

Introduction

Between 1940 and 1944, the Vichy French government actively aided the German war effort and voluntarily helped to implement Nazi policies by collaborating with Hitler's government. When it came to Fascist Italy, however, the contrast could scarcely have been greater. Despite Mussolini's government being allied to Berlin, Vichy treated it entirely differently. Throughout the Second World War, the head of the Vichy government, Marshal Philippe Pétain, never met Mussolini. There were no dramatic images to match the fateful handshake between the French leader and Hitler in October 1940. There was no headline-grabbing announcement of a new relationship of collaboration between France and Italy either. Nor did Vichy's second-in-command, Pierre Laval, ever publicly state that he wished Italy to win the war. Vichy's propaganda did not extol the virtues of an Italian-dominated new Europe. Nor did it call upon French workers to volunteer their labour for Italian factories. Vichy never even accepted that Italy had defeated France in June 1940 or that it had the right to occupy French territory. Nevertheless, between June 1940 and September 1943, Vichy had to deal with not just one Axis government but two.

This book is about the choices faced by the Vichy government during the Second World War. It explores how, contrary to appearances, Vichy's path to collaboration involved not merely Berlin but Rome as well. When war erupted in September 1939, Italy was not ready. Mussolini, therefore, reluctantly adopted a position of non-belligerency. With the Fascist regime ideologically geared towards war and expansion, however, it was only a matter of time before Mussolini joined the military action. As German forces invaded France in May 1940, bringing military collapse and chaos within the government and country, Mussolini decided to seize the opportunity. On 10 June 1940, he declared war against France and Britain. Despite making only minimal military gains against French forces, the Italians secured a seat alongside the Germans at the victors' table a few weeks later. The German armistice terms divided France into multiple

zones that included a large area of German occupation in the north and an unoccupied area in the south. In the armistice terms signed at the Villa Incisa outside Rome, meanwhile, Italy gained a small occupation zone in south-eastern France. More significantly, however, with Hitler leaving the implementation of the armistice terms across the Mediterranean and the Levant in Rome's hands, Italian military and civilian officials gained a foothold in the very areas to which the Fascist regime laid claim. Between July 1940 and November 1942, Rome engaged in a concerted campaign of attempting to annex its zone of occupation in south-eastern France and seeking to undermine French colonial authority in North Africa and the Levant. When Axis forces moved into the rest of France following the Allied landings in North Africa, Italy significantly expanded its occupation zone to span eleven departments. From November 1942, around four million people in south-eastern France and Corsica were subjected to an increasingly violent and repressive occupation that only ended with the Italian surrender in September 1943.

The Vichy government that was born out of the defeat of 1940 has become a byword for some of the darkest days in French history. After the liberation, its persecutory policies and willing collaboration in Hitler's plans to recast Europe along Nazi lines shattered into paroxysms of national soul-searching, which continue to this day. Instead of focusing attention inwards, however, this book analyses Vichy's outward interactions. Placing Italy at centre stage, it argues that Fascist claims over French territory and desires to see French power permanently diminished meant that in a different but no less troubling way, the vexations that loomed over France and its colonial empire were Italian as well as German. The Fascist policy of prestige compelled Rome to be more determined to assert its demands over France than Berlin. And whereas Berlin deemed it expedient to mask its true intentions towards France while the conflict continued, Rome did not. As a consequence, Vichy faced not just a double threat but a double bind.

Vichy's double bind operated on multiple levels. On one level, it lay in the escalating demands of Berlin and Rome that went beyond the terms of the June 1940 armistices. In another, more complex sense, it saw Vichy caught between the fundamentally irreconcilable yet inescapable positions of the two Axis governments. Rome's attempts to extend its claims over France meant that Vichy faced a secondary set of demands that were incompatible with those from Berlin. Unable to resolve the conflict between the German and Italian positions, Vichy sought to exploit it. At periodic junctures between June 1940 and September 1943 and at different

levels of administration, Vichy attempted to set one Axis government against the other. In reality, however, instead of playing a double game between Rome and Berlin, Vichy found itself caught in a double bind. Its attempts to benefit from the irreconcilability of Axis approaches foundered upon its inability to escape the demands with which, as a defeated state, it was confronted.

