

COLLABORATIONISTS AND FORMS OF COOPERATION WITH THE OCCUPATION AUTHORITY IN ODESSA (1941-1944)

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Abstract: *The topic's relevance increased considerably after the start of the Russian-Ukrainian war, the occupation of Crimea and part of Donbas transforming collaborationism from a historical notion into a current practical and legal concern. An even greater demand for understanding the essence of collaborationism emerged in 2022 when Russia temporarily occupied certain territories of Ukraine, subsequently liberated by the Armed Forces of Ukraine. This article analyses the cooperation dynamics between the Odessa population and the Romanian occupation authority in the economic and cultural spheres during 1941-1944. The historical context emphasises the varying degrees and motivations for collaboration among different social groups. The research focuses on life strategies, enabling a shift from a simplistic, one-dimensional viewpoint on collaborationism. The prevailing perception is that an individual's physical survival was the primary motivation for collaboration with the occupiers.*

Keywords: *World War II, Odessa, Transnistria, population, cooperation, collaborationism, Romanian occupation.*

Rezumat: *Colaboraționiști și formele de cooperare cu autoritatea de ocupație în Odessa (1941-1944). Actualitatea temei a crescut brusc după începerea războiului ruso-ucrainean, ocuparea Crimeei și a unei părți a Donbasului – când colaboraționismul a revenit de la calitatea de termen istoric la planul practic și juridic de acum. O cerere și mai mare de înțelegere a naturii colaboraționismului a apărut în 2022, când anumite teritorii ale Ucrainei*

au fost temporar intrate sub ocupație rusă și apoi au fost eliberate de Forțele armate ale Ucrainei. Articolul reprezintă o încercare de a analiza formele de cooperare ale populației odesite cu autoritățile de ocupație române, în sfera economică și culturală, în perioada 1941-1944. Ținând cont de contextul istoric, au fost evidențiate diferite niveluri și motive de colaborare ale diferitelor grupuri sociale din Odessa. Accentul cercetării a fost îndreptat spre strategiile de supraviețuire; aceasta ne-a permis îndepărtarea de la o anumită viziune unidimensională, simplificată, a colaboraționismului. Astfel, este definitiv clar că supraviețuirea fizică a unei persoane a devenit principalul motiv de cooperare cu ocupații.

INTRODUCTION

Collaborationism, as voluntary, conscious and deliberate cooperation with the enemy, is inadequately examined in Ukrainian and Romanian historical literature. The topic of collaboration with the Nazi occupation regime in Ukraine was considered inappropriate for a long time. During the Soviet era, researchers avoided it, since any scientific work that depicted “the entire nation rose as one to fight against the German-fascist invaders during the Great Patriotic War” was seen as much more “profitable”. The situation lasted for an extended period, even in independent Ukraine. The shallow examination of the subject stemmed from historians' acknowledgement that collaborationism is a dangerous and ungrateful topic, which could damage the reputation of their people in the eyes of posterity. At the same time, a significant influence was exerted by the belief among the Soviets and certain contemporary historians that their scholarly contributions ought to align with the prevailing political structure.

Before proceeding to a brief historiographical review of the issue, it should be noted that the remarks regarding collaborationism of historian G. Hirschfeld, asserting that it “is as old as war and the occupation of foreign territory”, are valid. However, the very term “collaborationist”¹ began to be actively used in France since the Napoleonic wars. Nonetheless, over time, its connotation evolved to imply a form of treasonous collaboration with the enemy.

Notwithstanding the aforementioned, researchers have not overlooked this topic, which has led to a collection of scientific publications that can be divided into several groups.

¹ Gerhard Hirschfeld, Patrick Marsh (Eds.), *Collaboration in France: Politics and Culture During the Nazi Occupation, 1940-1944*, Oxford, 1989, p. 11.

Historians from several nations have examined this issue at different periods. Some have studied the problem broadly or conceptually. Notable among them are the following: T. Brook, P. Davies, I. Deák, G. T. Harward, J. Hickman, D. Littlejohn, T. Penter, M. Semiryaga, and T. Vronska.²

A multitude of studies focuses on different facets of collaboration with the enemy in Central-East Europe, particularly Ukraine. The following authors are noteworthy: M. Dean, V. Kucher, O. Mikheev, O. Potylchak, T. Snyder, V. Solonari, O. Stiazhkina, I. Vetrov, and T. Zabolotna.³

