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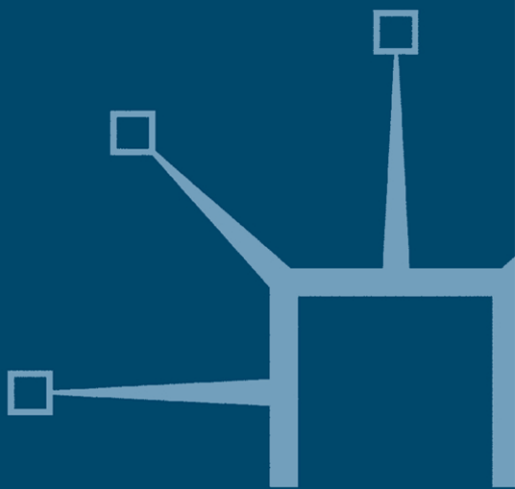
Food and Conflict in Europe in the Age of the Two World Wars

Edited by
Frank Trentmann and Flemming Just



Food and Conflict in Europe
in the Age of the Two World Wars

Also by Frank Trentmann

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and

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Acknowledgements

Food plays a central role in modern societies, ranging from everyday practices in households to collective identities and political economy. War and conflict have been decisive influences in shaping the material and moral contours of food production and consumption. This volume re-examines the place of food in Europe in the era of the two world wars, bringing together new research on politics, ethics, and nutrition. Earlier versions of several of the papers collected here were first discussed at the conference 'Food Production and Food Consumption in Europe *c*.1914–1950' organised in 2004 by The Centre for European Conflict and Identity History (CONIH) at Esbjerg in Denmark, 2–4 June 2004. This conference afforded a rare opportunity for dialogue between scholars coming to the subject of food from a range of cultural, political and economic directions. We would like to thank all participants for their input and the Centre for its support. In particular, we are grateful to Anja Hergesell for administrative and logistical assistance. We should also like to thank the anonymous reviewer, everyone at Palgrave Macmillan, Laura Bevir for providing the index, and Stefanie Nixon for her help in producing the final manuscript.

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Frank Trentmann

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Frank Trentmann is Senior Lecturer in Modern History at Birkbeck College, University of London, and Director of the Cultures of Consumption research programme, funded by the UK Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) and the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC). He has worked on consumption, political culture, and civil society. Recent publications include the volumes of essays *Worlds of Political Economy: Knowledge and Power 1700 to the present* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004, edited with Martin J. Daunton) and *The Making of the Consumer: Knowledge, Power and Identity in the Modern World* (ed.), (Oxford and New York: Berg, 2006). His book *Free Trade Nation: Consumption, Civil Society, and Commerce in Modern Britain* will be published by Oxford University Press in 2007.

1
Introduction

Frank Trentmann and Flemming Just

This volume examines conflicts over food and their implications for European societies in the first half of the twentieth century. Food shortages and famines, fears of deprivation, and food regulations and controls were a shared European experience in this period. Conflicts over food, however, developed differently in different regimes and regions, and played themselves out differently for different social groups. These developments had stark consequences for social solidarity, power, and physical survival. Ranging across Europe, from Scandinavia and Britain to Holland, Italy, and the Soviet Union, this volume explores the political, moral, and economic dynamics that shaped conflicts over food and their consequences, from conflicts over food and globalisation at the beginning of the twentieth century, through the First World War and inter-war years, to the Second World War and the humanitarian and moral crisis that was its legacy.

The backdrop to this era of food and conflict was the emergence of a first global food system in the late nineteenth century, which then disintegrated in an era of wars and economic nationalism. As food became a central part of integrated global commodity markets – food amounted to 27 per cent of world exports in 1913[1] – anxieties about food security and dependence increased. The First World War and post-war protectionism bolstered ideas of greater self-sufficiency and visions of agrarian empires and territorial expansion. The Second World War witnessed the unprecedented plunder, destruction, and redistribution of food under the dictates of totalitarian expansion and occupation. This was a West European as much as an East European story; France and Denmark contributed even more food to the Third Reich than did Russia.[2]

Traditionally, historians and social scientists have approached the question of food and conflict via two distinct literatures. One has concerned public health and nutrition. The other has focused on agricultural policies by the state, especially in relation to protectionism, rationing, social policy, and racial policies of extermination. While the former has done much to unravel the development of expert nutritional knowledge, it has mainly been framed in terms of the history of science and medicine.[3] The focus on state policies, by contrast, has tended to be in terms of agricultural production and productivity (or its failure) and the influence of agricultural interests, and has mainly been framed in relation to questions of the successful pursuit of war or the direction (and destruction) of agricultural supplies and people in a race war.[4]

The diversity of European societies (from urbanised Britain to rural Denmark, from export-oriented north-western Europe to more self-feeding central and eastern Europe), the diversity of systems of distribution (markets, rationing systems, black markets) and our growing knowledge of the different forms of political and social development pose a challenge for placing different European experiences alongside each other. But it also creates opportunities for new perspectives. This volume, and this introduction, offers some pathways into this complex terrain. In addition to its geographic scope, the book offers a shift in perspective, beyond the customary preoccupation with state, producers, and controls. Essays in this volume move within a triangle of related problems: relations between civil society and state; the interaction between consumers and retailers; and the moral landscape of food policies. In brief, civil society and consumers are viewed as active players, contributing to the moral and material dimensions of food politics, rather than just being on the receiving end of policies initiated by state actors and producers. The volume here draws on the conception of a more 'active' consumer, or of the consumer as co-producer of systems of provision, that has been developed by recent scholars of consumption. At the same time, it also seeks to give questions of war, scarcity, needs, and ordinary consumption a greater place in the story of consumption in modern societies, alongside questions of abundance, choice, and conspicuous consumption that continue to dominate the literature.[5] Food and conflict in twentieth-century Europe reminds us that modernity is not a shift from needs to wants, but about an on-going dialogue between needs and wants.

In addition to technical questions about rationing systems and productivity levels, food systems also operate through ethical ground

rules, systems of rights and responsibilities, questions of fairness, inclusion and exclusion. Likewise, the focus on civil society (however imperfect and conflict-ridden in practice) does create an opportunity for interesting pairings of problems of war and peace. International trade and social movements, experiences of collaboration, and humanitarian policies are thus reconnected to the subject of food policy, security, and starvation. Debates and battles over food and food security offer insights into the social, political, and moral workings of societies under stress.

Attention to consumers and civil society highlights the contested nature of systems of distribution. In addition to state policies, it asks how social groups and thinkers, on the one hand, and retailers, black marketers, and other distributive agencies, on the other, understood and responded to problems of scarcity. Conflicts over food and their resolution were influenced by intellectual traditions, social norms, and mobilisation, as well as by state policies and material endowments. Alongside reassessments of fascist nutritional policies and Soviet collectivisation, readers of this book will therefore also find discussions of retailer and consumer politics, the ethical and economic dilemmas facing occupied countries, the moral horizon governing black market exchanges in Britain during and after the Second World War, and the rationale of allied humanitarian assistance in Germany after the war.

In the First World War, food was the site of a dynamic rearrangement between states and new demanding groups in society. It witnessed the unprecedented mobilisation of consumers as an active, organised social movement across Europe.[6] Demands for fair prices became linked to demands for entitlements and reforms of state and economy more generally. As Thierry Bonzon shows in his chapter on consumption and total war in Paris, the politics of food evoked an older language of the 'moral economy' of the crowd, with its attack on middlemen and demands for the authorities to intervene in the economy.[7] The figure of the 'profiteer' here played an important role in cementing a new social contract between civilians and the state. It was at the same time a means to build a community at war (mobilising consumers against middlemen and profiteers) and a way of reinforcing the legitimacy of state power (the state acting as guarantor of fair prices). Put differently, state–civil society relations were the product of languages and imaginaries of social order, as well as of administrative measures guiding the food supply. If Bonzon's discussion is noteworthy for its attention to regional specificity – the Parisian centre versus the suburbs – it is also a useful reminder that food needs to be placed alongside other basic goods

or necessaries, like coal, which was part of a shared moral economy, although all too easily neglected by students of consumption.

The situation in The Hague during and after the First World War affords an intriguing contrast with that in Paris. In Holland, as Thimo de Nijs shows in his chapter,[8] retailing had been virtually unregulated before the war. The First World War produced a new set of competing organised social groups. On the one hand, food shortages made municipalities and retailers more dependent on each other; the local government needed shopkeepers for an efficient distribution of foodstuffs and other goods, which required regular consultation between the municipality and organized shopkeepers. On the other hand, it produced distrust and interest politics. The establishment of municipal markets and shops, and public intervention to control profiteering, fuelled a strong anti-statist mood among shopkeepers.[9] Alongside shopkeeper associations, however, there also now emerged the first organised consumer movement in the Netherlands, the *Haagschen Bond tot Bestrijding der Duurte*.

In the Netherlands, as across Europe, few consumer agencies or consumer councils survived for long. But it would be shortsighted to measure the impact of this chapter in the history of food and conflict solely in terms of institutional success. Rather, it could be argued that the mobilisation of consumers and of a language of consumer rights and fair prices and access shows the vitality of 'moral' considerations that have mainly been associated with 'tradition'. Far from being a sharp break with a traditional, pre-industrial society, modern consumer societies were able to absorb inherited notions of 'moral economy' and develop them in new directions.[10] The main difference with eighteenth-century food riots was that when scarcities hit modern market societies, like those of Paris or the Hague during the First World War, demands for rights and public intervention were now framed as permanent reform measures, embedded in demands for rights, not just in terms of short-term emergency measures. Across Europe, social democrats went furthest in seeing the war as a major leap towards socialisation and the coordination of trade, but cooperatives and women's movements, too, envisaged reforming and civilising capitalism in ways that went well beyond the more spontaneous stop-gap mechanism associated with earlier food riots and protests. This new 'moral' language paved the way towards more formal notions of social citizenship and consumer rights.

Different regimes of food rationing and controls reflected distinct notions of fairness and ethics in society, as well as the administrative

interests and material capabilities of states. One, perhaps the dominant, way of approaching this subject has been to imagine a normative spectrum stretching from an acceptance of distributive justice on one end, to a self-interested participation in the black market on the other. As Mark Roodhouse shows in his chapter, such a bipolar view of everyday ethics is too simple.[11] His analysis of diaries, letters, and Home Intelligence reports retrieves a shared normative consensus. Participants in black markets, too, accepted and talked the language of 'fair shares for all'. While they denied its application in particular cases, it would be too easy to view this evidence purely as a disguise of self-interested motives. Rather it points to a shared language of entitlements. Instead of seeing civilians under scarcity just following cost and price signals, it stresses the importance of shared moral languages in shaping human behaviour and motivations, that is, in informing people's sense of what was rational and acceptable behaviour. Arguably, the broad appeal of the languages of fair shares was one factor that helps explain the comparatively limited resort to black markets in Britain.

Fair shares are not the same as equality, however. Systems of rationing and food production shaped the structural conditions in which different social groups had to negotiate their lives in wartime. To understand how individuals and households coped and managed, it is helpful to extend the analysis from a focus on state and productivity to a consideration of how people adjusted their lifestyles and developed new practices of consuming and producing. Consumers did not just respond to state initiatives but played an active role, part of an on-going dynamic relationship with their households and social networks, putting together a new repertoire of skills and sensibilities. Paul Brassley and Angela Potter's chapter is an example of such detailed attention to the shifting consuming and producing habits of an upper-middle-class woman in the 1930s–40s.[12] It reveals the complex hybrid of self-provisioning, rationing, and commercial systems in wartime, and shows how an upper-middle-class woman combined new competences (raising rabbits and chicken; turning lawn into vegetable garden; selling foodstuffs) and a general commitment to 'fair shares' (reluctant to profit from the black market) with a keen and largely successful pursuit of a consumer lifestyle inherited from peacetime, marked by visits to elite restaurants and formal social entertaining. A single case study like this cannot resolve the large and on-going debate about whether the Second World War led to a new political consensus and a social transformation, or whether instead it was marked by the lack of social solidarity, merely cementing social habits and class hierarchies.[13] Arguably, however, it does suggest that the realities of

rationing and shortages reinforced the importance of existing social networks and class cultures rather than undermining them. To serve salmon and game in wartime requires cultivating an elite network of friends with access to hunting and fishing.

Such case studies of people's responses to scarcity and rationing are valuable as social histories. They also reveal the norms and traditions at work, or to put it more precisely, how individuals in developing new practices put norms and ideas *to work*, making sense of the world around them and guiding their own behaviour. Discussions of 'moral economy' and of twentieth-century languages of democratic justice and social citizenship emphasise the need to reconnect wars to inherited moral and intellectual traditions. War and peace, scarcity and affluence are not sharp divides, but connected through traditions. One way to think about the legacy and reworking of these traditions returns us to visions of civil society and the place of the consumer. Societies found it more or less difficult to cope with distance, that is, with the growing dependence on food imports from distant lands and the lengthening of the food chain that accompanied the global integration of markets. In his chapter, Frank Trentmann suggests that different responses in the run up to the First World War (ranging from Free Trade in Britain to protectionism in continental Europe) need to be situated in different imaginaries of civil society.[14] Discussions of food and trade in Britain were distinguished by being able to mobilise an inclusive tradition of civil society, in which consumers represented a shared public interest. Giving people the freedom to choose, or as contemporaries put it the right to a 'cheap loaf', was anchored both in a conviction that freedom of trade advanced wealth and in a high degree of trust in civil society being able to handle the social and moral consequences of exposing citizens to the forces of free trade and free markets. In Britain, the new public figure of the consumer was believed to foster virtuous citizenship and social cohesion, a figure more marginal in Germany, where debates over food were conducted through an antagonistic set of social and corporate interests.

So far discussion has highlighted perspectives on particular social groups and social imaginaries within nations. But the emphasis on consumers and civil society also needs to be connected to the realm of international visions and politics. Not least because of the tremendous suffering, scarcities, and famines produced by two world wars, questions of food security were linked to ideas of international order and global governance as well as to civil society in a domestic context. One of the contributions of Trentmann's chapter is to explore the flow

between domestic and global imaginaries, as progressive thinkers and social movements in the inter-war years came to see a symbiotic relationship between social reform at home and the global reordering of the food system. 'Fair shares', improvements in public health, and more vitamins in advanced societies became understood as part of a more global project of eradicating world hunger. One was impossible without the other. Of course, many powerful forces in world politics continued to be barriers to a genuinely global politics of food security and coordination. Imperial powers like Britain opposed the ambition of new international organisations in its own colonies, most notably at the time of the Bengal famine in 1943–44. In the climate of the Cold War, new international bodies like the United Nations' Food and Agricultural Organisation found it impossible to implement visionary projects of a world food board. Nonetheless, such studies about the bridges between social and international visions, between social movements and international governance, point to a remarkable paradigm shift in historical actors' understanding of their own place in a global system in the inter-war and war years, a cultural reconfiguration of civic mentalities that had been organised around ideas of national sovereignty towards something closer to a global civil society of shared rights and responsibilities. The story of food and consumer politics here complements the shift in international law and politics from a language of rights based in national self-determination to one of human rights. The creation, design, and strengths and weaknesses of these bridges between the domestic and the global call for further research.

The sphere of humanitarian assistance reveals the difficulties experienced by civil society actors entering this new supranational world, as well as their charitable contribution to post-war reconstruction. As with food policy more generally, planning for humanitarian aid after the Second World War was far-sighted and incorporated many of the lessons of the earlier war and famine relief in its aftermath. In his chapter, Johannes-Dieter Steinert examines the role of British Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), like the British Red Cross, Save the Children, and the Jewish Committee for Relief Abroad, in Germany in 1945–48.[15] Paying particular attention to the responses and attitudes of German people, just defeated and emerging from the rubble of Nazism, Steinert reconstructs a clash between competing moral communities of fairness, entitlement, and sacrifice. While Britain imposed lower rations on its own people to assist feeding a war-ravaged German population, most Germans responded to British NGOs with a sense of self-pity and ingratitude that showed little sense of either remorse or sympathy for other

groups' entitlement to assistance, including the many victims of Nazi crimes and oppression.

The discussion of how societies cope with food insecurity in a dynamic era of global trade and consumption is picked up by the chapters on fascist and totalitarian projects of transformation. If attention to consumers and civil society has challenged a divide between morality and markets for Britain, France, and Holland, new work on food politics in totalitarian societies in the inter-war years moves us further beyond an older view of tradition versus modernity. 'Ruralism' played a crucial role in the ideology and politics of Italian fascism. Conventionally, the 'battle for wheat' and the huge land reclamation programmes have been viewed as a strategy of strengthening the agricultural sector and the position of landowners and peasants in Italian society, an argument that essentially applied an older interpretation of German protectionism to inter-war Italy. As Alexander Nützenadel's contribution to this volume suggests, this orthodox interpretation misses much of the modernising momentum of fascist programmes.[16] Far from being an anachronistic, backward-looking strategy of rural tradition and power, the land programmes were part of a larger project of enhancing food security and of responding to the dynamics of modern consumption. Consumer protests during the First World War were a decisive learning experience for Mussolini and informed the fascist regime's drive for autarchy and attempts to diminish food imports to improve Italy's balance of payments problems. Regional diversity in development, farm ownership, and agricultural practices, however, continued to modify or militate against such centralised plans for self-sufficiency. When Italy entered the Second World War alongside Germany, the limits of autarchy quickly became apparent as black markets and food protests spread across the country. Food reform, too, was driven forward by modern knowledge regimes. As Uwe Spiekermann shows in his chapter on the promotion of brown bread in Nazi Germany, wholemeal bread grafted a new scientific discourse of vitamins and trace elements on to a racial policy of public health and hygiene.[17] With the full support of the Nazi regime, brown bread was promoted by a network of doctors, local institutions and bakers to create a strong German race. In the course of the Second World War, the Nazi wholemeal policy became an integral part of occupation policy in occupied Europe.

Debates of food security in the Soviet Union have inextricably been intertwined with discussions of collectivisation and questions of the responsibility and motivation behind famine and starvation, especially

the great famine of 1931–33.[18] Were the peasants an object of exploitation for Stalin, and was the famine intentional? While recognising the enormous suffering of the peasantry, Mark Tauger warns against a foreshortening of lines of causation and interpretation on this complex question or of reading back from outcome to intention.[19] Offering a close reading of Stalin's speeches and writings, Tauger retrieves the modernising vision behind policies of collectivisation. Instead of a deliberate intention of crushing the peasants, Stalin and Soviet experts based their policies on a coherent view of modernisation. Earlier famines were blamed on maldistribution and shortages. Solutions were informed by a transnational knowledge of models of large-scale mechanised agriculture in the United States. The speed, coercion, and violence with which collectivisation was introduced contributed to the deaths and dislocations during the great famine of 1931–33. At the same time, Tauger suggests, collectivisation may have improved the provision of seed, food, and aid that enabled the Soviet Union to escape from earlier cycles of famine.

Elsewhere in Europe, occupation, collaboration, and resistance raise equally difficult moral dilemmas. Holland and Denmark were the only countries that increased their food production during the war years, but while the latter opted for collaboration and was treated leniently, enjoying a uniquely rich and sufficient diet, Holland experienced the force of occupation and deprivation. The special status of Denmark, well captured in the term 'peace occupation', makes it a particularly interesting case study for our understanding of the socio-political dynamics of what might be called collaborative food politics. Mogens Nissen reveals the importance of pre-war institutional rules and procedures for Denmark's distinctive political and economic arrangements with Nazi Germany during the war.[20] Wartime arrangements effectively continued along pre-war lines, made possible both by an intimate culture of trust amongst experts on both sides and by the highly integrated corporate organisation of the agricultural sector in Denmark. Danish collaboration created a highly efficient system of controlling food production and consumption. This system delivered much-needed food exports for Nazi Germany and at the same time guaranteed high levels of consumption to the Danish people, levels that kept nutrition well above that in other occupied countries or, indeed, in Germany itself.

Holland provides a story of contrasts to that of Denmark, and nowhere more so than in questions of death. War is violent, and it is wise to recall that in an age of total war civilians have been the main

victims. The causes of non-violent civilian mortality are complex, ranging from sexually transmitted diseases brought along by troops, prisoners, or refugees on the move, and shortages of medical supplies, to lack of food, fuel, and shelter. Ralf Futselaar's chapter is a critical evaluation of these factors in an attempt to explain the startling contrast in mortality figures between Denmark and Holland during the Second World War.[21] In national histories traditional explanations pointed to declining standards of personal hygiene, fuel shortages, and increased mobility, but Futselaar's comparative analysis shows how both countries suffered from similar problems in these areas. Yet mortality rose sharply only in the Netherlands, and especially so amongst the very young. Turning to recent research in nutritional science, Futselaar identifies micronutrients – elements highly concentrated in animal-based foods, such as vitamin A, B6, B12 and D, as well as iron and zinc – as the crucial variable of explanation. Here is a good example of how current research in the sciences can be usefully employed in historical analysis. Recent research in Africa has found that a decline in the intake of micronutrients severely compromises the immune system and development of young children. This is precisely what happened in the Netherlands, where people's diet under Nazi occupation changed from animal-based foods towards a predominantly plant-based diet, whereas in Denmark diets remained largely unchanged during the war.

This volume does not tell a single story about food and conflict in Europe in the age of the two world wars. Rather the aim has been to present new elements, problems, and players that can take existing stories into new directions. By bringing societies (like Scandinavian countries) that are still all too often kept at the margins of modern European history into the story, this volume continues a direction that has produced many fruitful new insights in recent historical writing.[22] As in recent new imperial and post-colonial writing,[23] this amounts not only to a broadening of historical horizons but also problematises ideas of centre and periphery. Thematically, chapters in this volume expand the discussion of food and conflict by giving greater attention to the place of civil society, both in the sense of norms and behaviour and in the shifting place of actors, like consumers, in relation to states, retailers, and producers. There are many shadows of darkness in this story but also moments of light. For if the role of food and conflict in twentieth-century Europe abundantly demonstrated the horrific incursions made on civil society, it also produced a legacy of new domestic and global visions of solidarity, rights, and cooperation.

Notes

1 K. H. O'Rourke and J. G. Williamson, *Globalization and History: The Evolution of a Nineteenth-Century Atlantic Economy* (Cambridge, MA, 1999); K. O' Rourke, 'Long-Distance Trade: Long-Distance Trade Between 1750 and 1914', in J. Mokyr (ed.), *Oxford Encyclopedia of Economic History* (Oxford, 2003), Vol. 3, pp. 365–70.

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2

Coping with Shortage: The Problem of Food Security and Global Visions of Coordination, *c*.1890s–1950[1]

Frank Trentmann

'When each village was a virtually self-sufficing economic unit', the British radical J. A. Hobson wrote in 1909, 'some sense that he was helping to feed his neighbour must have accompanied the work of the husbandman who tilled the soil; but the Dakota farmer, whose wheat will pass into an elevator in Chicago and after long travel will go to feed some unknown family in Glasgow or in Hamburg, can hardly be expected to have the same feeling for the social end which his tilling serves.'[2] Hobson's observation provides a welcome line of inquiry to open our discussion about food and conflict. Briefly, the problem I want to wrestle with in this chapter is this: how did societies cope with the vulnerability and distance that came with an increasingly integrated global food system? What were the responses to the lengthening food chain, what were the implications for bonds of sympathy and solidarity as well as conflict within and between societies? Recent studies on the emerging global food system have focused on its economic dynamics, the role of markets, trade, and prices. This chapter extends the discussion to ask about the changing social and international imaginaries that developed in debates about food security and hunger.

Established approaches to food have tended to separate questions of sympathy from those of international coordination and conflict. Anthropologists and sociologists of consumption have clearly established the continued significance of food in modern and late modern societies, but these have tended to focus on the creation of self-hood, status, and sociability within a family, class or community, rather than about the social solidarities and imagined connections constructed between communities occupying different positions along the food chain.[3] Recent debates about 'fair trade' and globalisation have sparked an interest in 'caring at a distance',[4] but this is rarely extended to

a historical analysis of earlier phases of globalisation. International political economists and economic historians, by contrast, have mainly examined our problem in terms of the power of interest groups or state strategy.[5]

The aim of this chapter is to bring these different approaches into dialogue. It asks about the cultural and intellectual responses to the changing world food system, and the social and international visions of order this generated at times of crisis. The discussion will explore three related themes. First, it will ask about the different traditions of social sympathy and trust which informed social groups' perception of vulnerability and their management of dependence and scarcities. By doing so, we shift the focus from states and producer interests to civil society and consumers, and ask about the cultural underpinnings of different trade regimes and the different forms of social mobilisation and conflict at times of pressure. Second, it will point to the First World War and post-war years as a decisive period in the creation of a new international vision of coordination. This vision became the dominant frame of analysis among international civil servants, experts, and social movements when thinking about food security and world hunger in the 1930s, becoming the dominant model in the new international food politics during the Second World War, before falling victim to the Cold War. Rather than positing state-centred traditions (nationalism) and market-based traditions (liberalism) as mutually exclusive opposites, we can see an alternative tradition emerging, which sought to connect elements of civil society with mechanisms of global governance. Finally, therefore, I want to ask about the functional relationship between the social imaginary concerning domestic society and that concerning global society – more specifically how a sense of consumer rights and social entitlements developing in the domestic politics of food and welfare provision became connected to a more global understanding of a food system and shared human rights and responsibilities. By the mid-twentieth century, the politics of hunger was moving above as well as below the level of states, creating a sense of hunger as a shared global problem ('world hunger'). A sense of shared global solidarity and commitment to global mechanisms of coordination was underpinned by a new recognition of local communities and civil society groups as vital sources of local knowledge and social capital. While plans for a world food council proved 'policy failures', the debate about food security does reveal a significant cultural shift towards a more global vision of mutual dependence, entitlement, and caring.

The challenge of globalisation

Hobson's observation on the growing distance between food producers and consumers responded to the rapid and unprecedented development of a global food system. If 15 years ago it was still possible to argue for the post-1945 period as unique with regard to the distinct scale and pervasiveness of food-flows,[6] recent research has clearly established the period 1870–1914 as the historic breakthrough of an earlier integrated global food and trade system. Declining transport costs led to a rapid integration of commodity markets – if in the late 1860s it cost 4s 7½d. to ship a quarter of wheat from New York to Liverpool, this had fallen to 11½d by 1902. For the world economy as a whole, the ratio of exports to GDP grew more than eight-fold between 1820–1913 – higher than figures for the twentieth century. Prices of food increasingly converged – if wheat prices in Liverpool were still 58 per cent higher than those in Chicago in 1870, this had fallen to 16 per cent in 1913. The increase in tariffs from the 1870s did little to change the overall course of global integration. The United States' wheat production doubled between the 1870s and the 1900s; that of Russia more than trebled.[7] By 1913 food made up 27 per cent of world exports.[8]

Clearly, different regions and classes in Europe occupied very different positions in the global food system. In the late nineteenth century this extended from Free Trade Britain to protectionist Germany, France, and Russia; from more self-sufficient agricultural communities with extremely low productivity in the Mediterranean and Finland, to more productive, market- and export-oriented Sweden, Denmark, Belgium, Netherlands, and Switzerland.[9] The pressure generated by the unprecedented expansion in globally traded food and raw materials was not everywhere the same. In Switzerland, the percentage of the labour force in agriculture fell from 60 per cent in the early nineteenth century to 25 per cent on the eve of the First World War, a moment when in the Mediterranean countries, well over half the population was still occupied in agriculture. Still, pressure there was, and most European societies were unable to escape it altogether. The overall decline of the agricultural labour force in Free Trade Britain is well known; 1.5 million in 1867–69 to 1.1 million in 1911–13.[10] But the relative decline in societies with agricultural protection is equally significant. In Germany it dropped from half to a third in the same period.[11] In Italy, there was mass emigration, in spite of the tariffs of the late 1880s. In the late nineteenth century Germany joined Britain and the Low Countries as main net importers of grain.[12]

Clearly, too, living conditions differed enormously across regions. The spectre of famine and related diseases like typhoid and dysentery swept unevenly across Europe. Britain or France faced nothing compared to the terrible famines in Spain in 1904–06 and 1936–39; in Russia in 1891, 1897, 1922, 1932–33, and 1946–48; or the Balkans during the Second World War, let alone the Warsaw Ghetto.[13] The physical suffering of famine had geographic centres, the result of poor entitlements, disastrous policies of collectivisation, and war. Many Europeans were spared the fate of the millions in Russia in 1922, where the American H. F. Fisher saw '[m]en and women [who had] exhumed dead animals and hungrily devoured cats and dogs when they could be found.'[14] Millions of people died of hunger and related diseases in the immediate aftermath of the Second World War, especially in Central Europe.[15]

Yet, it would be unwise to limit discussions of hunger to Eastern or Southern Europe and to expunge the more affluent north-western region of Europe from the picture. For one, Britain was the affluent imperial centre of a famine system that included the major famines in Ireland in the mid-1840s, India in 1877, and Bengal during the Second World War.[16] Moreover, even though access to food and rationing systems differed, the experience of the two world wars, the world depression, and debates about public health created general anxieties across Europe about hunger, and how to overcome it. Political battles over fair prices or subsidies in the era of the two world wars were as pronounced as they were in the 1880s–90s or would become in the European Community;[17] France in 1935 spent more to support the price of wheat than on national defence.[18] In the less famished regions, as much and perhaps even more than in areas experiencing famine, debates about dependence and deprivation, about food security and human needs were a driving force in the domestic and international politics of consumption.

Social imaginaries: consumers in civil society

How did European societies cope with the growing distance and dependence that came with the global food system in the late nineteenth century, and what were the assumptions about social solidarities and cooperation that shaped their responses? Let us revisit the key protagonists: Edwardian Britain and Imperial Germany. We have excellent accounts of their opposite trade policies and the strategic thinking behind their food policies for wartime.[19] Equally significant were the more popular understandings and reactions that shaped the political

culture in which debate and mobilisation around a more or less open economy took place. Neither British Free Trade nor German protectionism was a self-evident, predetermined outcome of state structure or economic alliances. Unlike Britain, a strong, export-oriented state like Japan, for example, has pursued a policy of food nationalism throughout the twentieth century, with consumers preferring secure food to cheap imports. True, Britain had the navy to protect trade routes, but many popular radicals supporting Free Trade were critics of naval power and imperialism. Like many groups abroad, tariff reformers in Britain were rallying people to prepare themselves for the coming of more self-sufficient regional economies, and to choose imperial preference over the vulnerable position of being at the mercy of foreign powers. Why were popular groups and voters, whose food was mainly imported, not more concerned about the growing risk of food insecurity and, instead, opted in their majority for a fully open market?

There is a good argument to see the popular defence of Free Trade as the result of a connection between a particular version of national identity and civil society in Britain.[20] The majority of British people chose Free Trade because it meant a lower price of food, but also because they saw it tied to a social system that made risks manageable – risks of class war, trusts and cartels, and international conflict. The willingness to entrust their food security to foreign producers in a global market at a time of growing international rivalry is noteworthy, not least since it was before the state started to put welfare schemes such as old-age pensions and unemployment benefits in place. Conventional accounts have often presented Cobdenite cosmopolitanism as the polar opposite of nationalism. While there were some genuine cosmopolitans, however, Free Trade by the Edwardian period had also absorbed nationalist elements. Free Trade was Britain's civilising destiny. In popular demonstrations and speeches, the cheap white loaf became a symbol of national greatness and freedom and contrasted with lower, barbaric societies under protection, especially an autocratic Germany represented by black bread and the consumption of horsemeat sausages and dogmeat. Freedom of trade was defended for securing cheap imports needed for its export industries, but Free Trade was also a cultural achievement. Free Trade culture was able to manage the anxieties of rapid social changes and dislocations that have often come with full exposure to the dynamics of a world economy. Letting go of any national controls of these international flows was probably assisted by an early transition from agriculture towards an urban, commercial society, and the growing purchase of a cultural fairness that

in the mid-Victorian period came to underpin a new trust in a neutral state.[21] Equally important was a belief in civil society and a shared organic consumer interest as a way of advancing political democracy and social justice. Free Trade, in this view, advanced democratic culture by ensuring the state was neutral (rather than favouring particular groups and interests) and by giving breathing space to an expanding network of associations, like the cooperatives. This favourable setting would generate civic-minded consumers who would moralise the economy. And, by preventing cartels, trusts, and vested interests, Free Trade was believed to keep out millionaires and materialism. As Lloyd George put it in 1910: 'I am confident that Tariff Reform [protectionism] means Socialism . . . Not the Christian Socialism of a few enthusiastic Englishmen, but the godless Socialism of Continental materialism.'[22]

This last point deserves emphasis. Much of the anxiety in continental Europe, then and since, about free trade and global markets has been about the moral and social dangers associated with new, 'alien' cultures of consumption. Materialist desires, foreign foods, and lifestyles, or the promise of riches displayed in department stores easily appeared as a threat to social hierarchies, national traditions, and communal solidarity. Hence the negative connotations of consumerism. This does not mean that there were no conflicts within British society about particular aspects of consumer culture, such as the department store, and fears of materialism, or that there was no antagonism between retailers and cooperative stores. But, and this is a crucial point, these tensions did not feed into a more general antagonism between rival social projects across class or corporate lines. Free Trade provided a moral and material framework for different groups in which free imports and dependence on foreign food became desirable or at least acceptable. Indeed, most Edwardians felt materialism could be contained, indeed disarmed, through the moral influence of Free Trade and its supporting associations that favoured an ethical, community-oriented consumer. Thus, the consumer appeared as an organic public interest that included respectable men and women, indeed industrial consumers as well as the housewife with the basket organised in the large cooperative movement. From this civic mentality, it was a small step for some radicals to elevate this consumer ethics to the international plane. By the time of the First World War, the consumer had taken the place of the merchant as a pacifying link between the true human interests of different societies. For supporters of the cooperatives and radicals like Hobson, with whom we began, the presumed international ethics of consumers provided a bridge to imagine how the bonds of solidarity and shared feeling could

be reconstructed between groups at opposite ends of a widening food chain. Britons, in other words, put a tremendous amount of trust in their society, trust to cope with distance without dislocation, to increase material well-being without opening the floodgates to materialism, and to give power to market forces without them causing alienation, polarisation, and corruption.

The ability to cope with openness and dependence was structured by very different factors in Imperial Germany. The old picture of an alliance of 'iron and rye' has seen considerable revision in recent years, as historians have emphasised support for protectionism from small farming communities and small towns,[23] and the growing popular demand for lower tariffs.[24] Between 1906 and 1912 a popular mobilisation developed against increased prices (*Teuerung*), ranging from milk wars and butter boycotts, but especially focusing on meat. These protests had less to do with physical hunger than with a growing sense of entitlement to food and reflected the impact of a changing food culture brought on partly by urban modernisation, partly by the earlier drop in prices facilitated by the global food system. Consumption of pork and bread rolls made of wheat increased. Initially supported by the Social Democratic Party (SPD), mass mobilisation against high prices also began to attract support from Liberals and from the Catholic centre, which, by 1913 had swung from earlier support of tariffs to demand their reduction.

In contrast to Britain, however, the protests in Imperial Germany were not part of a similar development of trust in civil society. Nor did they mobilise around an organic consumer as representative of the public interest. The politics of food in Germany remained structured by the different milieux that supported distinct party political communities. From the late 1890s the Social Democrats tried to reposition themselves as a party of consumers as well as workers;[25] their Belgian comrades had already moved to a combination of free trade and welfare reform in the previous decade. But such efforts were constrained by widespread scepticism of equating consumers with a public, let alone national interest. Salaried employees and civil servants protested about high food prices, but made it clear that they did not want to be identified with the working class or some general consumer interest. Instead of a positive image as representing the national interest, contemporaries saw the consumer as a sectional interest and bemoaned the 'Nurkonsumentenstandpunkt' or exclusive, narrow-minded consumer perspective of the new middle classes.[26] Such remained the sectional, indeed negative, association of the term that groups like the association of housewives (Hausfrauenverein) sought to avoid the language of the

consumer altogether, presenting itself instead as a corporate organisation of women in charge of managing and preparing goods as much as purchasing them.[27]

It is difficult to know whether the path of European history would have been different if a more representative public notion of the consumer interest had been in circulation in Germany that might have offered an umbrella for different classes, religious, and occupational groups. In Britain, the expansion of 'the consumer' into the public interest benefited from favourable preconditions, especially a political tradition of the consumer as a tax-paying citizen with rights to accountability and representation.[28] Like their British and French counterparts, German public intellectuals also discovered the consumer, especially historical economists in the late nineteenth century, but their ambivalence is revealing about the difficulties of coping with distance in traditions with more national-territorial and corporate foundations. National economists in the second half of the nineteenth century began to appreciate the public benefits brought by advancing consumption. Instead of condemning luxury, Roscher saw modern England and Holland as models that proved the possibility of combining 'salutary luxury' with frugality and an appreciation of nature (the country house). Only in declining nations did luxury assume an 'impudent and immoral character'.[29] At the same time, the appreciation of consumption went hand in hand with anxieties of dependence and the erosion of national strength associated with food flows and changing dietary patterns. The place of consumers in the social order remained determined by their collective identity as members of family and nation. Wise consumption could enhance national strength but became a danger where it was excessive, thoughtless or repetitive and where consumers forget about their family, neighbours, and community.[30]

An essay by the economic writer and social reformer Karl Oldenberg in 1910 reflects this ambivalent attitude to consumption on the eve of the First World War. Consumption was nature's cunning: even where an increase in desire did not produce enhanced satisfaction, it nonetheless forced people to exert their energies, thus bringing a 'lazy mass' into the realm of civilisation. So far this is an observation already developed by eighteenth-century Scottish political economists. But Oldenberg now took this argument into a direction of collective awareness and national strength. The consumer's civilising function and growing demand for more and more propelled a shift from self-satisfaction to other-regarding actions: 'the consumer appreciated the value of his [sic] consumption

not only differently in different ages but at different levels of his ethical education [*sittliche Erziehung*]. Whether he places consumption in the services of transcendental obligations, or personal education or social considerations: the satisfaction of wants is only an end in itself at the most primitive, non-reflexive stage of culture.' Above all, it cultivated 'strong people and strong nations, which can rule over others and imprint their characteristics on them'.[31] National dominance and independence – not civil society and international interdependence – were the focal point. In 1897 Oldenberg characteristically warned the Protestant social convention (evangelischer Sozialkongress) of Germany's impending dependence on 'Bauernstaaten' like the United States and China. Anyone who sought to encourage this development, Oldenberg argued, was a grave-digger of the German nation – forcing it to increase exports if it wanted to feed itself.

Coping with deprivation

Such anxieties of managing distance became harsh reality with the First World War. Countries adopted different policies in response to the collapse of the world food system in war. In Germany fixed maximum prices were a sort of entitlement plan to assure people could afford food. France had been more self-sufficient before the war, but here maximum prices led to a decline in production. Britain, like the United States, used minimum prices to induce farmers to switch back from pastoral to arable farming. Clearly, the blockade had a far greater impact on food supply for Germans than the submarine war for Britons; the average German male had to do with half the calories of his British counterpart by 1918.[32] Yet this does not on its own explain the different ways in which societies worked through this challenge. One answer is to look at the legitimacy of state authority in the food system. Avner Offer has emphasised that Nazi Germany and Stalinist Russia faced even greater challenges than Imperial Germany but managed to distribute survival rations. Of course, it can be objected that to apply a test of 'legitimacy' or 'credibility' in the case of the Nazi or Soviet states is problematic in itself, since both states worked through terror and the brutal coercion of foreign labour or, in the case of Soviet collectivisation, the brutal extraction of surplus from their rural population to pay for industrial imports. Still, it is reasonable to conclude that the parallel existence in Germany in the First World War of an official system based on notions of social justice (subsistence rations) that failed to deliver alongside the reality of an illegal black market of high prices and inequity led to a widening,

fatal 'gap in credibility'. As Offer points out, command economies like the Soviet one in the 1940s never made the market illegal and accepted it as 'a vital top-up'.[33]

Next to asking about the state's legitimacy in the eyes of the population, however, there is a second dimension that deserves attention: relations between social groups. To function, the regulation of consumption, such as rationing systems, requires a shared sense of social justice. We are back to the question of sympathy and trust, but now between groups whose different capabilities to secure food and commodities are determined in the first place by entitlements laid down by states. Social mobilisation in wartime is driven as much by a contest over relative entitlements as by the absolute number of calories consumed. This should not surprise us. In total war, access to food is tied to demands for citizenship – and the state's duty to recognise these. In other words, legitimacy is not just a process structured by state policies from the top. It is also shaped by a dialogue (or lack of dialogue) between groups about their respective claims to social citizenship. Who deserves special consideration: mothers, industrial workers, or soldiers' widows? And, if so, how much? Should the rights of consumers be recognised in economic planning in terms akin to the interests of producers and soldiers? If so, who is a consumer, and what sort of social and political position should be accorded to consumers?

In German cities, as well as in Vienna, Budapest, and Prague, the war produced an unprecedented mobilisation and organisation of the consumer. In December 1914, a war committee for consumer interests (Kriegsauschuss für Konsumenteninteressen) was founded. Campaigns for thrift and rational consumption, and against profiteering, endowed consumers with unprecedented public recognition. Economic planners, like Walter Rathenau, came to see '[c]onsumption . . . not [as] a private affair but an affair of the community, the state, ethics and humanity'. Consumers, however, were not yet to be trusted to fulfil this purpose on their own. In fact, so far they had displayed a 'crazy hunger for commodities' and been responsible for the waste of natural resources. To make consumers more conscious of the social consequences of their actions, Rathenau urged an extensive system of consumption taxes, the elimination of middlemen, and control of imports.[34] The work of the war committees of consumers reveals the continuing suspicion surrounding consumer interests. In Vienna, the social democratic trade unions refused to join the committee (Kriegskommission für Konsumenteninteressen). Even in Germany, where three years into the war seven million members had joined seventy organisations, many professions like civil servants,

doctors, the self-employed, shop-assistants, and others refused to join, often for 'fear of their members' contact with other estates and viewpoints', as the committee's chairman and member of the Reichstag, Robert Schmidt, put it in 1915.[35] The committee monitored prices and quality, attacked profiteering and waste, and extended the practice of 'white lists' introduced by shopping leagues before the war in America and Europe to advertise socially responsible shops. But the committee also continued to run up against the suspicion of being a sectional or self-centred interest, denounced by many producer interests or excluded from local government by magistrates. As even Robert Schloesser, a leading advocate of consumer representation, concluded in 1917, a shared consumer identity was still underdeveloped:

> to-day it is primarily material factors which keep the consciousness awake: ideals need to be added. Next to the personal desire to buy as cheaply as possible, the consumer movement needs to develop social and national ideas: improvement of the social conditions of the lower classes . . . [and] preparedness for a future war, so that Germany would never be forced again to face an internal enemy – of Germans exploiting Germans – at the same time as an external enemy.[36]

Outside the consumer committee, in the streets of Berlin during and after the war, frustrated housewives and shoppers revealed just how low the degree of trust was between groups. State-supported consumer politics released a large energy of civilian conflict that eventually turned against the state itself. Protesting women directed their anger at Jews and profiteers. Anti-Semitic rhetoric went deep into the working class and was encouraged by some state authorities.[37] Already before the' turnip-winter' of 1916/17, consumption had become a site of social exclusion and antagonism, rather than national inclusion. In November 1916 the police noted that 'the word in Berlin [was] that only Jewesses and the wives of munitions workers can afford goose now.'[38] There was little social solidarity amongst women. Poor housewives queuing for food saw pregnant mothers and soldiers' wives as rivals and denounced their greater entitlements as unfair. Instead of a shared sense of sympathy and community, food protests revealed a fractured nation at war – a set of rival, antagonistic perceptions of fairness and entitlement that created an explosive legacy for the inflationary period after the war.

The German development of social conflict spilling over into advancing crisis of state legitimacy stands in stark contrast to the growing acceptance of stronger state regulation in Revolutionary Russia and

also Free Trade Britain. In Petrograd, Bolsheviks sought the wholesale elimination of free trade and free markets in 1918–21. In Russia, free trade was seen as 'eat[ing] away at a healthy society', 'a parasite to be destroyed', Mary McAuley has argued.[39] Bolsheviks closed markets, arrested traders, shut private restaurants, and took over the cooperatives. Communal restaurants and the national food distribution of Petrokommuna were set up – employing 36,000 people or almost 10 per cent of the adult population. Much more so than in Germany, here it was a governing ideology that identified a class enemy – be it juvenile street traders or women selling farm produce. There were attempts at evasion – not surprisingly, given the terrible scarcity – a worker in 1920 ate only half as much as in 1912–14. People criticised state inefficiency, corruption, and the poor standards of collective distribution and food preparation. When, in July 1920, 14,000 party members and soldiers tried to eliminate trade altogether – closing a total of 4500 shops and booths – people moved their transactions to homes and courtyards. Reluctantly, in the spring of 1921, Bolsheviks again allowed the trade in farm products. People hated the tasteless canteen food. There were some fights over too little food, and a strike in the summer of 1919. What is intriguing against this backdrop of hunger, crackdown on markets, and enforced change of food habits, is the popular support for state control. 'The fact that the new state was doing its job badly did not undermine the belief that state intervention was necessary', McAuley has emphasised.[40] Where did this belief come from? One important source, missing in Germany, was a strong, unifying social ideology, one that now equated the worker with the public interest and identified the bourgeoisie as the root cause of all evil, using a shared enemy picture for a shared view of social justice guarded by a workers' government.

People in Britain never faced the extremes of scarcity and hunger prevalent in Germany or Russia, but relative deprivation and socially constructed needs can be as important drivers of food politics as absolute nutritional factors. What are of interest here are two dimensions in the political mobilisation of needs: the organic representation of a shared public interest, and the turn to the state for economic regulation. In the autumn and winter of 1917 serious shortages of tea, bacon, butter, and meat developed. By November, queues had arrived. Rhondda, the food controller, introduced a national rationing system for all essential foodstuffs. Police reports document the dramatic arrival and disappearance of queuing. The initial 1.3 million persons counted in queues in London over six days, declined in the first week after rationing to 191,000, and went down to 15,000 in the fourth week, including queues

for unrationed articles such as cheese and fish.[41] By reducing queues, the success of a rationing system relying on registration with local shops restricted the space available for antagonistic street politics between groups.

Social stability was reinforced by organised consumers' representation of an organic social interest. Consumer mobilisation especially targeted heavy price increases in milk. Milk became *the* food reflecting the new politics demanding universal access to a basic good, leading to mass demonstrations and grass-root municipal take-overs of supply and distribution. In popular politics, Free Trade had placed cheapness and cultural nationalism – the cheap loaf – over questions of supply or nutritional need. In the First World War, milk was the harbinger of a new food politics to come, where regular supply and universal human needs defined and standardised by nutritional science took centre stage. Whereas in Germany the politics of consumption divided consumers such as working-class mothers from soldiers' wives, in Britain it consolidated a sense of the consumer as public interest. The demand for price control of milk as an 'essential food' led in 1918–19 to the more general demand for state control of supply, distribution, and prices of all necessary foods by the Consumers' Council, an advisory body established in 1918. The war exploded the idea, so popular earlier, that Free Trade prevented trusts and high prices, by revealing the limits of competition. Next to domestic combines, like the United Dairies which controlled 80 per cent of the milk supply of Greater London by 1918, organised consumers now pointed to their dependence on foreign corporations, like the American meat trust which controlled the global meat market. Coping with distance now required trade regulation to protect consumers against high prices or insecure supplies dictated abroad.[42] This was, of course, never a universal consensus – producers and retailers fought for the end of wartime controls, and organised consumers themselves were divided over the precise division of labour between regulation by government and by intermediate organisations, like the cooperatives. But tensions over rationing, high prices, and profiteering had left a legacy of a new shared sense of food security that undermined belief in Free Trade as a universal panacea.

Towards a global understanding of food security

The enforced urgency of food security was an important legacy of the First World War and transformed the mental landscape of political economy in which distance was mapped in international as well as

popular politics. The heavy increase in tariffs and other trade barriers is well known – Europe after the war had 7000 more miles of tariff barriers at an average of 30 per cent above their pre-war levels, with more flexible upward-tending agreements over an average of less than a year compared to their more predictable ten-year period before 1914. Tariff schedules multiplied, in Belgium from 235 in 1884 to 2000 in 1924.[43] Next to new states and threatened or vested economic interests, one contributing factor must also be seen in the relative decline of public support for an 'open door'. Part of the explanation behind the spread of protectionism lies in 'an excess of democracy', as Harold James has put it.[44] The fragmented nature of the agricultural vote favoured competition among parties seeking to expand their base of support. In France, agriculture was defended as a corner-stone of national identity. Fascist states, like Italy from the mid-1920s, injected subsidies and promoted corporative arrangements to boost agricultural production.[45]

Equally important, was the growing drift towards economic regulation across the middle and left of the political spectrum. This is where core supporters of an open world trading system had come from before the First World War. Few radicals or social democrats came to like tariffs, but there was a host of alternative forms of trade regulation favoured in the post-war years that marked a general acceptance that pre-war Free Trade had become an anachronism. In Weimar Germany, the SPD focused on increasing the productivity of domestic agriculture and called for tax privileges and a marketing board controlled by the state, long-standing demands of organised farmers.[46] In Britain, the labour movement toyed with everything from quotas to import boards and agricultural subsidies – which the first Labour government (1923–24) introduced to build up a domestic sugar beet industry. The domestic origin of 'essential foods' privileged in nutritional politics – especially milk which was still part of regional or at best national food systems and thus beyond the scope of global trade – reinforced the popular call for national control and regulation. It was difficult for social reform and women's movements to call for a secure and abundant provision of milk at reasonable prices without accepting some form of state regulation or another. In domestic as in international trade, the market retreated in the popular imagination. The domestic interests of producers and consumers moved closer together in a vision of stable prices and secure supply. Coping with distance now meant protecting the national economy against violent price fluctuations and the economic anarchy of world trade or by turning to more self-sufficient imperial trade blocs.

What about the international level itself? So far we have looked at the question of coordination from within nation-states, focusing on changing degrees of sympathy and demands made by social groups towards each other and the state. Discussion of the international level has principally focused on commercial and monetary policy and the collapse of a world economic system, through tariffs in the 1920s and the rise of quotas and bilateral trade agreements in the 1930s.[47] Here I want to look at a related, but more cultural and intellectual reconfiguration of international relations. For, in addition to giving rise to projects of autarchy or regional trading blocks, the First World War and post-war years also led to a new vision of international coordination amongst a new generation of international statesmen and reformers. The move towards international coordination identified both the market and the nation-state as problematic and deficient building blocks of the world order. And it ultimately laid the foundation for a new, more integrated view of the global economic system, in which the coordination of food supply and demand were reconceived as a shared global project of social justice.

This new international project, where distance would be managed through the coordinating effort and mentality of international agencies, emerged out of three main building blocks: experiments in transnational governance, new ideas of citizenship, and nutritional politics. Alongside economic nationalism, the First World War also left behind a legacy of supra- and transnational forms of economic coordination. The allied shipping crisis led to experiments with coordinating supply and distribution, such as the Wheat Executive and bulk purchases. The establishment of the Allied Maritime Transport Council and its Executive (AMTC, AMTE) created an international body without formally displacing the constitutional sovereignty of national governments. These bodies were a recognition that problems which had become unmanageable for nation-states required international coordination and the delegation of authority. For some within these organisations, like Arthur Salter, the AMTC was part of a historic shift towards a new supra-international system of governance supervised by an administrative corps that would gradually acquire a supranational understanding of political economy. The Belgian relief scheme and allied programmes of cereal supplies were held up as evidence of an expanding international mentality and sympathy.[48] Trade and trade policy, in this view, would gradually absorb other-regarding, international considerations and an awareness of the international cause and consequence of national actions.

The transnational vision received a heavy blow with the collapse of inter-allied controls in 1919, and the retreat of the United States, but succeeded in migrating to the League of Nations and internationalist social movements. Salter became the director of the League's Economic and Financial Section and preached before and after the World Depression about the permanent and irreversible collapse of a pre-war order of market mechanism and national sovereignty, and the need for more international forms of regulation.[49] Salter was part of a new political and epistemic community of New Internationalists who explored and popularised aspects of what we might now call global governance and global civil society. The economic case for coordination was spelled out by E. M. H. Lloyd, whose career stretched from the British Ministry of Food in the First World War to that of advisor to the Independent Labour Party and to UNRRA and the Food and Agriculture Organisation after the Second World War. Lloyd's *Experiments in State Control* (1924) highlighted the benefits of wartime controls and presented them as a blueprint for future coordination of international food supplies. Lloyd identified price fluctuations in food as a principal source of international and domestic instability. At the global level, the rise of commercial trusts had distorted market conditions and put small producers and consumers alike at risk from uncertainty and profiteering. At the domestic level, fluctuations in food prices undermined stable wages and thus eroded the foundations of industrial peace and political stability. Free Trade, the panacea of pre-war days, was no longer able to automatically guarantee the interests of consumers and civil society. Wartime experiments with coordinating supply and distribution, such as the Wheat Executive and bulk purchases, proved the potential for controls as sources of more stable and efficient social and international relations.[50]

Such economic arguments for stabilisation were embedded in a broader political project of civic renewal, in which international coordination replaced the more centralised forms of power of the nation-state. A leading exponent of this project was Alfred Zimmern. A prominent English ancient historian and public intellectual, Zimmern joined the British state and advised on foreign policy during the war, and later directed the International Institute of Intellectual Cooperation in Paris and advised the League. For Zimmern the future of the League lay with a 'system of distributed power' not with the centralisation of policy.[51] Again, the key observation here was that the world was at the same time too global and too diverse to any longer make it possible to rely on either free market or centralising nation-state. The civic awareness required for active citizenship and the collective identity required for

social solidarity – woven together in the nation-state – needed to be unravelled. Sovereignty was a conception that worked for a world of self-contained groups. A world of interdependent groups required coordination and decentralisation – only this would facilitate the transmission of ideas and sympathy between people in different political systems. Coping with distance pointed to an international system of governance open to international voluntary societies and responsive to global public opinion.

Approaching international government, in the way Zimmern did, as a project built up from international voluntary societies, like the cooperatives,[52] may seem rather lofty and, at first glance, removed from the problem of food security. But it was part and parcel of a much larger transnational dynamic which moved intermediate organisations and international politics closer together in discussions of food and public health. The growing reciprocal influence between civil society and domestic social reform with internationalism and international food politics was no coincidence. Salter, Zimmern, Lloyd, and others had been socialised in the settlement house of Toynbee Hall and retained close contacts with social movements. Internationally, the immediate post-war years saw an expansion of national and international intermediate organisations coordinating relief, such as the Commonwealth Fund active in Central Europe, the Rockefeller Foundation and, most notably, the American Relief Administration (ARA);[53] Lloyd's study on state controls was commissioned by the Carnegie Foundation. By 1922 the ARA fed more than eight million people a day in Russia.[54] Food had been a topic of international meetings of experts and social movements before the First World War, stretching from relief to adulteration. In the 1920s in the area of relief, there was a shift away from charitable relief to more professionalised and scientific approach to nutrition and epidemic relief. The International Labour Organisation (ILO) and the League's Health Organisation became international transmitters of new nutritional knowledge as well as sites from which reformers put pressure on their national government to raise minimum standards and social benefits.[55]

The shift towards nutrition had far-reaching consequences for a more integrated global understanding of food security. Nutritional science provided a universal language of standard units (such as vitamins and proteins) with a shared sense of the minimal diet required for human flourishing. It inserted an activist international dynamic into food politics. Food was no longer just a relative marker of different degrees of civilisation or a symbol of national identity, as in pre-war

contrasts between the white and the black loaf, but an essential good with universally applicable standards of optimal health. Or put differently, different societies became part of the same universal frame of analysis, where individuals and groups could be lined up against the same measuring rod of optimal nutritional standards.

Famine relief abroad went hand in hand with the discovery of malnutrition within the richest European societies. Research by the League and by investigators, like John Boyd Orr's influential study on *Food, Health, and Income* (1936), highlighted the persistence of malnutrition in Britain – Orr's study found that 50 per cent of the population were unable to sustain a healthy diet.[56] While studies established a positive correlation between low income and poor health, they also emphasised the contingent, variable nature of this relationship. 'The danger of malnutrition', the League found, 'exists for children of most income groups.'[57]

Domestic welfare and international coordination became two sides of the same coin – and social movements increasingly invoked knowledge and arguments from one sphere to support demands in the other. In 1925, for example, the first international conference of international women consumers combined discussions of 'food values' (nutrition and preparation of food) with discussions for an economic League of Peoples. Social movements and reformers used the nutritional standards developed by the League to call for greater entitlements (especially to core foods like milk) and an adjustment of the official index of the cost of living that informed social policy. The link between national nutritional policy and international trade policy was a frequent theme of discussion in international movements; in 1936 a conference convened by the League of Nations Union in London revealed virtual agreement with proposals by Frederick Hopkins of the Royal Society on Nutrition to extend subsidies to increase milk consumption as well as for cheap wheat from the colonies, proposals that would have received the kiss of death from Free Trade internationalists before the war.[58] Likewise, campaigns against malnutrition in the 1930s approached the domestic destruction of food in a vein similar to international debates about 'underconsumption' and 'overproduction'. Stories of milk and food being thrown into the sea in Britain had circulated since the First World War and sharpened an awareness of the destruction of world food supplies in the world depression. In 1938 Labour Women turned to F. L. McDougall's memo on 'Economic Appeasement' to argue that increased consumption for all peoples was possible and the most effective way to promote international trade.[59]

The nutritional approach reinforced the move towards a more symmetrical, globally integrated view of balancing food consumption and production advanced by advocates of coordination. The collapse of world prices of primary goods in the world depression (1929–32) amplified this trend rather than initiating it. Already Hoover, who directed the ARA, saw the connection between famine relief and wheat surpluses at the end of the First World War. In the early 1920s proposals for price stabilisation by New Internationalists like Lloyd included plans for international commodity boards and international pools. These would allow planning future world demand, fixing prices for producers, and building up a buffer reserve, which would be released during boom years.[60] Instead of following a short-term market rationale, which hurt consumers and producers at different points of economic cycles, consumers would gain by tying their long-term interests to stable conditions of production for farmers in, say, New Zealand or Eastern Europe. International commodity boards and cooperative arrangements became the nodes of international coordination and sympathy.

The debate about nutrition expanded this analysis into a comprehensive plan for improving levels of consumption worldwide. The Final Report of the Mixed Committee of the League of Nations on The Relation of Nutrition to Health, Agriculture, and Economic Policy in 1937 marked the culmination of the nutritional programme against international underconsumption. Increasing the consumption of 'protective' foods, it was argued, was a dual strategy of tackling malnutrition and agricultural depression. The report stressed the need for governments to give a lead in raising public knowledge of nutrition. Most importantly, it established the centrality of consumption for global trade and its symbiotic relationship with improving agriculture:

> Nutrition policy . . . must be directed towards achieving two distinct, though mutually dependent aims. Its primary concern is with consumption: with bringing the foods which modern physiology has shown to be essential for health and physical development within the reach of all sections of the community. But, in addition, it must also concern itself with supply. Changes in demand involve changes in supply; increased demand, increased supply.[61]

The League's report only explicitly dealt with European and Western countries, but the global implications were clear. In addition to raising demand for 'protective' foodstuffs (milk, vegetables, etc.), improved consumption in European societies would also require and make possible

greater production of energy-bearing foods (cereals) elsewhere. '[I]f the world problem of nutrition be viewed as a whole', it concluded, 'the enormous scope for increase in the consumption and production of cereals and certain other foodstuffs valued chiefly for their energy-yielding qualities becomes at once apparent.'[62]

A world food problem

The Second World War saw the completion of this globally integrated picture of food supply that placed domestic rights and duties within an understanding of global needs and trade coordination. With the Atlantic Charter in 1941, 'freedom from want' became a fighting principle of the allies. The Hot Springs conference in May/June 1943 recommended to increase world agricultural production and boost consumption by way of international action. The Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) that was eventually established in 1945 turned out to be a more conservative body than many internationalists had hoped, focusing on improved living conditions rather than on eliminating world hunger. Proposals for a world food board by the first director general of the FAO, Boyd Orr, were sidelined. Still, institutional stasis and the quickly advancing shadow cast by Cold War diplomacy must not distract from the broader cultural reconfiguration of domestic and global welfare considerations that came with a vision of coordinating world food security.

Allied propaganda spread ideas and images of the complementary rights and duties between individuals and state as well as between nations – an approach well illustrated in the film 'World of Plenty', written by Eric Knight, the author of 'Lassie Come Home' and a strong supporter of F. D. Roosevelt, and produced by Paul Rotha for the British Ministry of Information in 1942–43.[63] Boyd Orr was an advisor to the film and starred as the 'scientist'. The film neatly visualised the new symbiotic relationship between social citizenship and global coordination. The war, in this view, had taught a historic lesson of the organic functional relationship between state and citizen in the areas of food and public health. It extended an earlier maternalist vision to a virtuous circle of healthy citizens: stronger babies made stronger soldiers and citizens, who fulfilled their obligation to the state, which in turn fulfilled its obligation to build stronger babies and citizenships (Plate 2.1).

But now the film elevated this domestic vision to a global project of coordinating food supplies and satisfying human needs: social citizenship required global institutions and action to distribute food according to need from one part of the world to another (Plate 2.2).

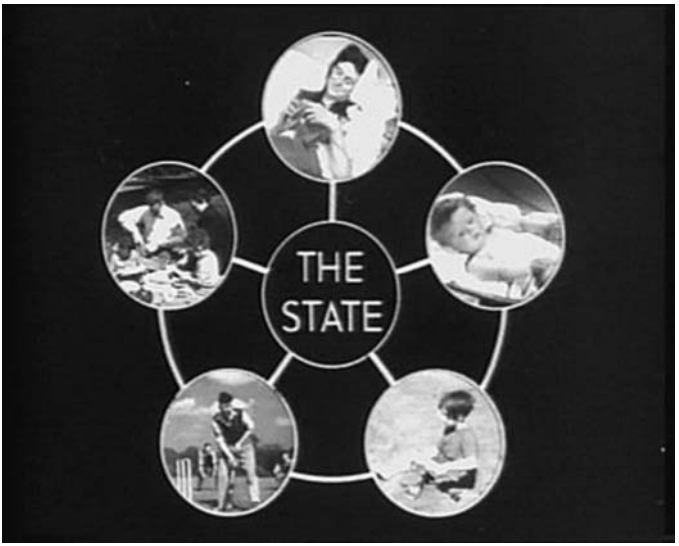

Plate 2.1 'The Circle is Closed', 1943
Source: 'The World Of Plenty' (1943), reproduced with the permission of Film Images.

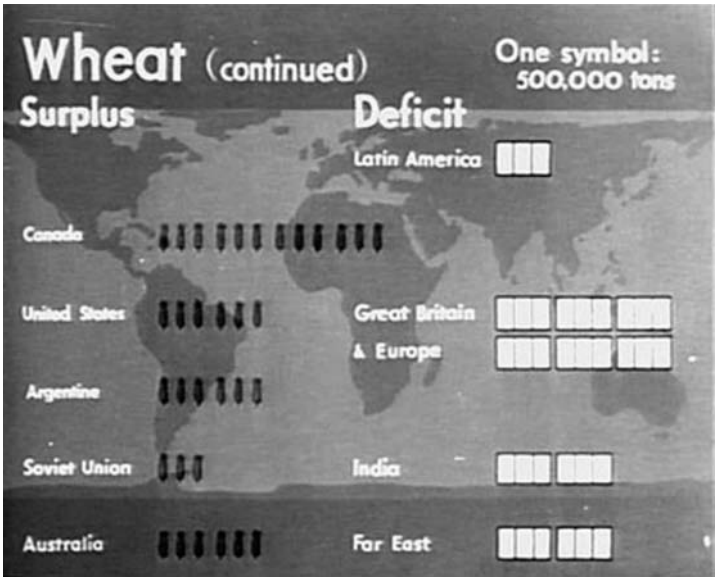

Plate 2.2 'A World Food Plan', 1943
Source: 'The World Of Plenty' (1943), reproduced with the permission of Film Images.

In part, this more ambitious project reflected the new professional claims of science and technology, which were expected to boost agricultural production. The optimistic embrace of a trade coordination mechanism, however, also recorded a more general shift in social and political mentalities: sovereign states had failed just as sovereign markets had. Social justice at the international plane – symbolised by proposals for a just 'world account' of food – demanded that, in future, international agencies regulated the flow of trade between producing and consuming countries on principles of need, thus avoiding the vicious cycle of the previous world depression and international conflict.

For advocates of a global approach to the world food problem, the decade after the Second World War was one of growing marginalisation and disillusionment. Boyd Orr's and the FAO's plans for a world food board quickly ran into opposition from key states, empires, and producers. There was some support from countries with recent memories of extreme deficiencies (Austria, Poland, Greece) and those favouring stable markets (France). But the United States government preferred liberal trade for its farmers. And the British state felt that as a consuming nation it would end up having to pay for the higher costs that would come with price stabilisation policies needed to fund agricultural surpluses and redirect them to countries with deficiencies. Canadian producers, who had been part of post-war commodity arrangements with the British government, felt that they had committed to unfairly low prices. The absence of the Soviet Union and Argentina weakened FAO's claim to global legitimacy from the outset. The polarising climate of the cold war, and, as the resigning Boyd Orr complained, the use of US Marshall aid without the cooperation of the United Nations,[64] killed the prospect of a world food board. With the exception of some regional commodity agreements, world agriculture was mainly again resting on market foundations by 1947. By the next decade, the problem for the FAO had become one of disposing of surplus production, not deficiency.[65]

As a project of global governance, the credibility of new international organisations and policies of food security and humanitarian relief was from the outset seriously compromised by Empire. Schemes of global food coordination always stood in tension with the political ambition and mindset of existing empires. The United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration (UNRRA), set up in 1943, was a good example of the global application of domestic knowledge and experience of food security and public health. Its strategy of restoring the health of children in liberated Europe can be summarised in one word: milk. The problem was that UNRRA's food work coincided with major famines in

parts of the British Empire, especially in Bengal where millions starved in 1943–44. The British government had no interest of seeing its status as an imperial power undermined by the interference of new international organisations. Britain was in control of the situation, the Foreign Office insisted: India did not need international assistance. Food politics, in short, was constrained by the politics of Empire, and that meant conflict among the allies as well as between imperialists and colonial nationalists. In view of the Bengal famine, 'Freedom from Want', and the new international bodies to which it gave rise, looked to many colonial nationalists like Jawaharlal Nehru suspiciously like merely another instrument of domination, preserving a moral double standard for the rich against the poor.[66]

Instead of a world food board coordinating production and distribution according to principles of universal need, food politics in the era of the Cold War were increasingly recast by US trade and foreign policy. Food aid, initially a part of the Marshall Plan, became central to bilateral agreements between the United States and Third World countries. Accepting greater agricultural self-sufficiency in Western Europe, amplified the US problem of what to do with its wheat surpluses. Food aid for the Third World was the answer. By the late 1950s US aid approached a third of the total world wheat trade.[67] Instead of the New Internationalist vision of global coordination and of boosting local knowledge and centres of production, the logic of food aid was to turn food producing developing countries into importers of American wheat surpluses. The symbiotic link between social citizenship and global coordination presumed by New Internationalists was broken. Significantly, a major force behind US food aid was the farm lobby, itself a product of the New Deal in the 1930s.

