Swords or Shields?

Implementing and subverting the Final Solution in Nazi-occupied Europe

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Summary. From the Nazi point of view, the 'success' of the Final Solution varied widely from one country to another. But what accounts for this variation in victimization rate? Intuitively, one would expect Nazi efforts to have been more successful in countries that were particularly antisemitic; but a quick glance reveals that this is not at all the case. Facing such a puzzle, many historians argue that there is simply no systematic explanation for the variation. In contrast, I will show that the success of the German genocide program depended upon the particular relationship between Germany and each occupied country. Where German rule was direct, its implementation of the Final Solution was unhindered, and therefore more effective. On the other hand, where Germany ruled through collaborators, the precise implementation of genocidal policies was the result of complex bargaining and negotiations. Cooperating in matters of military and economic importance, collaborators could often 'drag their feet' when it came to implementing the Final Solution. My project will also outline the incentives that existed for collaborationist regimes to negotiate on behalf of local Jews — as well as the German incentives to accept their terms.

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"If I could not be your sword, at least I would be your shield."
— Gen. Henri-Philippe Pétain, during his trial for war crimes as head of the Vichy Government

The Holocaust is one of the most widely researched events of the 20th Century. It is also among the most misunderstood. Though historians have made immeasurable contributions to our understanding of this event, political scientists have been reluctant to join the debate. This is unfortunate, because political analysis has made great strides in our understanding of state-sponsored violence, ethnic conflict, and warfare — all of which have direct relevance for our understanding of the Holocaust.

In this project, I add an historically-sensitive contribution to our understanding of various political aspects of the Holocaust. I will do so by looking at how occupied countries responded to German demands during World War Two, especially those demands pertaining to the Final Solution. Scholars have long observed that the implementation of antisemitic policy depended largely on the attitude of the local population: Non-Jewish Danes participated in massive acts of passive and active resistance, thereby saving most of Denmark's Jewish population, while Romanians took to the Final Solution with such zeal that German military officers actually had to restrain the locals from committing sheer butchery in the city streets. But it is far from clear how these differing responses actually translated into the proportion of the Jewish population decimated in each occupied country.

Intuitively, one would expect higher rates of Jewish victimization in countries characterized by high degrees of antisemitism. However, this is not at all the case. In fact, Jews often fared best in countries that were otherwise amenable to Nazi policies, even when those countries were openly antisemitic. For example, despite public hostility to Jews in Romania, the puppet government in that country actually succeeded in saving nearly 50% of Romania's Jews from certain destruction. Contrast this with the experience of Jews in the Netherlands, where a Western-oriented government with no significant antisemitism and a long tradition of democracy and religious tolerance saw nearly three-quarters of its Jewish population deported and killed. The Jews of Vichy France and Croatia fared relatively well, in spite of the fact that these two countries are notorious for being among Hitler's most faithful collaborators. Meanwhile, despite the valiant and even legendary resistance of many Serbs to German authority, Serbia itself was the first occupied country in all of Europe to be declared *judenrein*, free of Jews. Most ironic of all, Italy and Finland — fellow Axis powers and Germany's closest allies — were also two of the safest countries in Europe from the Jewish point of view. Clearly, there is very little significant correlation between domestic antisemitism and degree of victimization.

If antisemitism was not the main determinant of Jewish victimization rates in Nazi-occupied Europe, what was? I will show that the 'success' of the German genocide program depended most importantly upon the relationship between Germany and each occupied country. In each country it occupied, Germany faced a choice as to how it was to administer the newly acquired territory. In some cases (like Poland and Bohemia-Moravia), Germany occupied and ruled the territory directly. In others (Vichy France), Germany ruled through collaborators. I argue that where German rule was direct, its implementation of the Final Solution was unhindered, and therefore more

effective. On the other hand, where Germany ruled through collaborators, the precise implementation of genocidal policies was the result of complex bargaining and negotiations: In return for their loyal cooperation in military or economic policy, collaborators could often get away with partial or simply 'unenthusiastic' implementation of the Final Solution. This was often a major factor in reducing rates of Jewish victimization.

