EVOLUTION OF COLLABORATIONISM IN THE TEMPORARILY OCCUPIED SOUTH OF UKRAINE IN THE YEARS 2022-2024

[a]OLEXANDER ZUBCHENKO, [b]GALYNA NESTERENKO, [c]TAISIIA GAIVORONSKA, [d]RUSLANA MAKSAKOVA, [e]YEVHENIIA YEMELIANENKO, [f]NATALIA DIEVOCHKINA

[a]*Mariupol State University, 6, Preobrazhenska Str., 03037, Kyiv, Ukraine*
[b]*RheinMain University of Applied Sciences, Kurt-Schumacher-Ring 18, 65197, Wiesbaden, Germany*
[c-f]*National University Zaporizhzhia Polytechnic, 64, Zhukovsky Str., 69063, Zaporizhzhia, Ukraine*
email: [a]*zubchenko2016@online.ua,*
[b]*gala99nesterenko@gmail.com,* [c]*ZinchuRuslana@vnu.edu.ua,*
[d]*t.gayvoronska@gmail.com,* [e]*maksakovaruslana@gmail.com,*
[f]*ndev@ukr.ne*

Abstract: This article is dedicated to exploring the evolutionary processes within the environment of collaborators - local residents who voluntarily and proactively cooperate with Russian aggressors in the temporarily occupied territories of southern Ukraine. The study addresses both theoretical (to elucidate changes in collaborationism as a complex of social practices) and practical (to compile a socio-demographic and psychographic profile of enemy collaborators) aspects. Based on contemporary theoretical concepts and empirical data, conduct a comprehensive analysis of the evolution of collaborationism in the temporarily occupied territories of the Zaporizhzhia and Kherson regions during the years 2022-2024. The authors rely on functionalist (M. Gechter and M. Vidal-Ansari), identification (V. Chachava), resource-adaptation (V. Horobets) approaches to defining collaborationism, as well as P. Sorokin's ideas regarding the peculiarities of social mobility during periods of political turbulence. Empirical data collection utilizes content analysis of information from pro-Ukrainian Telegram channels. The study identifies the main factors of collaborationism (ideological sympathies, family ties, and experience working in the aggressor state), determines the primary forms of interaction with occupiers (the most significant being participation in anti-Ukrainian propaganda), analyzes the dynamics of the socio-demographic composition of enemy sympathizers (an increase in the number of youth and urban population), and emphasizes changes in the proportion of representatives from different professional strata among collaborators (an increase in the percentage of officials and small entrepreneurs). It is highlighted that within the collaborator environment, two processes are ongoing - the preservation of their socio-status positions in higher social groups (officials and public sector employees) and active vertical intergroup transitions in lower social categories (workers and retired).

Keywords: occupation; collaborationism; social regression; patron-client relationships; social mobility.

1 Introduction

The Russian occupation of parts of the Zaporizhzhia and Kherson regions has been ongoing for the third year, compelling us to reassess the socio-political processes occurring beyond the front line. In fact, discussing society aspect here is unnecessary, as one of the main features of fascism, like any other totalitarian ideology, is the complete state control over all spheres of life, even seemingly secondary ones. Furthermore, over time, the occupation regime has undergone a certain institutionalization process - the "management" system has been organized whose representatives gained "experience" during the organization and conduct of pseudo-referendums and illegal elections. Artificial local self-government bodies have been formed, a new "administrative-territorial structure" has been approved, and a crucial aspect is significant strengthening of the system of repressive-punitive bodies.

Additionally, collaborationism remains integral to consolidating Russian power - a social process wherein inhabitants of the occupied territories consciously, voluntarily, and intentionally collaborate with the enemy in his interests and to the detriment of their own state. Southern Ukraine exhibited particular characteristics in its formation as the low intensity of combat operations in the first weeks of the war led to few civilian casualties and limited infrastructure destruction. In fact, the enemy entered entire cities and villages with tens of thousands of local residents. Russians continue to exploit this fact to propagate the narrative that "Ukraine betrayed you because it does not need you anymore".

The issue of normative and emotionally evaluative attitudes towards collaborationism is ambiguous. On the one hand, the state has fairly clearly defined its stance towards various forms of betraying the homeland in Article 111 (Note) of the Criminal Code of Ukraine. On the other hand, unfortunately, the emotional and evaluative perspective on cooperation with occupiers has evolved over time. What initially appeared as a deviation and flagrant violation of social and moral norms during the early weeks and months of hostile rule is now perceived much more leniently. We are not discussing individuals who have assumed positions in occupation administrations, law enforcement structures, and pseudo-schools, constituting a small percentage of the population. Nevertheless, life continues, and many individuals who, for various reasons, have remained in the occupied territories, are endeavoring to adapt to the new realities. In this context, the issue of economic activity beyond the front line becomes particularly salient. Current legislation criminalizes any economic activity undertaken in collaboration with the aggressor state and illegal authorities. How justifiable is this now, given that these norms were enacted in March 2022, when society was predominated by unwarrantedly optimistic views regarding the terms for ending the war and occupation? There are numerous instances, since collaborationism has transitioned from an extreme phenomenon to a fairly pervasive social practice. Evidently, post-deoccupation, there will be a necessity to amend pertinent legislation to enhance accountability for certain categories of crimes (especially in the domain of war propaganda and animosity towards Ukraine) and to decriminalize other collaborationist behaviors (such as retail trade conforming to Russian laws).