Offering the first wide-ranging analysis of Vichy's dealings with Fascist Italy between 1940 and 1943, this book challenges the tendency to focus upon encounters with the Nazis in much of the scholarship on France during the Second World War. It does not seek merely to fill a gap in the historiography but rather to argue that the Italian dimension invites us to ask fresh questions and to revise our understanding of some of the key arguments and concepts developed by historians of Vichy. It suggests that Italy presented a set of challenges that had far-reaching consequences for Vichy's pursuit of collaboration, its response to occupation and its domestic and foreign policies more broadly.

Over decades, scholars have nuanced models of collaboration by exploring the ambiguities of actions taken from the state to the individual level, as well as motivations ranging from pragmatic, opportunistic and limited cooperation to committed, wide-ranging, ideological collusion.¹ However, their understandings have remained framed in terms of a two-way relationship between the French and German authorities. The implications of being drawn into Nazi policies mean that for all their complexity, historians' analyses have tended to emphasise the consequences of French actions over the significance of their motivations. The corollary to such an approach has been to define collaboration by casting a wide net that includes a range of actions and intentions within an overarching picture of cooperation and collusion. It has meant that if historians have argued that some degree of accommodation with the Germans was unavoidable, the picture remains one in which willing ideological collaboration with the Nazis sits at the extreme end of the spectrums of action.

¹ Jean-Pierre Azéma and Olivier Wieviorka, *Vichy 1940–1944* (Paris: Perrin, 2000); Marc Olivier Baruch, *Servir l'Etat français: L'administration en France de 1940 à 1944* (Paris: Fayard, 1997); François Broche and Jean-François Muracciole, *Histoire de la collaboration: 1940–1945* (Paris: Tallandier, 2017); Philippe Burrin, *Living with Defeat: France under the German Occupation, 1940–1944*, trans. Janet Lloyd (London: Arnold, 1996); Stanley Hoffmann, 'Collaborationism in France during World War II', *Journal of Modern History*, 40:3 (1968), 375–95; Simon Kitson, *Vichy et la chasse aux espions nazis 1940–1942: Complexités de la politique de collaboration* (Paris: Autrement, 2005); Robert O. Paxton, *Vichy France: Old Guard and New Order, 1940–1944* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1972).

By contrast, this book suggests that analysing French dealings with Italy reveals the multi-dimensional and multi-directional nature of Vichy's policy. Far from being merely a Franco-German relationship, collaboration was shaped by the trilateral relations between Vichy, Berlin and Rome. Italian actions served variously to aggravate and advance Vichy's relations with Berlin. At the same time, French relations with Italy drove Vichy to take measures whose consequences obscured the real nature of their intentions and motivations. At its most extreme, the involvement of Italy as a third actor turned French policy intentions and consequences on their head. Thwarting Italian claims over France became a motive for Vichy to collaborate with Berlin, while seeking concessions from Berlin became a motive for Vichy to collaborate with Rome.

The incorporation of Italy, therefore, reveals at once the unsatisfactory nature of models of collaboration as a bilateral relationship between France and Germany and the inadequacy of linear models of French policy that posit collaboration in its various forms as being at the extreme end of a spectrum of choices and actions. In order to develop an understanding that incorporates the role played by Italy in shaping and complicating French policy, this book, therefore, emphasises the significance of motive as much as consequence in Vichy's actions. In so doing, it advances an interpretation of Franco-Italian relations as one that distinguishes between acts of compliance and acts of collaboration.