But the defeat of world food policy is not the only story that deserves to be told, and, by way of ending, I want once more to look beyond the level of state policy and economic lobbies to suggest there is also another story about the impact of the Second World War. It is about a significant shift in perceptions of distance and social and global sympathies within civil society. At the official level, the responsibility to end world hunger would only be recognised by the international community in December 1965 after pressure at the twentieth session of the United Nations. Within civil society, however, it is possible to chart an earlier transition from charitable relief to a more global sense of social justice, interdependence, and equitable distribution. Discussions within social movements here interacted with those of New Internationalists and nutritional experts.

The cooperative movement was a principle transmission belt of this increasingly organic view of global political economy. Support for international cooperative exchange proved a platform for more elaborate forms of international coordination. Already in 1919 the British Women's Cooperative Guild had identified the 'growth of great Capitalist Combines' as a threat to the 'existence of the Co-operative Movement' and urged members to support the international control of raw materials as well as calling on the League and its allied economic council to make use of cooperative networks to fight famine in Europe.[68] International cooperative trading, however, remained slow and patchy in the inter-war years. The international cooperative trading organisation, first mooted in 1907, only came into existence in 1924, and when it did it meant an International Cooperative Wholesale Society merely encouraging national bodies to trade with each other. It was not until 1937 that an International Cooperative Trading Agency was established that traded on its own.

For many in the cooperative movement it was the Second World War that raised hopes of an international authority capable of channelling surplus goods to areas of need, rather than falling back into a 'scorched earth policy' of the inter-war years where surplus was burned or buried.[69] Recent scholarship has emphasised popular demands for an end to rationing and controls in Britain.[70] Post-war politics show an advancing divide between a social democratic vision of 'fair shares' and conservative versions of consumer freedom, with political power shifting from the former to the latter in the course of the 1950s. There has been a tendency to cast social commitment and individualist hedonism as polar opposites in this debate, the former losing out to the latter. However, it might also be possible to place the shift towards a more hedonistic culture, with its emphasis on identity and new, less class-based sociability, alongside a less insular and geographically more flexible mentality in which the appreciation of consumers' duties to producers abroad played a greater role.

Put differently, rather than seeing 'caring at a distance' as a cultural phenomenon following on the heels of affluence and consumer culture, as in recent campaigns for 'fair trade' and sustainable consumption, it is possible to trace elements to an earlier moment in debates about world hunger and civil society in the 1940s and 1950s. From the late 1950s, the cooperative movement and cooperative culture in Britain entered a period of sharp decline, but it also left a legacy of a more global relational ethic, articulating ethical connections between consumers and producers across the globe that would be revived in the

new dramatic attention to problems of world hunger in the 1970s and, more recently, in movements for fair trade and alternative consumption.

Instead of 'cheapness', the several million strong cooperative movement in Britain in the 1940s–1950s stressed the shared interests of consumers and producers in stable trade. Cooperators came together in town meetings to hear of the Hot Springs Conference and watch internationalist films like 'The World of Plenty'.[71] *The Co-operative News* reported at length about cooperators involvement in UNRRA relief work and of the work of the FAO. Study groups met to discuss problems of world hunger and world trade. The Cooperative Party, in alliance with the Labour Party, emphasised that a general rise in the standard of living demanded more 'conscious cooperation between the rich nations and the poor'. This required an end to the exploitation of cheap colonial labour, but also trade coordination: 'Food producing nations must not take advantage of shortages or be victimised by unreasonably low prices in times of abundance.'[72] The global interdependence between consuming and producing nations was emphasised. Through the 1950s, long after the defeat of a world food board, cooperators demanded international buffer stocks to eliminate fluctuations and prevent famine.[73]

I have emphasised an advancing, more integrated global understanding underlying visions of trade coordination, but how genuinely international was this? There has been a wave of critiques of Western hegemony in models of development and in global civil society – a much needed corrective. True, internationalists placed much trust in science and in increasing agricultural production to meet population growth. Many came to international governance from earlier experiences with an imperial model of governance. At the same time, the emphasis on science and production needs to be viewed within the dual context of wartime destruction and the goal of raising domestic and global standards of nutrition. The supply argument was part of a drive to increase capabilities and consumption. As the Women's Cooperative Guild told its members in *Feeding the World* in 1948, to give all people in the world a healthy diet, world production needed to be increased significantly above pre-war levels, by 100 per cent in milk, 163 per cent in fruit and vegetables, 80 per cent in pulses, and 46 per cent in meat. For Britons to become healthy, they needed to consume 57 per cent more milk and 70 per cent more fruit and vegetables than before the war. Increase in production and consumption was not a problem of development for other societies but for everyone. Even in the best fed countries, it was emphasised, one-quarter of the population did not have enough food to give them a decent standard of living. There was no qualitative difference

between 'First World' and 'Third World' here. By the mid-1950s hunger and deprivation were presented as a normal condition of humanity, not an exceptional problem of underdevelopment outside the West.[74] Britons might have come out of the war at a higher standard than people in Asia or Africa, but they all shared persisting deficits, especially in protective foods. They had all been victims of the destruction and waste of agricultural surpluses associated with the inter-war years.[75] Here was a global problem demanding a global solution, not unilateral acts of Western charity; the Cooperative Party used the example of the elderly British lady saving her crumbs for the world as an example of misplaced benevolence.

The new approach to a global food policy went hand in hand with the development of what more recently has been called global civil society. There was a tightening and growing affinity between international organisations and non-governmental and international non-governmental organisations. This more symbiotic relationship proceeded from established social movements, like the British cooperatives, but it was also flowing outwards from the centre. New international organisations like the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations and cooperative societies and other social movements came to emphasise their mutual dependence. The significance of cooperatives for mutual aid and democratic culture as well as for agricultural production and distribution had been stressed by the FAO since its birth at the Hot Springs conference in May 1943.[76] In addition to member states, the FAO also established connections with international social movements and bodies like the International Labour Office. The FAO had formal contacts with the International Cooperative Alliance, the All-India Cooperative Union, and, at a regional level, with a network of national cooperative bodies. Beginning with the Lucknow meeting in India in 1949, the FAO started technical committees to promote the transnational exchange of knowledge amongst cooperators, supporting study groups and cooperative surveys.[77] Its Rural Welfare Division did much to develop ties with local cooperatives and other civil society groups, like the Associated Country Women of the World. Key officers, like H. Belshaw, were inspired by the need for a 'social approach' to cure economic problems, as opposed to a technical approach or simple injections of capital. Cooperatives, in this view, were a vital agency in economic reform by building up the social capital and political experience and organisation necessary for development.[78]

The global scope of this new international outlook for social movements like the British cooperatives and for international organisations

becomes clear when compared to earlier responses to famines, such as the metropolitan debates about the Indian famine of 1876–78, which cost over seven million lives. Imperial policy was fixated with Free Trade policies and helped to create what Mike Davis has called 'Late Victorian Holocausts'.[79] Critics of imperial policy there were, but these too failed to see Britain and India as equivalent. British tax policy or the failure of investing in canals were held responsible for the deficient capabilities and access to food for millions on the Indian subcontinent. India, like Ireland before, was the victim of aristocratic exploitation, radicals argued.[80] Florence Nightingale tried to shake up her contemporaries by stressing how 'for their daily lives and deaths, we do *not* as a nation practically care'.[81] Philanthropic charity there was. But where there were signs of responsibility, it meant fiscal reform and imperial exit (for some liberals and socialists), frequently accompanied by a renewed emphasis on Britain's continuing mission as 'a higher civilisation'.[82] The *Daily News*, which criticised imperial policy for overburdening India with debt, saw 'scarcity' as a problem to which 'Eastern countries are especially prone'.[83] Put simply, famine was a foreign country: Britain and India were not part of a shared global politics of food.

The universal standards of nutrition and the international model of trade coordination provided a shared mental space for East and West. Where imperial food politics had been characterised by hierarchical distance and political asymmetry (civilised versus less civilised; the sender versus the recipients of charity; responsible empire and debt-ridden victim), global food politics moved towards a greater sense of equivalence: malnutrition was a universal problem; trade regulation required adjustments from both consuming and producing nations; domestic welfare required global awareness and action.

Such short characterisations stand the risk of sounding all too abstract and removed from everyday political discussion in civil society. Cooperative 'speaker notes' for grassroots meetings give some insight into the changing mentality and self-awareness that this shift in ethics entailed at a more popular level. These materials combined basic information on international institutions with 'human interest stories' in a flexible format for different audiences. The cooperatives' notes on the FAO in 1955, for example, opened with a self-reflective exercise on the changing meaning of the world food problem:

> Fifty years ago would anyone have *thought* about a WORLD food problem? When famine struck India, or the potato blight struck Ireland, other people heard of *India's* or *Ireland's* food problem. They

> were sympathetic and sent what help they could. But they didn't think about a *world* food problem that the WORLD should do something about solving. The first step toward solving it has been taken when we *talk* about a *world* problem.[84]

The FAO acted on the cooperative principles of 'telling people how to help themselves to grow more food'. FAO, in this view, was not the agent of Westernisation or top-down developmental initiatives, but a genuinely international facilitator between different local knowledge systems. Accounts of the Expanded Programme of Technical Assistance (1950), for example, emphasised the diverse range of knowledge systems and experts at work in increasing production, spreading new tools, and fighting pests. Experts came from all parts of the world, from India and Iceland, Peru and Switzerland. Chinese experts helped Afghans to develop their silk industry. Latin American experts showed Ethiopians how to increase their supply of coffee. 'It's completely international without bias towards anyone.' There was a dose of scepticism about the impact of civilisation on African societies. Discussing human rights in 1950, for instance, the Women's Cooperative Guild recommended Elspeth Huxley's *Sorcerer's Apprentice*, a book that showed how civilisation had affected African people 'not always to their ultimate advantage'.[85]

The relationship between civil society, food politics, and the coordination of distance – the theme of our discussion – had reached a new configuration in the internationalist outlook of social movements like the cooperatives. The new global vision of food policy and trade coordination only makes sense when viewed as a project of democratic renewal, both at the level of international institutions and at the level of local communities. International organisations were attractive for widening the influence of civil society and local democracy, sidestepping the nation-state and more centralised bureaucratic institutions. The FAO and UNRRA were represented as international applications of the historic virtues of local cooperative democracy. 'You can think of FAO as a self-help co-operative formed by 71 governments' to increase production, distribution, and consumption, the Cooperative Party explained. The cooperative movement seized on the support given in 1945 by Herbert Lehmann, the director general of UNRRA, to the International Cooperative Reconstruction committee and the principles of democratic control and education in training democratic citizens.[86] There were frequent accounts of the knowledge cooperators contributed to the fight against world hunger, such as the work of Walling Dykstra in Central

Europe and the Balkans in the summer of 1945; Dykstra had been the first director of the International Cooperative Trading Agency in 1937. Tom Taylor was an employee on loan to UNRRA from the Scottish Cooperative Wholesale Society who reported for the *Co-operative News*. His accounts reveal the great hope for building democracy from the bottom up by way of cooperative education. One report, for example, discussed how sponge divers in Camp Nuseirat near Gaza had begun a cooperative effort to turn a tree, washed up on a beach, into an improvised boat. This led to local discussions of 'how to break the power of their local capitalists' and the ultimate formation of a sponge-divers' cooperative society. When capital was needed for a second boat, UNRRA provided it. Here was international cooperative democracy and solidarity in action, overcoming the democratic deficit associated with nation-states. 'The very idea of a democratic world order', the *Co-operative News* reflected in 1943, 'implies that the ordinary citizen, who is often scarcely equal to mastering local or national affairs, will have to understand the workings of great international structures.' Only in the cooperative movement were they able to find the universal principles and methods of association 'which can link in one continuous line of thought the local with the global . . . enabl[ing] the peoples to dominate the vast administrative and economic machines on which their lives and livelihood depend'.[87]

Conclusion

In this chapter I have tried to present an approach to the problem of food in modern European history that moves beyond states and economic interests to ask about the changing social, moral, and intellectual understandings at work in societies coping with distance and the vulnerability as well as opportunities presented by an increasingly global food system. Let me conclude briefly by suggesting three related implications from this approach. First, the propensity for conflict or sympathy within societies and between them is not only determined by their different 'factor endowments', economic coalitions, and state policies, but also by the different moral resources and intellectual traditions circulating in societies. These inform their understanding of the risks that come with openness, their preference for different forms of coordination, and the tendency towards social conflict or cooperation at times of deprivation. The integration of the global food system was not simply an economic or technological achievement, but also a challenge that prompted a political and moral adjustment from consuming and producing societies.

Second, our understanding of the uneven process of this adjustment across Europe, requires a broadening of our categories of telling this story. The period from the 1870s–1950s, which saw the coming together, fragmentation, and partial repairing of the global food and trade system, is not only a drama between capital and nation-states but also includes civil society. The British preference for Free Trade rested on a strong sense of civil society and civic consumers. The rise of economic nationalism did not only spell tariffs or autarchy but also galvanised a New Internationalism which fused trade coordination with elements of social justice and transnational democracy. Some thinkers and social movements in Europe began to draw a new map of political economy in which the food problem emerged as a global problem.

Emphasis on civil society and how groups map their own position within the world, finally, have implications for the place of food in studies of consumption. Most studies of so-called 'consumer societies' have privileged objects and symbols of luxury, abundance, and convenience. Food politics needs to be reintegrated into these narratives, not only because for most of the twentieth century, the concerns of many Europeans lay with a struggle for survival, but also because food and food politics were the principal sites in which debates about appropriate levels of consumption and the relationship between consumers, civil society and states were fought out. It was through food that social groups articulated their own identity and imagined themselves in relation to humanity at large.

Critics of consumer society have tended to see spatial distance as a source of moral harm, producing indifference to others and widening the gap between people's actions and their knowledge of the consequences of these actions.[88] Yet the increasing spatial distance that came with the global integration of food systems also created new global visions of coordination which fostered a sense of shared ethics and broadened the global frame of sympathy and politico-economic analysis. What we might term food internationalism evolved together with food nationalism. Amongst geographers, the recent moral turn has led to inquiries about the creation of self and the role of other-regarding actions, such as in fair trade, while others have asked about the production of meaning along the food chain.[89] In economics, Armatya Sen has developed the entitlement approach, highlighting the importance of groups' capabilities and rights to securing food.[90] Historians, this chapter suggests, would do well to extend such contemporary perspectives and explore the changing forms of ethics, social solidarity, and international political economy that have developed through the politics of food in

the modern period. If food was about filling stomachs, it was also about thinking about one's place in the world.

Notes

1 For discussion and comments I am grateful to all participants at the conference on food and conflict in Denmark, and to Sunil Amrith, David Goodman, Mike French, and Jim Phillips. Thanks also for assistance to ESRC-AHRC (research grant L143341003).

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3

Consumption and Total Warfare in Paris (1914–1918)[1]

Thierry Bonzon

Introduction

The plague, famine, war – 'Pestis, fames et bellum' as the expression goes – these three age-old scourges, these three horsemen of the Apocalypse still held an important place in collective representations when France and her capital entered the First World War. In 1914, Parisians aged over 50 still bore in mind the 23,000 deaths due to tuberculosis, typhoid or smallpox, as well as the acute food crisis that had struck Paris during the Franco–Prussian war. With its four million inhabitants (10 per cent of the French population) on the eve of the First World War, the Paris region depended on a particularly vast and complex supply and distribution system. To meet the capital's needs for food meant access to ever more distant production zones, more specialised flows and more actors. In this respect, the 'Halles Centrales', in the heart of Paris, played a major role in the distribution of food. There, in the 'stomach of Paris', a spectacular, noisy business took place, causing huge urban repercussions on the city centre and on the life of Parisians.

In August 1914, at the time when the descent into war began, the supply and distribution system of the capital was immediately challenged. With the German occupation, one-fifth of the cereal production, more than half of the sugar beet production, and 75 per cent of French coal supply were lost to the French nation. It prompted a new organisation in the flow of products destined to supply the capital and raised many difficulties. The competition between the urban population's demand for food and the priority accorded to food supply for the army or linked to the war effort and mobilisation had equally drastic consequences for the distribution networks in the capital. The results were food supply crises on several occasions in Paris. There was a

shortage of sugar as soon as the conflict began, then of butter, and then of meat in 1918. The problem of coal supply, in particular, was especially acute in the first four months of 1917. The shortfall in coal supplies added to the harsh climatic conditions and turned the winter of 1917 into one of the worst ordeals the Parisian population had to undergo.

Beyond the hardships linked to severe restrictions (in relation to pre-war levels of consumption) social tensions began to emerge over the inequalities of access to food. Such tensions were sharpened by the unequal nature of the sacrifices demanded of the population. In this respect, however, the sensitivity of the Parisian population during the conflict was at the same time both new and old. The new dimension was that the mobilisation of society was accompanied by a moral discourse insisting on the equality of sacrifice in wartime (linked to the Republican ideal of the equality of citizens regarding the 'impôt du sang' (blood tribute). There had been a long-standing popular verbal expression of the social antagonisms opposing social categories in terms of physical differences: the 'thin' versus the 'fat' or the 'corpulent' versus the 'empty-bellied'[2] were common conventional representations emphasising the social oppositions and growing resentment of Parisians about scarcities.

In the case of Paris at war, political, industrial and military issues were always linked. If it is true that the French capital was the political centre of food protests and revolutionary gestures, Paris was also on the route of a great number of soldiers on leave. Paris was the most closely linked city to the front, in constant contact with it, and at the same time it was the place where the industrial mobilisation of the country was performed.

The surge in prices for some basic goods led to unequal access and fuelled claims for social justice. Representations borrowed from the language of the moral economy of the crowd and at the same time used the initial discourse of the authorities on mobilisation (ideas of moral solidarity and idealised views of the national community) in order to turn them against the authorities themselves.

This chapter gives an account of the relationship between the sensitive issue of food supply in Paris in the period of total warfare and the mobilisation of the civilian population of Paris. The maintenance of decent levels of consumption was a central issue in the waging of war. At the same time, the problem of access to food and essential goods was an aspect of the social contract between the population and the authorities. What was at stake throughout the conflict was nothing but the capacity of the authorities to renegotiate the social contract and at last to preserve their legitimacy in the opinion of the population.[3]

The 'descent into war'

From the beginning of the war, bread, a commodity seen as particularly sensitive, became the subject of close and unremitting attention from the public authorities.[4] A law of July 1791 was revived to control and fix its price throughout the war. When asked about the consequences of a possible 5-centime increase on the 2 kg bread-loaf, in the course of May 1915, the quartermaster sergeant in charge of the flour mills working for the Paris home-front reminded the minister of trade that:

> ... Paris is such an important city that it might be dangerous to increase the price of bread (however weak this increase may be) not because of the higher price itself but because of the moral aspect of such an increase. It is obvious that workers hardly protested when the price of meat and coal were increased significantly. But this would not be the case with bread. Traditionally, the rise in the price of this commodity is a source of popular discontent.[5]

Price-fixing was implemented so strictly that the price of bread remained practically unchanged throughout the war. It was the only commodity to be controlled so drastically.

The political decision favouring such a radical price-setting measure was followed by that of a secure supply system. As a security measure, the military authorities kept close guard over supplies of wheat for Paris until September 1916. During that period, the 'Direction des approvisionnements de siège' of the Camp retranché de Paris was responsible for all the stages in the regular supply of bread for Paris: it requisitioned and stored stocks of wheat, requisitioned flour mills working for the Paris home-front and allocated to each baker a miller and a fixed amount of flour for his customers.[6]

The aim was to avoid any shortage of bread and to keep its price low. These two goals reflected a clear comprehension by the government of the acute sensitivity of the food supply question in popular culture. This first intervention was successful: apart from a few tense moments when the stocks of the Paris home-front ran out at the beginning of 1915, or later when the quality of war bread was called into question,[7] popular discontent about bread remained weak.

At first, state intervention was based on the idea of a short war. Products other than bread were left uncontrolled and in general freedom of trade was uninhibited. The free market was then tempered by new moral norms, emphasising values of solidarity and sacrifice.

The early months of the conflict were characterised by a proliferation of prescriptive discourse urging Parisians to impose voluntary restrictions. This took various forms as is shown in the following interview of a waiter in a luxury restaurant in Paris published in *Le Matin* on 28 February 1915:

> Every customer seems to impose on himself some sort of restraint. In my view, this behaviour is not directed by the desire to save money. The reason is obviously different: they bear in mind the image of the 'poilus' and feel sympathy for them. They are aware that life in the trenches is hard and feel somewhat guilty if they can afford to spend money on luxury goods, when those heroes at the front must content themselves with the 'rata'.[8]

Civilian nutrition and consumption behaviour became the touchstone of citizenship in wartime, with, on the one hand, the representations of the 'good civilian' eager to consume less and to live economically, and on the other hand, the recurrent image of the 'profiteer' emerging in everyday language. The longer the war went on, however, the more contradictions were bound to appear. With the surge in the price of consumer goods, more and more obvious tensions emerged between the necessity to maintain a free market in food and the moral discourse of mobilisation.

High prices and the mobilisation of urban populations

At first the public authorities did not struggle hard against the rise in prices of basic food items such as sugar, butter, milk, and meat that began as soon as spring 1915. From June 1915 onwards, the Préfecture de police simply calculated and published the average prices for these basic foodstuffs. Then, in November, merchants were asked to advertise price information on public notice boards, but with little success. In summer 1916, all basic food items except bread had become more expensive, with their prices at least 30 per cent higher than in July 1914. Two products, in particular, had become especially dear: sugar and coal. The evolution of the price of these two items aroused so much tension that it led the government to fix the wholesale price of coal in April 1916 and the Préfecture de police to publish a maximum price for the sale of sugar in May 1916. The maxima were progressively generalised, affecting most consumer products: frozen meat in April 1916, potatoes in September 1916, milk and butter in February 1917.

This late and limited intervention revealed the government's reluctance to control market forces. It also reflected the particular relationship between public authorities and the agricultural sector, which had been the supporting base of the Third Republic since the days of the Paris Commune. The weight of farming pressure groups, represented in particular by the powerful *Société des Agriculteurs de France* could not be ignored in the Sénat. For the government this situation was a source of friction in the choice between a policy favouring urban consumers and an alternative inspired by agricultural interests.[9] The debate following the bill in favour of price-fixing proposed by the Minister of the Interior – the radical socialist Louis Malvy – reflected the tensions within the State. The bill passed the Chambre des Députés on the 26 November 1915. It allowed the price-fixing of 'the commodities essential for food, heating and lighting'. But the bill was then considerably weakened by its examination in the Sénat. As the senator from the Seine et Oise E. T. Aimond (democratic left) put it:

> No doubt everybody respects the interests of consumers. But the agricultural population represents at least half of the population of France and it feeds the whole country. We must therefore be very cautious in the handling of this dangerous weapon which could hurt half of the French population.[10]

At the same time, Parisians had become increasingly sensitive to the rising cost of living. From the second half of 1915 onwards, the rise in the price of food contributed to growing discontent and criticism in all the *arrondissements* of the capital.[11] Food prices became the object of constant recrimination among the Parisian working classes and trade unionists, within Socialist Party branches and in the leftist press.[12]

The surge of prices was seen in terms of speculation and monopolies. The press narrated a social drama, with the figures of the 'agioteur' – the speculator – and the profiteer at centre stage. These omnipresent characters were seen as the 'crooks within'[13] with 'a taste for lucre'.[14] As far as the socialist Louis Dubreuil was concerned, these profiteers 'were growing fat at the people's expense, while the best of the people, the real patriots were struggling and being slaughtered at the borders'.[15] *La Lanterne* denounced tradesmen who 'just see in war a means to enrich themselves. Far from renouncing a share of their profits in a patriotic spirit of sacrifice, these merchants only take advantage from the war and draw benefits from it.' The paper denounced the 'fat retailers who make the public pay high prices for their marble and gold'.[16]

These images and caricatures recalled the capital's revolutionary and republican tradition. Consumers were now 'weary of giving money to speculators',[17] *Le rappel* emphasised on 21 March 1916, echoing images published in *La Bataille* a few months earlier. This 'social drama' was rooted in pre-industrial culture,[18] and linked to social practices 'where popular protest was more defined by consumption issues than by production ones'.[19] The social interpretation of inflation in wartime brought back a familiar scenario, recalling the situation of Year II: traditional enemies (profiteers) had to be fought with traditional measures (price-fixing and requisition).[20]

In the course of 1915, the 'Halles issue' turned into a central conflict for advertisers and local politicians.[21] The Halles represented the most spectacular part of the Paris food supply system. The 'stomach of Paris' was a huge space including the ten specialised pavilions numbered from 3 to 12 and built by Baltard as early as 1851. It also comprised the so-called 'carreau' and the streets where the delivery people lived. All in all, the surface amounted to 21 hectares. But feeding Paris was certainly not the only function of the Halles Centrales, even if it was the most spectacular. The Halles were a supply centre, a wholesale, and half-wholesale market, a place for commercial transactions, but in the early hours of the morning also a retail market for the population of the 'quartier' and its surrounding streets. A place of consumption and leisure with its cafés and restaurants in the adjoining streets, it was a favourite Parisian nightlife destination for the night revellers and the soldiers on leave. This original social space with its own culture, rights, organisation and figures, then, connected a great variety of people through its food supply networks. Producers, consumers and middlemen of all sorts could be found there mixing with each other. Middlemen were particularly numerous: there were the 'mandataires', the 'représentants-vendeurs', the 'commissionaires', the 'approvisionneurs', the 'regrattiers' also named the 'pieds-humides'. In addition to the employees working in the market proper (the 'forts' and the 'placiers'), one could meet there country and city dwellers, men and women, the working class and bohemians, civilians, soldiers, policemen and prowlers, the idle and the poor.

The Halles Centrales at once embodied modernity and tradition, rationality and disorder, confusion and tension. It was emblematic of city life as a whole. Modernity was visibly present in the buildings of the Halles, in their organisation as well as in their architecture (cast iron and iron), and in the electrical factory located under pavilion Number 6 which had been supplying the whole market with electricity since

1889. The municipal council had refrigerators installed in its basement in September 1916. They introduced a new product to the Paris market: frozen meat. The population, though reluctant to consume it at first, nevertheless considered it a sign of progress. The refrigerators were greeted as a genuine improvement in the functioning of the market. They enabled diversification in the supply networks and consequently limited the waste of products to be sold, thus contributing to a fall in prices.

At the same time, the Halles Centrales were also denounced by many urban reformers and some Paris councillors for their archaic characteristics.[22] Their position in the city centre was criticised as a source of urban congestion. The Halles were no longer able to meet the demands of a city of four million people, so that the retail market had to set up shops in the adjoining streets, forming an open-air market (the 'carreau') which recalled the pre-Haussmannian geography. Lastly, poor transport accessibility interfered with the smooth functioning of the market, which processed decreasing quantities of foodstuffs. Those were the most common criticisms that appeared in the debate on the 'Halles issue' at the end of 1915. In 1916 the socialist councillor Henri Sellier proposed to transfer the Halles Centrales to the site of the Paris 'fortifications'. Their development, planned for the post-war period, embodied the very epitome of the city's growing modernity.[23]

Yet, the recurrent criticism of the Halles also revealed the importance of the many intermediaries who participated in the capital's food supply. From the end of 1915 onwards, the 'Halles issue' channelled attacks against those intermediaries, especially the *mandataires* (sales-agents giving preference to agricultural interests and who were not well controlled by the police authorities), the *commissionnaires* (delivery people), and above all the *regrattiers* who were alleged to be the drivers behind speculation. They were collectively blamed for price increases and became the targets of unanimous moral reprobation by the people at a time when the notion of sacrifice and collective solidarity were demanded from all. These images of unscrupulous merchants and intermediaries, then, shaped a representation of the urban community at war, divided by the principles of inclusion and exclusion (allies versus enemies). This social drama simultaneously painted a simple vision of society in a world that had lost its way and offered an obvious solution to the material problems of a rising cost of living: the curtailment of the *regrattiers*'s actions by the employees of the Préfecture de police in charge of social order and the regulation of transactions. As early as November 1915, the prefect of police spoke with firm determination, with some

success apparently.[24] During the whole conflict, the supervision of the Halles Centrales remained a major issue.

The very places of consumption (the Halles market, but also the retail markets and small outlets), then, appeared as a parallel 'theatre of operations', essential to the successful waging of war at the home-front. Power, authority, and political legitimacy were contested, as the population appealed to the interventionist power of the authorities to secure entitlements in ways reminiscent of an older moral economy of the crowd.

Yet the overall reliance on the market was unable to curb the increase in the cost of living and saw a gradual return to individualist consumption behaviour. As already noted the surge in food prices revived an older language of popular discontent: the opposition 'fat'/'thin' became the archetypical social division.[25] Another binary appeared alongside, that of 'the front' and 'the rear'.[26] The language of social justice underlined the increasingly unequal access to essential products and was reminiscent of the discourse on the equality of sacrifices uttered at the beginning of the war. It evoked the 'moral solidarity and the idealised vision of the national community',[27] but only to turn these ideals against the public authorities.

The winter of 1916–17 was a turning point and led to the 'mobilisation' of the local political authorities (local assemblies and representatives of the central authorities) on the issue of consumption. Its most spectacular result was the introduction of rationing procedures. A new social contract was negotiated between the urban population of Paris and the local authorities, defining principles of basic security, access to all essential foodstuffs, and the guarantee of a 'fair price' that echoed an older moral economy of the crowd.

Urban consumption and the making of a new social contract: two wartime experiences

At the end of the harsh winter of 1916–17, Henri Sellier, the famous socialist councillor of the canton of Puteaux, presented a drastic programme on commodity supply at the Conseil general de la Seine. His speech was peppered with phrases from the lexicon of the moral economy of the crowd. He blamed liberalism through and through: 'The country was given over to the spirit of lucre and to speculation', 'too many unscrupulous people have organised a pact of famine and make a scandalous fortune with public misery (Very well!)'.[28] Local assemblies, too, began to adopt the language of moral justice circulating amongst the population, recycling themes of equality and sacrifice, which became

a leitmotiv in political discourse. In terms of policy, priority was given to the implementation of concrete measures to facilitate fair distribution and assist the 'remobilisation' of the rear. The most significant was the rationing of one key material: coal.

Until the summer of 1917, attempts at regulating or controlling coal initiated by the Préfecture and the municipality were limited. Established by the Préfecture in September 1916, as coal supply capacities were decreasing and prices were rising, the Office des charbons of the Seine department was commissioned to control prices and facilitate the distribution of coal among retailers. In order to perform this task, the Office had set up a compensation system so as to achieve an adjustment between British and French prices. A Groupement charbonnier had been established in order to centralise the coal consignment and ensure its equitable distribution between all the members of the Groupement – the latter committing themselves not to sell beyond the price set up by the Office. The whole organisation was supposed to facilitate the distribution of domestic coal and to help to set up its price 'amicably'.

However, the Groupement soon turned out to be inefficient. Its impact was limited. From the outset, its powers of regulation and interference with the market were restrained. The Directeur du Materiel in the Préfecture de la Seine noted: 'It was agreed that as much as possible, freedom of trade would not be affected, and that everyone would remain free to follow their own initiatives.'[29] The Groupement only dealt with limited quantities of coal. For example, from 24 October to 1 September – when it was dissolved – it only received 878,000 tons of coal, that is to say less than 3000 tons per day, whereas daily domestic needs alone were estimated at 5000 tons by the prefectural administration.[30] Surprisingly enough, the activities of the Groupement were hardly controlled by the administration that had been responsible for its establishment. As the prefect of police lamented at a meeting of the municipal council: 'The tradesmen who belong to the Groupement refused my administration the right to control their books and invoice.'[31] Furthermore, the coal organisation was severely blamed for repeated misappropriation of funds. At the meeting of the municipal council of 16 March 1917, the distribution system was denounced as favouring only a handful of important tradesmen who had great influence within the Groupement.[32] This situation led to speculation and disorganisation and only fuelled popular resentment. In April 1917, there were renewed stories of speculation in the surroundings of the delivery buildings. They caused so much discontent among passers-by that the deliveries had to be put off.[33] At the same time, the principle of fair distribution – embodied

by the ration card – was increasingly winning public favour among Parisians.[34]

The response to the supply and distribution crisis in 1917 involved decisions at both the national and local level. State intervention was based on three elements: the distribution of coal on a national scale by the Ministère de l'armement et des fabrications de guerre, the price-setting of coal, and the establishment of a rationing system. In July, the Ministère de l'armement et des fabrications de guerre undertook to organise the distribution of coal on a national scale.[35] At the same time, a policy of price-fixing was rigorously enforced. Fixed from July 1917, the price of coal remained unchanged until February 1920. Just like bread, coal had become a sensitive commodity since the previous winter. At last, the municipalities were given the responsibility to organise rationing.

The debate about a fair distribution of coal started in the municipal council towards the end of July. It was dominated by the will to guarantee the existence of 'one fire per family'. Yet, this basic principle did not mean a minimum allowance. Evoking the economy of the plan, the councillor Alphonse Deville explained: 'It is interesting to inform the people about what will justly be distributed to them out of what the government will give us, not about what they will get . . . Our responsibility is limited to that of fair distribution.'[36] The municipal council refused to commit itself to precise quantities. It envisaged a system in which the volume of coal varied each month according to how much coal came in. In fact, basic quantities were fixed at 30 kg per month until February 1920. Yet the choice of criteria to determine the quantities for distribution prompted heated debates. The Assembly finally agreed on a table exclusively based on the number of people living in the same place, a populist decision that struck a blow at the comfort of the bourgoisie. From November 1917 to April 1918 between 4 and 6 kg of coal were allowed per day, according to the type of family, a figure that roughly corresponded to the average use of a domestic stove. There were deductions under certain circumstances: when people ate out, if they were absent from their home in Paris, if their employer supplied a part of their domestic coal consumption or when they had what constituted a personal stock. In late 1917, special allowances were introduced for groups of people who had especially suffered in the previous winter. Families in charge of young children, sick persons or elderly people could now benefit from a 100 kg supplement per month, albeit at a slightly higher price.[37]

With the proliferation of these different cases and regulations, the machinery of administration and knowledge expanded. A questionnaire

was distributed in 1917 and became a reference guide for the appropriate distribution of coupons for the coal ration cards, resulting in a more efficient and equitable system of distribution. There is no doubt that these measures went some way towards dissolving previous antagonism and fostered a greater feeling of social justice. The rationing of coal that became effective on 1 September 1917 and lasted until the end of the war was widely approved by the Parisian population.

The establishment of municipal butchers marks a second departure from the world of the Halles associated with free market, speculators, and social conflict. In Paris, the municipal majority had long avoided any 'collectivist influence' in its struggle against the rising cost of living. However, there had been several experiments with intervention in the suburbs. There, many socialist or radical municipal councils intervened directly in the distribution of provisions[38] through establishments such as the boucheries municipales (municipal butcher shops) and grocery shops, reflecting traditions of municipal socialism and pre-war ideas on direct supply to consumers.[39] Butchers' shops or municipal shops established during 1916 were strongly promoted in the popular press as a victory of the public interest over that of a small, vested minority seen as responsible for the rising cost of living. In spring 1918 the food crisis also led to municipal intervention in Paris.

The final year of the war was marked by serious difficulties: Feeding the Parisian population was becoming a more and more sensitive political issue.[40] Hardly a day passed without police reports on the state of public morale mentioning 'protests', 'general discontent', or 'numerous and lively complaints'. As winter approached, the atmosphere became intense.[41] Once again, acceptance of sacrifice was linked to an appreciation of equitable social distribution. This was underlined in a police report of 12 June 1918: 'All conversations on the topic of restrictions, from the suburbs to the grands boulevards, indicate that the population will accept all that may still be necessary, on condition that no one is spared.'[42] It was against this particularly tense background that the municipality decided on the creation of the boucheries municipales. Their creation, on 25 March 1918, comprised the simultaneous establishment of the 'boucheries contrôlées' and the 'boucheries municipales' (controlled and municipal butchers). The first were managed by shopkeepers who had agreed to sell their produce at prices set by the Préfecture de police. The municipal butchers were to sell meat supplied by the military quartermaster at its requisition price, prepared at a central butchery under Préfecture supervision and distributed from butchers' shops rented and managed by city authorities. The first public butchers'

shops opened on 18 May, in the midst of the German offensive, with the Germans troops only 20 kilometres away from Compiègne. The butchers' shops opened 'in the most heavily populated *arrondissements* with the greatest proportion of low-rent housing'.[43] In July, while the German pressure was at its height, there were 25 municipal butchers' shops and 44 controlled butchers' shops. The latter were partly managed by cooperatives (among which the famous Bellevilloise). Together, they supplied 4 per cent of the meat consumed in Paris, at prices substantially below market prices. By the time of the armistice, there were about 50 municipal butchers' shops. In April 1919 more than 100 were in place. It was undoubtedly a highly successful way of containing social tensions. 'All residents demand the opening of municipal butchers' shops in every district', stated a police report on 12 June 1918.[44] The enthusiastic reaction of the population emphasised the symbolic weight of these measures, which set up the new social contract between the local authorities and the civilian population.

In April 1919, another initiative was taken by the government to complement the butchers' shops: the creation of municipal stalls or the 'Vilgrain barracks' as the Parisians called them, named after the Under-Secretary of State in charge of the provisioning of the time. The State was responsible for the construction and the provisioning of the stalls, while the Municipality operated their management. These first municipal stores opened up on 6 March 1919. They sold groceries but effectively functioned in the same way as the butchers' shops. At the beginning, their stocks were limited to a few products: rice, beans, and salt meat. But soon they offered a wide range of produce including pasta, oil, raisins, jam, and wine. From May 1919, one could even find meat in these stores, raising the overall number of municipal meat outlets in Paris to 250 by the end of 1919. This initiative, even more than in the case of the municipal butchers' shops, was based on the solid inter-allied network that lay behind the provisioning of the city. The inter-Allied purchasing bodies of London and New York were invited to help with provisioning the Vilgrain barracks. Products sold related directly to the typical ration specification established during the war by the Commission scientifique interalliée.[45] At the end of 1919, there were 162 barracks in Paris, particularly in the peripheral arrondissements of the city.

The municipal butchers' shops and the Vilgrain barracks, so successful in Paris, represent in many respects, an antithesis to the Halles retail market (the 'carreau'). The latter was said to have fallen prey to the speculators (the regrattiers) and was viewed as a traditional form of

supply, dominated by agrarian interests whereas the former were at the service of the consumer. The supply networks and prices of municipal butchers' shops and Vilgrain barracks were viewed as strictly controlled, rationalised, and, above all, fair. Through their systematic use of price tags, for instance, they transformed the very nature of the purchasing transaction, which now appeared to be based on prices set in a rational, transparent way.

Conclusion

If protest movements explicitly linked to consumption appear to have been relatively limited during the First World War, the language and representations of these movements nonetheless managed to evoke an older moral economy of the crowd. This language was mobilised by both consumers, with their claims for a fair price and their criticism of the middlemen, and the authorities, in their intervention in the market. The return to these older moral representations is significant and telling. It was at the same time a means to build and comfort an urban community at war (mobilising consumers against middlemen and profiteers while moving diminishing traditional class divisions) and a way of reinforcing the legitimacy of state power (the state acting as guarantor of the fair price). The urban community at war may be defined by the people who did not belong to it: the unscrupulous broker, the regrattier who worked at the Halles or the merchant who inflated his prices. At the same time, the authorities presented themselves as the organiser of a social contract based on the guarantee of fair price and more widely on the definition of equal access to commodities for all. The conflict over food thus witnessed the brokering of a new social contract between the Parisian population and the local authorities. At its core was the principle of equal access to essential goods for all, an entitlement that, in part, was borrowed from the older cultural background of the moral economy of the crowd.

Notes

1 This contribution partly resumes the text of the paper we presented on the occasion of the fiftieth annual congress of the Society for French Historical Studies held in Paris in June 2004. Thanks to Agnès Mougeot for her help with translation.

2 M. Tournier, 'L'envers de 1900, le lexique des luttes et de l'organisation ouvrière en France', *Mots*, 5 (Oct. 1982), pp. 103–26.

3 In this respect, the case of Berlin is enlightening. In Berlin, the failure of the authorities to manage the nation's provisioning needs, obvious from 1917, contributed to the process of delegitimation of the power. On this point, see B. Davis, *Home Fires Burning: Food, Politics, and Everyday Life in World War I Berlin* (Chapel Hill, NC, 2000); and T. Bonzon and B. Davis, 'Feeding the Cities', in J. Winter and J.-L. Robert (eds), *Capital Cities at War: London, Paris, Berlin, 1914–1919* (Cambridge, 1997), pp. 305–41. See also the comparative point in Frank Trentmann's chapter in this volume.

4 Already in January 1914 the minister of war had called a meeting of the Paris municipal Council in secret committee to decide on the constitution of a flour stock for the consumption of the Parisian population. Conseil municipal de Paris, *Comité du budget: Procès-verbaux*, 24 Jan. 1914, pp. 1–34.

5 '...Paris est une telle agglomération qu'il peut y avoir inconvénient à laisser se produire pareille augmentation si faible soit-elle, pas tant pour l'augmentation de dépense que pour l'effet moral. Il est évident que l'ouvrier a supporté sans murmure l'augmentation plus sensible dans les prix de la viande et du charbon, mais ce n'est pas le pain – et l'augmentation de cette denrée paraît toujours, par le fait de la tradition surtout, plus sensible aux populations.' A letter of the sous-intendant militaire, De Lomares, to the minister of trade, 15 May 1915, A.N. F/23/110: 'Ravitaillement du camp retranché de Paris en blé'.

6 Cf. file 'Ravitaillement du camp retranché de Paris en blé', A.N. F/23/110.

7 See for example A.N. F/23/110 and Archives de la Préfecture de Police B.A./1640, report of 5 Aug. 1918.

8 '...[C]haque client semble s'imposer une sorte de retenue. Ce n'est point à mon avis un sentiment d'économie qui les guide: non, la raison est autre. On est de pensée avec les 'poilus', on sait qu'ils n'ont point dans les tranchées toutes leurs aises. Et l'on éprouve quelque pudeur à s'offrir le superflu, quand ceux qui sont au front se contentent de l'héroïque rata.' *Le Matin*, 28 Feb. 1915.

9 P. Barral, *Les agrariens français de Méline à Pisani* (Paris, 1968).

10 'Sans doute tout le monde respecte les intérêts des consommateurs. Mais la population agricole représente au moins la moitié de la population de la France et nourrit le pays tout entier. Il ne faut donc manier qu'avec une grande prudence une arme dangereuse qui peut blesser la moitié de la population française.' As reported in the newspaper *Le Temps*, 13 Apr. 1916.

11 As revealed in the reports established for the Ministère de l'Intérieur in each *arrondissement* of Paris in August, September, November, and December 1915. See J.-J. Becker, *Les Français dans la grande guerre* (Paris, 1980), pp. 125–32.

12 J.-L. Robert, *Ouvriers et mouvement ouvrier parisiens pendant la grande guerre et l'immédiat après-guerre. Histoire et anthropologie* (thèse pour le doctorat d'Etat, University of Paris, 1989), tome 5, pp 1432–4 and 1440–7.

13 *La Bataille*, 22 Aug. 1915.

14 L. Dubreuilh, *L'Humanité*, 25 Oct. 1915.

15 *L'Humanité*, 25 Oct. 1915.

16 *La Lanterne*, 7 Oct. 1915.

17 '[C]ommencent à être las de payer la dime aux spéculateurs' (*Le Rappel*, 21 Mar. 1916).

18 See T. Bonzon, 'La société, l'Etat et le pouvoir local: l'approvisionnement à Paris, 1914–1918', *Guerres mondiales et conflits contemporains*, 183 (October 1996), pp. 17–18; and J.-L. Robert, 'The Image of the Profiteer', in J. Winter and J.-L. Robert (eds), *Capital Cities at War: London, Paris, Berlin, 1914–1919* (Cambridge, 1997), pp. 104–32.
19 J. Horne, 'Etat, société et 'économie morale': l'approvisionnement des civils pendant la guerre de 1914–1918', Introduction to 'Nouvelles pistes de l'Histoire urbaine en 1914–1918', *Guerres mondiales et conflits contemporains*, 183 (Oct. 1996), p. 6.
20 J. Horne, *Labour at War, France and Britain, 1914–1918* (Oxford, 1991), pp. 92–3.
21 The long debate on this issue that occupied the municipal council of November and December was widely covered by the press.
22 See, for example, A. Renouard, 'Les Halles centrales, honte et plaie du Paris moderne', *L'Œuvre*, 15 Jan. 1913. The need to put an end to the congestion of the district of the Halles was taken up in 1916 by the architect Louis Bonnier for the conference de la cité reconstituée. L. Bonnier, 'De l'urbanisme', in L. Gaultier, *Exposition de la Cité reconstituée. Esthétique et hygiène*, rapport général, Paris, 1917, p. 230.
23 See H. Sellier, 'La crise alimentaire et l'organisation des Halles centrales', *Le Parlement et l'Opinion*, September 1916, pp. 907–20, and his 'Rapport sur la cherté de la vie et la réorganisation du marché central des denrées alimentaires dans l'agglomération parisienne', Conseil général de la Seine, *Rapports et Documents*, no. 3, 1916.
24 Cf. the statements of the Prefect of Police during the session of the municipal council (*Bulletin Municipal Officiel de la Ville de Paris*, 28 Nov. 1915, p. 2448).
25 M. Tournier, 'L'envers de 1900. Le lexique des luttes et de l'organisation ouvrière en France', *Mots*, 5 (Oct. 1982), pp. 103–26.
26 Thus, pacifist discourse denounced 'those patriots with their backs to the hearth and their stomachs at the table', cited in T. Bonzon, *Cent-quatre-vingt-dix lettres de pacifistes, juin 1916–octobre 1916* (MA thesis, University de Paris-I, 1985).
27 J. Horne, 'Etat, société et 'économie morale . . .', art. cited, p. 7.
28 Conseil général de la Seine, *Procès-verbaux*, 28 Mar. 1917, p. 151.
29 Conseil municipal de Paris, *Procès-verbaux*, 16 Mar. 1917, p. 35.
30 P. Carrau, *Le ravitaillement en combustibles de la région parisienne pendant la guerre*, Law thesis, Paris, 1924, p. 29.
31 Conseil municipal de Paris, *Procès-verbaux*, 20 July 1917, p. 632.
32 See the royalist municipal councillor F. Froment-Meurice: '. . . on peut adresser un reproche à l'Office départemental en ce qui concerne la partie de sa mission concernant la répartition des arrivages. Par la création d'un organisme spécial, auquel il déléguait ses pouvoirs, il a permis l'accaparement en faveur des marchands qui ont réuni dans leurs chantiers d'énormes quantités de charbon, alors que rien ou presque rien n'était distribué dans le même temps aux marchands moins importants, qui alimentent les marchands de quartier et la clientèle bourgeoise.' Conseil municipal de Paris, *Procès-verbaux*, 16 Mar. 1917, p. 29.
33 A. L'Esprit, *La crise du charbon à Paris pendant la guerre de 1914–18*, s.l. n. d.

34 Regarding the card, L. Dausset observed on 20 July 1917: '…elle a répondu à un sentiment populaire incontestable, car le public voit dans la carte un moyen d'avoir du charbon et de mettre fin à des abus criants; le public ne comprend pas que les marchands refusent systématiquement toutes les commandes, alors qu'il voit à chaque instant des voitures de combustible circuler dans les rues.' Conseil municipal de Paris, *Procès-verbaux*, 20 July 1917, p. 637.
35 The Bureau national des charbons now played a key role. It centralised and controlled demand, organised a national supply programme and distributed the consignments between a limited number of participants, including the Office de charbon du département de la Seine, for the domestic needs of the city. G. Sardier, *Le ravitaillement en charbon pendant la guerre* (Law thesis, Paris, 1920), p. 44; and Archives de Paris, DR7/228.
36 'Il est intéressant de faire connaître à la population non pas ce qu'elle aura, mais qu'il lui sera justement réparti ce que le gouvernement nous donnera…Seule la responsabilité d'une équitable répartition nous appartient.' Conseil municipal de Paris, *Procès-verbaux*, 26 July 1917, p. 716.
37 Conseil municipal de Paris, *Procès-verbaux*, 30 Dec.1917, pp. 1372–4.
38 Among others, this is the case for Alfortville, Arcueil, Clichy, Maisons-Alfort, Pavillons-sous-Bois, Saint-Denis.
39 See, for example, P. Dogliani, *Un laboratoire de socialisme municipal: France 1880–1920* (PhD thesis, Paris VIII, 1991), pp. 501–20.
40 The scarcity of food was reflected in an impressive series of regulations: it was forbidden to consume fresh butter in restaurants (12 Feb. 1918), milk in cafés (3 Sept. 1917), and then in restaurants after 9 a.m. (12 Feb. 1918). The number of days without meat was first limited to two between May and October 1917; then to three from May to July 1918 with a limit on the quantity of purchase on the fourth day.
41 Police report on the state of mind of the Parisian population from June 1918 to June 1920, APP, BA 1614.
42 Police report, 8ème district (tenth and nineteenth *arrondissements*), 12 June 1918, APP, BA 1614.
43 Conseil municipal de Paris, *Rapports et documents*, 1918, imprimé no. 30, p. 2.
44 Police report on the state of mind of the Parisian population from June 1918 to June 1920, APP, BA 1614. 8ème district (tenth and nineteenth *arrondissement*s), report of 12 June 1918.
45 H. Sellier, A. Bruggeman and M. Poete, *Paris pendant la guerre* (Paris, 1926), pp. 24–5.

4

Food Provision and Food Retailing in The Hague, 1914–1930*

Thimo de Nijs

Although the Netherlands remained neutral in the First World War, its consequences were severely felt. Import of several foodstuffs, household goods, and fuel became increasingly limited by the actions of the belligerent countries. Corn, potatoes, beans, meat, soap, soda, gas, and coal became scarce and prices were rapidly rising. To be sure, the situation never became as critical as in a city like Berlin, but the food provision of the urban population was seriously endangered during key periods. The national government responded by limiting exports and establishing ceiling prices for basic foodstuffs, a policy which initially proved successful. Yet already in 1915 the government was forced to implement much more drastic measures such as the introduction of an extensive distribution system for most foodstuffs and goods like coal, soap, and clothing. Local authorities had to implement a sometimes messy central policy. In addition, they tried to improve the precarious food provision of their populations by several measures, like establishing soup kitchens and, in some cases, by setting up complete food provision enterprises.

This chapter aims at contributing to an extensive literature on food provision during and directly after the Great War. Most of this literature has been written on the belligerent countries.[1] However, war also had important consequences for a neutral country like the Netherlands. This chapter touches on three interrelated topics. In the first place, several historians have pointed to the importance of the Great War for the development of the welfare state. During the war the state gained experience at the national, but especially at the local level with interfering in social and economic life.[2] Second, the provision of food and other basic goods by the state formed an important chapter in the still virtually unwritten history of the Dutch retailing sector. At the beginning

of the twentieth century, the establishment of the first national union of the *middenstand*, the lower middle class, marked the coming into being of what later would be called the *middenstandsprobleem*. During the war it became apparent how important the retailing sector was for economic and social life. The government relied heavily on (organised) shopkeepers for food provision. However, not all shopkeepers could resist the temptation of withholding goods and selling them at famine prices. In doing so shopkeepers contributed to what contemporaries called *duurte* (dearness) and an unequal division of wealth. This situation provoked a debate about what role the state should play in the provision of food. It also prompted a more assertive attitude among consumers and the birth of a consumer movement. This 'discovery of consumption' as a politically contested area forms the third topic of this chapter.

Food provision on the eve of war

The Hague entered the war at a turbulent period. The city had experienced rapid growth during recent decades from 113,460 inhabitants in 1879 to more than 300,000 on the eve of the Great War.[3] The old centre was partly transformed into a modern city with office buildings, department stores, and a shopping gallery. Entirely new quarters were built around the centre. Until the turn of the century this happened in a rather haphazard way, after which local authorities took the lead in setting standards for housing quality, constructing accommodation, and developing a modern infrastructure.[4]

Local authorities also started to take measures in order to ensure food quality. After long discussions the City Council in 1905 decided to establish a *Gemeentelijk Slachthuis* (Municipal Slaughterhouse). From 1911 the local butchers could slaughter here under hygienic conditions and store their meat in cold-storage spaces. The abattoir also started to control the quality of imported meat.[5] With the establishment of the *Gemeentelijke keuringsdienst van eet- en drinkwaren* (Municipal Inspection Service of Foodstuffs) in 1908, The Hague followed the example of other cities and broadened the control of foodstuffs. Quality was now controlled on a regular basis by taking samples from milk traders, grocers, ice-cream shops, and so on.[6] Consumers did secure some protection against retailers who sold bad or adulterated foodstuffs.

Growing government interference and improvements in social conditions did not, however, eliminate all tensions between rich and poor.

Although The Hague cherished its image as a green, attractive residential town for the well-to-do, the poorer sections of the population grew alongside government bureaucracy and industry. Compared to most other Dutch cities there was a high degree of social segregation. The labouring poor lived normally in houses of poor quality in the densely populated quarters south and east of the city centre, lying on low, wet former grasslands. Houses in the quarters north and west of the centre, a more affluent zone, were built on the sandy and relatively dry soil of the old dunes and were of much better quality.[7]

Already the day before the official start of the war on August 1, 1914 grocery stores were besieged by members of a nervous public, who hoarded grain, potatoes, beans, and bacon. Many shopkeepers raised their prices considerably and refused to accept paper money. Small rows developed in some shops and the hoarding frenzy even caused the first food shortages.[8]

The reaction of the government was quick. The export of foodstuffs was temporarily subjected to strict regulations, and price ceilings were introduced for many foodstuffs, household goods, and fuel.[9] At the local level the executive of The Hague drew up lists of the available food stocks, which proved to be satisfactory. The Municipal Inspection Service of Foodstuffs became responsible for the implementation of government regulations on price ceilings.[10] One of the main tasks was to control the stocks of shopkeepers and to ensure that they provided clear and correct information on the price ceilings for the public. These measures proved to be successful. Whereas goods like sugar, rice, butter, and salt were sold at very high prices during the first days of the war, prices declined with the introduction of ceiling prices.[11]

Despite this rapid normalisation it was clear that the provision of bread would become a problem. The amount of grain cultivated in the Netherlands would suffice for only 20 per cent of national consumption, a figure similar to that in Great Britain.[12] Since imports from Russia and Romania had stopped, the country was dependent on imports from the United States and Argentina.[13] Scarcity and high prices would become inevitable in case of a prolonged war, reason enough for the executive of The Hague to investigate into types of bread which needed less wheat but provided the same nutritional value. Municipal experiments resulted in a bread consisting of three equal parts of wheat flour, wheatmeal, and rice meal. According to the municipal government the taste of this 'emergency bread' was quite satisfactory;[14] while others, like the pharmacist daughter Maria Elisabeth de Zaaijer, thought the taste of the 'emergency bread' rather 'desperate'.[15]

Plate 4.1 Holland 1917: 'The gentlemen belligerents don't leave me much space to do my shopping'
Source: 'In de verdrukking' [Squeezed], Albert Hahn, *Notenkraker*, 2 February 1917.

Setting up a distribution system

In April 1915 the scarcity of grain put an end to a free market and led to the adoption of rationing. In addition so-called 'government bread' was introduced, much to the dislike of the Dutch, who had just acquired a taste for white bread. Setting up an efficient distribution system proved to be equally difficult. Initially, the bakers were in charge of distributing bread cards among the population. This system not only resulted in many cases of fraud and mistakes, but many bakers refused altogether to distribute bread cards to former customers who had moved to another baker. The result was that many inhabitants did not receive any bread card at all. After a month the municipality set up a Bread Office, which administered the distribution and collection of the bread coupons. The office rapidly grew in 1915 and 1916 to a total number of 14 civil servants.[16] Bread cards were only handed out in 24 public

buildings on production of a new identity card to prevent trade in bread coupons.[17] After each 'bread card period' (which varied from 7 to 11 days) the bakers of The Hague handed in sheets of bread coupons. Civil servants controlled these and determined the amount of government wheat each baker could receive. Controlling the 110,000 sheets of bread coupons – the equivalent of a 60-metre-tall tower – was an enormous bureaucratic burden.[18]

Plate 4.2 Collected bread cards for one distribution period, 1918
Source: HGA, photo 1.01883.

During the winter of 1915–16, however, local authorities also assumed control of the distribution of the most basic foodstuffs like potatoes, rice, milk, vegetables, and meat. All these measures eventually led to the creation of a distribution system. On 29 October 1915, the City Council set up an 'Executive and advisory committee for food provision' consisting of Council members, senior civil servants, and, at a later stage, representatives of consumer organisations.[19]

Distribution was organised in a complex way. At the national level, a multitude of committees and offices came into existence. For each individual foodstuff a different organisation was set up which in cooperation with producers, had to ensure that enough food was available. Only at a later stage were attempts made to centralise distribution. Municipalities

coordinated distribution at the local level. In consultation with retailers the municipality determined how many so-called 'government goods' ('government bread', 'government vegetables', 'government milk', and so on) had to be ordered from the National Bread Office, the National Board for Vegetables, the National Soap Committee, and other committees. After delivery of these foodstuffs, the local 'Executive and advisory committee for food provision' (replaced on 25 September 1916 by the Temporary Municipal Distributive Agency) would take care of their distribution among shopkeepers. The Temporary Municipal Distributive Agency also informed the public about the availability and price of government goods and checked that foodstuffs would not be sold at prices above the official price ceiling. In order to do this, the public was provided with identity cards and coupons for all sort of goods. Shopkeepers had to account for the amount of goods they sold with the coupons they received from their customers. Failure to do so could lead to being excluded from the distribution system.

In the case of cheese, butter, rice, and beans the distribution of foodstuffs proceeded fairly smoothly. The distribution of most vegetables, by contrast, proved to be more complicated.[20] The vegetable trade was highly fragmented with more than 800 greengrocers and costermongers, of whom only a minority were organised. Many greengrocers also considered the margins on 'government vegetables' too low. Moreover, the delivery of 'government vegetables' was very irregular. Most greengrocers and costermongers had to buy extra supplies on the free market, which made the control of prices extremely difficult, especially since a trader could easily claim that vegetables had rotted if he could not produce enough distribution coupons.[21] In other branches, bureaucracy and fraud also ran into serious problems. For shopkeepers, the collection of coupons was a time-consuming affair. Controls proved to be difficult. Some shopkeepers asked their customers for additional coupons for scarce goods, which allowed them to sell part of their stock at high prices. At a price monitoring exercise in Rotterdam as many as 190 of the 265 shopkeepers under investigation were found to have committed fraud.[22]

The Temporary Municipal Distributive Agency grew rapidly. On 1 May 1917 its staff comprised a director, a deputy director, a bookkeeper, a cashier, a legal adviser, the head of the Bread Office, 39 clerks, 19 controllers, a caretaker, and a messenger. In addition some 68 civil servants of the Municipal Inspection Service worked almost continuously for the Distributive Agency.[23] By 1 January 1918, the staff of the Agency had risen to 84 civil servants,[24] by the end of 1918 staff numbers were 168.[25]

This rapid growth reflects the administrative burden that distribution created for local governments.

Despite this growth, the municipal role in food provision was far from undisputed. At meetings of the City Council the liberal alderman for financial affairs, P. Droogleever Fortuyn, argued that the measures were strictly temporary and designed to interfere as little as possible with normal economic life. The Christian democrats and a liberal representative of the petite bourgeoisie, H. Koppel, nonetheless feared that commerce would be severely hampered. At the other end of the political spectrum, the social democrats saw the municipal involvement in food provision merely as a first step in the socialisation of the retailing sector, to guarantee fair prices for the labouring poor.[26]

The importance of distribution

The distribution of the most important foodstuffs reveals the significance of this municipal distribution system.

Bread

Trade barriers were already causing grain shortages in the first year of the war. Bread provision was therefore one of the first domains in which local and national governments interfered with the immediate introduction of 'emergency bread' and after 1 June 1915 with 'government bread'. Thanks to these measures the population was able to get unbolted bread at a reasonable price, although the price of white bread more than doubled in 1917 (see Figure 4.1).

In February 1917 general rationing of bread was introduced. Even white bread was now no longer available without a bread card. Initially, about 400 grams were available per head per day, more or less the level of normal bread consumption (Figure 4.2). However, the allowance went down quickly to 311 grams and in the period between 1 April 1918 and 14 November 1918 fell further to only 200 grams.[27] Some inhabitants were entitled to supplementary allowances, such as people in physically demanding sectors, children from 12 to 18 years, children younger than 1 year, and pregnant women.[28]

After the war the supply of wheat recovered. This allowed for higher rations, but the rationing system was maintained to check inflation. Central government and local authorities wanted to protect purchasing power by making unbolted bread available at reasonable prices. Certain forms of bread (rye bread, white bread, currant bread) could be sold on the free market again from October 1919.[29] People in The Hague quickly

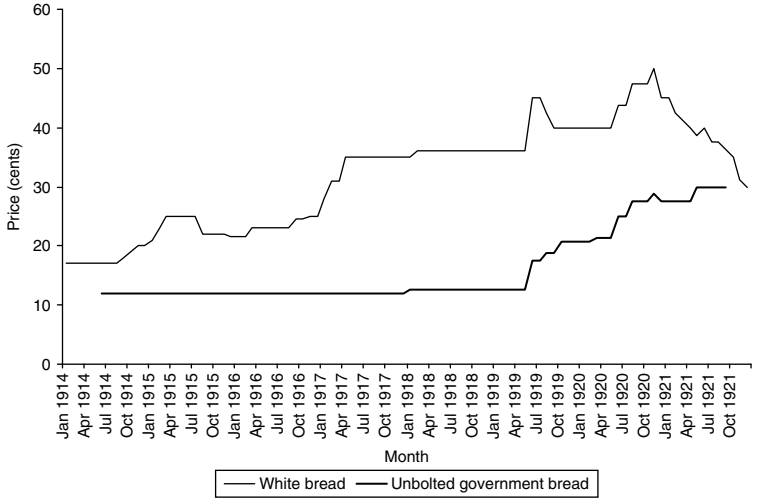

Figure 4.1 The price of bread, 1914–1921
Source: *Rapport van de Commissie tot Onderzoek van het vraagstuk der levensmiddelenvoorziening van 's-Gravenhage in normale tijden* ('s-Gravenhage 1922), pp. 103–14.

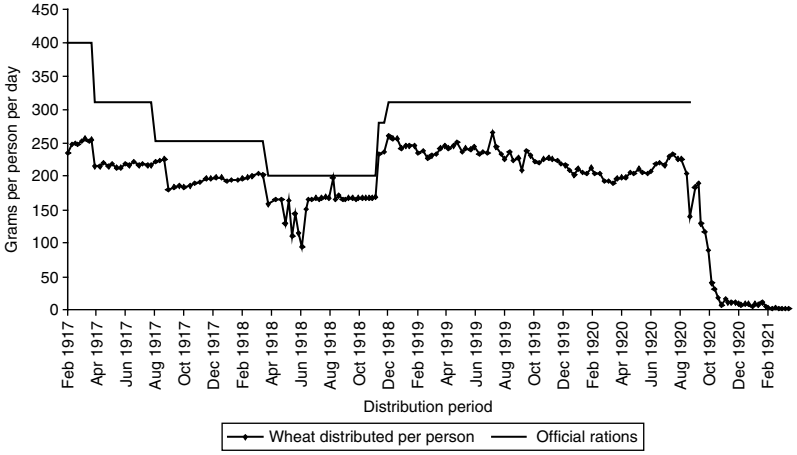

Figure 4.2 Distribution and rationing of bread, 1917–1921
Source: Jaarverslagen TGDB, HGA, Archief TGDB, inv.nr. 37 'Maandelijks overzicht van de gedistribueerde artikelen'.

returned to white bread. By the end of 1919, the market share of the unbolted bread dropped from almost 45 per cent during the last war year to less than 25 per cent.[30]

In 1922 the 'Committee investigating the question of food provision for The Hague in normal times' concluded that bread provision had normalised, ensured by some 15 big enterprises and high-end bakeries, some 90 small bakeries, and 20 low-end bakeries. Prices were higher though than in other big cities like Amsterdam and Utrecht. According to the commission, in a spacious city like The Hague bread delivery was to blame, especially since delivery costs were not charged separately. Moreover, the committee found a lack of competition. Even the cooperatives followed the price policy of commercial bakers.[31]

Potatoes

Next to bread, potatoes formed the most important source of carbohydrates for the population of The Hague. Since the eighteenth century the potato had become one of the basic elements of the Dutch diet. In normal times the population of The Hague would consume early potatoes, which arrived from mid-June until mid-August from the Westland, North-Holland, and the polders south of Rotterdam; late potatoes from the areas of Haarlem and Leiden to be consumed from mid-August until December; and clay-soil potatoes from Zeeland and South-Holland in mid-August until June.[32] The potato trade in The Hague was organised by 14 wholesalers, who delivered to approximately 800 greengrocers and costermongers. In normal times, consumption was about 70 million kilos a year. During the war this rose to 80 million kilos.[33]

These figures might suggest that potato provision was not really a problem during the war. However, in spite of the fact that the Netherlands could produce more than enough potatoes for domestic consumption, it was precisely the shortages of potatoes that caused important disturbances, especially at the end of spring – when the early potatoes were not yet fit for consumption. A first shortage occurred in early June 1916, leading rapidly to rising prices. The government reacted by supplying potatoes at a price of 7.5 cents a kilo and supplementary rice rations at reduced prices.[34] In September 1916 free transport of potatoes was prohibited in order to prevent illegal exports to belligerent countries. Distribution was put under the control of a special committee and from October 1916 onwards people could buy government potatoes at 5 cents a kilo.[35]

Potato shortages returned during the winter of 1916–17. Misunderstandings between the municipality and the central potato committee,

storage problems, and limited transport capacity in times of frost caused a severe shortage in January 1917. During this winter the first hunger marches took place in The Hague. In Amsterdam crowds even attacked railway wagons loaded with potatoes. During the first months of 1918 potato shortages became critical again, after other foodstuffs like bread, milk, and meat had become scarce. Alternative sources of carbohydrates like rice or barley were not considered to be equivalent by the public and were not easily available in any case. In February 1918 the first food riots took place in the streets of The Hague and on 12 and 13 April 1918 shops were plundered by a hungry crowd. During the riots two persons were accidentally killed by stray bullets. After the war the potato provision recovered quickly, thanks to the favourable agrarian conditions in the Netherlands.

