sup>79</sup>

If collaboration means only a minimal adaptation to structural constraints in order to ensure the survival of the enterprise, we cannot classify it as ‘collaboration’ in the sense in which I have defined it. This is why François Marcot proposes to replace it with the term ‘forced adaptation’.<sup>80</sup> Yet, the problems of delimitation remain the same. What ‘minimal’ adaptation is and to what extent cooperation is ‘necessary’ for survival can hardly be determined on a general level. Where the French demand had broken down completely, accepting, or even searching for, German sales offers could prove inevitable to avoid bankruptcy whereas in other branches companies could survive on French offers, perhaps at the price of reduced activity. Construction firms could still find French sales offers until 1942, especially in the Southern zone.<sup>81</sup> When the majority of French construction sites were closed due to German pressure, working on German sites could be the only way to maintain a decent level of activity. The wish to survive did not necessarily prevent them from making profits, though. On the other hand, the desire to survive economically or to make profits did not prevent some businessmen from rendering services to the resistance simultaneously. In practice, clear-cut categorisation is impossible.

The category of ‘economic collaborationism’ is similarly fuzzy since ideological motivations were always combined with economic considerations. This is even true for *Sainrapt et Brice* although it is considered to be the prototype of economic collaborationism. The firm started working for the *Kriegsmarine* in 1941, at least partly under the threat of requisition of its equipment it seems, and later participated in the construction of the Atlantic Wall. This activity led to an impressive expansion of the firm. Works for German account made up 40% of the overall turnover in 1940–1944, which was even modest compared with many other construction firms. Much more unusual – and perceived as more compromising after the war – were three facts: the firm also worked *in* Germany; Louis-Pierre Brice, head of the company and an ambitious engineer, patented a technical process in Germany; he accepted to test his invention in cooperation with the German Navy and *Siemens* in 1942–1943.<sup>82</sup> Brice had always admired Germany and its technology. Like many big companies, his enterprise had already cooperated with German firms before the war. The situation created by the occupation seemed to offer the opportunity to establish durable relations with France’s technically and economically hegemonic neighbour. Brice’s collaboration no doubt proved ideological compliance, but it was also based on an entrepreneurial strategy.

The cooperating companies were surely a large majority, but there were exceptions. Some firms refused any direct or indirect cooperation with German authorities, also at the price of reducing or even ceasing their activity.<sup>83</sup> Some firms were involved in resistance activities in the narrow sense, by providing resistance movements with logistics or equipment, serving as depots for arms, etc., the heads of some companies being members or even leaders of resistance networks. In most cases, this was, however, a personal engagement of the entrepreneur, which did not involve the firm as such. On the other hand,

personal and entrepreneurial activity could follow different logics: an entrepreneur could produce for German purposes and be a resister at the same time, as was demonstrated by the example of Jacques Foccart, on whom was conferred the 'médaille de la Résistance' and he became a close confidant of Charles De Gaulle after the war. While he was still doing business with OT, Foccart started organising a resistance network in autumn 1943 before he went underground and became a leader of the resistance in Normandy.<sup>84</sup>

The example illustrates that collaboration and resistance did not exclude each other, but could succeed one another and even coincide, for both were multidimensional phenomena. On the other hand, it points to the importance of chronology and how the choices of individuals changed in respect of changing constraints and perspectives. If the priority of French business under the occupation was to 'survive and prepare for the future',<sup>85</sup> one needs to add that this preoccupation could imply very different choices at different times. What might have seemed a clever entrepreneurial strategy in 1941 when the general horizon of expectations was a German-dominated Europe, had to be perceived as increasingly compromising in the light of a probable Allied victory. When collaboration took the shape of Franco-German business cooperation, this can be expected to have lowered the inhibition level to engage with it, especially if firms could have resumed prewar connections. On the other hand, path-dependency and the increasing institutionalisation of business cooperation may be two factors to explain why distancing often occurred very late or not at all. Another factor is that the risk of equipment being confiscated remained until the end of the occupation; yet, saving the equipment was the key to a good starting position with regard to postwar reconstruction.

## Conclusion

Should we completely renounce the term 'collaboration' as an analytical category when examining occupations during the Second World War, as has been suggested by historians? The term is certainly counter-productive if its use is purely moral and aimed exclusively at unmasking collaborators and denouncing retrospectively unpatriotic and politically unseemly behaviour. Consequently, it can bar the way to a deeper understanding of the complexity of motivations, coercions and situations. On the other hand, avoiding the term must not mean a retrospective rehabilitation. Whether we want to use it or not, what is much more decisive is that we do not confine ourselves to labelling. Instead, we should ask what the underlying conditions, constraints, options, interests and motivations of the actors were. Inasmuch as the proposed differentiation between collaboration and cooperation favours such a questioning, I hold that collaboration remains a fruitful concept for the study of occupations, including economic and, more specifically, business collaboration.

