

FEEDING THE VOLK: FOOD, CULTURE, AND THE POLITICS OF NAZI
CONSUMPTION, 1933-1945

By

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In memory of my mother

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<u>page</u>
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS.....	4
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS.....	9
ABSTRACT	11
CHAPTER	
1 INTRODUCTION: MOVING BEYOND GUNS AND BUTTER.....	12
Historiography.....	17
Sources and Chapter Summaries.....	29
2 THE STARVED SPIRIT OF 1914 AND ITS (NAZI) DISCONTENTS.....	33
Slithering over the Brink.....	36
The “Stab-in-the-Back” Legend.....	48
A Darréan Take on WWI.....	53
“Not Enough to Live on—too Little to Die on:” Food and the Great Depression.....	65
3 NO ONE SHALL GO HUNGRY OR FREEZE.....	76
The Ideological Origins of Nazi Social Welfare.....	81
National Socialist People’s Welfare.....	87
Winter Relief.....	97
Gauging Success.....	110
4 THE COOKING SPOON IS OUR WEAPON.....	123
German Women, Mothers, and Housewives.....	125
German Housewives and the National Economy.....	132
Nazi Women’s Organizations and the Four Year Plan.....	134
Changing the German Diet.....	144
Food from German Soil.....	159
The Fight against Waste.....	173
Pigs and Potatoes: The Nutritional Relief Campaign (EHW).....	178
5 FEEDING THE WORKERS: NUTRITION SCIENCE, LABOR EFFICIENCY, AND HOT FACTORY MEALS.....	184
Food and the German Workers’ Lot.....	190
The People’s Nutrition.....	194
The Beauty of Labor and Factory Canteens.....	207
Nazi Cooking Schools.....	219

6 CONCLUSION: FOOD, WAR, AND THE PARADOX OF CONSUMPTION 227

APPENDIX

A BIBLIOGRAPHY 242

Archives 242

Periodicals 242

Published Primary Sources..... 243

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH..... 263

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Abt. V/H	Abteilung für Volkswirtschaft/Hauswirtschaft; Department for National Economy/Home Economics
BAL	Bundesarchiv-Lichterfelde; Federal Archive Berlin-Lichterfelde
BdM	Bund Deutscher Mädel; League of German Maidens
BLH	Brandenburgisches Landeshauptarchiv; Brandenburg State Archive
DAF	Deutsche Arbeitsfront; German Labor Front
DFO	Deutscher Frauenorden; Order of German Women
DFW	Deutsches Frauenwerk; German Women's Bureau
EHW	Ernährungshilfswerk; Nutrition Relief Campaign
HJ	Hitler Jugend; Hitler Youth
IfZ	Institut für Zeitgeschichte; Institute for Contemporary History (Munich)
IfSFM	Institut für Stadtgeschichte Frankfurt am Main; Institute for the History of Frankfurt am Main
KdF	Kraft durch Freude; Strength through Joy
KEA	Kriegsernährungsamt; War Food Office
KPD	Kommunistische Partei Deutschlands; German Communist Party
KWHW	Kriegswinterhilfswerk; War-time Winter Relief
NSBO	Nationalsozialistische Betriebszellen-Organisation; National Socialist Factory Cell Organization
NSDAP	Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei, National Socialist German Workers' Party
NSF	NS- Frauenschaft; Nazi Women's League
NSV	Nationalsozialistische Volkswohlfahrt; National Socialist People's Welfare

RAGVE	Reichsarbeitsgemeinschaft für Volksernährung; Reich Labor Committee for the People's Nutrition
RAGGV	Reichsarbeitsgemeinschaft für Gemeinschaftsverpflegung; Reich Labor Committee for Mass Provisioning
RNS	Reichsnährstand; Reich Food Estate
RVBA	Reichsvollkornbrotausschuss; Reich Whole-Grain Bread Commission