² T. Brook, *Hesitating before the Judgment of History*, in "The Journal of Asian Studies", 2012, vol. 71, Issue 1, p. 103-114; P. Davies, *Dangerous liaisons: Collaboration and World War Two*, London, Pearson Longman, 2004, 226 p.; I. Deák, *Europe on Trial. The Story of Collaboration, Resistance, and Retribution During World War II*, Westview Press, 2015, 257 p.; Grant T. Harward, *Romania's Holy War. Soldiers, Motivation, and the Holocaust*, Ithaca and London, Cornell University Press, 2021, 340 p.; John Hickman, *The Occupier's Dilemma: Problem Collaborators*, in "Comparative Strategy", 2017, vol. 36, no. 3, p. 228-240; David Littlejohn, *The Patriotic Traitors: A History of Collaboration in German-Occupied Europe, 1940-45*, London, William Heinemann Ltd., 1972, 391 p.; T. Penter, *Collaboration on Trial: New Source Material on Soviet Postwar Trials against Collaborators*, in "Slavic Review", 2005, vol. 64, no. 4, p. 782-790; Mihail Semiryaga, *Kollaboratsionizm: priroda, tipologiya i proyavleniya v gody Vtoroy mirovoy voyny* [Collaborationism: Nature, Typology and Manifestations during the Second World War], Moscow, ROSSPEN, 2000, 863 p.; T. Vronska, *Fenomen «posobnystva»: do problem kvalifikatsii spivpratsi tsyvilnoho naseleennia z okupantamy u pershyi period Velykoi vitchyznianoï viiny* [The Phenomenon of "Assistance": to the Problem of the Qualification of Cooperation of the Civilian Population with the Occupiers in the First Period of the Great Patriotic War], in "Storinky voiennoi istorii Ukrainy" [Pages of the Military History of Ukraine], Kyiv, 2008, vol. 11, p. 88-97;

³ Martin Dean, *Collaboration in the Holocaust: Crimes of the Local Police in Belorussia and Ukraine, 1941-1944*, New York, 2000, 241 p.; V. Kucher, O. Potylchak, *Ukraina 1941-1944: trahediia narodu za fasadom Sviashchennoi viiny* [Ukraine 1941-1944: the Tragedy of the People behind the Facade of the Holy War], Kyiv, 2011, 357; O. Miheev, *Kollaboratsionizm na Ukraine v gody Vtoroy mirovoy voyny (1941-1944 gg.)* [Collaborationism in Ukraine during the Second World War (1941-1944)], Harkov, 2006, 320 p.; O. Potylchak, *Ekonomichnyi kolaboratsionizm v Ukraini v roky natsyystskoi okupatsii (1941-1944): prychny i proiavy* [Economic Collaborationism in Ukraine during the Nazi Occupation (1941-1944): Causes and Manifestations], Kyiv, UDPU im. M. P. Drahomanova, 1997, 29 p.; Timothy Snyder, *Kryvavi zemli: Yevropa mizh Hitlerom i Stalynym* [Bloodlands: Europe between Hitler and Stalin], Kyiv, 2011, 448 p.; Vladimir Solonari, *A satellite empire: Romanian rule in southwestern Ukraine, 1941-1944*, Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 2019, 308 p. See especially the part 3 of the book: *Responding to Romanian Occupation*, p. 163-230; Olena Stiazhkina, *Rokada: chotyry narysy z istorii*

A third distinct category of works consists of books or articles related to specific regions of Ukraine such as the Reich Commissariat “Ukraine”, Transnistria, and Odessa, which are specifically investigated in this research. However, there is a limited amount of material specifically regarding Odessa. These are mainly scientific publications by Ukrainian researchers. The most valuable are authored by historians such as I. Dereiko⁴, M. Mykhailutsa⁵, V. Pidhurskyi⁶, V. Shaikan⁷, and Yu. Skrypnychenko⁸.

This research aims to partially address the inadequately researched issue

Druhoi svitovoi [Rokada: Four Essays on the History of the Second World War], Kyiv, DUKh I LITERA, 2020, 272 p.; I. Vietrov, *Ekonomichna ekspansia tretoho reikhu v Ukraini 1941-1944 rr.* [Economic Expansion of the Third Reich in Ukraine 1941-1944], Kyiv, Chetverta khvyliia, 2000, 231 p.; T. Zabolotna, *Stratehii vyzhyvannia miskoi intelihentsii Ukrainy v roky natsystskoi okupatsii (1941-1944 rr.): teoriia ta praktyka* [Survival Strategies of the Urban Intelligentsia of Ukraine during the Years of Nazi Occupation (1941-1944): Theory and Practice], in “Storinky voiennoi istorii Ukrainy” [Pages of the Military History of Ukraine], Kyiv, 2013, vol. 16, p. 94-112.

⁴ Ivan Dereiko, *Mistsevi formuvannia nimetskoï armii ta politsii u Raikhskomisariati «Ukraina» (1941-1944 roky)* [Local Formations of the German Army and Police in the Reich Commissariat “Ukraine” (1941-1944)], Kyiv, 2012, 174 p.

⁵ M. Mykhailutsa, *Tema rosiiskoi kolaboratsii na shpaltakh hazet v okupovanii Odesi (1942-1943 rr.)* [The Topic of Russian Collaboration in the Columns of Newspapers in Occupied Odessa (1942-1943)], in “Pivdennyi zakhid. Odesyka. Istoryko-kraieznavchyi naukovyi almanakh” [Southwest. Odessa. Historical and Local Lore Scientific Almanac], Odessa, Drukarskyi Dim, 2013, vol. 16, p. 147-156.

⁶ V. Pidhurskyi, *Spivrobitnytstvo mistsevoho naseleattia z rumunskoiu okupatsiinoiu vladoiu v Transnistrii v 1941-1944 rr.* [Cooperation of the Local Population with the Romanian Occupation Authorities in Transnistria in 1941-1944], in “Ukraina v Tsentralno-Skhidnii Yevropi: Zbirnyk naukovykh prats” [Ukraine in Central-Eastern Europe: Collection of Scientific Works], Ternopil, Ternopilskiy natsionalnyi pedahohichnyi universytet im. V. Hnatiuka, 2017, vol. 4, p. 57-64.