However, all of this remains a matter for the future. Currently, the relevance of the investigated issue is evident in both theoretical (to elucidate the fundamental changes in collaborationism as a complex of social practices from the onset of occupation to the present) and practical (to compile the socio-demographic and psychographic profile of collaborators) aspects. From the above discussion, the aim of the article emerges: to conduct a comprehensive analysis of the evolution of collaborationism in the temporarily occupied territories of Zaporizhzhia and Kherson regions during the years 2022-2024, based on contemporary theoretical concepts and empirical data.

2 Materials and Methods

In our research, we relied on several theoretical frameworks that allow describing various aspects of the genesis of collaborationism. According to the model proposed by M. Gechter and M. Vidal-Ansari, collaborationism is viewed as a functional dependency of the local population on occupiers regarding access to essential goods [9]. Whether one desires to initiate a business – complying with Russian laws, or to deploy agricultural machinery in the fields – negotiations with the commandant are necessary. Researchers delineated the interdependence between the "net benefit" provided by the occupier to the local community and the likelihood of cooperation. However, following the occupation of southern Ukraine, no tangible "net benefits" were offered, and militarized Russia was unable to deliver any. Instead, an illusion is crafted of hungry Ukrainians expressing gratitude to the "liberators" for food parcels, and "happy" schoolchildren celebrating the opportunity to learn in Russian.

Equally notable is the interpretation of collaborationism as a method of political identification proposed by V. Chachava [2]. The researcher emphasizes that "the destruction of even the slightest stability represents the most potent tool for eroding human existence and freedom - both as a choice and as a responsibility". The intrusion of a foreign army triggers anomie and dismantles previous social relationships. In such circumstances, political identification, as a form of symbolic affirmation of belonging to a specific group, assumes particular significance: both in defining one's identity and as evidence of an individual's necessity for it. Thus, the recognition of the

substantial potential of pro-Russian sentiments commences, prevalent in southern Ukraine throughout the years of independence and notably expressed during electoral campaigns. For instance, during the parliamentary elections of 1998, 60% of Kherson residents and 62% of Zaporizhzhia residents voted for political entities advocating political and economic unity with Russia. Eight years later, these figures rose to 62% and 68%, respectively. Even in the most recent local elections, six years after Russia's initial assault on Ukraine, candidates with favorable inclinations towards the northeastern neighbor secured 43% of the votes in Zaporizhzhia and 35% in Kherson.

Equally important in explaining the origins of collaboration with the enemy is the institutionally dysfunctional model of collaborationism. S. Makieiev observed that under extraordinary circumstances such as war and occupation, the social structure undergoes a transition from a relatively stable state to singularity, representing a blend of diverse old and new elements. The disharmonious, constantly disrupted rhythm of social metabolism generates new structural products – unwelcome and unexpected arrivals that reshape the societal environment and give rise to fundamentally new forms of social interaction among individuals. Alongside existing social institutions and organizations, individuals introduce their own innovations and contributions [11]. Collaborationism emerges as one such innovation – a social practice aimed at preserving and, if possible, enhancing one's own socio-status resources through demonstrative loyalty to the new political order. However, fundamentally, such behavior is dysfunctional, as behind the appealing facades of institutions imposed by occupiers, terror and hatred hide. In such circumstances, the performance of seemingly routine social practices and procedures results in the reinforcement of enemy power and further severe societal consequences, inflicting significant harm on people's lives and health.

In the socio-stratification dimension, the nature of collaborationism is elucidated by P. Sorokin's theory of the rapid acceleration of social structure transformation during revolutionary and military upheavals, the mobilization of individuals and groups that were previously on the sidelines of socio-political processes, the alteration of behavior and psychology among participants in artificially induced upward social mobility ("from rags to riches"), and consequently, the complete overhaul of traditional criteria for social stratification – shifting from traditional Weberian indicators (income, prestige, power, education) to a singular criterion (loyalty to the new authority) [14].

The resource-adaptation approach, as described by V. Horobets, examines the evolution of collaborationism in the context of changes in complex socio-psychic formations encompassing various forms of human activity, behavioral models aimed at satisfying basic physiological and social needs, and adaptation methods to complex living conditions [7]. While at the beginning of the occupation, any form of interaction with the occupiers, especially obtaining a passport from the aggressor state, was perceived as an immoral act and deviation, now the possession of Russian documents has become a matter of physical survival.

The empirical basis of the study consists of information from open sources about individuals who, in various forms, collaborated with Russian occupiers in the temporarily occupied territories of the Zaporizhzhia and Kherson regions, for which liability is provided according to the Criminal Code of Ukraine. To this end, data from Telegram channels such as "Suki Melitopolia" (https://t.me/suki_melitopolya), "Zradnyky Melitopolia" (https://t.me/melitopol_traitors), "Skelety Shevchyka i Ko" (https://t.me/actual_energodar), "Berdiansk online" (https://t.me/brdnews), and "Yakymivka Melitopolskyi raion" (https://t.me/yakumivka2023) were utilized. The reliability of the obtained information is questionable since it was generated by an extremely wide range of user of Telegram resources, has an exclusively subjective-evaluative character, and may be based on personal biases, revenge, and so on.

However, it is worth considering the fact that there are currently no other safe ways to study this issue. It can be expected that after the liberation of the South, more reliable data can be obtained from materials of law enforcement agencies or through conducting informal interviews with collaborators of the enemy who remain in free Ukraine.