Milk

Before the war, dairies in The Hague obtained their milk from farmers in North-Holland. During winter prices were 1 cent higher than during the summer. Prices in The Hague were somewhat higher than in Rotterdam where delivery was less expensive. Milk was usually sold by milkmen who delivered milk to homes.

Plate 4.3 A milkman of the De Sierkan in the Kerkstraat, *c*.1917
Source: HGA, photo 6.14431.

At the beginning of the war the delivery of milk did not cause any problems. However, the foreign demand for dairy products like cheese and butter sharply increased after the summer of 1915. More and more farmers sold their milk to dairy factories instead of selling it to dairies for direct consumption. Milk prices also rose because of higher feed costs. In October the government laid down a ruling which required farmers, who had sold their milk for direct consumption the year before, to do so again in the winter of 1915–16. Cheese factories that processed milk from farmers who normally sold their milk for direct consumption would no longer receive an export licence. Despite these measures, there was still a shortage of milk. During the summer of 1916 the authorities started to pay supplements for consumption milk. They hoped that farmers might be induced to sell more milk for direct consumption and that price rises would remain limited. This hope soon proved to be in vain. Prices for milk continued to rise and in order to prevent further shortages, the government on 1 February 1917 prohibited the use of milk for the production of bread.[36]

Due to high feed prices and the forced slaughter of cattle in the second half of 1917 milk provision continued to deteriorate. From September 1917 the trade in milk and dairy products was partly controlled by a government committee. Delivery of 'government milk' was only allowed up to 0.3 litre per person. On 17 December 1917 the city of The Hague decided to introduce milk rationing. With the exception of infants, small children, and the sick, nobody was allowed to drink more than 0.2 litre a day. Rationing continued until the end of April 1918, when enough milk was again available. During the winter of 1918–19 the Netherlands experienced new shortages. In October 1918 an allowance of 0.3 litre a person was introduced, which was reduced to a mere 0.1 litre (0.18 pint) on 17 November 1918. On 22 March 1919 the allowance was doubled and from 1 April it rose to 0.3 litre (0.53 pint). From 23 April 1919 onwards milk rationing was abolished.[37] This delay in the recovery of normal levels of milk production reflected the time it took to re-establish livestock.[38]

Figure 4.3 confirms the necessity of milk rationing, even in an important dairy producing country like the Netherlands. During the winters of 1917–18 and 1918–19 milk consumption was clearly below the normal daily level of 0.5 litre (0.88 pint) per person.

Milk shortages caused more and more cases of fraud. According to the Temporary Municipal Distribution Agency in the period 1 May 1918 to 1 November 1918, 44 milkmen did not receive supplements on a substantial part of their milk (511,089 litres) since this milk was of

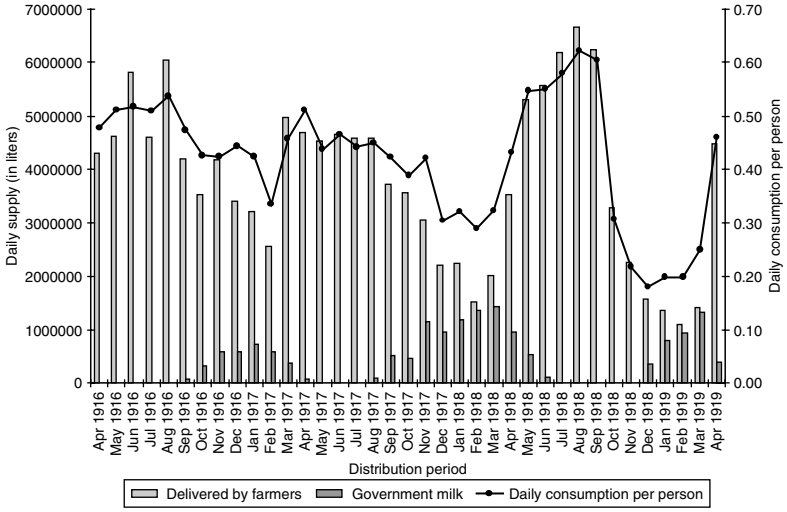

Figure 4.3 Milk supply, 1916–1919
Source: Annual reports Temporary Municipal Distribution Agency.

inferior quality or adulterated, 30 milkmen were fined because they did not manage to follow all bureaucratic procedures, 8 milkmen were found to have sold milk at prices higher than the official price ceilings, and 22 had sold more milk to their customers than was permitted under the rationing system.[39]

Meat

In the decades before the Great War the consumption of meat had become a normal part of the Dutch diet. Even the labouring poor were able to eat some low-quality meat. In working-class districts several so-called 'popular butchers' sold less expensive meats. During the war overall meat consumption remained at first at a high level, although the high price of beef, for instance, caused a sudden taste for lamb.[40]

In the winter of 1917–18 meat provision for the first time became problematic. On 6 November 1917 the director of the Municipal Slaughterhouse, W. G. Harrevelt, reported on the advisability of municipal meat distribution.[41] Prices for top-quality meat were high because of a scarcity of cattle. High-quality meat cost even more because of the 'high demands of consumers with regard to the presentation of meat and delivery'. However, since more affluent groups could easily afford high prices, Harrevelt did not consider them a problem. Fortunately,

Plate 4.4 The Municipal Slaughterhouse, 1911. Pork-butcher and wholesaler F. Wellink and his staff prepare pigs for consumption
Source: HGA, photo nr. 0.49698.

low-priced meat was available in abundance since many farmers were forced to empty their stables in view of the high feed prices. A municipal meat distribution was not considered necessary.

At the beginning of 1918 the situation became more precarious (Figure 4.4). On 13 January 1918 Harrevelt reported that the shortage of fat stock caused high prices. The price for inexpensive meats had risen from fl. 0.50 to fl. 0.85 per pound. At a time when milk and vegetable sources of fat were also scarce, undernourishment was a serious threat for the poor. In order to prevent this, Harrevelt proposed to provide the poor – those who paid less than fl. 1200 income tax – with coupons to allow them to buy meat at reduced prices. This solution would be preferable to the more costly alternative of providing butchers with a general allowance. He also advised against establishing municipal butcher shops, since he did not believe the Municipal Slaughterhouse was capable of running these stores. Moreover, he wanted to prevent competition with local butchers.

In March 1918 meat provision was briefly improved, thanks to the distribution of salted beef among the poor by butchers in working-class areas. However, in April 1918 there was another acute shortage of meat. In a letter of 5 April 1918 Harrevelt announced that the Central Administrative Office for the Distribution of Foodstuffs was incapable

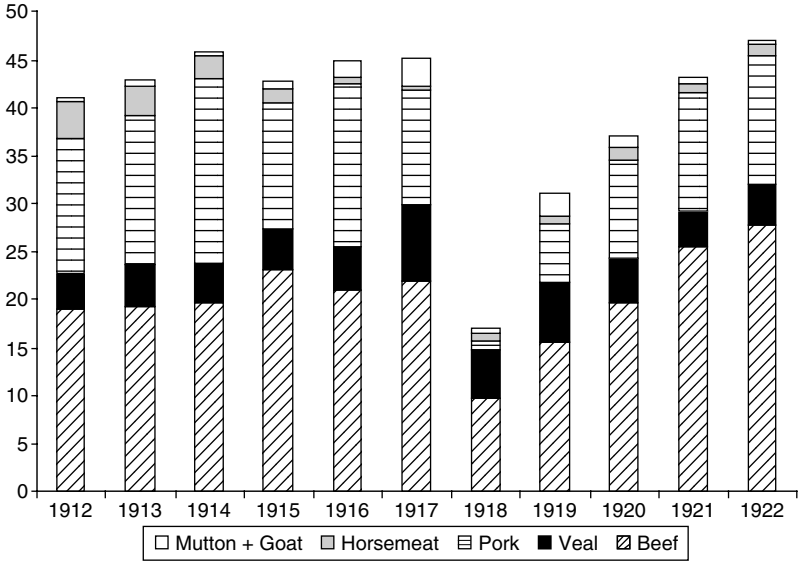

Figure 4.4 Meat Consumption (in kilos) per head, 1912–1922
Source: *Gemeenteverslagen*, 1912–1922.

of delivering the 330 cattle needed since too many animals had been slaughtered. In butcher shops some newborn veal was available, but at very high prices (from fl. 4 to fl. 6 per kilo). Harrevelt proposed that the available veal be distributed to the poor, whereas the wealthier parts of the population should buy eggs and milk at the free market.[42] In April the weekly ration was fixed at 100 grams.[43] In June the weekly ration was raised to 200 grams. Wealthier groups could buy veal at high prices on the free market. For poorer groups the so-called '*eenheidsworst*' ('government sausage') provided an alternative. Meat provision gradually improved in the second half of 1918 up to the point that Harrevelt in spring 1919 proposed stopping the distribution of offal by the municipal Soup Kitchen and the Municipal Market Halls. The 'fat situation' had improved because of the regular distribution of inexpensive bacon.

The Municipal Soup Kitchen[44]

Besides becoming more and more involved in the distribution of foodstuffs and other basic goods by making use of the services of retailers,

the municipal government of The Hague started to provide goods to the population directly by setting up a municipal Soup Kitchen and Municipal Market Halls.

Following the example of other big cities the City Council decided on 2 July 1917 to set up a Soup Kitchen, where inhabitants could get complete meals at reduced prices. With the Soup Kitchen, the Council hoped to prevent malnutrition and to save fuel at the same time. The distribution of hot meals had started some time before, but from the summer of 1917 the capacity was enlarged significantly to 20,000 meals a day. In order to prevent waste, the public had to buy tickets at 10 cents the day before. Moreover, they had to hand in a corresponding number of food coupons. Cooking was centralised but meals were distributed in the gymnasiums of municipal schools.

The popularity of the Municipal Soup Kitchen remained limited, although it certainly improved during the war. The average amount of meals in 1917 was 3673 (with a peak of 5774), which is not very spectacular in a city of about 300,000 inhabitants. In 1918 the demand rose to 10,205 meals a day with a peak of 28,037 on 19 September 1918. In spite of an improved service offering vegetarian meals, kosher food and delivery at home in 'neatly painted delivery carts' by deliverymen dressed in a 'linen suit and cap, which made the whole service look clean and bright', only 3 per cent of the population made use of the soup kitchen.[45]

After the war the soup kitchen soon lost its right to exist. In the autumn of 1918 a serious expansion still seemed necessary and top civil servants visited the soup kitchens of Amsterdam, but already on 17 February 1919 the director of the kitchen wrote to the responsible alderman that the planned extension should be stopped in view of the 'current circumstances regarding to the food question'.[46] Because of diminished demand and rising costs, the local authorities decided to close the kitchen on 19 July 1919.

Municipal Market Halls

With the opening of the so-called *Gemeentelijk Halbedrijf* (Municipal Market Halls) the municipality also became involved in retailing. In June 1915 the Central Bureau for the Sale of Fishery Products started selling fish on market stalls (later replaced by wooden kiosks). The original aim was to stimulate the sale of fish and to provide an alternative source of protein and fat for the lower strata of society. This

Halbedrijf was a big success. Already on 12 July 1915 the number of selling outlets was increased to 14 and in April 1916 another 7 kiosks were built. In May 1918, 15 new market stalls were erected, which were replaced by wooden kiosks in August.[47] On 1 June 1918, the municipality took over the activities and the *Gemeentelijk Halbedrijf* came officially into being. The assortment was seriously extended: besides inexpensive 'government fish' the market halls sold so-called 'free fish', the main reason why the turnover sharply increased from fl. 175,000 in the period between July 1917 and June 1918 to more than fl. 350,000 over the second part of 1918. The *Halbedrijf* sold not only fish but also vegetables and fruit in an attempt to regulate prices on the free market. This came to a temporary halt when vegetables became available at ceiling prices after 13 November 1918. The growth of the *Halbedrijf* was reflected in the staff: at the end of 1918 it employed 57 members, including 37 vendors.[48] From May 1918 it had an office of its own and facilities for the storage and distribution of vegetables. Over the course of 1918 a small profit of fl. 1,936.49 was made on a turnover of fl. 542,062.97.[49]

After the war the *Halbedrijf* continued to function for a couple of years, and initially even extended its activities. Against all expectations, prices continued to rise in 1919 and contemporaries spoke of 'duurte' (dearness).[50] The cost of living was almost twice that before the war.[51] According to some local politicians, the *Halbedrijf* helped to check the prices in the retailing sector. For this purpose the *Municipal Market Halls* started to sell goods that were freely available, although this was highly controversial. Most retailers were not amused. On 26 April 1919 the fishmongers' association 'Ons Belang' called for the abolition of the *Halbedrijf*. Fierce disputes in the Council followed. Most Christian democrat Council members pressed for its liquidation and a restoration of a free market. In their view, the fishmongers from Schreveningen and the 800 greengrocers and costermongers suffered from the activities of the *Halbedrijf*. A majority of social democrats and progressive liberals, however, rallied to the defence of the municipal market halls. The social democrats considered them a first step in the direction of socialised distribution, which would be the only way to protect the working classes against profiteering retailers. The liberals considered the continuation of the *Halbedrijf* as a temporary measure in a malfunctioning market.[52]

During the summer of 1919 the retailers' associations continued their agitation against the *Halbedrijf*. In addresses and meetings with the local authorities they underlined their principle objections and

pointed to a whole series of practical difficulties. The *Halbedrijf* did not really affect prices on the free market, but only harmed independent retailers because several costs were not incorporated in its prices. The municipal government would subsidise the *Halbedrijf* at the expense of the taxpayer.[53] By contrast, the first consumers' organisations asked the City Council to continue with the *Halbedrijf* and to expand its activities. Kiosks should be improved and more goods like meat and fats should be sold. According to the *Haagschen Bond tot Bestrijding der Duurte* (The Hague Union against High Prices) and the local branch of the *Vereeniging van Nederlandsche Huisvrouwen* (League of Dutch Housewives) the *Halbedrijf* prevented excessive prices and protected the purchasing powers of the less well-to-do. The running of the *Halbedrijf* should be improved by establishing an advisory committee of consumers to ensure quality control.[54]

Local retailers' worries were soon over; by November 1919 the *Halbedrijf* had suspended the sale of vegetables because of high losses. This was not very surprising, given the fact that consumer cooperatives like 'Eigen Hulp' (Self-Help) and 'De Volharding' (Perseverance) never succeeded in making profits from the sale of vegetables. Costermongers and greengrocers were much more successful in this respect.[55] Moreover, the *Halbedrijf* made a loss of almost fl. 21,000 over 1919, caused mostly by the introduction of the eight-hour working day with retroactive effect. According to the annual report for 1919 the *Halbedrijf* still had an important price-regulating effect: many retailers adopted its prices.[56]

At the beginning of 1920 the Municipal Executive followed the advice of the *Halbedrijf's* director, G. J. J. de Jongh, to opt for a partial continuation. The sale of vegetables and clothing would be stopped and the sale of fish would only continue in 12 of the 34 kiosks.[57] To no avail. In May 1920 de Jongh reported that 'the citizens of The Hague do not any longer want to buy at the kiosks. The mistress finds it inconvenient, the maid doesn't like it. During the crisis years it was . . . interesting to buy in municipal market halls, but nowadays people think that it is below their dignity to make purchases in such a way.' The sale of fish could hardly become successful in The Hague given the presence of large numbers of fishmongers from Scheveningen. According to de Jongh, municipal retailing could only succeed with a limited number of shops offering an extended delivery service.[58] By the end of May 1920 it became clear that continuation would have serious consequences for the municipal budget: after which the *Halbedrijf* was closed down.[59] Only the social democrats and communists

opposed it. Articles in socialist newspapers accusing the municipality of mismanagement and deliberate sabotage did not change the outcome.[60]

Food politics: 'normal times'

The Great War and the inflation following it created a new local politics of food. Whereas municipal interference in wartime did not meet serious opposition, its role in normal times was highly controversial. Social democrats dreamt of socialised food distribution putting an end to the excessive profits that retailers were allegedly reaping. Progressive liberals liked the idea of a price-regulating body, but did not accept the fiscal implications. Most Christian democrats wanted to restore the free market as quickly as possible. These opposite views came to the surface again during the proceedings of the all-party Committee for the Investigation of Food Provision in The Hague during Normal Times, set up in 1917.[61] The committee concluded its activities only in 1923, six years after its installation. In the concluding report the majority emphasised that municipal interference was only justified in times of crisis when problems occurred in the distribution of foodstuffs. Under normal circumstances municipal enterprises were considered far less efficient than private commercial retailers. The profit-seeking attitude of retailers would ensure the most efficient distribution system.[62] The minority on the committee (and in the City Council) disagreed with this point of view. It was exactly the profit motive of retailers that rendered effective and just food provision impossible. Falsification of foodstuffs and inflation also occurred in normal times; the war period only accentuated this. Socialisation of food distribution was desirable and possible.[63]

Despite these strong disagreements the Committee reached a compromise on two major topics. In the first place the infrastructure of food distribution had to be improved. A new marketplace was needed as well as some smaller decentralised markets to enable people to buy their necessities at reasonable prices. The construction of canals between The Hague and its agrarian hinterland would improve the supply with vegetables and milk. Second, the position of consumers needed strengthening by improving cooking and domestic science education, and most importantly, by way of a new regulatory agency to protect consumers, guarantee product information, and improve the efficiency of the retailing sector.[64]

When the committee finally presented its report, food provision was no longer an urgent problem. Scarcity had disappeared and prices had

fallen. Its infrastructural proposals were partly adopted, but the proposal to extend the Food Inspection Service to a fully fledged Consumers' Agency passed into oblivion until 1930. Consumers, it was argued, could already voice their concerns in the Contact Committee in which the Dutch Union of Housewives, the local retailers' association, and the director of the Municipal Market participated. This was of course a far cry from the envisaged consumers' agency.[65]

Conclusion

The history of food provision in The Hague during the Great War and its aftermath points to several conclusions. The role of the local and central authorities became much more important in this period. Intervention was relatively successful. Of course, food shortages and riots also occurred in The Hague. Food provision was especially problematic during the first months of 1918. However, the authorities mostly succeeded in providing the population with a reasonable volume of foodstuffs and other necessities. This was achieved with the help of a rapidly growing bureaucracy. At the local level the Temporary Municipal Distributive Agency and the Municipal Market Halls developed into large organisations with dozens of civil servants. In running these new bureaucracies the municipal government was able to profit from the pre-war experience of the Municipal Slaughterhouse and the Municipal Inspection Service of Foodstuffs. These organisations provided much needed knowledge and organisational competence for wartime intervention.

The Great War also introduced important changes in the relation between government and the retailing sector. Because of the shortage of foodstuffs municipal authorities and retailers became more dependent on each other. Local government needed shopkeepers for the smooth distribution of foodstuffs and other goods, which required regular consultation. However, at the same time distrust and irritations started to grow. Quite a few shopkeepers abused the scarcity of goods by selling at famine prices on the black market. Central and local governments tried to respond with price ceilings and strict controls. Post-war inflation led local governments to continue with the municipal distribution of foodstuffs and even to extend price-regulating measures. In most cities these attempts were rather unsuccessful. They fuelled a strong sense of distrust and dislike of government interference among shopkeepers, which probably delayed their support for government intervention in the 1930s.[66]

The distribution crisis during the First World War caused a strengthening in the shopkeepers' organisation. Local and central governments needed interlocutors for whole branches of trade.[67] In The Hague three general shopkeepers' associations existed in 1922. By far the biggest was the neutral 's-Gravenhaagsche Winkeliersvereeniging with 1800 members in 1922. Catholic shopkeepers were very often members of the 's-Gravenhaagsche R. K. Middenstandsvereeniging 'De Hanze' (1040 members in 1922). The Christelijke Middenstandsvereeniging Den Haag had only 250 members in 1922. In addition there were various branch specific organisations, most of them founded during the war.[68] The threat of continued government interference and the challenge from the first consumers' organisations further stimulated the growth of the retailers' movement.

The economic consequences of the war for retailers in The Hague are more difficult to establish. Most citizens of The Hague saw them as war profiteers and complained about excessive prices. However, it is doubtful whether these complaints were entirely justified. Without doubt many shopkeepers profited from scarcity by selling at high prices, but scarcity also meant that they had to pay high prices for their purchases and that they could sell less than they used to. Moreover, the distribution system and ceiling prices limited the freedom of shopkeepers. Small retailers probably profited relatively more than larger ones.

Finally, scarcity during the war and the inflation that followed gave birth to what one might call the first consumers movement in the Netherlands. The *Haagschen Bond tot Bestrijding der Duurte* was founded in 1919, and The Hague branch of the *Vereeniging van Nederlandsche Huisvrouwen* also became more active in the post-war period. Proposals to establish a consumers agency did not gain a majority and the consumer movement faded away in the inter-war years. However, despite these failures, the emergence of a consumers movement during the First World War signalled important changes that would become part of the legacy of the twentieth century.

Notes

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5

Dictating Food: Autarchy, Food Provision, and Consumer Politics in Fascist Italy, 1922–1943

Alexander Nützenadel

During the two decades of fascist dictatorship, Italy underwent dramatic changes. Conventional accounts tended to emphasise the conservative character of fascist policies, economic stagnation, and social repression. By contrast, recent studies have produced a more complex picture of the Mussolini era and of fascist attempts to create a 'new society'. Beyond their pure instrumental character, ideology and culture are now interpreted in the wider context of a modern mass and consumer society that emerged in Italy after the First World War.[1] Industrialisation gained momentum and left a deep impact on labour markets, family organisation, and social institutions. Rather than pointing to the backward aspects of economic and social order, historians now stress the dynamics, conflicts, and cultural ambivalences of 'fascist modernities'.[2]

How do the rural campaigns of Mussolini's regime fit into this picture? While historians used to focus on the propagandistic character of fascist ruralism, more recent studies have argued that agricultural policy was part of an overall strategy to confront economic crisis. According to Paul Corner, there were 'many, non-agricultural reasons for the implementation of these policies'.[3] By reorganising the internal structure of the labour market and by enacting large-scale work schemes – especially through the land reclamation programmes – the rural sector absorbed a considerable number of unemployed industrial workers during the economic slump. Moreover, food autarchy was instrumental for industrial development in a country depending heavily on imports of raw materials, energy, and technology. The fascist regime pursued agricultural self-sufficiency in order to meet a growing balance of payments deficit.[4]

This historiographical shift has produced many new insights, but it has also tended to a disjuncture of production and consumption, and of

economic and cultural perspectives. On the one hand, there are studies that have exclusively looked at fascist rural policies from the perspective of producers and their changing role in national markets, examining the relations between agriculture and industry during the inter-war crisis. On the other hand, the literature on fascist consumerism has tended towards a more cultural understanding of markets and consumption without taking into account the complex interactions between producers, wholesalers, shopkeepers, and consumers. By contrast, food consumption – amounting to more than 50 per cent of the average consumer budget throughout the 1930s and 1940s – has received scant attention.[5] This chapter argues that fascist rural policies were heavily influenced by the problems of provisioning in the First World War and the conflicts over food of the post-war years. The experience of scarcity and the politicisation of food consumption had a deep impact on fascist policies. And the limitations and paradoxes that marked fascist projects in this sector were among the main reasons for the rapid decline of consensus during the Second World War.

The legacy of war

Food and agricultural policies were among the main concerns of Mussolini's regime from the moment of the seizure of power in October 1922. Italy was primarily still an agricultural country. Almost half of the gross national product came from agriculture, and 55 per cent of the working population was employed in this sector.[6] Apart from the 'industrial triangle' Milan-Turin-Genoa, industrialisation in Italy was still in its infancy. Despite its dominant role within the national economy, Italian agriculture faced severe problems: a deep north–south division, low standards of productivity, and high rates of unemployment as well as extremely unequal distribution of land. Unlike elsewhere in Europe, a rural middle class of peasants and small landholders did not exist in Italy. Most of the rural population eked out an existence as daily workers or small sharecroppers. Social conflicts had regularly erupted in rural areas in the nineteenth century.[7] The revolutionary mass agitations of the 'biennio rosso' (1919–20) witnessed the occupation of land by socialist syndicates and the emergence of cooperative administration of food distribution as well as food riots and a widespread sacking of stores.[8]

Fascism itself had gained its first mass basis in the rural areas, especially in the Po Valley, Tuscany and Puglia. By fighting socialist trade unions and rural strikers of the so-called 'biennio rosso', fascism successfully presented itself to the Italian bourgeoisie as a movement to re-establish

law and order and to secure the freedom of private property. It was the violent s*quadrismo* of the countryside that transformed fascism from a small and heterogeneous group of students, veterans, and unemployed intellectuals into a powerful political movement. Without the support of 'agrarian' fascism, Mussolini would never have been able to seize power in October 1922.[9]

Agricultural policy and food regulation had become a major arena of political conflict in the First World War. Like most other European countries, Italy faced severe problems of food supply during and after the war. More than 2.6 million rural workers had been called up by the army after Italy entered into the war in May 1915. Moreover, farmers were confronted with shortages of fertilisers, machinery, and other industrial inputs. As a consequence, domestic production of food decreased dramatically, and Italy had to import staple foods such as wheat, meat, and fresh products on a large scale.[10]

From 1915, a series of market regulations and price controls had been introduced in order to secure food supply and to contain increases in the cost of living. Grain shortages and rising bread prices triggered massive protests and civil disorder all over the country. Government regulations included the prohibition of food exports, the control of grain supply and distribution as well as price controls for basic food items. By the spring of 1916, most grains, flour, pasta, and sugar were subject to fixed prices. However, there was no efficient and centralised management of food markets until 1917. Municipal or provincial authorities enacted most regulations. Conflicts between consumers and retail merchants were often settled in local committees in which labour unions met with representatives of the political parties and the chambers of commerce. Price fixing by local authorities and committees led to very different results from centralised controls, but clearly helped to established new forms of citizen participation and social solidarity.[11]

The provisioning crisis in the summer of 1917 and the devastating defeat of the Italian army in the Battle of Caporetto forced the Italian government to take a more active role in food administration. In August 1917 violent food riots erupted in the city of Turin, killing more than 50 people. At the same time, the military fiasco of Caporetto led to a critical assessment of military provisioning. The weakness of the military forces was now linked to the army's low ration of food. The 'General Commissariat for Food Consumption', established in January 1917, was transformed into a ministry responsible for the entire field of agricultural production, foreign trade, internal distributions, and the rationing of food. Price and wage controls were fixed at a national level, whereas high penalties

were inflicted on 'profiteers' and 'speculators'. Moreover, rationing was introduced for basic items such as cereals, meat, sugar, and fats.[12]

War paved the way for new forms of state intervention all over Europe. Significantly, in Italy most regulations in the food sector were kept in force during the post-war years. The Socialist Party and the trade unions supported a proactive role of public authorities in the fight against rising costs of living. In the light of skyrocketing inflation, consumer protests and food riots became an experience of daily life.[13] Consumer activism stretched well beyond traditional political beliefs and party divisions. Both socialists and Catholics advocated consumer rights and regarded price controls and food subsidies as the engine of social redistribution. A progressive income and luxury tax was supposed to create the fiscal capacities for highly subsidised food supplies. And consumer cooperatives were expected to squeeze the profit margins of wholesalers and retail shopkeepers.

The debate about how to resolve the bread-subsidy crisis was among the most visible signs of the deep crisis of the liberal state after the First World War. In June 1920, Prime Minister Francesco Nitti was defeated over a bill which sought to abolish bread subsidies. When his successor, Giovanni Giolitti, finally repealed the 'political bread price' in view of growing fiscal deficits, he undermined all chances of cooperation between liberal, Catholic and socialist forces. The dissolution of the liberal political system and the rise of the fascist movement was thus closely linked to conflicts over food provision and subsidies.

The 'Battle for Wheat'

When Mussolini seized power in October 1922, the consumer activism of the post-war years was already in decline. Most food regulations had already been abolished by the liberal–conservative coalition under Giolitti, and the new fascist government seemed to continue on this liberal road. The cooperative organisations of the labour unions were destroyed, land occupied by the rural unions returned to old proprietors, and the remaining price and trade regulations weakened. At the same time, fascist leaders advocated new producer-oriented policies. This change of direction was explicitly linked to wartime experiences. Already in November 1919, Mussolini had proclaimed the basic principles of fascist food and agricultural policy:

> Four years of war and fourteen months without peace have demonstrated that the political independence of a country is closely related

> to economic independence, or in other words: in order to reach a maximum of political autonomy within the international struggle for hegemony, it is necessary to have a maximum of economic autonomy.[14]

Especially in the food sector, the 'production capacity of the nation must be increased up to its limits'.[15] Already in these early statements, autarchy emerged as the guiding principle of fascist economic and commercial organisation. In the face of a growing balance of payments deficit, imports had to be drastically reduced. While the import of raw materials and basic industrial products could hardly be eliminated, the purchase of foreign food and consumer goods was to be limited to the absolute minimum.[16] The fascist concept of 'produttivismo' was instrumental to the overall goal of economic autarchy: Low wages and production costs were supposed to create incentives for higher domestic investments and productivity growth in agriculture and industry, while at the same time, declining household incomes were supposed to contain domestic consumption.

The politics of autarchy had a deep impact on the agricultural policies of the fascist regime. Wheat imports alone accounted for over a quarter of total goods and services purchased outside Italy. This meant that by eliminating wheat imports, Italy would be able to reduce its trade deficit by more than 50 per cent.[17] And wheat played a major role in Italian's nutrition, providing more than 50 per cent of the calories consumed. However, fascist attempts to gain alimentary self-sufficiency was more than a short-term strategy in order to balance Italian trade deficits and stabilise the foreign value of the lira. For Mussolini and other fascist leaders, food autarchy was closely linked to the overall goal of creating a Mediterranean empire under Italian rule. Mussolini was convinced that access to alimentary resources would constitute a decisive factor in the struggle for hegemony and power in Europe. In the light of Malthusian scenarios of famine, war, and population development, boosting domestic food production was a decisive step to regain a position of strength and autonomy after the crisis of the post-war years.[18]

Against this backdrop, Mussolini launched the 'Battle of Wheat' (*battaglia del grano*) in July 1925.[19] This campaign embraced a whole series of economic, political and propagandistic measures: a high duty was placed on wheat imports to protect domestic producers against the international market and to discourage imports. Milling regulations specified the percentage of domestic wheat to go into domestically produced flour. Various subsidies for wheat cultivating farmers were

Plate 5.1 'Mussolini and the "Battle for Wheat" (20th August 1936)'
Source: Published with the permission of Parabolafoto (Milan).

introduced, including tax exemptions and financial assistance for machinery, fertilisers, and irrigation investments. Moreover, efforts were made to encourage the use of seeds with high yields and rapid maturation. Local committees established 'demonstration fields' to foster the technical education of farmers and peasants.[20]

The 'Battle for Wheat' represented one of the first and most successful mass campaigns of Italian fascism. It was coordinated by new agencies created at the central and local level, and it received heavy support from the regime's efficient propaganda machine. The campaign did not only involve traditional forms of communication such as public speeches, flyers, and newspaper articles, but also embraced novel media such as films, radio, and advertisements in public spaces.[21] Mussolini himself played a prominent role in the wheat propaganda, stressing his own rural family origins and founding a model wheat farm in his hometown in the Romagna. Intensive efforts were made to mobilise farmers and peasants for 'victory' in the 'Battle for Wheat'. The wheat contest held yearly in October at the local and national level was one of the most important mass meetings of fascism of all. At the same time, schools,

churches, universities, and the armed forces were employed to foster 'wheat consciousness' throughout the nation. The Catholic Church was especially courted by the regime for its huge influence among the rural population.[22]

The 'Battle for Wheat' was not only a significant propaganda success for the fascist regime. The economic effects of the campaign were also considerable and surprised even the fascists. Within ten years, the domestic output of wheat increased by roughly 40 per cent. This was partly due to an extension of the cultivation area, made possible by the huge land reclamation programmes that the regime initiated in 1929. There was also a considerable growth in terms of productivity through an intensified use of chemical fertilisers, machines, and newly developed seeds. Although complete self-sufficiency was never achieved, foreign purchases of food were significantly reduced. Imports of wheat dropped from roughly 25 million quintals per year in the period 1921–25 to less than 7,7 million in 1936–40.[23] At the same time, exports (especially of fruits, vegetables, cheese, and other high-quality foodstuffs) increased considerably. From 1932 on, exports of foodstuffs exceeded imports, and agriculture made an important contribution to balancing the notorious trade deficits of the country.

Austerity

The 'Battle for Wheat' – extended to other agricultural sectors in the late 1920s – marked a turn towards a producer-oriented direction in economic policy that had significant implications for consumers. First of all, self-sufficiency was achieved at the cost of diminished availability of domestic food supplies.[24] Table 5.1 shows the decline in the per-capita availability of staple foods such as meat, wheat, vegetables, fruits, and fats. This overall picture of decline was not altered by the slight increase in other foods. As the data in Table 5.2 shows, nutrition deteriorated. Of course, averages say nothing about the regional and social distribution of food consumption. There is little doubt that low-income households, especially, faced a massive deterioration in their diet. Already in 1927, nutritional experts like Filippo Bottazzi diagnosed a 'chronic state of malnutrition' among large parts of the Italian population. According to Bottazzi, consumption of meat and other protein-rich foods was extremely low, especially for poor families in southern Italy.[25] This is underlined by the reappearance of nutrition-related diseases such as Pellagra in Italy during the 1930s and 1940s.[26]

Table 5.1 Annual per capita availability of selected foods (in kg)

	1926–30	**1936–40**
Wheat	228.3	216.0
Potatoes	30.9	41.0
Vegetables	88.2	71.8
Fruits	59.4	42.2
Meats	23.1	20.0
Milk and Cheese	42.3	43.5
Fats and Oils	13.9	12.8
Sugar	8.4	7.8
Coffee	1.1	0.7
Wine and Beer (l.)	133.8	86.8

Source: G. Rey (ed.), *I conti economici dell'Italia* (Bari, 1991), pp. 219–26.

Table 5.2 Daily per capita availability of nutrition values (in grams) and calories

	1926–30	**1936–40**
Proteins	100.0	93.2
Fats	68.1	60.8
Carbohydrates	452.3	420.9
Calories	2, 883.0	2, 664.0

Source: *ISTAT, Sommario di statistiche storicheitaliane 1861–1955* (Rome 1958), p. 233.

Of course, the decline of food consumption was not caused by the regime's programme of autarchy alone. Household incomes were affected by the economic depression, which began earlier and lasted longer in Italy than in most other European countries.[27] However, as the figures in Tables 5.1 and 5.2 show, food consumption remained at low levels even after 1935, when Italy's economy had recovered from the slump. One reason for the decline in consumption was the fact that prices of protected foods such as wheat or meat remained relatively high throughout the depression, while incomes declined rapidly. By 1930, real wages in industry were 15–40 per cent below the levels of 1921, and the situation was not much better in agriculture. For the growing number of families without stable employment, incomes fell even further.[28]

Fascist leaders were aware that deteriorating food supplies would create discontent and unrest among the Italian population. The situation led to tensions and controversies within the Fascist Party. The politicisation of consumption, that had been apparent during and after the war, could hardly be reversed by the regime. Already in 1924, when, as a result of a bad harvest, wheat prices increased by 60 per cent within a few months, a new wave of consumer protests, strikes, and food riots spread across the country.[29] Especially in the south, which was not entirely controlled by fascism at that time, public disturbances gained momentum. Popular anxieties about food threatened the political authority of fascism, which was under enormous pressure after the assassination of the socialist leader Giacomo Matteotti in June 1924. While the Ministries of Economics and Finance tried to improve bread supply through additional imports of grain, heated debates over high living costs (*caroviveri*) arose within the Fascist Party. In many provinces, prefects began to reintroduce price controls for basic foodstuffs, and in October 1924, the fascist government established a 'Central Committee for Nutrition' in order to coordinate the activities of various agencies and organisations in this field.[30]

While state authorities had difficulty controlling public unrest, some fascist leaders themselves now began to advocate consumer interests against the 'middlemen and profiteers of the wholesale and retail business'.[31] Already in 1923, the fascist Minister of Commerce and Industry Cesare Rossi had sharply criticised shopkeepers and wholesalers for keeping food prices artificially high. One year later, the Minister of Finance Alberto De Stefani proposed a reorganisation of the entire commercial sector to reduce the number of profit-seeking 'middlemen'.[32]

While these threats remained more or less rhetorical during the early years of the regime, a more stringent disciplining of the commercial sector began in 1926, when Mussolini proclaimed a rigid course of monetary stabilisation.[33] The heavy revaluation of the lira ('Quota 90') was accompanied by a whole series of measures to lower retail prices and wages. While wage cutting was realised through agreements by the fascist syndicates that had monopolised labour relations since 1926, the lowering of consumer prices implied more complex strategies. Under the direction of prefects, committees including representatives of the Fascist Party, the chambers of commerce, syndicates, shopkeepers, wholesalers, and producers had to agree to the lowering of prices in line with monetary stabilisation. A decree of December 1926 formally reintroduced public price controls for food through provincial and local

authorities, a task transferred to the new institutions of the corporate state in November 1927.[34]

Most historical accounts of fascist corporatism have emphasised the ideological character of these new institutions, which had only little impact on economic policy.[35] While this interpretation holds true for many areas of economic policy making, the corporations did have considerable influence in the fine-tuning of economic relations in many sectors. For example, the corporations were set-up in such a way that entire cycles of production were integrated in one institution. The 'Corporation of Grains', for example, included representatives of farmers, flourmills, bakers, wholesalers, and consumers.[36]

At the same time, the regime also aimed at reducing the number of retailers in the food sector, which were regarded as one of the main source of excessive prices. From December 1926, the opening of new shops required a special licence from the local authorities.[37] As new licences were issued on a very restrictive basis, the number of retailers dropped by 22 per cent between 1927 and 1938. The regime also supported new agricultural cooperatives in the food sector in order to rationalise commercial relations and to minimise the cost of retailing. These were primarily created in agrobusiness branches with a high degree of horizontal integration, especially sugar, rice, and meat. Existing agricultural cooperatives and consumer cooperatives were integrated into the structures of the corporate state. In the summer of 1927, the 'Italian Federation of Agricultural Cooperatives' (*Federconsorzi*) with 954 rural cooperatives was merged with the fascist 'Confederation of Agriculture'.[38]

Even though the period between 1927 and 1935 were years of austerity and crisis, with high unemployment, declining incomes, and a general loss of purchasing power, there were few reports of consumer protests and food conflicts.[39] This was partly because the regime extended its control to all spheres of public and private life. Still a developing country, Italy was also able to avoid the worst excesses of the economic depression in industrialised countries like Germany or the United States. In light of the absence of political unrest and the relative economic stability, some historians have characterised the period between 1929 and 1935 as 'years of consent', when both Mussolini and the fascist regime reached the zenith of popularity.[40] While the concept of 'consent' is rather debatable in a dictatorship that suppressed any form of political opposition, many Italians believed that the regime was able to reconcile the diverging interest of consumers and producers as well as overcome tensions between the different branches and sectors of

the Italian economy. There was a general feeling that the burden of the depression was distributed fairly evenly across society. The official proclamation for autarchy in the mid-1930s and the regime's extension of political control to all spheres of economic life put an end to this sense of fairness.

Controls

In October 1935 Italy invaded Ethiopia. From an economic perspective, the Ethiopian war and the creation of an Italian Mediterranean empire was a disaster. The financial burdens of war and occupation were enormous and went well beyond the state's fiscal capacity. Worse, Italy confronted a growing trade deficit, rising inflation and deteriorating exchanges.[41] Attempts to create new rural colonies in North and East Africa in order to supplement domestic food supply failed. Only a few thousand rural workers settled in the colonies, and the yields of the new farms were more than meagre. In the end, Italy had to supply settlers with food produced in Italy, which only aggravated the domestic crisis of supply.[42] The Ethiopian war also altered Italy's status in the international political economy. The League of Nations placed an embargo on Italy, and most of Italy's former allies turned against Mussolini. Nazi Germany became Italy's principal ally. This had significant economic consequences. One result was that Italy was forced to export an increasing share of its food production to Germany. By 1938, 33 per cent of Italian exports came from agriculture compared to 25 per cent in 1928.[43]

Paradoxically, the economic depression had eased some of the most urgent problems of Italian economy. As a consequence of falling incomes, domestic demand decreased. This meant that imports and consumer prices dropped as well. The crisis had helped to relieve the pressure on Italy's trade and payment deficits. When the Italian economy recovered in 1934 and consumer demand expanded rapidly, this was reversed. For the first time since 1925, prices began to rise again. Between January and April 1935, wheat prices went up by 20 per cent, while prices for maize and rice increased by 38 per cent and 42 per cent.[44] Almost immediately, consumer protests against the *caroviveri* were reported from all parts of the country. At the same time, fascist labour unions claimed that higher wages were overdue after a long period of falling incomes. The danger of a price-wage spiral emerged that would have threatened monetary and fiscal stability in Italy. Already in spring 1934, price controls had been established by the prefects, but with

only limited success. Then, all import duties were abolished. Instead of protecting domestic producers by tariffs, importation of foodstuff was limited through a combined system of import quotas and licences.[45] In the summer of 1935, fascists presented themselves as the 'vigilant protector of consumer interest' advocating the whole administration of retail prices.[46] In October 1935 a 'Permanent Committee for Price Control' was established, which issued maximum price lists for staple foods and other products. Local price committees were set up as well.[47] The military organisation of the party enforced strict controls. Shopkeepers who did not adhere to maximum prices were severely punished. Popular resentments against 'speculators' and 'profiteers' were used to put pressure on wholesalers and shopkeepers. The Minister of Agriculture Edmondo Rossoni argued that 'in the corporate economy there is . . . no space for parasites and speculators. I believe that in the food sector, cooperatives are the natural organisation of trade and retailing'.[48]

Although party controls effectively stopped price increases until December 1935, new problems of food supply emerged. Many wholesalers retained considerable amounts of flour, as they expected price increases in the future. More serious problems emerged from the fact that price controls were enforced only at the retail level, while wholesalers were not subject to fixed prices. Moreover, production costs increased and caused serious problems for the milling and bread industry.[49]

Fascist experts were aware that the growing problems of food supply could not be resolved by fixing retail prices alone. In the long run, this system might even worsen the situation, as producers would have fewer incentives to sell their products. According to Rossoni, the whole food chain had to be controlled by state and party agencies. On the other hand, direct controls at the level of production were hardly practicable in Italy, where there were more than five million farmers at the time. As a consequence, the Ministry of Agriculture introduced a compulsory delivery order for wheat in summer 1936. Farmers had to deliver 95 per cent of their harvest to public storages (*ammassi obligatori*), the remaining 5 per cent could be used for domestic consumption. Large grain silos run by the agricultural cooperatives were set up all over the country.[50]

The new compulsory system turned out to be a complete failure. Several new agencies were created under the direction of the Ministry of Agriculture and the Fascist Party, but the new bureaucracy faced enormous problems. The administration of the whole food chain from producers to wholesalers and from food industry to shopkeepers and weekly markets proved to be extremely complicated. One of the main

problems was the setting of prices across the entire cycle of production. Regional differences with respect to markets, prices, and qualities were not sufficiently considered by the central offices of the Ministry of Agriculture. The introduction of the 'ammassi obligatori' had been poorly planned by the regime. Within a few months, the complex interplay of markets had to be substituted by a highly centralised system of state intervention. Reports from the prefects and local party offices indicated chaos across the country. In many cases, local authorities lacked the necessary information for organising the delivery of grain. The second half of 1936 witnessed an explosion of protests and public demonstrations against the reorganisation of food markets.[51] Farmers criticised the 'ammassi' as a hidden form of 'Marxist' expropriation, while wholesalers, food manufactures, and retailers complained about falling profits. For weeks many flour mills stood still, facing shortages of wheat.[52] Consumers complained that bread and other staple foods were often sold out in bakeries and local markets. There was a general feeling of mismanagement, corruption and fraud in the bureaucratic administration of the 'ammassi'.

As economic experts had expected, farmers were often reluctant to deliver their harvest to the public storages. In 1936–37, only 43 per cent of the wheat harvest was delivered. Numbers varied between different regions: there were fairly high quotas in the north of the country, while in the southern regions, only a few farmers transferred their crops to the public silos. In Calabria, less that 16 per cent of the wheat production was collected by the 'ammassi', and the numbers were even lower in Sicily or Campania![53] In July 1937, police authorities in Naples informed the Ministry of Interiors, that a black market had emerged and was spinning out of control.[54] This, of course, meant that earlier measures to control high costs of living proved ineffective since for many households, additional purchases on the black market became indispensable.

In light of these events, compulsory delivery was not extended to other foodstuffs. Instead, the regime intensified efforts to increase food supplies by introducing a more coherent system of planning. In spring 1937, the corporations drew up 'autarchy plans' for all branches of the food sector. Reports identified considerable deficits in the supply of wheat (20 per cent), meat and fish (15–25 per cent), fats and oils (20–35 per cent), while there were small surpluses in sugar, fruits, vegetables, maize, rice, and other cereals. Even though Italians were not in danger of starvation, serious problems of supply were expected in case of a war that would cut Italy off from foreign supplies for years.[55]

In the following years, the regime launched a new campaign to extend productive areas of cultivation and to increase wheat production. Especially in the south, where productivity was extremely low, a new programme for land reclamation and soil improvement was initiated in February 1937.[56] Households were encouraged to produce at least part of their food requirements in their own gardens and to be parsimonious in their consumption of food. The fascist leisure and women organisations launched a campaign to raise small animals in private households in order to compensate for protein deficits.[57] More generally, a shift in popular diets from proteins and fats to carbohydrates was recommended by the 'Committee of Nutrition', established in November 1935.[58] All theses efforts were embedded in the propaganda of autarchy, linking private consumption to the goals of national power and independence. Fascist propaganda urged consumers to embrace austerity as a way of life, defining it as one of the most important virtues of the new fascist society.[59]

Deprivation and unrest

When Italy entered the Second World War in June 1940, it was ill prepared for military conflict, which would last several years and require the national mobilisation of all economic and human resources. Even though the fascist government had made substantial efforts at consolidating domestic food provisions in the years before the war, the situation was more than disquieting. In June 1940, the grain stocks amounted to 7.5 million quintals, that is, less than 10 per cent of the quantity Italians consumed in a single year. The situation was even worse for meat, fats, and oils, rice, and other staple foods.[60] If the regime had failed to build up sufficient food reserves, this was partly because most fascist leaders expected a short military conflict. After Germany's quick victories in the 'Blitzkrieg' against France and Poland, few doubted the ability of the 'Axis Powers' to wage war without major economic efforts, optimism that would prove to be a fatal misjudgement.[61]

Compared to the First World War, Italy was in an extremely precarious position in the Second World War. In military and economic terms, the country depended almost completely on its German ally. To secure raw materials, industrial products and armaments, Italy had to export foodstuffs and workers to Germany.[62] The situation became even worse in 1941, when the Allies imposed a blockade that seriously interrupted imports from other countries. Moreover, domestic production declined

dramatically during the war. Measured in 'grain units', the overall output of agriculture dropped by more than 28 per cent between 1939 and 1943.[63]

Food regulations in wartime followed the principles established during the Ethiopian conflict. While the fascist authorities abstained from regulating farmers directly until 1942, initial intervention focused on the control of market exchanges and prices. In June 1940, the compulsory delivery system was extended to other important food products, including all cereals, meats, oils, and fats. By contrast, vegetables, fruits, and fish were not regulated. A general price-stop for all food items was imposed immediately after Italy's entry into the war, followed by more differentiated price schedules in autumn 1940. But price regulation had only limited effects.[64] Almost immediately, black markets emerged all over country. In 1941, only 47 per cent of wheat production was delivered to state-run silos, while the rest was sold on the black market. According to the general director of provisioning, Vittorio Ronchi, 'products disappeared immediately from market stands' the minute they had been placed on the official price list.[65] As prices on black markets were many times higher than official prices, low-income households encountered severe problems of food supply. Contemporary studies calculated that in 1943, families spent roughly 40 per cent of the food budget on black-market products. At the same time, the hoarding of food became a widespread practice, further cutting into the availability of food, especially in the cities where people lacked direct access to farmers. Already in October 1940, basic food items such as sugar, coffee, pasta, fats, meats, eggs, and cheese were subject to rationing; for political reasons, the consumption of bread was not subject to regulation until October 1941.[66]

Even though strict laws were passed against black marketeering (including the death penalty in severe cases), enforcement was limited. While big farmers and food producers were usually in compliance with the law, fraud was frequent among small farmers and shopkeepers.[67] Low rations reinforced the black-market system: in June 1942, the average daily ration was 950 calories. This was about 50 per cent of rations in Germany at that time and well below minimal nutritional requirements.[68] Fascist leaders were conscious that official rations had to be supplemented by illegal purchases, though these were often out of reach even for middle-class households.

For most Italians, malnutrition and deprivation became a daily experience during the war. Numerous reports of prefects and party officials reveal the growing unrest among Italians from summer 1941 on. All over the country, consumers complained about low rations, high prices

for food on the black-market, and the highly inefficient administration of food provisions. Public protest often appeared when new food items appeared on the ration lists or new regulations were implemented.[69] This was the case in October 1941, when bread became rationed and tens of thousands protested in front of municipal buildings and party headquarters. The same happened when rations for sugar and bread were lowered in March 1942. Even though most of these manifestations were not explicitly political, more and more citizens blamed Mussolini and the regime for mismanagement and corruption.[70] Complaints about inadequate provisions and the poor quality of food were also reported from the armed forces. In March 1943, a severe food shortage triggered an unprecedented wave of strikes and protests in the industrial areas of northern Italy.

Conclusion

Unlike Nazi Germany, which was able to secure provisions at home by exploiting the alimentary resources of the occupied territories, Italian fascism failed to provide even minimal standards of food supply during the Second World War. This failure appears even more dramatic in light of the enormous political and economic efforts of the fascist regime to gain alimentary self-sufficiency since coming into power. Two different, though frequently intersecting discourses fuelled fascist policies in this field: On the one hand, the experience of scarcity and hunger during the First World War, when conflicts over foods had engendered new forms of consumer activisms and state intervention. As elsewhere in Europe, food conflicts in Italy reflected more general questions of living standards, public health, and social security that concerned governments and social movements in the post-war era. On the other hand, agricultural programmes of Italian fascism were closely linked to the emergence of neo-Malthusian theories, which framed malnutrition and hunger in a wider context of economic development, population growth, and national sovereignty. Unlike older accounts of historical literature, this chapter argued that fascist rural campaigns – from the 'Battle for Wheat' over the land reclamation programmes to the corporative control of economic and social relations – were not exclusively dedicated to the interest of farmers and landed property, but had a deep impact on food provision and consumption as well. Especially during the long years of economic crisis, the regime tried to equilibrate the interests of producers, traders and consumers within the institutional framework of fascist corporatism. This worked fairly

well until 1935, when the Italian aggression against Ethiopia and the embargo of the League of Nation correlated with more drastic interventions in food markets. The establishment of a highly centralised system of compulsory delivery for grain and other staple foods proved a complete failure and caused massive distress and unrest among farmers, the food industry, and retailers. Disorganised administration, corruption, and emerging black markets eroded the authoritarian consensus that fascism had gained among the Italian population since the late 1920s. The problems and shortcomings of food administration since 1935 made it extremely difficult to mobilise the agrarian sector when Italy entered into the Second World War in June 1940. This is one reason for the growing difficulties of the fascist authorities to control food markets and to secure the basic needs of the military and civilian populations. Furthermore, it became apparent that the agricultural production campaigns launched from 1925 were not sufficient to secure a solid food basis for a prolonged war. As Italy was forced to export growing shares of its food production to the Nazi ally, domestic provision became more and more difficult. The disaster of food politics was certainly not the main reason for the military fiasco of the Italian armies in the Second World War and the fall of Mussolini in July 1943. But the daily experience of hunger and privation certainly contributed to a general atmosphere of discontent and discredited fascism even among those who for a long time had believed in the promises and myths of the fascist state.

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6

Stalin, Soviet Agriculture, and Collectivisation

Mark B. Tauger

The collectivisation of Soviet agriculture in the 1930s may have been the most significant and traumatic of the many transformations to which the Communist regime subjected the people of the former Russian empire. Historical and other literatures have viewed this policy with considerable ambivalence. On the one hand, it involved considerable violence and the harsh policy of 'dekulakisation', provoked numerous peasant protests, disrupted the agricultural system, and was a factor in the great famine of 1931–33, though not the most important cause.[1] At the same time, collectivisation brought substantial modernisation to traditional agriculture in the Soviet Union, and laid the basis for relatively high food production and consumption by the 1970s and 1980s.[2]

This ambivalence regarding collective agriculture extends to the intentions of the Soviet regime in implementing collectivisation. In particular, Stalin's attitudes toward peasants and agriculture, given the growing authority and power he had by the late 1920s, are central issues for an understanding of the regime's decision to carry out this policy. Yet scholarly discussions of his views of agriculture and related issues (peasants, famines, agricultural development) are problematic. Few, if any studies, for example, discuss his early writings on peasants. Some works simply assume Stalin's hostility to peasants as the underlying explanation for the tragedies that struck them in the 1930s, as for example Robert Conquest's citation of Khrushchev that 'for Stalin, peasants were scum'.[3]

Aside from such extreme and inadequately supported positions, the historical literature displays several interpretations of Stalin's views of agrarian topics and his intentions behind the decision to collectivise agriculture. These interpretations range between two poles: exploitation, according to which Stalin's goal in collectivisation was to facilitate extraction of food and other resources from the villages; and

development, according to which Stalin's goal was to modernise agriculture to make it more productive. One can find the first view in a wide range of publications.[4] Alexander Erlich, for example, cites Stalin's speech at the July 1928 plenum, in which he referred to the need both to obtain 'tribute' ['dan'] from the peasants and also to modernise agriculture, and asserts that the second claim was essentially a political lie: 'To proclaim in so many words that collectivisation was needed in order to squeeze out the peasants in a most effective way would clearly be a poor tactic; it was much smarter to present the collective farm as an indispensable vehicle for modernising Soviet agriculture and for drastically increasing its productivity.'[5] Subscribers to these views hold that Stalin had simply adopted Preobrazhenskii's concept of 'primitive socialist accumulation'.[6] On this basis, one development economist wrote that 'historically, large-scale farming was not established in the USSR as a means of modernising agriculture, reducing costs of production, or improving the income of the peasants. The dominant motive was to overcome the difficulty of organising "procurement".'[7] I will refer to this interpretation as the 'exploitation argument.'

Other publications have questioned or suggested alternatives to this view of collectivisation. In the 1970s, James Millar and Michael Ellman challenged the exploitation argument, which Millar called 'the standard story', using calculations by the Soviet economist Barsov to argue that during the first five-year plan (1928–32) agriculture was a net recipient rather than donor of resources in the Soviet economy.[8] They saw this result, however, as the unexpected consequence of collectivisation and not the government's intention. E. H. Carr wrote in the 1960s that Soviet leaders hoped collectivisation, and the mechanisation of farming that it would allow, would increase productivity as well as marketing, but he thought that the problem during the grain crisis (the shortfall in urban food supplies from late 1927 onward) was primarily marketing rather than production. In 1980, Mark Harrison analysed the main scholarly views of why the Soviet regime 'abandoned NEP', and reached conclusions similar to Carr's. He restated the argument that the regime imposed collectivisation to increase the share of marketed grain and facilitate procurement, but he also argued that the grain crisis of 1928–29 could not have been eliminated by alternative policies, and that the resource needs of the first five-year plan exceeded the potential of NEP farming.[9] This interpretation implies that the Soviet leadership implemented collectivisation at least in part to increase production.

Moshe Lewin has argued that production as well as marketing of grain had declined relative to pre-war years and that the regime hoped

to remedy this with collectivisation, but he still thought that Soviet leaders placed a higher priority on marketing from the farms than on increased production and modernisation.[10] John Bergamini took a more development-oriented view by summarising, with some scepticism, Stalin's arguments that collectivisation would provide agriculture with a technical base comparable to industry and allow agriculture to develop like industry.[11] Isaac Deutscher argued that 'Stalin was precipitated into collectivisation by the chronic danger of famine in 1928 and 1929', which also implied a need to increase production[12] On the other hand, post-Soviet scholars have taken an extreme version of the exploitation argument, even though the new archival sources they used contradict that argument.

This chapter examines Stalin's views of agriculture under the categories of his attitudes toward peasants, agriculture, and collectivisation, based on his published works and certain archival sources, from his earliest publications to the 'Great Change' of 1929. It does not claim to be a complete examination of his views, but it presents evidence and analysis to show that the advocates of the 'exploitation argument' overlook, distort, and take so much of Stalin's writings and statements out of context that they misrepresent his views and the intentions that Stalin and his associates had in their agrarian policies and their decision to undertake collectivisation.

In light of the potentially controversial character of this topic, it might be helpful for the general reader to clarify one issue. This chapter is a study of the decision to undertake collectivisation; it is not a study of collectivisation itself or of the great famine of 1931–33. The literatures on collectivisation and especially on the famine are highly polarised, but most writings work from the assumptions of the 'exploitation argument' described above and try to extend that argument to explain the famine. Several scholars argue that since the harvests of 1931–32 were not small by official data, the famine was a genocide that Stalin imposed intentionally and specifically (or mostly) on Ukraine in order to suppress Ukrainian nationalist tendencies among the peasants and to suppress peasant resistance.[13] Thus they interpret the famine as a means by which the regime exercised its authority to facilitate exploitation of the peasants where the peasants were allegedly particularly resistant. On the basis of this view, certain 'intentionalist' or Ukrainian nationalist scholars move backwards and, in addition to making an extreme version of the exploitation argument, assert that the regime imposed collectivisation to suppress Ukrainian nationalism.[14]

Others, including myself, have shown that the famine was not limited to Ukraine, but affected virtually the entire Soviet Union, and resulted first of all from a series of natural disasters in 1931–32 that diminished harvests drastically and that were not reflected in official statistics or in the later intentionalist historiography. This new evidence invalidates the basic assumption of the intentionalist argument, that the 1931–32 harvests were not small enough to cause a famine on their own, and shows that the famine could not have been a genocide in the sense claimed by intentionalist scholars.[15] More important, the evidence for this interpretation of the famine demonstrates that the Soviet regime depended for its survival on the peasantry and relied on the peasants to overcome the famine, which they did by producing a much larger harvest in 1933, despite the tragic famine conditions in which they worked.[16] This evidence shows, in particular, that collectivisation allowed the mobilisation and distribution of resources, like tractors, seed aid, and food relief, to enable farmers to produce a large harvest during a serious famine, which was unprecedented in Russian history and almost so in Soviet history. By implication, therefore, this research shows that collectivisation, whatever its disruptive effects on agriculture, did in fact function as a means to modernise and aid Soviet agriculture.

Readers committed to an 'intentionalist' interpretation of the famine might respond by dismissing this research as an attempt to exonerate Stalin and the Soviet regime for the catastrophes that took place in these years. In line with the saying, 'to understand is not to condone', my aim, however, is to explain, not to defend. This chapter attempts to provide a more careful, contextual, and objective reading than previous studies of both familiar and new sources to show how Stalin and others developed the idea of collectivisation in the late 1920s in the first place. Instead of a heroic defence of collectivisation, this chapter arrives at an ironic story, that of intentions going very wrong.

If the evidence and arguments here attribute to Stalin the intention of improving agriculture with collectivisation and do not attribute to him a ruthless hatred of peasants, and Ukrainians in particular, this does not exonerate him from responsibility for many well-documented decisions during the process of collectivisation and the famine that could have alleviated conditions for many people.

Stalin and the peasants

Stalin's writings do not indicate that he considered peasants to be 'scum'. Instead, his writings through 1929 show understanding of, and support

for, the demands of at least the 'poor' and 'middle' peasants, but also an awareness of the peasants' place in the larger economy. In a series of articles on the 'agrarian question' in a Georgian radical newspaper in 1906, for example, Stalin discussed peasants' desires for land and urged them to confiscate it. He argued that despite the Social Democrats' party line, 'if the peasants' demands are genuine and democratic, the Party must help peasants so as not to be a brake on revolution'.[17] In April 1917 he defended peasants' appeals to the Provisional Government to be allowed to farm uncultivated lands on nobles' estates, agreeing with the peasants' warnings of disaster and food shortages, and criticising the government's efforts not to offend the landlords, 'even though Russia fall into the clutches of famine'.[18]

In October 1917 he published an article about starvation in villages and towns that is particularly interesting in light of events in the 1920s and 1930s.[19] He challenged 'bourgeois' press claims that peasants were 'rolling in wealth', cited investigations showing that peasants were starving and suffering from scurvy and other diseases of food scarcity, and quoted from a peasant's letter (which he calls 'eloquent') expressing fears that winter will leave no alternative to starvation. In particular, he criticised plans by the Kerenskii government to send punitive expeditions to the countryside to gather food because they would only worsen the situation. He then described starvation among factory workers, citing reports from several towns, and contrasting Russia's large exports before the revolution with its inability to feed its own workers. He analysed the whole situation as a vicious circle: the peasants obtained few industrial goods, and therefore sold little grain, which left the workers too hungry to produce more, which in turn led the peasants to sell even less, making urban conditions yet worse. Stalin saw the only solution in Russia's withdrawal from the 'predatory war'.

This description of the 1917 crisis seems to be an uncanny anticipation of the 1927–29 grain crisis, with urban and rural starvation, the goods famine, and requisitions. Stalin and other Soviet leaders recognised this similarity between the crisis of the revolutionary period and the grain crisis of 1928 and after. They came to see this situation as a fundamental weakness in the Soviet agricultural system and undertook collectivisation because they thought it would prevent the problem from recurring.

These items from Stalin's published works are only a sample of his writings from the pre-Soviet period, and at this point it is not possible to say how representative they are. Still, they do not show anything like hostility toward the peasants. For the Civil War period, Stalin's

works include what clearly are again only a small sample of his correspondence and other writings, yet again we do not find hostility toward peasants. The most relevant in his published works is an article on the German and Austrian occupation of Ukraine in accord with the Brest-Litovsk Treaty. Here he describes Ukrainians as putting up fierce resistance to the Germans.[20] This again anticipates later events: coercive governmental demands, abusive officials, peasant protests, and conflict over extractions from the countryside. In these documents Stalin clearly viewed these events from the peasants' standpoint, and took their side. While he may not always have done this, these sources indicated that he did so in these cases, that he had the capacity, and most notably the willingness, to understand how peasants responded to coercive state policies.

During NEP, the 'peasant question' – in this case, which agrarian policy would be best for the transition to socialism – was of course a central issue in the debates of the time between the main Soviet leadership and the various 'oppositions', and Stalin even published a collection of his writings on the peasant question. In them Stalin again seeks to balance understanding of the peasants with an awareness of the peasants' place in the national economy. Stalin repeatedly argued that capitalist development would be a mistake for Soviet agriculture because it would inevitably lead to the polarisation of that sector into large latifundia and impoverished wage-slaves. Instead, Soviet agriculture had to develop through amalgamation of peasants into cooperatives.[21] He also thought that private trade would lead to an exploitation of the poorer peasants through prices and loans. Therefore the government should try to shift trade from the private sector to the state and cooperative sector.[22] In other words, he advocated socialist and state-centered policies because he thought they would help avoid exploitation of the peasants by large landowners and moneylenders under a capitalist economy.

He also tried to understand peasants' objectives. At a Central Committee (TsK) plenum in October 1924, during the 1924–25 famine, he argued that peasants had changed since the revolution. They were no longer the downtrodden masses, now they were a new, free, and active class. The issues that concerned them were also new, no longer the landlords or the requisitions of the Civil War; now peasants wanted high selling prices for their grain and low prices for the commodities they wanted to buy. He even identified these price issues as a key factor in peasant rebellions during the brief Georgian uprising of 1924.[23] To win over their support Stalin proposed involving peasants more actively in the elections for, and activities of, the local soviets; he also identified

food relief during the famine as an important factor encouraging peasants' support.

During NEP Stalin repeatedly emphasised that local officials learn to get on good terms with the peasants, not just look to Moscow. He warned that renewed uprisings on the scale of Kronshtadt and Tambov were still possible if Soviet officials acted unresponsively toward the peasants.[24] He identified the peasantry as the Soviet government's main ally, since the foreign proletariat and the colonies had so far shown no sign of following the Bolsheviks in creating a revolution. He wrote that they were an uncertain ally, because they had 'vacillated' under the influence of Denikin and Kolchak (the two main leaders of the Whites during the Civil War), but he did not blame them for that, instead attributing it to their ignorance, and insisted that the party and regime work to inform the peasants and make them more reliable allies.[25]

In these sources, Stalin shows the same sort of basic understanding of peasants' attitudes that he did in his writings from 1917 and before. His understanding is somewhat oversimplified and incomplete – Stalin was not Chaianov – but he got to the point and for many, perhaps most, peasants he was not wrong. I have not found any pejorative statements by Stalin about peasants in general, certainly nothing like Khrushchev's comment cited above.