⁷ V. Shaikan, *Kolaboratsionizm na terytorii reikhskomisariatu “Ukraina” i viiskovoi zony v roky Druhoi svitovoi viiny* [Collaborationism on the Territory of the Reichskommissariat “Ukraine” and the Military Zone during the Second World War], Kryvyi Rih, Mineral, 2005, 466 p.

⁸ Yu. Skrypnychenko, *Povsiakdenne zhyttia u natsystskii Nimechchyni u spohadakh kharkivskykh ostarbaiteriv* [Everyday Life in Nazi Germany in the Memories of Kharkiv Ostarbeiters], in “Naukovizapysky Ternopilskoho natsionalnoho pedahohichnoho universytetu imeni Volodymyra Hnatiuka. Serii: Istoriiia” [Scientific Notes of Ternopil National Pedagogical University Named after Volodymyr Hnatiuk. Series: History], Ternopil, 2016, vol. 1(1), p. 125-130.

of collaboration with the occupying authority in Odessa during World War II.

THE MEANING OF THE TERM “COLLABORATIONISM” AND ITS LEGAL COMPONENT

Collaborationism should not be defined as a marginal form of disreputable conduct shown by individuals who allied with the occupier. Rather, it is a complex socio-political phenomenon that cannot be studied as often portrayed in Soviet historiography. The assumption that it is not intrinsic to most of the occupied was equally erroneous. An extensive analysis of statistics, including the current Russian-Ukrainian war, suggests the opposite. This was prevalent in the past and remains true in contemporary circumstances. Analysing the term itself is unnecessary. One must acknowledge that it originates in the French term “collaboration”, meaning cooperation. The next step is to create a system of coordinates and evaluations related to the extent of this cooperation, its methods, and demographic segments that may be classified as collaborators. Usually, this term is used in the Vichy France sense, referring to military and administrative collaboration. Conversely, alternative forms of collaboration are typically overlooked. “Collaborationism is assistance to the aggressor in wartime by the citizens, his victims to the detriment of their homeland and people. In the conditions of occupation, the activity of collaborators is treason to the motherland... by international law; they are committing a war crime”⁹.

M. I. Semiryaga suggested differentiating between “collaborationism” and “cooperation”. He considers collaborationism synonymous with “conscious treason”, whereas cooperation is the forced and inevitable interaction of the local population with the enemy in the context of occupation¹⁰.

However, a philological issue emerges, since “collaboration” or “cooperation” corresponds to the literal translation of the French term “collaboration”. Therefore, the joint use of “collaborationism” and “cooperation” may lead to ambiguity. To avoid such a problem, it makes sense to link cooperation with the occupiers, distinct from collaborationism, using a different term, such as “contacts”, to eliminate conflicting interpretations and the need to defend collaborationists. The boundary between harmless interactions with the adversary and collaborationism is blurry. Moral assessments are not applicable here; rather,

⁹ Mihail Semiryaga, *Kollaboratsionizm: priroda...*, p. 11.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 815.

the standards of criminal legislation prevail.

During that period in the USSR, “collaborationism” or “collaborationists” were rarely used. The terms “traitors”, “accomplices”, and “traitor to the motherland” were commonly used to refer to those who collaborated with the enemy. The criminal liabilities of “traitors-accomplices” were outlined in paragraphs “a” and “b” of Article 58-1 of the Criminal Code. The official statements described the standard as the gravest offence under wartime circumstances.

Paragraphs “a” and “b” of the relevant article of the Criminal Code states: “58-1a. Treason to the motherland, i.e. acts done by citizens of the USSR in damage to the military power of the USSR, its national sovereignty, or the inviolability of its territory, such as espionage, betrayal of military or state secrets, crossing to the side of the enemy, flight (by surface or air) abroad, shall be punishable by – the supreme measure of criminal punishment – shooting with confiscation of all property, or with mitigating circumstances – deprivation of liberty for a term of 10 years with confiscation of all property. 58-1b. The same crimes, perpetrated by military personnel, are punishable by the supreme measure of criminal punishment – shooting with confiscation of all property”¹¹.

However, the aforementioned provides a few examples of cooperation with the enemy and does not fully resolve the issue. Therefore, answers should be found in the works of historians. O. Stiazhkina formulates her point of view with clarity: “The attempt to reduce all the multifaceted scenarios of life under occupation to a permanent triangle of “heroes-traitors-victims” lacks documentary support and remains politically charged”¹².

M. I. Semiryaga suggests that the collaborationism of Soviet citizens who voluntarily served the occupiers stemmed not only from sympathy for Nazi ideology and Hitler’s Germany. They were motivated by a variety of factors, including economic and socio-political discontent, psychological fears of fascist brutality, careerism, the need to survive the difficult conditions of the occupation, and the desire to save themselves and their families¹³.

M. I. Semiryaga noted that the responsibility of historians is to place all elements in their proper context: real collaborators deserved punishment; the remaining citizens who had to reside in the occupation zone and, as a result, were

¹¹ Article 58, *Criminal Code of the RSFSR (1934)*, in <http://www.cyberussr.com/rus/uk58-e.html#58-1a> (Accessed on 17.07.2024).