The study has shown that analysing economic collaboration in terms of business relations is a rewarding (though not all-explaining) approach, also in a sector that seems, at first glance, as state-controlled as the German construction programmes in France. Moreover, it has pointed to the potential importance of continuities, such as prewar business contacts or the taking over of pre-existing French structures by the occupier, to understand and explain wartime collaboration. Last but not least, it has shown that companies had different options and room to manoeuvre, notwithstanding German pressure and coercion.

While proper 'economic collaborationism' was rare, the general attitude of French enterprises during German occupation is probably best described by what Philipp Burrell has called 'accommodements' or 'accommodation'. This adaptation to the circumstances of the occupation could oscillate between the ensuring of economic survival, occasional opportunism, and the systematic exploitation of the situation to make profits. The central

mechanism underlying business collaboration was neither direct coercion nor political commitment but the fact that the occupying power created framework conditions which made enterprises consider that cooperation was in their own interests.

If many construction enterprises may have had no other choice than to work for German purposes to survive, they could often choose *to what extent* and almost always *how* to work for them. Whether and how the French firms made use of their room for manoeuvre, especially towards their workers, is a question for further research.

## Notes

1. Hirschfeld, "Collaboration", 1.
2. Paxton, "La collaboration d'Etat", 351–2.
3. Hoffmann, "Aspects"; id., "Collaborationism"; Jäckel, *Frankreich*; Paxton, *Vichy France*.
4. Ory, *Les collaborateurs*, 8.
5. Azéma, *De Munich à la Libération*; Ory, *Les collaborateurs*; Rousso, *La Collaboration*; Burrin, *La dérive*; id., *La France à l'heure allemande*; Azéma and Bédarida, *La France des années noires*.
6. Durand, *Le nouvel ordre*, 10; Röhr, "Okkupation und Kollaboration", 62–3.
7. Hoffmann, "Collaborationism".
8. Akten zur deutschen auswärtigen Politik, Series D, vol. IX, 554–8.
9. Hoffmann, "Aspects", 46.
10. Azéma, "Le régime de Vichy", 163–8.
11. Cf. Frank, "Deutsche Okkupation", 91.
12. Burrin, "Le collaborationnisme", 386. On collaborationism see also Ory, *Les collaborateurs*; Gordon, *Collaborationism*; Burrin, *La dérive*; id., *La France à l'heure allemande*, 365–443.
13. Paxton, "La collaboration d'Etat", 352–3.
14. See Azéma and Peschanski, "Vichy Etat policier"; Peschanski, *Vichy*.
15. Azéma and Peschanski, "Vichy Etat policier", 414.
16. Cf. Giolitto, *Histoire de la milice*; Azéma, "La Milice"; Burrin, *La France à l'heure allemande*, 444–53.
17. Azéma and Peschanski, "Vichy Etat policier", 415.
18. Burrin, *La France à l'heure allemande*, 447.
19. Archives nationales (AN), Paris, AJ40/1204: Militärbefehlshaber in Frankreich (MBF) to Oberkommando der Wehrmacht, 23 September 1941.
20. Burrin, *La France à l'heure allemande*, 439–43.
21. AN, AJ40/443: Situation report of the MBF for June–July; Bundesarchiv-Militärarchiv (BA-MA), Freiburg, RW35/8: Situation report for August–September 1941.
22. AN, AJ40/848, file 2: NSKK-Motorgruppe Luftwaffe, Verbindungsstelle Paris, to MBF, 1 July 1942 and 15 April 1943.
23. Burrin, *La France à l'heure allemande*, 442–3; see also Giolitto, *Volontaires*.
24. Madajczyk, "Zwischen Zusammenarbeit und Kollaboration", 55.
25. Barjot and Rousso, "Stratégies industrielles"; Beltran *et al.*, *La vie des entreprises*; Dard *et al.*, *L'Occupation*.
26. See particularly Verheyde, *Les mauvais comptes*; Dreyfus, *Aryanisation*.
27. As for its conference and publication activity see <http://gdr2539.ish-lyon.cnrs.fr/>. See also the proceedings of the Franco–German conference held in Frankfurt in 2003: 'Les entreprises allemandes' and 'Die französischen (und deutschen) Unternehmen'.
28. Rochebrune and Hazera, *Les patrons*, 19.
29. Frank *et al.*, "Conclusion", 385.
30. Ibid.; Fridenson, "French enterprises", 262–3.
31. See, however, the 15- to 20-year-old studies by Barjot, Desquesnes, and Voldman.
32. Radtke-Delacor, "Verlängerte Werkbank", 347.
33. Ibid., 347–8.
34. Ibid., 349.
35. Without Nord–Pas-de-Calais and without the building industry.
36. Margairaz, *L'Etat*, 524–35.
37. Rochebrune and Hazera, *Les patrons*, 17.