Stalin's attitudes toward the peasants in these NEP sources, as earlier, were basically positive: he saw them as a new peasantry, free from the landlords, and with demands reflecting economic improvement, but also as a potential threat if regime officials ignored them. The main potential threat posed by the peasants, in Stalin's view, came from the small subgroup of kulaks. Stalin's limited and distorted Marxist education, of course, prevented him from having any doubt that such a group existed and acted as a 'class', with clearly defined interests and political views opposed to the Soviet government.[26] He shared this view, however, with many Communist Party members and others.[27]

During the grain crisis of 1927–29, Stalin, like most other Soviet officials, increasingly turned against the 'kulaks', assuming that they withheld marketable grain from exchange and that they represented a political threat because of their standing in the villages. The leaders, however, still considered the kulaks necessary for the economy. Kalinin expressed the Politburo's views at the July 1928 plenum, in a digression to which Stalin made no protest, that the party opposed the exile of kulaks so long as their grain production could not be replaced.[28] When the accelerating collectivisation in late 1929 indicated to the leadership that kolkhoz production could surpass the share of grain that the kulaks

produced, they then decided to unleash the anti-kulak attitudes and change policy to 'liquidation of the kulaks as a class'.[29]

Stalin and other leaders, however, repeatedly stated that most of the rest of the peasants supported dekulakisation, that it was a policy that reflected the interests of the poor and most middle peasants, whom the kulaks (according to Stalin) exploited. Stalin's hostility to the kulaks, then, did not in his mind correspond to hostility to the peasantry as a whole. Stalin also saw the kulaks as political leaders in the village, who could persuade peasants to turn against the Soviet government and withhold their grain reserves from sale in an attempt to weaken it. In other words, his attitude towards them derived from his view of the kulaks' place and function in the NEP economy and their attitude towards the regime. These types of considerations also affected his views of the peasants as a whole. To explain how Stalin viewed the peasants' place in NEP, we have to consider his views of agriculture.

Stalin and agriculture

While Stalin clearly could understand peasants' viewpoints, he also developed over this period a broader conception of the condition and place of agriculture in the Soviet economy. This conception did not see agriculture exclusively as a resource, as a means to development, but as a part of the development process.

The most important context for examining Stalin's views of agriculture was the character and condition of Soviet agriculture itself. Stalin recognised the diversity and complexity of the different agrarian systems that made up the rural Soviet Union and attempted to accommodate them in writing the Soviet constitution. Stalin's draft of a Soviet constitution in 1921–22 contained a three-tiered hierarchy of commissariats, which became part of the 1922 USSR constitution. This system left the agriculture commissariats as republic rather than national commissariats because agriculture involved specific customs and land-use patterns that varied by republic. The agriculture commissariats, like five others in Stalin's view, had to be 'independent commissariats' to ensure 'freedom of national development' for different nationalities.[30]

Stalin also recognised, like many others, the weakness and backwardness of Soviet agriculture. Few of the numerous studies of NEP peasant agriculture discuss famines, yet the country endured a series of famines in this period. The threat of famine underlay both officials' interpretations of the country's agricultural problems and the solutions they chose. By the beginning of NEP the country had endured two famines

since 1914: a primarily urban famine during the last years of the First World War and the Civil War, and the severe famine of 1921–23, during which the regime imported food and allowed the American Relief Agency to aid famine victims.[31]

Stalin's response to the 1924–25 famine, caused by drought and crop failure in the Volga basin, the southeast, and Ukraine, provides insight into his views of agriculture and famine.[32] In July 1924, Stalin published a directive to all party organisations on the struggle with the crop failure.[33] He outlined the extent of the crisis and the regime's measures to deal with the results of the drought – famine, disruption of peasant farms, reduced sowings – and to deal with drought itself – to protect peasants from drought in the future, and stabilise and improve agriculture. Measures in the first category included nearly 60 million rubles in food, seed, credits, and tax reductions, and as Stalin later admitted some 83 million gold rubles to purchase grain abroad.[34] Measures in the second area included a three-year land reclamation programme at a cost of 80 million rubles. In addition, however, Stalin emphasised the need to involve peasants in the struggle against the famine, to make sure that these measures would not remain on paper, and to dispel rumours and panic spread by 'enemies' (kulaks, etc.).[35]

In this directive Stalin understood the causes of the famine to be not only the natural disaster but also the weaknesses and instability of Soviet agriculture. The measures he described aimed not only to help peasants survive, maintain their animals and sowings, and restore hope and willingness to work, but also to help strengthen and protect the sector against future droughts. In other words it combined short-term relief and long-term agricultural development aid. Stalin agreed with most, if not all, of the party leadership. In his book on the famine, for example, Rykov blamed it first of all on what he termed the 'Asiatic' backwardness of traditional peasant farming, and included a series of articles on all the varied measures the regime had undertaken to restore and improve peasant farming.[36] Stalin and his associates interpreted the vulnerability of the Soviet Union to natural disasters as backwardness, as a problem that could be solved by modernisation. At this point Stalin still thought that Soviet peasant agriculture had potential for growth and improvement. In December 1925 he told the fourteenth party congress that agriculture could still make progress, asserting that even simple measures like clean seed could bring an improvement of 10–15 per cent.[37]

Stalin's experience in dealing with this famine, and his attribution of it to backwardness, were among the considerations that led him to see agriculture not simply, or even primarily, as a resource. In an important

speech in April 1926, Stalin distinguished two phases in the development of NEP: an initial phase during which the government had focused on agriculture, and the current phase which emphasised industry.[38] He explained that during the first years of NEP, the country had to focus on agriculture because the rest of the economy depended on it: industry needed food, raw materials, and markets. Now (in 1926) that agriculture had substantially recovered, he argued, the country had to focus on industry to lay a foundation for socialism. He emphasised, however, that even agricultural progress depended on industrial development, for tractors, machines, and other manufactured goods. Even in this speech on industry, Stalin did not see agriculture as subordinate and as purely a resource to be exploited. Agriculture, in his view, was more basic than industry to the economy and would be one of the prime beneficiaries of industrial development.

A year earlier, when the Dneprostroi project was under consideration, Stalin opposed it because he thought building factories to produce agricultural equipment was a higher priority: 'We need, furthermore, to expand our agricultural machinery factories, because we are still forced to purchase abroad the most elementary agricultural tools for tens of millions of rubles. We need, then, to build at least one tractor manufacturing plant, a new and large factory, because without one or more such factories, we cannot develop further.'[39] And when he wrote this, in July 1925, the Soviet Union was recovering from the famine that began the previous year. Clearly, he thought that farm machinery factories were the way to deal with vulnerability to natural disaster. In light of this evidence, it is problematic to argue, as Erlich did in relation to the grain crisis, that Stalin's assertion of the need to develop agriculture in this 1925 letter was a lie concealing a hidden desire to crush and exploit the peasantry. Lewin also argued that Stalin and the rest of the Soviet leadership did not envisage collectivisation and dekulakisation until mid-1929 at the earliest, and certainly not in 1925.[40]

In his April 1926 speech Stalin went on to discuss the nature and requirements of Soviet industrial development. He emphasised that Soviet development had to proceed without compromising Soviet independence, that the Soviet Union could not become an appendage of an imperialist power like India in relation to Britain. In order to avoid this, the country had to find internal sources of accumulation to cover the costs of industrialisation. He argued that the Soviet Union had such sources, and he listed them. Remarkably given the claims in the existing literature, agriculture itself was not on his list, which emphasised the annulment of tsarist debts and the nationalisation of industry and

banks. He did emphasise, however, that in order to secure Soviet accumulation the country needed a certain amount of food reserves, which he argued would not only support a favourable balance of trade but also to respond to crop failure or another such calamity.[41]

Stalin thus recognised that agriculture and industry were linked, mutually dependent. He certainly acknowledged the industrial sector's need for raw materials, food, and labour, which one would expect from the exploitation argument. He also emphasised, however, that agriculture needed crucial and growing amounts of inputs from industry. Otherwise it would not be able to develop and would hold back industrial development itself. In other words he perceived here a potential vicious circle similar to the one he saw in 1917.

'Tribute'

This conception of industry and agriculture as linked and mutually dependent is evident even in Stalin's much-cited remark about the peasants having to pay 'tribute'. Soviet leaders had discussed the topic for years, certainly even before Preobrazhenskii came up with this theory of 'primitive socialist accumulation'. As Millar has argued, Preobrazhenskii's theory was in fact little more than a description of NEP.[42] A more detailed and complete analysis of Stalin's statements on this point suggests a somewhat different interpretation from that of the exploitation argument. At the July 1928 TsK plenum, Stalin discussed the country's need to rely on internal resources for industry, identifying both workers and peasants as contributors, and explained agriculture's contribution in the following way:

> With the peasantry the situation in the given case stands as follows: they pay the state not only the usual taxes, direct and indirect, but they also overpay in relatively high prices for industrial goods – first of all, and they under-receive in prices for agricultural produce – second. This is an additional tax on the peasants in the interests of raising industry, serving the whole country, including the peasantry. This is something like 'tribute', something like a supertax, which we are forced to take temporarily, to preserve and develop further the present tempo of development of industry, to provide for industry for the whole country, to raise further the welfare of the village and then destroy completely this additional tax, these 'scissors' between town and village. This business, so to speak, is unpleasant [nepriiatnoe]. But we would not be Bolsheviks, if we were to paint over the fact and

> close our eyes to it, that, unfortunately, our industry and our country for the time being cannot manage without this additional tax on the peasantry.[43]

Later in the same plenum, in response to criticisms by Osinskii and Tomskii, Stalin returned to this issue. After repeating the above argument, he added:

> Of course, the words 'supertax', 'something like tribute' – are unpleasant words, for they hit you in the nose. But first, the issue is not in words. Second, the words fully correspond to reality. Third, they, these unpleasant words, are precisely intended to hit the nose and induce Bolsheviks to undertake work in a serious way to liquidate this 'supertax', to liquidate the scissors. But how is it possible to liquidate these unpleasant things? By means of systematic rationalisation of our industry and reducing prices for industrial goods. By means of systematic improvement of the technology and yields of agriculture and gradually reducing costs of agricultural produce. By means of systematic rationalising of our trade and procurement apparatus. And so on and so forth. You will not be able to do all of this, of course, in one – two years. But we should definitely in the course of a series of years, if we want to free ourselves from all types of unpleasant things and phenomena that hit us in the nose.[44]

Stalin used the term 'tribute' as one of several terms to get across the idea of the policy the government was following. Stalin also clearly and repeatedly stated that the policy is disagreeable but inevitable, and that the Soviet regime should and was making efforts to eliminate the need for the policy of taxing agriculture heavily. He also stressed that a primary reason for the supertax was to benefit agriculture via industrial development. These are not the statements of a leader who sought to 'crush' and brutally exploit the peasantry. Nonetheless, Bukharin is known in the literature for having criticised Stalin on this point, for calling Stalin's policies 'military-feudal exploitation of the peasantry', which implies that Bukharin opposed this policy. On 9 February 1929 Bukharin, Rykov, and Tomskii presented an appeal to the Politburo in which Bukharin sharply criticised Stalin, among other things, for his use of the term 'tribute'. They wrote the following:

> The error of comrade Stalin, like the error of Comrade Preobrazhenskii, absolutely does not consist in the naked assertion that

> the peasantry 'overpays' (this possibly will still be for a long time, although we should strain all efforts toward the rapid liquidation of such a situation, according to the direct instructions of Lenin). This error consists in the incorrect, anti-Leninist, anti-Marxist characterisation of the social relations of the proletariat and peasantry, which leads inevitably to the practice of excessive taxation, undermining the basis of the union of the workers and peasants. Tribute is a category of an exploitative economy. If the peasant pays tribute, that means he is a tributary, exploited and oppressed, it means that from the government's viewpoint, he is not a citizen but a subject. Is it possible to identify the participation of the peasantry in the construction of industry as tribute? It is senseless, illiterate and politically dangerous . . .[45]

Bukharin did not reject the policy that Stalin described, but only Stalin's use of the term 'tribute', which he argued reflected an exploitative attitude toward the peasantry (a point he made at the November 1928 TsK plenum) and which he warned could lead to 'excessive overtaxation'.[46] In response to this point at the Politburo session held the same day, Stalin pointed out that Bukharin and his associates did not reject the policy, but were uncomfortable with the word 'tribute'. Stalin proceeded to cite numerous quotations from Lenin in which he used the term repeatedly to refer to government economic relations with the working class. Stalin asked the Politburo, if Lenin could use this term for workers, why could it not be used in a figurative sense for peasants, as 'something like tribute', along with all the other terms in use, like scissors, supertax, or additional tax? At the same time, Stalin recognised that Bukharin's criticism reflected his distaste for and (in Stalin's view) his inability to understand the regime's policy. Stalin said, '[The policies] are not understandable to him and it seems to him, that we are exploiting the peasants.' Stalin compared Bukharin's criticisms to those of Miliukov before the revolution.[47]

Of course, the dispute between the Stalin group and the Right opposition cannot be reduced to this issue. My aim here is to show that Bukharin's attack on Stalin about 'tribute', which has found its way into many scholarly works, did not reflect a difference over policy. The claims in the exploitation argument, therefore – that Stalin's reference to 'something like tribute' reflected only Stalin's viewpoint, that it represented a change in policy from NEP, and that his shift to this allegedly new policy was part of his decision to collectivise agriculture – are all incorrect. The policy of extracting 'something like tribute' in the form

of unequal prices was the NEP policy, not a new policy in 1928, and was already in effect before the regime began planning collectivisation. Collectivisation involved not the reinforcement or even perpetuation of this policy, but rather the policy goal of its reversal.

Stalin and collectivisation

The Soviet leadership's decision to collectivise agriculture had many roots, including the dreams of the Russian Populists and the convictions of Marx, Engels, and Lenin regarding the superiority of collective labour. The most immediate considerations, however, were, on the one hand, the slow growth of Soviet peasant agriculture and, on the other, the prospect that collective and state farms could allow modern mechanised farming based on the US model. Studies of kolkhozy conducted in the mid-1920s provided clear evidence of their higher productivity, and stimulated party and state decisions allocating resources to them and establishing new government administrative agencies to aid kolkhozy in 1925–27.[48] By the fifteenth Party Congress, the party resolved to set collectivisation as the new first-priority goal. In his speech to the Congress, Stalin contrasted the Soviet Union's rapid industrial growth and the slow development of agriculture with more rapid agricultural growth in the United States.[49] He attributed the USSR's agricultural problems to Soviet agriculture's technical backwardness, low cultural level, and the scattered, fragmented pattern of cultivation in the villages. He argued that the solution was not to slow industrial development in the Soviet Union, but to consolidate Soviet peasant farms into larger units farmed in common on the basis of new technology. He stated that this transformation be accomplished not by pressure, but by the persuasive power of mechanisation and scientific agriculture. However, he asserted that all the government's previous work in the countryside served only as a preparation for a shift to collective cultivation.

Stalin's statement at the Congress indicated a change in his views, like that of other Soviet leaders under the influence of the new information about the collective farms and the new measures the regime had initiated to support them. Stalin's statements during the grain crisis that followed the fifteenth Party Congress, however, indicated a much stronger commitment to collectivisation. According to the exploitation argument, the grain crisis triggered Stalin's decision to undertake collectivisation by coercive means because the collectives promised to facilitate grain procurement, but his statements on this point during his procurement-oriented trip to Siberia were not limited to that argument.

In his reproaches to Siberian officials, he blamed the procurement difficulties first of all on officials' mismanagement of the procurement campaign, which allowed the kulaks to 'disorganise the market' by raising grain prices.[50] He argued that such 'sabotage' would recur as long as there were kulaks, and he saw collective and state farms as the necessary means to obtain regular procurements because they produced large marketable surpluses. He went beyond this immediate concern for grain procurements, however, to argue for broader collectivisation as a basis of development:

> The expansion of collective and state farms to relegate kulaks to the background is not all. Our country cannot live with an eye only to today's needs. We must also give thought to the future, to the prospects for the development of our agriculture and, lastly, to the fate of socialism in our country. The grain problem is part of the agricultural problem, and the agricultural problem is an integral part of the problem of building socialism in our country. The partial collectivisation of agriculture of which I have just spoken will be sufficient to keep the working class and the Red Army more or less tolerably supplied with grain, but it will be altogether insufficient for: a) providing a firm basis for a fully adequate supply of food to the whole country while ensuring the necessary food reserves in the hands of the state, and b) securing the victory of socialist construction in the countryside, in agriculture. . . . Hence, for the consolidation of the Soviet system and for the victory of socialist construction in our country, the socialisation of industry alone is quite insufficient. What is required for that is to pass from the socialisation of industry to the socialisation of the whole of agriculture. . . . We must realise that we can no longer make progress on the basis of small individual peasant farms, that what we need in agriculture is large farms capable of employing machines and producing the maximum marketable surpluses.[51]

Stalin, then, interpreted the grain crisis not simply or even mainly as a problem of officials' incompetence in dealing with peasants to purchase grain or 'kulak' machinations in concealing it and deceiving procurement agents. In his view, the crisis was indicative of the larger and more fundamental problem of the backwardness and low productivity of traditional peasant agriculture. This is, of course, an issue of debate even in the recent literature, as evident in the work of Harrison, Lewin, and other more recent scholars. In discussing this statement, Lewin,

for example, asserts that Stalin 'felt' he had to offer local officials some long-term policy, which seems to dismiss Stalin's statement as a rationalisation.[52] Such an interpretation not only requires us to believe that Lewin somehow was privy to Stalin's emotions, but also requires us to believe that Stalin in early 1928 needed to ingratiate himself with the same officials whom he was upbraiding for their insufficiently effective procurement work. Yet if we consider Stalin's statement in January 1928 in the context of his experiences in dealing with similar crises, and his statements about them, during 1917, the Civil War, the 1921 famine, and the 1924 famine, his viewpoint was a logical and defensible position and consistent with views he and his associates had expressed for years. By January 1928, Stalin had witnessed three substantial famine crises that had affected millions of people, two of which had lasted for years and caused significant mortality. Low productivity of peasant farming, and its extreme vulnerability to natural disasters had played an important role in all of these crises.

The grain crisis and agricultural productivity

According to the exploitation argument, the grain crisis was not primarily a problem of production but of prices and planning. Most studies admit that the 1927 harvest was slightly smaller than that of 1926, but the latter was so large that a slight decline could not have caused the crisis. Instead, state procurement agencies' decisions to retain low grain prices relative to those of other farm produce, insufficient and unduly low-priced consumer goods, and fears of an impending war derived from statements by Stalin and others, all combined to persuade peasants to withhold or 'hoard' their grain stocks rather than sell, creating shortages in the towns.[53]

In fact, this interpretation underplays the significance of a decrease in production and shortages in the crisis, and leads to a misleading explanation of the decision to undertake collectivisation. First, the harvest data on which all of these arguments rely are more than uncertain: they are not even harvest data.[54] The overall 'harvest' statistics for the 1920s, which were matters of considerable dispute, derived (with few exceptions) from qualitative projections gathered by statistical officials from a sample of peasants before they completed their harvest work. Officials asked peasants to evaluate their harvests on a scale of one to five and then processed this 'data' to derive a percentage of an average, which they then multiplied by a figure they considered to be a pre-revolutionary average harvest. They would also routinely raise

their estimates slightly because they thought that the peasants understated their production to reduce their taxes. At a national meeting in 1929, however, statisticians decided that the pre-revolutionary reference number for an average harvest was in fact invalid, thus discrediting all of their previous estimates. Consequently, we do not know how much grain Soviet peasants actually produced. The official estimates probably overestimate the total.

One of the most detailed studies of any harvest, Welker's detailed study of the 1927 harvest using the (probably inflated) official data, concludes that the crop failure and harvest decline was not a minor factor but reduced peasants' reserves to subsistence levels or less. Welker argues, on the basis of a careful study of peasants' grain utilisation and available data on production in several regions of the Soviet Union, that they were not holding back surpluses to get higher prices in 1927, but were retaining what was essentially the bare minimum necessary for survival.[55]

Several Soviet leaders also saw the crisis as the result of shortage rather than, or more than, prices. According to documents found by Reiman, at the end of January 1928 the head of VSNKh, V. V. Kuibyshev, reported to the Politburo that the situation was disastrous and the country could not get out of it on its own resources. This viewpoint found support in a Sovnarkom resolution of February, which urgently ordered Soviet diplomats to gather all relevant information on the country's international standing in order to determine the possibility of obtaining foreign aid even at the cost of concessions.[56] Ultimately the Soviet Union did import food in 1928. Rykov explained at the November 1928 plenum that this was necessary to cover the gap between the old and new harvests, because production of food grains in 1928 was some 3.5 million tons less than in 1927, which again is an acknowledgement of a shortage.[57] The most explicit rejection of this 'hoarding' conception came from Mikhail Kalinin at the July 1928 Central Committee plenum, in his discussion of Stalin's proposal to build state farms:

> Will anyone, even one person, say that there is enough grain? . . . All these conversations, that the kulak concealed grain, that there is grain, but he does not give it up – these are conversations, only conversations, because *we know how* to take grain from the kulak. To teach Kaganovich or Chubar' how to take grain – absurd. *They know how* to take. . . . We need to pose the question directly: if the kulak had a lot of grain, we would possess it. . . . At the basis of this lies a shortage of productivity, a shortage of grain, and this shortage of grain pushes us to the organisation of sovkhozy.[58]

Several other officials shared this type of interpretation of the grain crisis and the general problem of Soviet agriculture. The issue had already come up at the April 1928 plenum. Miliutin, head of the Central Statistical Administration, cited statistics showing that peasants had larger reserves in early 1928, during the application of extraordinary measures, than in the same period in 1927. But Iakovlev, head of the NK RKI, an agency charged with verifying the work of other government branches, argued that the regime in the countryside worked as if it were in a 'dark forest'. Despite Miliutin's statistics he insisted and presented evidence indicating that government agencies had very little reliable information about grain reserves in the villages. Following him, Kubiak, then RSFSR agriculture commissar, disputed Miliutin's claims for the harvest because in many regions the extraordinary measures procured grain from old reserves. He described Miliutin's figures as 'disproved by life', and he also anticipated Kalinin's argument that if there had been substantial reserves, the extraordinary measures would have found them.[59] Sokolnikov, vice-chairman of Gosplan, in a speech at the July 1928 plenum, argued that Soviet grain production was 5 per cent below the pre-war level (admitting that his statistics from TsSU were flawed and the number could be even lower), but the population was 10 per cent greater than before the war, and asked 'on what basis can we make ends meet?'[60]

Stalin's views on the causes of the crisis are contradictory. He did not object to Kubiak's statement or to Kalinin's statement at the plenums, and he agreed with Sokolnikov. In his speech 'On the Grain Front' in May 1928, Stalin made a rather inconsistent argument.[61] On the one hand, he cited data showing that overall grain production in the Soviet Union had reached pre-war levels. He also cited data showing that the government had procured during 1925–28 steadily more grain every year. Yet he also quoted the data prepared by Nemchinov showing that grain marketings had decreased relative to pre-war years, which seems incompatible with the evidence of increasing procurements. And he blamed the whole situation on the small-farm structure of Soviet agriculture, which did not allow for large market production.

Clearly many party leaders, including apparently Stalin, believed that the grain crisis was not simply or even primarily a problem of grain marketing and prices, but rather first of all one of production, that the country faced a shortage that reminded at least some of the crises in 1921 and 1924. It was this awareness, not only of the current situation but the memory of repeated crises in the past few years, that lay behind

not only the pressure on the kulak but also the efforts to obtain food from abroad and, most important, to undertake the transformation of agriculture.

The sovkhoz project

The first concrete policy step in the direction of collectivisation was the sovkhoz project, which Stalin proposed at a Politburo meeting on 23 April 1928, in response to the grain crisis. The proposal envisaged establishing a network of some dozens of large state farms mostly in what would later be called the 'virgin lands' of southern Siberia, northern Kazakhstan, and open areas in the Volga, North Caucasus, Ukraine, and a few other places where the sovkhozy would not impinge on peasant lands.[62] The sovkhozy were to be modelled on the large mechanised farm of Thomas D. Campbell, Jr. in Montana.

Stalin's statements about this project indicate better than most other sources his intentions in advocating collectivisation. He expressed his attitude in a speech published in incomplete form in his works, but new archival sources now allow us to place his statement in the context of the debate that took place at the plenum about his proposal. Kalinin presented the sovkhoz project to the July 1928 plenum. He stated that when Stalin proposed the project, the Politburo discussed it once and immediately approved it. This was an unusually rapid decision for such a large project – the allocation for the project of more than 300 million rubles substantially exceeded allocations for the Dneprostroi dam, for which discussions had been conducted for many years. In fact, Kalinin pointed out, the project had been discussed indirectly for some time as part of the problem of collectivisation and raising agricultural productivity, so that the Politburo was already psychologically prepared for it.[63] As we have seen, the leadership had already been discussing collective and state farms since at least 1925, had committed themselves to collectivisation in principle at the fifteenth Party Congress in December 1927, and Stalin had decided during January 1928 that socialist agriculture needed to be accelerated. Stalin, therefore, must have proposed the sovkhoz project as a kind of test project for collectivisation, and he and the other leaders, like Kalinin, saw the project as part of the process of collectivisation.

Kalinin defended the project on the basis of his argument that the country faced a shortage of grain, and that this programme would alleviate that shortage until more sovkhozy and kolkhozy could be built. Yet he conceived of the sovkhozy in this project as playing only a

contributory role in food supply: he said it would be 'absurd to shift the centre of weight of supply for the state to the sovkhozy', and that the main source of supply for the next five to six years would remain individual peasant farms until demand would become too large for them. Stalin interrupted Kalinin twice on these points to agree with him.[64] In this test project, therefore, the Soviet leadership attempted to organise large-scale socialist farming in a manner that would not coerce or even interfere with peasant farming, but would function as a supplement. They did not discuss what would happen after that five- to six-year period; they just seemed to hope that the socialist sector would grow fast enough to make up for the inevitable lag in peasant output.

Stalin expressed his views of the project in response to the intense debate that this proposal inspired. Antselovich, the head of the union of agricultural and timber workers and an advocate of sovkhozy, was very sceptical of the plan's emphasis on extensive farming in arid regions, and urged that investment instead be used for existing sovkhozy. Khataevich, party secretary of the Middle Volga region, also recommended this, in part because he anticipated delays and other problems in the project's implementation. The main critic, however, was Osinskii, a respected statistician and economist with wide experience in agricultural and food supply administration and at the time the head of the TsSU. Osinskii attacked the project as illiterate in agronomic terms, reasserting Antselovich's criticisms, and in economic terms. Osinskii described how, during a recent trip to the United States, he tried to find two famous 'bonanza' farms in the Midwest, those of Dalrymple and Amenia Sharon, and instead found that (according to him) both farms had disappeared because of soil exhaustion and economic considerations. He then criticised the Campbell farm, based on discussions with some local farmers; he admitted that he did not visit it. He said that 'Campbell, besides, is an advertiser or his enterprise is an advertising [reklamnyi] enterprise for showing tractors and agriculture machines of corresponding factories. He also acquires these cheaply. That's the situation with the wheat factory of Campbell.'[65] Osinskii thus dismissed it as a fraud and not a model of advanced farming. Instead he recommended as models certain intensive German farms connected to breweries and other enterprises, of the sort that the German Marxist Kautsky had described.

In response, Ivanov, a party leader in the North Caucasus, argued that Osinskii's report on the disappearance of the earlier large farms reflected capitalist conditions that would not apply in the Soviet case, and argued that the general economic consolidation from the new sovkhozy would

compensate for its higher cost. To this Rykov interjected: 'Correct.'[66] Muralov, vice-commissar of agriculture of the RSFSR, directly responded to Osinskii's criticism of extensive farming by citing Osinskii's own book on US agriculture, which documented that the large US farms had been growing grain continuously for decades, thereby discrediting Osinskii's criticism of extensive farming. Osinskii, he said, did not know his own book. Muralov also cited the leading Soviet agronomic specialist on drought, N. M. Tulaikov, who argued on the basis of experimental evidence that grain could be grown for seven years straight in the region before soil exhaustion concerns would become important.[67]

It was in this context that Stalin decided to participate in the discussion and respond to Osinskii. In his speech he defended the sovkhoz project and also the US model he was relying on. First he cited at length from the article by Tulaikov that described the Campbell farm, its enormous size of some 95,000 acres, complete mechanisation of production, and vast productivity. He then argued, like Ivanov had, that the capitalist conditions of private property and rent did not exist in the Soviet Union, so that under Soviet conditions large grain farms 'do not need at all for their development either maximum profit, or average profit, but can limit themselves to minimum profit (and sometimes manage without any profit), which along with the absence of absolute land rent creates exceptionally favourable conditions for the development of large grain farms'. Finally, he argued that new sovkhozy, along with the older ones and the kolkhozy, could serve as economic support points in the villages, which would allow increased grain supplies and thereby enable it to avoid the use of the extraordinary measures.[68]

Tulaikov, who was a much more knowledgeable and competent specialist on agriculture than Osinskii, was in fact correct in his report, and Osinskii's statements at the plenum about large US farms were seriously wrong.[69] There were many more large farms than the three he tried to find. The Amenia Sharon farm was in fact dissolved in the 1920s because of disputes among the owners, but it was well organised and profitable during its 42-year existence. The Dalrymple farm had temporarily been divided among other farmers during the First World War because of the profit offered by high land prices, but with the farm price collapse after the war many of the new owners returned their lands to the Dalrymple family. By the 1930s the farm again had 30,000 acres and was making a profit, and it was still operating in the 1970s.[70] As regards Campbell, while he certainly advertised his success, it was quite real. Thomas D. Campbell, Jr., was an extremely competent individual, who

earned a PhD in Engineering and a Law degree, operated a 4000-acre farm while in college, and overcame initial obstacles of drought, crop failure, and debt to turn his massive farm in the early 1920s into an enormous success based on exclusively mechanised grain production. In 1924 he produced a million-dollar wheat crop, and his farm continued to be large and productive well after his death in 1966. His farm was well known as the largest and most productive grain farm in the world; his work on it led several foreign countries in addition to the Soviet Union to invite him as a consultant on farm modernisation.[71]

Tulaikov, and thus Stalin, were right about Campbell in another sense: his highly mechanised, large-scale farming set a precedent followed by US farmers and those in many other countries. Whatever we may think about the environmental or economic effects of large farming, large-scale mechanised 'factory' farming became the model of modernity in agriculture, at least for grain and other crops and many forms of livestock production as well. The self-sufficient diverse farms idealised by Kautsky and later Osinskii were certainly important accomplishments for the nineteenth-century, but because they used limited mechanisation and because they were so self-sufficient, they did not fit into the increasingly specialised pattern of inputs, production, and processing that came to characterise the modern food system.[72]

The sovkhoz project had the goal within the next few years of producing 100 million puds (about 1.6 million tons) of marketed grain, using the most modern farming technology available at the time, and the new sovkhozy were not to impinge on peasant lands. The programme was in fact implemented in this way, under the new agency 'Zernotrest', and did produce approximately 200 million puds by the beginning of 1931, of which about 150 million puds were marketable grain and the rest were seed.[73] The Soviet Government even brought Campbell to the Soviet Union twice, in January 1929 to meet Stalin and advise Zernotrest, and in June 1930 to observe large sovkhozy in the North Caucasus and Ukraine; he acknowledged many of their difficulties but was impressed by the scale and modernising effort of the farms and their workers.[74]

Clearly, the regime's commitment to modernisation in the sovkhoz project was not fraudulent and its objective was not to extract grain from peasants without regard to increasing production. Stalin indicated this in emphasising that the sovkhozy would not need to make much if any profit initially; since these were state farms, he was saying that the regime would invest in them without initially expecting a significant return except food. The project thus did not aim to exploit the countryside, but to spend what the leadership thought was necessary in order

to create a modern agricultural infrastructure that would benefit the country in the long term. The sovkhoz project, therefore, has to be seen as purely developmental in orientation, and reflected the same kind of attitude toward agricultural investment that Nove identified in the Brezhnev years.[75]

The rationale for collective agriculture

The move from the sovkhoz project to the mass collectivisation of the Soviet peasants was an enormous step in policy but not in principle. Stalin's speech 'The Year of the Great Turn', of 3 November 1929, which was one of the main indicators of the decision to collectivise, restated all of the arguments that he and those who supported the sovkhoz project had been proposing for years, but applied them to the mass of the peasantry. In the speech, Stalin listed as a major accomplishment of the year the shift from small peasant farming to large-scale advanced collective agriculture, which he described in terms of Machine-Tractor Stations (MTS), kolkhozy, and the large-scale grain sovkhozy.[76] He thus interpreted the sovkhoz project as part, even the epitome, of the collectivisation process. Stalin then restated his argument that the socialist system was more amenable to large-scale farms because socialist farms would not need to pay rent, would receive state financing, and would not need to make a profit initially.[77] In his notorious speech of 27 December 1929, in which he announced the policy of the liquidation of the kulaks as a class, Stalin referred again to his arguments about the advantages of large-scale farms and explicitly stated that these same advantages applied to the new collective farms, both those with advanced machinery and even those which could only pool their old equipment, because even that allowed expansion of sowings.[78]

By connecting collectivisation to the sovkhoz project begun a year before, and by attributing to kolkhozy the same basic advantages of state farms, Stalin indicated that he and other leaders conceived of collectivisation as an area of developing infrastructure, a sector in which the state would invest for the long term rather than for immediate returns. Of course the leadership wanted increased marketed food output, but they expected it because sovkhozy and kolkhozy during NEP had had higher yields than peasants, and because collectivisation like the sovkhoz project would increase cropland and, in their view, guarantee much more food production. Stalin stated, however, that collectivisation, by increasing farm productivity and production, would enable the regime to eliminate the scissors between town and country, in other words

eliminate the 'something like tribute', the exploitation, which the leadership had uncomfortably acknowledged and disputed during NEP.[79]

These public statements obviously reflected some degree of exaggeration, but they also reflected Stalin's optimism based on several reports about collectivisation in certain model regions of 'wholesale' [sploshnoi] collectivisation. We will return to this optimism below, but first we should consider how party leaders saw collectivisation in the closed forum of the November 1929 plenum. For the discussion of the collectivisation project at the plenum actually reflected a diversity of views, with some speakers clearly more optimistic about collectivisation than others. Stalin in particular tried to tone down optimism at the plenum by emphasising that the kolkhoz was still not socialism, but only the beginning of the gradual transformation of the peasantry in the spirit of socialism.[80] Several speakers, like Kaminskii, the head of Kolkhoztsentr, who made the initial report on collectivisation, and Andreev, the North Caucasus party secretary, agreed with Stalin's claim that the middle peasant had 'turned toward' the kolkhoz, and cited evidence to support it. Kaminskii presented tables with data on kolkhoz crop sowings, Andreev reported 25–30 per cent collectivisation in the North Caucasus.[81] Klimenko, the head of Traktorotsentr, the agency in charge of the MTS system, had the most extreme and unrealistic expectations: 60 per cent increases in both yields and sowings, massive increases in fodder production because tractors would allow a drop in the number of horses and thereby free land for fodder for other animals, and plans to train 800,000 technicians for the MTS.[82]

On the other hand, speakers discussed most of the fundamental problems that would plague the collective farm system in the following years: labour organisation, remuneration and incentives, shortages of parts for equipment, peasants' opposition and resistance, and environmental disasters. Antselovich in particular discussed problems of kolkhozy obtaining a third or more of their labour by hiring batraks on terms worse than the kulaks offered, misappropriating investment funds to build houses, and concealing grain from procurements with false grain balances.[83]

In general, however, speakers did not emphasise or even discuss marketing and procurement issues. Kaminskii argued that kolkhozy would be market producers, not 'consumer farms', because they had higher yields and used more modern methods, that is, that collectivisation was development. He did not say that they were market producers because procurement brigades could take more from kolkhozy more easily than from individual peasants, that is, that they facilitated

exploitation, as advocates of the exploitation argument might assert. As noted above, Kalinin made a statement like that about the extraordinary measures. It would have been possible for Kaminskii to make an exploitation argument, but the evidence shows that he did not.[84]

The party leaders at the plenum thus focused on the kolkhoz system as a new and (at least to most of them) promising system of farm production, and addressed its problems in operation and management. Most of them shared to some degree the optimism about collectivisation that Stalin expressed in his Great Turn speech, but many of them also repeated his statement at the plenum that collectivisation would only begin the transformation of the peasantry. This was of course a substantial understatement, but it indicated that these leaders saw collectivisation as the beginning of arduous work, the crucial first step in a long process of technical and human transformation and modernisation. None of them expressed a sense of relief that 'now we will be able to extract what we want from those peasants without having to deal with them or worry about their farms'.

The reports that the mass of peasants had already 'turned toward the kolkhoz' were highly problematic because those results took place in a context of increasing coercion, which local personnel applied against 'kulaks' and also frequently used to induce peasants to join kolkhozy, and because these reports, along with many other factors, motivated local and regional officials to use coercion and violence in collectivisation. Most if not all officials knew this from numerous OGPU reports, but they also thought that the kolkhoz would be much better for the peasants than traditional farming, based on statements by peasants to this effect and evidence of expanded sowings, greater output, and reduced workloads. I believe that they calculated that only a limited amount of coercion would be necessary until the peasants understood the advantages of the kolkhoz. Yet the regime also supported collectivisation with substantial and increasing investments in agriculture. Table 6.1 presents published data which shows massive increases in Soviet budgetary expenditure on agriculture; these data are moreover understated because some industrial investment, like tractor factories, actually was used for agriculture. There are some disputes over the exact figures, and of course sometimes investment was not used as designated, but all other sources also indicate significant increases in Soviet agricultural spending, including investment, from the late 1920s, initially in both the peasant and socialised sectors, and then from 1930 much more in the socialised sector.[85]

Table 6.1 Soviet state budget expenditure on industry, agriculture, and total, 1928/29–1941 (million current rubles and per cent of total)

Investment sector	**amt.**	**%**	**amt.**	**%**	**amt.**	**%**	**amt.**	**%**	**amt.**	**%**
	1928–29		**1929–30**		**1930 Special Quarter**		**1931**		**1932**	
Industry	1,248	14.2	2,624	19.7	1,030	20.4	8,117	32.4	13,300	35.0
Agriculture	714	8.1	1,353	10.1	614	12.2	2,914	11.6	3,944	10.3
Total	8,784	100	6,654	100	2,727	100	15,977	100	24,784	100
	1933		**1934**		**1935**		**1936**		**1937**	
Industry	13,701	24.7	13,687	24.7	16,332	22.2	14,929	16.1	16,743	15.8
Agriculture	4,134	9.8	6,409	11.6	7,682	10.4	9,158	9.9	9,506	8.9
Total	24,047	100	31,241	100	73,572	100	92,480	100	106,238	100
	1938		**1939**		**1940**		**1941**			
Industry	23,616.5	19.0	31,116	20.3	28,576	16.4	39,181	18.1		
Agriculture	11,409	9.2	13,334	8.7	12,204	7.0	13,455	6.3		
Total	124,039	100	153,299	100	174,350	100	216,052	100		

Source: R. W. Davies, *The Development of the Soviet Budgetary System* (Cambridge, 1958) p. 296. The 1930 special quarter refers to the last three months of 1930 after which the Soviet budgeting system shifted to a calendar year basis.

These figures again show that in collectivisation, just as in the sovkhoz project, the regime's aim was agricultural development, and not extraction at the expense of agriculture for the exclusive benefit of industry. These data also demonstrate that the statements by Stalin and other officials advocating the sovkhoz project and collectivisation in order to develop agriculture were not propaganda lies to conceal brutal exploitation, because they did not just talk about investment but actually allocated and spent increasing amounts of funds on agriculture. When Soviet officials thought of sovkhozy and kolkhozy and collectivisation, they did not think of exploiting the peasants but of the budget, of balancing priorities for investment.

Stalin's optimism (and of course not only his) about the project had a certain fanatical quality: with collectivisation it must have seemed to him that the Soviet government was actually solving at long last the old, cursed 'peasant question'. In his public statements and even at the plenum he clearly anticipated that the poor peasants, who in his view were oppressed by their kulak neighbours, would want to farm in a new, modern way, free of their former oppressors. He clearly had faith that the application of American technology and farm organisation would easily overcome any obstacles.

Of course, it did not quite work that way. Endless unanticipated problems and complications, not only in the farms but also in the industrial and trade sectors over which the agricultural personnel had no control, peasants' actions, which were not always resistance but which often had a disruptive effect, and natural disasters whose effects a modern farming system was supposed to mitigate, combined to disrupt the operation of the new system, especially in its first few years. The mild famine conditions of 1928–29 became extremely severe by 1932, when Stalin complained to the writer Sholokhov, with whom he engaged in a long correspondence about the difficulties of the kolkhoz near his home, that 'the esteemed peasants' in his farm and others were engaged in a strike that threatened to leave the workers without bread.[86] This famous quote, of course, was an over-reaction, because the famine of 1931–33 was not caused by a peasant strike. It does suggest, however, that by this time Stalin's enthusiasm for collectivisation, his patient attitude toward the peasants expressed in his earlier writings, and his hopes for their transformation had been somewhat weakened by disillusionment and been transformed in part into a sense of being in bitter, dogged combat with an opponent who would yield only to the strongest resistance and at great cost to the Soviet Union.[87]

Conclusion

Nonetheless, Stalin still consistently rejected the exploitation argument. In July 1934 he wrote a letter to the Politburo in which he criticised an article published by Bukharin earlier that year that reasserted the exploitation argument. Stalin wrote: 'One should not make even a remote allusion to the point that our heavy industry developed allegedly by means of some or partial devouring of light industry and agriculture. One should not, because this does not correspond to reality, [and] it smacks of slander and denigrates party policy.'[88] Some 15 years after this crisis, during the Second World War, Churchill asked Stalin about collectivisation, and in that famous but often ill-interpreted discussion Stalin indicated that his intentions were those of development:[89]

> 'Tell me,' I [Churchill] asked, 'have the stresses of this war been as bad to you personally as carrying through the policy of the Collective Farms?'
> This subject immediately aroused the Marshall.
> 'Oh, no,' he said, 'the Collective Farm policy was a terrible struggle.'
> 'I thought you would have found it bad,' said I, 'because you were not dealing with a few score thousands of aristocrats or big landowners, but with millions of small men.'
> 'Ten millions,' he said, holding up his hands. 'It was fearful. Four years it lasted. It was absolutely necessary for Russia, if we were to avoid periodic famines, to plough the land with tractors. We must mechanise our agriculture. When we gave tractors to the peasants they were all spoiled in a few months. Only Collective Farms with workshops could handle tractors. We took the greatest trouble to explain it to the peasants. It was no use arguing with them. After you have said all you can to a peasant he says he must go home and consult his wife, and he must consult his herder.' This last was a new expression to me in this connection.
> 'After he has talked it over with them he always answers that he does not want the Collective Farm and he would rather do without the tractors.'
> 'These were what you call Kulaks?'
> 'Yes,' he said, but he did not repeat the word. After a pause, 'It was all very bad and difficult – but necessary.'
> 'What happened?' I asked.
> 'Oh, well,' he said, 'many of them agreed to come in with us. Some of them were given land of their own to cultivate in the province of

> Tomsk or the province of Irkutsk or farther north, but the great bulk of them were very unpopular and were wiped out by their labourers.' There was a considerable pause. Then, 'Not only have we vastly increased the food supply, but we have improved the quality of the grain beyond all measure. All kinds of grain used to be grown. Now no one is allowed to sow any but the standard Soviet grain from one end of our country to the other. If they do they are severely dealt with. This means another large increase in the food supply.'

This is of course a highly problematic quotation. Stalin knew perfectly well what happened to the kulaks, and what he said was extremely incomplete and misleading; the statement about peasants consulting their wives might be an echo of the 'bab'e bunty' of early 1930. The conversation took place after midnight and so Churchill's memory when he wrote, and Stalin's memory and the translator's accuracy at the time, may all have suffered; the 'herders' whom the peasants consulted may have been an error of the translator or of Churchill's or Stalin's memory. Yet from this discussion we can see two characteristics of Stalin's views of agriculture that date back many years before. First, we see again Stalin's attempts to understand the peasants' viewpoint, in his homespun-style description of the peasant consulting his wife, being unwilling to have tractors, and so forth. His attitude here was much more negative than in his early articles, and what he said may have reflected a certain degree of disillusionment after the protests of early 1930 and the events of the famine, and perhaps this is the source of Khrushchev's comment cited at the beginning of this chapter. On the other hand, Stalin's statements in the discussion have a constant theme: the Soviet Union needed collective agriculture in order to mechanise so that the country could produce enough food and avoid repeated famines. And in this discussion Stalin said nothing about extracting grain from the countryside.[90] This would suggest that by this time Stalin no longer thought of agriculture as a source of 'something like tribute', but instead saw it as an integral and crucial part of the Soviet industrial economy.

Finally, interpreting collectivisation as development, in particular the extremely idealistic application of the most advanced American technology and methods to modernise backward Soviet Russia, makes more sense and is more compatible with the idealistic, utopian character of the rest of the five-year plan goals and ideals. Stalin's efforts to think beyond the immediate needs, his long-term conceptions of a socialist economy based on a socialist agriculture, his recognition of the potential of the US factory farm, and the process by which he moved the Soviet leadership

and the country toward collectivisation via the sovkhoz project, reflected both his intellectual strengths and limitations. The tragedy of collectivisation derived from the fact that in certain ways it was rational, because it employed modern technology and farming methods that had proven themselves in similar environmental conditions, and because it seemed clearly to have the potential to solve the country's most serious economic problem.

Notes

1 On this, see M. B. Tauger, *Natural Disaster and Human Action in the Soviet Famine of 1931–1933* (Pittsburgh: Carl Beck Papers in Russian and East European Studies, no. 1506, 2001); and R. W. Davies and S. G. Wheatcroft, *The Years of Hunger: Soviet Agriculture, 1931–1933* (New York, 2004).

2 For this moderately positive evaluation of Soviet agriculture, see for example *U.S. Agriculture in a Global Economy*; 1985 Yearbook of Agriculture (Washington, DC, 1985), pp. 100–6.

3 R. Conquest, *Harvest of Sorrow* (Oxford, 1986), p. 20. Similar, even cruder, and even less supported descriptions of Stalin's views and policies are found in the recent biography by S. Sebag-Montefiore, *Stalin: The Court of the Red Tsar* (New York, 2004).

4 A. Erlich, 'Stalin's Views on Economic Development', in E. J. Simmons (ed.), *Continuity and Change in Russian and Soviet Thought* (Cambridge, MA., 1955); D. Volkogonov, *Stalin: Triumph and Tragedy* (New York, 1991), p. 170; D. Moon, *The Russian Peasant, 1600–1930* (London and New York, 1999), p. 358. See also L. Viola, *The Best Sons of the Fatherland* (Oxford, 1986), p. 25; S. Fitzpatrick, *Stalin's Peasants* (Oxford, 1994), pp. 37–38.

5 Erlich, 'Stalin's views', p. 94.

6 Radzinsky even attributes Preobrazhenskii's views explicitly to Stalin without indicating that they originated with Preobrazhenskii and without giving any indication where he found these views in Stalin's writings or statements; E. Radzinskii, *Stalin* (New York, 1996), p. 235.

7 I. Arnon, *Modernization of Agriculture in Developing Countries: Resources, Potentials, and Problems* (New York, 1981), p. 451.

8 J. Millar, 'Mass Collectivization and the Contribution of Soviet Agriculture to the First Five-Year Plan', *Slavic Review*, 33 (1974), pp. 750–66; M. Ellman, 'Did the Agricultural Surplus Provide the Resources for the Increase in Investment in the USSR during the First Five Year Plan?', *Economic Journal* (December 1975).

9 M. Harrison, 'Why did NEP Fail?', *Economics of Planning*, 16(2) (1980), pp. 57–67.

10 E. H. Carr, 'Revolution from Above: Some Notes on the Decision to Collectivize Soviet Agriculture', in K. H. Wolff and B. Moore, Jr. (eds), *The Critical Spirit* (Boston, MA, 1967), esp. p. 323; M. Lewin, 'The Immediate Background of Soviet Collectivization', in M. Lewin, *The Making of the Soviet System* (New York, 1985), pp. 92–9; quoted at p. 91, see also pp. 99, 103.

11 J. D. Bergamini, 'Stalin and the Collective Farm', in Simmons (ed.), *Continuity and Change*, pp. 225–7.
12 I. Deutscher, *Stalin: A Political Biography* (Oxford, 1967), p. 322.
13 These include R. Conquest, *Harvest of Sorrow*; *Investigation of the Ukrainian Famine*, (Washington, D.C., 1988); A. Graziosi, *The Great Soviet Peasant War* (Cambridge, 1995).
14 Conquest, for example, cites one sentence second-hand from a Ukrainian newspaper asserting that one aim of collectivisation in Ukraine was 'the destruction of Ukrainian nationalism's social base – the individual land-holdings'. *Harvest of Sorrow*, p. 219. This kind of argument is very problematic because it is by no means clear that Ukrainian peasants, who were mostly illiterate, were nationalist, at least in the sense of the nationalism of educated society. It is also problematic because this argument is not advanced in any of the archival sources to be discussed below.
15 See, for example, M. B. Tauger, 'The 1932 Harvest and the Famine of 1933', *Slavic Review*, 50(1) (Spring 1991); and *Natural Disaster and Human Action* at http://www.as.wvu.edu/history/Faculty/Tauger/; and Davies and Wheatcroft, *The Years of Hunger*.
16 On this, see Tauger, 'Soviet Peasants and Collectivization: Resistance and Adaptation', *Journal of Peasant Studies*, 31(3–4) (April–July, 2004); and Davies and Wheatcroft, *Years of Hunger*, chs 6–7.
17 Stalin, *Sochineniia*, vol. 1, pp. 222–3.
18 Stalin, *Sochineniia*, vol. 3, pp. 34–5.
19 Stalin, *Sochineniia*, vol. 3, pp. 331–4.
20 Stalin, *Sochineniia*, vol. 4, pp. 45–8.
21 Stalin, *Sochineniia*, vol. 6, pp. 135.
22 Stalin, *Sochineniia*, vol. 6, pp. 243–4.
23 Stalin, *Sochineniia*, vol. 6, pp. 316–17.
24 The Kronstadt revolt of early 1921 was an anti-Communist rebellion of sailors, mostly of peasant origin, on a Soviet island naval base in the Baltic. The Antonov rebellion took place at the same time in Tambov province in central Russia.
25 Stalin, *Sochineniia*, vol. 7, pp. 19–33, vol. 8, pp. 91–4.
26 The research of Chaianov's organisation-production school, with the evidence it exposed of cyclic social mobility among the peasantry, makes it extremely difficult to accept the existence of any classes in the urban sense among the peasantry; see T. Shanin, *The Awkward Class* (Oxford, 1972); and A. V. Chayanov, *The Theory of Peasant Economy* (Madison, 1986).
27 In 1925 he stated with little exaggeration that 99 out of 100 Communists were ready to strip the kulak; Stalin, *Sochineniia*, vol. 7, p. 337.
28 *Kak lomali NEP*, vol. 2, p. 461.
29 Stalin, *Sochineniia*, vol. 12, pp. 167–9. Lewin, among others, interpreted dekulakisation as a purely political decision, asserting that regime policies toward the kulaks reflected hesitation due to official uncertainty about 'the real social character of the kulak'; M. Lewin, 'Who was the Soviet Kulak?', in Lewin, *Making of the Soviet System*, p. 138. It seems clear from this plenum and other sources that Stalin, Kalinin, and most other leaders had no uncertainty about the kulaks' social character, and were just waiting for socialist agricultural enterprises to free them from dependence on the kulaks.

30 Stalin, *Sochineniia*, vol. 5, pp. 152–3; T. Martin, *The Affirmative Action Empire* (Ithaca, NY, 2001), pp. 395–6.
31 See his messages to Lenin from the Tsaritsyn area dealing with food supply in 1919: *Sochineniia*, vol. 4, pp. 116–21, 217–20, 425. For examples of Politburo decisions on the famine on which Stalin voted, see *'Antonovshchina:' Krest'ainskoe vosstanie v Tambovskoi gubernii v 1919–1921 gg*. (Tambov, 1994), pp. 109, 133.
32 No Western study examines this famine in any detail; E. H. Carr discusses it briefly in *Socialism in One Country* (New York, 1958), vol. 1, ch. 1. See also I. A. Poliakov, 'Nedorod 1924 g. I bor'ba s ego posledstviiami', *Istoriia* SSSR, (1) (1958), pp. 52–82; and the contemporary collection of articles: A. I. Rykov (ed.), *V bor'be s zasukhoi igolodom* (Moscow, 1925).
33 *Bednota* ran the article twice, on 25 and 26 July 1924. This article was not included in Stalin's published works.
34 Stalin, *Sochineniia*, vol. 7, p. 313.
35 Stalin's emphasis on panic-mongering was not simply a typical attack on the usual class enemies. The 1924 crop failure and famine had quite serious effects on peasants who had endured the extreme trauma of the 1920 and 1921 crop failures very recently, often had not fully recovered, and expected the worst again. The *New York Times* in September 1924 summarised a secret German diplomatic report they had obtained on the crisis, which asserted that 'Russia faces the worst famine in her history', described mass peasant flight from their homes, livestock deaths, cannibalism, and anticipated millions of deaths. *New York Times*, 7 Sept. 1924, 3. Although there were some deaths from the famine, this latter fear did not materialise, as the regime imported food and set up effective relief measures, which Stalin outlined in the article discussed.
36 See Rykov (ed.), *V bor'be s zasukhoi*, pp. 5–6.
37 Stalin, *Sochineniia*, vol. 7, pp. 315–16.
38 Stalin, *Sochineniia*, vol. 8, pp. 117–19.
39 L. T. Lih, O. V. Naumov and O. V. Khlevniuk (eds), *Stalin's Letters to Molotov, 1925–1936* (New Haven, CT, 1995), pp. 86–7, letter of 20 July 1925.
40 Lewin, 'Immediate Background', pp. 94–7 and *passim*.
41 Stalin, *Sochineniia*, vol. 8, pp. 120–29.
42 Millar, 'A Debate on Collectivization', in Ward, *Stalinist Dictatorship*, pp. 146–7.
43 *Kak lomali NEP*, vol. 2, p. 354.
44 *Kak lomali NEP*, vol. 2, p. 513.
45 *Kak lomali NEP*, vol. 4. p. 607.
46 *Kak lomali NEP*, vol. 4, p. 154, for the dispute at the TsK plenum.
47 *Kak lomali NEP*, vol. 4, pp. 661–2.
48 On higher productivity, see the documents in *Koooperativno-kolkhoznoe stroitel'stvo v SSSR 1923–27* (Moscow, 1991), especially the mid-1926 report by the agriculture cooperative council documenting much higher yields in collective farms, pp. 173–88; more generally, E. H. Carr and R. W. Davies, *Foundations of a Planned Economy*, pt. 1, vol. 1 (New York, 1969), ch. 6, especially pp. 158–60.

49 P. N. Sharova (ed.), *Kollektivizatsiia sel'skogo khoziaistva: Vazhneishie postanovleniia Kommunisticheskoi partii i Sovetskogopravitel'stva 1927–1935* (Moscow, 1957); Stalin, *Works*, vol. 10, pp. 310–13.
50 Stalin, *Sochineniia*, vol. 11, pp. 1–4; *Political Archives of Russia* (Nova Science Publishers, Commack, New Jersey), 2(4) (1991), pp. 213–24.
51 Stalin, *Sochineniia*, vol. 11, pp. 4–9.
52 Lewin, 'Immediate Background', pp. 98–9.
53 These components were openly discussed and published at the time, and such published sources served as the basis for subsequent scholarly discussions, such as R. W. Davies, *The Socialist Offensive* (Cambridge, 1980), pp. 39–41; M. Lewin, *Russian Peasants and Soviet Power* (New York, 1975), ch. 9; and the studies discussed at the beginning of this chapter.
54 The following derives from Tauger, *Statistical Falsification in the Soviet Union*, Donald Treadgold Papers (Seattle, 2001).
55 J. E. Welker, *Climate and the Soviet Grain Crisis of 1928* (Dissertation, University of Maryland, 1995), pp. 41–2.
56 M. Reiman, *The Birth of Stalinism* (Bloomington, 1987), pp. 47–8.
57 *Kak lomali NEP*, vol. 3, pp. 38–9.
58 *Kak lomali NEP*, vol. 2, p. 460, emphases in the original.
59 *Kak lomali NEP*, vol. 1, pp. 71–9.
60 *Kak lomali NEP*, vol. 2, pp. 266–7.
61 Stalin, *Sochineniia*, vol. 11, pp. 81–7.
62 I. E. Zelenin, 'Pervaia sovetskaia programma massovogo osvoeniia tselinnykh zemel', *Otechestvennaia istoriia*, (2) (1996), pp. 55–70; M. L. Bogdenko, *Stroitel'stvo zernovykh sovkhozov v 1928–1932* gg. (Moscow, 1958); Carr and Davies, *Foundations of a Planned Economy*, ch. 7.
63 *Kak lomali NEP*, vol. 2, pp. 453–4.
64 *Kak lomali NEP*, vol. 2, pp. 462–5.
65 *Kak lomali NEP*, vol. 2, pp. 471–6, 481–4.
66 *Kak lomali NEP*, vol. 2, p. 487. Zelenin, 'Pervaia sovetskaia programma', 61, misinterprets Ivanov's statements as critical of Stalin's proposal and supportive of Osinskii, which they were not.
67 *Kak lomali NEP*, vol. 2, pp. 503–4.
68 *Kak lomali NEP*, vol. 2, pp. 514–16.
69 Russian scholars who have written about this dispute – Zelenin in his 1996 article, 'Pervaia sovetskaia programma', and Danilov, Vatlin, and Khlevniuk in their introduction to the transcript of the April 1928 plenum – misrepresent it, in particular in relation to the Campbell farm. Zelenin asserts that Tulaikov's description, which Stalin quoted, referred to an earlier phase of the Campbell farm's operations and that it no longer worked as well, which was quite incorrect, and both Danilov and Zelenin accept Osinskii's dismissive and invalid description of the farm as 'advertising'. Zelenin, 'Pervaia sovetskaia programma', pp. 60–2; *Kak lomali NEP*, vol. pp. 2, 20.
70 On these points, see the classic study of US large-scale farming, H. Drache, *Beyond the Furrow* (Danville, 1976), ch. V.
71 On Campbell, see H. Drache, 'Thomas D. Campbell – The Plower of the Plains,' *Agricultural History*, 51(1) (January 1977), pp. 78–91; *New York Times*, 19 Mar. 1966, 29; Biography, T. D. Campbell Papers, 1874–1984, Online Archive of New Mexico, http://elibrary.unm.edu/oanm/NmU/nmu1%23mss566bc/.

Campbell's success as a farmer caught the attention of General George C. Marshall of the US army, who recruited him as his direct subordinate during the Second World War. Campbell was ultimately promoted to Brigadier General for his work in logistics and military planning in the African and Asian theatres.

72 On this, see G. Tansey and T. Worsley, *The Food System: A Guide* (London, 1995), ch. 5; D. Fitzgerald, *Every Farm a Factory* (New Haven, CT, 2003); J. Scott, *Seeing Like A State* (New Haven, CT, 1998) unjustifiably minimizes the significance of large-scale farming; see my review at hnet.org, under reviews.

73 RGASPI 17.3.809, l. 23, report by Zernotrest to the Politburo, 7 Jan. 1931.

74 See his description of his trips in T. D. Campbell, *Russia: Market or Menace*? (London, 1932).

75 See A. Nove, *Soviet Agriculture: The Brezhnev Legacy and Gorbachev's Cure* (Santa Monica, 1988).

76 Stalin, *Sochineniia*, vol. 12, pp. 124–5.

77 Stalin, *Sochineniia*, vol. 12, pp. 129–30.

78 Stalin, *Sochineniia*, vol. 12, pp. 154–7.

79 Stalin, *Sochineniia*, vol. 12, pp. 160.

80 *Kak lomali NEP*, vol. 5, p. 579.

81 *Kak lomali NEP*, vol. 5, pp. 277–9, 332.

82 *Kak lomali NEP*, vol. 5, pp. 309–12.

83 *Kak lomali NEP*, vol. 5, pp. 326–31.

84 *Kak lomali NEP*, vol. 5, pp. 289–90.

85 R. W. Davies, J. M. Cooper and M. J. Ilič, *Soviet Official Statistics on Industrial Production, Capital Stock and Capital Investment, 1928–41*. SIPS Occasional Paper No. 1, CREES, (Birmingham, 1991).

86 Conquest, *Harvest of Sorrow*, p. 232.

87 See Tauger, 'Soviet Peasants and Collectivization'.

88 V. Danilov, R. Manning and L. Viola (eds), *Tragediia Sovietskoi derevni* vol. 4 (Moscow, 2002), pp. 200–1.

89 W. S. Churchill, *The Second World War v. 4: The Hinge of Fate* (Cambridge, 1950), pp. 498–9.

90 Some scholars have argued that Soviet leaders employed collectivisation at least in part as an attack on Ukrainian nationalism. Their evidence for this is one sentence taken out of context from a Ukrainian newspaper in January 1930; see Conquest, *Harvest of Sorrow*, p. 219. Yet in the two years of discussions recorded in the newly published *TsK* plenums none of the speakers suggested anything remotely indicating that they wanted collectivisation to destroy Ukrainian nationalism. The only discussion related to these issues is Kosior's presentation on Ukrainian agriculture at the November 1929 plenum, in which he connects Ukraine's success in dealing with the 1928–29 natural disasters to Ukraine's success in solving the nationality problem, which at that point could only have meant the policy of indigenisation and promotion of Ukrainian nationalism, not the later attacks on Ukrainian nationalism. *Kak lomali NEP*, vol. 5, p. 388.

7

Brown Bread for Victory: German and British Wholemeal Politics in the Inter-War Period

Uwe Spiekermann

Bread is more than a foodstuff: it is a symbol of life. Its cultural status not only includes the Christian promise of brotherhood and equality of mankind, but bread consumption also marks crucial differences between individuals, social groups, and nations. This chapter will analyse a short but important episode in the history of consumption. During the two world wars bread was still the most important foodstuff in the European diet. It was a decisive resource in conflict and for victory. While the First World War was a testing field both for strategists and nutritionists, intensified research and cultural anxieties moved bread to the top of the social and political agenda of the Second World War.[1] The type of bread and the efficiency of bread policy were understood to be central for individual health, social efficiency, and national strength. This chapter will concentrate on wholemeal bread policy and compare the efforts of the main European powers, Germany and Great Britain, in the inter-war period.

Brown bread between alternative movement and nutritional science, 1900–1940

Today, wholemeal bread is often seen as a traditional food, typical of a coarse but nourishing peasant diet. This view may be right for some types of brown bread, but it is wrong for wholemeal bread. The term 'wholemeal' or 'Vollkorn' cannot be found in the German language before the turn of the nineteenth to the twentieth centuries. The first use can be dated at around 1910.[2] The syllable 'whole' resulted not only from the basic idea of using the whole grain for bread. It was an expression, too, recording the loss of traditional dishes during industrialisation and commercial bread production. While a growing number ate white bread,

traditionally a symbol of affluence and civilisation, a vocal minority criticised this development as the decline of mankind.

However, such complaints were also linked to innovative work in food production. Since the 1890s a growing number of bread reformers introduced new wholemeal breads to set a new standard for an improved diet. Named by their inventors, Felke-, Steinmetz-, Simons-, Schlüter-, Finkler- and Klopfer-Bread were introduced in Germany before the First World War.[3] Most of them were rye breads, while Graham-Bread became the leading alternative wheat bread. The re-establishment of a 'traditional' food – an imagined construct – was a direct reaction to the increase in modern milling. Technical improvements allowed an easy and efficient separation of bran and germ and made white flour popularly accessible. This trend to cheap white bread was accompanied by the use of bleaching agents.[4]

Bread reformers combined technical innovation with cultural traditionalism. They rejected the commercialisation of a staple food, because this was too important for public health and morale. Commercialisation was combined with anti-Semitism and a general fear of racial decline. New wholemeal bread was understood as an important factor in the rebirth of a strong and powerful nation.[5] These ideas were biological and mechanical: bread was understood as fuel for the human machine, which slowly but steadily was weakened by the consumption of white bread. Increasing prevalence of caries and decreasing physical fitness ratings were read as harbingers of physical decadence resulting from a modern diet.[6]

Bread reform was initially a project of social reformers, not of scientists. Most of the reformers were practical men, some had academic training, but none of them were nutritionists. Their work challenged the scientific establishment, which propagated a different understanding of changing food patterns. In the early 1880s, physiological work by Max Rubner, who later became the leading nutritionist in Germany, set the standards for the next decades. He proved that bran could be partly absorbed – an important argument for later reformers. But Rubner's work revealed, too, that human absorption was lower than that of animals, especially of pigs. As a consequence it made more sense to eat tasteful and digestible white bread and meat from animals fed with bran.[7] From a physiological point of view, bread reform was unnecessary. Modern milling technology was not an expression of decline, but of progress and a more efficient division of labour. The growing consumption of fine bread, especially fine wheat bread, seemed to back the argument of the scientific establishment.

During the First World War German bread changed dramatically. In autumn 1914 potato bread was introduced as a first 'war bread'. The extraction rate of grain rose from 65 per cent in 1914 to 75 per cent in 1915, 84 per cent in 1916, and to 94 per cent in 1917. The standard bread was not the wholemeal bread reformers dreamt of, but it was certainly a brown bread with a high amount of bran.[8] The First World War became a grand test in the bread question. The impact of the war on public health was disastrous. But it was still an open question whether the main cause was the severe malnutrition of the German population or the poor quality of bread. Some doctors even spoke of the war diet having been 'a healthy stroke'.[9] For the vast majority of consumers, however, the bread question seemed to be answered in favour of pre-war white bread.