The gathered results underwent systematic organization, codification, processing, and analysis utilizing the SPSS 17.0 software. This analysis was conducted based on several key characteristics: gender, age, connections with Russia (such as residence, education, relatives, work trips, and business - forming hypotheses regarding external factors of collaborationism), profession (workplace) prior to the occupation (forming hypotheses about collaborationism as a mechanism for social mobility amidst disruptions to the established institutional order and career progression system), post-occupation sphere of collaborationist activity, presence of collaborators among immediate relatives (testing the hypothesis of social networks as a channel for collaborationism), occupation of positions within occupation authorities or law enforcement agencies, specific modes of cooperation with the enemy, and type of settlement (testing the hypothesis of the role of spatial factors in collaboration with the occupiers). In total, data concerning 1400 individuals - residents of the occupied territory of the Zaporizhzhia region - were inputted into the database.

3 Results

The evolution of collaborationism should be viewed within the broader context of regressive social processes occurring in temporarily occupied territories. Among the negative changes that contribute to the bolstering of the enemy's position and the proliferation of interaction practices with them, urbicide (the destruction of cities as physical-spatial and social communities), moral-value anomie, deformation of the social structure, artificially inflated rates and volumes of social mobility, destruction of Ukrainian national identity, acceleration of russification, and dysfunction of leading social institutions stand out.

Our research results indicate that only about a third of current collaborators have aligned themselves with the kremlin out of ideological considerations. Well before the onset of full-scale invasion, these individuals publicly condemned the Revolution of Dignity, denied the presence of Russian troops in Donbas, spoke favorably of the aggressor state, and praised the Soviet past. Many of them also participated in the events of the "Russian spring" of 2014 (especially in Melitopol, where the most numerous pro-moscow rallies in the region occurred) or in the activities of the Party of Regions. Meanwhile, the remaining collaborators engaged in interactions with the enemy based on the factual realities of everyday life.

P. Berger and T. Luckmann, in their examination of everyday life as a sphere of social interactions, emphasize several interconnected aspects: the institutionalization and legitimization of social relations, as well as socialization and identification. It is in the process of their synthesis that subjective reality is born - the entire spectrum of a person's worldview - from dreams and fantasies to theoretical abstractions [1]. This is precisely why the issue of collaborationism may be morally uncomfortable for researchers. After all, no one knows how the residents of Zaporizhzhia, Lviv, or Kyiv would behave in the new reality if the Russian army reached these cities.

The immersion in the everyday life of the 'Russian world", sometimes even long before the annexation of Crimea, the invasion of Donbas, and the onset of full-scale aggression, manifests in various forms: "Victoria, 55-60 years old. A supporter of Russia since pre-war times. Her husband has been working in Russia for a long time. One of the first to receive a passport"; "Edik (Edward) Izyumov. Worked as a masseur, went to Russia to earn money... Edward's sister, Tatyana Izyumova, always said she was a child of the USSR. Her son vacationed in Crimea last year. Infinitely happy about the Russian world"; "the family of collaborators from Vodiane, Vasyliivka district, who

shone at the celebration in honor of Russia - mother Chorna (Uziakova) Iryna Oleksandrivna born on December 20, 1987, native of Orenburg Oblast, grandmother Uziakova (Solovyova) Nadiya Vasylivna born on July 19, 1962, native of Orenburg Oblast, aunt Pokalyuk (Uziakova) Svitlana Oleksandrivna born on March 5, 1984, native of Orenburg Oblast". Among the ranks of collaborators, there are many migrants from territories occupied by the Russians a decade ago: "Tatyana Limova, moved to live in Melitopol from the occupied Luhansk seven years ago. An ardent supporter of the Russian world".

Overall, the proportion of individuals with experience in labor migration to Russia, at first glance, is not very high (90 "respondents", or 6.4% of their total number). However, within various socio-professional categories, this indicator is distributed very unevenly. For example, out of seventeen top businessmen in Melitopol who sided with the enemy, ten worked in senior positions in Russian companies at different times. With a high degree of probability, it can be argued that many of them were recruited by Russian special services. After the occupation, top collaborators were able to preserve and significantly increase their assets, focusing on restructuring local engineering for the needs of the enemy and developing connections with the Russian military-industrial complex.

Particular attention deserves family collaborationism - the involvement of individuals in various forms of interaction with Roccupiers, including both blood relatives (father, mother, son, daughter) and relatives by marriage (husband, wife, mother-in-law, father-in-law). The results of our study indicate that 27% of collaborators cooperate with the Russians as entire families. On the one hand, these could be family clans around which powerful financial-industrial groupings have developed. For example, the family of Y. Balitsky was a powerful center of political influence in Melitopol for many years, forming its own social capital, which in its structure resembles that of the Patnam clan [13]. Around them, social networks emerge based on personal loyalty, cunning, and opportunism, declarations of pro-Russian sentiment, and the high value of patron-client relationships.

On the other hand, it is about entirely ordinary families who consciously collaborate with the enemy to improve their socio-economic positions. One typical example is the Lepikhov family from the village of Terpinnia in the Melitopol district. The locomotive engineer Stanislav Lepikhov continued to work on the railway after the arrival of the occupiers, transporting military equipment and ammunition. His wife Oksana, along with her brother's wife, delivered hot food to Russian soldiers at checkpoints, and later opened her own cafe in a commandeered premises and even secured a position as a "teacher". Meanwhile, their son Bohdan joined the Russian police force. During the occupation, the family purchased a new car, vacationed in Moscow, and vehemently opposes the return of Ukrainian authorities. Remarkably, many families of collaborators embarked on their path to state betrayal in the early hours of the occupation. For instance, the Denysov family in Melitopol, en masse, participated in looting chain supermarkets early on the morning of February 25, 2022, and subsequently, its head, Oleksandr Denysov, enlisted in the ranks of the Russian army [21].