As part of this project, I investigate the incentives that existed for collaborationist regimes to negotiate on behalf of local Jews —as well as the German incentives to accept their terms. With regard to the latter, Nazi Germany clearly found indirect rule to be beneficial in a number of respects. Usually, what Germany lost in terms of inefficiency and compromise, it gained in terms of lower governance costs. Thus, so long as collaborationist regimes could be trusted not to sabotage the German war effort, Germany was happy to let its 'Quislings' take on the responsibilities of fighting partisans or enforcing local law. Indeed, with locals at the helm, local administration retained at least the pretense of legitimacy, something that was nearly impossible where Germany ruled directly.

German occupation was not an unmitigated evil for most collaborators, either. Aside from the obvious fact that their positions in office were often bolstered by Nazi persecution of the opposition, occupied countries could often reap the economic rewards of trade with the Third Reich. In the meantime, military cooperation with Germany often held out the promise of territorial expansion at the expense of one's neighbors —as it did for Finland and Romania in Russia, and Bulgaria in Yugoslavia and Greece. Lured by these economic, military, and political rewards of cooperation, and responding to their own domestic concerns, collaborators often had the incentive to 'strike deals' with Nazi officials, deals which often had the result of protecting local Jewish populations.

But why would collaborators use their resulting autonomy to *protect* local Jews? Certainly, genuine concern for the well-being of Jews, or reflection upon the sheer horror of the Nazi program, was sometimes a relevant factor. But collaborators are not known for their commitment to moral principle. I shall argue that collaborators only consistently protected Jews when it was in their best interest to do so, narrowly defined. Sometimes, they did so because Jews were part of key political constituencies. And sometimes, Jews even bribed local officials for protection from Nazi persecution.

This project constitutes a significant contribution, not only to our study of the Holocaust, but to our understanding of antisemitism, ethnic hatred, and state-sponsored violence generally. First, though many Holocaust scholars have considered the implementation of the Final Solution in this or that particular country, there are few broadly comparative studies of the Nazi genocide, and none that provides such a close analysis of the incentives facing the main actors in this tragedy. This gap in the literature, alone, warrants further attention.

The more general approach to this well-documented issue also entails certain rewards; and, thus, the methodology of political science makes it particularly well-suited for this study. After all, arguments that rely on the centrality of antisemitism in the Holocaust place considerable emphasis on sentiment and ideology in the perpetration of ethnic violence. But many political scientists dismiss the argument that 'ancient hatreds' play a decisive role in most ethnic brutality. As a Holocaust-specific variant of the 'ancient hatreds' argument, I believe that antisemitism is but one important element in any explanation of the Holocaust. Thus, I believe there is another,

heretofore under-represented, side of the debate —one that stresses the importance of factors other than antisemitism in the perpetration of the Nazi genocide.

In applying political analysis to the Holocaust, I evaluate the importance of material and strategic factors in the formulation of Nazi policy. I hypothesize that these factors played at least as decisive a role as antisemitism in the implementation of the Final Solution. In so arguing, I am not saying that antisemitism was unrelated to victimization-rate variation. Rather, I am broadening the debate so as to include factors that many previous studies have overlooked.

What others have said.

In the vast literature on the Holocaust, there are surprisingly few attempts to explain comparative rates of victimization in rigorous or generalizable terms. In those works that *are* explicitly comparative, cultural and ideological factors (of which antisemitism is one) often take on important explanatory roles. However, as we have seen, there is little evidence that domestic antisemitism was an important determinant of Jewish victimization.