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Why did Nazi officials squabble over which serving dishes and flatware went best in factory canteens? Why did the Nazi Party Program remind its constituency not once but twice of its duty to feed Germans? Why would a thirteen-year old Wuppertal girl, in a prize-winning essay, liken the Third Reich to “a large family sitting around a dinner table: the Führer and his followers”? Put simply, food and eating was a constant concern for all Germans at least since the scarcities experienced during the “hunger blockade” of the First World War and the Great Depression of 1929. Despite the massive literature on seemingly every aspect of Hitler’s Germany, we know relatively little about the role of food and drink in everyday life. My dissertation will begin to fill this void by using food as a category of analysis. The value of such an approach in the context of the Third Reich lies in the various ways in which the Nazi regime attempted to manipulate food consumption for its own ends. My main argument is that the success of the Nazi regime in feeding the Volk and raising the standard of living, at least relative to the preceding two decades, effectively blunted popular concerns about ever-tightening social constraints and even the persecution of neighbors. It also changed traditional German foodways.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION: MOVING BEYOND GUNS AND BUTTER

Mighty is the law, mightier is necessity.

—Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *Faust*

First the grub, then the morals.

—Bertolt Brecht, *The Threepenny Opera*

During World War Two, Hilde Schlegel sat in an apartment on Brandenburg's Immelmanstrasse and reminisced about the two Germany's she had known. The young wife of a soldier who had just been sent to the Eastern Front, Schlegel received generous government benefits and did not work. "It wasn't always like this," she conceded. Growing up in the Weimar Republic, her family suffered difficult times like many. For twelve years her father tried in vain to make ends meet without a steady job and the family survived largely on charity. However, after "our dear Führer came to power things got much better," she admitted. Schlegel's mind then turned immediately to powerful memory, a Nazi banquet she attended at the age of fifteen as member of the Hitler Youth. It was not the stirring speeches nor the pageantry she remembered, but the food. "It was the first time I ever tasted butter," she remarked. "I feel that everything we have we owe to our dear Führer, may he live forever."¹

These words fell upon the ears of Edith Hahn. Hahn, known to Schlegel by her alias Grete Denner, was a young Jewish woman from Vienna who had taken on a false identity and married a Nazi Party member in an attempt to survive the Third Reich. The two neighbors quickly became close despite obvious tensions. Upon hearing these

¹ Edith Hahn Beer, *The Nazi Officer's Wife: How One Women Survived the Holocaust* (New York: Harper Collins, 1999), pp.190-191.

words, Hahn wondered “Is that the reason? Is that why they averted their eyes, made themselves blind? For butter?”² Was this a rhetorical question? Did Hahn mean it literally? At first glance, the question may seem so preposterous that one must cast it aside immediately. But this would be a mistake. Food matters. Not only is the question reasonable and legitimate, it has, in a much more general form, become a driving force behind this dissertation. That is, what role, if any, did National Socialism’s ability to “put food on the table” play in gaining the support of the masses?

There are hundreds of books about Hitler’s Germany which have detailed, in a variety of ways, a colossus of persecution, war-mongering, and murder that caused immeasurable suffering and extinguished millions of lives. A previous generation of historians would likely have found a study of food be too trivializing, or worse yet even offensive. However, after sifting through archival materials it became clear that historians have in the past severely underestimated the importance of food in the Third Reich whether viewed from above or below. Indeed, in every facet from production to consumption, or to use more contemporary jargon, from “farm to fork,” the Nazis had a vested interest in Germany’s food supply and undertook monumental efforts to ensure it. No other area of mass consumption was more closely monitored or heavily regulated. And given the bitter memories of scarcities during the First World War as well as the bread lines of the Great Depression, nearly everyone in Hitler’s Germany had intimate knowledge of hunger and want. For them, the security of basic necessities was a source of constant concern.

² Ibid.