¹² Olena Stiazhkina, *Rokada: chotyry...*, p. 145-146.

¹³ Mihail Semiryaga, *Kollaboratsionizm: priroda...*, p. 322.

forced to cooperate with the new government for the sake of survival, should be protected from the disgraceful label of a traitor.¹⁴

Furthermore, when assessing the indicators of collaborationism, it is essential to acknowledge that the guilt of people who collaborated with the occupiers varied significantly. It is unjust to hold ordinary individuals accountable when involved in the maintenance of roads or railway tracks under the threat of firearms. In addition, it is necessary to evaluate the reasons that forced the population of the occupied territories to cooperate with the enemy. An individual would deliberately side with an armed invader. Usually, these included those “offended” by the Soviet government, who hated it. In addition, certain assimilated individuals consistently endeavoured to attain elevated social standing.

E. Carlton meticulously examines the individual and his behaviour in relation to the constraints of his employment. “Most people in the occupied territories were neither fierce resisters nor opportunistic collaborators. Most of them went about their daily lives as normally as possible... Most of them were neither particularly brave nor particularly cowardly...”¹⁵

Most researchers make a distinction between military, political and economic (civil) cooperation, with military collaborationism split into passive (work in military units) and active (participation in military operations with weapons).

It is advisable to concur with the perspective of researchers who assert a qualitative distinction between two phenomena: collaborationism as a betrayal of the homeland and forced cooperation with the occupiers, which did not harm the Indigenous interests of the country. The boundary will remain unclear unless one discusses the most radical manifestations. A simple classification appears as follows: conscious, proactive – generated by a balanced inclination to help the occupiers and forced, caused by circumstances. Civil collaborationism was primarily necessary, because many Soviet citizens, especially in urban areas, had no alternative means of subsistence.

Understanding the essence of the problem is essential in this instance. Collaborationism in a great war is an unavoidable phenomenon. The effectiveness of an occupation system relies on collaboration with the local population; no conqueror can succeed without cooperation with the local population. A new administration needs local administrators, experts in the political system, interpreters,

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 815.

¹⁵ Apud: Olena Stiazhkina, *Rokada: chotyry...*, p. 147.

housekeepers, logisticians, etc.

O. Stiazhkina provides an interesting generalization of such arguments: “It is obvious that all people who got into the occupied territories, collaborated with the enemy regime in one way or another: they registered on the labour exchange and got a job and/or a position, worked as teachers and doctors, contributed, even under coercion, a significant part of their harvest, engaged in trade, used documents and money of the occupation regime, etc. Even individuals associated with the underground, red partisans, OUN-UPA soldiers collaborated, albeit under pressure, exhibiting a transient and/or superficial allegiance to the regime that allowed them survival, access to certain resources and/or information, among other benefits.”¹⁶

Collaborationism can be broadly categorized into military, administrative, economic, cultural, household, and individual-political based on varying perspectives and techniques. This typology changes according to the traits of the occupation regime and many mental and moral-psychological factors.

Nevertheless, it is essential to deconstruct this phenomenon into its components for a more comprehensive understanding. First, it is important to stress the distinction between military collaborationism and civilian. This analysis will concentrate on the second due to its greater diversity of forms in the occupied Odessa. A detailed examination of memoirs, post-war criminal cases, and an extensive body of literature provides ample data for analysing “life trajectories of occupied people (O. Stiazhkina)”. She emphasizes: “The life of ordinary people under various occupation regimes does not undergo any schematization and any conceptualization... that any attempt to find a generalized regularity in it seems unsuccessful. Moreover, even the most amazing break may not constitute a permanent choice, but a situational reaction, resulting in a lack of understanding and no shift in one’s position...”¹⁷

Lastly, Vladimir Solonari prefers to distinguish between “accommodation” and “collaboration”. In his opinion, “collaboration” was “apolitical” and “most farmers, labourers, workers, and lower administrative personnel in occupied Transnistria exhibited it”¹⁸.

As for collaboration, he specifies the following: “There, most residents, particularly in the early stages of the occupation, shared with the occupiers a vital

¹⁶ Olena Stiazhkina, *Rokada: chotyry...*, p. 146.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 145.

¹⁸ Vladimir Solonari, *op. cit.*, p. 163.

interest in restoring, as much and as quickly as possible, a local economy that had been severely damaged by the retreating Soviets. ... These people formed the predominant segment of what can be described in general as Transnistrian "collaborators."¹⁹

This article's concluding section refers to the "collaboration" of Odessa residents with Romanian authorities, as viewed through the researcher's perspective.

LIFE CONDITIONS AND BEHAVIOURAL STRATEGIES OF OCCUPIED ODESSA RESIDENTS

Any occupying power regards the population of the occupied territories as a resource and seeks to maximize how it is used. Consequently, a special focus was put on systematic economic collaboration, namely cooperation with qualified workers, engineering and technical personnel, and teaching and professorial staff.