Though many scholars are hesitant to explicitly suggest explanatory variables for differing victimization rates[*], a few possible factors become apparent in a review of their findings. Geography, the timing of deportations[†], local attitudes and demographics, and even the precise make up of the German occupational bureaucracy have all been proposed as explanations for Jewish victimization. But while each of these factors clearly has an effect, none is sufficient to explain outcomes across a wide variety of cases.[‡]

To my knowledge, the only other current research on the important topic of victimization rate variation is the pioneering work of Wolfgang Seibel. In "The Strength of Perpetrators – The Holocaust in Western Europe, 1940-1944,"[§] Seibel explains the comparative Jewish victimization in France, Belgium and the Netherlands with regard to the nature of the German occupational bureaucracy (ie, a civilian versus

[*] In their broadly comparative analysis of the implementation of the Final Solution in Western Europe, Marrus and Paxton conclude that "Generalizations break apart on the stubborn particularity" of each case [196]. Bela Vago echoes that sentiment in his complementary assessment of Eastern Europe, arguing that "generalization … entail[s] the risk of simplification and misrepresentation" [233]. [Both articles found in François Furet's (ed) *Unanswered Questions: Nazi Germany and the Genocide of the Jews* (New York: Schocken Books, 1989).] My hypothesis is that such caution is unwarranted, and that we *can* make certain, limited generalizations regarding victimization rate — even across such a wide variety of cases.

[†] Marrus & Paxton posit that "Proper timing was obviously crucial to the success of opposition to Nazi Jewish policy" [195]. The same argument has been made to explain differing outcomes in Denmark and Norway (see, for example, Oddvar K. Hoidal and Leo Goldberger as found in John J. Michalczyk's (ed) *Resisters, Rescuers, and Refugees: Historical and Ethical Issues* [Kansas City: Sheed & Ward, 1997]). However, among France, Belgium, and the Netherlands, deportations began earliest in France (March '42) —the country with the lowest victimization rate of the three by far (26%). They began at roughly the same time for Belgium (60%) and the Netherlands (75%), even though Belgium's victimization rate was somewhat lower. Among the last deportations in all of Europe were from Hungary (May '44), although that country also had very high rates of victimization (70%). See Franciszek Piper's "Estimating the Number of Deportees to and Victims of the Auschwitz- Birkenau Camp" as found in *Yad Vashem Studies XXI* (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 1991); Joods Historisch Museum Amsterdam, *Documenten van de Jodenvervolging in Nederland 1940 – 1945* (Amsterdam: Polak en Van Gennep, 1965); Serge Klarsfeld, *Memorial to the Jews Deported from France 1942 – 1944: Documentation of the deportation of the victims of the Final Solution in France* (New York: Beate Klarsfeld Foundation, 1983); Serge Klarsfeld & Maxime Steinberg, *Mémorial de la déportation des Juifs de Belgique* (Brussels, 1982); and Randolph L. Braham, *The Destruction of Hungarian Jewry: A Documentary Account* (New York: Pro Arte for the World Federation of Hungarian Jews, 1963).

[‡] For example, I have conducted a statistical test which compares the timing of deportations with victimization rates across the German area of influence. While there is a weak relationship between these factors, it is not statistically significant.

[§] As found in *Governance: An International Journal of Policy, Administration, and Institutions* (15:2) April 2002: pp. 211-240.

military administration) and territorial fragmentation of the occupied country. However, Seibel's case selection is still somewhat limited, focusing on only three countries, all in Western Europe. By broadening his analysis to include Scandinavia and Eastern Europe, I believe I can better test the applicability of his explanatory variables. For example, Seibel attributes France's low victimization rate (in part) to that country's territorial fragmentation. But Greece and Yugoslavia were also subject to territorial fragmentation, and victimization in these countries remained rather high. Moreover, I believe I can provide (i) a more precise determination of German occupation authority and (ii) an overview of the motives of collaborators, two important pieces of the puzzle missing in Seibel's analysis.