38. Margairaz and Rouso, "Vichy".
39. Jones, "Illusions", 3.
40. Cf. Joly, *Les comités d'organisation*.
41. Barjot, "L'industrie", 420; Rochebrune and Hazera, *Les patrons*, 160.
42. Figures according to Desquesnes, *Atlantikwall*, vol. 1, 205–8.
43. BA-MA, RW 35, 1158: Contract between Arbeitsgemeinschaft Donaueschleusen Persenbeug and Entreprise Générale de Travaux Publics, Béton Armé (Paris) [December 1942].
44. BA-MA, RW 35, 1158: Contracts between Reichsstatthalter in der Westmark und CdZ in Lothringen, Wiederaufbauamt, and Société Marseillaise d'Entreprise de Travaux et de Bâtiments (Nogent-sur-Marne), 24 August 1942, and Entreprise Viturat (Paris), 7 September 1942.
45. Voldman, "Le bâtiment", 105.
46. AN, F12/9614: Cours de Justice de la Seine, Exposé contre X (pouvant appartenir à la Direction ou à l'Administration de la société anonyme Sainrapt et Brice), 29 September 1948. See also Rochebrune and Hazera, *Les patrons*, 149–82.
47. The activity of OT in France and Italy is studied in depth in the doctoral thesis being prepared by the author.
48. BA-MA, RW35/1406: MBF Arb. 770/XXa/aa to MVOR Demiani, 31 March 1944; BA, R13VIII/262: List by Wirtschaftsgruppe Bauindustrie, 11 November 1944; lists by Reichsinnungsverband des Bauhandwerks, 14 November 1944.
49. Handbook, 171.
50. Barjot, "French industry", 219.
51. Frank *et al.*, "Conclusion", 383.
52. Centre des Archives du Monde du Travail (CAMT), Roubaix, 35AQ/2–9, 15–16.
53. Such as *Société Technique pour l'Utilisation de la Précontrainte*, set up in 1943 by *Entreprises Campenon Bernard* (ECB) and a holding founded by ECB one year before (Barjot, "French industry", 228).
54. See the dossiers of the Commission nationale interprofessionnelle d'épuration (CNIE), AN, F12/9596–9616.
55. CAMT, 104AQ/103–4.
56. BA-MA, RW35/1405: Ministre Secrétaire d'Etat au Travail to MBF Wi VII, 19 August 1943; Kommandant von Groß-Paris, Abteilung Arbeit, to MBF, Hauptabteilung Arbeit, 26 February 1944.
57. See the list in Barjot and Jégou, "Les archives", 195, and Desquesnes, *Atlantikwall*, vol. 2, document 77.
58. AN, F12/9599: Dossier Compagnie française du Bâtiment et des Travaux publics.
59. Barjot, "L'industrie".
60. Voldman, "Le bâtiment".
61. Established on the basis of the cases tried before the CNIE.
62. BA-MA, RW35/1406: Contract between OT-OBL Nord with *Travaux Economiques de Construction* (Paris), 17 June 1941.
63. AN, F12/9596–9616.
64. AN, F12/9596–9616; Barjot, *La trace*, passim.
65. AN, AJ40/815B, file 45.
66. AN, AJ40/815B, file 45: Dyckerhoff & Widmann KG to Reichswirtschaftsministerium, 22 May 1941.
67. AN, F12/9597, file Campenon Bernard: Exposé de la Cour de Justice de la Seine, 19 February 1946; Déposition Estrade, 11 September 1946.
68. DGEN to COBTP, 19 September 1942, see Desquesnes, *Atlantikwall*, vol. 2, doc. 70; *ibid.*, vol. 1, 215.
69. *Ibid.*, 216–17.
70. BA, R13VIII/261: OT-Einsatzgruppe West, circular, 29 February 1944.
71. Both dossiers in AN, F12/9597.
72. See note 57.
73. AN, F12/9597, file Canal et Schuhl: Rittmann to Canal et Schuhl 22 December 1942; CAMT, 104AQ104: Carroux to OT-Einsatzgruppe West, 14 December 1942.
74. AN, F12/9597, file Canal et Schuhl.
75. AN, F12/9614: Sainrapt et Brice; F12/9597: Campenon Bernard; Barjot, *La trace*, 71, 154.

76. Barjot, "L'industrie", 428; idem, Fougerolle, 32–42.
77. AN, AJ40/851, file 5: MBF, Wi VII, to OT-OBL St-Malo and OBL Dieppe, 8. August 1942; Rochebrune and Hazera, *Les patrons*, 149–82.
78. It is again referred to the files of the CNIE (AN, F12/9596–9616).
79. Frankenstein, "Die deutschen Arbeitskräfteaushebungen", 214.
80. Marcot, "Qu'est-ce qu'un patron résistant?", 280.
81. Barjot, "L'industrie", 420–1; Desquesnes, "Atlantikwall", vol. 1, 200–31.
82. Rochebrune and Hazera, *Les patrons*, 149–82.
83. Le Maner and Rouso, "La domination allemande", 38; Berthonnet, "Le développement", 381–3.
84. Rochebrune and Hazera, *Les patrons*, 364–86.
85. Barjot, "French industry", 222.

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