Unlike with Germany, Vichy had no sustained policy of collaborating with Italy; its compliance was restricted to limited domains, and there was little ideological imperative towards collaborationism. The broad evolution in French relations with Italy was such that in the period between June and November 1940, Vichy actively sought rapprochement with Rome to counter German domination. Between December 1940 and March 1942, Vichy engaged in opportunistic compliance and limited collaboration with the Italian authorities. Finally, between March 1942 and September 1943, Vichy's relations with Rome were characterised by opposition and reluctant compliance rather than collaboration. The pattern that emerges from examining French engagements with the Italian authorities from the diplomatic level down to the local level in France, Corsica, French North Africa and the Levant was that opportunistic collaboration was rare, acts of limited compliance more common and obstruction the dominant position.

With strong cultural and historical connections, Italy seemed a more obvious candidate than Germany for French rapprochement and collaboration. However, Vichy's attempts to make common cause with Rome

founded upon Mussolini's territorial claims and political demands. As a consequence, whereas the narrative of Franco-German relations was one of Vichy drawing ever further into the Nazi orbit, with Italy, the trajectory was in the opposite direction. This book, therefore, challenges concepts of the relationship between state collaboration and ideological collaborationism that have been constructed with reference to Franco-German relations. If French proponents of collaboration constructed a rationale in which defeat by Germany would be mitigated by willing engagement in a Nazi-dominated Europe, they saw no compensatory value in an Italian victory. In the absence of any sustained collaboration with Italy, and with little to nourish the aspirations of those sympathetic to Fascist ideology, the relationship between state collaboration and ideological collaborationism with Fascist Italy was virtually the mirror image of that with Nazi Germany. Exploring French encounters with Italy, therefore, significantly transforms our understanding of Vichy's wider wartime engagements. What emerges is a picture in which Vichy was less pliant and more opportunistic than previously depicted, but more constrained in its ability to act as well. Ultimately, the tragedy was that between Germany and Italy, Vichy was caught in a double bind from which it was unwilling and unable to break free.

This book necessarily builds upon as well as challenges the rich body of scholarship on Vichy, Fascist Italy and the Second World War more broadly. In particular, it owes a debt to the path-breaking work of Robert Paxton, whose study of Vichy continues to influence how historians understand French collaboration with Nazi Germany decades after it was first published.² This book also returns to the work of Stanley Hoffmann, whose analysis of the different types of collaboration has proved similarly enduring.³ By incorporating the Italian dimension of Vichy's undertakings, this book reassesses Hoffmann's model of the relationship between state collaboration and ideological collaborationism. Philippe Burrin's notion of 'accommodation' provides a third focus for critical engagement.⁴ It incorporates behaviours ranging from pragmatic opportunism to more ideologically driven collusion. Yet while the notion of 'accommodation' might have broader applicability, its conception in relation to the German occupation means that it cannot so easily be applied to Franco-Italian interactions. The work of historians such as Marc Olivier

² Paxton, *Vichy France*.

³ Hoffmann, 'Collaborationism', pp. 378–9.

⁴ Burrin, *Living with Defeat*, pp. 2–4, 461–3.

Baruch, Simon Kitson and Denis Peschanski on how the defence of sovereignty led Vichy to make ever-increasing concessions to Berlin is a fourth central theme explored in this book.⁵ By incorporating the Italian dimension into its analysis, this book suggests that Vichy regarded French sovereignty in pragmatic terms, treating it as a kind of currency that could not only be saved, but bought and exchanged between Berlin and Rome at fluctuating rates.

This book aims to contribute towards the relatively neglected study of Vichy's foreign relations. Since the publication of Jean-Baptiste Duroselle's wide-ranging and unsurpassed analysis of French diplomacy during the Second World War, the subject has tended to be overlooked in favour of other avenues of research.⁶ This book adopts a different approach to that taken by Duroselle, however. It seeks to capture the complexity of French relations with Germany and Italy and how they were conducted not just through conventional diplomatic routes but through the armistice commissions, local authorities and unofficial intermediaries. Shaped not just by government policies, ideological imperatives or even domestic and international pressures, French relations with the Axis were determined by the actions of individuals and communities at a local level as well.