It is critical to recognize the differences in systemic approaches between the German and Romanian zones of occupation. Hitler's strategy assumed that the German troops would subsist on the resources of the occupied lands. Therefore, the Germans, adhering to the directives outlined in "Göring's Green Folder", tried to preserve the command-administrative management system characterized by significant monopolization, to prevent disorder in production and management after the abrupt dismantling of the Soviet economic order: "The Soviet economy is completely organized by the state. If this organization collapses or disrupts due to the removal of the leadership, there may be a danger of economic anarchy"²⁰. To this end, collective farms and enterprises were preserved as structures, but a new administration was instituted above them, fully subordinated and accountable to the new owners. At the same time, all valuable professional personnel received some security guarantees (it was forbidden to take them as hostages or subject them to political persecution). In addition, engineering-technical staff and highly qualified workers were provided with separate social guarantees, including food and medical care, wages, etc. However, this was only to efficiently and systematically acquire the optimal quantity of food or necessary industrial products from the farms in the occupied territories.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 164.

²⁰ *Zelyonaya papka Geringa* [Goering's Green Folder], in "Voenno-istoricheskiy zhurnal" [Military History Magazine], 1991, no. 5, p. 24-33.

The economic system of the Romanian occupation was built on free economic initiative. The population could open businesses or work on leased land and pay the appropriate taxes (Decree of Gh. Alexianu No. 702 of May 13, 1942²¹). At the same time, the minimum wage was established by legislation; payment increased in line with the worker's level of qualification (Gh. Alexianu Resolution No. 935 dated June 5, 1942²²). This created motivation for collaboration with the new authorities in Transnistria.

It is essential to evaluate different periods of occupation and the shifting motivations for collaboration with the occupiers accordingly. Thus, throughout the initial weeks and months, the population was willing to communicate with the new government as liberators from the Soviet regime. In addition, the population frequently failed to assess the extent of the threat posed by Romanians or Germans. Subsequently, after several months, even those initially unwilling to cooperate felt driven to seek contact and interaction simply because of hunger. Survival in an occupied territory is challenging without employment. The Romanian authorities created conditions that necessitated individual self-sufficiency in earning a livelihood. To most people, there was no other professional option, so they went to work in their typical areas of expertise.

According to V. Horobets, “the social basis of economic collaborationism should be sought not within the class structures of the Sovietized Ukrainian society, but in much broader social categories that united not only ideological opponents of Bolshevism or nationally conscious citizens but also politically neutral persons, in a certain way victims of the Bolshevik regime or dissatisfied with it. The majority of such persons lived in Ukraine, due to known reasons and circumstances”.²³

Therefore, the following delineates certain typical and special motives and manifestations of this phenomenon, together with prominent features of the main social groups. An initial exploration of the memories and diaries of those who survived the occupation reveals several key motivations: the necessity to resume one's customary profession due to a lack of alternatives; enlisting in the

²¹ Derzhavnyi arkhiv Odeskoi oblasti (DAOO) [State Archive of Odessa Region], F. R-2353, op. 1, spr. 1, ark. 48.

²² DAOO, F. R-2353, op. 1, spr. 1, ark. 50.

²³ Vitalii Horobets, *Ekonomichnyi ta kulturnyi kolaboratsionizm: formula spivpratsi* [Economic and Cultural Collaborationism: a Formula for Cooperation], in “Viiskovo-istorychnyi merydian. Elektronnyi naukovyi fakhovyi zhurnal” [Military-Historical Meridian. Electronic Scientific Journal], Kyiv, 2020, Vol. 1 (27), p. 87.

service of the occupiers out of desperation to protect one's family from starvation; a prevalent desire to engage in business in Odessa; to express justified discontent with the Soviet government and system; trying to gain favour with the new government stemming from feelings of cowardice and adaptability; and attempts to avoid a worse fate than the one they were facing at that very moment of their life.

It is essential to point out again that only a limited part of the civilian population may completely disassociate from the "new government". Initially, these individuals joined the resistance voluntarily or were indirectly compelled to go underground. These are exceptions, as several individuals from the underground, who did not go to the catacombs but remained active in the city and continued to live there, nonetheless obtained employment and somehow earned a living. There were only a few hundred people in the entire city almost half a million people.²⁴

Some Odessans perished without ever envisioning themselves as part of the occupation. Suicides are frequently documented in journals as well as occupation newspapers. The suicide rate has increased when compared to peacetime rates.

Certain citizens were eager to please the new authorities. Doctor A. Shevaliov recalled that the head of the security guard residing on the hospital premises lamented: "I didn't think that your people would demonstrate such hostility toward one another"²⁵.

It is essential to acknowledge that, in numerous contexts, most townspeople were compelled to interact with the occupiers. The working professions had to go to factories that had transitioned to Romanian ownership and work there to sustain their families. Medical professionals had to provide treatment, educators impart knowledge, cooks prepare food, and artists sing and dance. It would be nearly impossible for an adult to keep living for 907 days without any interaction with the outside world, excluding exceptional circumstances where a family could

²⁴ Oleksandr Babich, *Pidpilnyi i partyzanskyi rukh v Odesi (1941-1944 rr.): sklad ta etapy diialnosti* [The Underground and Partisan Movement in Odessa (1941-1944): Composition and Stages of Activity], in "Pivden Ukrainy: etnoistorychnyi, movnyi, kulturnyi ta relihiinyi vymiry: zbirnyk naukovykh prats" [The South of Ukraine: Ethnohistorical, Linguistic, Cultural and Religious Dimensions: a Collection of Scientific Works], Kherson, OLDI-PLuS, 2021, Vol. 8, p. 21.