The physiological debate was more differentiated. While reformers stressed the higher nutritional value of wholemeal bread, nutritionists were not sure how substances like bran or calcium were absorbed. Without research on vitamins and minerals, it was not possible to decide which bread had a higher nutritional value.[10] Many patients with stomach and intestinal problems had severe difficulties digesting war and wholemeal bread.[11] Doctors tried to accustom sick persons to regular war bread.[12] This alteration in diet, combined with the problems of purified flour, led to widespread problems with digestion and bowel movement. Flatulence was common. All in all, the consumption of war bread led to an aversion to dark bread, although there was no real alternative until the end of grain rationing in 1920. Bread reformers nonetheless favoured the wide range of wholemeal bread, which of course had a higher quality and purity than war bread. They argued that the war had reinforced the continuous worsening of bread quality and baking technology.

The discussion intensified in the early 1920s as the methodology of metabolism experiments improved and the essential function of vitamins was explored. Critics argued that traditional physiology did not account for the development of the digestive system and was concentrating on short-term investigation. The role of the kidney and of the interplay between different nutrients were not recognised.[13] In 1924, the German Ministry of Nutrition and Agriculture financed improved physiological and technological research. The results backed the well-known finding that the digestion of nutrients, especially of protein, declined, once the extraction rate was higher than 82 per cent. The content of Vitamin A and B also was too low to cover the necessary daily intake of an average person.[14] As a result, leading nutritionists

again began to advocate a 'rational division of labour' between man and animal: fine bread and meat for people, bran for animals. Wholemeal bread did not make sense.[15]

Bread reformers continued their campaign in the 1920s, and their position was now strengthened by research on vitamins. Recognition of these nutrients as the basic elements of health and well-being became accepted in the late 1920s. It was accompanied by intensive biochemical research on metabolism, chemical structure, and synthesis.[16] Traditional physiology was now replaced by the new science of nutrition, interested in the health implications of vitamins and minerals. As a consequence, the vitamin and mineral content of bread became the central indicator of its nutritional value. Essential ideas of bread reformers were slowly but steadily adopted by established nutritionists.[17]

Three factors accelerated this process of adoption. First, vitamin debate reinforced the critique of food processing and food quality. Economic depression and the ideas of the declining biological 'quality' of human beings and their environment went hand in hand. The 'domestication' of man seemed to favour civilisation. Visions of free trade and modern white-collar culture, associated with an American-style diet of sandwiches and white bread were discredited. It became popular to call for a more traditional diet and a change of lifestyle. Better bread was an important element in rethinking modernity. Second, caries became a symbol of declining food quality and deteriorating lifestyle. Dentists favoured hard brown bread as an everyday health cure. In 1933, the *Forschungsgemeinschaft für Roggenbrotforschung* (Rye Bread Research Council) was established to explore the relationship between bread and teeth. Bread reformers were invited to present their visions in new scientific journals.[18] Third, healthy nutrition became a topic of international nutritional science. Although Germany left the League of Nations in 1933, the league's recommendation of fresh vegetables, fruits, and brown bread lent further credibility to the position of bread reformers.[19]

In 1936–37 the scientific debate on brown versus white bread came to an end in Germany. As one author put it:

> The development of nutritional physiology during the last one and a half decades, which was characterised by insights into vitamins, protein valency, minerals, and the relevance of nutritional ingredients, which led to the enormous progress of prophylactic and therapeutic medicine, has ended the old debate on grain nutrition. . . .

Plate 7.1 Vitamin and mineral content as arguments for wholemeal bread, 1941
Source: 'Ein Werbezug wurde erfolgreich beendet', *Zahnärztliche Mitteilungen*, vol. 32 (1941), p. 219.

> Strangely the end of the earlier dispute and the complete victory of the principles of integral grain utilisation, happened relatively quietly.[20]

Nutritionists and reformers, however, did not shape the direction of policy.[21] This was left to the German state and the Nazis who took command of a wholemeal bread programme in 1936.

Creating a traditional 'German' foodstuff: agricultural economics and national-socialist bread policy, 1927–1939

In the 1920s German bread policy initially responded to the decreasing consumption of rye bread and agricultural pressures. In 1850 the share of rye bread was twice as high as that of wheat. During the second half of the nineteenth century the share of wheat increased significantly. Rye consumption was stagnating, while wheat consumption increased. Since the turn of the century, rye and wheat consumption were roughly equal, a relation that would not change fundamentally in the first half of the twentieth century. Total grain consumption had increased from 80 kg a head per year in the mid-nineteenth century to 140 kg in 1900. Consumption of rye and wheat, however, decreased thereafter, to 110 kg a head per year by the mid-1920s.[22] After hyperinflation wheat consumption increased, rye consumption decreased. Farmers and economists warned that this trend would have severe consequences for German finances, because rye was produced mainly in Germany, while two-thirds of wheat was imported. The price cut during the international agrarian crisis of 1925 and 1926 did not diminish this problem, because wheat imports were still rising and production of rye was not profitable for Eastern German producers.

The result was an agricultural policy in favour of rye and rye bread.[23] From 1928 on, advertisements told Germans to eat 'German' bread: 'The patriot eats rye bread.'[24] The success of such propaganda, however, was limited. The agrarian lobby was not able to standardise rye, to increase its quality or to establish bread brands. The wheat lobby, which favoured free trade, an international division of labour and easily digestible foodstuffs, fought hard and defended people's choice and the physiological superiority of wheat bread. Wheat-free days were not established and the increase in wheat tariffs was lower and less rigorous than the rye lobby demanded.

Economic and political priorities were transformed by the presidential cabinets and the Nazi government.[25] During the early 1930s bread policy in favour of rye and brown bread was one instrument in a programme of strengthening the balance of trade and national independence. A developed consumer society however, posed an important counterweight to an agriculturalist policy. Even the Nazi government was unable to ignore dominant consumption trends.[26] Between 1933 and 1936 the Nazis tried to concentrate on the supply side, seeking to reduce rye production and increase German wheat production with the help of new winter-resistant varieties. But such changes were slow.

The preference for German food could not be guaranteed from the supply side alone. Consumers had to support the main aim of German policy, which was not autarchy, but 'freedom of nutrition'.[27] This term contained an aggressive and imperial component, which became more explicit after 1936.

A consumer-oriented policy needed to advertise the benefits from a change in consumer preferences. German bread policy came to focus on people's health. 'Health' acquired a new racial meaning in Nazi ideology. In the Weimar Republic health care had been directed towards supporting the sick and disabled. Nazi policy, by contrast, saw its ideal in leading people to health. Care was replaced by prophylaxis. Individual health was linked to the health of the *Volk*, a 'way of intensifying human work efficiency for the benefit of the whole community'.[28] Not individual dignity but functional materialism was at the centre of health policy: 'human beings only have a value as far as they command a productive output.'[29] Food was the source of human labour and so became the focus of health policy. In this context doctors had a specific function to play, comparable to a gardener: they had to separate healthy from sick people, strong from weak individuals, and remove the weed. Food was akin to fertiliser in a productive garden.

Wholemeal bread was not a foodstuff like any other: 'It is necessary to make diet healthier, to make people more efficient. It is necessary to change the diet, to achieve German freedom of nutrition.'[30] Wholemeal bread was the characteristic food for German people, the right fuel for an efficient and healthy Aryan race. Doctors had to guide people's diet in the right direction, while consumers had the duty of guarding and exercising their health: 'an organ, which is not used sufficiently will atrophy. If our diet becomes effeminate, our jaw, gums and teeth will degenerate. . . . The consumption of the natural products of this "backbone of nutrition" [wholemeal bread] will reduce disease and degeneration.' For advocates like Wegner, this meant that coarser wholemeal bread usefully challenged the human body. It would strengthen the racial community. Degenerate bodies would die sooner and no longer impose 'costs' on the nation.[31]

Improving individual health meant improving the nation. White bread was connected with urbanisation, commercialisation, and democracy. Instead, wholemeal bread would help roll back these developments and strengthen German people in their fight against cultural and racial decline. Although leading German scientists emphasised that their recommendation of wholemeal bread was the opinion of the 'whole scientific world, especially in Anglo-Saxonian countries', and that

'mankind must return to wholemeal bread',[32] their work had specific imperial and racist purposes.

Germany started the Second World War well prepared. This did not only mean the technical planning of a rationing system, introduced three days before the attack on Poland. Improvements in storage and production were combined with physiological, social, and psychological expertise, which also took consumers' views into consideration. In 1937, for instance, physiologists, doctors, and economists formed a committee for fair social consumer regulation (*Ausschuss für sozial-gerechte Verbrauchsregelung*) which fixed physiological norms for different consumer groups. Food resources were concentrated on children, mothers, and working people.[33] In contrast to the First World War, food was not primarily seen as a carrier of calories. Amount and quality of protein, fat, and vitamins were central points for the rationing norms. Every group should receive enough food of controlled quality. The focus on labour efficiency and on the biological future of the German race reflected national-socialist ideology as did the creation of insufficient norms for Jews and foreign workers. The war nutrition plan of 1 April 1939 anticipated a severe decline in food supplies in the second and third year of war, which had to be compensated for by the ruthless exploitation of conquered nations.[34] Grain products were the basic foodstuffs in Germany during the Second World War. Cereals and pulses amounted to 36.6 per cent of caloric consumption before the war and 39.2 per cent (1942–43) and 43.9 per cent (1943–44) during the war.[35] It is therefore not surprising that war preparations concerned this decisive sector of consumption.

Institutionalising health and ideology: the work of the German *Reichsvollkornbrotausschuß*, 1939–1944

The institutionalisation of German bread policy began in 1937. The first phase was characterised by testing in regional markets and developing an effective agenda for the whole of Germany. The second phase started with the founding of the National Committee for wholemeal bread (*Reichsvollkornbrotausschuß*) in the summer of 1939.

Regional efforts started in Swabia in 1937.[36] The initiative came from the NS-health care (*NS-Volkswohlfahrt*), which wanted to improve the diet of infants and mothers. Wholemeal bread should improve the health and racial quality of the next generation. Swabia was a white bread region and the first task was to propagate the new brown bread with the help of nursery-school teachers, nurses, and social workers.

Their propaganda may have been convincing, but consumers could not buy wholemeal bread in most places. Bakers often did not offer it, quality was generally low, and wholemeal flour was not produced by local millers. Two implications were drawn. First, bread policy had to start at the production level. Without sufficient supply and high quality, a change in diet was impossible. Second, individual choice had to be framed by institutional reforms. School meals were recognised as a vital transmission belt for propaganda. This meant a clean break with a German tradition based on family meals.

A second wholemeal bread campaign started in Saxony in 1938 and was coordinated by the regional department of public health.[37] Bakers, government, schools, and doctors established a network for the sale and propaganda of wholemeal bread. The training of millers and bakers was successful and clarified that standardisation and branding were necessary to promote 'health bread', which was, after all, more expensive than ordinary bread. Quality needed to be guaranteed and health effects demonstrated. In 1939 a first bread brand was created and used for advertisement.

At the same time the general propaganda for wholemeal bread led to rising levels of consumption. Regional eating patterns still differed greatly, but between 1937 and 1939 consumption rose by 50 per cent, especially in southern and western Germany. In 1939 wholemeal bread had a share of 13 per cent of total bread consumption.[38] For nutritionists this was an important step in the right direction, but only a start for a more fundamental change of German diet. During the next few years wholemeal bread's share needed to increase to half of the total bread consumption. To achieve this target, institutionalisation and organisation were vital.

The experience in Saxony led to the decision to establish a national *Vollkornbrotausschuß* in summer 1939. The different interest groups had failed to work together without a coordinating agency. The establishment of a national committee was to give the elite of the 'thousand-year empire' the power to change dietary habits in a long-term, sustainable way. The possibility of shaping consumption with the help of the rationing system was discarded. Success had to be based on conviction: 'We have to go the arduous but more successful way and gain the voluntary support of our people.'[39]

The *Vollkornbrotausschuß* was located in Berlin and led by the *Hauptamt für Volksgesundheit der NSDAP*. By the end of 1939, 96 people were working for better German bread.[40] Although it was generally accepted that scientifically documented high quality was the road to

success, the precise type of bread to be promoted remained subject to debate. Each German region had a different type of traditional black bread and bread reformers had offered a wide range of products. At the end of 1939 wholemeal bread was defined as bread from the whole grain, which meant an extraction rate of 100 per cent. Flour should be clean and the husk separated. Supplements, bleaching agents or artificial colours were forbidden. Bread should be produced from fresh flour and stored several days before selling or eating. This definition was put into the statutory instructions for millers in December 1939. 'Wholemeal bread' now became a recognised brand, which replaced the traditional terms of brown or wholemeal bread. Every producer or baker, who wanted to sell 'wholemeal bread' had to send a sample of their bread to approved laboratories. If quality was acceptable, they received advertisement material and a quality brand label, which had to be placed on every 'wholemeal bread'. Producers had to pay for this label, but, in exchange, were allowed to ask higher prices than for ordinary bread.[41]

At the same time the *Reichsvollkornbrotausschuß* started to professionalise producers and bakers. Training started in November 1939 at a regional level. Significantly, it was flour that was the subject of quality control and standardisation, not the resulting kind of bread. Different traditions of baking led to a wide range of different wholemeal breads. Standardisation of flour did not result in a uniform wholemeal bread. Regional committees for wholemeal bread were established in the early 1940s and became more and more important during the war.

At the end of 1939, 2420 (1.25 per cent) of all German bakers produced certified wholemeal bread. This number grew to 12,959 at the end of 1940, 22,903 in October 1941, and 27,454 in 1943.[42] It amounted to 22.8 per cent of all producers, including all bread factories and the majority of efficient urban bakeries. Training networks assisted decentralised and flexible production under wartime conditions. Higher and fixed prices made wholemeal bread attractive for calculating producers.

Another task of the *Reichsvollkornbrotauschuß* was to initiate nutritional research. German scientists were especially interested in the chemical composition of grain and grain products and in metabolism studies. They tried to optimise the cultivation of high quality grain, storage and supply, processing, and the mixture of different qualities.[43] Further research was done to improve the method of home cooking and baking. New recipes found their way into cook books and housekeeping guides or were presented directly by the *NS-Frauenschaft*.[44] The digestion of sick persons and infants was examined. Better knowledge of human physiology was to be the foundation for detailed advice to doctors and

politicians.[45] This product-oriented work was combined with modern consumer-oriented marketing. Standardised quality enabled a new brand for the new product. In December 1939 a national quality brand label (*Reichsgesundheitsgütemarke*) was designed, which connected the Germanic rune or *Lebensrune* with the term 'people's health', around the slogan 'Wholemeal bread is healthier and more nutritious and filling!' From spring 1940 on this brand was propagated everywhere in Germany – supported by the propaganda ministry, which was a member of the *Reichsvollkornbrotausschuß*.

Plate 7.2 'Wholemeal bread is healthier and more nutritious and filling!', 1940
Source: *Zugkräftige Kinowerbung für Vollkornbrot*, Leipziger Fachzeitung für Bäcker und Konditoren, vol. 52 (1940), p. 187.

Placards and bills were posted, and standardised slides advertised wholemeal bread at cinemas. Newspaper and magazine articles informed people of the advantages of changing their diet. Brochures were published and distributed by NS-organisations. Between 1940 and 1941, for example, 300,000 copies of 'Kampf ums Brot' (Battle for Bread) were sold. Films like 'Die Sache mit der Uhr', 'Drei Silben sollst Du mir nur sagen' or 'Das Geheimnis des Erfolges' became part of the cinema programme.[46]

There were advertisements on German buses and trams. An advertisement week was established once a year during harvest festival. Shop windows were decorated and bread became an important element of harvest parades. The mobilisation of Germans for a strong and healthy nation became a ubiquitous image. In 1941 several exhibitions started. Commercial advertisement was further improved by the foundation of a National Wholemeal Advertisement cooperative. The bread card itself suggested that 'Wholemeal bread is better and healthier!'

Plate 7.3 Slide for cinema advertisement, 1940: 'Healthy Teeth, Strong Bones, Good Development'
Source: 'Zugkräftige Kinowerbung für Vollkornbrot', *Leipziger Fachzeitung für Bäcker und Konditoren*, vol. 52 (1940), p. 187.

Marketing and propaganda were also supported by more direct forms of communication. Different groups were assigned different tasks. Doctors, for example, were asked to propagate better bread to every patient face to face. While taking their case history, doctors were to ask patients, whether they were eating wholemeal bread – and to give reasons for switching to it. The wide range of diseases combined with unhealthy eating made it possible to exhort patients to consume 'health' bread. Doctors were advised to follow a step-by-step strategy. People should not change their eating patterns from one day to another, but

start with one or two slices a day and increase this amount gradually. Direct communication was always individualised. Health strategists were convinced that a small impetus was enough to start people thinking and acting to promote greater individual and national strength. To do so, German doctors themselves needed to prefer wholemeal bread. *Volksgemeinschaft* meant that every single German should do his or her duty, acting as a model for the whole community.

Wholemeal bread policy therefore was a distinctive kind of health policy. It was an integral part of Nazi-ideology and a vital source for building and strengthening the Aryan race.

Plate 7.4 Strong Pupils for a Strong Germany, 1941
Source: *Vollkornbrotfibel*, ed. Reichsvollkornbrotausschuß (Planegg, 1941), p. 1.

Wholemeal bread became a topic of children's education. Specialised brochures, like the National Wholemeal bread primer, established the ideal of strong, healthy, and competitive pupils, who were superior to weak and silly consumers of white bread. Hard bread was a symbol of a patriarchal world, where fitness was a vital element in a race war.[47] At school the bread question became part of natural history. Food was presented as fuel for healthy and efficient people, a foundation

Neuzeitliche Ernährung

des Säuglings erfordert nach der Stillzeit eine Beikost zur Milch, die nicht nur nahrhaft ist, sondern auch lebenswichtige, für die richtige Entwicklung des Kindes unerläßliche Funktionsstoffe enthält. **Pauly's Nährspeise** entspricht diesen Anforderungen in idealer Weise. In ihr sind die Stärkebestandteile des Mehlkörpers wie auch die im Keimling und den Randschichten enthaltenen Vitamine des B-Komplexes und Mineralstoffe harmonisch vereint. Sie ist kraftvoll und leicht verdaulich. Von den frühkindlichen Verdauungsorganen wird sie bereitwillig aufgenommen und bestmöglich ausgenutzt. Darum die neuzeitliche, unter klinischer Kontrolle stehende **PAULY's NÄHRSPEISE** aus dem vollen Korn.

Milupa-Pauly, Friedrichsdorf/Taunus

Plate 7.5 Wholemeal products for babies. Advertisement, 1940
Source: *Nationalsozialistischer Volksdienst*, vol. 7 (1940), p. 178.

of national and racist strength.[48] But the habituation to wholemeal bread started even earlier. Wholemeal products were introduced as part of infant feeding. In 1942 experiments with infants began to explore the earliest age to start with wholemeal mash. Wholemeal bread was an element of hardening the body at the earliest possible stage.

Eating outside also became important for bread policy. In April 1940 wholemeal bread became compulsory for the *Reichsarbeitsdienst*. The *Reichsvollkornbrotausschuß* concentrated its work on canteens, school meals, and restaurants. The longer the war, the greater the importance of wholemeal products.[49] Wholemeal products became a symbol for a nation that took care of its people.

Wholemeal products, too, were introduced in hospitals. During the First World War stomach and digestion trouble was a reason for receiving white, or at least better, bread. Now, wholemeal bread was this better bread – and doctors prescribed it ruthlessly.[50] They believed that most patients and old people, too, could be accustomed to wholemeal bread consumption. Those, who could not were denounced as 'intestinal cripples'.[51] Even wounded soldiers were forced to eat hard bread. Germany was no 'dictatorship of favours': the value of people depended on their contribution to the efficiency of the nation.

Importantly, German bread policy did not end in Germany. Wholemeal bread became a symbol of a victorious Germany and a superior Aryan race. Diffusion started in August 1940, when wholemeal bread production began in some parts of the *Generalgouvernement* Poland.[52] In late 1941 foreign wholemeal bread committees were established in Bohemia and Moravia, the Netherlands, the Warthegau, Belgium, northern France, and Bulgaria. In 1942, for example, nearly 40 per cent of Dutch producers were 'allowed' to produce 'German' wholemeal bread.

The advance of German wholemeal bread policy, however, was not a simple victory march. Its structures and directions need to be separated from its perceptions and results under wartime conditions: German bread policy was welcomed by most nutritionists of 'neutral' countries.[53] Its emphasis on health was an important image factor for foreign elites and backed the illusion of a scientific and rational Germany, while German task forces and soldiers were executing hundreds of thousands in Eastern Europe. The perception of many 'enemies' was positive. German policy followed the recommendations of the League of Nations and was often perceived as a leading example of a strong and effective health policy. Although there was some criticism of the digestibility of this hard food, it is astonishing that the ideological and racist implications were not discussed abroad.

German consumers judged differently. The German state tried to analyse consumer perceptions. Reports of the *Sicherheitsdienst der SS* documented that consumers were distrustful: 'Previous experiences with wholemeal bread campaigns show that people, especially in southern Germany, strongly resist wholemeal bread, because their habitual preference is to eat white bread where possible.'[54] Generally prices seemed to be too high. On the other hand, many consumers argued in favour of the new health bread. They wanted intensified wholemeal bread propaganda, favoured recipes backed by the authority of doctors and more information on the different types of bread. Others did not find wholemeal bread to be as nourishing. At the same time most German people were unable to distinguish between rye or brown bread on the one hand and wholemeal bread on the other.[55] In 1940–41 intensified propaganda, better quality and greater availability led to a higher popular acceptance of the 'German' bread.[56] Although bread policy in general was viewed with scepticism, especially because the regional differences were not reflected in the rationing system adequately, many consumers now understood and welcomed wholemeal bread policy.[57]

From autumn 1942 bread quality deteriorated, following crop failures.[58] Already in April 1942 bread was produced with the addition of one-third of the grain type 2800. Bread became crumbly and was more and more eaten as a side dish; bread with butter decreased. Although the quality of wheat bread again improved in January 1943, rationing placed limits on a successful bread policy.[59] These general problems affected wholemeal bread, too. Quality diminished, and standards deteriorated: 'During the last summer [1942] an increasing number of complaints on short weight and the general composition of bread were brought to the laboratory. . . . It was more than obvious that these things needed to be clarified, because of considerable unrest among the population that undermines our whole economy of supply unnecessarily.'[60] The *Reichsvollkornbrotausschuß* tried to stabilise wholemeal bread quality, but the results were limited.

As a consequence, the number of wholemeal dishes increased rapidly. Gruel and groats became more and more common at breakfast and even dinnertime. Wholemeal cookies and flakes were introduced, wholemeal cereals for babies and toddlers had a quickly growing market share. Recipes for wholemeal cakes were tested at the *Reichsfachschule* of bakery at Berlin. The *Deutsche Arbeitsfront* had several pastry cooks. Wholemeal waffles made their way into German households, too.[61] This development was welcomed enthusiastically by doctors and nutritionists. Dishes like Bircher-Benner's muesli or Werner Kollath's

Frischkornbrei seemed to be healthy alternatives to traditional fatty and heavy breakfasts. At the same time these were parts of a functional diet for a nation which first conquered Europe, and then ended up as undernourished survivors living amidst the ruins of bombed cities.

A nutritional perspective would stress the increase of wholemeal consumption during the war and a better supply of vitamin B_1, E, minerals, and protein.[62] Wholemeal bread stabilised and improved the standards of health. But it must be stressed that German nutrition and bread quality were optimised at the expense of conquered nations. Inside Germany, too, high quality wholemeal bread was a dish reserved for Aryan Germans, while forced labourers had to make do with poorer quality bread.

Learning from the enemy? British bread policy, 1939–1945

From the early twentieth century bread reform was a common topic in most European countries, especially in Switzerland and France. Driven by alternative lifestyle movements, this discourse was reinforced by nutritional research and eventually fixed on the nutritional recommendations of the League of Nations.[63] In the new scientific knowledge on food requirements and existing deficits in food supply, British and US nutritionists played a decisive role. Yet it also resulted from a middle-class social reform interest in optimising the eating patterns of the poor and workers.[64] Bread was one central issue in this debate. In Britain, at the beginning of the 1880s a Bread Reform League was established to educate the working classes to eat wheatmeal flour instead of common white bread. At this time German physiologists warned German people not to follow 'British' advice to eat wholemeal bread and a wide range of wholemeal dishes: 'One would chew the husk in the soup, the bread, in vegetables, and in dessert. How disgusting!'[65] The Bread (and Food) Reform League was not very successful, although their agitation continued.[66] Popular preference for white bread and the mass production of bread by big companies were not reversed easily.

The debate changed during the First World War. Bread was the basic foodstuff especially for workers. This staple food was not rationed, although the grain supply was endangered by German submarines, especially in 1917. British bread policy expressed confidence and security even if the extraction rate of grain had to be increased from *c.*70 per cent in 1914 to 76 per cent in 1916 and 81 per cent in March 1917.[67] The resulting 'war bread' was favoured by many doctors, who recognised it as a kind of wholemeal bread. This 'has come to stay, with great advantage

and economy to mankind.'[68] But war bread was unpopular with the public, especially because wheatflour was often combined with mixtures of corn and other plants.[69] 'Dark in colour, it had an unfamiliar flavour, was difficult to bake and tended to produce a moist, soggy, and unpalatable crumbly mix.'[70] Tradition and taste were more important than medical advice. People did not believe, that 'it will be the fault of the public if it returns to the old over-refined white flour'.[71]

During the 1920s the health advantages of brown bread were backed by a growing number of physiological experiments, by epidemiological investigations of eating patterns and an improved knowledge of vitamin and mineral content of diet. But this did not mean that the majority of nutritionists recommended brown bread. The frontiers of the British 'brown vs. white bread controversy'[72] were similar to the early German ones.

During the world depression (1929–32) the social problem of malnutrition became a recognised part of the debate in Britain, emphasising the centrality of vitamins and minerals for a healthy lifestyle.[73] Educating the working class therefore became a crucial task for nutritionists, since public knowledge of these invisible nutrients was low. In contrast to Germany, in Britain science and civil society took the lead in changing

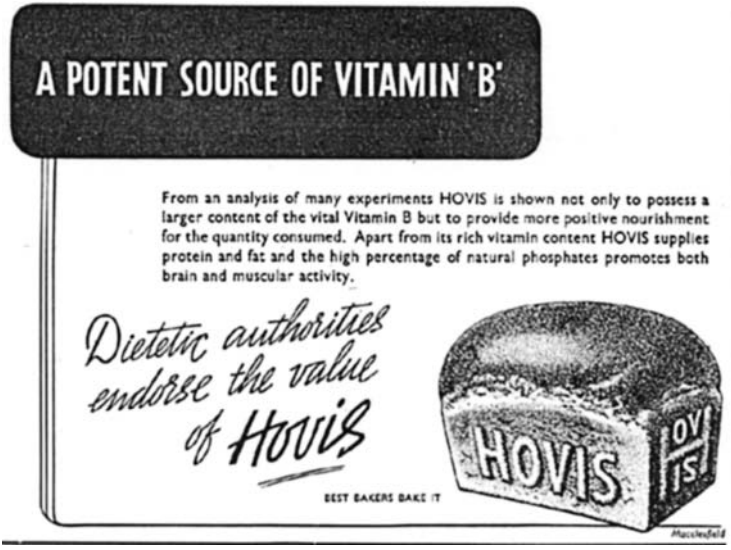

Plate 7.6 The nutritional quality of brown bread, advertisement, 1939
Source: *The Lancet*, vol. 237 (1939), no. fr. 09.09., p. 28.

people's diet: 'According to present knowledge, a diet of brown bread, milk, butter, cheese, fresh fruit, and salad will provide all the essentials. There is no scientific evidence that meat is necessary.'[74] While the position of independent nutritionists changed in favour of brown bread, the important interest groups of millers and bread producers were still in favour of the common white wheat loaf, consumed by the majority of Britons.

This dietary preference became a problem when the Second World War started in September 1939. British grain supplies were even more vulnerable than in 1914. The Royal Navy had lost its supremacy and 88 per cent of wheat consumption came from imports. British defence was intensified in 1936, but the systematic creation of food stocks started only in February 1939. Bread was not rationed in Britain during the Second World War.[75] For most experts it was clear that it would not be sufficient to increase the extraction rate of grain.[76] What policy should be taken then?

At the beginning of the Second World War many British politicians linked German victories with the improved diet of German people and soldiers: 'Their present diet is much more scientific and effective than ours.'[77] Nutritionists stressed that Germany had learned the lessons from the First World War and had concentrated on protective foods to optimise the efficiency of its labour and military force: 'The present German rations are based on the simple but sound principle that a "peasant diet" of 'high extraction' or wholemeal bread, plenty of vegetables and potatoes, and some dairy produce in the form of cheese or separated milk, provides all the essentials of sound nutrition.'[78] While the British air force fought the Battle of Britain, many nutritionists turned to German food and bread policy for inspiration. British government should 'be fired with some of the inspiration of the Dictators'[79].

Of course, public discourse was differentiated. White bread had been a symbol of freedom and Britain's civilising mission.[80] The Ministry of Food concentrated its work on an institutional framework which guaranteed the basic food requirements of all, favoured poor people, mothers, and children but still allowed individual choice. It was not possible to guarantee a continuous supply of white flour and bread. A central problem of war policy in a free society was 'to persuade the people of this country to change their dietary habits' voluntarily.[81] Modern war was a war of resources and food. Most experts and politicians believed that traditional dishes, including brown bread, were inevitable. Parliament even debated whether to use some kind of 'propaganda of Dr Goebbels.'[82] At the same time, in the view of most nutritionists,

war was also finally an opportunity to improve public health: 'Modern scientific investigation of nutrition has made it quite clear that wholemeal bread is a more nourishing food than white bread and that it would be better for the nation's health to eat brown bread.'[83] As in Germany, the term 'brown bread' was not clearly defined in Britain. For most this was bread made from flour of a higher extraction rate, comparable to the former 'war bread'. It never meant to produce 'German' wholemeal bread. This was not only the bread of the enemy, but the bread of snobbish extremists. Britain's way through the age of extremes lay between extreme positions. 'German' wholemeal bread 'is all right for long-haired gentlemen in Bloomsbury, but the people who have to do the world's work do not want that sort of thing put down their throats every day.'[84] Moreover, British food producers were not able to produce such a type of bread.[85]

British bread policy changed slowly. Partly, this was a result of the strong position of millers and the bread industry, which preferred the production of white bread. White flour kept longer, held more air and water, and bran and germ could be sold as animal food. The turnover of trade was higher and wholemeal bread took more skill and time to make.[86] But the main reason was that the Ministry of Food tried to improve the quality of white bread with the fortification of Vitamin B_1 and calcium. In July 1940, it decided to introduce a new enriched white flour.[87] British policy used the improvements of modern nutritional science. This decision was backed by leading nutritionists, who saw this as a 'revolutionary advance, because it can only mean that, in the future, whilst the preferences of the public will always receive first consideration, steps will be taken to make good any nutritional deficiencies both in individual foodstuffs and in our diet as a whole.'[88] Fortification policy was discussed not only in Britain but in Germany and the United States, too. While Americans started fortified bread in 1942, in Germany mainly margarine was fortified with Vitamin A after 1940. As a staple food, bread did not seem to be the right one for experiments with public health.

In Britain public and scientific opinion was sceptical, too. Ernest Graham-Little, MP and a leading member of the Food Education Society, a successor of the Bread and Food Reform League, pointed out that 'the universal scientific opinion is that the organic and natural supplies of vitamins are far superior to the synthetic kind.'[89] The decision to fortify bread had been based on rat experiments. It was only a theoretical proposition that synthetic vitamins were absorbed by the human intestinal tract.[90] An alternative view was developed by the Medical

Research Council, which recommended in August 1940 an increase of grain extraction to 80–85 per cent and an addition of calcium salts to flour used for bread.[91] This was a compromise, based on scientific knowledge, partly welcomed by the Food Education Society, but strictly rejected by millers and the baking industry. The Government decided to introduce new 'wholemeal' bread with an extraction rate of 85 per cent at the same price as the reinforced 'white' loaf in December 1940. But white bread was still available and dominant. In 1940–41 the 85 per cent national wheatmeal bread had a market share of only 9 per cent.

Its general introduction was blocked by producers and the government, which followed consumers' preferences. In 1941 it became clear that producers were not able to introduce fortified flour.[92] The consequences of 'bad' white bread for public health and warfare were still discussed, although German bread politics was no longer mentioned. Doctors and nutritionists continued to favour bread made from flour of 85 per cent extraction, which was propagated as a fair compromise between public health, commercial interests, and traditional habits.[93] But politics did not change until March 1942, when the Battle of the Atlantic was at its peak and shipping space became scarce. Now, the national wheatmeal bread became standard and white bread production was stopped.[94] The new British bread was fortified with calcium. It was a modern product, not a 'natural' one, based on knowledge of the human metabolism.[95] Although there were still some critics and the digestibility of the national wheatmeal was questioned, the British bread question was effectively solved by a scientifically based compromise.[96] When the British government reduced the extraction rate to 80 per cent in February 1945, people's acceptance of the new bread was high: 'This is a very drastic departure from what has been shown to be of great value to the health of the people.'[97] But it also meant that at the moment when victory was near, the balance between health, taste, and commercial interests would break down. The subsequent increase of flour extraction rate to 90 per cent and the post-war rationing of bread were dominated by political factors.[98] Britain was caring enough to feed defeated Germans,[99] but it was not able to continue a successful bread policy that improved public health and bread quality, while restricting individual choice and freedom of enterprise.

Hidden logics of consumption

German and British bread policies in the inter-war period were based on comparable scientific assumptions. Wholemeal bread was superior to

white bread and had a higher vitamin and mineral content: consumption would improve people's health. In both countries scientists were concerned by the decreasing quality of food and by unhealthy lifestyles caused by industrialisation and commercialisation. Bread reformers first emphasised these themes. But established scientists were soon rethinking modernity as well once vitamin research identified the close relationships between food and health and between individual eating and national power. Since the mid-1930s most German and British nutritionists favoured the consumption of brown bread.

Comparable knowledge, however, led to different policies. In Britain, prior to the Second World War, general recommendations were aimed mainly at poor and working class people, who were asked to adjust their eating habits to a healthier diet. Social reform was supported mainly by health service officers, teachers, and social workers. Germany went in a different direction. The bread question was a question of the nation's racial quality. Consequently, bread policy had to be directed at the entire German population. Individual health and social differences were important factors, but they were overwhelmed by questions of racial quality and imperial policy. Bread policy was institutionalised and became a domain of state planning. Bread consumption was too important to be left to individual choice. The different bread policies were founded on different conceptions of human nature and society. While individual freedom and market efficiency were favoured in Britain, Germany looked towards a strong institutional framework for guiding people in the 'right' direction. Public institutions needed to help those unable or unwilling to consume the way German elites preferred. People's 'health' had very different meanings in these two societies. In Germany individual health was replaced by racial health. Wholemeal bread was healthy, because Germans were hardened and prepared to accept voluntary self-denial for the benefit of the whole community. In Britain, a public obligation to eat 'war bread' was a short-lived wartime emerging measure.

The differences in German and British bread policies were influenced, too, by different market structures. While milling and baking in Britain was dominated by big companies, in Germany small and middle-sized firms remained important. British firms were able to influence food policy more directly. They also financed scientists who questioned dominant physiological positions, improved the quality of flour and white bread, and widened the public debate with innovative methods, such as the enrichment of flour. In Germany, the introduction of wholemeal bread caused more problems, although the *Reichsnährstand* allowed

governmental guidance. The decentralised system of small bakeries was functional in wartime. Nevertheless it took considerable effort to train and teach many thousands of small bakers and firms. Yet it was these entrepreneurs who understood local and regional consumption patterns and were able to manufacture different kinds of wholemeal bread to suit the preference of their consumers.

On their own respective terms German and British bread policies were both efficient for people's health and the labour force. However, bread policies were not decisive for victory or defeat in the Second World War. Germany had learnt its lessons from the First World War, but without the exploitation of conquered European countries even the efficient institutions of the wholemeal bread policy would not have been able to guarantee an adequate food supply for the German population. Britain found a functional and pragmatic compromise, ensuring a sufficient and fair share of food resources even in the most critical times.

In the long run, bread policies stabilised the different consumption patterns of the pre-war years. Once bread rationing came to an end, British producers and consumers again favoured white bread. Since the early 1950s this development was increasingly backed by British nutritionists. Long-term experiments with German orphans at Wuppertal and Duisburg in 1947–49 produced no evidence of the superiority of wholemeal bread.[100] Fortification was continued until the mid-1970s, when brown bread slowly started a come back as a healthy alternative.[101] In Germany white bread has become much more important since the early 1950s. But nutritionists continued to favour brown and wholemeal bread, especially in eastern Germany.[102] Bakers continued to produce wholemeal bread, although the extraction rate was lowered to 90 per cent. Based on traditional regional eating patterns wholemeal bread held its pre-war market share in the 1950s.[103] Individual choice – not bread policy – established it as a 'German' foodstuff.

Notes

1 See also Frank Trentmann's chapter in this volume.

2 W. Hartmann, *Das Schrot (Vollkorn-) und Soldatenbrot*, (Berlin, 1910). For a detailed analysis, see U. Spiekermann, 'Vollkorn für die Führer: Zur Geschichte der Vollkornbrotpolitik im Dritten Reich, *Zeitschrift für Sozialgeschichte des 20. und 21. Jahrhunderts*, 16 (2001), pp. 91–128, here 93–4.

3 An overview can be found in R. O. Neumann, 'Über Vollkornbrote und das neue Gross'sche Verfahren zur Herstellung von Vollkornbrot', *Vierteljahrsschrift für gerichtliche Medizin und öffentliches Sanitätswesen*, 3rd series, 53 (1917), pp. 91–151.

4 J. Buchwald and M. P. Neumann, 'Über das Bleichen der Mehle', *Zeitschrift für das gesamte Getreidewesen* (1909), pp. 257–62.
5 See G. Simons, 'Rasse und Ernährung', *Kraft und Schönheit*, 4 (1904), pp. 156–9; G. Simons, 'Tod der Nahrungsmittelindustrie!', *Vegetarische Warte*, 38 (1905), pp. 273–5; S. Steinmetz, *Zeitgemäßes Mehl und Brot: Der Grundstein zum Aufbau neuer Volkskraft* (Freiburg i.Br., 1917); V. Klopfer, 'Vollkorn-Ernährung', *Blätter für Volksgesundheitspflege*, 14 (1914), pp. 142–4.
6 A. Kunert, *Unsere heutige falsche Ernährung als letzte Ursache für die zunehmende Zahnverderbnis und die im ganzen schlechtere Entwicklung unserer Jugend*, 3rd edn (Breslau, 1913).
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8 G. Schwenk, 'Unser tägliches Brot, wie es ist, und wie es sein sollte', *Vegetarische Warte*, 50 (1917), pp. 32–3; V. Klopfer, *Die Verbesserungen des Brotes durch Aufschließung der Kleie und Vervollkommnung der Backverfahrens* (Dresden and Leipzig, 1918).
9 G. Klemperer, 'Die Krankenernährung in jetziger Zeit', *Berliner klinische Wochenschrift*, 54 (1917), pp. 642–3, here 642. Research included all groups of the population, see E. Rhonheimer, 'Über die Verträglichkeit des Weizen- und Roggen-Vollkornmehles (94% Ausmahlung) im Säuglingsalter', *Zeitschrift für Kinderheilkunde*, 16 (1917), pp. 259–64.
10 See 'Diskussion zum Vortrag des Herrn Röhmann: Ueber den Nährwert des Vollkornbrotes', *Berliner klinische Wochenschrift*, 53 (1916), pp. 94–7.
11 C. v. Noorden, 'Ueber Verdauungsbeschwerden nach dem Genuss von Kriegsbrot und ihre Behandlung', *Berliner klinische Wochenschrift*, 52 (1915), pp. 349–50; A. Theilhaber, 'Das Kriegsbrot und das Vollkornbrot', *Vegetarische Warte*, 52 (1919), pp. 24–5.
12 G. Klemperer, 'Die Krankenernährung in jetziger Zeit', *Berliner klinische Wochenschrift*, 54 (1917), pp. 642–3.
13 R. Berg, 'Unser täglich Brot', *Die Umschau*, 28 (1924), pp. 581–5.
14 M. Rubner, 'Unser Brotgetreide in physiologischer und volkswirtschaftlicher Hinsicht', *Sitzungsberichte der Preussischen Akademie der Wissenschaften*, phys.-sc. class (1925), pp. 126–39, esp. pp. 135–36.
15 'Gesamtergebnisse', in M. Rubner (ed.), *Die Verwertung des Roggens in ernährungsphysiologischer und landwirtschaftlicher Hinsicht* (Berlin, 1925), pp. 46–50, here 50; K. Mohs, 'Getreideverarbeitung, Müllerei, Brotversorgung. Aktuelle Probleme', *Die Technik in der Landwirtschaft*, 9 (1928), pp. 223–6.
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19 A. Durig, 'Betrachtungen über die Schaffung internationaler Ernährungs-Standardwerte', *Wiener klinische Wochenschrift*, 51 (1938), pp. 1–7, 38–44.

20 W. Kraft, 'Die Probleme der physiologisch richtigen Brotkorn-Nahrung', *Schweizerische Medizinische Wochenschrift*, 21 (1940), pp. 913–18, here 913.
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22 W. G. Hoffmann, F. Grumbach and H. Hesse, *Das Wachstum der deutschen Wirtschaft seit der Mitte des 19. Jahrhunderts* (Berlin, Heidelberg and New York, 1965), pp. 622, 624. For details, see H. Dörner, 'Das Roggen-Weizen-Verhältnis und der Mehltypenanteil am Mehlverbrauch in Westdeutschland 1893–1954', *Bäcker-Zeitung*, 8(34) (1954), pp. 10, 15. Germany had diverse regional consumption patterns. For details, see U. Spiekermann, 'Regionale Verzehrsunterschiede als Problem der Wirtschafts- und Sozialgeschichte. Räume und Strukturen im Deutschen Reich 1900–1940', in H. J. Teuteberg, G. Neumann and A. Wierlacher (eds) *Essen und kulturelle Identität: Europäische Perspektiven* (Berlin, 1997), pp. 247–82.
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8

Danish Food Production in the German War Economy[1]

Mogens R. Nissen

Denmark was a special case during the Second World War. While other German-occupied countries experienced exploitation and oppression, German policy in Denmark was relatively soft. This chapter argues that Danish food exports and the way in which production and consumption were organised played a crucial role in Germany's distinct, special occupational policy. The German occupying power pursued a special economic policy in Denmark. Institutional conditions were a decisive factor. The economic collaboration of Danish authorities and agricultural organisations established a very efficient system with strict controls of food production and food consumption, to the mutual benefit of Denmark and Germany. A brief comparison with policies in Holland, Belgium, and France illustrates the specific dynamics at work in Denmark.

Negotiating positions

Denmark was occupied on 9 April 1940 for strategic, not economic reasons. Agricultural experts in the German Ministry of Nutrition and Agriculture estimated that food export would dry out after one or two years under occupation. The German authorities in trade negotiations with the Danish government believed that post-1941 food production would only cover Danish consumption.[2] It was assumed that the occupation would cut Denmark off from overseas deliveries of feed and fertilisers, so animal production would be dramatically curtailed, as happened in Holland and Belgium with highly intensive pre-war food production, based on imports of feed and exports of animal products.[3] Before the occupation, Britain was the biggest market for Danish food exports. Some 97 per cent of bacon and some 75 per cent of butter exports

were sold on this market. Since approximately 75 per cent of all Danish exports were agricultural products, Denmark was highly dependent on the British market.[4]

When Denmark was attacked, the German government guaranteed Danish integrity and sovereignty, on condition that the Danish government accept the occupation without military resistance. Denmark formally remained an independent neutral state throughout all five occupational years. All official contacts were between the two ministries of foreign affairs. In Berlin, Denmark was considered a foreign country. If they wanted to obtain contacts in Denmark, civilian German authorities had to go via the foreign ministry. Holland and Belgium were given the same offer as the Danish government, but decided to defend their countries by force.[5] By contrast with Denmark, this resulted not only in damage to farm land, but also to the imposition of German authorities as new decision makers.[6]

In Denmark, the war saw the continuation of inter-war institutions and German–Danish negotiations. In 1934, the Danish–German Government Committees began to manage trade between the two countries, proceedings that continued during the occupation.[7] Negotiations concerned quantities and prices. Detailed agreements about agricultural products were concluded between the different Reichsstellen and the Danish Export Committees. The key figure on the German side in negotiations with Danish authorities was the head of the commercial department in the Ministry of Nutrition and Agriculture, ministerial director Dr Alex Walter.[8] The chairman of the German Government Committee since 1936, Danish negotiators in the Government Committee and in the Export Committees knew him well when Denmark was occupied; Walter was also chairman for German negotiations with Sweden and Holland up until the German occupation of Holland. In addition, he was a member of several other German negotiation committees in southeast Europe before the war.[9]

His direct superior was Staatssekretär Herbert Backe, who, under the four-year plan, was head of the preparations of future agricultural production in the German New Order (Grossraum). From May 1942, he was acting minister of nutrition and agriculture and was kingpin for the so-called 'Hunger Plan'. In this plan from December 1940, it was calculated that several million Soviet citizens had to die of starvation, when Germany occupied the Soviet Union.[10] Racism was a central element in the Nazi ideology. Danes were regarded as Aryans. It was unthinkable that Slavic countries in East and Southeast Europe were offered similar arrangements to the one in Denmark. Backe was the head

of the *Rasse- und Siedlungshauptamtes der SS* – the department of SS planning the German colonisation and race policy in the Slavic European countries in 1935–37, and Walter was attached to this department of SS.[11] While Backe, and apparently also Walter, were closely involved in implementing the exploitation policy in the East, they carried through a totally different policy in Denmark.

Walter had a powerful supporter in Backe, who confirmed all overall economic agreements concerning Danish production and exports. In his memoirs, the president of the Agricultural Council of Denmark, Henrik Hauch, made it clear that he met with Backe many times before and during the occupation. He regarded him as an 'energetic, active and competent' man, who, together with Walter, was an old friend of the Agricultural Council. Hauch recognised Backe's great importance in regard to German economic policy in Denmark.[12]

Several times before and during the occupation, Walter made reports to the central inter-ministerial committee, the *Handelspolitischer Ausschuss*. In this committee, economic authorities were represented by the head of a department or a civil servant at an equivalent level, and most German decisions concerning foreign trade were concluded here.[13] There are no examples where the committee made decisions against Walters's recommendation.[14]

Walter and his superior in the Ministry of Nutrition and Agriculture controlled not only the German Government Committee, but also the Reichsstellen, shown in Figure 8.1. The Reichsstellen were subordinated to this ministry, and prior to negotiations with the Danes the negotiators in the Reichsstellen received detailed instructions. They also had to report back to Walter from negotiations. Hence the German side was very hierarchical with Backe as top decision maker, and Walter as his subordinate, who was responsible for the implementation in practice.[15]

On the Danish side, senior officials from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs were negotiating on behalf of the Government Committee.[16] In preparation for the Danish–German meetings, the members of the Danish Government Committee met with civil servants from the Ministry of Agriculture, the Ministry of Trade, and other economic authorities and representatives from the trade organisations, to prepare proposals for the German negotiators. In this way, the committees concluded almost normal international trade agreements under the most unusual wartime circumstances. Both sides saw an advantage in keeping this institution going, and the system continued throughout the period of occupation. The same actors were in charge, and made decisions about economic and trade affairs based on pre-war experience. Personal relations were

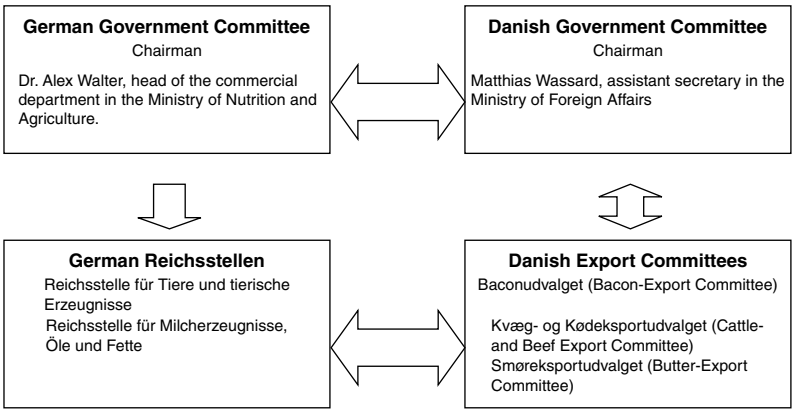


Figure 8.1 Relations between different German and Danish trade committees

characterised by mutual confidence and understanding. The climate in the institution was to a large extent based on shared values and norms. This does not mean that the Danes had adopted Nazi ideology, but a shared understanding of acceptable behaviour and institutional culture had evolved. Both sides, too, had a shared interest in ensuring maximum food production as a precondition for keeping up Danish consumption and food exports. There are numerous examples where negotiators tried hard to find solutions when there were different interests.[17]

Reichsstellen and the Export Committees concluded detailed trade agreements. The Danish Export Committees were officially subordinated to the Ministry of Agriculture. In reality they were managed and controlled by the agricultural organisations placed under the Agricultural Council of Denmark (Landbrugsraadet), as all chairmen of the Export Committees were members of the executive committee of the Agricultural Council. The executive committee coordinated and organised the policy in relation to the German negotiators and the Danish government. In September 1939, the minister of agriculture promised that in future the Export Committees not only would have a monopoly on exporting all agricultural products, but also the exclusive rights to negotiate price agreements with the Reichsstellen.[18] Thus, in the period between September 1939 and June 1941, the Export Committees controlled and managed by Danish farmers, had the exclusive rights to negotiate prices on Danish food exports with the Reichsstellen.[19] German authorities wanted to promote particular parts

of the production, primarily milk and butter, by letting prices increase heavily. Danish farmers had a similar interest in getting higher prices to increase their income.

This institutional set up and integration of agricultural producers marks an important difference with France, as well as with Holland and Belgium. In Denmark, agricultural organisations were centralised and unified in the Agricultural Council or to a smaller extent in the Organisation of Smallholders (Husmandsforeningerne). In the 1930s, they had gained significant influence on Danish agricultural policy and, probably more important, on the implementation of numerous agricultural arrangements.[20] During the occupation, these organisations still represented Danish farmers, and the cooperation between them and the Ministry of Agriculture worked without major friction. None of these Danish agricultural organisations and the leading actors had adopted the Nazi ideology. Nevertheless, German authorities did not seek to replace them with new ideological organisations like the German *Reichsnährstand*. In France and Holland, by contrast, there were several divided agricultural organisations, and the German occupational authorities insisted on establishing central agricultural organisations the same way as in Germany. They failed because of opposition from farmers.[21] Thus, it was not possible to create an efficient system of collaboration like that involving the Danish agricultural organisations.

In June 1940, a telegram was sent from the German embassy in Copenhagen to the Auswärtiges Amt.[22] The president and secretary general of the Agricultural Council, Henrik Hauch and Arne Høgsbro Holm, wanted to get in contact with Walter to negotiate prices on agricultural products.[23] It was explained that the Agricultural Council had little confidence in the negotiators from the Danish Government Committee. They preferred a direct contact to Walter without interference from the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Walter responded that he supported considerable price increases on food and that he was aware of the different views of the Danish Government Committee and the Export Committees. He finished his letter by stating that future price negotiations were to be carried out between the Reichsstellen and the Export Committees.[24] A direct contact was now established between Walter and the Agricultural Council. Important negotiating rights were taken away from the Danish Government Committee, which caused tensions between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Agriculture, and the Agricultural Council. As it was concerned that the low prices in April 1940 would cause a significant decline in production leading to food

shortages, however, the Danish government supported increased prices on agricultural products.

Trade negotiations

On 15 May 1940, an important meeting chaired by Herbert Backe took place in the German Ministry of Nutrition and Agriculture.[25] The topic was *Dänemark*. Backe and Walter explained their plan for changing Danish food production in order to reduce the populations of pigs and poultry dramatically and keep the herds of livestock almost unchanged. The objectives for the number of cattle, pork, and poultry respectively were taken directly from the estimated numbers made by the Agricultural Council of Denmark in a report from the beginning of May 1940.[26] Backe and Walter did not want to force changes through by means of control and rationing, because they doubted that it would provide the results desired. They regarded rationing as a possibility only if the Danish population had an explicit interest in it and voluntarily accepted it. Instead, they carried out a set of differentiated prices, which made Danish farmers change animal production from economic motivations. The price of poultry increased heavily while the price for eggs fell. The price for pork was already high and would remain unchanged while prices for milk products increased rapidly. In this way, the German authorities managed to carry out the desired changes in Danish agricultural production. Heavy price increases on food stimulated farmers to maximise production.

At the beginning of November 1940, the annual trade negotiations regarding Danish food exports were held for the first time after the German occupation. Such negotiations were unique among all occupied countries. Even though the negotiating sides were not equal, as the Germans had the power to demand what they wanted, there are relatively few examples where they simply imposed their will. Generally, the German negotiators tried to make agreements that both sides accepted and found mutually beneficial. As trade negotiations started, the German price policy was implemented, and the population of animals was adjusted as desired by the Agricultural Council and by the German agricultural experts. At the same time, reliable calculations of the Danish harvest became available, so it was possible to make rough estimates on production and domestic consumption the following year. The calculation for export quantities was based on these estimates. The Danish negotiators tried to reach an agreement that fixed export quantities to Germany as low as possible, fearing that high estimates would

lead to a reduction in domestic consumption if production turned out to be lower than expected. On the German side there was a clear interest in raising the calculations on production and exports as high as possible.

On the Danish side, there were several meetings between civil servants from different ministries and representatives from the Export Committees and the Agricultural Council before negotiations with the Germans started. The chairmen of the Export Committees initially very reluctant to make any calculations as they thought it too hazardous, but soon gave in.[27] On 22 October 1940, the economic commissioner at the German Embassy in Copenhagen, Franz Ebner, proposed that the trade agreement for the next year should guarantee fixed export quantities of food to Germany.[28] If Denmark delivered the guaranteed quantities, the Danish government would have had any extra production at its own disposal. It would be up to the Danish authorities to implement food rationing if they wanted to, since they had the autonomy to export excess food to other countries. This, in turn, would make it possible for the Danes to import from abroad crucial raw materials, machines, chemicals, etc. to the benefit of Danish production. These imports were, as Ebner noted, also in the interest of the Germans, as most of it would be processed and exported to Germany. Backe accepted the proposal.[29]

In the trade agreement for 1940–41 fixed export quantities of food were set for only six months.[30] The German authorities were satisfied anyway, since the quantities fixed were very generous. To achieve the guaranteed quota, the Danish government carried through rationing on butter, and other means to limit consumption on beef and pork, and also to maintain exports to Sweden and Switzerland. By controlling production and domestic consumption until the autumn of 1944, Danish authorities maintained a very efficient system. As C. B. Christensen has noted, food was never traded on the black market in Denmark and Danish authorities never lost control of the administration of prices. Food rations generally were observed in Denmark.[31] There were very few German administrators placed in Denmark during the occupation. In this way an efficient administration was implemented without involving German resources.

Other occupied countries offer a stark contrast. Like Denmark, Holland and Belgium were cut off from overseas deliveries of feed, but this had fundamentally different consequences. Food production relied heavily on imports of feed, and the population of animals had to be curtailed drastically, as the density of cattle per hectare was very high compared to other European countries. Because population density in Belgium and Holland was the highest in Europe, food consumption had to be

changed radically. The consumption of bread, potatoes, and other vegetable food increased, while the consumption of animal products declined sharply. To secure such a rapid transformation several differentiated price increases on agricultural products were introduced. Compared to the Danish case, where it was left to farmers to decide which type of production they wanted to use, there were numerous restrictive elements in Belgium and Holland. German authorities dictated which crops farmers could have on their land. From the beginning of the occupation, food rations were introduced at the same level as in Germany. One consequence of this restrictive regime was that the black market economy grew, since it was impossible to coordinate efficient control with agricultural producers.[32]

France was not included in the German *Grossraumswirtschaft*, so when it was occupied, German experts had to make plans for French agriculture.[33] Pre-war agriculture in France was relatively extensive and yields were much lower than in other Northern and Western European countries. German experts wanted to change agricultural production to what it was in Germany, based on self-sufficiency. Imports of feed from the French colonies were difficult or impossible. It was expected that yields could increase by using more labour and more fertilisers. In this way production not only would provide French food consumption, but also feed the German troops in France as well as ensure heavy food exports to Germany. Another means to secure these deliveries was food rations, which were introduced in 1940 and lowered continuously during the occupation. As in Holland and Belgium, official food prices increased relatively modestly, whereas food prices on the black market rose considerably. The black market made an important contribution to food supplies in these countries during the war. At the same time yields did not increase as hoped for by the German experts because of a general shortage of fertilisers and labour. Instead, production decreased, and as the German authorities demanded rising food exports, food rations continued to fall. This again fuelled the black market.[34]

In a report from December 1940 to all German authorities participating in the *Handelspolitischer Ausschuss*, Ebner explained about the Danish trade agreement for the year 1940–41.[35] Again he expressed enthusiasm about the results. The reason for this was that the '*Produktions- und Lieferfreudigkeit der dänischen Landwirtschaft*'[36] was maintained, and that Danish authorities – the government and the agricultural organisations – agreed upon controlling domestic consumption for the benefit of both sides. At the same time Ebner pointed out that the estimated export quantities depended both on the

increase of German exports of raw materials, machines, etc. and on political stability in Denmark, which would only be threatened by the imposition of a Nazi government or a government with Nazi ministers, neither of which was installed in Denmark. Walter expressed the same concerns in a report from February 1941 and at a meeting in the *Handelspolitischer Ausschuss*. He added that Germany had to help the Danish government secure constant consumer prices in Denmark. Otherwise there was a risk of social disturbances. Walter recommended that future prices on Danish imports and exports were kept steady.[37] There was enthusiasm on the Danish side, too, with the results achieved by the trade agreement. A draft speech by the Danish minister of foreign affairs, Erik Scavenius, in parliament on 15 November 1940, stated that it was in Denmark's own interest to make long-term trade agreements.[38] By doing so, the Danish population would benefit from stable food supplies in the future whereas other countries like Belgium, France, Spain, and Finland already experienced scarcities.

In June 1941 a new report was sent to Berlin from the embassy in Copenhagen explaining economic developments in Denmark.[39] It stressed how Denmark supported Germany with essential food supplies, which were much higher than expected by German experts at the beginning of the occupation. It was important for Germany to export more goods to Denmark, especially fertilisers. In Denmark, it explained, increased production did not cause growing domestic consumption, as in other occupied countries. The reason for reduced domestic consumption was, according to the report, a combination of efficient controls made by Danish authorities and increased consumer prices.

Danish production and exports of butter and pork surpassed all expectations in the year 1940–41. At the same time exports of cattle and beef were much lower than calculated in the fall of 1940, because Danish farmers had not reduced livestock as expected. Though Denmark only partly fulfilled the trade agreement, Danish authorities had proved their interest in controlling and reducing domestic consumption. German negotiators were confident of their Danish counterparts. It was accepted that food exports the following year would fall considerably, after the poor harvest of 1941. Danish and German estimates for animal production differed; Danish experts calculated a much smaller production volume than their German counterparts.[40] It is worth noting, however, that there was total agreement about Danish consumptions of butter, pork, and beef. After several meetings Walter concluded: 'No matter how the calculations are made the actual production will not increase: this time the trade agreement cannot be based on fixed quantities. The

numbers drawn up shall not in any way be binding . . . .'[41] With this very pragmatic attitude Walter solved the problems after the poor harvest. He trusted the Danish authorities to produce and export as much as possible in their own interest. He had a detailed knowledge of the Danish economy and realised that production and exports had to fall dramatically the next year. Both sides did everything possible to keep the system of negotiation going.

A comprehensive report was sent to Berlin at the end of January 1942.[42] For the first time Danish food exports were related directly to the consumption of the civilian population in Germany. It was emphasised how striking it was that a small country with four million inhabitants not only fed its own population but also exported considerable quantities to Germany. This was especially surprising, as it was not possible for Denmark to import feed and fertilisers. It was estimated that Danish exports of butter, pork, and beef in 1941 accounted for more than one month of German consumption.[43] This calculation fits fairly well with pre-war estimates made over Danish food exports in relation to German consumption.[44] There was a clear interest in creating these positive reports and to strengthen Walter's position in Berlin. The German envoy in Copenhagen, Renthe-Fink, had a similar interest. Food exports from Denmark helped to secure his position and that of the Auswärtiges Amt in Denmark. At a time when food exports from Denmark dropped heavily, it was important to highlight that exports so far had been vital for Germany.

In 1942 Herman Göring became increasingly concerned about the food situation for the civilian population in Germany. On August 6, 1942 he arranged a conference with high-ranking representatives from the occupied territories. The topic of the meeting was Göring's dissatisfaction with the current food supplies to Germany. He demanded considerable increases in supplies in the future. His demands meant that the populations in some occupied countries had to starve to secure the German inhabitants from hunger. At the conference, Denmark was significantly not mentioned. It indicates how the leading German authorities in Denmark had succeeded in convincing the top of the Nazi hierarchy that Danish food exports were at a maximum. Backe participated at the conference and supported Göring's demands.[45]

The trade agreement for 1942–43 was concluded after only a few days of negotiations.[46] There were almost similar expectations on the Danish and the German side, so there was not much to discuss. The German negotiators were very satisfied with the results, and another positive report was sent to Berlin.[47] It was calculated that Danish exports

of butter, pork, and beef in 1941–42 had ensured approximately three weeks consumption in Germany. The report also stressed that Denmark supplied Germany with other types of food, especially 80,000 tons of fish, just as it exported large quantities of sugar to Norway and Finland, exports that freed up sugar rations in Germany. It was concluded that food exports from Denmark accounted for more than exports from the Ukraine and similar countries under German occupation.

In December 1942 Walter returned to Copenhagen and increased German demands on exports of pork and beef. He produced a new form of calculating total Danish consumption which now included farmers' consumption as well. Farmers were allowed to kill pigs and cattle for their own consumption, and the Germans did not want to change this. They feared it would only cause an increasing black market economy, since it was not possible to control 200,000 Danish farmers. Prohibition against home killings would harm the farmers' eagerness to produce and export to Germany. Instead, Walter tried to convince the Danish authorities to carry out means to reduce the farmers' consumption.[48] The matter was discussed frequently during the next months, and in March 1943 Walter suggested a system with customers' cards that would benefit both sides. He explained that he was still against real rationings of pork and beef, but on the other hand he was interested in gaining control of the illegal exports made by German troops. Danish citizens, he suggested, should '. . . show some kind of paper . . .' when they bought pork and beef in shops. German military authorities in Denmark would not accept the use of coupons if Danish citizens did not have the same obligation.[49] Danish authorities would be able to justify customer cards – a kind of superficial food rationing – because they helped prevent real rations of pork and beef from being lowered to the German level; after 1 May 1943 Danish rations on meat were approximately three times that in Germany. At the same time they gained control of the illegal consumption practices by German troops in Denmark. At a confidential press conference on May 25 1943, this was exactly what the general secretary of the Agricultural Council, Høgsbro Holm, emphasised to the journalists:[50] customers' cards were to the benefit of the Danish population. Again it is worth noting that when this kind of rationing system was established, it was the Danish government that implemented it. The German authorities still only regarded rations as an opportunity if it was to the benefit of the Danish population. They were confident that Danish consumption of pork and beef would be reduced without increasing black markets, which would have been the case if a harsher rationing regime had been introduced.

Once the customer cards on pork and beef were implemented on 1 May 1943, trade negotiations between Denmark and Germany proceeded along a smooth course. All major issues were resolved. There were four conditions that favoured collaboration and smooth negotiation:

1 After the turn of the year 1942–1943, Danish food production and food exports increased until Denmark was liberated. The production and exports of pork and beef especially increased heavily.
2 The Danish authorities – including agricultural organisations – had for several years proved that they controlled Danish food consumption. As a result the German authorities saw no reasons to change a negotiating institution that in their view ensured a maximum of food exports to Germany.
3 Danish food exports increased at a time when German food supplies in general were decreasing. There was no incentive of risking food supplies from Denmark by changing the system.
4 Even if the German authorities had wanted to remove the Danish authorities and replace them with German administrative personnel, they did not have the resources to do so. This was clearly demonstrated when the Danish police force was arrested in September 1944, and the occupying power did not have the manpower to replace it.

The resignation of the Danish Government on 29 August 1943 did not have an impact on trade negotiations between Denmark and Germany. The Government Committees were still negotiating the same way as they did before. Civil servants and agricultural organisations continued their work in spite of the new political situation. In fact negotiations worked more smoothly after the retreat of the Danish government than before. Danish food production developed to the benefit of both sides.

The material and political importance of Danish food exports during the war

Estimates in Tables 8.1 and 8.2 are based on: (1) Calculations made in different German reports; (2) the consumption of the civilian German population; (3) the consumption of the German urban population (the civilian population minus self-sufficient farmers); (4) the consumption of the German armed forces; and (5) total German consumption.

These estimates are rough and a brief note needs to be made on their limitations. The data for German consumption is problematic, because a part of it includes estimated levels of consumption among self-sufficient

Table 8.1 The significance of Danish butter exports for German consumption during the occupation period (per cent)

	1 German calculation	2 Civilian population	3 Urban population	4 German armed forces	5 Total
Report for 1941	8	7	9	84	6
Report for 1941–42	6	5	7	37	5
Report for 1942–43	8	7	9	31	5
Report for 1943–44	8–10	7	9	36	6
Estimation 1/10/44–30/3/45[51]		4	5	21	3

Source: Calculations made in different reports and calculations based on export quantities published in Statistisk Departement, *Landbrugsstatistik 1945*, related to data over German consumptions published in Länderrat des Amerikanischen Besatzungsgebiets, (ed.), *Statistisches Handbuch von Deutschland 1928–1944*, p. 494.