Despite the massive amount of literature on seemingly every aspect of National Socialist Germany, we know curiously little about the role of food and drink in everyday life. Wanting to learn more about possible intersections between Nazi food policy and popular support, I initially, and quite logically, focused my attention on the development of social welfare in the Third Reich, above all the very public and popular *Winterhilfswerk* (Winter Relief or WHW). It soon became clear that the “goulash cannons” of WHW, from which stews were ladled out to the needy during the cold German winters, were only a small part of the story. Therefore, as so often happens, the project’s focus widened greatly.

This dissertation is then a study of consumption, literally. Using food as a category of analysis, it explores the powerful, oft overlooked role of seemingly benign commodities. The value of such an approach in the context of the Third Reich, I argue, lies in the multifarious ways in which the study of food illuminates at once the major social, economic, and (bio)political goals of the Nazi regime as well as reception and resistance at the grass roots level. What becomes clear is that the Nazi regime used food as tool. Of course, the word “tool” suggests that something was to be fixed and indeed that was their intent, if not always successful. Nazi nutritional policy had two interrelated goals: food security and autarky. Germany was to not only feed its people sufficiently; it was to do so domestically.

The National Socialist German Workers’ Party (NSDAP) developed a tripartite plan to achieve those goals, namely by raising agricultural production, by “steering” consumption, and by encouraging the frugal and proper use of foodstuffs. Instead of focusing on the production side of this equation, this dissertation will give more attention

to issues concerning food consumption (i.e. shopping, preparation, and eating). This approach is justified given the fact that we already know much about the push to increase agricultural quotas. In fact, we now know that for all the hype and hyperbole associated with the Party's agrarian policies it never achieved its desired results, in part because agriculture clearly took a back seat to the industrial sector and rearmament.³ To use a commonly invoked phrase, the regime chose "guns over butter." Thus, the importance of consumption takes on new meaning as it points to the ways in which the regime sought to fill the gaps between actual output and consumer demand. Put simply, the "guns vs. butter" dichotomy is misleading as the Nazi regime never considered them as polar opposites, but rather as sequential and circuitous necessities.⁴ This was particularly true of Hitler.

My overarching thesis is that the Nazi regime sought to redefine the German diet and alter traditional German foodways along their own ideological and economic lines to offset the imbalances caused by the dire economic circumstances after 1929 as well as the necessities of rearmament and war. Moreover, food was used as political tool to shore up and maintain the Party's legitimacy. The regime, however, demanded what might best be called "patriotic austerity" from the German people until the day would come when Hitler would get them the "living space," and concomitant natural resources,

³ Gustavo Corni's research has done much to revamp this view. See his *Hitler and Peasants: Agrarian Policy of the Third Reich, 1930-1939* (New York: Berg, 1990). Cf. John Farquharson, *The Plough and the Swastika: The NSDAP and Agriculture in German 1928-1945* (London and Beverley Hills: Sage, 1976). For a regional study, see Horst Gies, *Nationalsozialistische Agrarpolitik und bäuerliches Verhalten im Zweiten Weltkrieg. Eine Regionalstudie zur ländlichen Gesellschaft in Bayern* (Frankfurt am Main und Berlin: Lang, 1996). On the food economy, see the magisterial work of Corni and Gies, *Brot, Butter, Kanonen: Die Ernährungswirtschaft in Deutschland unter der Diktatur Hitlers* (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1997).

⁴ Adam Tooze, *Wages of Destruction: The Making and Breaking of the Nazi Economy* (London and New York: Allen Lane, 2006), pp.162-163. See below for a further discussion of this debate.

fit for a master race. Neither I (nor Hahn above) are suggesting that something as simple as the taste of butter won millions of Germans over to Nazism. Nor am I arguing, as has recently been done, that the Nazis used the spoils of war to buy German complicity as they murdered Europe's Jews.⁵ However, I do argue that the myriad food policies of the Nazis were one of many aspects in the Third Reich that enabled them to gain, if not always outright support, then passive loyalty. It appears that as living standards rose for a considerable stratum of German society relative to the low points of 1918 or 1930, so too did their indifference towards the increasing constraints on personal freedom and even the persecution of their neighbors. As the historian Michael Burleigh has put it, "[a] full plate, work, and a wage packet considerably reduced people's interest in their fellow man."⁶