When compared with the vast array of scholarship on French collaboration with Nazi Germany, the ways in which Vichy engaged with the Italian government and military authorities remain under-explored. Many of the leading studies on Franco-Italian relations and their wider international context end in 1940 or focus on Italian rather than French policy.⁷ The most significant study of Franco-Italian relations between 1940 and 1943 is Romain Rainero's work on the Italian Armistice Commission for France.⁸ Containing many insights into the workings of the French and

⁵ Marc-Olivier Baruch, *Le régime de Vichy 1940–1944* (Paris: Tallandier, 2017), p. 52; Denis Peschanski, 'Vichy Singular and Plural', in Sarah Fishman, Robert Zaretsky, Ioannis Sinanoglou, Leonard V. Smith and Laura Lee Downs (eds.), *France at War: Vichy and the Historians* (Oxford: Berg, 2000); Kitson, *Vichy et la chasse*, pp. 170–82.

⁶ Jean-Baptiste Duroselle, *L'Abîme 1939–1944* (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1986). Exceptions include: Dominique Chassard, *Vichy et le Saint-Siège: Quatre ans de relations diplomatiques juillet 1940–août 1944* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2015) and Michael S. Neiberg, *When France Fell: The Vichy Crisis and the Fate of the Anglo-American Alliance* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2021).

⁷ William I. Shorrock, *From Ally to Enemy: The Enigma of Fascist Italy in French Diplomacy, 1920–1940* (Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 1988); Reynolds M. Salerno, *Vital Crossroads: Mediterranean Origins of the Second World War, 1935–1940* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2002); H. James Burgwyn, *Italian Foreign Policy in the Interwar Period 1918–1940* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1997); H. James Burgwyn, *Mussolini Warlord: Failed Dreams of Empire, 1940–1943* (New York: Enigma, 2012).

⁸ Romain Rainero, *La commission italienne d'armistice avec la France: Les rapports entre la France de Vichy et l'Italie de Mussolini (10 juin 1940–8 septembre 1943)* (Paris: Service Historique de l'Armée, 1995).

Italian delegations, it remains an essential work of reference on this subject. Rainero explores French as well as Italian sources, but having been published through the Service Historique de l'Armée de Terre, the book's scope is limited to the material held in its archives. By contrast, Massimo Borgogni's research engages with French and Italian diplomatic sources, but in turn, it neglects the daily negotiations between the French authorities and the Italian Armistice Commission.⁹ While Enrica Costa Bona explores Franco-Italian relations in a broader chronological framework, her work focuses principally on Italian policy and is based upon published diplomatic sources.¹⁰ This book, therefore, seeks to take a broader perspective, engaging with a wider variety of archival sources and focusing upon French rather than Italian policy.

Research into the experiences of the Second World War in France continues to flourish with fresh approaches and new enquiries into previously neglected groups, but still tends to deal with the German occupation.¹¹ Among the somewhat smaller body of scholarship that does explore the Italian occupation, local studies and research on the Italian occupying forces have led the way.¹² More recently, however, historians have turned to focus on the experiences of French populations and the actions of local French authorities as well. Jean-Louis Panicacci has published a wide-ranging analysis exploring the 'ambiguities' of the occupation in areas with strong cultural and historical connections with Italy.¹³ Emanuele Sica, meanwhile, has explored the significance of cultural proximity in

⁹ Massimo Borgogni, *Mussolini e la Francia di Vichy: Dalla dichiarazione di guerra al fallimento del riavvicinamento italo-francese (giugno 1940–aprile 1942)* (Siena: Nuova Immagine, 1991), and Massimo Borgogni, *Italia e Francia durante la crisi militare dell'Asse (1942–1943): L'ombra di Berlino sui rapporti diplomatici fra Italia fascista e Francia di Vichy* (Siena: Nuova Immagine, 1994).

¹⁰ Enrica Costa Bona, *Dalla guerra alla pace: Italia-Francia: 1940–1947* (Milan: F. Angeli, 1995).