Perhaps the most explicit treatment of Jewish victimization during World War II is that of Helen Fein's *Accounting for Genocide*.[*] Fein argues that the "extent of Jewish victimization" varied primarily with regard to the level of prewar antisemitism, and increased sharply "as a function of the intensity of the SS grip over the state in 1941" [82]. Of all the scholarship on this specific issue, Fein's comes closest to presenting a generalizable and theoretical explanation of Jewish victimization. Still, there are certain exceptions to her prediction (most notably Romania and the Netherlands). Moreover, antisemitism, so important in Fein's analysis, is a variable that resists rigorous measurement and only weakly correlates with Jewish victimization. Finally, there is some question as to whether "SS grip over the state" [my emphasis], rather than German authority in general, was of paramount importance.

But the most serious omission of Fein and Seibel alike is simply one of detail. Though their work provides a powerful foundation for future study of this issue (my own included), their brevity on the issue of collaboration itself leaves out a crucial 'half' of the equation. Without a detailed, country-by-country analysis of collaborators and their motives, we cannot determine why some collaborators chose to use their relative autonomy to *protect* local Jews. Notwithstanding these critiques, Fein has done the important work of directing us to the some of the most relevant questions, and Seibel has provided a powerful foundation for understanding the German role in the country-by-country implementation of the Final Solution. I intent to build upon the foundation provided by their important scholarship.

Explaining implementation…

My investigation takes over precisely where that of Fein and Seibel leaves off. With explicit consideration of German military and economic strategy, I provide a rigorous framework for understanding the degree of German authority in each occupied country. Additionally, with explicit consideration of the political dynamics and incentive structures within collaborationist regimes, I can explain why local officials (even those in relatively antisemitic countries) sometimes used their power to stymie German social policy, including its implementation of the Final Solution.

Like any regime at war, Germany had to consider the relative costs and benefits of direct, occupational rule. Aside from securing a border from Allied attack, Germany had to consider the sometimes immense costs of fighting partisans, instituting and enforcing domestic law, not to mention the more 'typical' costs of governmental

[*] (New York: The Free Press, 1979). The book's sub-title ("National Responses and Jewish Victimization during the Holocaust") notwithstanding, Fein's work gives direct attention to this question in only half of one chapter ("The Bonds that Hold, The Bonds that Break"). The rest, though intriguing, is only tangentially related to the question of victimization rate variation. (Irving Louis Horowitz makes a similar (but more critical) observation in his review of Fein's work. This is yet another reason that direct attention to this question is warranted.

administration. These costs might indeed be prohibitive in countries where home-rule was a long-standing and established tradition. Certainly, where possible, Germany would rather leave the costs of governance to local officials —even if this required that Germany sacrifice its ability to carry out genocidal policies effectively.

In its treatment of foreign governments, Germany seems to have been guided primarily by military and economic concerns. For instance, Germany explicitly bargained with Bulgaria and Romania — accepting Jews from their newly acquired territories while relinquishing its demands on the Jews in Bulgaria and Romania proper. No doubt, Germany's reliance on these countries in terms of military assistance tied its hands in terms of the intensity with which it could make ideologically-motivated demands. All other things being equal, Germany certainly preferred the efficient and unhindered implementation of anti-Jewish policy. However, observation shows that Germany was not willing to sacrifice an ally or faithful collaborationist in order to achieve that aim.[*]

Clearly, Germany had the incentive to rule through collaborators — thereby exporting the costs of governance to local officials. And in return for their local autonomy, collaborators were usually willing to 'pay' Germany by providing faithful cooperation. However, with regard to some specific issues (including the 'Jewish Question'), Germany couldn't push these collaborators 'too' far —lest she jeopardize their continued support in other (more important) aspects of the ongoing military operation. The resulting dynamic left considerable room for local officials to negotiate with Germany on behalf of local Jews. With promises (and even deliveries) of continued military and economic support, domestic rulers could often win security guarantees for their Jewish constituents.

… and subversion.