I had begun to ponder the cultural and political significance of food, not in the context of the Third Reich, but rather on a macro level already as an undergraduate. History seemed to be full of events, whether one looked at France in 1789, Russia in 1917, or Lebanon in the 1980s, in which there appeared to be a connection between political stability on the one hand and a sufficient supply of basic necessities for the masses on the other. More specifically, it seemed as though hungry subalterns often looked to radical solutions for their extreme problems. Although this is not the place to dwell on the topic, it has not been lost on me that the present study may have insights that transcend National Socialist Germany given the current economic recession and global food crisis. Since the global economy tanked in 2007, food prices for staple

⁵ Götz Aly, *Hitler's Beneficiaries: Plunder, Racial War, and the Nazi Welfare State* (New York: Metropolitan, 2007).

⁶ Michael Burleigh, *The Third Reich: A New History* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2000), p.812.

commodities have steadily increased and are now up an average of nearly fifty percent. The United Nations Food Security Task Force estimates that now over one billion people are undernourished in the world, up nearly a quarter of a billion from the previous year. Food riots have erupted across the globe, from Haiti to Indonesia, Egypt to Peru. Food shortages and high prices were partly to blame for the massive protests in Tunisia that just recently ushered in a regime change. Even in wealthy countries the food issue has moved to center stage. Governments dealing with fiscal crises in health, welfare, and pension systems as well as the alarming increase in obesity rates are routinely now targeting poor diets as a root cause. It seems, particularly in the West, that for some time many have all but forgotten importance of food and eating because of contemporary affluence. As history shows us, this can change very quickly.

Historiography

Scholars have long known that the study of food serves as an ideal entry point into other cultures. Although once a peripheral concern in many of the social sciences, food studies are now a thriving sub-discipline with widely respected publications and have stand-alone departments in universities and colleges. Monographs on food history did not appear until the pioneering works of social historians from the Annales School in the 1960s began exploring the routine structures of daily life.⁷ Much of this work was quantitative in nature and focused largely on food supply, nutritional values, and prices.⁸ While undoubtedly useful, such studies laid bare the sharp disconnect between the

⁷ Of course the *locus classicus* in this vein of methodology remains Fernand Braudel, *The Structures of Everyday Life: The Limits of the Possible*, trans. by Siân Reynolds (New York: Harper & Row, 1981).

⁸ For a good overview see Robert Forster and Orest A. Ranum, (eds.), *Food and Drink in History: Selections from the Annales: Économies, Sociétés, Civilisations*, vol.5 (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1979).

quantitative analysis of food on the one hand and those who actually consumed it on the other. More recently, scholars have begun to examine the social, cultural, and political importance of food, meal preparation, and eating habits.⁹ Parallel advances have been made by historians of alcohol.¹⁰ For food studies in the German context, Hans Jürgen Teuteberg has outlined the wide-ranging effects of industrialization on foodstuffs in the Kaiserreich.¹¹ Belinda Davis has shown that food protests by women during the First World War influenced high politics¹², and Michael Wildt has demonstrated how the experience of hunger helped shape cultural identity in post-war Germany.¹³ Holocaust scholars have also touched on the importance of food and

⁹ This literature is already vast and continues to grow steadily. For select examples see John Burnett, *England Eats Out: A Social History of Eating Out in England from 1830 to the Present*. (Harlow, England and New York: Pearson/Longman, 2004); Katarzyna Joanna Cwiertka, *Modern Japanese Cuisine: Food, Power and National Identity* (London: Reaktion, 2006); Jean Louis Flandrin, Massimo Montanari, and Albert Sonnenfeld, eds., *Food: A Culinary History from Antiquity to Present* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999); and Peter Scholliers, ed., *Food, Drink and Identity: Cooking, Eating and Drinking in Europe since the Middle Ages* (Oxford and New York: Berg, 2001); Jeffrey Pilcher, *Que vivan los tamales! Food and the Making of Mexican Identity* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1998); and his *The Sausage Rebellion: Public Health, Private Enterprise and Meat in Mexico City, 1870-1917* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2006).