²⁵ *Audiozapys besidy z A. Shevaliovym – Zrobleno muzeiem Istorii yevreiv Odesy* [Audio Recording of a Conversation with A. Shevaliov – Made by the Museum of the History of the Jews of Odessa].

hide a person). Someone must provide sustenance, hydration, medical care, hygiene, and warmth for the living spaces, and manage the financial obligations associated with utilities, among other responsibilities. Subsequently, each individual engaged in a deliberate contemplation regarding the proximity and potential benefits of their association with the occupiers. Some chose to serve the police, while others assumed an official position and helped strengthen the regime. Some individuals began collaborating with the special services, deliberately betraying their fellow citizens – Jews, underground activists, communists..., and some lived according to the “homework” principle. Some stole Jewish property or their apartments while others deemed the behaviour low and despicable. Some awaited the return of Soviet power and endured temporary difficulties, while others praised the invincibility of the Reich and welcomed the new masters.

Witness testimonies and reports from the occupation authorities document several instances of voluntary assistance from the civilian population in rehabilitating damaged or inoperable companies at the beginning of the occupation.

For example, before moving to Romania, M. Manuylov, an Odessa native, worked as a financial management economist. He was neither a radical anti-Soviet nor an ideological Nazi nor can he be classified as a Bolshevik. He just knew how to handle finances, but nothing else. In December 1942 he was writing the following:

“You stroll along the street and cannot believe your eyes: where there were dirty, empty cooperatives and canteens are now clean stores, snack bars, and restaurants. Where there were pits and bumps are now clean and smooth pavements . . . where there were colossal lines next to a kolkhoz horse-cart with unripe or rotten apples – that is, in the bazaar – one sees boundless piles of all kinds of fruits offered by sellers. And not only there! Fruits and other commodities are available everywhere. ... Soviet peacetime bazaar pales compared to our wartime bazaar”²⁶.

This is how he describes the reasons behind his and his colleagues’ cooperation: “Romanians or emigrants were initially appointed to the positions of the newly created departments, while local figures did not show much effort to occupy responsible positions for many reasons: the instability of the military situation, hostility to the occupiers, the limitations placed by Romanian leaders, a deliberate reluctance to support the occupiers’ projects and objectives restricting

²⁶ “Odesskaya gazeta”, Odessa, December 13, 1942. *Apud* Vladimir Solonari, *op. cit.*, p. 154.

the interests of the population and the nation under siege. I cannot claim that the covert sabotage had organized forms or resulted from meticulously planned actions. Efforts to restructure the city's administration have consistently resulted in disappointment, mainly because local experts understood that the new Romanian administration was following in the footsteps of the former communist commissars, who appointed individuals lacking in qualifications to lead significant industrial enterprises or estates, solely based on their party affiliation. Rather than possessing a party ticket, one had to be of Romanian descent or in a vulnerable situation. Romanians realized that managing the economic life of such a large city was not within the power of their officials, prompting them to treat local specialists and figures with greater respect and consideration. The residents of Odessa anticipated this moment, understanding the imperative to capitalize on the inexperience and confusion of the Romanians, thereby improving the circumstances faced by the local population. Every specialist and public figure faced a dilemma: what course of action to pursue? One may choose to serve the occupiers, thereby assisting both the population and oneself, or one may adhere to the principle of embracing adversity for the sake of principle."²⁷

I. Pavlov presents a considerably more severe evaluation: "Some of the residents who gained authority in the occupation authorities, held high administrative positions, enjoyed material benefits, became holders of honorary titles. For example, the head of the financial directorate of the city A. Kutsehorhiev and the rector of Odessa University P. H. Chasovnykov were honoured by the Romanians as "His Excellencies", occupied multi-room apartments, had servants: maids, cooks, and governesses; when entering the premises of subordinate institutions, employees had to stand up"²⁸.

The rapid rehabilitation of the university, schools, and theatres by the Romanians was largely due to the involvement of local expertise. The local engineering personnel helped restore the energy supply in Odessa²⁹, including cogeneration³⁰ and transportation. The deliberate destruction of the Khadzhibey Estuary dam by Soviet troops during their retreat led to the flooding of a large

²⁷ M. Manuylov, *Odessa: Zhizn v okkupatsii. 1941-1944* [Odessa: Life under Occupation. 1941-1944], Moscow, ROSSPEN, 2013, p. 133-134.

²⁸ I. Pavlov, *Poteryannyye pokoleniya* [Lost Generations], in <https://www.sakharov-center.ru/asfcd/auth/?t=book&num=1755> (Accessed on 16.07.2024).

²⁹ P. Kozlenko (comp.), *German Pyntya – Torzhestvo spravedlivosti. Moyo dosie* [Gherman Pântea – Triumph of Justice. My Dossier], Odessa, Feniks, 2019, p. 27-28.