Table 8.2 The significance of Danish exports of pork and beef for German consumption during the occupation period (per cent)

	1 German calculation	2 Civilian population	3 Urban population	4 German armed forces	5 Total
Report for 1941	8	7	9	28	6
Report for 1941–42	6	4	5	10	3
Report for 1942–43	6–8	4	6	9	3
Report for 1943–44	20	10	14	22	7
Estimation 1/10/44–30/3/45		10	13	20	6

Source: Calculations made in different reports and calculations based on export quantities published in Statistisk Departement, *Landbrugsstatistik 1945*, related to data over German consumptions published in Länderrat des Amerikanischen Besatzungsgebiets (ed.), *Statistisches Handbuch von Deutschland 1928–1944*, p. 494.

German farmers. Data for black market consumption is not included. Therefore, total German consumption was probably higher than that estimated in the *Statistisches Handbuch*. On the other hand, the figures regarding Danish export quantities are quite reliable, because both the Export Committees and the Reichsstellen made detailed statements, and there are no examples of disagreements.

It is fair to conclude that Danish exports of butter, pork, and beef accounted for one month's consumption of the civilian German population – the equivalent of 8 per cent. Their contribution was relatively low in 1941–42 and 1942–43, especially with regard to pork and beef. Danish export quantities of pork and beef then more than doubled between the harvest years 1942–43 and 1943–44; at the same time the level of consumption of the civilian German population fell rapidly. The consumption of pork and beef by the urban German population declined from 2,077,000 tons in 1939–40 to 1,125,000 tons in 1943–44; the decrease was strongest in the last year of the war.[52] The last estimates made by Backe in September 1944, when he calculated the significance of Danish exports of pork and beef at approximately 20 per cent of the consumption of the civilian population and 25 per cent of the consumption of the armed forces, were perhaps not that misleading.[53] He related Danish exports to the consumption of the urban German population, because self-sufficient farmers covered their own needs. It was the urban population which gained from Danish exports, or suffered if exports stopped. When urban consumption dropped dramatically in the last year of the war, and at the same time Danish export quantities increased, food exports covered up to 20 per cent of what the urban population in Germany consumed.

According to Brandt, Denmark exported more than 200,000 tons of butter in the period 1940–1943, while France exported a mere 49,000 tons in the same period. Denmark delivered approximately 548,000 tons beef and pork to Germany in that period, France some 735,000 tons. During 1944, France was liberated, and exports to Germany decreased, while Danish exports of butter were constant and the export of beef and pork increased.[54] Of course France exported large quantities of grain and other vegetable products to Germany, while Denmark only exported fish in addition to the above mentioned food stuffs. Still it is amazing that Denmark exported almost the same quantities of animal food products as France. No other small occupied state exported butter, pork, or beef on a similar level to Germany. And the Soviet territories only supported the Reich with food, including butter, pork, and beef, in the harvest years of 1941–42 and 1942–43.[55] Brandt has noted his conclusion that: 'The production record of Danish agriculture in the Second World War is one

of the most remarkable in the annals of World agriculture. It ranks at least as high as the achievements of American farmers in farm production, and probably higher.'[56]

The political importance of Danish food exports calls for similar attention. As shown, several reports were sent from the German embassy in Copenhagen during the war, emphasising the importance of Danish food exports for the German civilian population. There was a shared interest among all the leading German authorities in Denmark in keeping up food production and export, and this mattered when other political issues in Denmark were discussed. Walter had to report back to Backe about economic developments in Denmark. He also had to report to, and produce proposals for, the *Handelspolitische Ausschuss*, where all central economic authorities were represented. Decisions made in this decisive interdepartmental committee in relation to Denmark always had agricultural production as a main objective. Other considerations were not allowed to harm Danish farmers or Danish food production.

Walter repeatedly emphasised that it was more important to secure food exports to Germany than follow a political path in Denmark, for instance, by installing a Nazi or semi-Nazi government. There are several examples, too, where he tried to interfere to retain the *status quo* at times of political crises.[57] The clearest example was in October 1944, when he wrote an angry letter to the Auswärtiges Amt, when the Danish police force was arrested.[58] He made it clear that with the removal of the Danish police there were no longer controls of production and domestic consumption. Earlier, at the beginning of November 1943, a delegation with three high-ranking Danish civil servants had visited different authorities in Berlin.[59] Walter followed the Danish delegation and participated at the meetings, where he, on behalf of the Danes, helped to explain the importance of Danish food exports. It is clear that the Danes saw him as an important ally at these meetings. Walter did what he could to convince German authorities that the German interest lay in keeping conditions in Denmark unchanged.

Herbert Backe intervened in a similar direction during political crises in Denmark. On 2 September 1943 – three days after the resignation of the Danish government – the German embassy in Copenhagen informed the Auswärtiges Amt that Backe and Walter did not want to exploit the situation to secure more food from Denmark.[60] On the contrary, they accepted fewer quantities for a short period, but demanded that conditions in Denmark returned to normal as soon as possible. The most striking intervention came on 26 September 1944, when Backe wrote a letter to the German minister of foreign affairs,

Ribbentrop.[61] He angrily explained that the arrest of the Danish police one week earlier jeopardised crucial food exports from Denmark. The civilian population in Germany might lose 20 per cent of its consumption of pork and beef. He demanded that conditions in Denmark immediately went back to normal. Karl Schnurre, who referred to Backes letter, fully agreed with his demands, and ordered the envoy in Denmark, Werner Best, to find a solution quickly.

The Auswärtiges Amt and the Ministry of Nutrition and Agriculture shared this approach to Denmark. For the Ministry of Nutrition and Agriculture normality was the basis for ensuring maximum food exports to Germany. The main interest of the armed forces was to keep law and order in Denmark, without spending too many German resources. With regard to Danish agriculture, the overall interests of the armed forces reflected those of the civil authorities.

Hitler indicated several times that he was aware of the importance of Danish food supplies to Germany. When Best was appointed envoy in Denmark, Hitler explained his duties to him at a meeting on 27 October 1942. One of the most important obligations was to maintain Danish food exports to Germany, by keeping the existing negotiating institutions.[62] Again two days after the resignation of the Danish government, Hitler ordered Best to secure '*die Erhaltung der dänischen Wirtschaftskraft*' – the maintenance of Danish production.[63] On 6 April 1944, Hitler ordered more goods to be exported to Denmark, an incentive for Danish farmers to produce more food.[64] Finally, Schnurre referred to a repeated instruction from Hitler at the beginning of October 1944. Again Hitler ordered more goods exported to Denmark to secure food exports from Denmark.[65]

The critical role attached to Danish food production and exports must be seen in the context of the overall views of the Nazi elite, especially the strong memory of the First World War. Volkmann has emphasised that: 'Traumatised by the poor food supplies during the First World War, the national socialist leaders, with Hitler himself at the top, never surmounted the dread for a discontented population at the home front, which not only weakened war morale, but also threatened the whole regime.'[66] Indeed, Backe in his book in 1942 explained German defeat in the First World War as a result of failing food supplies.[67]

Summary

Denmark was a special case in the Second World War. Though clearly an illusion, its official status as a neutral country had significant influence

on the German occupation of Denmark. The ministries of foreign affairs were the only formal contact between the two countries. Thus, established governmental committees continued to manage trade during the war. As a result, German administrators at the Ministry of Nutrition and Agriculture, who were well known and regarded as sober minded and trustworthy by their Danish counterparts, were the decisive German authorities in relation to economic policy in Denmark during the occupation.

This special institutional framework was the basis for a relatively lenient economic policy. From the beginning to the end of the occupation period, the leading actors in the Ministry of Nutrition and Agriculture believed that the best results in Denmark were achieved by encouraging farmers' eagerness to produce and deliver. In contrast to Holland or France, where the occupation led to a regime of diminishing food rations, black markets, and malnutrition, policy in Denmark was lenient and informed by a sense of shared, symbiotic interests between occupier and occupied. They did not believe that it was possible to implement food rations at the German level in Denmark because it was impossible to control production and consumption. Instead, they carried out a model with differentiated food prices at a much higher level so that farmers, out of pure self-interest, changed and maximised production.[68]

This model proved to be efficient. The yield of Danish harvests was maintained, and the production of animal products did not decrease as much as expected. At the same time Danish authorities and agricultural organisations, unified in the Agricultural Council of Denmark, secured well-organised controls of production and consumption. Thus, it was possible to keep food consumptions in Denmark almost constant and to export considerable quantities of butter, pork, and beef to Germany. Exports were higher than expected by the German Ministry of Nutrition and Agriculture which showed total confidence in the Danish authorities. There were no reasons or resources to replace them with German administrators. In this way, agriculture also shaped the general occupational policy in Denmark. The population was generally immune, shielded from the German authorities, food supplies were relatively high, and the food exports secured Danish jobs. By economic standards, the special occupational policy was to mutual benefit. Whether the same can be said in moral terms is a different matter, although it is much easier to raise this moral issue by hindsight, 60 years after the liberation than it was for the top decision makers during the occupation.

Notes

1 This article is based on my PhD Dissertation, *Produktions- und Lieferfreudigkeit. Landbruget under den tyske besættelse 1940–1945* (Esbjerg: Unpublished PhD Dissertation at University of Southern Denmark, 2004). Published in 2005 by Lindhardt & Ringhof Forlag under the title *Til fælles bedste [For the Common Good]*.

2 Bundesarchiv (henceforth BAarch) R16/1351. Report made by 'Institut für Konjunkturforschung' in May 1940 :'Die Ernährungswirtschaft in Dänemark, Norwegen und Schweden'. See also H.-E. Volkmann, 'Landwirtschaft und Ernährung in Hitlers Europa 1939–45', *Militärgeschichtlichen Mitteilungen*, 35 (1984), pp. 28–32.

3 Volkmann, 'Landwirtschaft und Ernährung in Hitlers Europa 1939–45', pp. 32–9; and K. Brandt, *Management of Agriculture and Food in the German-Occupied and Other Areas of Fortress Europ:. A Study in Military Government* (Stanford, CA., 1953), pp. 371–480.

4 Det Statistiske Departement, *Statistisk Aarbog 1940*.

5 Aa. Trommer, *Disse fem år. Tværsnit og indsnit. Danmark 1940–45* (Odense, 2001), p. 32.

6 Volkmann, 'Landwirtschaft und Ernährung in Hitlers Europa 1939–45', pp. 32–9; and Brandt, *Management of Agriculture and Food*, pp. 371–480.

7 S. Jensen, *Levevilkår under Besættelsen. Træk af den Økonomiske og Sociale Udvikling i Danmark under den Tyske Besættelse 1940–45* (København, 1971), p. 18; and Nissen, *Produktions- und Lieferfreudigkeit. Landbruget under den tyske besættelse 1940–1945*, p. 40.

8 A. Walter, 'Landwirtschaftliche Zusammenarbeit im Europa', *Bericht über Landwirtschaft. Zeitschrift für Agrarpolitik und Landwirtschaft im Europa*, 28, (1942/3), pp. 351–9; and Nissen, *Produktions- und Lieferfreudigkeit*, pp. 42–3.

9 BAarch R901/67939 and R9I/949.

10 R. S. Wistrich, *Who's Who in Nazi Germany*, 2nd edn (London, 2002), pp. 6–7; and C. Gerlach, *Krieg, Ernährung, Völkermord. Forschungen zur deutschen Vernichtungspolitik im Zweiten Weltkrieg* (Hamburg, 1998), pp. 15–22.

11 National Archives: NA: SSO file for DR. Alex Walter. Read also M. R. Nissen, *Til fælles bedste – det danske landbrug under besættelsen* (København, 2005), ch. 2.

12 H. Hauch, *Landbrugsminister Henrik Hauchs erindringer* (Aarhus, 1978), pp. 86–92.

13 BAarch R901/68939 and R9I/949. See also J. Lund, *Danmark og den europæiske nyordning. Det nazistiske regime og Danmarks plads i den tyske Grossraum-wirtschaft 1940–42* (København: Unpublished PhD Dissertation at University of Copenhagen, 1999), p. 34.

14 Nissen, *Produktions- und Lieferfreudigkeit*, pp. 47–8.

15 Nissen, *Produktions- und Lieferfreudigkeit*, ch.r 2 in general and pp. 52–3 in specific.

16 M. Mau, *'Business as Usual'. De dansk-tyske handelsrelationer under besæt-telsen. En analyse af Udenrigsministeriets embedsmænds politik i regeringsudvalget* (København: Unpublished Dissertation at University of Copenhagen, 2002),

p. 25; and S. Andersen *Danmark i det tyske Storrum. Dansk økonomisk tilpasning til Tysklands nyordning af Europa 1940–45* (København, 2003), p. 33.

17 For a detailed theoretical and empirical examination of the basis of the institution, read Nissen, *Produktions- und Lieferfreudigkeit*, chs 1 and 2.

18 F. Just, *Landbruget, staten og eksporten 1930–1950* (Esbjerg, 1992), p. 138; and Landbrugsraadets Præsidiemeddelelser (Henceforth PR), no. 26/1939.

19 PR no. 26/1939 and PR no. 14/1941.

20 Just, *Landbruget, staten og eksporten 1930–1950*, for a detailed examination of the relations between the central administration and the agricultural organizations during the 1930s.

21 Brandt, *Management of Agriculture and Food in the German-Occupied and Other Areas of Fortress Europe*, pp. 371–480.

22 The German Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

23 BAarch: R901/67771 and Jensen *Levevilkår under Besættelsen. Træk af den Økonomiske og Sociale Udvikling i Danmark under den Tyske Besættelse 1940–45*, p. 73. Letter dated 14 June 1940 written by the economic commissioner in Denmark, Dr Franz Ebner.

24 BAarch: R901/67771. Letter dated 24 June 1940.

25 BAarch: R16/1306.

26 PR 17/1940 and PR 18/1940.

27 PR no. 34/1940.

28 BAarch R901/76736. Ebner was employed by the Ministry of Nutrition and Agriculture with Walter as his superior before the occupation. There was still close connections between Walter and Backe after he was appointed economic commissioner in Denmark.

29 BAarch R901/76736.

30 Rigsarkivet (Henceforth RA): UM 1909–45, H64–192. Trade Agreement signed 7 November 1940.

31 S. B. Christensen, *Den sorte børs – fra besættelse til efterkrigstid* (København, 2003), p. 319.

32 Brandt, *Management of Agriculture and Food in the German-Occupied and Other Areas of Fortress Europe*, pp. 371–480; and Volkmann, '*Landwirtschaft und Ernährung*-in Hitlers Europa 1939–45', pp. 32–9.

33 Brandt, *Management of Agriculture and Food in the German-Occupied and Other Areas of Fortress Europe*, p. 495; and Volkmann, 'Landwirtschaft und Ernährung in Hitlers Europa 1939–45', p. 38.

34 Brandt, *Management of Agriculture and Food in the German-Occupied and Other Areas of Fortress Europe*, pp. 481–569; and Volkmann, 'Landwirtschaft und Ernährung in Hitlers Europa 1939–45', pp. 38–42.

35 BAarch: R901/68311. Report dated 9 December 1940, 'Wirtschaftslage in Dänemark'.

36 The expression means 'the Danish farmers' eagerness to produce and supply' and it was a mantra in many German reports in all five years.

37 BAarch: R901/68311 and R901/68939. Report 'Bemerkungen zur Wirtschaftslage Dänemarks' dated 18 February 1941, and summary of a meeting 7 April 1941.

38 RA: UM 1909–45, H64–192.

39 BAarch: R901/68311. Report with the title'Die Wirtschaft Dänemarks im ersten Jahr nach der Besetzung und ihre Bedeutung für Deutschland' dated 15 June 1941 and written by Franz Ebner.
40 PR no. 19/1941.
41 PR no. 19/1941.
42 BAarch: R901/68311 and R901/68712. The title of the report written by Franz Ebner was '*Dänemarks Wirtschaft in Beziehung zu Deutschland*' and it was dated 31 January 1942.
43 The conditions for his calculations were a German population of 90 million people, and a weekly ration per habitant on 125 grams of butter and 400 grams of pork and beef.
44 Länderrat des Amerikanischen Besatzungsgebiets (ed.), *Statistischen Handbuch von Deutschland 1928–1944* (München, 1949), p. 494.
45 H. Knudsen and H. V. Ringsted, *Maskerne falder I Nürnberg* (København, 1946), pp. 53–74.
46 RA: UM 1909–45, H64–195; and PR no. 18/1942. The agreements were signed 13 and 14 November 1942.
47 BAarch: R901/67735. Report dated 24 November 1942 with the title 'Politische Informationen für die deutschen Dienststellen in Dänemark' and the subtitle 'Abschluss der deutsch-dänischen Regierungsausschuss-Verhandlungen und die Leistungen der dänischen Landwirtschaft an das Reich'.
48 RA: UM 1909–45, H64–195; and PR no. 20/1942.
49 RA: UM 1909–45, H64–195. Summary of meetings with Walter 16–18 March 1943.
50 PR 9/1943.
51 The calculation is made on the basis of 14,000 tons butter exported to Germany in the time period, cf. Landbrugsraadets Præsidiemeddelelser, and related to half of the German butter consumptions in the harvest year 1943–44, because there are no data for the German consumptions in the harvest year 1944–45. One must take into consideration that butter production generally was much higher during the summer compared to production in the winter season.
52 Länderrat des Amerikanischen Besatzungsgebiets (ed.), *Statistisches Handbuch von Deutschland 1928–1944*, p. 494.
53 RA: Tyske Arkiver, Auswärtiges Amt, Ha. Pol. ABT, AA 228. Report dated 11 October 1944, sent from the German embassy in Copenhagen to the Auswärtiges Amt.
54 Brandt, *Management of Agriculture and Food in the German-Occupied and Other Areas of Fortress Europe*, pp. 308 and 564.
55 Volkmann, 'Landwirtschaft und Ernährung in Hitlers Europa 1939–45', pp. 67–71. In these years some 25 per cent and 40 per cent respectively of German meat imports and some 38 per cent and 34 per cent respectively of the butter imports were from Soviet territories.
56 Brandt, *Management of Agriculture and Food in the German-Occupied and Other Areas of Fortress Europe*, p. 301.
57 See, for instance, H. Kirchhoff, *Augustoprøret 1943. Samarbejdspolitikkens Fald. Forudsætninger og forløb. En studie i kollaboration og modstand*), vol. 1 (København, 1971), p. 106; and H. Poulsen, *Besættelsesmagten og de danske*

nazister. Det politiske forhold mellem tyske myndigheder og nazistiske kredse i Danmark 1940–43 (København, 1970), p. 254.

58 RA: Tyske Arkiver, Auswärtiges Amt, Ha. Pol. Abt., AA 228. Letter dated 13 October 1944.

59 RA: 0014 Landbrugs- og Fiskeriministeriet 1848 –: J04: Statskonsulenten i Berlin 1921–45 (14/200/13). Package no. 9–12 and package no. 21. On 2 and 3 November, they visited the permanent secretary in the Auswärtiges Amt Steengrath; the permanent secretary, Landfried, in the Ministry of Economic Affairs; acting minister of nutrition and agriculture Backe; the director of the Reichsbank, Puhl; and General Becker, head of the economic department of the Armed Forces (OKW).

60 Den Parlamentariske Kommission (Henceforth PK): Bilag xiii, 429, p. 930.

61 RA: Tyske Arkiver, Auswärtiges Amt, Ha. Pol. Abt., AA228. Report dated 13 October 1944, written by the head of the commercial department in the Auswärtiges Amt, Karl Schnurre.

62 Kirchhoff, *Augustoprøret 1943. Samarbejdspolitikkens Fald. Forudsætninger og forløb. En studie i kollaboration og modstand*, vol. 1, pp. 48–52; and O. B. Jensen, *Infiltration, kollaboration og nødvendigt samarbejde. Studier i de økonomiske relationer mellem Danmark og Tyskland 1940–1945* (Aarhus: Unpublished PhD Dissertation at University of Aarhus, 2003), pp. 214–15.

63 RA: Tyske Arkivalier, Auswärtiges Amt, Ha. Pol. Abt. AA 281; Lund, *Danmark og den europæiske nyordning. Det nazistiske regime og Danmarks plads i den tyske Grossraumwirtschaft 1940–42*, pp. 171–2; and Kirchhoff, *Augustoprøret 1943. Samarbejdspolitikkens Fald. Forudsætninger og forløb. En studie i kollaboration og modstand*, vol. 1, pp. 105–6. Report dated 26 December 1943, written by Schnurre.

64 Jensen, *Infiltration, kollaboration og nødvendigt*, p. 6.

65 RA: Tyske Arkiver, Auswärtiges Amt, AA 228.

66 Volkmann, 'Landwirtschaft und Ernährung in Hitlers Europa 1939–45, p. 9.

67 H. Backe, *Um die Nahrungs-Freiheit Europas. Weltwirtschaft oder Groβraum* (Leipzig, 1942), p. 9.

68 Read M. R. Nissen, 'Prices on Food, 1940–45: Nazi Price Policy in Occupied Denmark', *NORDEUROPAforum. Zeitschrift für Politik, Wirtschaft und Kultur*, 1, 14 Jahrgang 2004. pp. 25–44, for a detailed examination of this topic.

9

The Mystery of the Dying Dutch: Can Micronutrient Deficiencies Explain the Difference between Danish and Dutch Wartime Mortality?[1]

Ralf Futselaar

Introduction

From the spring of 1940, both Denmark and the Netherlands were occupied by Nazi Germany for a period of almost exactly five years. During these years, mortality rates in the Netherlands rose significantly, whereas mortality in Denmark was only marginally affected. Since the wartime experience of both countries was in many other respects similar, a comparative investigation into the causes of these different outcomes is an intriguing project. The outcome of that comparison, this chapter argues, is that the most likely cause for the observed difference was the different diet prevailing in each of the two countries. Such a conclusion, of course, can only be arrived at when both a clear biomedical explanation can be given, and when possible alternative explanations can be shown to have had little or no impact. As a consequence, the analysis begins by testing other possible causes of mortality and assessing their limited relevance. Only in the last section will the main explanatory suspect, mild micronutrient deficiency, be brought to the fore.

Both Denmark and the Netherlands were occupied by Nazi Germany after short-lived and mostly ineffective military resistance, just like so many other countries. Both were relatively wealthy countries, and characterised by comparatively low mortality rates, both before and after the Second World War. Both countries suffered a significant economic setback under Nazi occupation, not least because they were cut off from their overseas trading partners. On the other hand, neither country

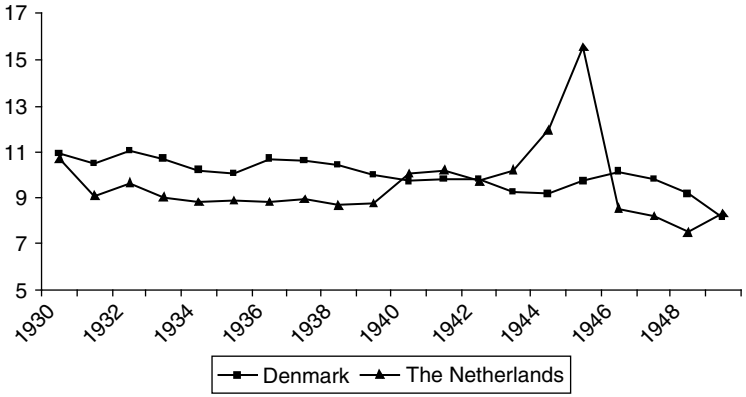


Figure 9.1 Standardised mortality rates (SMR) for Denmark and the Netherlands, 1930–1948

Source: Centraal bureau voor statistiek, *Maandschiften*, Human Mortality Database (accessible through the internet at www.mortality.org)

was treated exceptionally brutally by the occupying force, at least in comparison with most other occupied countries in Central and Eastern Europe. In Nazi ideology, the Danes and the Dutch were racial equals of Germans, to be treated with a certain courtesy and if possible won over to the cause of pan-Germanic unity. Of course the Dutch (and, later, Danish) Jews, who were persecuted with uncanny ruthlessness, were principally exempt from any such considerations, as were gypsies and other perceived 'inferiors'. For the majority of people in both Denmark and the Netherlands, however, at least until late 1944, German violence was ever-present, but comparatively restrained.

In spite of the similarities between Denmark and the Netherlands the patterns of mortality prevailing during the occupation years were remarkably different. As can be seen in Figure 9.1, apart from a slight upturn at the end of the war, Danish mortality rates were not much affected by the German occupation. In the Netherlands, on the other hand, mortality rose considerably after the invasion of 1940, and dropped, almost as suddenly, to a level well below its pre-war levels in the course of 1946–47.

Patterns of mortality

Of the difference between the two countries, only the Dutch mortality peak of 1945 can be explained relatively easily. During the period

between the liberation of the southern Netherlands in September 1944 and the liberation of the North in April and May of 1945, social and economic order collapsed in the Netherlands, and a brief but severe famine broke out in its western cities. Denmark experienced no subsistence crisis of that kind and consequently did not experience such a sudden upsurge of mortality either. Apart from the 1945 peak, however, no explanation for the difference between the two countries, or for that matter the rapid return of the Netherlands to its pre-war levels of mortality, is immediately evident. Judging by Figure 9.1, the rise of mortality in the Netherlands up to 1944 appears to have been significant, but for the most part hardly spectacular. The true impact of the occupation on mortality is only revealed when age-specific mortality rates are investigated and compared. As can be seen in Appendix A, mortality of children and young adults rose dramatically in the Netherlands, already doubling in some age groups by 1943. The mortality rates of Dutch middle-aged and elderly people were affected much less, at least until the advent of famine in late 1944. Such developments did not, or hardly, affect Danish youths, whose mortality rates remained roughly stable.

A second remarkable aspect of the development of Dutch mortality was the role of infectious diseases. Although the Netherlands suffered considerable casualties in a series of bombardments and fierce fighting in the course of liberation, most of the wartime rise of (child) mortality was caused by infectious diseases. The relationship between warfare and outbreaks of infectious disease has of course been known for millennia and has left a profound mark on demographic history. War, if only through the movement of people it causes, contributes greatly to the outbreak of epidemics.[2] What was affecting the wartime Dutch, however, was not a single epidemic or imported disease. Rather, a number of diseases, most of which had already been fairly common before the war, killed far more people during the period 1940–45 than before or after liberation. This radical upsurge of otherwise normal diseases, moreover, cannot be blamed on the development of particularly virulent types of these diseases (which would have been rather a remarkable coincidence), since these should then have spread to Denmark as well, which was also locked into the German-dominated area and exposed to the same stems of infectious disease.

The variety of infectious diseases that caused people to die during the occupation years was enormous, but in the affected age groups a mere handful of diseases caused most casualties. Over half of the deaths attributable to infectious disease among over-10s were caused by diphtheria

and tuberculosis (mainly pulmonary TB and TB of the nervous system). Younger children were predominantly killed by measles, whooping cough, dysentery, and bronchopneumonia. Infants and the under-4s were also gravely affected by those diseases as well as by diarrhoea. These diseases, as well as a number of less prominent ones such as typhoid fever and influenza, caused much of the rise in mortality in the occupied Netherlands. It is not possible to establish precisely how many excess deaths were caused by war-related illness, both because of insufficiencies in the available data, and because it is not known how many deaths there would have been in the absence of occupation.

The second of these problems can be overcome by estimating a normal trend based on the development of mortality and disease rates during the late 1930s and early 1940s. This is, perhaps, a dangerous venture into 'what if' history, because in reality it cannot of course be known what would have happened to mortality rates in the absence of the Second World War. Comparing observed cases with an estimated trend, however, does provide a useful insight into the relative changes during the war years. The problem of knowing whether deaths were really caused by infectious diseases results to a degree from a lack of clarity in both diagnosis and reporting. Some of the wartime deaths were never linked to any more precise cause than 'chest problems' or 'unknown causes'. Some such cases may have been caused by infectious diseases, but it is now impossible to say how many. Here only those deaths which clearly were caused by infectious disease have been taken into account. Table 9.1 displays the percentages of the annual estimated excess deaths that were caused by the estimated increase of infectious

Table 9.1 Percentage of excess mortality in the Netherlands attributable to infectious disease

Year/Age	0	1	2–4	5–9	10–14	15–19	20–24	25–29
1940	40	55	59	−129	−44	39	24	17
1941	63	81	76	58	118	93	84	43
1942	68	62	71	85	117	93	69	39
1943	89	74	75	82	90	71	51	37
1944	67	66	63	49	39	40	35	28
1945	69	69	68	49	41	36	21	21

Source: Cause-of-death statistics kindly provided by KNCV Tuberculose Fonds, The Hague. The table displays the percentage of excess deaths attributable to infectious disease. Calculations are based on estimated trends of mortality and infectious disease mortality, based on the years 1935–39 and 1947–50, and adjusted for changing population size.

disease mortality. As can be seen in Table 9.1, infectious disease mortality was the driving force behind much of the upsurge in mortality. Only during the last war years, and only in the age-groups over 15, did violent and hunger-related mortality take over. Otherwise, infectious diseases clearly caused the vast majority of wartime excess deaths.

Having established that the rise of mortality in the Netherlands was to a large extent the result of rising infectious disease mortality, caused by a variety of normal endemic diseases, the question remains whether the rise in incidence, or to be precise the rise in the lethality of disease was the driving force behind the changed pattern of mortality. This, however, is very difficult to investigate. Under National Socialist rule it could be highly advantageous to simulate a dangerous infectious disease, for example to escape coerced labour in Germany. The desire to be registered as dangerously ill, and the willingness of many doctors to cooperate with pseudo-patients, caused the number of registered cases to rise unduly and this data is consequently of little use. It is impossible to reconstruct what percentage of people contracting a certain disease were killed by it. Cause-of-death statistics, although not entirely immune to such fraud, were affected much less by these problems and it is therefore these on which this chapter is primarily based. Regrettably, this means that it is unclear whether those who were infected with diseases had a greater chance of dying, or rather that a greater number of infections caused increased mortality.

What is clear, however, is that the impact of infectious disease during the German occupation of the Netherlands was far more dramatic than it had been before or after. This was the result not of the outbreak of a particularly virulent disease or the introduction of an entirely new one, but rather of the far greater death toll of diseases that had been there before. It is likewise clear that the considerable increase of infectious disease mortality was remarkably limited both in terms of age groups affected and in terms of time span. Only the young, it seems, were very vulnerable to the increased deadliness of infectious diseases and the period of vulnerability fits the occupation years almost exactly. In spite of the superficial similarity of both countries' occupation experience, a very significant difference or set of differences, then must have been at work.

The international context

Interestingly, Denmark appears to have been the exception rather than the rule in wartime Europe.[3] Although research into wartime mortality

in most other countries is still in its infancy, the Dutch experience of rising (child) mortality, caused by a rise in the incidence of infectious diseases, appears to have been rather a common one. The universality of rising civilian mortality during the Second World War has, unsurprisingly, been noted by both contemporaries and historians. The British nutritionist Isabella Leitch, to name one illustrious mid-twentieth-century scholar, speculated about the impact of wartime living standards on child health in 1950. In her famous article 'Growth and Health', Leitch pointed out that in both Britain and Germany the impact of the Second World War on living standards had been far more dramatic than during the First World War, but that its impact on public health had been far less pronounced. This was remarkable, especially in the British case; the Second World War had had a great impact on life in Britain, because of the intense bombardments of its cities and the mass migration of children to the countryside. Nevertheless, child health in Britain had been rather good during the Second World War, and certainly much better than during the First World War. In Germany, the impact of the Second World War on public health had been far greater, but there too, the impact of the First World War on public health had also been far greater, whereas its military impact had clearly been far less pronounced. In all four cases, that is, in two countries, during both wars, children's growth had been stunted, and the incidence of diseases such as TB had risen. Having excluded, on the basis of her comparison with the First World War, explanations such as blackouts, bombardments or evacuation, Leitch concluded that wartime diets in the two countries had caused nutritional deficiencies and professed that 'underfeeding, which produces underdeveloped people, also interferes with the processes which determine immunity or susceptibility to tuberculosis'.[4]

In a recent article, the German historians Jörg Baten and Andrea Wagner have likewise emphasised the stunted growth of German children, revealing that this development began with the rise of Nazism in 1933, rather than with the outbreak of war. In spite of considerable economic growth and the achievement of full employment in Germany, (child) mortality also rose well above the level common during the Weimar Republic. Baten and Wagner, like Leitch, have linked the observed deterioration of German health to changes in the prevailing diet. The sharply diminished protein content of the German diet, they argue, coincides remarkably with the observed medical outcomes. Although they appear unaware of the work of Leitch and other contemporary nutritionists, the problems they observed were roughly similar,

as is their, admittedly tentative, explanation that changes in the food situation are the most likely explanatory variable.[5]

Stunted growth, as observed in Germany (and to an extent in Britain) may well have existed in the occupied Netherlands, but reliable sources to investigate child growth are yet to be found. In Denmark, where superficial research into child growth was done by the Council for Nutrition and Household Economics (*Ernærings of Husholdningsnævnet*), stunted growth was not reported during the occupation years.[6] Since the rise of mortality observed elsewhere was likewise for the most part absent, one may safely assume that whatever war-related circumstance, or combination of circumstances, caused the decline of public health in countries such as the Netherlands or Germany (from 1933 onwards) during the Second World War, was of no great importance in Denmark. Thus Denmark, henceforth, can serve as a test-case, if not to determine what was killing so many young civilians in other countries, then at least to exclude a number of possible causes that were of little or no relevance.

Exposure and immunity

The possible causes of increased disease morbidity or mortality are manifold, but for our purposes can be divided into a mere two categories. The first of these includes all explanations that concern the exposure of people to infectious diseases. A variety of environmental circumstances, such as overcrowding, declining hygienic standards or evacuation may greatly aid the spread of disease within a population.[7] The other category of explanations focuses on the ability of the human immune system to fight off an infection, either avoiding sickness altogether, or at least surviving it. These factors include, for example, malnutrition, stress or sleep deprivation. Commonly, of course, both categories are at play, together making war the deadly phenomenon it has time and again proven to be.

In Dutch historiography, insofar as the issue of wartime civilian mortality has been addressed at all, emphasis has been placed firmly on the former category of explanations. In his 1985 study *Tussen ons volk en de honger*, Gerard Trienekens proved that the hunger that was supposed to have prevailed during the war years was to a large extent mythical. Trienekens estimated that although caloric intake declined significantly during the occupation, an average adult male still ate well over 2400 Kcal per day, enough to avoid quantitative malnutrition, at least until late 1944. Having established that the Dutch had not been the famished people they had hitherto been believed to have been, but acknowledging

the rise in mortality, Trienekens listed a number of circumstances as more likely causes of wartime mortality.[8] Almost all of these, such as declining hygiene, migration, etc., fall into the first category of explanations. In spite of fierce criticism at the time, his views eventually reached the status of orthodoxy. In his 2002 economic history of the Netherlands in the 1940s, Hein Klemann reiterated Trienekens' explanations, summing up the causal relation in a sentence; 'Poverty is bad for people.'[9] But can greater exposure to infection indeed explain the rise of mortality in the Netherlands? It is worth assessing the allegedly lethal environmental changes one by one.

Intensified movement, evacuation, and overcrowding of people, to begin with, seems a likely cause of rising disease incidence. Displacement of large groups of people over relatively long distances, typical of modern warfare, is known to further the spread of infectious diseases.[10] During the occupation of the Netherlands, numerous people were evacuated from the western coast (especially from The Hague), went to Germany to work, or were otherwise being moved about or cramped together. This may have helped the spread of infectious disease considerably. As an explanation for the difference between the Netherlands and Denmark, however, it can hardly be sufficient, because circumstances in Denmark were in many respects similar. A proportionally similar number of Danes worked temporarily in Germany, as labourers, soldiers or builders.[11] Tens of thousands of young Danes migrated to huge labour camps in rural Jutland, to work in turf and lignite mining. Even greater numbers moved to the great building sites on the western coast, to work on the erection of the *Atlantikwall*, where they were often housed in barracks.[12] Finally, the presence of considerable numbers of *Wehrmacht* troops previously deployed at the Eastern Front linked the country directly to one of the most disease-rife areas in Europe.[13] As probable as the movement and concentration of people may seem as a cause of rising rates of infection, it is difficult to explain why no such development took place in Denmark.

A second argument against this explanatory variable is the fact that it does little to explain the observed age division of rising mortality. Children were hardly the most mobile people in The Netherlands, but they were nevertheless relatively hard-hit by rising mortality. Rising mortality of young adults and especially young males could, perhaps, be explained by increased movement, but then the difference with the Danish case is all the more poignant. It is hard to see how young Dutchmen would contract TB in droves as a result of their working in Germany or moving to the countryside whereas their Danish counterparts would

have been invulnerable to such dangers. A final argument against movement of people as an explanatory variable is that although such movements continued, or even intensified, after liberation, they apparently no longer caused increased mortality after 1945.[14] Although it almost certainly had an impact on the contraction of specific infectious diseases, increased human traffic does not explain the remarkable difference in mortality figures.

An alternative environmental explanation related to the increased exposure to infectious diseases is the diminished availability of soap and the consequent deterioration of domestic and personal hygiene. The soap ration in the Netherlands indeed declined sharply during the occupation years and some contemporary sources did mention declining domestic hygiene. As can be seen from Table 9.2, the soap crisis was less severe in Denmark than in the Netherlands, making it a viable explanation from a comparative point of view. On the other hand, soap deficiencies did not become particularly serious in the Netherlands until 1942, and hence do not explain the divergent development of mortality in Denmark and the Netherlands during the first occupation years. Moreover, in the Netherlands a variety of synthetic soaps came to be widely used that were far less common in Denmark and probably aided Dutch domestic hygiene significantly.[15]

The availability of soap and detergents of course tells only part of the story of hygiene. Rather than the amount of soap used, hygienic practices in households matter more for avoiding infectious diseases. Other factors than declining availability of soap, such as increased stress or sloppiness, might also have played a part. Qualitative sources do not

Table 9.2 Per capita soap rations in Denmark and the Netherlands, 1940–1944

Year	Netherlands	Denmark
1940	60	60
1941	40.5	60
1942	25–40	60
1943	33.7	60
1944	28	60
1945	26	60

Source: H. A. M. Klemann, *Nederland 1938–1948: Economie en Samenleving in Jaren van Oorlog en Bezetting* (Amsterdam, 2002), 472; *Statistisk Årbog* 1946. Grams of soap fatty acids per head per month.

provide any definite answers, but many contemporaries at least believed standards of domestic hygiene were in a dismal state. Yet researchers of the Red Cross, who surveyed domestic hygiene immediately after liberation, found that hygienic standards were remarkably good.[16] The incidence of lice, fleas, and scabies rose, but it is unclear by how much.[17] A more structural, quantitative investigation is henceforth needed and can be undertaken using infant mortality statistics.

Both historical and medical research suggests a strong link between hygiene and the seasonality of infant mortality. Infant mortality was (and is) to a very high degree caused by diarrhoea. Since the capacity of babies to drink is quite limited, they tend to dehydrate rapidly as a result of diarrhoea, a condition which is therefore immediately life-threatening. In the period at hand, at least 25 per cent of infant mortality was caused by diarrhoea, quite possibly more.[18] Diarrhoea is caused by either bacteria or viruses. Of these two, bacterial diarrhoea can be effectively fought by handwashing with soap and generally maintaining personal hygiene, whereas viruses are largely unaffected by such measures.[19] Hence, declining hygienic standards lead to a sharp increase in bacterial diarrhoea. Bacterial diarrhoea occurs predominantly during summer, when bacteria thrive as a result of higher temperatures. Viral diarrhoea, on the other hand, occurs predominantly during winter, when the relative proximity of people to one another facilitates its spread. Hence, low hygienic standards, which result in an increase of the spread of bacterial diarrhoea, normally coincide with high infant mortality during summer. As can be seen in Figure 9.2, however, Dutch infant mortality was and remained relatively low during summer, but was high during winter. While further research would be needed to establish the effects of declining hygiene with greater precision, soap shortages certainly seem to have had at most a very limited impact.[20]

A third environmental explanation for a rise in mortality is the relative scarcity of fuel. Both the isolation from the world market and German demands on Dutch coal production led to a sharp drop in the availability of fossil fuels in the Netherlands. While the medical dangers of a cool home need not be very great, a decline in the availability of fuel can have a serious effect on public health. As fewer spaces were heated, people probably flocked to those that were, thus increasing the risk of contagion. The problem with this explanation, again, is that there is little evidence that the situation in Denmark was significantly better. As can be seen from Table 9.3, fuel rations were considerably higher in Denmark than in the Netherlands. This data, however, should be treated with caution. The Netherlands had an indigenous coal mining industry

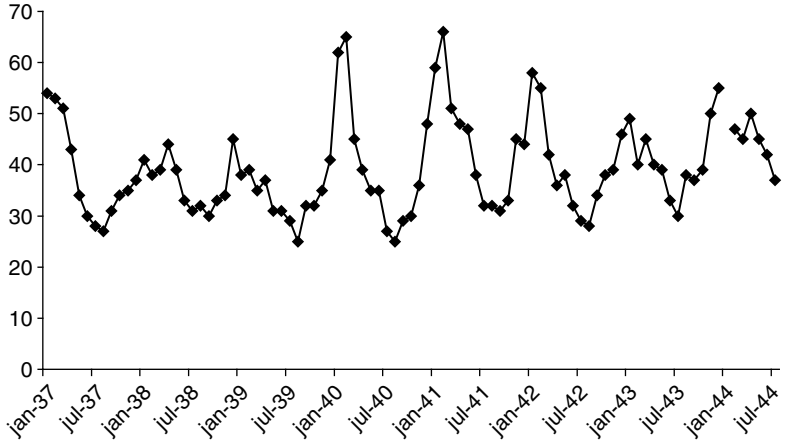


Figure 9.2 Monthly infant mortality in the Netherlands, 1937–1944
Source: Neurdenburg, 'Algemeene statistiek der mortaliteit en der morbiditeit', in I. Boerema, *Medische Ervaringen in Nederland tijdens de bezetting 1940–1945* (Groningen, 1947), 336.

Table 9.3 Average fuel rations for heating in small households in Denmark and the Netherlands (gigajoule per winter)

Winter	Netherlands	Denmark
40–41	21,000	30,000
41–42	15,000	30,000
42–43	15,000	22,500
43–44	13,500	22,500
44–45	2,250	15,000

Source: H. A. M. Klemann, *Nederland 1938–1948: Economie en Samenleving in Jaren van Oorlog en Bezetting* (Amsterdam, 2002), 475; *Statistisk Årbog*, various issues, gigajoule per winter.

which produced high quality fuels. In Denmark, lignite and turf mining had to be set up from scratch in the wake of collapsing coal imports. The shift from coal to lignite and turf proved troublesome, not least because some fraudulent resellers of fuel tended to raise the water content of the product. Although such problems also existed in the Netherlands, they appear to have been less severe than in Denmark.[21]

Not only the relatively bad quality of Danish fuel makes a comparison with the Netherlands a difficult one. The colder Danish climate requires the use of considerably more fuel for heating than is needed in the

Netherlands. The absolute advantage of Denmark over the Netherlands, which undeniably existed, was far less great in relative terms. League of Nations investigations undertaken immediately after the occupation reveal that the decline in both countries was fairly similar.[22] Moreover, there is ample evidence that many poor Danish households, usually the ones most vulnerable to infectious disease, often sold their coupons for fossil fuels on the black market. Unlike their Dutch counterparts who, as we shall see, primarily sold their coupons for expensive foodstuffs, Danish households thereby sought to raise their income in the wake of steep wartime inflation.[23]

A fourth factor that could possibly have increased the chances of incurring an infection is the decline of what today would be called 'food safety'. The relatively meagre diet of the Dutch during the occupation drove many to buy meat on the black market, where hygienic standards were unsurprisingly far from ideal. During the shift of Dutch agriculture towards arable farming, necessary to raise caloric output, a large number of cattle, pigs, and sheep disappeared from the statistics, undoubtedly destined for black market food production. Especially the clandestine slaughter of stolen animals, in sheds and barns, by inexperienced butchers, posed a clear and acute danger to public health. Indeed, food-borne diseases such as dysentery and paratyphoid fever killed considerably more people during the occupation years than before or after. Paratyphoid fever rose sharply in 1942, dropped again, and then rose again in 1945 (Figure 9.3). The first peak (albeit one of a mere 16 deadly victims) is quite likely related to illegal slaughter. In later occupation years, illegal slaughterers ran out of animals and their trade consequently dropped, only to return with a vengeance during the 1945 famine. At that point, people were found even to scavenge carcasses of animals lying dead in the fields – clearly a recipe for disease. Up to that time, however, paratyphoid fever remained a moderate problem. The disease dysentery, which, as noted above, did carry off many young, and very young, people, does not seem to have followed the pattern of paratyphoid fever. Rather, dysentery deaths increased gradually through time, which does not rule out the possibility that bad food safety standards influenced its spread, but does make the link with illegally slaughtered animals an unlikely one. Even more remarkable, in this respect, is that dysentery like other infectious diseases, returned to pre-war levels fairly soon after liberation, whereas the illegal slaughter continued on a considerable scale as late as 1948.[24]

A second argument against food safety as an explanation for the rise in Dutch mortality is that illegal slaughter was very common in Denmark as

Figure 9.3 Deaths attributed to paratyphoid fever, the Netherlands, 1938–1946
Source: I. Boerema, Medische Ervaringen in Nederland tijdens de bezetting 1940–1945 (Groningen, 1947).

well. Mogens Rostgaard Nissen recently estimated the illegal consumption of pork to have ranged from 49,000 tonnes in 1941 to 58,000 tonnes in 1944 – a dazzling quantity for a country of some four million inhabitants.[25] Not much is known about the circumstances under which these animals were slaughtered, although a few cases of industrial processing of unregistered meat are known. Not that industrial processing guaranteed good hygiene, as became apparent when inspectors found that the Danish sausage manufacturer Houlberg had processed large amounts of inedible, and downright dangerous, carcasses.[26] It appears, moreover, that much of this pork was produced by farmers themselves, hence under circumstances not obviously different from those prevailing in the Netherlands. Again, the explanation not only fails to explain Dutch patterns of mortality but also to account for the absence of such effects in Denmark.

Impaired immunity

Although the contribution of environmental factors to the increase in mortality in the Netherlands should not be discarded altogether on the basis of the above, they do fail to explain the different patterns of mortality in Denmark and the Netherlands. Reason enough, hence, to investigate the second category of causes, which concerns the biological defence against infection, rather than the chance of exposure. Problems

with the human immune system can cause the incidence of infectious diseases to jump violently, as is all too evident in the current explosive growth of TB in the slipstream of HIV infections in Africa and Asia.[27] Investigating populations' immunity to disease infection of populations in the past, however, is difficult. Not only must it rely on rather scanty data, but also on still relatively limited medical understanding of the workings and sensitivities of the human immune system.

One suggestion, popular among contemporary doctors, is that stress may have contributed a great deal to the vulnerability of the Dutch population to infectious diseases.[28] There indeed exists evidence that stress can harm the body's ability to fend off disease.[29] Obviously, the German occupation was a source of stress for the Dutch, especially as the occupation regime became increasingly repressive over the years. Executions, disappearances, and bombardments, even though they affected a relatively small group of people directly, were the order of the day during the latter years of the occupation in the Netherlands. It is hard to imagine such circumstances not being stressful. One would wonder, however, why only the young would be affected by such stressful circumstances, rather than, say, 50-year-olds. Moreover, Denmark, in spite of its peculiar legal status of 'occupied neutral', likewise lived through an era of great uncertainty, fear, and violence.

A second possibility, one that has only very recently been put forward, suggests that at least the rising number of TB deaths may be ascribed to an unidentified sexually transmitted disease (STD). The number of STD infections, unsurprisingly, rose spectacularly during the occupation years (Figure 9.4).[30] In a recent article, Nagelkerke has argued that an unnoticed (presumably) viral agent may have spread through sexual intercourse, affecting the workings of the human immune system.[31] Since the incidence of other, identified STDs rose spectacularly, the spread of an unidentified disease seems probable enough. Still, this theory does not appear to solve the problems at hand here. In the first place, STD incidence rose sharply in both the Netherlands and Denmark, and was predominantly spread by a similar population of infected individuals, namely German military personnel. A more important argument against STD as an explanation, however, is that while TB affected young males somewhat more than females, wartime STDs disproportionately affected young females.[32] The most likely explanation for this rather sex-specific upsurge is that women contracted STDs from German troops, who themselves were not registered in national disease statistics. Consequently, the rise in STD in the Netherlands predominantly affected young women, a group that is not nearly as well represented among

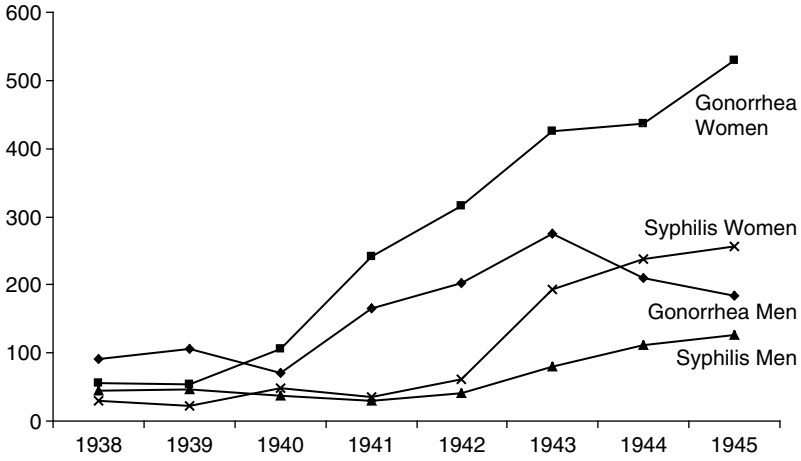


Figure 9.4 Registered Number of STD cases in Utrecht, 1938–1945
Source: I. Boerema, *Medische Ervaringen in Nederland tijdens de bezetting 1940–1945* (Groningen, 1947), 472.

civilian TB deaths as young men. This does not necessarily prove that there was no link between TB and STDs, but it does make it highly unlikely that the effect of STDs was very pervasive.

Nutrition and immunity

This leaves nutrition, an explanation supported by compelling circumstantial evidence. The rise of Dutch mortality coincided with a radically changed diet, while neither rising mortality nor dietary changes occurred in Denmark. In Germany, from 1933, and in both Germany and Great Britain during the First World War, dietary change and medical problems likewise coincided. Coincidence, however, does not necessarily imply causality. At first sight, little appears to have been wrong with the wartime diet of the Dutch. The Dutch historian Klemann even maintains that the changed diet of the occupation years was, from a strictly biological perspective, an improvement rather than a setback.[33] The director of a retirement home, to give one contemporary example, enthusiastically wrote to the Dutch Bureau for Food Provisions that heart patients were benefiting a great deal from the dietary changes forced upon them.[34] There can be little doubt that the pre-war Dutch diet had been too rich and fatty by any sensible nutritious standard. The leaner diet of the war years seems tailor-made according to modern dietary

prescriptions. It was high in fibre, low in fats, ensured ample intake of vegetables, and contained very little saturated fat. It was, moreover, quantitatively enough; Dutch adults, at least up to the famine winter, consumed a diet that was quite in accordance with present-day dietary advice in caloric terms.[35]

This type of dietary change was in fact common throughout Europe, during both the First and Second World Wars. Europe was a net importer of agricultural products such as vegetable oils and fodder, raising cattle locally but feeding it imported products. The fatty and meaty diet commonly consumed in Europe consequently depended on its access to overseas supplies, especially from the Americas and tropical colonies. The two world wars severed most European countries, partially or entirely, from the global economy and made drastic changes to the food pattern of European consumers inevitable. Countries such as Germany and especially the occupied Netherlands, which could not normally feed their populations on indigenously produced food, abandoned much of their import-dependent production of dairy, meat, and eggs, in favour of the production of grain, legumes and potatoes – products that could be grown in such quantities on the available acreage that the population could be fed without imports. In no country was the conversion of agriculture undertaken with such zeal and professionalism as in the Netherlands. In a swift and well-prepared operation, the occupied Netherlands revolutionised its agricultural sector; cattle were slaughtered and land was converted to arable farming. It was this conversion that enabled the Dutch, with the exception of the aforementioned famine winter, to retain a quantitatively sufficient diet during the occupation (Figure 9.5).[36]

In Denmark, concerns about agriculture likewise existed, and drastic measures towards transformation were taken, but the concerns about the level of production were quite the opposite. Denmark not only produced easily enough foodstuffs to feed its own population, it produced so much more that it was economically dependent on agricultural exports. Even after reducing the number of cattle in the country, it produced a huge surplus of animal-source foodstuffs. Danish governments of the 1930s had been deeply concerned that the outbreak of war would cut the country off from the main buyer of its butter and pork, Great Britain. Germany, however, was in desperate need of precisely those products that were produced in enormous quantities by Danish agriculture. Nevertheless, Germany chose to uphold the illusion that Denmark was still an independent nation and to export only those foodstuffs from Denmark which the Danes themselves did not consume. Although

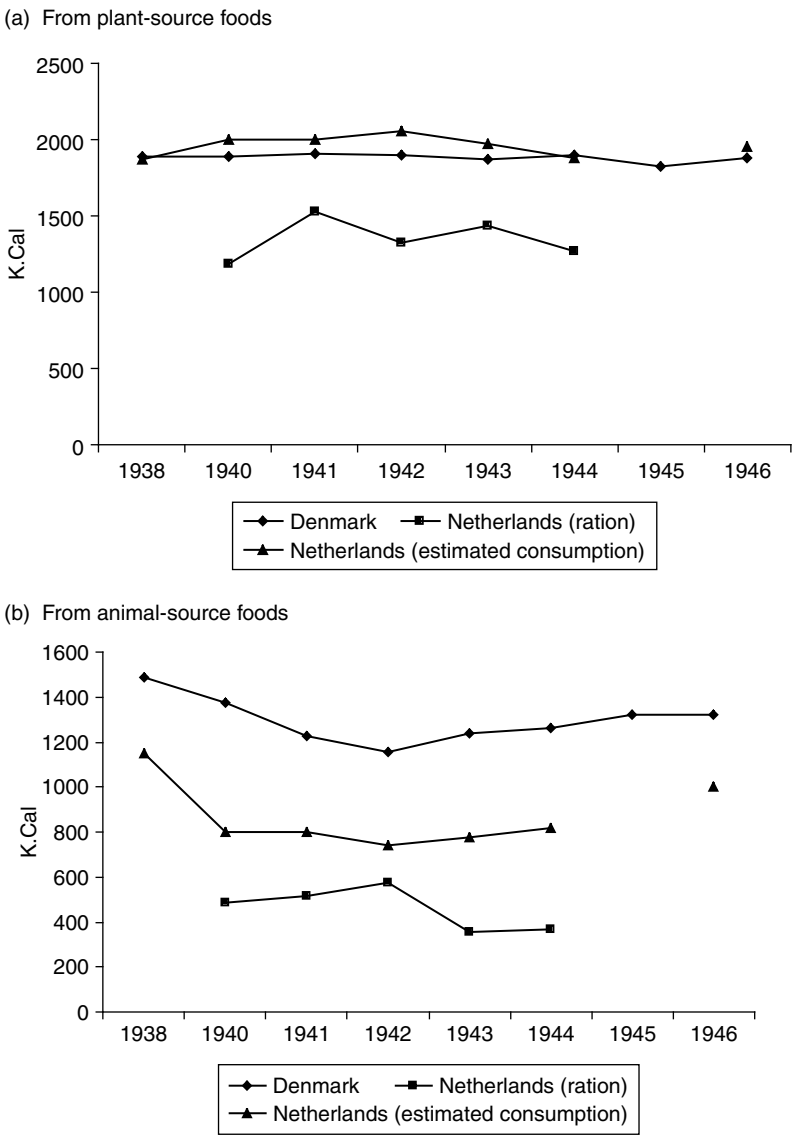


Figure 9.5 a and b Calories in Dutch and Danish diets (per capita), by origin, 1938–1947

Sources: *Landbrugsstatistik 1945. Landbrug, Havebrug, Skovbrug m.v. Danmarks Statistik*; CBS, *Maandschriften, Sociaal-Economische kroniek*; H. A. M. Klemann, *Nederland 1938–1948: Economie en Samenleving in Jaren van Oorlog en Bezetting* (Amsterdam, 2002); caloric values taken from: G. Trienekens, *Tussen ons volk en de honger* (Utrecht, 1985), Tables LX and LXI. Estimated *consumption* (as opposed to *ration*) for the Netherlands includes (estimated) black market production. Hein Klemann and Mogens Rostgaard Nissen kindly provided data for the above reconstructions.

officially, Danish living standards were not to rise above those in Germany, the Danish diet during the war years was far richer than that of Germany, and in all likelihood the richest in all of Europe, including neutral nations.[37]

As the above figures show Danish diet changed relatively little during the occupation years. The total caloric value of the diet declined, in the gloomiest of estimates, by less than 10 per cent, a decline which posed no threat to public health, and was little more than a minor nuisance from a gastronomic perspective. The Dutch diet, on the other hand, did reflect the drastic changes in agriculture. The diet made available through the Dutch rationing system not only had a lower caloric content than the Danish diet, but was also dominated by plant-source foodstuffs. Even if illegally produced foodstuffs are taken into account, the decline in animal source food consumption was a marked one.

One should be aware that the figures above reflect only average per capita consumption. In the case of Denmark, the size and diversity of the food supply left consumers ample leeway in adapting their diet to their tastes and their budget. Such adaptations were, among government officials, seen as a danger to public health. The possibility that poor Danish families could not, or would not, consume a sufficient diet because it was beyond their financial reach worried the Danish authorities especially. To monitor the fate of these groups, a special council of experts had been set up, the *Ernærings of Husholdningsnævnet* (Council for Nutrition and Household Economics). Although their reports resound with concern, they found little or no data to suggest that the nutrition of the Danish poor was in any way insufficient, or even much different from the rest of the population.[38]

In the Netherlands, on the other hand, the intake of animal-source foodstuffs was strongly related to income. The *Polscommissie*, a commission of nutritionists found in its investigations of Dutch popular diets that there was quite a strong relation between diet and income, especially during the early war years. The observations of the *Polscommissie*, were at odds, of course, with the theory behind the rationing system. Consuming fewer animal-source foodstuffs, notably meats, than were provided for by rationing obviously left people with rationing coupons to spare. Poor, urban households consequently began to use black markets to exchange rationing coupons for expensive foodstuffs, such as meat, for coupons for bread and (especially) potatoes. Although such exchanges helped households to raise their incomes, it also tilted their diets even more towards plant-source products. Their low incomes also excluded them from the relative bulge in the availability of illegally

produced meat stemming from the transformation of agriculture. In Denmark, there was little need for poor households to sell their rights of access to animal-source foods, because, first, cheap pork-based products (by-products of the country's massive pork production) were both available and affordable and, second, because meat was never coupon rationed in the first place, and selling meat-coupons consequently impossible.[39]

The micronutrient revolution

The changed diet of the Dutch (and, in varying degrees, of almost everyone in Europe except the Danes) may have had a far greater impact on public health than has hitherto been assumed. When compared with the food pattern that is currently endorsed by doctors and governments alike, the wartime diet of the Dutch appears to have been an improvement over pre-war overeating. The Danish wartime diet, which contained abundant amounts of saturated fats, seems a recipe for obesity, clogged arteries, and diabetes rather than a safeguard for public health. One should be very wary, however, of simply applying present (perceived or actually) ideal diets to past societies. Whereas to present-day Europeans non-communicable diseases such as cancer and heart disease are by far the gravest health hazards, this was not necessarily the case during the early 1940s. The populations under scrutiny here lived in a far more disease-rife environment, not least because the use of antibiotics was still in its infancy. In an era where infectious diseases were still an immediate danger to longevity, avoiding the great killers of today, such as cardiovascular and heart disease would certainly have been a lesser priority.

In recent years, the relation between diets and immunity has attracted considerable attention from nutritionists and epidemiologists, especially those who take an interest in developing countries. Many such countries have, in the course of the past decades, made great strides towards eradicating the quantitative malnourishment that plagued them before. The green revolution, which enabled indigenous farmers to increase yields from arable farming has been instrumental in this development; by efficiently producing plant-source foods, many countries could (and can) largely feed their populations on indigenous production. Whatever the merit of eradicating hunger in this manner, the improvements in public health have in many cases been disappointing. Especially the incidence of infectious diseases, and consequent premature mortality, has in many cases remained rather high.[40]

The nutritional problem underlying many of the health problems still prevalent in many developing countries has been found to be mild micronutrient deficiencies. Although hunger has been eradicated in most developing countries, the intake of a number of nutrients still leaves much to be desired. Many of these, such as iron, zinc, selenium, Vitamin A, Vitamin B6, Vitamin B12, and possibly many more, are difficult (in some cases impossible) to absorb from plant-source foods. Because these micronutrients are indispensable for child growth, cognitive development, and immune systems, the relatively low intake of animal-source foods is directly related to impaired immunity and a relatively high incidence of infectious disease and child mortality. Moreover, micronutrient deficiency (particularly of vitamin A) in lactating women leads to a far lower content of these nutrients in mothers' milk, so that infants are also affected quite dramatically by these deficiencies. The disastrous effects of (mild) micronutrient deficiencies on child health and survival that have become increasingly evident over the past years have culminated in drastic changes in policies regarding economic development and public health. The 2003 Unicef report, *Vitamin and Mineral Deficiency, a Global Progress Report*, to give an example, outlines not only the enormous scope of the problem of micronutrient deficiency, but also places food fortification firmly among the main priorities for human development in the coming decade. Other international organisations have likewise shifted both their attention, and much of their budgets, towards relieving micronutrient malnutrition, which has been estimated to kill millions of people per annum, very predominantly children in developing nations.[41]

But what can new views on micronutrient deficiencies do to explain the health problems experienced by the Dutch during the Second World War? There are enormous differences between modern developing nations and the occupied Netherlands. The relatively peaceful circumstances prevailing in most developing countries, but also the absence of rationing, a very different climate, and scores of other very fundamental differences with the occupied Netherlands are evident. The disease environment in the Netherlands in the 1940s was likewise rather different, especially as many developing countries today struggle with a disease (AIDS) that did not even exist during the Second World War. That said, in spite of all these differences, both the observed health phenomena and the changed diet bear more than a passing resemblance to what is experienced in much of the developing world today. Moreover, as shown in the above, other explanations for the observed

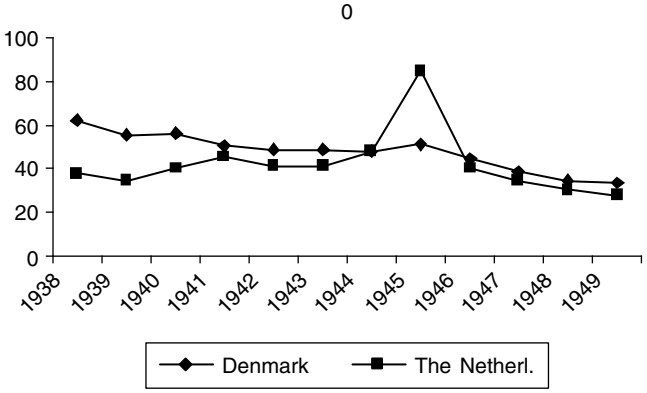
differences do little or nothing to explain the remarkable differences between Denmark and the Netherlands, or for that matter Denmark and Germany.

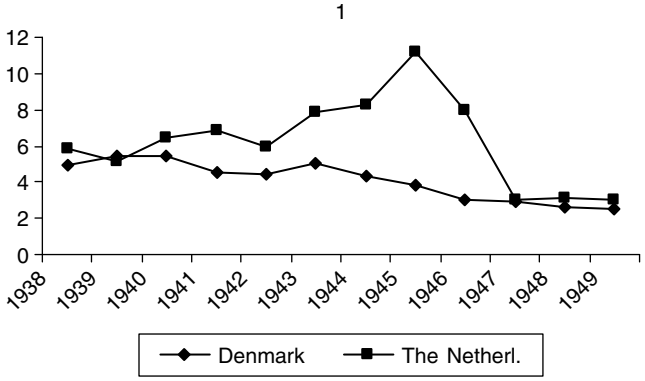
If, as seems to be the case, the mysterious increase (especially) in child mortality in the Netherlands was indeed the result of a sharply lowered absorption of micronutrients, due to a lower consumption of animal-source foods, this may shed considerable light on other observed phenomena as well. There is a strong relation, for example, between stunted growth and micronutrient deficiencies, which fits wartime observations remarkably well. Stunted growth of children has been reported by both Baten and Wagner and Leitch, in both Germany and Britain, and did coincide with the change towards a very predominantly plant-based diet. To arrive at substantial conclusions with regard to the loss in health and life caused by the economic isolations of the war years, further research is clearly necessary.

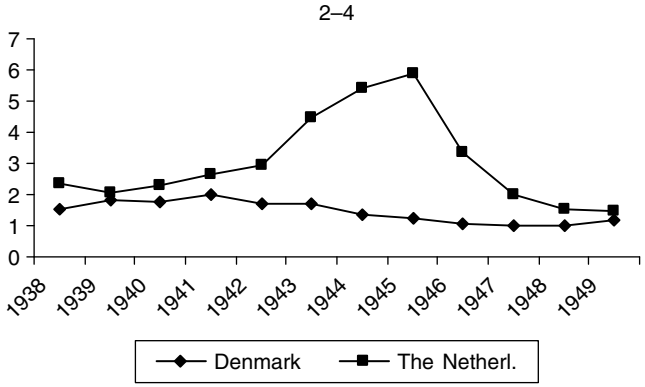
Conclusion

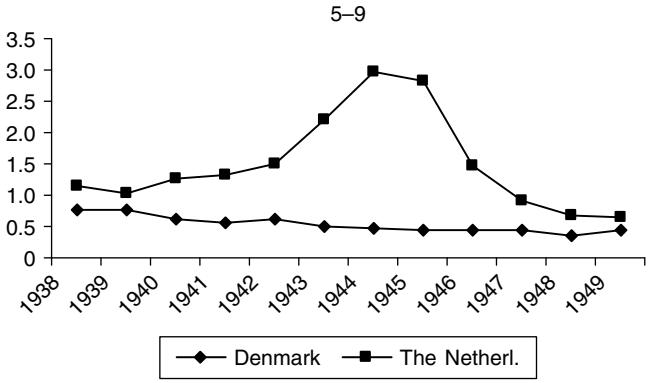
Although many factors influenced the changing pattern of mortality in the Netherlands, few of these can explain the fact that no such changes took place in Denmark. Rather, both countries suffered a decline in living standards which was conducive to the spread of infectious diseases. In the event, however, Denmark averted the disastrous outcome similar developments had on infant, child, and adolescent health in the Netherlands, because immunity was markedly better. The rich, and very markedly animal-source, diet prevailing in Denmark was of pivotal importance in maintaining high immunity and it is here that the crucial difference with the Netherlands lies.