¹¹ See, for instance, Shannon Fogg, *The Politics of Everyday Life in Vichy France: Foreigners, Undesirables and Strangers* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011); Thomas J. Laub, *After the Fall: German Policy in Occupied France, 1940–1944* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010); Daniel Lee, *Pétain's Jewish Children: French Jewish Youth and the Vichy Regime, 1940–1942* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014); Ludvine Broch, *Ordinary Workers, Vichy and the Holocaust: French Railwaymen and the Second World War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016); Jacques Semelin, *La survie des Juifs en France 1940–1944* (Paris: CNRS, 2018); Eric Alary, *Nouvelle histoire de l'occupation* (Paris: Perrin, 2019); Alya Aglan, *La France à l'envers: La guerre de Vichy (1940–1945)* (Paris: Gallimard, 2020). An exception to this tendency is Chris Millington, *France in the Second World War: Collaboration, Resistance, Holocaust, Empire* (London: Bloomsbury, 2020).

¹² Domenico Schipsi, *L'occupazione italiana dei territori metropolitani francesi, 1940–1943* (Rome: Stato Maggiore Dell'Esercito, 2007); Hélène Chaubin, *La Corse à l'épreuve de la guerre 1939–1943* (Paris: Vendémiaire, 2012); Pierre Giolitto, *Grenoble 1940–1944* (Paris: Perrin, 2001); Christian Villermet, *A noi Savoia: Histoire de l'occupation italienne en Savoie, novembre 1942–septembre 1943* (Les Marches: La Fontaine de Siloé, 1991).

¹³ Jean-Louis Panicacci, *L'occupation italienne: sud-est de la France, juin 1940–septembre 1943* (Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2010).

leading Italian forces to eschew the more violent type of occupation seen elsewhere.¹⁴ Rather than treat the Italian occupation in isolation, however, this book draws connections and comparisons with the challenges of the German occupation. It takes a different approach to Panicacci and Sica by focusing upon how local French officials and the Vichy government dealt with the often-conflicting demands of the Italian occupying forces and the German authorities.

Most of this book is not concerned with the Italian occupation of south-eastern France and Corsica. The Villa Incisa armistice brought an Italian presence to a much wider area of French metropolitan and colonial territory beyond the areas under occupation. From July 1940, Rome sent officials to monitor the implementation of the armistice terms, establishing control commissions across south-eastern France, Corsica, French North Africa, Syria, Lebanon and French Somaliland. This book, therefore, extends its focus beyond the responses to occupation and beyond metropolitan France. It examines the interactions between local French and Italian authorities against a complex backdrop of colonial tensions, rising nationalism, and in the case of French North Africa, the provocations of the German presence as well. In this sense, it echoes the expanding outlooks of many historians in exploring the experiences of the French colonial empire during the Second World War.¹⁵ With the notable exception of the scholarship on anti-Semitic policies in Tunisia, research into the interactions between French and Italian authorities in the areas under the jurisdiction of the Italian Armistice Commission remains limited.¹⁶ In his examination of the struggles over competing French, Italian and German policies towards Jews in France and Tunisia, Daniel Carpi tackles some of the questions addressed in this book.¹⁷ Indeed, Carpi is one of the few

¹⁴ Emanuele Sica, *Mussolini's Army in the Riviera: Italy's Occupation of France* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2016).

¹⁵ Jacques Cantier and Eric T. Jennings (eds.), *L'Empire colonial sous Vichy* (Paris: Odile Jacob, 2004); Sarah Ann Frank, *Hostages of Empire: Colonial Prisoners of War in Vichy France* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2021); Ruth Ginio, *French Colonialism Unmasked: The Vichy Years in French West Africa* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2006); Eric T. Jennings, *Vichy in the Tropics: Pétain's National Revolution in Madagascar, Guadeloupe, and Indochina, 1940–1944* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001); Martin Thomas, *The French Empire at War, 1940–45* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1998); Martin Thomas, *Fight or Flight: Britain, France and Their Roads from Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).