Looking at this from the point of view of the collaborators, however, the implication is that *occupied countries could actually preserve a fair degree of autonomy simply by collaborating with the Nazis on policy issues that had little or nothing to do with the genocide program*. Consider, for example, the actions of a regime whose very name has become synonymous with the evils of collaboration: Vichy France. While much has been made of Vichy participation in the implementation of the Final Solution, it's easy to forget that Vichy officials were long successful in making an exception that helped the country's Jews escape persecution: Routinely, foreign Jews living in France were deported, while Jews who were French citizens remained unharmed —at least for the initial stages of the deportations. This 'resistance' — though hardly heroic and tragically bigoted in its own right —was a constant headache for German occupational officials, and no doubt contributed to the fact that over three-quarters of the Jews in that country survived the war. In his own defense after the war, Vichy collaborator Henri-Philippe Pétain said to the French people: "If I could not be your sword, at least I would be your shield." Of course, Pétain was hardly concerned with the well being of French Jews as Jews. But the chauvinistic nationalism in France at the time was simply such that deporting French citizens was politically dangerous, regardless of the religious affiliation of the deportees. Though cold comfort and hardly the product of

[*] As a point of contrast, note that Germany only explicitly revoked Hungarian independence when it suspected that country's lack of *military* allegiance. The decision had disastrous consequences for Hungary's Jews —who had been largely untouched before 1944. As already noted, the late start of deportations in Hungary didn't hinder the German effort to decimate the country's Jewish population.

'righteous' intentions, the words of this French war criminal are not without a hint of credibility.

Similar stories of partial cooperation, shirking, and foot-dragging can be told of collaborationist countries and German allies around the continent. In April 1941, Bulgaria joined the Axis powers in invading Yugoslavia. King Boris and the parliament remained in power. In February 1943, Germany and Bulgaria actually signed an agreement regarding the deportation of Jews from recently conquered territory in Yugoslav and Aegean Macedonia. Ultimately, 11,400 Jews were deported and killed. However, this number represented a certain amount of shirking on the part of the Bulgarians, because it fell short of the roughly 20,000 Macedonian Jews referred to in the agreement. What's more, by agreeing to deport only these *Macedonian* Jews, Bulgarian officials actually succeeded in protecting the nearly 50,000 Jews who lived in Bulgaria-proper [Vago: 223-7]. All told, over 80% of Bulgarian Jews were saved — a unique outcome in the "belt of mixed populations where anti-Semitism was rampant" [Arendt 1963: 185]. Like Bulgaria, Romania joined in the German war effort, and came to control new swaths of territory for her efforts. In so doing, however, Atonescu, like his Bulgarian counterpart, was able to strike a 'dirty deal' with the Germans — whereby the Jews in the newly conquered territories were essentially sold-out in favor of a protection guarantee for the Jews in Romania itself. Like many ruthless antisemites, however, Atonescu found a way to turn his 'heroic' protection of Romania's Jews into a profit: Jews in Romania were soon forced to pay higher taxes than their fellow citizens. With this 'Jew tax' in full force, Atonescu steadily became only more interested in protecting 'his' Jews from German persecution.

Even in countries that didn't benefit *territorially* from cooperation with the Germans, other bases of 'compromise' could be found. In Italy, Germany's closest and most 'reliable' ally, Benito Mussolini eventually bowed to German pressure to introduce anti-Jewish legislation.[*] But Mussolini was sure to exempt certain categories of Jews from the laws' effect —among them, war veterans and members of the Fascist Party. The result was astounding: Jews from around Italy flocked to the party of *il duce*. Ultimately, Jews were only deported from Italy in significant numbers *after* a coup removed Mussolini from power.

Why protect local Jews?

Of course, one glaring question remains: Why would domestic officials expend valuable political capital or risk their positions in office for the sake of local Jews? My answer to this question also differs from that of many prominent scholars. This is not to say that their explanations are wrong. Rather, I will show that *in addition to* the explanations of various historians, there exists another, heretofore unexplored, influence on the collaborators who protected local Jews. Let us consider these influences in greater detail.