³⁰ DA00, F. P-12219, op. 1, spr. 365.

residential area in Peresyp. The prompt initiative shown by local engineers helped the immediate rehabilitation of the dam and provided adequate conditions for normal life.

Among the five deputy assistants to the mayor of Odessa, two of them, namely M. Zaevloshyn and V. Kundert, were Odessans. Among the managers and officials of Odessa in 1941-1944, alongside Romanians one can see former emigrants and Bessarabians. Many lived in Odessa before the revolution or studied in gymnasiums and the university. However, throughout this dedicated category, the Romanians carried out a selection, designating those permitted to enter Odessa to the positions of heads of departments, interpreters and representatives of various institutions. Gherman Pântea notes that the city's administration comprised 12,600 employees, including 40 from Romania, alongside others from Bessarabia, all of them possessing a strong command of the Russian language. The date remains unspecified; however, it appears to have been at the height of its prominence, specifically in 1943³¹.

A fast revival of small businesses occurred, characterized by speculation, rapid growth and quick decline. The enterprising spirit of the Odessans was activated and stimulated, leading them to rapidly engage in commerce. It is particularly intriguing to trace this in the diaries of Odessa residents who survived the occupation and engaged in trading.³²

I. Pavlov recalls it as follows: "The Romanians allowed residents to rent premises and open private shops, restaurants and snack bars, hairdressers, bakeries, cinemas, workshops, which grew like mushrooms. Energetic, enterprising people who managed to get initial capital became tenants. Among them were many former employees of stores and warehouses, administrators who, during the difficult wartime, appropriated former state property or funds... Many entrepreneurs were Germans, Romanians, and Moldovans who used tax benefits. To increase the profitability of their business, the owners of shops and cafes began bypassing intermediaries to go to the surrounding villages themselves to purchase products"³³.

³¹ P. Kozlenko (comp.), *German Pyntya...*, p. 33.

³² L. Melnichenko, *Dnevnik Adriana Orzhehovskogo. "Zapiski 1941-1944 gg."* [Diary of Adrian Orzhekhovskiy. "Notes of 1941-1944"], in "Dom knyazya Gagarina. Sbornik nauchnyh statey i publikatsiy" [House of Prince Gagarin. Collection of Scientific Articles and Publications], Odessa, 2007, Vol. 4.

³³ I. Pavlov, *Poteryannye pokoleniya*, in <https://vgulage.name/books/pavlov-i-i-poterjannye-pokolenija/> (Accessed on 16.07.2024).

Six weeks after the capture of Odessa, a notice was published in the newspaper: "Open trading enterprises (to the attention of persons interested in trade). The government decided to engage with individuals seeking to establish private trade firms. To this end, they will be given the necessary resources and financial support to start their activities immediately, along with an extensive range of benefits. Persons interested in this issue are asked to contact the supply department (Pushkinska street No. 19)".³⁴

After a month, the following statistics were given: "Now there are 34 hairdressers, 42 shoe shops, about 80 electrical, locksmiths, watch, carpentry and other technical workshops working in the city. There are already two hotels and 8 inns for peasants coming to the city. Private initiatives have had major impact in trade as well. 62 snack bars, restaurants and cafes, 37 buffets, 20 grocery and gourmet shops, 10 confectioneries and bakery shops, 13 general and convenience stores were opened in the city this month".³⁵

Further, the local press and Labour Office reports until the end of 1943 illustrate the quantitative growth of various enterprises and businesses³⁶. In 1943, Mayor Gherman Pântea testified that Odessa had 10,000 trade and industrial enterprises working in Odessa that paid taxes. The City Hall's budget was 170 million marks, equivalent to 10.2 million lei.³⁷

Interacting with the many Russian Anti-Soviet organizations that operated in Odessa was rather intriguing. This form of collaboration deserves a separate article, yet it would be incomprehensible not to acknowledge it here. Numerous similar groups existed in Odessa. Several were founded by white emigrant movements from abroad: ROVS (Russian All-Military Union), NTS (National Alliance of Russian Solidarists), and RPC (Russian Protective Corps). The group was formed from the surviving "formers" of the local draft – the "Society of Former Military Ranks of the Russian Army", as well as followers of the "Vlasovites ("Vlasovtsy")" movement. Some of these organizations could only operate with the approval of the Gestapo. Notably, despite their common enemy – Bolshevism, they were at odds with each other, hatched petty intrigues and found many reasons for conflicts.

Less than 20 years passed between the end of the Civil War and the

³⁴ "Odesskaya gazeta" [Odessa Newspaper], Odessa, 1941, December 4.

³⁵ "Odesskaya gazeta", Odessa, 1942, January 12.

³⁶ DA00, F. 2294, op. 1, spr. 1.

³⁷ P. Kozlenko (comp.), *German Pyntya...*, p. 34.

beginning of World War II. People aged 20 to 40 who participated in the "White Army" and successfully emigrated, or, on the contrary, miraculously survived all the purges and executions in the Soviet country while maintaining the aspiration to eliminate Bolshevik influence, were at the age when they could still strongly stand for their beliefs. They soon appeared in Odessa, expecting that the occupiers would allow them to re-establish "united and indivisible Russia" in one way or another. The main point of dispute among them was the nature of the proposed "Free Russia": a monarchy, a democratic republic, or a puppet state with a pro-German government. They disputed allies, methods of resistance, the impact on the population and the extent of dependence on the occupiers.