¹⁶ The Italian presence in the French colonies in North Africa is explored in Romain H. Rainero, *La politique arabe de Mussolini pendant la seconde guerre mondiale*, trans. Jean Louis Riccioli (Paris: Editions Publisud, 2006); Christine Levisse-Touzé, *L'Afrique du Nord dans la guerre* (Paris: Albin Michel, 1998).

¹⁷ Daniel Carpi, *Between Mussolini and Hitler: The Jews and the Italian Authorities in France and Tunisia* (Hanover: Brandeis University Press, 1994).

historians to have explored in depth the ways in which Vichy attempted to play the Italian and German authorities off against one another.

In its emphasis upon Vichy's relations with Italy, this book contributes towards a move away from the more traditional Germanocentric approaches towards the Second World War in Europe. It underscores the significance of the Mediterranean region not just for France and Italy but for Germany, Britain and the United States in the wider outcome of the war. In exploring Fascist expansionist ambitions in the Mediterranean, this book draws on the scholarship that emphasises Mussolini's dominant role in shaping a foreign policy that was driven by ideology.¹⁸ Indeed, it was Fascist ideology that led Mussolini to adopt a more intransigent position towards Vichy and the future of France than many of his political and military advisors as well as his German counterparts. By highlighting the threats posed by Rome's intervention and demands, as well as the harsh and often violent nature of the Italian occupation, this book contributes towards the scholarship that has sought to refute myths of a fundamentally humane Italian army led by a comparatively benign Fascist regime.¹⁹ It also engages with a connected area of research emphasising the importance of anti-Semitism in Fascist policy and within the Italian army.²⁰

This book is grounded in significant primary research. It engages with the extensive records of the French delegation to the Italian Armistice Commission in Turin and the Armistice Service authorities in Vichy held by the Archives Nationales in Paris. These archives have been largely overlooked by historians and have never been the subject of systematic research. Yet with most of the negotiations between Vichy and Rome being

¹⁸ Davide Rodogno, *Fascism's European Empire: Italian Occupation during the Second World War*, trans. Adrian Belton (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006); MacGregor Knox, *Mussolini Unleashed, 1939–1941: Politics and Strategy in Fascist Italy's Last War* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1982); MacGregor Knox, *Hitler's Italian Allies: Royal Armed Forces, Fascist Regime, and the War of 1940–1943* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000); Bruce Strang uses the term 'mentalité', rather than ideology, in G. Bruce Strang, *On the Fiery March: Mussolini Prepares for War* (Westport: Praeger, 2003).

¹⁹ See, in particular, Angelo Del Boca, *Italiani, brava gente?* (Vicenza: Neri Pozza, 2005); Filippo Focardi, *Il cattivo tedesco e il bravo italiano. La rimozione delle colpe della seconda guerra mondiale* (Rome: Laterza, 2013); Davide Rodogno, 'Italiani brava gente? Fascist Italy's Policy Toward the Jews in the Balkans, April 1941–July 1943', *European History Quarterly*, 35:2 (2005), 213–40. For an overview of the debates, see Patrick Bernhard, 'Renarrating Italian Fascism: New Directions in the Historiography of a European Dictatorship', *Contemporary European History*, 23:1 (2014), 151–63; Roberta Pergher, 'The Ethics of Consent – Regime and People in the Historiographies of Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany', *Contemporary European History*, 24:2 (2015), 309–15.

²⁰ Michele Sarfatti, *The Jews in Mussolini's Italy: From Equality to Persecution* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2007); Jonathan Steinberg, *All or Nothing: The Axis and the Holocaust, 1941–1943* (London: Routledge, 1990); Joshua D. Zimmerman (ed.), *Jews in Italy under Fascist and Nazi rule, 1922–1945* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

conducted through the armistice delegates at Turin and with disputes over Italian encroachments upon French sovereignty playing out between Italian armistice officials and French authorities at a local level, these collections are indispensable. They contain not just French documents but the extensive correspondence emanating from the Italian government and armistice authorities as well. This book also engages with the records of the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs held at the Archives Diplomatiques in Paris. Incorporating an analysis of French relations with the Italian civil and military authorities at a local level as well, it draws on research conducted in the areas that fell under the jurisdiction of the Italian Armistice Commission and that were held under Italian occupation, including the Archives Départementales of the Alpes-Maritimes, Savoie, Haute-Savoie and Corsica.²¹ Finally, to situate Vichy's double bind within a wider international context, this book draws upon published diplomatic documents from Italy, Germany, the United States, the Holy See and Britain, as well as British Foreign Office records held at the UK National Archives.