Appendix A: Mortality per thousand inhabitants, Denmark and The Netherlands, 1938–1949 (age-specific)





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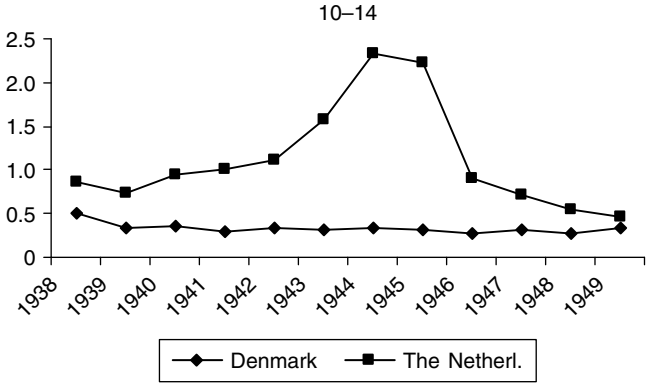
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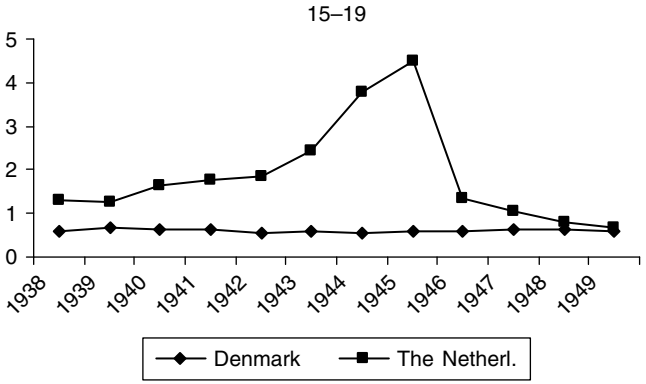
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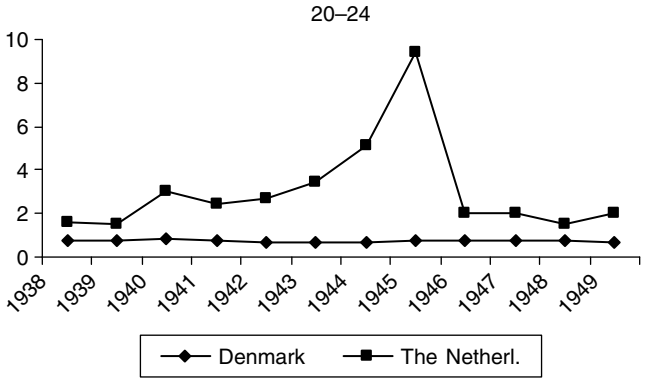
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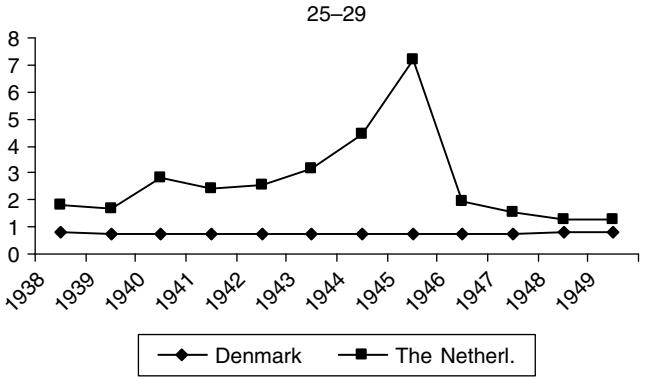
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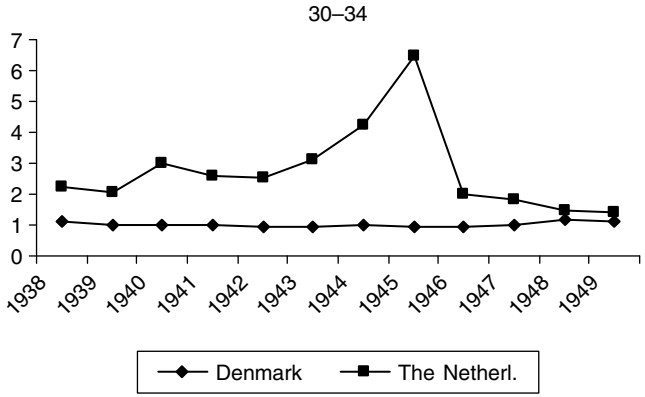
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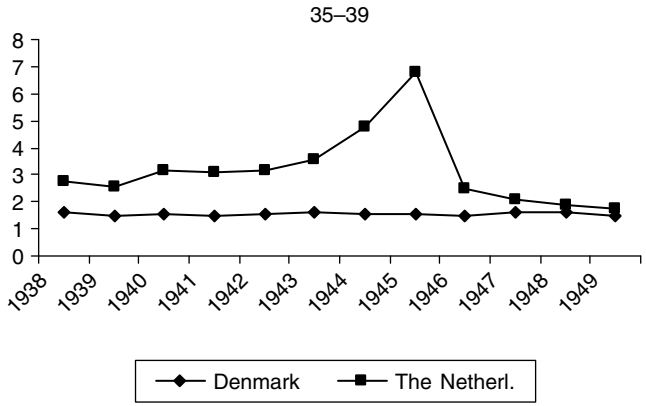
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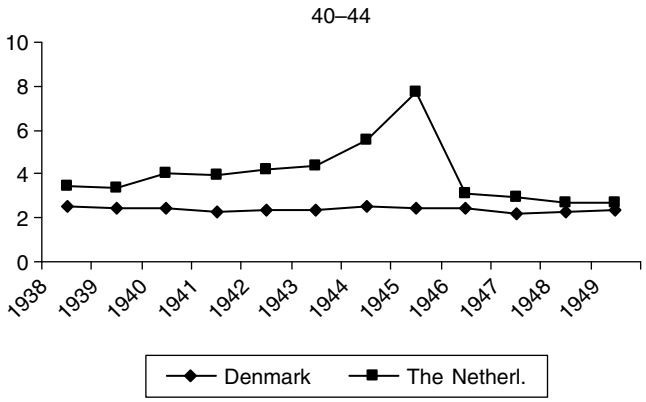
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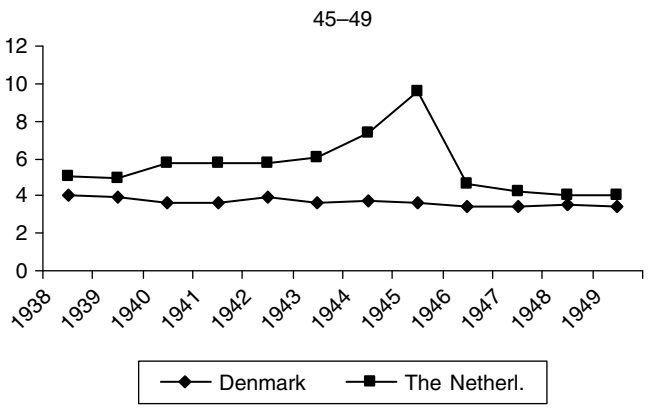
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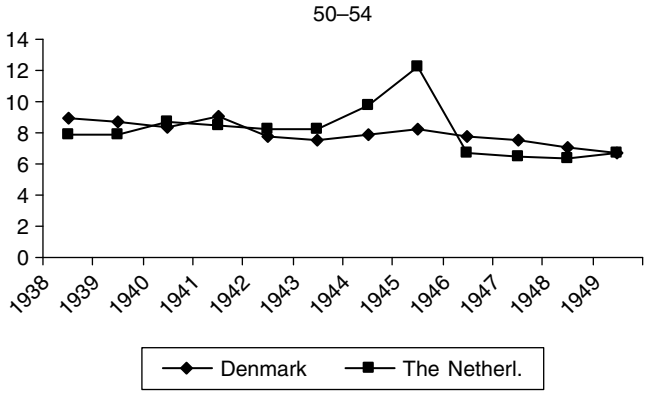
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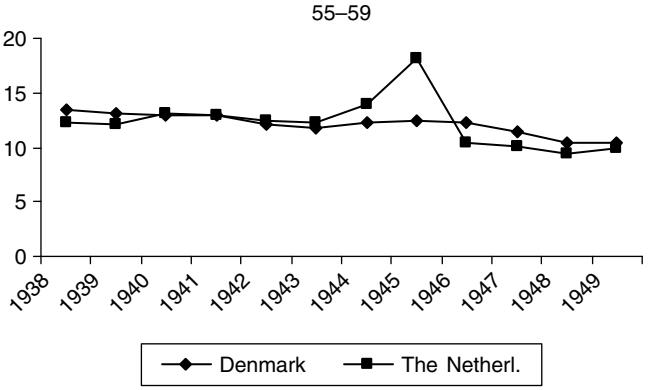
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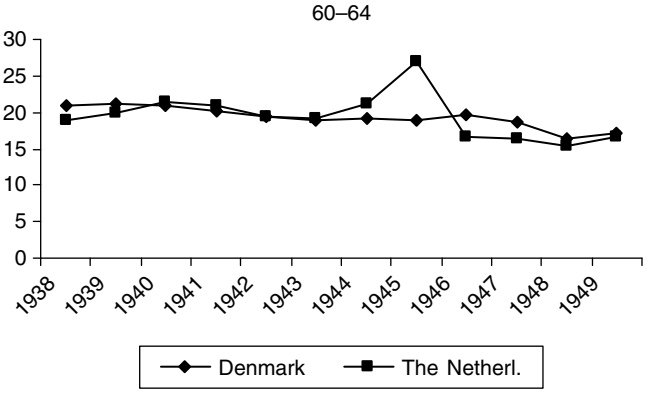
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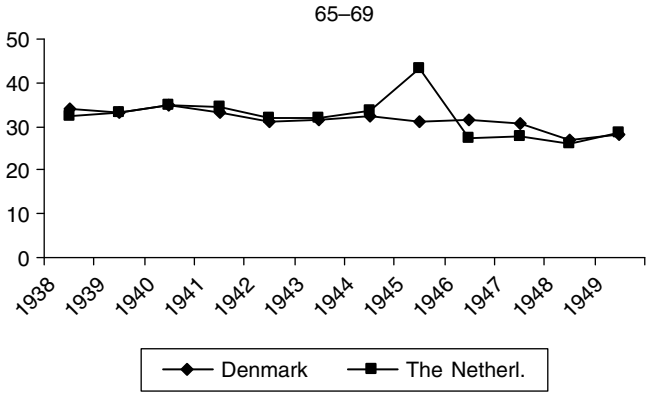
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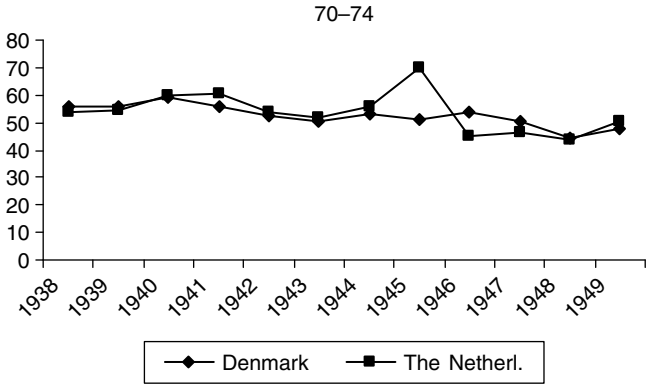
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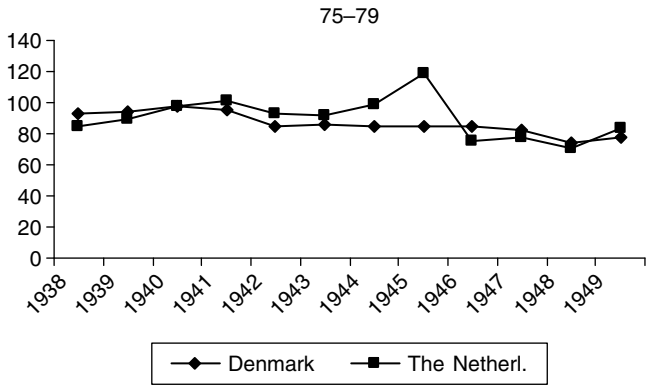
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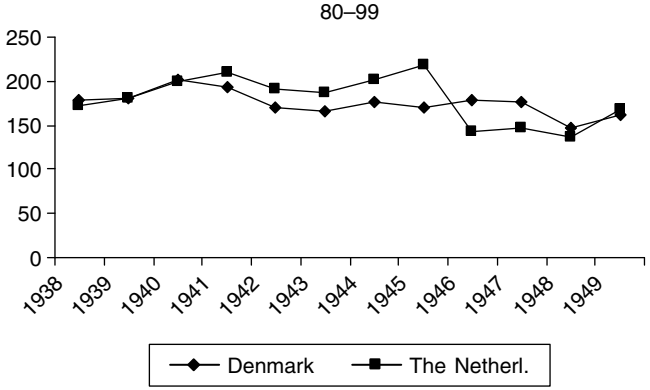
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Notes

1 This chapter owes much to comments received at a meeting of the KNCV tuberculosis fund, The Hague; the CONIH conference in Esbjerg, in June 2004; a seminar at the Cambridge Group for the History of Population and Social Structure in October 2004; as well as comments by Anne Hardy and Gerard Trienekens.
2 M. R. Smallman-Raynor and A. D. Cliff, *War Epidemics: Diseases in Military Conflict and Civil Strife, 1850–2000* (Oxford, 2004).
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11 T. Stræde, 'Arbejderbevægelsen og Tysklandarbejdere', in: *Årbog for Arbejderbevægelsens Historie 1994* (Copenhagen, 1994), pp. 159–88.
12 C. Bundgård Christensen, N. Bo Poulsen and P. Scharff Smith, *Dansk arbejde, tysk befæstningsanlæg* (Copenhagen, 1995).
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15 Unilever Historical Archive, Rotterdam, HA 71 0970. I am grateful to Ton Bannink and Ben Wubs for this reference.
16 Red Cross, *Onderzoek naar Sociale en Hygienische Toestanden in het Westen des Lands* (Undated report, available at the Netherlands Institute for War Documentation).
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36 Trienekens, *Tussen ons Volk en de Honger*.

37 Rostgaard Nissen, *Productions- und Lieferfreudigkeit*. See also Mogens Nissen in this volume.

38 Rigsarkivet, *Direktorat for Vareforsyning; Ernærings og Husholdningsnævnet*.

39 Rigsarkivet, *Direktorat for Vareforsyning; Ernærings og Husholdningsnævnet*; Bundgård Christensen, *Den Sorte Børs*, p. 60.

40 The body of literature conerning the (part) changed emphasis from combating quantitative hunger to combating so-called 'hidden hunger' is vast and rapidly expanding rapidly. See M. Wm Demment, M. M.Young and R. L. Sensenig, 'Providing Micronutrients through Food-Based Solutions: A Key to Human and National Development', *Journal of Nutrition*, 133(11) (November 2003).

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10

A View From the Top: Social Elites and Food Consumption in Britain, 1930s–1940s

Paul Brassley and Angela Potter

This chapter uses a new source to shed some light on the story of food consumption in Britain during the Second World War, and, in doing so, to examine wider issues relating to the study of food consumption in history. We touch on the existing literature on food, and then use the evidence of some wartime letters to comment upon it. We then show how this new evidence can advance current debates on gender and class in the Second World War.

Initially, the story of food consumption in Britain in the Second World War has been told from the top down. That is to say, it was largely concerned with the activities, and written from the archives, of the politicians and civil servants who made and administered food policy, rather than from the experiences and evidence of the people affected by the policy. The material available reflected official concerns such as food production, nutrition policy, rationing, and regulation, rather than the personal experience of consumers, and the same pattern was maintained long after the war was over.[1] Most recently Alan Wilt's *Food for War* (2001) bore the revealing subtitle '*agriculture* and rearmament in Britain before the Second World War' (our emphasis), and again concentrated on food supplies, both imported and home produced, more than the demand for, or consumption of, food. Similarly, recent general works discuss rationing, but not food in general.[2] The only references to food in the leaflets produced by the British National Archives on 'The Home Front' in the war are on rationing and the Women's Land Army.[3] Derek Oddy, the doyen of modern British food historians, in his latest book mostly writes from the viewpoint of policy makers.[4] In contrast, the wider debate on the civilian history of the war and its subsequent impact on British society has been opened up, especially since the 1980s. The extent to which the nation was united in and

by the war has been questioned in accounts of wartime crime and the black market, conflicts between urban and rural attitudes, solidarity and comradeship within and between classes, and gender differences in the experience of war.[5] Three recent studies have brought together much of this material: Ina Zweiniger-Bargielowska's work on austerity, Robert Mackay's on civilian morale, and Sonya Rose's on the national community and identity.[6] Perhaps not surprisingly, each of them identifies food as a central concern in the questions they deal with, and relate it to wider issues such as class, gender, equality of sacrifice, fair shares, and post-war change.[7] This chapter is a contribution to this debate.

Food in general and its wider social implications are clearly topics that could be informed by closer analysis of the experience of a range of ordinary people in wartime. While recent historians have indeed made use of the Mass-Observation archive and, to some extent, of the range of wartime memoirs and diaries, there appears to have been little systematic analysis of this source.[8] It is not for lack of material. Even a cursory search reveals numerous published personal records in addition to what would probably be a much longer list of unpublished records and oral history interviews.[9] The difficulty, of course, is that these are much more diffuse sources than the records of ministers and their civil servants, and the problems of analysing them are correspondingly greater. For one thing, while the view from official sources surveys the whole population, the view from diaries, letters, and memoirs is personal. Each observer sees the problem from their own individual viewpoint; young or old, rich or poor, male or female, or, in the case of the material used here, in their early thirties, upper/upper-middle class, and female. In addition, those that have been published have almost always gone through an editorial process, in which the contemporary impressions may be distorted by the selection process, while memoirs and oral interviews, as opposed to material written at the time, are subject to imperfect recollection. All these points should be borne in mind when considering our analysis of the material discussed here. But it is at least our analysis, of a text written in wartime, and we have access to the whole archive, rather than to another editor's selection of it, so it is possible to obtain overall impressions and even to quantify at some points.

Food in Virginia Potter's wartime letters

The correspondence from which we are illustrating the elite experience of food consumption and production during the Second World War was written by an American woman to her mother in the United States.[10]

Virginia Potter was born in 1908 in Richmond, Virginia. In 1936 she married an English Guards officer, Gerald Potter, and settled in England. After living initially in London, she and her husband moved to Hampshire, and from September 1940, to a house owned by Eton College at Datchet near Windsor. From there she wrote long letters to her mother in which she painted a detailed picture of domestic life in wartime England.

The prewar years of Virginia Potter and her husband centred around an active social life in London and Hampshire, visits to the theatre, and yachting on the south coast. Whilst not an immensely wealthy couple, they always employed domestic staff and as a result were able to enjoy a significant amount of leisure time. The consumption of food played an important part in their upper-middle-class pre-war routine. The couple dined at top London restaurants, gave dinner parties, and attended parties given by friends. A cook always formed part of the domestic staff and food was meticulously planned, discussed, rated, and enjoyed. The evidence of the letters in this pre-war period is, of course, partial, being mostly concerned with memorable meals rather than quotidian normality. Thus in May 1936, having been married for two months, Virginia wrote to her mother describing the first dinner party that she and her husband gave in their flat in Onslow Square, South Kensington: two friends 'were the brave souls we rehearsed on – and the dinner was *delicious* – soup, lobster au gratin, Chicken Maryland and strawberry ice-cream . . .' (8 May 1936). She would enthuse about dinners without being guilty of self-praise because she had not cooked them herself, as in 1938 when she noted that 'Ella produced a very good dinner of roast duckling – and zabaglione' (14 December 1938), although naturally she would have discussed the menu beforehand. Lobster figured frequently in these pre-war menus. In June 1936, for example, she mentions a supper of lobster and champagne (21 June 1936), and the following month lobster and mayonnaise appeared in a picnic they took to the races at Goodwood, together with potted shrimps, cold ham, galantine of chicken, Stilton cheese, fruit, coffee, and liqueurs – 'I thought it was very snappy' (30 July 1936). She always enjoyed seafood, and refers to eating oysters at Driver's and Scott's restaurants in London, and a 'marvellous bouillabaisse' when on holiday in France (28 September 1936; 27 October 1936; 7 November 1938). The standard format for a pre-war dinner party at home involved at least four (and sometimes five) courses: thus, for example, in entertaining an uncle at their cottage in Hampshire, they had salmon steaks, roast beef with vegetables from the garden, fruit and cream, and shrimps on toast (23 September 1936). In overall design, it was not very different from what she described at

the time as 'the best dinner I have ever had in London' (at the Savoy Hotel): 'caviar (with vodka), soup, fish with lobster sauce (Alsatian wine), pheasant (Chateauneuf du Pape), lemon soufflé (champagne), mushroom savoury, etc.' (12 November 1936).

The letters reveal little about their day-to-day diet, although sometimes a few details appear, suggesting a mixture of the simple and the grand. On one occasion they had sandwiches and champagne instead of dinner before going to the theatre (27 November 1936). On another evening, she wrote, both the housemaid and cook were out, so 'Lily [the parlourmaid] is going to scramble a few eggs for me' (29 October 1936). Even something as simple as scrambled eggs was prepared by a servant. Rather than worrying, as a working-class or lower-middle-class housewife of this period might, about *what* to cook, a woman of Virginia Potter's class worried about *finding* a cook: 'Interviewed several dud cooks . . . one with a glass eye, one about 80, one rude creature with a strong accent who said she was inklish' (6 October 1936). Or 'Tuesday I took Mary Hill Bishop to lunch at the 500 Club. The poor thing is looking for five servants. How I pity her' (11 March 1937).

The availability of both servants and food decreased dramatically with the arrival of hostilities. The rationing system that marked the nation's policy towards equal accessibility to food was introduced into Britain in January 1940, three months after the declaration of war.[11] Wartime diarists, such as Clara Milburn, welcomed the arrival of rationing as 'a good thing to . . . make everyone come under the same rule and help to win the war'.[12] Rationed foods were indeed fairly and evenly distributed and Virginia Potter would have had to queue ('I spent Friday morning standing in queue for the new ration cards' (2 June 1944) and be allocated the same portions as everyone else. She writes in May 1942 that 'housekeeping is somewhat simplified by war-time menus . . . as the shopping list begins with the rationed foods – then you go through the list of certain foods you want and <u>may</u> get'. However, she admits that she is 'very lucky to get all our . . . vegetables . . . out of the garden . . . and eggs from the . . . chickens' (2 May 1941), and therein lies an important disclosure.

For everyone did not come under the 'same rule' that Clara Milburn anticipated. The middle classes, who could fall back on greater personal resources, were able to afford a greater variety of food in a number of ways. This wider variety of available food was largely brought about by two determinants: leisure time and money, both of which were available to Virginia Potter. She wholeheartedly supported the dig for victory campaign and (admittedly with the help of staff, her husband when he

was at home, a landgirl (i.e., a member of the Women's Land Army) for two years, and visiting friends) transformed the garden into a holding which yielded 18 types of vegetable (beetroot, cabbage, onions, spring onions, tomatoes, leeks, broccoli, lettuce, broad beans, runner beans, peas, carrots, potatoes, radishes, cauliflower, sweetcorn, marrow, and asparagus), and five types of fruit (plums, apples, red currants, strawberries, and rhubarb). They also raised ducks, geese, hens, and rabbits, and kept pigs with neighbours. In March 1942 she writes of the previous week that 'We had 32 hen's eggs; 9 goose eggs; and a duck egg, so at least we are getting some reward for our labours' (23 March 1942). Given the shortage of eggs in England generally (by the beginning of 1943 the ration was '1 a month each' (11 January 1943)), those were riches indeed. Clearly such home production was not possible for anyone unable to own land either through accident of geography or lack of personal finance.

Over an acre at Virginia Potter's house at Datchet was dedicated to food production. The demands made by such a horticultural endeavour inevitably resulted in a diminution of her leisure time, so that a direct connection between the erosion of wartime leisure and the production of food can be drawn. The point is that she would have had to have the necessary time and money in order to dig for victory to that extent. Conversely her employment of domestic staff released her from unrelenting care of animals and crops, so that she was still free to socialise with friends and dine out in restaurants both locally and in London. She went out to restaurants for lunch on average every fortnight, and dined out in the evening either in private homes or restaurants likewise, although such occasions were not the gastronomic experiences of the pre-war era. By December 1942 she considered restaurant food 'mediocre' everywhere (30 December 1942), and in March 1943 wrote that there was 'nowhere in London to get a decent meal' (23 March 1943). Nevertheless she was at least in a position to eat out if she wanted to, and when dining with her husband was able to enjoy wine with dinner as 'They take 15% off the wine bill for officers in uniform, so we can have a really good wine for a reasonable price' (20 October 1939). An increasing number of guests dined at her home during the war, which peaked in 1944 when 88 friends came to either lunch, tea or dinner, and another 26 to stay (see Table 10.1). In July 1942 she gave a 'successful' lunch party: 'We had prawn cocktail (with a few bottled prawns I had been keeping up my sleeve) – then liver schnitzel, new potatoes, and a "garden salad": hearts of lettuce with little nests of every vegetable in the garden: peas, broad beans, dwarf beans, tomatoes and baby carrots and

Table 10.1 Entertainment involving food and drink in the Potter household, 1939–1945

Year	Out to lunch (private)	Out to lunch (public)	Out to tea (private)	Out to tea (public)	Out to dinner (private)	Out to dinner (public)	Out to drinks (private)	Out to drinks (public)	Out to night-club	Guests to lunch	Guests to tea	Guests to dinner	Guests to stay	Give Party	Attend Party	To stay with friends	Parcels received
1939	8	18	7	1	9	12	6	2	6	5	3	6	4	0	1	8	0
1940	26	18	19	0	13	20	2	3	1	5	7	8	7	1	4	3	1
1941	6	28	12	5	17	17	2	1	0	17	22	43	25	3	7	4	17
1942	8	26	19	3	11	9	4	0	3	25	18	30	23	2	11	4	23
1943	4	23	11	11	15	9	9	6	1	25	31	25	26	5	19	6	9
1944	9	28	24	5	15	11	7	8	2	22	34	32	26	5	27	9	12
1945	18	29	16	4	9	15	7	2	2	22	35	28	12	2	9	12	11

beets – then caramel ice-cream (which Bella [the Austrian cook] made with milk and ½ my week's sugar ration)' (27 July 1942).

The importance of a cook in families of Virginia Potter's social standing cannot be overestimated. She talked of not being able to stay at her sister-in-law's house as she 'had no cook' (9 December 1939). Never instructed in the art of cooking: 'I am definitely not . . . a good cook' (21 April 1941)), 'Having to produce dinner for a hungry man every night is . . . difficult' (20 March 1941), she employed a cook throughout the war, and regarded the cook's days off with dismay: 'Mrs. F. [Bella's predecessor] returned ten days ago, so thank goodness I don't have to cook!' (28 August 1941). She does begin to learn about cooking – she eventually became a good, if reluctant, cook – and writes that 'With the help of Nannie I have learned a little about cooking' (7 January 1941). Exempted from war work due to having a child under 14 years of age, Virginia Potter did not have to work outside the home during the day nor come home to cook a meal in the evening. She did spend some of the leisure time she gained from having domestic staff volunteering for the Women's Voluntary Service in the British Restaurant in Windsor where, in something of a social *volte face*, for two days a week she became the waitress ('We serve over 300 meals a day and they cost 8d or 10d' (28 September 1941)) rather than the waited upon. She writes that she could 'do the W.V.S more often but cannot promise to do that, as Mrs. F. is leaving at any moment and I shall be very tied here I am afraid' (4 September 1941).

In addition to the plentiful supply of home produce, those with connections in North America were often sent food parcels. Virginia Potter's mother in Virginia and her uncle in Montreal sent numerous parcels, peaking in 1942 when she received 23 in total (see Table 10.1). There were restrictions on the weights for such parcels. She refers to a parcel being seized by customs as it was too heavy: 'One is not allowed to receive a parcel weighing more than 5 lbs. and not more than 2 lbs. of any one thing' (28 September 1941). She writes of a parcel from Canada containing 'maple sugar, 2 lbs. of Redpath Demarara and a tin of treacle' (18 February 1941) and a 'wonderful' parcel from Virginia with '3 bottles of orange concentrate, and 2 bottles of grapefruit' (27 July 1942). Sadly there 'had been a third bottle of grapefruit in the parcel, but it unfortunately was broken into about 100 pieces'. She describes her appreciation at receiving 'a lot of future orange-juice smiling at you – no points, no ration cards – [as] manna from Heaven'. Other parcels contained 'one Virginia ham and [some] bacon' (4 August 1941), 'sugar, syrup and peanuts' (16 January 1942), 'butter, sugar, chocolate and spam' (23 March 1942), '1 lb. tea, 1 lb. butter, 1 lb. sugar and some dried fruit' (9 November 1942) and 'banana flakes' (12 May 1944).

Game shooting played a useful part in augmenting the Potter household's diet. Virginia's husband Gerald often shot the occasional pheasant locally or joined organised shoots away from home. In September 1941 they travelled to the north-west of England for '6 days grouse-shooting on the Duke of Buccleugh's estate', returned by train 'armed with guns, grouse, partridges, cartridges etc.' and a few days later had 'partridge for lunch and grouse and snipe for dinner', which she admits was 'not a bad meal for wartime!!' (16 September 1941). In 1944 'Gerald went out and shot 2 pheasants on our own "estate"'(29 October 1944), and later that year 'Gerald and Bill . . . shot 25 brace of pheasants' (13 November 1944). Rather less exotic fare nearer home was also translated into food; on one occasion they dined on 'moor-hen soup – moor-hen shot by Butler [the gardener]' (7 February 1944). As the Potters's house was situated on the River Thames, their diet was also supplemented by fish as 'Fiander [Gerald Potter's soldier servant] usually catches a little fish' daily (23 July 1941). Their own poultry was also used for meat consumption and Virginia writes that she 'had a goose killed in honour of the warrior's return', which was roasted and served with 'sage and onion stuffing, apple sauce, cauliflower – and a goose liver and onion savoury – all [home] produce' (9 May 1944). Such domestic connections could produce unexpected difficulties, as, for example, when an old hen was killed in honour of a luncheon guest: the hen '. . . must have been 4 yrs. old if she was a day . . . it was boiled and boiled, and *boiled*, and amazed us by being fat and very tasty . . . and we all enjoyed it very much, except poor old Bella who confessed that she had always been so very "fond" of the old brown hen that she couldn't bring herself to eat any of it' (14 February 1943).

Barter occasionally brought in a few luxuries. Bartering was a common practice during the war but the system only worked if you had something to offer. In February 1944 a neighbour gave Virginia some venison which she 'exchanged for . . . goose eggs' (7 February 1944). Virginia kept rabbits which she used for bartering, chiefly because of her distaste at the thought of eating them. 'I have to shut them [rabbits] all up at night now, and it is quite a job persuading them to go to bed, especially Milly's 12 babies who are very sweet and tame, and just *won't* go into their hutch. How I'll ever eat the cute little things I don't know. I won't mind eating the geese or the ducks, because they are so *silly* and *dirty* – and their pens have to be cleaned out continuously. . . . Milly's 12 babies are my pride' (4 September 1941). Some months later she sold all the rabbits as 'they didn't do well here' (2 January 1942). Presents, too, were enthusiastically received. A friend brought Virginia 'a bottle of gin so we had a cocktail' (1 March 1943), another 'bicycled over and brought

a bottle of very good port' (8 April 1942), and a third gave her a 'tin of butter and some dates' (17 August 1942). Home produce made excellent presents and according to their record book of 'Produce: sold and given away', the Potters's friends benefited from gifts of poultry, eggs, fruit, and vegetables through the war. This record book was presumably kept in order to demonstrate that they did not participate in the black market.[13]

Some of their produce was sold either to individuals or to the Windsor British Restaurant. In 1943, for example, sale of produce totalled £3 17s 3d. For that particular year the following eggs and garden produce were sold or given away:

177 hen eggs
10 duck eggs
76 goose eggs
12 tomato plants
6 lbs tomatoes
24 lettuces
88 lbs plums
8 lbs beans
5 lbs spring onions
74 lbs onions
7 lbs apples

By comparison 1944 proved to be a more lucrative year when their sales brought in £20 1s 0d. Details are as follows:

6 geese
4 sittings of goose eggs
336 goose eggs
250 hen eggs
36 lbs onions
26 lbs leeks
800 cabbage plants
325 broccoli plants
100 leek plants
12 tomato plants
20 lbs tomatoes
7 lbs beetroot
13 lbs currants
5 lbs new potatoes
2 lbs beans

Such bounty wisely harvested could last well into the winter months, and preservation of food became part of the home production line. Virginia writes of 'rhubarb and ginger jam', which 'may sound disgusting but . . . is really delicious' (7 August 1942). In the summer of 1941 they 'picked all the redcurrants and made 20 lbs. of jelly' (31 July 1941) and early in 1944 they made 'water-glass to pickle some eggs . . . for the future' as the hens were 'laying like mad' (21 February 1944). One year they 'picked plums all day – off *one* tree only, and there were 125 lbs. – so I have sold 85 lbs. and we have bottled the rest' (1 August 1943).[14]

War, food, class, and gender

Domestic life in Second World War Britain was not experienced in temporal isolation. Contemporary reactions to inevitable wartime changes would have been influenced by what people were used to and what they considered normal. Many socio-economic, anthropological, psychological, and cultural factors affect attitudes to food consumption, and irrespective of age, class, and gender differences, pre-war expectations were influential.[15] Even those with problematic experiences nevertheless invoked them as normality. Sonya Rose cites the telling example of a refugee child, who, when offered the typical pre-war English breakfast (and wartime treat) of eggs and bacon, replied: 'Oh, I'm not eating that. At home we have chips and ale.'[16] Similarly, it is interesting to observe the instructions set out in the War Office *Manual of Military Cooking and Dietary*, published in 1940, nine months after the introduction of rationing. It is a monument to traditional English cooking, and appears to make few concessions to civilian rations. Three rations of tea per man per day would have required nearly twice the civilian tea and all of the civilian sugar rations. The recipe for pork and Boston beans required about half of the civilian meat ration for a week.[17] Clearly those who wrote it felt that military morale would be best maintained by the provision of the sort of diet to which troops might be accustomed. To set the wartime experience in context, a brief consideration of pre-war food issues is therefore worthwhile.

As with many other aspects of inter-war Britain, writing about food deals with a mixture of problems and novelties. At one end of the spectrum, Graves and Hodge's classic survey, *The Long Week-End*, concentrated on new branded goods sold by new retailing chains, prepared and preserved foods, packaging methods, and new fashions for health foods and slimming. There were also new places to eat and drink outside the home, from nightclubs, restaurants, and Lyons Corner Houses in town

centres to the road houses of the suburbs.[18] At the other extreme an increased governmental and academic interest in food, nutrition, and health revealed problems. Official interest in nutrition dates back to the beginning of the twentieth century, and the increasing scientific knowledge of the role of proteins, minerals, and vitamins in the diet led to several surveys of food consumption behaviour.[19] The initial focus of official concerns was with the inadequate diets of the poor and how they could most effectively be improved, but by the mid-1930s this had expanded to a demand for a wider range of nutritional information. In 1935, for example, E. M. H. Lloyd produced an analysis of the impact of income on food consumption, and in 1936 John (later Lord) Boyd Orr, one of the most prominent figures in the nutrition field in this period, published *Food, Health and Income*, a detailed survey of the consumption of dietary constituents (calories, proteins, minerals, and vitamins) analysed by income groups. The following year, William Crawford produced a further survey drawn from a larger and more socially and geographically representative sample than Boyd Orr's. It revealed enormous differences between income groups. Those that the survey placed in Group C, for example, who had a household income of between £125 and £249 (not the lowest income group, but one which included 60 per cent of the British population), spent 7s 11d per person per week on food, which represented 39.2 per cent of their *per capita* income. Class AA, in contrast, comprised of the one per cent of the population with an annual household income in excess of £1000, spent 18s 9d per head per week on food, although this represented only 11.8 per cent of their income.[20] There were class differences not only in expenditure, but even in the time of day at which meals were eaten. The higher the income group the later they ate breakfast, for example. The main meal of the day was eaten around midday in the lower income groups and in the evening in class AA.[21] Class differences in food and its accompanying rituals were securely established in inter-war England.

Individual records can shed interesting light on such more quantitative, aggregate data. As with any historical document, Virginia Potter's letters need to be interpreted with care. It is quite clear that the writer does not reveal everything. She did not write about either of her wartime pregnancies until they were well advanced, in order to spare her mother anxiety.[22] Neither did she present rationing and food shortages in a negative perspective, although evidence of problems sometimes emerges inadvertently. In 1941, for example, in sending thanks for a parcel of Virginia ham, she remarks that 'we haven't seen ham for months', although, 'we are luckier with bacon as we get 4 oz. per head each week'

(4 August 1941). The negative is often balanced by the positive, as in 1944 when 'it was Shrove Tuesday and someone gave me a LEMON!! The first one I have seen for about four years. They gave it to me for the pancakes, but I divided it into five slices, and everyone decided what they would do with theirs! Nannie put hers on her pancake, Jennifer had a *small* glass of lemonade, I had mine in my tea Wed. afternoon and so did Bella and Rosa.' (28 February 1944). Virginia was a natural *raconteuse* who saw it as her duty to write entertaining letters. She had been brought up to deny her feelings and make the best of things. Consequently, she was unlikely to moan, especially to an anxious and distant mother. Instead, it is the incongruity of the experience, especially for a reader who would have been all too aware of the contrast with her pre-war life, that is emphasised: 'I have had a very busy week cooking, cleaning . . . You would have laughed to see me clad in overalls and half Wellingtons cleaning out the geese's pen – then rushing in and cooking dinner etc' (18 August 1941). The tone invites not pity for her position, but admiration for her adaptability: '. . . we are going to breed rabbits, ducks, geese and chickens like mad and DIG DIG DIG for Victory' (23 July 1941). It might also be expected that the letters would concentrate on the exceptional rather than the quotidian, but in fact (and in contrast to her pre-war letters) such is their detail and frequency that this appears not to be the case. She was unavoidably separated from her mother, to whom she had always been very close, and by writing a thorough day-to-day description she wanted her mother to be able to envisage her daily life and so share it as much as possible. In consequence the letters create a detailed picture of wartime life on the home front. But they are, without doubt, the view from one particular age group and social class.

Virginia was 30 years old and her husband Gerald was 31 in September 1939, and their first daughter was born in April 1940, so for most of the war it is easy to define their demographic standing as a married couple with one child. Their social class is less straightforward: were they at the lower end of the upper class or the upper end of the middle class? As McKibbin observes, in attempting to define the upper class, '[m]ore perhaps than for any other class, formal criteria of membership are lacking'.[23] It was not just a matter of income. Although he sets the required minimum income level at £10,000 per year in 1919 purchasing power terms (the equivalent in 1939 would have been about £8,000), McKibbin admits that many of the peerage and gentry would have had less. He also argues that inter-war 'Society' was not exactly the same as the upper class, although many members of either would also have been

recognised as belonging to the other. In both, membership was defined by mutual recognition, based not only on money but also on acceptable breeding, education, cultural assumptions, and social affiliations. The number of people involved, he calculates, was no more than 40,000, and perhaps as few as 20,000, or between 0.1 and 0.05 per cent of the population.[24] In comparison, it will be remembered that the group described as AA in Crawford's food survey accounted for one per cent of the population and had annual incomes in excess of £1000. Many of these would have been recognised as part of the upper middle class, which at the beginning of the twentieth century would have included the traditional professions: the church, the law, medicine, and officers of the armed forces. By the middle of the century this upper-middle class would have been expanded by an influx of those from the technical, scientific, and commercial occupations on their way up, and also, according to G. D. H. Cole (writing in 1955), by many of those on the way down, who before the war would have thought of themselves as upper class.[25]

Gerald and Virginia Potter probably fit quite neatly into this last group. There is no available information on their pre-war annual income, although it seems likely that it was less than £8,000 and more than £1000. Gerald had several of the attributes that McKibbin associates with membership of the upper class. He had been to Eton, one of the few schools that McKibbin identifies as 'indubitably upper class'; before the war he enjoyed the 'vestigial gentry life-style' that went with a commission in the Brigade of Guards; and he had numerous titled friends. Her American origins were no barrier to Virginia's social position – as McKibbin points out, many society hostesses were American – and she was presented at court, the upper class's 'most characteristic rite of passage'.[26] Their wedding featured on the Gaumont British newsreel in 1936. After the war Gerald went into the fishing business in Devon for a year or so, and then became a market gardener, although much of the couple's income continued to be derived from their private resources. Economically, it would have been difficult to sustain a view of them as part of the diminishing post-war upper class. On the other hand, they continued to associate with the same group of friends they had known before the war, many of their new post-war friends were wealthy or titled or both, and Gerald had the time and resources to establish himself as a leading competitive yachtsman. In many ways, therefore, Gerald and Virginia may be seen as typical representatives of the elite whose socio-economic position was extensively affected by the war.

Food consumption, argues Sonya Rose, was a focal point of 'class feeling'. It was an arena in which the idea of a united people fighting

a People's War could be tested in the daily reality of who ate what. Similarly, Robert Mackay, in discussing the factors affecting civilian morale in the war, reminds us that 'fair shares for all' was the official slogan of the food rationing scheme, and that the imposition of a maximum charge of 5 shillings for a restaurant meal in 1942 was a response to the perception that rich people could avoid the impact of rationing by eating in expensive restaurants.[27] The effects of this were probably nugatory in total demand terms, but it flouted the perception of equality of sacrifice. This equality, argued McKibbin, was seen in wartime rhetoric as ideologically good in itself, 'and not simply as instrumental to winning the war'.[28] Curiously, however, given the central position that she attaches to it, Rose allocates no more than a couple of paragraphs to discussing the question of food and class in wartime, mentioning only rationing and the use of restaurants to avoid it. It was much more complicated than that, as the evidence from Virginia Potter's letters demonstrates.

We would argue that the circumstances described in these sources made for a very different home war experience from that of the majority of the population. The ability to generate so much home produce, both fresh and preserved, was dependent upon access to sufficient land, which was in turn dependent upon sufficient financial resources. Likewise, regular parcels from abroad and dining out all bore a cost. Lunch at Claridges Hotel in London, albeit a 'very small and nasty' one, cost £1 15s 0d, a very high price at the time but one which Virginia reluctantly bore in order to meet a friend (13 November 1944). Access to game, from invitations from friends, was presumably a return on pre-war expenditure on entertaining, but domestic staff, which in the Potter household consisted of a cook, nannie, maid, and gardener, all had to be paid for at wartime costs and prices. They did, however, especially in the case of the cook and gardener, bring with them additional expertise which enabled more food to be produced, and what was produced to be used more effectively or inventively (e.g., the cook's caramel ice cream that she made from milk and sugar). Conversely, employees could also present problems, as in the case of Miss Tomkins, the landgirl: 'La Tomkins usually stands about and *watches* . . . Butler has tried very hard to make a gardener out of her but finds it an impossible task . . . she drinks a pint of milk a day, and untold cups of tea, coffee or chocolate – and gleefully tucks into my ration of jam – and is getting as fat as a butter-ball!' (14 February 1943).

In the context, therefore, of the historical debate about fair shares and class, a gap emerges between rhetoric and material reality, what

the Potters said and did. There was great enthusiasm for the rationing system ('I think Lord Woolton is *absolutely marvellous* the way he has managed food rationing in this country' (20 September 1942)), and a largely uncomplaining acceptance of its practical effects ('They have let us down very gently in England – nearly every day there are more rations cut etc. but if it had all happened in one fell swoop we would have been left reeling' (28 April 1942)). The letters also show an awareness of the problems of others: 'It is almost a full-time job watching the papers and listening to the wireless to find out all the new changes and regulations – and whether you get treacle on the points ration or the jam ration – and then rush in and get it! How people ever manage to shop when they are in an office or factory all day I don't know' (27 July 1942). At the same time, they effectively subverted the system through their greater access to land, money, and, on occasion, charm ('sweet-talked the butcher into letting me have some kidneys' (14 February 1942)). But if they were rich, they were by no means the idle rich. Virginia Potter's war involved the exchange of leisure for food. Whereas before the war she had not had a paid job, but had devoted her life to the running of the household and the pursuit of a very active social life, during the war she became a busy manager of what was essentially a small food production and processing organisation. This is not surprising – Maslow's hierarchy of needs suggests that basic needs for food, clothing, and shelter will be satisfied before higher order needs for self-expression or self-fulfilment are considered – but it is interesting in the context of a study of consumption.[29] As Boyd Orr pointed out in 1940: 'For a large part of the population foodstuffs have in fact always been rationed by price.'[30] This rationing clearly did not apply to the rich before the war. The possession of money allows consumers to buy goods, and when they have sufficient goods they can avoid further income-producing activities in order to consume leisure. When these market rules no longer apply, and no amount of extra money will produce more food, the relationship between high income and leisure also breaks down. The only exception to this involved resort to the black market, and there is no evidence that the Potters were involved. If anything, the contrary is the case: 'I saw goose-eggs in Fortnum and Mason's at 3s.9d. each!! I sell mine for sixpence each, as am *not* Queen of the Black Market' (12 April 1945).

In contrast to this breakdown of pre-war economic rules, social rules appear to have been maintained. Since food is not only a means of nutrition but also of socialisation, it is interesting to note that the process of entertaining and being entertained, with its implications for

the maintenance of status and social obligations (leaving aside that important wartime commodity, fun), appears to have continued at its pre-war level, indeed to have increased significantly. The fact that food was not only bartered, but also given away, and used in entertaining, is just one indicator of this. There is also evidence that the whole range of food-related social activities continued at more or less their pre-war rate (see Table 10.1). As with most statistical evidence, these data need to be interpreted with care. The figures for 1937 and 1938 are in general lower than those for 1936. This is explained, to some degree, by the fact that Virginia's mother, Virginia Dickinson Reynolds, visited England for part of each of those years, so the normally frequent interchange of letters did not need to occur. But there was probably more to it than that. In the first fine careless rapture of early married life the Potters socialised intensively and spent freely, until the realities of their financial position became apparent. They were a long way from being poverty stricken in 1937 and 38, but the letters contain more discussion of money questions, and their entertainment schedule may have reflected this. There is also the question of how complete and reliable a record of social events the letters are. There is no means of checking this, although there appears to be no systematic source of error apart from those already mentioned.

With these caveats in mind, it is worth examining Table 10.1 in more detail. The annual totals of entertainment events are as follows:

1936	325	1941	209
1937	243 (304)	1942	196
1938	89 (180)	1943	226
1939	96 (128)	1944	264
1940	137	1945	222

(figures in brackets for 1937–39 show the expected annual totals if a full year's data had been available).

By 1941, when they were settled in their wartime home near Windsor, the Potters were entertaining at a rate that almost reached their pre-war peak. They went to the Eton and Harrow cricket match, to dances at Windsor Castle, weddings, had a weekend at the Berkeley Hotel, and visited nightclubs and restaurants. The main differences were that they dined out at restaurants much less (see 'out to dinner (public)' in Table 10.1) but had more guests for meals and to stay in their own house. These might be English friends, or those passing through England

on wartime business, visiting American officers, or brother-officers that Gerald might bring home. Cost and convenience became a minor consideration. As Virginia later wrote: 'we all knew that eventually most of us would be killed, so we made the best of it, and my Lord, we did!'[31] This might be interpreted as another attempt to maintain morale by clinging to normality as much as possible. The Potters had always entertained their friends before the war; they could have responded to wartime fuel and food shortages by operating a smaller household and entertaining less, but there is no sign in the letters that they ever considered doing so.

This extensive entertaining with a reduced retinue of servants, together with her gardening, animal husbandry, and housekeeping activities, supports Ina Zweiniger-Bargielowska's conclusion that gender differences in the experience of austerity were more important than class differences.[32] Virginia Potter's husband was an army officer during the war, but he had also been an army officer for much of the time that she had known him before the war. He was just doing a different part of an officer's job when he was on active service. On the other hand, her life was transformed completely. The change is epitomised in two extracts from the letters, the first from November 1938:

> First had some oysters at Driver's and came to the sad conclusion that they aren't as good as the French ones – then went to the Command Performance at the Coliseum – supposedly a sort of top-notch variety show for the King and Queen. We had excellent seats with a good view of the Royal Box . . . the King looked bored except for the comedian turns . . . we went on to the Savoy for supper, and had a few dances and came home.
>
> (15 November 1938)

and the second from September 1941:

> [the cook] left just two weeks ago and since then I have been doing the housework, the cooking, looking after 52 animals, and working for the W.V.S. [Women's Voluntary Service] . . . On Tuesdays and Thursday I work from 11–3 dishing up food at a hot plate in the British Restaurant . . . It is very hot work, so will be lovely in the winter! . . . On Wednesdays and Saturdays I spend the morning cleaning and disinfecting the geese, duck and hen houses . . . I shall start a manure factory soon as a sideline!
>
> (28 September 1941).

There is a sense of life being more vivid and interesting in the second extract than in the first. Of course she was always anxious to allay her mother's fears, and so may have been careful always to be as positive as possible. But there is surely unfeigned excitement when she writes, in February 1942: 'Another great event happened on Wed – Spring has arrived . . . as we had our first *goose egg*. Thrills!' (9 February 1942).[33]

Sonya Rose draws attention to the possibility of new demands leading to new expressions of class antagonism. There were suggestions that women of the leisured classes might use voluntary work as an excuse for avoiding more demanding jobs, and that there was a class bias in the kinds of work that women undertook.[34] Virginia Potter's work for the Women's Voluntary Service was certainly voluntary, and it is difficult to imagine her working in a munitions factory, but at the same time she seems to have been fully occupied, servants notwithstanding, in looking after her child, house, garden, animals, husband, and guests. As Rose argues, women were expected to 'preserve a conventional feminine persona' and at the same time 'contribute heroically to the war effort'.[35] Similarly, Fielding argues that female roles were 'equivocal': they were expected to perform previously male tasks but also to remain feminine.[36] Virginia Potter's experience embodies a class equivocation that parallels this gender equivocation: she was required to perform middle-class or working-class roles while continuing to socialise as a member of the upper class. This, presumably, was a way in which war broke down class barriers in the same way that it broke gender barriers. The difference was that women tended to revert to traditional female roles immediately after the war whereas, as McKibbin argues, 'a large part of the upper class . . . collapsed into the upper middle class'.[37]

This chapter suggests that discussions of food and war from the perspective of the politician and civil servant need to be nuanced by comparison with the impact of policy on individual consumers. The enormous variety of their individual archives, used carefully, can be used to reveal the corresponding variety of their experiences, and show a more complex picture than that derived from national archives. The evidence analysed here suggests an overall acceptance of, and even enthusiasm for, the food rationing system, as does Mrs Milburn's diary.[38] In both cases though, the detail, the daily reality, and the unexpected windfalls and treats mattered as much and were more written about than the overall concepts of wartime food supply. Significant as it was *per se*, food also connects with questions of gender, class, and culture that resonate more widely through the recent historiography of the war.

Notes

1 R. J. Hammond, *Food. Volume 1: The Growth of Policy* (London, 1951); D. N. Chester, *Lessons of the British War Economy* (Cambridge, 1951); A. Calder, *The People's War: Britain 1939–45*, (London, 1969); P. Calvocoressi and G. Wint, *Total War: Causes and Courses of the Second World War* (Harmondsworth, 1972). N. Longmate, *How We Lived Then* (London, 1971) is an exception, but the extent to which he subjects his material to historical analysis might be questioned.

2 See, for example, P. Addison, *The Road to 1945: British Politics and the Second World War*, 2nd edn (London, 1994); M. Donnelly, *Britain in the Second World War* (London, 1999).

3 www.catalogue.nationalarchives.gov.uk/leaflets

4 D. J. Oddy, *From Plain Fare to Fusion Food* (Woodbridge, 2003), pp. 133–68.

5 E. Smithies, *Crime in Wartime: A Social History of Crime in World War Two* (London, 1982); T. Crosby, *The Impact of Civilian Evacuation in the Second World War* (London, 1986); P. Summerfield, 'The "Levelling of Class"', in H. L. Smith (ed.), *War and Social Change* (Manchester, 1986) pp. 179–207; S. Fielding, 'The Good War: 1939–1945', in N. Tiratsoo (ed.), *From Blitz to Blair: A New History of Britain since 1939* (London, 1997). See also Mark Roodhouse's chapter in this volume.

6 I. Zweiniger-Bargielowska, *Austerity in Britain: Rationing, Controls, and Consumption, 1939–1955* (Oxford, 2000); R. Mackay, *Half the Battle: Civilian Morale in Britain During the Second World War* (Manchester, 2002); S. O. Rose, *Which People's War? National Identity and Citizenship in Wartime Britain, 1939–1945* (Oxford, 2003).

7 Rose, *Which People's War*, p. 35; Mackay, *Half the Battle*, pp. 196–202.

8 Zweiniger-Bargielowska, *Austerity in Britain*, has a more nuanced approach, but even here a glance at the footnotes in her section on popular attitudes to food (pp. 69–87) suggests that about one-third of them refer to official sources.

9 For example, R. Broad and S. Fleming (eds), *Nella Last's War: A Mother's Diary, 1939–45* (Bristol, 1981); P. Donnelly (ed.), *Mrs. Milburn's Diaries: An Englishwoman's Day-to-Day Reflections, 1939–45*, (London, 1979); V. Hodgson, *Few Eggs and No Oranges* (London, 1976); B. Noble, *The House Opposite* (Toronto, 1943); E. Olivier, *Night Thoughts of a Country Landlady: Being the Pacific Experiences of Miss Emma Nightingale in Time of War* (London, 1943); N. Webley (ed.), *Betty's Wartime Diary* (London, 2003).

10 The letters are unpublished, and in the possession of the authors of this chapter, who are the writer's daughter and son-in-law. A selection from them, edited by Angela Potter, will be published by the University of Georgia Press. Henceforth quotations from them will be identified in the text by the date on which they were written.

11 Zweiniger-Bargielowska, *Austerity in Britain*, p. 16.

12 Donnelly, *Mrs Milburn's Diaries*, p. 23.

13 It is now in the possession of the authors.

14 This figure of 85 lbs. conflicts slightly with Virginia's total of 88 lbs. listed above under 1943.

15 D. Marshall (ed.), *Food Choice and the Consumer* (Glasgow, 1995).

16 Rose, *Which People's War*, p. 207.
17 The War Office, *Manual of Military Cooking and Dietary, Part 1 – General, 1940* (London, 1940), p. 114. We are most grateful to Derek Shepherd for the loan of this book. For details of civilian rations see Zweiniger-Bargielowska, *Austerity in Britain*, pp. 34–5.
18 R. Graves and A. Hodge, *The Long Week-End* (London, 1940), pp. 168–86.
19 D. F. Smith, 'Nutrition Science and the Two World Wars', in D. F. Smith (ed.), *Nutrition in Britain: Science, Scientists and Politics in the Twentieth Century* (London, 1997) pp. 142–65.
20 J. Burnett, *Plenty and Want* (Harmondsworth, 1968), pp. 306–8; J. C. Drummond and A. Wilbraham, *The Englishman's Food* (London, rev. edn, 1957), pp. 442–4.
21 Burnett, *Plenty and Want*, pp. 310–13.
22 The impending arrival of her first daughter was announced 5 weeks before she was born, and of her second, less than 4 weeks before she was born (7 Mar. 1940; 6 July 1945).
23 R. McKibbin, *Classes and Cultures: England, 1918–1951* (Oxford, 1998), p. 1.
24 McKibbin, *Classes and Cultures*, pp. 1–2.
25 McKibbin, *Classes and Cultures*, pp. 42–6.
26 McKibbin, *Classes and Cultures*, pp. 22–4 and 35.
27 Rose, *Which People's War*, p. 35; Mackay, *Half the Battle*, pp. 196 and 200.
28 McKibbin, *Classes and Cultures*, p. 531.
29 A. Maslow, *Motivation and Personality* (New York, 1954).
30 Calder, *People's War*, p. 384.
31 Unpublished post-war memoir, MS in the possession of the authors.
32 Zweiniger-Bargielowska, *Austerity in Britain*, p. 256.
33 It is interesting to note that Lady Diana Cooper, daughter of a duke and wife of a government minister, also found wartime smallholding work (she had a cow, a goat, hens, ducks, seven pigs, and 35 rabbits) 'unexpectedly fulfilling . . . the life of an intelligent rustic labourer suits me to perfection'. P. Ziegler, *Diana Cooper* (Harmondsworth, 1983) p. 237.
34 Rose, *Which People's War*, pp. 36–8.
35 Rose, *Which People's War*, p. 123.
36 Fielding, 'The Good War: 1939–1945', p. 39.
37 McKibbin, *Classes and Cultures*, p. 42. See also Summerfield, 'The "Levelling of Class"'.
38 Donnelly, *Mrs Milburn's Diaries*.

11

Popular Morality and the Black Market in Britain, 1939–1955*

Mark Roodhouse

In February 1944 a pig keeper from Lowestoft in Norfolk was prosecuted for contravening the terms of a licence to slaughter a pig. Over the coming weeks the case was to become a *cause célèbre*. Under the terms of the licence, the pig keeper had to sell half of his pig to a local butcher in order to keep the other half for household consumption. According to the Deputy Meat Agent, the butcher cut up both halves of the pig and warned the pig keeper against selling or giving away any of his half. Three days later the Deputy Meat Agent called at the pig keeper's house to discover that there was only one leg remaining. He had given a small amount away and was believed to have sold the rest. When the pig keeper appeared before the local magistrate, the magistrate dismissed the charge of selling the meat for lack of evidence and found the man guilty of giving pork away illegally. The case would have remained buried in the columns of the local newspaper, if it had not been for the comments of the presiding magistrate who condemned the Deputy Meat Agent's use of 'gestapo methods' by calling at the pig keeper's home. The national press reported the magistrate's comments, prompting the Prime Minister Winston Churchill to write an indignant minute to his Minister of Food Lord Woolton in which he wrote that it 'showed bureaucracy in its most pettifogging and tyrannical aspect, and could not see why a person licensed to kill a pig should not be allowed "to share it with friends"'.[1]

If such hostile attitudes to control could be found on the bench of Lowestoft Magistrates' Court and in 10 Downing Street, why did the British meat control scheme not break down during, or immediately after, the Second World War? How could Lord Woolton assert in his memoirs that 'there was little or no black market in Britain', despite 'the scarcity of supplies and the rigidity of rationing', when he changed

the regulations to assuage a public outraged at the harsh treatment of the Lowestoft pig keeper? His assertion is also at odds with individual and collective memory of the home front: overcharging for price-controlled foodstuffs and bartering of food coupons and food rations are ubiquitous features of oral testimony, and a regular storyline in film and television programmes about 1940s Britain. This chapter seeks to reconcile these apparently opposing views of black-market activity, and in doing so reveal the impact of conflict on the moral environment in which economic agents operated. The black-market consumer, dealer, and producer were not selfish, unpatriotic, and immoral, or even amoral. They were, in their own opinion, ethical consumers, dealers, and producers of illicit goods who were entitled to obtain 'a little bit extra' or make 'a decent living' as reward or compensation for the many personal sacrifices they made at central government's behest. It was this sense of entitlement that motivated, or at least justified, black-market dealing in rationed foodstuffs such as meat.

Rationing: regulations and evasions

The National Government introduced a meat-rationing scheme in March 1940, a scheme that remained in place until July 1954. The meat scheme covered mutton, lamb, beef, and veal, but it did not include pork and offals or bacon and ham. Pork and offals were later included in the scheme, but bacon and ham were rationed separately throughout the period of control.[2] The Ministry of Food (MoF) deemed meat rationing necessary to ensure that reduced civilian supplies of home-killed and imported meat were distributed equitably. Civilian meat supplies had to be cut as meat was Britain's largest single import during the inter-war period and to have continued importing the same amount of meat in wartime would have taken up a large amount of valuable shipping space. Social unrest about rising food prices during the First World War convinced emergency planners that it was not enough to restrict the supply of meat to civilians and watch prices rise.[3] Rationing by price would deprive those on low and middle incomes, many of whom would be engaged in semi-essential and essential war work, of a basic foodstuff.[4]

Although meat was not 'the staff of life', that honour being reserved for bread, it was deemed a 'necessary' food. Meat had become a regular part of the working-class diet towards the end of the nineteenth century as average incomes rose and the growth in imports of chilled and frozen meat brought the price of meat down. Workers prized meat highly as a

valuable source of energy. Regular consumption of meat conferred social prestige and affirmed masculine and national identities too.[5] Against this historical background and with the experience of the First World War fresh in their minds, it is easy to understand why civil servants and politicians did not allow the price mechanism to deprive workers of meat for fear of precipitating industrial and civil unrest.

Similar reasoning and the need to secure the support of the meat trades lay behind the MoF decision to calculate the meat ration according to price. Using price instead of weight to determine the level of the ration preserved the customary choice between quality and quantity. Initially, all civilians were entitled to 1s 10d of mutton, lamb, beef, or veal per person per week with the exception of children under 5 who received half the weekly ration.[6] No group of civilians received supplementary meat rations until 1943, when the MoF introduced a special allowance for pregnant women, who received one and a half times the standard ration from then on. Three years later in October 1946 underground coal miners became the second group to receive a supplementary allowance, which effectively doubled their ration. The overwhelming majority of civilians were not entitled to a supplementary allowance, but they could legitimately augment their meat ration by eating out at hotels, restaurants, and canteens. Diners were allowed one penny-worth of meat per person per meal; this was doubled in works canteens catering for manual workers in heavy industries. Despite the special provisions made for manual workers, this group were to make persistent complaints about the lack of meat in their diet.

The meat rationing scheme that manual workers complained about was a standard single-line or commodity-rationing scheme. The MoF established a monopoly over imports of frozen meat through the Meat Importers' National (Defence) Association Limited (MINDAL) and domestic meat production by establishing the MoF-controlled Collecting Centres and Slaughterhouses to centralise slaughtering. The MoF forced wholesale butchers to form Wholesale Meat Supply Organisations (WMSO), which supplied shipping butchers, retail buying groups supplying caterers and institutions, retail butchers supplying caterers, institutions, domestic consumers, manufacturers, and the armed services.

To obtain their meat ration, domestic consumers had to register with a retail butcher. When buying meat from their butcher, consumers surrendered the requisite number of ration coupons to the butcher. The retail butcher sent the coupons to the local Food Office with a *return* of stocks, sales, and purchases. To obtain supplies, retail

butchers completed an *application for supplies* every four weeks that stated the number of registered customers and the requirements of catering customers. The Food Office staff compared the application to the returns before sending the butcher a *preliminary authority* showing the amount the butcher might buy. The Food Office summarised the authorities in a *schedule* before issuing butchers with a *buying permit* calculated according to the wholesale value of the meat allowing a 2.5 per cent margin for meat processing. The butcher presented the permit to the local WMSO in return for supplies. The WMSO returned the cancelled permits to the Area Meat Agent who sent them to the Food Office where they could be compared with coupons and returns.

After scrapping the *return* in 1942, the MoF overhauled the meat rationing system to prevent retail butchers building up a surplus of meat, introducing a new system in 1943. Under the new scheme, retail butchers completed a *weekly statement* of new registrations and the value of meat sold accompanied by coupons and caterers' order forms. This allowed the Food Office to compile a *weekly assessment sheet* which was used to calculate a butcher's weekly meat requirements. From the individual sheets, the Food Office compiled a *summary of authorisations* covering an eight-week period, issuing *intermediate summaries* every week which adjusted authorisations in accordance with the *weekly statements*.[7]

The composition and value of the meat ration varied during the period of control. Pork and offals were not initially included in the standard meat ration, but they were added to the ration in January 1941. Offals came off the ration six months later in June 1941. When there was a chance that the MoF would not be able to honour the meat ration with home-killed and imported meat, canned corned meat was included in the ration to make up for the shortfall. The MoF also introduced a Christmas bonus in December 1944, historically a time of high meat consumption, which remained a regular feature of the rationing system until decontrol in 1954.[8]

Although the introduction of meat rationing caused public discontent, meat rationing had little impact upon civilian meat consumption during the spring and summer of 1940.[9] The ration allowance fluctuated dramatically during the autumn of 1940 due to a glut of home-killed meat entering the market in the autumn. In September the MoF increased the standard meat ration from 1s 10d to 2s 2d per person per week. The generosity of ration levels during the ten months of control meant that the average Briton consumed 116.3 lbs of meat in 1940, which was only 13 lbs less than the annual average of 129.3 lbs for the period 1934–38. This was not a sustainable level of consumption

as a shortage of home-killed meat followed the autumn glut and the tonnage of Allied shipping sunk by German u-boats continued to rise. In December the MoF cut the meat ration to 1s 10d and by January 1941 the standard meat ration had settled at 1s 2d per week; a level at which it remained for much of the war.[10] *Per capita* consumption of meat for 1941 stood at 99.3 lbs, 17 lbs less than in 1940 and 30 lbs less than the period 1934–38.[11]

At the same time as the MoF cut ration levels, the Ministry of Information Home Intelligence Division and independent social research organisations such as the British Institute of Public Opinion and Mass-Observation noticed increasing public discontent with food rationing.[12] Male manual workers in particular felt that their diet was inadequate due to the reduction in their consumption of meat.[13] In 1942 the Wartime Social Survey found that 42 per cent of men working in heavy industry did not feel that they ate enough food to keep fit, compared to 45 per cent of men employed in light industry, 32 per cent of women employed in light industry, and 22 per cent of housewives. Of those who gave reasons for the inadequacy of their diet, 56 per cent of men in heavy industry attributed this to insufficient meat: the comparable figures for men in light industry, women in light industry, and housewives were respectively 37 per cent, 23 per cent, and 23 per cent.[14] These feelings intensified after the war as meat ration levels began to fluctuate again, but the pattern across the different social groups remained unchanged with men being more likely to complain than women about an inadequate amount of meat in their diet.[15]

Given the size of the cuts in meat consumption and the evidence of discontent with meat ration levels, there would appear to have been an excess demand for meat. Producers and traders were also unhappy with the system of meat control. In theory the system of price control and subsidy fixed producer, wholesale, and retail prices ensuring that consumers paid a fair price for meat, holding inflation in check, while producers, wholesalers, and retailers made an acceptable profit despite falling turnover and rising costs. All complained about unrealistic calculations that left them with little or no profit, and the regulatory burden that accompanied control. It would seem the conditions were ripe for the emergence of a black market in meat.