¹⁰ See for example Thomas Brennan, *Public Drinking and Popular Culture in Eighteenth-Century Paris*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988); Peter Clark, *The English Alehouse: A Social History 1200-1830* (London and New York: Longman, 1983); Hasso Spode, *Alkohol und Zivilisation: Berausung, Ernüchterung, und Tischsitten in Deutschland bis zum Beginn des 20. Jahrhundert* (Berlin: Tara-Verlag Hartmut Hensel, 1991) and *Die Macht der Trunkenheit: Kultur- und Sozialgeschichte des Alkohols in Deutschland* (Opladen: Leske + Budrich, 1993); and B. Ann Tlusty, *Bacchus and the Civic Order: The Culture of Drink in Early Modern Germany* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2001).

¹¹ Hans Jürgen Teuteberg, "Zum Problemfeld von Urbanisierung und Ernährung im 19. Jahrhundert", in *idem* (ed.), *Durchbruch zum modernen Massenkonsum: Lebensmittelmärkte und Lebensmittelqualität im Städtewachstum des Industriezeitalters* (Münster: F. Coppenrath, 1987), pp.1-36.

¹² Belinda J. Davis, *Home Fires Burning: Food, Politics, and Everyday Life in World War I Berlin* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000).

¹³ Michael Wildt, *Der Traum vom Sattwerden. Hunger, Schwarzmarkt und Rationen in Hamburg, 1945-1948* (Hamburg: VSA-Verlag, 1986) and *Am Beginn der "Konsumgesellschaft": Mangelserfahrung, Lebenshaltung, Wohlstandshoffnung in Westdeutschland in den fünfziger Jahren* (Hamburg: Ergebnisse Verlag, 1994). For a comparative look at hunger in East and West Germany, see Alice Weinreb, "Matters of Taste: The Politics of Food in Divided Germany, 1945-1971 (PhD Dissertation: University of Michigan, 2009).

nutritional policies in the occupied eastern territories¹⁴, yet our knowledge of the German home front during the Third Reich is lacking.¹⁵ This dearth becomes more apparent when compared to the literature which exists for Britain, Italy, and the United States.¹⁶

“Feeding the Volk” has been informed by and will add to three strands of modern German historiography, all of which are tethered to the issue of popular support under Nazism. In 1932 the National Socialist German Workers’ Party gained just under fourteen million votes, or roughly thirty-seven percent, thus becoming the largest party in the Reichstag. Not one year later and without a majority vote, Adolf Hitler was appointed chancellor of Germany, thus launching the country and its people headlong into a twelve-year period of rearmament, annexation, total war, genocide, and ultimately ruin. For decades historians of German history have tried to explain just how such a monstrous regime came to power. What was so appealing about the Nazi party and who voted for them? Why did a significant resistance movement never develop? For all we know about Nazism, its allure remains uncomfortably enigmatic.

In the first decades after 1945, it became fashionable to cast that Third Reich as little more than a constellation of goose-stepping masses terrorized into conformity and

¹⁴ See for example Christian Gerlach, *Krieg, Ernährung, Völkermord: Forschungen zur deutschen Vernichtungspolitik im Zweiten Weltkrieg* (Hamburg: HIS Verlag, 1998) and his *Kalkulierte Morde. Die deutsche Wirtschafts- und Vernichtungspolitik in Weißrußland 1941 bis 1944* (Hamburg: HIS Verlag, 1999).