It is worth noting that family collaborators aren't just on the social fringes; they are often affluent and successful individuals. Take, for instance, the Perelyhin family from Melitopol. Since the early days of the occupation, the father, Ihor Perelyhin, a prominent chess player and entrepreneur, has been actively involved in Russian propaganda TV shows, leading the so-called "chess federation" in the occupied part of the Zaporizhzhia region and later taking control of a meat processing plant seized from its rightful owners. His son, blogger Vladyslav, publicly expressed pro-Russian views even before the war and has connections to another collaborator, Viktor Kharchenko, the owner of the "Bravo Tour" travel agency. Overall, in the upper echelons of traitors in southern Ukraine, there is a trend towards forming family-clan alliances, driven by intense competition for resources with newcomers from Russia.

Another aspect of this issue involves individuals with close relatives in Russia who maintain regular contact despite the ten-year war against Ukraine (132 individuals, or about 10% of the total). However, this percentage could be even higher as relevant information wasn't obtained from all sympathizers of the Russians. Since 2014, such contacts not only reveal the deeply anti-Ukrainian stance of our fellow citizens but also serve as a basis for their active recruitment by Russian special services. This is corroborated by court statistics on sentences for collaborators, with the vast majority involved in cooperation with Russian special services through their family networks.

The next important aspect of our research focuses on the forms and practices through which local residents collaborate with the enemy. In this context, we are specifically examining active and initiative-driven forms of collaborationism, where individuals willingly aid the aggressor in various ways - from disseminating propaganda materials on their social media platforms to assuming "authoritative" positions. Table 1 shows general forms and practices of collaborative activity among the population of Southern Ukraine.

Table 1: Forms and practices of collaborative activity among the population of Southern Ukraine

Form of activity	Number of individuals	Percentage
Occupying "positions" in the bodies of occupational authorities and law enforcement structures	343	25,0
Public expressions of support for occupiers at the household level	565	41.2
Financial and economic cooperation	276	20.1
Assistance in finding housing	60	4.4
Informing on pro-Ukrainian activists, ATO veterans, and their families	114	8.3
Co-habiting with occupiers	78	5.7
Participation in mass propaganda events as a private individual or as part of "official" duties	767	55.9

The data presented in Table 1 indicate that participation in Russian propaganda remains the primary form of collaborationist activity and a mandatory minimum 'program' for those who defect to the enemy's side (56% and 68% respectively). The forms, methods, and techniques of agitation for the "Russian world" are nearly countless, but their main goal is to create a sense of artificial normalcy among people living under occupation.

As it is known, the construction of everyday life occurs through the objectification of life in things and symbols that compel individuals to conform to certain standards, allow for the typification of emotions and their transmission to others, and integrate various spheres of daily life [1]. Artificial normalcy is the enemy's attempt to pass off the desired as real, because even after two years of its rule, the majority of the population does not accept Moscow's orders. The strategic objectives of the Russians in their communication policy remain unchanged - to foment hatred towards Ukraine, which allegedly always pillaged and exploited the southern regions and now "shells" peaceful civilians. Illustrative is the incident involving the deaths of nearly a dozen civilians due to the dropping of a Russian-guided bomb on the occupied city of Tokmak, Zaporizhzhia Oblast, in April 2024, which Russian propagandists attempted to portray as a missile strike by the Ukrainian Armed Forces. Simultaneously, a picture of peaceful and happy life in "liberated" Novorossiya is being painted - familiar Soviet-style community workdays for the older generation, "letters to defenders" in captured schools,

repairs to water mains with the help of "bosses" from Yaroslavl, and so forth.

However, over the past two years, there has been a certain decrease in the indicators of economic collaborationism (from 31% to 20%). This is attributed to several factors. Firstly, unfortunately, there is a significant expansion of the circle of individuals who, to maintain their usual way of life (including engaging in entrepreneurial activities), are compelled to register and pay taxes according to the norms of the occupation legislation. Secondly, the longer the occupation lasts, the fewer opportunities there are to avoid engaging in economic relations with the ruling regime. The only alternative remains an extremely complicated and expensive departure to free Ukraine. Additionally, there is also a slight decrease in the number of individuals engaged in "snitching" and assisting the enemy in identifying pro-Ukrainian activists, ATO veterans, and other "unreliable" individuals. This dynamic should not deceive us, since the moral degradation of the population in the occupied territories only intensifies, as we will further demonstrate below.

However, amidst the significant reinforcement of Russian repressive agencies and special services in the occupied Ukrainian territories, the role of individual "informants" has somewhat diminished, but primary collaboration with enforcers remains a prerequisite for entry into the collaborator community. Special emphasis is placed on the tasks carried out by "plainclothes individuals", particularly senior figures in buildings and neighborhoods. During the pre-occupation period in Ukraine, representatives of this relatively unstructured category did not hold a significant role in social life, and heads of neighborhood committees in the private sector did not receive even minimal rewards from municipalities. However, this was not universally true. Specifically, in Melitopol and Berdiansk, local financial-industrial groups led by Y. Balitsky and O. Ponomariov systematically engaged with these individuals based on the principle of electoral patronage - relationships that entail the exchange of services between two parties of different status and power, where the client receives protection in return for loyalty and political support [10]. Through funds from parliamentary foundations, business-controlled funds, and local budgets, "ins" housing cooperatives saw the replacement of windows and doors, installation of children's playgrounds, repair of access roads, and their leaders received personal bonuses from their patrons, among other benefits. This fostered the development of electoral "networks" that functioned effectively during elections and, following the arrival of the occupiers, were put to their service.