Not only was there excess demand for meat, but there were also numerous opportunities to evade the meat rationing scheme from the farm gate to the kitchen table. Farmers failed to register livestock so that they could be illicitly slaughtered and sold. They would also inform the authorities that illicitly slaughtered livestock had been buried or

burnt after dying from natural causes, illness, or injuries sustained in an accident. Alternatively, the farmer might send a beast to the knacker's yard, knowing that its carcass would be sold illegally. Farmers could also evade price control by selling fat stock as store stock at auction. The price of livestock bought for store was uncontrolled and butchers who owned farms would buy store stock and illicitly slaughter them. Butchers could also obtain diseased and rotten meat from knackers' yards. Buyers for London hotels and restaurants toured East Anglia and the Home Counties, obtaining black-market meat from farmer-butchers.

Although illicit production and slaughter was an important source of meat for the black market, wholesale and retail butchers could divert meat from official channels into the black market too. If a wholesale butcher working for a retail buying group or a WMSO had a limited amount of veal, then the wholesaler could force a retail butcher or retail buying group who bought the veal to buy uncontrolled offals for a very high price. The retail butcher could place a condition on the sale of the veal too. The wholesaler and retailers could also employ the familiar techniques of giving short measure to customers, mislabelling horse meat and second-quality meat as better quality meat, and overcharging customers. Through careful processing, butchers could also build up a surplus of meat from unwanted rations and by manipulating the manufacturing margin. This surplus meat could be sold to customers or processed illegally. Officials believed illegal sales of surplus meat to be a bigger problem than illicit slaughter.

There were also several ways in which civilians could evade meat control. For example, it was possible for consumers to evade the regulations by forming a pig club. The MoF permitted groups of domestic consumers to buy, raise, and slaughter a pig for personal consumption. Control of pig clubs was difficult as pigs were not killed at MoF-controlled slaughterhouses so meat from self-suppliers' pigs could be given away or sold contrary to the rationing regulations. Pig clubs also evaded the regulations by paying farmers to raise pigs for them.[16] If it was not possible to join a pig club, consumers could buy illicitly slaughtered meat from a farmer or a retail butcher. They could offer more than the official price for rationed meat or pay more for offals bought at the same time. They could barter unwanted rations and ration coupons too. Another way to evade the regulations was to apply for a replacement ration book under false pretences or to use a dead person's book. Although making a fraudulent application for a ration book was an offence under the rationing regulations, it was also an offence under existing criminal law and wartime emergency legislation.

The emergence of black markets in controlled goods such as meat changed the pattern of 'traditional crime', leading to a boom in fraud, forgery, theft, and bribery. Instead of forging bank notes and insurance stamps, gangs forged ration coupons which were sold to consumers. Meat and ration coupons were stolen and sold to consumers and butchers. The demand for black-market goods and coupons turned the market for stolen goods upside down as thieves could sell controlled goods for more than the official market price.[17]

Wholesale and retail butchers were well placed to exploit the loopholes in the meat-rationing system, particularly those who owned a farm and a slaughterhouse. There was a long-established tradition of sharp practice in the meat trade – nineteenth-century social reformers exposed overcharging, the sale of poor quality meat as premium quality meat, adulteration, and a widespread trade in rotting and diseased meat that was unfit for human consumption – which meat inspectors had failed to stamp out.[18] Most butchers were aware of these sharp practices even if they did not follow them. Given their passive knowledge of sharp practices, it did not require much imagination on the part of butchers to devise ways of evading the new regulations, eking out dwindling meat supplies by cheating their customers or securing supplies of stolen and condemned meat.

Identifying motives, means, and opportunities for black-market dealing cannot tell us how widespread black-market dealing was. To answer this question we need to gauge the extent of the meat black market. Enforcement statistics are not a reliable indicator of the level of black-market activity; due to the problem of the dark figure of unrecorded crime they are a better reflection of enforcement activity than the extent of illegal dealing.[19] Attempts to use the national income statistics, price data, and the demand for cash to estimate the level of black-market activity are also fraught with problems due to the unreliability of the data and the difficulty of isolating the effect of black-market dealing. Even if these problems could be ironed out, estimates based on these data would only reflect the level of commercial black-market dealing, as they cannot measure the extent of barter-exchange, which, if oral testimony is to be believed, was widespread. When quantitative evidence about the level of excess demand, the number of unwanted ration coupons in circulation with the public, the price store livestock realised at auction marts, the level of enforcement activity, and the percentage of the civilian population who believed black-market dealing was on the increase is combined with qualitative evidence about the level of public and official concern about the meat black market, a rough picture of the extent of the meat black market emerges.[20]

The meat black market developed alongside the meat-rationing scheme, emerging at the same time as the introduction of rationing created excess demand. Not only did the level of black-market dealing increase when the level of excess demand increased, but it also increased when public hostility towards black-market dealing declined, key moments being the point at which the British public felt that Allied victory was inevitable sometime in 1944, the unconditional surrender of Germany and then Japan, and the relaxation of control in 1945, the 1947 economic crisis and the tightening of control which raised questions about the economic stewardship of the post-war Labour government, and the drastic cut in the meat ration occasioned by the collapse of negotiations with the Argentinean government in 1951.

Without a point estimate of the size of the meat black market, it is difficult to compare the extent of the British black market to meat black markets in Western Europe or North America during the period. The incommensurability of enforcement data and rationing systems, as well as the problem of the dark figure of unrecorded crime, invalidates attempts to use crime figures collected by the International Penal and Penitentiary Commission and the UN to compare the level of black market activity in the United Kingdom to other countries.[21] The economic historians Geoffrey Mills and Hugh Rockoff are the only historians to attempt to make a cross-national comparison using price data to compare the United States and the United Kingdom during the period 1940–46. Mills and Rockoff concluded that there was less black-market activity in Britain than in the United States.[22] Others have arrived at the same conclusion through the process of deduction. For example, Alan Milward has argued that black markets were less of a problem in Britain than elsewhere, because government control of imported goods and the comprehensive system of control made enforcement easy.[23] BBC correspondents reporting from countries liberated by Allied forces shared the impression that black-market activity was a relatively minor problem in the United Kingdom.[24] Newsreels and news magazines carried similar reports throughout the 1940s.[25] Although Allied wartime propaganda had deliberately fostered this view, it does seem to be borne out by the available evidence.[26]

Between right and wrong: multiple moralities

How are we to explain the limited extent of the British meat black market? Taking our cue from choice theory, we could explain the limited extent of the meat black market in several ways: the 'tightness' and

'comprehensiveness' of control, that is to say the small number of loopholes to exploit; excess demand for meat was limited, in other words meat rationing delivered (enough of) the goods; the risks associated with black market dealing, such as the perceived likelihood of being detected and the severity of the punishments meted out, weighed more heavily on the minds of producers, traders, and consumers than the rewards of illegal dealing; and, imperfect information (to engage in a black-market deal one needed to be able to recognise an opportunity and know how to seize it). The last, it has been argued by the Indian economist A. K. Dasgupta, may well prevent the emergence of a true illicit market, each transaction being a one off.[27] Some, if not all, of these explanations can be found in the secondary literature on price controls, rationing and black markets in the United Kingdom. But these works also stress the importance of non-rational social forces – namely patriotism and personal morality. These underdeveloped explanatory factors 'mop up' those people whose actions do not fit the choice theory approach.

Behind this approach lies the assumption that it is natural for people to turn to black markets, which has led researchers to ask the question 'Why did people not use black markets?' rather than the question 'Why did people use the black market?', which in turn assumes that the factors inhibiting black-market activity were stronger than those propelling people into illegal dealing. In the case of the United Kingdom, black-market dealing was not necessary to survive and, with the notable exception of Northern Ireland, was not construed as an act of resistance to an occupying power, the so-called 'economic' and 'social' forces were nicely balanced. Nonetheless, historians have paid little attention to the social forces restraining black-market activity and how black-market traders and consumers made use of 'neutralisation techniques' or 'vocabularies of motive' to subdue these forces. In order to do this, we need to examine individual decision-making processes, whether they be outcome-oriented actions guided by a rational calculus or non-outcome-oriented actions guided by social norms.

Clearly some people did not exploit opportunities to engage in black-market dealing. If it were otherwise, the meat black market would have been far larger than it was. Some people were unaware of the criminal opportunities around them. Others may have sensed the existence of opportunities, but lacked the knowledge and contacts to exploit them. Individual assessments of the consequences of black-market dealing also varied, some people being more risk-averse than others.[28] But by

themselves these factors cannot explain the behaviour of those people who did not exploit opportunities to engage in illicit deals.

It is clear that some people wanted to buy and sell on black markets, but lacked information about them. Eleanor Howard, an active member of the Women's Voluntary Service, was in the market for extra petrol, but did not know where she could get it:

> I am never tempted to scrounge extra bits of butter, or to buy stockings without giving up coupons, but oh dear! I feel I should fall for a black market in petrol if I knew where there was one. It is, I feel, rather particularly hard to be cut off completely from one's urban centre headquarters of all local activities, short of walking four miles.[29]

Even when imperfect information and bounded rationality is taken into account the theory of price control and black markets is unable to explain why people like Mrs Chalmers's parents did not make illicit deals. Her parents were furriers. During the war they 'were offered fabulous fur coats' which had been obtained illicitly. There was a shortage of fur coats and Chalmers's parents could have expected to make a large profit: 'But they turned down the offer, saying that they preferred to sleep peacefully in their bed, as long as the Luftwaffe allowed them to do so, with a clear conscience and without the thought that the Police could arrive at any time and arrest them for receiving stolen goods'.[30]

Public choice theorists might explain 'voluntary compliance' with meat rationing in terms of 'contingent consent'.[31] From this perspective the majority of the civilian population accepted rationing because they believed rationing was both necessary and fair, and they trusted officials to administer the system fairly. The public were willing to place their trust in the government, because of their experience of rationing during the First World War and the impartiality of state regulation more generally. This consent was contingent on the rationing system operating fairly during the period of the wartime emergency. Surprisingly, economic historians have not attempted to explain voluntary compliance with control in this fashion, although Martin Daunton has employed these ideas to explain the high level of tax compliance in twentieth-century Britain and they are also implicit in Ross McKibbin's work on the accommodation of the British working class to the British state.[32] Instead they point to the law-abiding character of the British population and their wartime patriotism. By extension the 'minority' who did not comply with the regulations were greedy,

selfish, unpatriotic and immoral economic actors.[33] Implicit in these explanations is the idea that the minority have not internalised key social norms, but this is not explored.

Studying the 325 responses to a question about black-market dealing in the Mass-Observation monthly directive for January 1948, it is apparent that participants in black-market activity did not think of themselves in this way.[34] The 'immoral' respondents admitted feeling guilty about their illicit dealings. One housewife wrote about her feelings of guilt after purchasing four handkerchiefs without surrendering clothing coupons:

> Alas, my husband has a public job. I am not free to be bad. Also I should very much dislike putting myself in the power of one I did not respect. I must admit I once bought 4 handkerchiefs for some of the children, and on proffering the clothing coupon book, I was told by the assistant that it wouldn't be right to take any coupons as I had so few. What with being taken aback, not wishing to appear ungrateful, and being glad anyway, I'm ashamed to say, I paid the ordinary utility price, and left without disputing his view. What made me feel most guilty was that we always have a good number of clothing coupons, as the children help, and my husband and I dress appallingly.[35]

Although this was a minor infringement of the regulations, it made her feel very uncomfortable. Even panellists, who argued that control was unjust, felt uncomfortable breaking the law. Another housewife admitted to half-heartedly dealing in black markets telling Mass-Observation, 'I am by temperament unfitted to do this kind of thing'. 'I am, unfortunately, fundamentally law abiding, even when I think the laws are unjust.'[36]

Not all respondents admitted feeling guilty, ashamed or embarrassed about their illegal dealings, but many of them went to elaborate lengths to justify their activities to themselves and to others. Respondents denied responsibility for their actions, denied the existence of a victim, condemned their condemners, appealed to higher loyalties or pleaded ignorance. These attempts to justify and rationalise their behaviour demonstrate an awareness that their black-market activity was in some sense 'wrong' and show that the decision to engage in a black-market deal was not taken in a moral vacuum. The ways in which respondents attempted to reduce the dissonance between the knowledge that black-market dealing was wrong and their desire for 'a little bit extra' or 'a decent return' are similar to those employed to justify 'traditional' or 'ordinary' criminal activity.

A common way for respondents to excuse black-market dealings was to deny responsibility for their actions. Often, buyers blamed the authorities for imposing economic regulations that went against natural human impulses.[37] They might also blame black marketeers for tempting them with black-market goods. Several of the respondents to the Mass-Observation directive who admitted to buying black-market goods blamed traders, particularly Jewish traders, for seducing them.[38] However, black-market traders were more likely to deny personal responsibility for their actions than their customers.[39] Retailers overcharged their customers and blamed wholesalers for demanding above ceiling prices for controlled goods, while the wholesalers redirected retailers' anger to greedy processors and producers.

Processors and producers could not use the justifications employed by retailers and wholesalers. Instead, they blamed the government for not controlling costs or wholesalers for paying too much. A poultry farmer's wife, who was a rural district councillor and an active member of the Women's Institute, outlined the case for the producer in her reply to the Mass-Observation directive:

> The only respect in which we, as poultry farmers, touch the fringe of the Black Market is that when we send old hens to market, we know very well that the price they fetch is not the controlled price per pound for table poultry. This is the market's responsibility, not the poultry farmer's, and everyone knows it is a ramp. We profit by it, because it just doesn't pay to sell at the Government controlled price. It would be far better if the Government were to decontrol table poultry altogether. The controlled price doesn't pay the producer and is evaded right and left by the markets.[40]

However, she did not extend this justification to cover farm-gate sales of eggs:

> We are constantly badgered to sell eggs at the door – 'I don't mind what I pay', and consistently refuse, partly because my husband carries honesty to a fault, partly because he is an Accredited Poultry Breeder and has to be like Caesar's wife![41]

Clearly, it was harder to deny responsibility for an illegal deal if it was a face-to-face transaction between producer and consumer.

In addition to denying responsibility for their actions respondents would deny the existence of a victim. Several respondents to the Mass-

Observation directive argued a deal was not black market if one paid in excess of the maximum price for a commodity so long as you did not take someone else's share. This argument excused producers for charging wholesalers more than the maximum price. Wholesalers could use the same excuse when they overcharged retailers. Retailers could use it if they overcharged their customers. Rations were honoured and costs were covered. Producers, wholesalers, retailers, and consumers could not, or would not, understand the inflationary consequences of overcharging.

Another way to deny the existence of a victim was to argue that there were more supplies to go round than the government let on. Therefore, taking a little bit extra did not take anything from other people's rations. The middle-aged housewife Nella Last was surprised to discover that her sister-in-law felt this way about wangling a few extra eggs:

> Several times, she spoke as if to get more than she was entitled to was a *grand* game. I said, 'But Beat, if you take someone else's share, they will have to do without'. She said, 'Nonsense – there is plenty of food about. There must be, or else a place could not get it in such quantities. It's only a matter of organising properly.'[42]

Last's sister-in-law refused to believe she was taking someone else's allotment of eggs if she got some on the black market.

Another excuse used by the respondents was to condemn their condemners. There were enough high-profile black-market offenders to make this a feasible argument. Public figures regularly appeared before the courts charged with evading clothing and petrol rationing and currency regulations. In 1943 Major-General Sir Percy Laurie, the army's Provost Marshall, was forced to resign after being convicted of ration-book fraud.[43] When the Conservative MP Lady Astor was found guilty of attempting to smuggle clothes into the United Kingdom from the United States in 1943, Home Intelligence noted that her prosecution had caused 'some sarcastic comment':

> Her defence that she did not know she was committing a breech of the Regulations is ridiculed, and there was 'rather unholy glee over the magistrate's comments on her ignorance'. People say 'if this is the case she had no right to be in Parliament', and that 'if she had been an ordinary person she would have been treated much more harshly.'[44]

Perhaps the most common way for respondents to overcome their inhibitions to illicit deals and maintain a non-deviant self-image was to redefine the term black market. Ministry officials understood the term 'black market' to refer to illegal buying and selling of rationed or price-controlled commodities.[45] Although the general public were familiar with the legalistic understanding of 'black market', they used the term differently in everyday speech. Not only did the term refer to 'illegal' dealings, but also to dealings which people felt were wrong. For many people 'black market' was a moral category. A theological student agonised over his definition of 'Black Market dealings'. The practice of swapping unwanted rations caused him great problems. 'I can't make up my mind whether this is wrong – I equate "Black market" dealings with wrong.'[46] If a buyer deemed the price of an uncontrolled commodity to be 'excessive', then he might label it a black-market price and call the buyer a black marketeer. A married housewife explained that she used the term black market 'as a kind of adjective to describe any goods obtained by special favour, not necessarily rationed goods, or supremely expensive goods'.[47] A merchant on Mass-Observation's national panel was annoyed at such usage of black market. He reported 'a widespread habit of using the term as synonymous with profiteering', but he considered 'the two as quite distinct' provided that the 'excessive' prices were within the law.[48] A wine merchant noted that:

> In my own business the term 'Black Market' is rather loosely used. For instance, proprietary whisky is controlled by the Distillers as to distribution and price. But there is also a free market which is legal enough but the prices here are well over twice the proprietary price and the general public usually call it 'Black market whisky' which of course it is not.[49]

A so-called 'black-market deal' need not contravene regulations. According to the manager of a textile mill: 'Everything around here is called black market if one pays more than the usual price for something.'[50]

Using black market as a moral category made it easier for those making illicit deals to redefine the term so that their transactions were not black market. Their task was facilitated by the popular image of the Black Market as an organised underworld. Petty dealings paled in comparison to the large-scale dealings of celluloid black marketeers. This response to the Mass-Observation directive shows this process at work. According to an industrial psychologist: 'Black Market with capitals means very

sinister dealings which mean that – monied people have gross privileges, but without cap.'[51] Although petty deals might not fit the popular image of the Black Market, they were also illegal. Therefore, black-market buyers and sellers distinguished between 'black-market dealings', which were inherently evil (*malum in se*), and 'grey-market dealings' which were merely prohibited by statute but were not inherently wrong (*malum in prohibitum*).[52] Although individuals drew different boundaries between black- and grey-market dealings, they shared the idea that black market dealings were what the other person did. A commercial traveller explained the subjectivity of the definitions to Mass-Observation: 'Black market dealings are the way the bloke down the road gets what he wants. . . . when the issue becomes more personal one notes a tendency for the colour of the transaction to become Grey or even slightly Dirty White.'[53] A bank clerk, struggling to define 'black market dealings', wrote: '[i]t is not easy as what I buy, even a little underhand, is obviously not black market, it is what the other fellow buys that is really black, mine is at the very worst only grey or off-white.'[54] The 'other' was often identified as Jewish.

Languages of entitlement

Although there was no consensus as to what constituted a grey- or a black-market deal, it is possible to discern loose attitudinal clusters. At one end of the moral spectrum were the 'moral minority' who rejected all illicit dealing as Black Market; at the other end were 'spivs, drones, eels and butterflies' who engaged in all manner of illicit deals whenever the opportunity arose. The space between these two polar opposites was characterised by an ever-expanding definition of the grey market. The major distinction was between barter-exchange and monetary-exchange. The vast majority of panellists believed swapping unwanted rations and ration coupons was morally acceptable. A smaller number of the respondents believed cash transactions were legitimate. Those respondents, who believed illicit cash transactions were grey market, were divided on the issues of profit and scale. One group believed such deals to be legitimate so long as they involved small quantities and if no profit or only a 'reasonable' profit was made on the deal. One woman felt a deal was black market if the dealer sought to make a profit, but grey market if no profit were made.[55] The other group held that any cash transactions were legitimate.

These attitudes varied according to the commodity being traded or a person's role in a deal. An individual might deem it acceptable to

obtain the 'necessities' of life from black markets. It was common to excuse housewives from getting extra food or new clothes for members of their families. They might have a neutral attitude towards buying and selling 'luxuries', which did not deny others the necessities of life. Another complicating factor was a person's role within a black-market transaction. If the person was a private end-user of the commodity or a user/dealer buying the commodity for friends and family and selling it to them at cost, then the transaction was more legitimate than if the person were making a profit.

Like the distinction between black, grey, and white market, the popularisation of low slang associated with dodgy dealing allowed participants in black-market deals to avoid acknowledging the illegality and immorality of their activities. During the 1940s many of the slang-words and phrases of criminal cant entered everyday speech. The most popular referred to dodgy dealings. Not only did such language disguise criminal behaviour from the authorities, but it also removed the moral stigma publicly associated with black-market activity. It became increasingly common to talk of 'fiddles' and 'wangles' while the popular catch-phrase, 'Did it drop (or occasionally "fall") off the back of a lorry?' had its origins in the late 1940s. According to the etymologist and lexicographer Eric Partridge, it was 'a graceful, delicate way of asking "Was it stolen?" or even "And you stole it, I suppose".'[56]

Not only do these justificatory accounts reveal that participants in black-market deals were aware that their actions could be construed as 'wrong', but they accepted the grounds for these moral judgements too. The Mass-Observation respondents demonstrated the ability of black-market traders and consumers to justify contravening the regulations using the officially sanctioned language of 'fair shares'. A probation officer told Mass-Observation that 'In every case of black market I have come against I found that the people concerned who are buying the goods do it with the feeling that this is something to which they are entitled and of which they are being deprived.'[57] The sense of entitlement that the officially sanctioned language of fair shares encouraged can be seen in many other responses to the Mass-Observation directive.

A married commercial traveller, who did not admit involvement in illegal deals, stressed that a black-market deal was getting more than one was *legally* entitled to:

> I think the essence of the offence is the unentitled share of the commodity, rather than the price. For example, if a trader sells, say,

> a garment at a price in excess of the maximum controlled price, and receives full coupon value from the buyer, that would not constitute a black market deal. But if the seller received the higher prices as a consideration for not demanding coupons then that would in my definition be a black market deal, since the buyer would receive clothing in excess of his entitlement.[58]

The language of fair shares surfaces again in the following extract from the response of a 29-year-old schoolmaster who was involved in black market activity:

> To me 'Black Market Dealings' mean any dealings which give a person more than his fair share of rationed goods at the expense of someone else. I include the last phrase because I don't consider that a butcher is dealing on the Black Market when he gives one of his customers a fraction more than her ration because he has some spare which would otherwise be wasted.[59]

For the schoolmaster an illegal deal involved getting more than one's legal entitlement at another's expense. A 'victimless' offence was a technical offence and not a black-market offence. A single man in his early twenties, who admitted black-market deals in unwanted clothing coupons, shared the schoolmaster's view:

> Officially, I suppose any dealing in rationed commodities without licence, any buying, selling or exchanging of rationed goods, one's own or anyone else's. But personally, the only black-marketing I recognise is depriving another party, against his will, of his fair share.[60]

Reviewing the directive replies, this sense of entitlement that limited black-market dealings varied according to the commodity involved. Getting more than one's fair share of foodstuffs that the public deemed to be essential was morally reprehensible. A 61-year-old housewife gave a concrete example in her reply to the directive:

> Poultry and such luxuries I feel a bit different about. There have always been those who could afford them. Poor people have never had them. We never did and don't. For twenty years we had a cockerel from next door [for Christmas] but not this year. If there is one bird, and a poor man and rich man to buy it I don't see why the

> [farmer] shouldn't have the rich man's money until such time as we go Communist, and the poor don't want that any more than the rich.[61]

Using the language of fair shares to justify illegal dealings placed limits on black-market activity. If an illicit transaction deprived others of their fair shares, then the exchange was an unacceptable black-market deal and not an acceptable grey-market deal. Despite victory removing the patriotic imperative and some moral imperatives to obey rationing regulations, the discourse of fair shares ensured that black-market activity did not increase sufficiently to bring about the collapse of the meat-rationing system during the post-war years, as many people agreed with the principle of fair shares.

But was support for the principle of 'fair shares' dwindling as the transition from wartime to peacetime economy dragged on into the 1950s? Ration cuts in the autumn of 1947, after two years of ration increases, undermined public trust in the economic management of the Labour government. Encouraged by the Conservative Party, the public questioned the need for rationing and the intentions of the Labour government, who a growing number of people suspected of maintaining control for control's sake. Post-war support for rationing was contingent on the need for control. With the decontrol of clothing in 1949, the Conservative opposition questioning the need for control in the run up to the 1951 General Election, and foreign governments in apparently worse positions removing controls, one would expect the social democratic discourse of fair shares that constrained the black-market dealings of Mass-Observation respondents in 1948 to have a lessening effect on economic behaviour. In fact 'fair shares for all' continued to influence economic behaviour.

In January 1951, nine months before the General Election, the anthropologist Geoffrey Gorer conducted a self-report survey of a representative sample of 5000 people aged 16 and over then living in England, as part of a study of English national character. Only one in 50 respondents, when asked to select one or more statements from a list of nine statements that most nearly represented their opinion about 'fiddling', chose the statement, 'None of my family has ever got anything off the ration.' In January 1951, like in January 1948, small-scale black-market deals were ubiquitous. Nevertheless, control had not broken down. Popular support for the principle of fair shares appears to have still placed limits on black-market dealings. Of those who selected one of three statements

expressing moral objections to fiddling on the grounds of patriotism, respect for the law and fair shares, the most popular objection was 'It is unfair to get more than others.'[62]

Conclusion

Lord Woolton's 'Food Code' would appear to have been a more powerful influence on voluntary compliance than patriotism or respect for the law. This was probably the case during and after the war. What, then, are the implications of this discovery for the debate about the politics of consumption in twentieth-century Britain? Frank Trentmann is surely right to argue that the 1940s marked the apogee of a new social-democratic politics of consumption that emerged towards the end of the First World War and was concerned with state regulation of trade and based around basic foodstuffs.[63] Without the Labour and Cooperative Movements' advocacy of this new politics of consumption during the inter-war period, central government would have found it harder to persuade people to comply with rationing and price regulations during the period of control. Paying close attention to the justificatory accounts of participants in black-market deals reveals the pervasiveness of this new discourse of entitlement that placed limits on their dealings. Not only does it suggest that support for the principle of fair shares is more important in understanding voluntary compliance than patriotism and respect for the law in the context of adequate living standards, but it also suggests that the Labour Party, defeated in 1951, missed an opportunity to exploit widespread support for fair shares by applying the principle in the context of an affluent society.

This study of black-market dealing in Britain also has wider implications for the study of food and conflict in Europe. The focus on the everyday ethics of food distribution and consumption in this chapter demonstrates the importance of understanding individual moral choices and helps us to appreciate how people apply norms of distribution in times of scarcity. Food scarcity, which was brought about by total war, forced European governments to intervene in the production, distribution, and consumption of foodstuffs. Rationing and price regulations posed a challenge to existing social norms governing exchange in societies were the market was the dominant mode of exchange, but these regulations also chimed with social norms governing distribution, while contravening the regulations conflicted with social norms governing authority. In these changed circumstances, individuals had to determine

whether they should comply with the regulations or not, while governments attempted to influence their choices by mixing systems of incentives and disincentives with appeals to social norms.

Notes

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8 Hammond, *Food*, vol. I, pp. 402–3.

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10 Meat ration levels, 1940–41:

11 Mar. 1940	1s 10d weekly
30 Sept. 1940	2s 2d weekly
16 Dec. 1940	1s 10d weekly
6 Jan. 1941	1s 6d weekly
8 Jan. 1941	1s 0d–1s 6d weekly

Source: Hammond, *Food*, vol. I, 173–5.

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survey, which included questions on New Year resolutions and capital punishment.

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36 DR 118, 'Reply to Jan. 1948 Directive', M-OA, Directive Replies.

37 See DR 20, 'Reply to Jan. 1948 Directive'; DR 65, 'Reply to Jan. 1948 Directive'; and, DR 118, 'Reply to Jan. 1948 Directive', M-OA, Directive Replies.

38 See DR 74, 'Reply to Jan. 1948 Directive'; DR 87, 'Reply to Jan. 1948 Directive'; DR 103, 'Reply to Jan. 1948 Directive'; and DR 174, 'Reply to Jan. 1948 Directive', M-OA, Directive Replies.

39 See DR 182, 'Reply to Jan. 1948 Directive'; and DR 220, 'Reply to Jan. 1948 Directive', M-OA, Directive Replies.

40 DR 12, 'Reply to Jan. 1948 Directive', M-OA, Directive Replies.

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42 Nella Last Diary, 28 Apr. 1942, in R. Broad and S. Fleming (eds), *Nella Last's War* (1981; London, 1983), p. 201.

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47 DR 93, 'Reply to Jan. 1948 Directive', M-OA, Directive Replies.

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58 DR 141, reply to Jan. 1948 Directive, Falmer, M-OA, Directive Replies, Men, A–B.

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12

Food and the Food Crisis in Post-War Germany, 1945–1948: British Policy and the Role of British NGOs

Johannes-Dieter Steinert

International humanitarian relief efforts are an integral part of key events in the twentieth century, and if the first six years are anything to go by, they will feature prominently in the twenty-first century also: internationally coordinated relief efforts responding to natural disasters, famines or armed hostilities are an everyday part of media coverage. In this global age, most of us have come to expect such international cooperation. But what we now take for granted is, in fact, the result of a long learning process in which the aftermaths of each of the two world wars were catalysts.

This chapter examines British humanitarian assistance in Germany after the Second World War.[1] This help was initially directed at survivors of the Shoah, former forced labourers, and other UN nationals, but as early as October 1945 it was extended to German refugees and German children in particular. It was provided jointly by the British government and numerous British Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), whose relief teams followed in the wake of troops. International humanitarian assistance was a compassionate response to the violence, mass-murder, and war crimes perpetrated by the Third Reich. It provided shelter, medical treatment, clothing, and food that was essential for the survival of individuals during the final stages of the war and immediately afterwards. Moreover, this multi-pronged approach to solving social problems helped stabilise Allied control in Germany during this period and made the Allied occupation more palatable to the populations of both Germany and Britain.

The chapter will focus on British governmental and non-governmental efforts to defeat the food crisis in post-war Germany. Drawing on British,

German, and American archival sources, it highlights some key elements of how this aid programme was planned during the war, and how these plans were converted into practical help in post-war Germany, considering the additional measures taken to feed schoolchildren in particular. It looks at relationships between British NGOs and the British Military Government, and asks how those on the ground – both German and British – perceived the relief effort at the time.

Wartime planning

During and after the First World War, a large number of British NGOs provided humanitarian assistance to those in need. The agencies involved included the British Red Cross, Salvation Army, Society of Friends, Friends Ambulance Units, Baptists, Fight the Famine Council, Save the Children Fund, and the Imperial War Relief Fund. They delivered this aid in France, Poland, Russia, Serbia, Austria, and Germany.[2] Help was provided at the scene of the crisis, in cooperation with national and local institutions and organisations. The efforts of the British NGOs would have been impossible without this local cooperation and a certain amount of support given by the Allied governments and military authorities. But by no means could these joint efforts be described as closely knit, well-organised, and targeted.

Between 1919 and 1925, Germany alone received humanitarian assistance equivalent to 250 million Goldmark, of which 160 million came from the United States. As a result, around 250,000 Germans, most of them children, were billeted for a period, either with better off families or in rest homes abroad. Also, thanks mainly to the efforts of the American and British Quakers, millions of German children received an additional school meal.[3] This so-called *Quäkerspeisung* (Quaker feeding) became synonymous with international help, and in 1947 the organisations in both countries were jointly awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in recognition of their efforts in the wake of the two world wars.

Regardless of everything that was achieved, however, the experience gained during and after the First World War made it very obvious that relief work had been hampered by a lack of precautionary planning and effective cooperation at national and international levels. One of the main consequences of this learning process was the decision taken on 9 November 1943 to create the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration (UNRRA) by the 44 nations attending a conference convened in Washington by the US government. UNRRA's *raison d'être* was to bring immediate relief to UN civilians in liberated areas, for

example, by providing food, shelter, and medical treatment. Contemporary accounts hailed the organisation as an innovation showing the lessons of the past had been learnt. According to Francesca Wilson, one of the best known relief workers of the time, the idea that it was 'better to plan beforehand, than muddle through' had in fact been recognised. The significance of UNRRA's creation was that it provided the opportunity and the means to break from the previous post-war period, 'when no prior survey of needs was made and nation was allowed to compete with nation for food and necessities'.[4] Britain supported UNRRA with some $600 million, a huge amount of money for the war-torn country.[5]

Efforts at the international level were complimented by the attempts of various organisations in Britain to coordinate not only the activities of interested NGOs, but those of the government and military also. This was achieved during July and August 1942 with the formation of the Council of British Societies for Relief Abroad (COBSRA).[6] With no executive function, COBSRA focused on facilitating the exchange of information and opinions and advising and coordinating the activities of NGOs, both with each other and with state authorities and international institutions. The information and advice it provided fell into three broad themes:

(A) Spheres of action, both in the purchase of supplies, the type of work most suited to each of the societies and the area where help is needed.
(B) Personnel, training, finance, transport, supplies and means of distribution.
(C) Joint schemes of action between two or more of the societies.[7]

Forty British NGOs joined COBSRA, and the following 11 eventually sent their own teams to Europe: the British Red Cross Society and Order of St John of Jerusalem, Friends Relief Service, Friends Ambulance Unit, Young Women's Christian Association, Save the Children Fund, Salvation Army, Catholic Committee for Relief Abroad, Jewish Committee for Relief Abroad, International Voluntary Service for Peace, Boy Scouts Association, and the Guide International Service.[8]

COBSRA's establishment showed that lessons concerning the inadequate provision and coordination of assistance following the First World War had been learnt. Frederick Leith-Ross, Chairman of the Inter-Allied Committee on Post-War Requirements, highlighted this in a speech he gave at the opening of a training course on the delivery of pre-armistice civilian relief overseas in January 1943.[9] Leith-Ross

pointed out that thousands of people could have been saved following the First World War if humanitarian assistance had been better planned. However, British and American NGOs should not be expected to go into the liberated countries of Europe and start distributing food and supplies: This was the responsibility of local and national authorities as well as of national and international organisations. Turning to the question of exactly what the British NGOs would be asked to do, Leith-Ross explained that:

> [i]t would not be possible to say at present where and when the voluntary organisations can be brought in. . . . There is no doubt that their help will be needed. But their activities will have to be co-ordinated. They will be subject to the directions of the military authorities and of any governmental organisation responsible for relief; and account must be taken of the requirements of countries in which missions are working. There will remain a large field where governmental machinery will only partially organise relief work, and here voluntary organisations can help most with problems of feeding, child welfare, etc. These can give right personal contacts and do more on the human side, and there will remain great scope for voluntary organisations even in areas where governmental machinery is functioning in an adequate and effective way.[10]

In 1943, then, it appeared that the British NGOs would play an important role, but it was still impossible to say exactly what that role would be. Coordinating their efforts with the work of 'governmental machinery' on one hand, and international organisations on the other, NGO activities would range from filling gaps to taking over larger sections of particular operations, and they would generally take care of the 'human side'.

Food, freedom and peace

On 20 August 1940, just one week after the Battle of Britain had begun, Prime Minister Winston Churchill made one of his most famous speeches in the House of Commons. In it he promised the peoples of Europe, including Germany and Austria, that food, freedom and peace would immediately follow the end of National Socialist rule: 'We shall do our best to encourage the building up of reserves of food all over the world, so that there will always be held up before the eyes of the peoples of Europe, the certainty that the shattering of the Nazi power will bring

them all immediate food.'[11] Statements such as these were an integral part of a propaganda strategy that was aimed equally at the stomachs, minds, and emotions of those in occupied Europe. It sought to equate liberation with relief. On the basis of her own resources, however, Britain was in no position to keep this promise, already dependent on imported food herself. How to supply continental Europe's food requirements was hotly debated by politicians and the military. What was not disputed, however, was that the populations of liberated areas should be given priority. As one MP stressed, '[t]he Germans cannot starve the peoples of Europe during the war and immediately afterwards expect to live in luxury.'[12]

The question of supplying food to Germany arose as early as 1944, when doubts were raised as to whether, in the event of Germany being divided into three zones of occupation, food deliveries from the Soviet zone to the Western zones would actually materialise. Up until this point, military and political planning had been based on two key assumptions: (1) Germany would remain as one economic unit; and (2) it would harvest the same amount of produce in 1945 as it had done the previous year. In March 1944 the British and American governments still assumed that the German civilian population would be capable of providing a daily ration of 2000 calories per head from its own resources. They therefore concluded that during their advance, it would be necessary to set aside a small amount of contingency food rations only, to ensure food would be available for UN nationals (refugees and displaced persons) in the event of an emergency. The remarks made by the Soviet Union suggesting that it was unlikely they would be able to provide food aid for the Western zones challenged this basic assumption. In response the British War Office revised its calculations for the German civilian population downwards from 2000 calories to a maximum daily ration of just 1400 calories *per capita*.[13]

The War Office feared that the reduction might both increase the hoarding of foodstuffs and fuel the black market to the point where the food distribution system would completely collapse and result in mass starvation in some urban areas. In turn, it predicted, this would threaten the entire economy and create serious difficulties for the occupying troops. These warnings succeeded in having the desired effect at the Foreign Office, which began to accept the need for precautionary planning to ensure the food supply for the German population. But as Foreign Office records show, while they may have accepted the need for contingency plans, officials in the Foreign Office remained sceptical: 'If the Military have some food at their disposal, they will naturally

be prejudiced in favour of sending it into Germany, even if this is not absolutely necessary, because they will suppose that this will tend to simplify their own administrative problems.'[14]

The end of 1944 marked the beginning of the most decisive planning phase. The supreme command of Allied military forces was authorised to make its own estimate of the demand for food in Germany. They concluded that for the period November 1944 up to and including May 1945, a total of 226,052 gross register tons would be required. This estimate was based on a projected daily ration of 2000 per head for displaced persons, and 1500 calories per head for the German population.[15]

Post-war realities

Within Germany, government and Nazi officials together with the Wehrmacht and SS worked to ensure that no food stocks fell into the hands of the advancing Allies. This 'scorched earth' policy was also followed at the western front, at least to the crossing of the Rhine.[16] German officials, however, were quick to lament the situation. At a conference of the International Red Cross in early March 1945, a German delegate highlighted the plight of the population: 'We have nothing left to eat. The first signs of famine are already apparent.'[17] There is a certain cynical irony in the fact that a representative from the country that had perpetrated the Holocaust, and inflicted aggression, criminality, forced labour, and a war of destruction on the rest of the world was so quick to complain when it finally received the mildest taste of its own medicine.

In light of post-war realities, all key assumptions used by the Allies during the war to plan for their future occupation of Germany were immediately shown to be unreliable and useless, notably:

- Estimates of the size of food reserves that would be available in Germany.
- The size of the German harvest they had predicted.
- Their ability to effectively control the production and distribution of food.
- That Germany would remain as one economic unit.
- That Churchill would be successful in his attempts to redraw Poland's western border along the eastern river Neisse, rather than the western river Neisse, which is what happened. This alone would have prevented the expulsion of an estimated three million people.

At the beginning of April 1945, General Eisenhower issued a stark warning to the people of Germany: A food crisis was likely if they did not follow Allied instructions *not* to plunder food.[18] Given that Eisenhower was at that stage still assuming the Allies would not need to import food to feed the German population – a position that was expressly confirmed again, at the beginning of May 1945, by the British government in the House of Commons[19] – one wonders what he would have said had he known the true picture. In retrospect, the British were *de facto* fighting a losing battle from the very start. While assuaging public opinion at home resulted in protestations that all of the food imported into the British zone was destined for troops and displaced persons and not for the 23 million or so Germans living there, nothing could change the fact that despite all efforts, sooner or later the Germans themselves would need imported food to stave off starvation.

It was an American official touring the Rhine/Ruhr area in May 1945 who first recorded the massive problems that deficiencies in the 'unholy trinity of food, fuel, and transport' began to cause in post-war Germany. His report noted that: 'The British will scarcely be able to handle the problem of feeding the Ruhr population without enlisting our assistance in arranging for overseas imports.'[20] William Strang, Political Adviser for the Control Commission for Germany (British Element), reached a similar conclusion following a tour of inspection in the British zone: 'It was clear that the sufferings of the German people were still to come; and that unless the coalfields could run into adequate production and unless substantial imports of grain could be made available, there was likely to be widespread malnutrition and something near starvation in many places, with the risk of disorder and a general breakdown.'[21]

These early predictions were accurate. For the first three years following the end of the war – in fact right up until the currency reform of 1948 – all efforts to improve the situation in Germany were thwarted by this 'unholy trinity', which played itself out in an almost unbreakable cycle of food, fuel, and transport shortages. Those in urban areas, the people of the Ruhr area in particular, faced three years of extreme privation during which a disastrous famine was only averted thanks to massive food imports.

In response to numerous predictions in the British press during the summer of 1945 of an impending food crisis that would particularly affect the Berlin and Ruhr areas, the British government altered its policy in October 1945. Prior to this, humanitarian aid had been restricted to members of the United Nations only. Now it was to be extended to the German population, and food deliveries for the German people were

Table 12.1 Germany's occupied zones: Imports of grain used in bread making, 1945–1948 (1000 tons)

Period	British zone	US zone	Combined zone
Jun.–Dec. 1945	664.7	958.0	
Jan.–Jun.1946	581.2	748.9	
Jul.–Dec. 1946	567.6	255.8	
1 Jan.–30 June 1947			1,932.3
1 July–31 Dec.1947			2,214.6
1 Jan.–30 June 1948			1,764.2
1 July–31 Dec. 1948			2,655.1

Source: Hans Schlange-Schöningen, *Im Schatten des Hungers* (Hamburg, 1955), pp. 310–12.

announced.[22] During 1946–47, the three Western zones of occupied Germany became one of the world's biggest importers of grain with imports of almost 3.6 million tons (Table 12.1). To put this in perspective, total world imports of cereal grains for the period were 28 million tons, of which 5.7 million tons were imported by Britain, and 2.3 million tons by India.[23] In 1946, 25 per cent of all rationed food in the British zone had to be imported.[24]

The British government had to pay for most of these imports in US dollars, an added burden on an economy already suffering the effects of war, and a contributing factor in the introduction of bread rationing in Britain in July 1947. The highly unpopular step of imposing bread rationing at home in peacetime constituted the final step with which the British government impressively demonstrated, at home and abroad, its political resolution, and at the same time, the limits of its own resources.[25] By this time, the 'Battle for Food', a campaign against food wastage launched in March 1946 with cinema clips and bread-battle posters, reached its peak.[26] Among other things, it successfully achieved such things as a 15 per cent reduction in beer production so that the 70,000 ton surplus of barley created could be redirected to Germany.[27]

Perversely, the German population barely registered Britain's generosity and willingness to make sacrifices for its former enemy. By the winter of 1945–46, the *Magenfrage* (tummy question) dominated everyday life.[28] The first target set in 1945, 1550 calories for so-called 'normal consumers', was barely enough to sustain the health and fitness of the working population. And that was assuming that target was met, which, due to logistical problems, was not always the case.

In terms of calories *per capita*, the British zone in Germany came relatively low in the European rankings. This reflected the Allies' policy that

the German population should not receive a higher ration of calories than populations in liberated areas, although for the first few post-war months differences were mostly very small. For example, at the end of October 1945, the daily ration in the Netherlands averaged 2110 calories per person, in Belgium the figure was 2025, in Norway 1760 calories, in France 1600, and in Czechoslovakia it was just 1360 calories (and 1100 for the German population there). In Finland the ration was only 1250 calories. In Britain the average ration was about 2800 calories, and in Denmark it was a little higher.[29] But these international comparisons did little to improve the mood amongst the population in Germany. There feelings hardened, especially against the British, despite the fact that the situation in the American zone was not much better.

Many Germans in the British zone refused to believe that there was a worldwide food shortage, despite the numerous posters that had been put up in town halls and businesses proclaiming the 'Facts about the World Food Situation'.[30] In their eyes, it was the occupying power that bore sole responsibility for food shortages. There was also a not insignificant number who interpreted the meagre rations as part of a strategy of collective punishment, designed to undermine German efficiency and production. Added to this were the never-ending rumours that food, especially butter, was being exported to Britain.[31]

In March 1946 daily rations dropped noticeably, something that was to be repeated in March 1947 and 1948 (Table 12.2). Some regions were particularly hard hit, with rations dramatically lower than the figures indicated in Table 12.2. In some places only 900 calories per day – or even as little as 800 – were provided. The severity of the situation sparked food demonstrations in most of the larger towns, particularly along the Ruhr.[32] Instances of plundering, violence, and mass arrests involving bakers' shops in Hamburg and food transporters in the Ruhr[33] were reported in 1946, but it was not until 1947 that these smaller demonstrations turned into mass protests.[34] The exceedingly hard winter meant that many canals and waterways had already frozen over by December 1946, and stretches of the rail network had also become inoperable. The transport system collapsed, industrial production and coal mining, which up until then had been picking up, suffered severe set backs – and the 'unholy trinity' of food, fuel, and transport plagued Germany yet again. However, attentive observers had predicted the food crisis as early as 1945. In his memoirs, Julius Posener, who worked in political intelligence for the British army in Germany during this time, recalled that when he left Germany in October 1945, 'there were the children of Krefeld, standing next to the train begging. "Nix chokolad,

Table 12.2 German 'normal consumers': Average daily calorie quota, 1945–1948

Period		British zone	US zone	Combined zone
75	May 1945	1,945	1,460	
76	June 1945	1,470	850	
77	25 June–22 July 1945	1,404	1,019	
78	23 July–19 Aug. 1945	1,376	1,048	
79	20 Aug.–16 Sept. 1945	1,386	1,385	
80	17 Sept.–14 Oct. 1945	1,542	846	
81	15 Oct.–11 Nov. 1945	1,476	1,384	
82	12 Nov.–9 Dec. 1945	1,701	1,521	
83	10 Dec.–6 Jan. 1946	1,548	1,699	
84	7 Jan.–3 Feb. 1946	1,675	1,576	
85	4 Feb.–3 Mar. 1946	1,694	1,576	
86	4 Mar.–31 Mar. 1946	1,103	1,612	
87	1 Apr.–28 Apr. 1946	1,042	1,270	
88	29 Apr.–26 May 1946	1,155	1,264	
89	27 May–23 June 1946	1,137	1,176	
90	24 June–21 July 1946	1,065	1,286	
91	22 July–18 Aug. 1946	1,239	1,221	
92	19 Aug.–15 Sept. 1946	1,478	1,314	
93	16 Sept.–13 Oct. 1946	1,530	1,247	
94	14 Oct.–10 Nov. 1946	1,542	1,541	
95	11 Nov.–8 Dec. 1946	1,547	1,554	
96	9 Dec.–5 Jan. 1947	1,529	1,534	
97	6 Jan.–2 Feb. 1947	1,515	1,534	
98	3 Feb.–2 Feb. 1947	1,564	1,556	
99	3 Mar.–30 Mar. 1947	1,555	1,564	
100	31 Mar.–27 Apr. 1947	1,552	1,552	
101	28 Apr.–25 May 1947			1,120
102	26 May–22 June 1947			1,192
103	23 June–20 July 1947			1,218
104	21 July–17 Aug. 1947			1,388
105	18 Aug.–14 Sept. 1947			1,426
106	15 Sept.–12 Oct. 1947			1,432
107	13 Oct.–9 Nov. 1947			1,426
108	10 Nov.–7 Dec. 1947			1,426
109	8 Dec.–4 Jan. 1948			1,400
110	5 Jan.–1 Feb. 1948			1,400
111	2 Feb.–29 Feb. 1948			1,317
112	March			1,298
113	April			1,446
114	May			1,493
115	June			1,542
116	July			1,990

Source: Hans Schlange-Schöningen, *Im Schatten des Hungers* (Hamburg, 1955), p. 302.

nix cigret, Tommy?" We were used to that from the beginning. But when I returned in December, there they stood, from Krefeld to Hamm in every industrial town, holding out their hands and screaming "Bread, bread".'[35]

Suffering children

Not everyone in Germany was affected equally by post-war shortages. In general refugees were harder hit than local residents, whilst rural populations were better off than those living in towns, and evacuees had a harder time than those who had not been evacuated. But across the board, children suffered the negative health effects of the famine more than adults. The findings of all contemporary studies are unanimous in showing the particular plight of children, and especially those in the 6–14 age group (interestingly, in 1947, children younger than this were still judged to be in 'fairly good condition').[36] There is also evidence that the average weight of children in children's homes was lower than that of those living at home.[37] This is hardly surprising as the latter often enjoyed additional calories. Refugee children living in towns were the most disadvantaged section of the entire population. They were especially prone to TB and other life-threatening diseases. As early as 1945, pot-bellies brought on by malnutrition showed how dire their situation was, and how urgently help was needed.[38]

The children's hunger and misery stung Britain's humanitarian conscience. *The Times*, for example, carried an article about their particular plight as early as July 1945. It warned its readers against complacency: 'That people have starved in other countries of Europe does not mean so much to a man seeing the hunger in the eyes of small children.'[39] In October 1945, several MPs insisted in the House of Commons that if the first 'Battle of the Winter' was to be won, it would have to include special measures to assist children, especially those in towns.[40]

At this point, school meals were being served in some parts of the British zone. However, as reported in the *Manchester Guardian*, on her return from Germany British Education Minister Ellen Wilkinson stated this was only undertaken in areas with the greatest need, and not as widely as necessary. She, too, publicly expressed her fear that a lot of children would die of starvation during the winter.[41] Eventually the British Military Government announced that it would introduce regular meals for schoolchildren from 1 February 1946. All the larger towns in the British zone would be included. The ration would consist of an extra daily soup ration of some 300 calories. Children aged between 12 and

14 would also receive an additional daily allowance of bread and rusk roughly equivalent to 500 calories.[42]

School meals were introduced in the British zone more than a year before similar measures were adopted in the American zone in early 1947. Considering the very different economic circumstances of the two countries – the prosperous United States, rich in food surpluses, on the one hand, and the United Kingdom, heavily in debt and reliant upon imported food itself, on the other – the cost of Britain's humanitarian aid effort becomes even more significant. The fact that the British effort was not universal and continuous but targeted to specific areas of need for a limited period, and that it relied upon improvisation and the help of many other countries and NGOs should not be overlooked. But although it was surpassed in both quantitative and qualitative terms by later American aid, it was significant that it was introduced during the first post-war winter, rather than following the second.

A variety of countries participated in feeding schoolchildren. Ireland donated meat from 2000 cows.[43] The *Schweizer Spende* fed more than 30,000 schoolchildren in Cologne, deploying their own teams, and fed children in several other towns in the Cologne-Aachen area and in the Ruhr. There were also a number of special support programmes and donations for toddlers and babies.[44] A Swedish effort got under way as early as October 1945 when, in a radio interview, Count Bernadotte of the Swedish Red Cross called for assistance on behalf of German children.[45] It led to 34 of the biggest aid organisations in Sweden creating a working committee called Swedish Relief for Europe in early 1946. The committee undertook the ambitious task of collecting donations to the order of one day's wages per working person.[46] The Danish Red Cross, in collaboration with British, Norwegian, and Swedish organisations, also fed schoolchildren in Schleswig-Holstein and Hamburg.[47]

Feeding school children turned out to be one of the most common forms of humanitarian aid in the period following the Second World War. When comparing this period with the period following the First World War, it is noticeable that temporary visits abroad to recuperate played very little part in the process. A few thousand German children did go to Switzerland, Sweden or Ireland, and a few dozen also went to Quaker families in Britain. But rather than sending them abroad, it was found to be far more effective to treat children where they lived.[48] A further reason for not sending children abroad were the experiences with German children billeted abroad in the wake of the First World War. These were still very much alive in Sweden in December 1946 when a plan to accept up to 50,000 German children was discussed. The

British Embassy in Stockholm reported to London that: '[t]he scheme is opposed by the press, partly on account of the unpleasant experiences resulting from similar schemes after the 1914–18 war. The results of those schemes became apparent 20 years later, when the Scandinavian countries were overrun by an effective bi-lingual Fifth Column.'[49]

NGOs and the Military Government

In April 1945, COBSRA had 455 humanitarian relief workers from a wide variety of member organisations deployed in north-western Europe. A further 115 were active in Italy, 300 in Greece, and 37 in Yugoslavia.[50] Once hostilities ended, most of the COBSRA teams already in north-western Europe were transferred to British-controlled Germany. New teams also came directly from Britain to take up postings in Germany. The number of teams increased sharply after the war and continued to rise. Numbers peaked in the summer of 1946, at which stage there were some 60 groups and 600 relief workers.[51] This was in large part due to an expansion of field activity carried out under the banner of 'German welfare' in late 1945. The primary beneficiaries of this work were German refugees and children, but the relief teams also became involved in rebuilding German charitable organisations, and they took on a semi-liaison role between these organisations and the Military Government. By 1946, German welfare work dominated relief efforts, and by 1947, with around 38 teams focusing solely in this area compared to the 16 teams working with displaced persons, it had almost completely taken over.[52]

The British government paid half the costs British organisations incurred through their overseas activities, such as administration costs, equipment, and members' expenses.[53] Up until 1947, the government's contribution came out of the Foreign Office budget, but subsequently it was the Control Office for Germany and Austria (COGA) that paid. In the financial years 1947–48 through 1949–50, the government subsidy amounted to £171,950; the total cost of the relief efforts over the period was about £250,000.[54]

It is difficult to see what specifically the British government got in return for its support. Organisations, teams, and relief workers became part of the complex system by which the government implemented its occupation policy, without having to sacrifice their independence or individual identities. This policy was designed to achieve the twin goals of imposing military control and supporting a new democratic start. British relief teams in effect became an integral part of the military

occupation, 'a group within the total occupying forces', as Roger Wilson of the Friends Relief Service noted in a rather critical report he produced following his visit to Germany in December 1945. Certainly these organisations did run the risk of sacrificing intellectual and spiritual independence.[55] But at the same time, they were seen as a counterbalance to the Military Government, especially where unpopular measures were concerned. They were proof of the British people's willingness to alleviate the plight of the Germans.[56] It was in this area of tension, between occupation and occupation policy on the one hand and the relief of suffering and improving Britain's image on the other that a large part of practical relief work was carried out. In the area of German welfare, in particular, the teams became something of a link between the Military Government, the German population, the German administration, and German NGOs. In the words of one of those involved at the time: 'A bridge between those in need and the source of help, finding out the requirements, and putting them in contact with the authorities who can render them aid.'[57]

That those involved in the British humanitarian effort described their role in this way also reveals a key difference between early British relief efforts and the aid provided by the Americans. The latter began later, and concentrated on distributing material assistance on a far greater scale than Britain was capable of providing in the immediate post-war years. In positive terms, however, the British aid organisations did not limit themselves solely to the provision of material assistance, although they did this too on a considerable scale. They were also involved in providing a variety of other types of support and assistance, from managing a camp for displaced persons to transporting light bulbs for a hospital, for example. Teams stationed in larger houses occasionally opened these to the public for discussion groups and visitors. On occasions such as these, army rations, warm drinks, and a central heating system that actually worked were added attractions. Events like these not only served re-education purposes, sometimes they also facilitated low-key and informal contact between members of the Military Government and German politicians and officials.[58]

Relief teams undertook countless investigations, both small and large. Some were on behalf of the Military Government, which appears to have had an almost insatiable demand for information. Others were on their own initiative. They also prepared related oral and written reports. At the request of the Military Government, the teams reported on hospitals, clinics, care homes, the health of schoolchildren, the reconstruction of local health services, and the structure of youth organisations. They

also investigated camps and local facilities for refugees, looking at living space and shelter in emergency quarters and bunkers in particular. They reported on food shortages, the state of schoolchildren's footwear and the quality of their breakfasts. They also undertook a large-scale investigation into the weight and size of Berliners that involved staff from the Military Government and relief workers, publicly weighing and measuring 6000 passers-by.[59]

Perceptions

Whatever the Allied planning commissions, the military, NGOs, and relief teams had expected, conditions on the ground in Germany during the last phase of the war and the immediate post-war period turned out to be quite different. As F. S. V. Donnison noted in his semi-official publication, *Civil Affairs and Military Government North-West Europe*, as early as late 1944 reports from Military Government officials indicated that their expectations regarding the attitude of the German civilian population were equally wide of the mark.[60] Instead of the hostility and subversive activity they had prepared for, the Allied forces usually found in the battle zones a listless and war-weary population.[61] Their first impressions were of the immense destruction and devastating effects of the bombing raids that caused mounting horror among the troops.[62] But they also noted the good physical condition of Germany's civilian population: 'People were well fed and well dressed. The cellars of the un-destroyed houses were well stocked with food', reported a Salvation Army team.[63] Similar statements can be found in many contemporary reports and newspaper articles.[64] These were usually made in the context of comparisons with conditions in France, the Netherlands, Belgium, and Luxemburg, that is, Western European countries that had been plundered by the German occupiers throughout the war years. The standard of living and amount of stockpiled provisions in these countries, however, was still better than in Eastern European countries.

In contrast to their healthy appearance, the behaviour of the Germans was surprising: 'After the delightful friendliness of the people in Holland it was a difficult experience to be among people who obviously resented bitterly one's presence. Especially hard was it to get no friendly response from the children in those early days.'[65] This statement from the previously quoted Salvation Army report is far from unique. Other relief workers had similar experiences when working with German civilians in the immediate post-war period. Pip Turner of the Friends Ambulance Unit, who quite openly did not comply with the Non-Fraternisation

Order, was to discover that her 'Guten Morgen' usually received no response. 'They felt hostility to us', she concluded.[66]

Non-verbal interaction seems to have been a particular feature of the final phase of the war. Speech was replaced by specific patterns of communications and perceptions, and shaped by role expectations and role assignments as well as by the National Socialist past. In mid-June 1945, relief teams were once more strongly reminded of the Non-Fraternisation Order.[67] Very quickly – during preparations for the 'Battle of the Winter' and the extension of humanitarian aid to the German civilian population, however, remarks about German character traits and comments on the precarious nature of their situation became more positive. A report from a Friends Ambulance Unit stationed in Essen strongly emphasised the 'friendliness of the ordinary people', and the fact that they did not display animosity despite the destruction and shortages surrounding them.[68] 'In the midst of such fearful destruction caused by British bombs, it would be expected that the German mind would be filled with hatred', mentioned another report in November 1945, 'but even in Hamburg and down in the Ruhr there is a remarkable absence of resentment. The people seem to feel that they have been saved from something rather terrible; and to be thankful that they live in the British rather than any other zone.'[69] Current research supports contemporary assessments: until late-1945, German public opinion ranked the British zone above the American zone in terms of overall living conditions.[70] However, following the difficult post-war winters and the start of the American humanitarian aid programmes, this assessment changed dramatically: at times the British Military Government had to contend with open hostility.[71]

The first post-war winter of 1945–46 was accompanied by a distinct change in perceptions of the appearance of the German population. Good levels of provisions and decent clothing were no longer commented on. Instead, faced with difficulties in providing provisions and the increasing number of refugees and returning prisoners of war, reports from relief workers increasingly concentrated on the effects of deprivation on appearance and behaviour, with descriptions of the 'yellow, lined faces' of the elderly, 'pinched, grey faces' of the workers, and 'pasty, dull faces' of children.[72] Powers of concentration and the ability to work generally declined, and 'hopelessness and embitterment' increased, also commented on by German observers.[73] There was a corresponding decline in moral values, often starting within families, 'where mothers sell the child's shoe coupons for cigarettes and connive at the immorality of their very young daughters

with Allied personnel to get supplementary food, or send their children to do black-market transactions and to smuggle instead of going to school', as one observer noted.[74]

As the supply of government provisions worsened and private stockpiles of food built up during the war started to run out, commentators noted with increasing frequency the self-pity of the German population. As a report written by Saul Padover, who worked in the US army's Psychological Warfare unit, in late November 1944 shows, this trait was already in evidence immediately after the end of the fighting. Padover judged it as a 'more or less conscious method of justifying the individual participation' (*Mitläufertums*). During the war, 'the Germans were the best fed people in Europe', and, with the exception of refugees and those who had lost everything in the bombing raids, they had 'suffered less than all the other Europeans. Still, they complain non-stop.' Intertwined with this self-pity and egoism there also appeared to be a 'refusal (or psychological inability), to turn against the NS-Regime or even do acts of sabotage'.[75]

'[P]oisoned by self-pity'[76], 'full of misery',[77] and 'an orgy of self-pity'[78] were common points of reference. Hilary Saunders of the British Red Cross repeatedly used the term 'apathy', or descriptive combinations of 'coma and apathy'[79], 'bitterness', and 'despondency and bitter resignation'.[80] Such descriptions often appeared in the context of the writer expressing surprise that the Germans with whom they were talking or to whom they were delivering aid were apparently completely indifferent to, and without interest in, any situation other than their own. This attitude cannot be attributed to the increasingly difficult situation regarding food supplies, for it was already well documented in 1944 and 1945, before food shortages became a problem. 'All the teams are troubled by the indifference of the German population to the misery of Europe', wrote Roger Wilson of the Friends Relief Service following a tour of Germany in October and November 1945.[81] In political terms he considered this to be devastating, noting that since the destruction and deprivation in Europe were brought upon it by the 'Nazis in the name of the German people. . . . Bitterness will not be assuaged unless the German people are able to realise what is happening.'[82]

Other observers went a step further, not only reporting the average German's lack of interest in the situation of their European neighbours, but the way they seemed to have lost touch with reality. 'Germany was sunk in its own misery, and the ordinary German citizen did not understand how the name of Germany stank in the nostrils of Europe.'[83]

In was in this context that historian Karl-Ludwig Sommer spoke of a 'collective refusal to face responsibility for the consequences of National

Socialism in Germany and Europe', combined with a simultaneous and compounding 'demanding attitude towards the occupying powers'.[84] The British Military Government did not agree with an interpretation of the Hague Convention that bound them to feeding civilians in the British zone,[85] but a significant number of the German civilians in their charge saw food aid as their right, and to such an extent that 'the thankfulness for foreign humanitarian aid was limited'.[86]

The difficulties faced by the British Military Government in satisfying the expectations of the German people were further compounded by the widely accepted myth that Britain was a country flowing with milk and honey, and therefore able to solve all of Germany's problems. Britain's Minister of Education, Ellen Wilkinson, reported as much to the *Manchester Guardian* following a visit to Germany in October 1945.[87] This German perception of Britain as saviour was destroyed during the winter of 1945–46, and Britain's standing as an occupying power declined. Instead, what festered and grew in the following months and years was a general perception among Germans that not only were they 'victims of the Nazis and the war themselves',[88] but – as became apparent as early as October 1945 and quite without justification – that Germany must surely be the most hard done by country in Europe.[89] This view seemed to be very popular not only during the 1945–48 food crisis; in some parts of the German population it continues till today.

Conclusion

While the impact of the post-war supply bottleneck on daily life and the process of reconstruction in occupied Germany has been considered widely in academic research, media, and text books, research on its background and the manifold efforts to deal with the crisis have yet to be analysed in a comparative European perspective and on the basis of archival material of national and international provenance. This also affects the so far largely neglected question of international governmental and non-governmental humanitarian assistance in liberated and occupied territories, its aims, direction, and efficiency as well as the role of voluntary organisations involved.

The wide range and quality of archival sources available made it possible not only to examine British and international efforts, but also to analyse how the recipients of humanitarian assistance, among them German civilians, were perceived by the relief workers. This chapter has offered a critical contribution to the ongoing debate about Germans as victims of war.

Looking back, we can see that the contemporary shape and pattern of humanitarian assistance is the result of a long learning process, in

which the two world wars in particular acted as important catalysts. Based on experiences gained from the First World War, Britain pursued a far-sighted policy of advance planning during the Second World War. The British government was also influential in the creation of the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration (UNRRA) and the Council of British Societies for Relief Abroad (COBSRA), and involved in coordinating the activities of British NGOs that provided overseas humanitarian relief.

Estimates made by the Allies during the war about Germany's post-war food aid requirements were based on assumptions that quickly proved completely false when the war ended. In the first three post-war years, continual shortages in the 'unholy alliance' of food, fuel, and transport, as well as other shortages on the world's commodity markets, left large parts of Europe with inadequate food supplies. The British government reacted to the emerging food crisis more rapidly than the Americans. In the autumn of 1945 they extended humanitarian aid, which had until then been limited to members of the United Nations only, to parts of the German civilian population. What came to be known as the 'German welfare' programme (including food for schoolchildren) became an integral part of the 'Battle of the Winter' during 1945, as it did in subsequent years.

Relief teams were deployed in north-western Europe immediately after D-Day. To begin with their activities were confined to helping UN citizens. In Germany, the teams were an integral part of occupation policy. They assisted the work of the Military Government, were active in the area of civilian welfare in particular, and encouraged and supported efforts towards re-educating and democratising the country. Furthermore, they carried out this work unstintingly, despite having to contend with a widespread attitude of self -pity and very limited gratitude by the German population for their humanitarian efforts.

Notes

1 The research project was generously supported by the British Academy. See further: J.-D. Steinert, *Nach Holocaust und Zwangsarbeit: Beobachtungen und humanitäre Hilfe in Deutschland nach dem Zweiten Weltkrieg* (Osnabrück, in press).

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