First, there is the sheer magnitude of the German program: While antisemites around Europe may have been content to see their Jews resettled elsewhere, few were willing to be accomplices in mass murder [Arendt 1963: 165] —especially of those who had long been considered *citizens* (albeit, persecuted ones) of the country in question. Inherent in these hesitations is an enduring political reality: Like Germany, collaborators, too, were subject to the powerful forces of political expediency. Even though they usually didn't rely on the popular support of their people as in a

[*] Mussolini called this legislation a "showy but cheap token payment" to his fellow Axis power [Levin 1990: 299].

democracy, collaborators still had to balance German demands with the needs and desires of at least a selected constituency. So, when that constituency was hostile to the idea of deporting citizens (Jewish, socialist, or otherwise) to Nazi death camps, collaborators faced a terrifying and potentially career-threatening Catch-22: Ignore German demands, and thereby risk being thrown out of office, or acquiesce to them, and risk the same fate at the hands of your own citizens.[*] It's no wonder, then, that collaborators often tried to find a compromise: Implement German racial policy, but with enough hesitancy —or enough loopholes —to satisfy domestic audiences. Only in Germany, where anti-Jewish propaganda had worked its toll for nearly a decade, were protests relatively (though not completely) non-existent. Obviously, factors such as these would become only more salient as the war progressed, rumors spread, and the true meaning of words like 'resettlement' became known. [†]

Before going on, we should subject this explanation to closer scrutiny. While strong public reactions certainly *influenced* the decision-making of collaborationist and German alike, we must be careful not to draw too direct of a connection between popular sentiment and a specific rate of victimization. As mentioned earlier, popular sentiment in Romania was largely in favor of murdering local Jews — to which spontaneous pogroms in that country attest. Yet that country demonstrates a relatively low victimization rate. Likewise, public demonstrations *against* the Nazis in both Denmark and the Netherlands only successfully thwarted deportations in the former. This is to say that, just as antisemitism alone did not lead to higher rates of victimization, neither did *philo*semitism lead to lower ones. The love of Jews was no more a relevant force in Denmark or Norway as was the hatred of Jews in Romania or Poland. As Leni Yahil wisely cautions: "Here is a rare instance where the researcher must be careful not to overdo his enthusiasm for the rescuer, any more than he should overindulge his hatred for the persecutor."[‡]

While antisemitism played a crucial and even definitive role in the implementation of, and reaction to, Nazi policy, that factor is only weakly correlated with higher rates of victimization. No doubt, public attitudes toward Jews play an important, albeit indirect, role in the explanation. But in order to truly account for comparative rates of victimization, an investigation of collaborationist motives must also include explanations as to why this factor was a more salient force in some countries than in others. Antisemitism *must* play an important role in any explanation of comparative victimization. It cannot play the only role.

Over the course of the war, many collaborators also seemed eager to distance themselves from the Nazi regime. After all, the sort of nationalism engendered by fascism has historically torn empires apart, not held them together. Thus, if only to signal a certain degree of autonomy from German pressure, or to underscore the 'sanctity' and sincerity of (domestic) 'racial purity', collaborators often sought to put their own 'stamp' on antisemitic policies. Ironically, these 'self-imposed' anti-Jewish measures often had the effect of protecting the very Jews they were intended to harm.

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[*] This is a classic problem faced by agents who are simultaneously beholden to two or more principals. [See McCubbins, Noll and Weingast 1989 and 1987]

[†] The explanation that collaborators protected Jews because they or their constituents felt morally obliged to do so has been proposed by a number of theorists (mostly regarding Western European countries). But it's worth noting that the explanation is not formally materialist, because it relies on the ideological *sentiment* of a domestic constituency.

[‡] *The Rescue of Danish Jewry: Test of a Democracy,* p. *xx.*

Sometimes, where collaborators had the authority to persecute local Jews, German officials *lacked* the authority to deport them.