Indicators regarding the cohabitation of women with occupiers for the years 2022-2024 have changed only within the margins of statistical error (7.1% and 5.6%, respectively). Matters of love and sex are not criminalized in Ukrainian legislation; however, this form of collaborationism is typically closely associated with serious crimes. This includes obtaining positions in government bodies, "extorting" others" businesses with the assistance of lovers who are military criminals, unauthorized appropriation of property (furs, residences, automobiles, valuables), as well as facilitating financial-economic activities (such as establishing trade, organizing "banking" affairs, re-registering legal entities under Russian legislation, and assisting in the placement and provision of occupant units).

A wealth of information about processes in temporarily occupied territories can be gleaned by analyzing changes in the socio-demographic characteristics of collaborators (see Table 2).

Table 2: Changes in the socio-demographic characteristics of collaborators in the years 2022-2024

Social-demographic category	2022 (N=500)	202 (N=1400)
Men	33	53
Women	67	47
18-29 years old	11.6	18.3
30-44 years old	45.2	37.8
45-54 years old	29.8	30.8
55 years old and older	13.4	13.1
Urban population	50	67
Rural population	50	33

From Table 2, several conclusions can be drawn. Firstly, collaborationism is fairly widespread in the temporarily occupied territories of Southern Ukraine, resulting in a tendency towards equalizing the representation of different socio-demographic categories among sympathizers with the enemy, in proportion to their overall distribution in the population. A clear example of this is the percentage of rural and urban collaborators, which currently roughly corresponds to the spatial distribution of residents in the occupied part of Zaporizhzhia Oblast. However, in cities where government bodies, key facilities, and institutions of the aggressors are concentrated, there are objectively greater opportunities for collaboration, facilitated by the higher anonymity of the urban environment and the possibility of blending in among tens of thousands of people.

Secondly, the significant increase in the proportion of men is linked both to the expansion of the contingent of occupational administrative and repressive structures and to the emergence of a new business environment operating under Russian laws. This environment often exploits assets stolen from legitimate owners, enriches itself through supplying the Russian military, speculation with agricultural products, and plundering the region. It is important to understand that collaborationist enterprises only receive meager benefits, as all major state orders in the "new regions" are fulfilled by structures controlled by Russian top oligarchs.

Thirdly, the significant increase in the percentage of young collaborators is alarming. Essentially, this marks the emergence of the second generation of collaborators – both through family-clan groups and through the recruitment of young men and women into pseudo-youth organizations such as "Movement of the First", "Young South", "Young Army", and so forth. In this manner, the enemy not only prepares cannon fodder for the next waves of mobilization but also establishes a social base for the occupation regime and resistance to Ukrainian liberators in the future.

An important area of interest lies in analyzing the professional background of kremlin collaborators. Here, the situation appears rather intricate. On the one hand, Ukrainian legislation criminalizes numerous forms of economic interaction with occupiers, except, perhaps, routine physical and non-physical hired labor. On the other hand, when enemy soldiers have been stationed on your land for three years and a foreign flag flies overhead, people are confronted with an almost Hamletian dilemma – what social behavior is acceptable? And this is not merely a moral quandary of "to be or not to be" (assimilating into the new social order or remaining loyal to the Ukrainian state), but a matter of basic physical survival.

Table 3 shows changes in the areas of pre-war professional activities of collaborators in 2022-2024. But before delving into the analysis of the data presented in Table 3, it is important to note that nearly 8% of the total collaborators (or 110 individuals) were employees of the Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant, residing in the city of Enerhodar and its vicinity. The social structure within the nuclear power plant is highly intricate, influenced by various factors such as specialization, proximity to core production areas, and organizational units, necessitating further investigation. Moreover, information regarding the occupations of 31% of enemy sympathizers (430 individuals) remains elusive. This demographic often exhibits passive support for the enemy, typically manifesting through social media postings or participation in mass propaganda events like rallies, floral tributes, car processions on fictitious dates set by the aggressors, or asset collection drives. It is this widespread participation that creates the semblance of support for the occupying regime, intricately entwined within the patron-client networks established by aggressors in temporarily controlled regions.

Table 3: Changes in the areas of pre-war professional activities of collaborators in 2022-2024

Social-professional category	2022 (N=500)	2024 (N=860)
Education institution employees	48.9	17.5
Employees of executive authorities and local self-government bodies	13.1	4.8
Employees of law enforcement and regulatory authorities	9.4	12.1
Workers and officials	6.2	23.7
Owners of small businesses, private entrepreneurs, and farmers	5.6	19.5
Employees in the fields of culture, healthcare, social protection, and sports	5.4	6.8
Senior figures in buildings and neighborhoods	3.8	2.2
Students	2.4	3.2
Pensioners and unemployed individuals	2.1	5.1
Others	3.1	5.1
Total	100	100