Menshevik Ye. Tverskyi lived in occupied Odessa from 1941 to 1944. During the Romanian occupation of Odessa, he worked on the railway and was a freelance writer for several local newspapers. Together with the retreating Romanians in 1944, he left for the West. He stated, "Odessa became one of the few cities of the occupied USSR, where participants of the White movement, who failed to evacuate after 1920, became active. On December 24, 1941, the first meeting of the initiative group of former officers and lower ranks of the Russian Imperial Army and Armed Forces of Southern Russia took place. Major Pustovoitov assumed leadership of the group. The main goal was declared to be the fight against Bolshevism, aiding families and children repressed under Stalin, providing assistance to the elderly and disabled, and maintaining the St. Magdalena Church. In the spring of 1943, white emigrant recruiters for the Russian Protective Corps, which actively opposed Bolshevism and partisanship, appeared in Odessa, led by Colonel L. S. Dumbadze. Many members of the initiative group joined the Russian Corps"³⁸.

In light of the circumstances faced by the youth of Odessa who was confronted with the dilemma of either accepting employment in Germany, enduring a return to Soviet rule again, or enlisting in a Russian military unit with the enticing possibility of deployment in the Balkans on good rations and less rigorous duty, it is evident that there were people inclined to enlist. Optimistic expectations were presented to them at a meeting with Russian emigration in Yugoslavia. The composition of the corps was considerably replenished by

³⁸ K. Aleksandrov (comp.), *Pod nemtsami. Vospominaniya, svidetelstva, dokumenty. Istoriko-dokumentalnyy sbornik* [Under the Germans. Memories, Testimonies, Documents. Historical and Documentary Collection], Saint Petersburg, Skriptorium, 2011, p. 356.

Odessans. On October 17, 1943, "Odesskaya Gazeta" ("Odessa Newspaper") reported in the article "Russian Black Sea Legion" that "on October 14, 1943, the third batch of Russian volunteers who joined the Russian Black Sea Legion went to the front"³⁹. There has been a sufficient quantity of such news in the local press of that time. The records from the State Archives of Odessa region serve as an independent source of information, containing "Lists of prisoners in Odessa prisons who expressed a desire to join the Russian corps of the German army in Serbia".⁴⁰

However, the topic requires a distinct examination. More thorough research on cultural collaborationism is also needed, specifically regarding the role of local newspapers, theatres, museums, etc.

CONCLUSIONS

The issue of collaborationism is one of the most controversial topics, not only for the former Soviet territory but for all of Europe.

The following quote serves as a fitting conclusion: "Given the particularly brutal nature of the occupation regime, the question of whether to collaborate in the economic or cultural sphere did not arise for the population of Ukraine. The life strategy was to survive. The formula of cooperation only increased the chances of survival"⁴¹. The occupation regime in Ukraine differed from that in Odessa. The occupation regime exhibited a degree of moderation, allowing a sense of peacetime normality. The authorities created a propaganda model in Odessa intended to show that the occupation regime was a European, tolerant, prosperous one, different from the Soviet one. This myth of Odessa's prosperity had a propaganda role. Odessa's relative prosperity contrasted with the German policy of starvation of the occupied regions of the Soviet Union. Most people faced the usual alternative: survive or die without essential resources for survival. They endeavoured to safeguard their property, resume work, create a business, and feed their loved ones precisely by interacting and cooperating with the occupiers. Such adaptation to new conditions can be considered the most widespread and natural. Simultaneously, there existed separate categories of those who sought active cooperation with the new owners, trying to gain their favour while

³⁹ "Odesskaya gazeta", Odessa, 1943, October 17.

⁴⁰ DАОО, F. 2350, op. 2, spr. 3.

⁴¹ Vitalii Horobets, *Ekonomichnyi ta...*, p. 102.

jeopardizing the safety of their fellow countrymen.

By examining the dynamics of interaction between the residents of Odessa and the Romanian occupation authorities in the economic and cultural spheres during the years 1941-1944, one can identify a spectrum of levels and motivations for cooperation among diverse social groups. Concurrently, the primary motivation for such interaction remained people's desire to ensure their physical survival. The recollection of the adversities experienced during the Soviet era remained vivid, allowing the residents of Odessa to adapt to the new circumstances with relative ease.

The Romanian administration preferred to keep, at least in the economic sectors, the former Soviet personnel. The Romanians exhibited a degree of hostility towards Ukrainian nationalism and collaborated more easily with the former employees of the state apparatus. The most remarkable instance is that of the intelligentsia, which, although not at all numerous, adopted the anti-Semitic discourse, thereby perpetuating the anti-Semitic climate in the region through their writings and dissemination of ideas. A second, very heterogeneous collaborationist group is represented by the recruited Transnistrian police forces, which operated under Romanian leadership and contributed to the measures taken both in Odessa and in Transnistria. Most of the inhabitants of Odessa adapted and chose to collaborate with the Romanian regime as a means of survival. Their enthusiasm for the dissolution of the Soviet regime in 1941 was tempered by discontent regarding the abuses of the new masters towards the end of the occupation period.

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