Finally, collaborators who refused to negotiate on behalf of their Jews gave up a potentially 'profitable' opportunity to exploit them. In some cases, Jews themselves could provide local governors with financial or even political support in return for protection from German genocidal policies. With one notable exception, Yehuda Bauer's *Jews for Sale? Nazi-Jewish Negotiations, 1933 – 1945*, the literature is almost completely silent on the issue of explicit negotiation for Jewish lives. As his title (*Nazi-Jewish Negotiations*) suggests, however, even Bauer's study gives only passing reference to some of the most fertile ground for research: Negotiations between Jews and local *collaborators*.

In exploring the implementation of the Final Solution, the distinction between German and collaborationist perpetrators is a crucial one. But Bauer's analysis focuses primarily on two cases, Slovakia and Hungary, both of which were firmly within the German sphere of influence. By taking his lead and expanding his analysis to an even broader array of cases, however, my project breaks new ground, and gives deserved attention to a fascinating and heretofore ignored aspect of collaboration. This development is important because it's precisely the collaborators who, in a semi-autonomous regime, are more willing and more able to negotiate and accept side-payments from would-be victims of Nazi persecution.

I argue that the most important factor in determining the success or failure of Jewish negotiations was the nationality of the intermediary with whom the Jews negotiated —an issue directly related to the form of occupational administration. The reasons for this are simple: For any member of the German occupational bureaucracy, the simple act of negotiating with Jews could be grounds for dismissal, or worse. And that's to assume that the would-be intermediary himself is sufficiently 'unscrupulous' to subvert Nazi policy in an effort to save Jewish lives. Besides, such a would-be intermediary is directly under the thumb of fellow Germans — many of whom, for reasons discussed earlier, are only more immediately and faithfully committed to the very Nazi ideology and policy he is charged to enforce. Bauer observes that most Nazi-Jewish negotiations failed; and "some succeeded to a very limited degree" [1994: 1]. I argue that the incentive structure of the occupational bureaucracy doomed such negotiations, even before they began.

Where domestic collaborators, rather than occupying Germans, are in charge, however, the situation is very different. As political figures, a domestic official's job (ostensibly, at least) is to respond to the demands of local constituents, Jewish or otherwise. Of course, collaborators are no ordinary political figures. They are simultaneously the agents of another, competing principal — German occupational authorities. But even that relationship is likely to be fraught with agency slack in a way an exclusively German bureaucracy is not. In negotiating with a collaborator rather than a German bureaucrat, a Jewish community leader is negotiating with someone who may or may not be committed to the Nazi party line. His negotiation-partner may never have agreed with Nazi, anti-Jewish ideology; and, even if he genuinely did, that very collaborator would at least be simultaneously (and perhaps primarily) beholden to an important, non-German constituency. The more autonomy a collaborationist regime has, the more distance there is between that regime and the Nazi ideologues from whom genocidal policies originate. There are more points of potential delay, more space for negotiation, and, ultimately, more room for life.

Neither Melos nor Masada.

From Melos to Masada, the ancient world is littered with the ruins of those who defended principle to the point of death. But for the most part, those who prefer sovereignty to survival are the exception, not the rule. True, even the cities that survive as subjects of another bare the scars of imperial conquest and domination. And there's little evidence that the strategy of collaboration is the 'best' one in the long term — much less, the 'right' one. But objective study of the Holocaust requires that we deflate villainy as much as we do heroism. Disturbing as the moral implications may be, we cannot deny the simple fact that collaborators — be it by the virtue of their own intention or the unwitting consequence of selfishness — succeeded in saving more Jews than the most righteous of gentiles. There is little doubt that history's greatest freedom-fighters had the best interests of their people in mind. But if we are to learn anything from the most tragic events in Jewish history, it might be that, while Tito, ben Simon, and Bar Kokhba are rightly considered heroes of a 'Jewish' cause, Mussolini, Pétain and Herod saved more Jewish lives.

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