From the data presented in the Table 3, two distinct waves of collaboration emerge. The initial wave, spanning approximately April to October 2022, predominantly comprised of disloyal officials and educators. During this period, Moscow actively orchestrated a spurious referendum on joining Russia, necessitating organizers (administrative staff) and operatives (so-called "district commissions", often derived from educational institutions akin to soviet times). The subsequent wave, commencing in early 2023, primarily encompasses lower-ranking officials (amidst bureaucratic expansion) and entrepreneurs (comprising business owners since Ukraine's era, who had temporarily ceased operations, alongside those who amassed wealth from "seized" commercial properties, manufacturing facilities, and other assets). Here, we witness a symbiosis between the bureaucratic and mercantile classes, driven by shared aspirations for social advancement and profit maximization, aligning closely with the occupiers' interests. Ultimately, individuals who previously aspired to modest roles, such as a technical worker aspiring to a department director position or a kiosk proprietor now overseeing a sprawling supermarket under the new regime, eagerly embrace their newfound authority.

Subscribers of the Telegram channel "Suki of Melitopol" offer a detailed account of what could be the most significant redistribution of property since the October Revolution and the Bolshevik occupation of Ukraine in 1917-1920. Specifically, in Zaporizhzhia Oblast, this process is orchestrated by individuals closely associated with Russian gauleiter Y. Balitsky. Within each occupation administration, departments for "ownerless property" have been established. Hundreds of individuals partake in this pillaging: local leaders, building supervisors, and heads of homeowner associations compile lists of vacant apartments and buildings; former employees of the city executive committee compile lists of industrial enterprises, public institutions, and commercial real estate properties whose owners have fled to free Ukraine; the "people's militia" scavenges through abandoned homes in search of gold and money; informant residents appropriate their neighbors' belongings, while numerous speculators sell stolen goods at half price under the protection of local law enforcement [8]. It can be anticipated that following the arrival of the Ukrainian army, the processes of reclaiming personal properties and real estates, particularly means of production in rural areas, will assume a

truly dramatic nature and will necessitate priority attention from the state.

When approaching the topic of collaborationism as a social ladder, it is important to note that attempts to gauge the speed of upward mobility through the prism of Western concepts may not always yield successful results. Moreover, our information regarding the true social-class status of collaborators before the war and after the occupation is not sufficiently comprehensive for objective reasons.

Table 4: Movement of collaborators between socio-professional categories after the Russian occupation (2024, N= 1351)

Social-professional category	Remained in their social group		Transitioned to another social group	
	Individuals	In percentages	Individuals	In percentages
Government officials and managers of various levels	35	85	7	15
Educators	122	83	25	17
Healthcare, cultural, and sports workers	47	83	10	18
Law enforcement personnel	76	75	26	25
Civil servants	56	48	60	52
Laborers	12	15	68	75
Pensioners, students, and unemployed individuals	41	28	104	72
Private entrepreneurs	134	82	31	18
Unknown social-professional group	174	41	256	59
Total	764	60	587	40

As it is observed in Table 4, among collaborators, two processes are concurrently unfolding - maintaining their socio-status positions in higher social groups and active vertical intergroup transitions in lower social categories. At the upper echelons, among the newly appointed Russian officials, this movement primarily stems from personal conflicts rather than structural shifts. Some may have clashed with the new leadership, relocated, or aligned themselves "in the basement" with the pro-Russian factions. Overall, the enemy's managerial cadre still maintains a sufficiently high level of cohesion, and widespread replacements of local turncoats with newcomers are likely still forthcoming.

However, approximately one-eighth of former teachers, doctors, and cultural workers have ascended to positions of authority. Each of them served the occupiers in their own capacity - disposing of and burning Ukrainian literature, treating wounded soldiers and officers with sympathy, arranging concerts for imperial celebrations, and so forth. Generally, among budget workers-collaborators, there are prevailing attitudes described by one of the authors of the Telegram channel "Mariupol. Sprotyv": "Tamara Viktorivna Zubko voluntarily assumed the position of school director in the village of Berdianske. She has been collaborating with the occupiers since day one. Her lifelong ambition has been gaining managing position. She is very pleased with Russia's arrival, as it now provides the opportunity to vacation in various sanatoriums. Tamara's husband, Sasha Zubko, works in the Emergencies Ministry in Mariupol. Tamara says, "Finally, we will live well"" [17].

At the same time, for 10% of former police officers, the change of state flags brought the opportunity to start their own businesses - adopting a Russian, semi-criminal style. Leveraging old acquaintances, connections in the criminal world, and unprecedented bribery from local gauleiters, they take control of abandoned enterprises, trading establishments, and household service facilities.

The social mobility of collaborationism is quite active among civil servants, 27% of whom managed to ascend one or two career steps higher and assume managerial positions, typically within the same institutions where they worked during the times of Ukraine.

Complex processes of collaboration are underway among workers. V. Tsyba and D. Novikov emphasize the shift in the nature of their employment - from permanent to temporary (or additional) - whereby individuals, while holding an official job, take on side jobs to increase their income. There is a phenomenon of "precarization", where the worker loses stable ties with his "basic" class. The more severe the situation of precariats, the easier it may become to mold them into a "potentially dangerous new class", oscillating between left-wing radicalism and a propensity towards fascism [18]. This thesis finds complete empirical confirmation, as in previous years we have repeatedly observed increased levels of support in this social group first for the Communist Party, and later for the Party of Regions and V. Yanukovych, against the backdrop of consistently high ratings of the authoritarian leader in contrast to democratic institutions. And with the Russian occupation comes fascism.