The structure of this book is divided into two sections, following a thematic and chronological approach and reflecting the duality of the tensions between decisions made in Vichy and those taken at a local level. The first section explores relations between France and Italy at a state level and in ideological terms, analysing the wider implications for Vichy's engagements with Germany. Chapter 1 looks at the breakdown in Franco-Italian relations in the lead-up to war and how the relatively moderate nature of the Italian armistice terms sent mixed signals about Mussolini's ambitions towards France. Chapter 2 covers the evolution in Vichy's policy between July and December 1940. It explores how this period saw Vichy pursuing rapprochement with Rome to counter the domination of Berlin while also using collaboration with Germany to counter the dangers from Italy. Chapter 3 examines how the collapse of negotiations with Berlin and the growing vulnerability of Italian forces in Libya culminated in a brief but significant experiment in military collaboration between France and Italy in the winter of 1941 to 1942. Chapter 4 covers the period following the full occupation of France in November 1942. It analyses the ways in which Vichy dealt with the often conflicting demands of the German and Italian authorities. Chapter 5 examines the ideological dimensions of Vichy's relations with Rome, focusing upon the attempts to create an alternative vision to collaboration with Nazi Germany and the absence of collaborationism with Fascist Italy.

²¹ The Archives Départementales du Corse du Sud cover the whole of Corsica, predating the division of the island into two departments in 1976.

The second section shifts the focus to the local level and to the daily interactions between the French authorities, Italian control commissions and the Italian occupying forces in mainland France, Corsica, French North Africa, French Somaliland and the Levant. Chapter 6 explores how the Italian control commissions threatened French authority. It analyses how the responses of Vichy and the local French authorities were sometimes very different to their treatment of the Germans. Chapter 7 deals with Rome's attempted annexation of the areas occupied by Italian forces following the armistice of June 1940. It assesses how French authorities' opposition to Italian actions was constrained by Vichy's response to the *de facto* German annexation of Alsace-Lorraine. The final chapter deals with the Italian occupation of south-eastern France and Corsica between November 1942 and September 1943. It examines how local French officials responded to Italian forces' efforts to assert their authority with growing repression and Vichy's attempts to exploit conflicting Italian and German occupation policies.

Over eighty years on, the history of Vichy is still the focus of vigorous scholarly and public debate. It endures as a contentious subject because many of the uncomfortable questions about France's past continue to resonate today. Indeed, in recent years, the resurgence of populism and anti-Semitism has made Vichy a more contested subject than in previous decades.²² Yet while its policies were rooted in a reactionary conservatism that challenged many of the ideals of the Revolution of 1789, its ideology was heterogeneous. The political culture that made the Republic was also that which spawned Vichy. It, therefore, cannot simply be written off as an aberration in French history. The Vichy government's willing collaboration with the policies of the Nazi regime and its ready alignment with the Axis implicate it not just in a 'Franco-French' trauma but in a European one as well. Through a blinkered perspective of misaligned priorities, Vichy chased hollow victories. It attempted to set Rome against Berlin not out of any principled opposition to Nazi policies but because it wanted to assure France's status within a German-dominated continent. In turn, it willingly ingratiated itself with Berlin not merely to thwart Rome's demands but in the delusion that collaborating with the Germans was preferable to yielding to the Italians.

²² See Laurent Joly, *La falsification de l'Histoire: Eric Zemmour, l'extrême droite, Vichy et les juifs* (Paris: Grassnet, 2022).