More than a quarter of former workers have been recruited into the ranks of the occupational police force, one in every five has transitioned to the social-humanitarian sphere, and one in every ten has taken positions in the Russian "government". It is reminiscent of the infamous Leninist principle - where every cook not only runs the state but also teaches children and catches "enemies of the people". However, the effectiveness of such labor activity is highly questionable. Similar processes can be observed among outsiders in the labor market - pensioners, the unemployed, and students. The arrival of the Russians has provided them with the opportunity to occupy, for the first time or again, fairly prestigious social positions in the fields of management and "law enforcement" (20%), education, medicine, and culture (16%), entrepreneurship (14%), and business (10%). Overall, we can observe that Pitirim Sorokin's theory regarding the emergence of marginal layers of the population onto the social forefront during epochal historical events remains relevant.

To conclude this part of our study, it is time to examine the changes in the socio-professional structure of collaborators in autumn 2022 and today.

Table 5: Ratio of representatives from various socio-professional categories among collaborators (as a percentage of the number of individuals with known occupations)

Socio-Professional Category	2022 (N=500)	2024 (N=1072)
Employees of the occupational authorities and managers of various levels	48.0	17.8
Employees of repressive and punitive bodies	27.7	18.4
Civil servants	No data	13.2
Private entrepreneurs operating under Russian legislation	1.4	14.9
Employees of "education"	17.9	18.1
Employees of occupational culture, medicine, sports		7.3
Owners of "seized" businesses	No data	5.2
Others	5	5.1

The data presented in Table 5 indicate that the cancerous tumor of collaborationism, unfortunately, is growing and encompassing new social strata. While at the beginning of the occupation, collaborators were concentrated only in a few dysfunctional institutions (pseudo-government, law enforcement, and education), now they feel free in almost all spheres of public life, including the real economic sector.

4 Discussion

Our scientific findings prompt a reevaluation of collaborationism as a reflection of criminal behavior and social dysfunction. É. Durkheim famously interpreted crime as a consequence of societal structural flaws and the disconnect between human aspirations and attainable opportunities. He argued that "the more a person has, the more he desires, since acquired goods only stimulate, but do not satisfy needs" [5]. External social control defines the boundaries of our needs, and any weakening of it precipitates a sharp crisis of values and norms. Anomie disrupts the customary motivation for social behavior, leading to a misalignment between goals and the means of achieving them, as later elaborated by R. Merton [12].

These propositions of the eminent sociologist found early confirmation in the initial hours of the occupation when, following the evacuation of rightful owners and Ukrainian law enforcement, widespread looting of commercial networks commenced in numerous cities, including Melitopol. Among the initial looters, there were former inmates, "chemists" (individuals serving sentences in labor camps), and troubled youths, among others. Items such as groceries, household appliances, electronics, and valuable alcohol were frequently plundered by entire families.

However, as the occupation progressed, a fundamental question arises: can we even speak of the relevance of social norms under the extreme conditions that three generations of our compatriots have not encountered since the Second World War? Ukrainians in the occupied territories are confronted with choices - whether to refrain from radical changes, remain in their homes and familiar social milieu, adapt their lifestyles to new exigencies, or abandon everything and relocate to free Ukraine.

Partially, the class theory of crime by the young P. Sorokin [15] does not fully apply, as we have seen above, the propensity to collaborate with the enemy is demonstrated by representatives of various social strata. However, their motivations differ - some aim to preserve the high social positions they acquired back in the days of Ukraine, while others, conversely, are rapidly, almost head over heels, striving upwards.

Meanwhile, the maximum dedication to the occupiers and the insatiable desire to be closer to power are well explained within the framework of E. Sutherland's theory of "criminal learning" [20]. Purposefully distancing from evaluative-moral judgments, the researcher asserts that a person becomes a criminal only due to special learning abilities, and his behavior is not abnormal or pathological. It is about Merton's "innovativeness", the ability to quickly adapt to new, unfamiliar everyday life that arises with the arrival of the Russian horde. A characteristic example is the ordinary seamstress from Melitopol, T. Limova, who "moved to Melitopol from the occupied Luhansk 7 years ago. A staunch supporter of the Russian world, she welcomed the occupation enthusiastically. In discussions, she often acts as a lively witness to Ukraine bombing Donbass for 8 years. At home, she set up a workshop for sewing military uniforms for the Russian army. Her clients are occupiers residing in the city. In cinematic terms, she is like a "Verka Modistka from Fox's Gang". Neighbors are morally suppressed and intimidated. How many such Verka Modistkas has the war and occupation brought to the surface of the social hierarchy in Melitopol?" Representatives of the social lower classes quickly assimilate the spirit of the new orders and, without formally changing their status, become perhaps the most influential people. However, after the arrival of the Ukrainian army, the fate of such "authorities" is very dismal - they will have to flee with the occupiers or endure persecution from their fellow countrymen for the rest of their lives.

Prominent Ukrainian jurist V. Tymoshenko, upon reevaluating the work of an American scholar, concludes the existence of two interconnected segments of society, one being law-abiding, and the other not [19]. This theory posits a conflict between legal and criminal cultures. Perhaps this theory holds true under stable socio-political conditions, but what happens when all institutions and organizations associated with the previous legal order disappear with the arrival of enemy forces? It is worth noting that the number of pro-Russian citizens in southern Ukraine has traditionally been quite large, and in the 2010s, according to our research, ranged from 15 to 25-30% of the total number of voters depending on the region [22]. But can we equate support for the eastern vector in economics and politics with readiness to cooperate directly with the enemy, committing crimes against own state? Especially since the pro-Russian electorate was predominantly composed of older individuals, who, due to their physical and moral condition, could not be overly active collaborators. Conversely, the situation of the conditionally pro-Ukrainian part of the population became quite complex, as the only law-abiding strategy of social behavior that the Ukrainian state could offer was evacuation. While in regions of active combat (Bakhmut, Avdiivka, Kyiv region in the early days of the war) this decision seemed to be the only possible one, in the South, which the enemy captured quite quickly, almost without encountering armed resistance, many felt that it was safer to stay at home.

Representatives of the sociological approach (D. Kressy, H. Van Hamel, and A. Prince) recognize economic factors as the primary determinant of crime - mass impoverishment, the contrast between poverty and wealth, the pursuit of illicit gain, and so forth [4]. The empirical data provided above do not support the idea of collaborationism solely as a movement of the social lower classes, as approximately one-third of collaborators with the enemy belong to the first to third social classes (according to J. Goldthorpe's classification [6]). However, workers and individuals who were not actively engaged in economic life before the war (pensioners, students, the unemployed) were able to significantly enhance their status positions compared to other social strata, thus partially validating this hypothesis.

The concept of subculture, introduced by American criminologist and sociologist A. Cohen, presents certain avenues for further exploration of collaborationism [3]. Within small social groups, shared cultural values are cultivated based on unity of perspectives ("we are one nation"), customs (vacations in Crimea), aspirations (photos on red square in Moscow), commercial behaviors (selling cherries or early vegetables to Russia), attitudes toward the external world ("everything Russian is the best"), uncritical reception of information, and heightened susceptibility to propaganda ("for thirty years, we were oppressed by the Bandera followers"). In the temporarily occupied regions of the Zaporizhzhia region, numerous such social cohorts exist: gardeners and employees of machine-building enterprises in Melitopol, proprietors of commercial greenhouse farms from Kamianka, Old Believers - descendants of settlers from the central regions of Russia in the Pryazovia district, and so forth.

Our observations suggest that the formation of small groups based on collaborationism begins within the family during school years. In the city's schools, within children's and youth communities, a pronounced ideological divide has emerged, echoing the sentiments of adults: 'Are you for Russia or Ukraine?' Children from pro-Russian families engage in conflicts, whether openly or discreetly, with their counterparts from pro-Ukrainian families. Pro-Ukrainian children, both at school and on the streets, find themselves in a subdued and embittered state. They too congregate in groups, driven by a profound youthful thirst for justice and retribution [16]. However, as the occupation regime consolidates its power, one can anticipate a closer scrutiny of the attitudes of young boys and girls by the occupiers. The kremlin has already implemented a formidable information system to monitor "unreliable"

teenagers, and over time, pressure on the younger generation is likely to escalate.

Another crucial aspect to consider is the duration of the occupation and its impact on the prevalence of collaborationism. It is imperative to differentiate between voluntary cooperation with the enemy and forced compliance with new directives, often bordering on survival necessities (such as obtaining a Russian passport, without which residents of temporarily occupied territories are denied access to emergency medical assistance). Recently, in a bid to heighten people's reliance on their authority, the occupiers have actively "nationalized" ostensibly abandoned housing, vacated by those who have fled to free Ukraine. Faced with the prospect of losing their homes or apartments, individuals are compelled to return and register their property under Russian laws or risk losing it altogether. Consequently, a web of corruption emerges around the "confiscated" housing, leading to local officials, various power brokers, and auxiliary services of the occupiers. This perpetuates the economic foundation of collaborationism.

In conclusion, the scholarly discourse on the nature of collaborationism in the territories of Ukraine under Russian occupation is still in its nascent stages, and its culmination should involve the empirical validation of numerous domestic and foreign theoretical frameworks.

5 Conclusion

During our research, we have reached the following conclusions. Firstly, by the third year of occupation, collaborationism in the temporarily occupied territories of Ukrainian state unfortunately transitions from openly marginal social practice to an enforced social norm. The lives of local residents have been transformed into a daily moral referendum on the boundaries of acceptable interaction with the enemy. Given the criminal nature and governance methods of the Russian occupation regime, present-day collaborators increasingly resemble the enablers of the Nazis during the Second World War.

Secondly, significant factors contributing to allegiance to the enemy include both the ideological-political orientation of individuals and the diversity of adaptive practices based on family ties or prior experience of socio-labor activity within the aggressor state. One of the primary channels of collaborationism becomes the family, reflecting both a general trend towards the archaization of social life beyond the front lines and providing sufficient stability to bolster support for the occupation authorities. Additionally, attention should be drawn to the highly targeted social instruments utilized by the invaders in their dealings with various categories of collaborators: controlled access to social benefits (officials, law enforcement, and public sector employees), financial incentives (pensioners, the unemployed, seniors, and other participants in the social clientele ensuring regime stability at the micro-level), and promises of rapid career advancement (loyal youth).

Thirdly, we have identified alarming trends regarding the significant proliferation of collaborationism among various socio-demographic and socio-professional population categories. These trends indicate both an increase in collaboration with the enemy among new age cohorts (especially among the youth) and the emergence of a symbiosis between the petty-official and entrepreneurial classes, which have significantly improved their status and material conditions compared to pre-war times. In the long term, they may form the social basis of the occupation regime, the definitive eradication of which may extend for many years after the arrival of the Ukrainian army.

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