¹⁵ For exceptions, see Nancy Reagin, “*Marktordnung* and Autarkic Housekeeping: Housewives and Private Consumption under the Four-Year Plan, 1936-1939”, *German History*, (Vol. 19, No. 2, 2001), 162-184; and her *Sweeping the German Nation: Domesticity and National Identity in Germany, 1870-1945* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007).

¹⁶ See for example Ina Zweiniger-Bargielowska, *Austerity in Britain: Rationing, Controls, and Consumption, 1939-1955* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000); Amy Bentley, *Eating for Victory: Food, Rationing and the Politics of Domesticity* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1998); and Carol F. Helstosky, *Garlic and Oil: Food and Politics in Italy* (New York: Berg, 2004).

complicity by totalitarian repression.¹⁷ Under this “supervision theory,” it was held that “the systems of control, internal espionage, and policing...were so efficient that even the faintest attempt at opposition was sure to lead to the concentration camp.”¹⁸ More recent research has largely overturned such views, despite the fact that they still very much remain part and parcel of popular culture. To be sure, fear and intimidation were commonplace, but so too was uncoerced compliance and collaboration. Detailed examinations of the Gestapo, for example, have shown that its surveillance network was nowhere near as pervasive as once believed. In fact, with its tight resources and labor pool, the repressive institution was fueled in no small part by an opportunistic public willing to denounce neighbors, often for personal gain.¹⁹

A second strand of interpretation, the so-called “seduction theories,” locate the attractiveness of Nazism in the apparent magnetism of Hitler and his movement. Much of the focus has been placed on the public persona of Hitler as constructed by the master propagandist Joseph Goebbels. In the classic statement, Ian Kershaw highlighted the image of Adolf Hitler, or the so-called “Hitler Myth,” to demonstrate “less what Hitler actually was than what he seemed to be to millions of Germans.”²⁰ Because of his ability to deal effectively with the economic crisis, political turmoil, and Germany’s

¹⁷ The classic example of totalitarian theory is Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1951). For another view, see Edward Crankshaw, *Gestapo: Instrument of Tyranny* (London: Putnam, 1956).

¹⁸ See Detlev J.K. Peukert’s discussion in *Inside the Third Reich: Conformity, Opposition, and Racism in Everyday Life*, trans. by Richard Deveson (Yale University Press, 1987), ch.4.

¹⁹ See Robert Gellately, *The Gestapo and German Society: Enforcing Racial Policy 1933-1945* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990) and George C. Browder, *Hitler’s Enforcers: The Gestapo and the SS Security Service in the Nazi Revolution* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996).

²⁰ Ian Kershaw, *The ‘Hitler Myth’: Image and Reality in the Third Reich* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), p.2.

tarnished image after Versailles, Kershaw argues that Hitler took on the messianic aura of the “*Führer* without sin.” In fact, Hitler’s popularity grew at the expense of the Party as he remained shielded from the corrupt, brutal, and zealous actions of party officials that Germans dealt with in everyday life. Despite realities to the contrary, Hitler was thus perceived to be a moderate, upholder of the law and the Christian faith, and was simply unaware or misinformed about such disreputable behavior from within his lower ranks.

Other works have found the appealing nature of Nazism to be in its ideology. One sophisticated, although not wholly original recent study, casts National Socialism as a political religion complete with rituals, hymns, martyrs, and a messiah to which Germans transmitted their faith after the disasters in 1929 and 1918. The *Volksgemeinschaft* (national community) became, in essence, the “chosen people” which Nazism sought to redeem and save from a host of enemies (i.e. liberals, Jews, and communists).²¹ Certainly the most well known, if the most problematic of works in this vein of historiography, is Daniel Goldhagen’s *Hitler’s Willing Executioners*. For Goldhagen, Germans actually needed little seducing as anti-Semitism, the core component of Nazi ideology, permeated German culture so completely after the mid-nineteenth century that even “ordinary Germans” came to accept and often savor the extermination of European Jewry. This “demonological anti-Semitism, of the virulent racial variety, was the common structure of the perpetrator’s cognition and German

²¹ See Burleigh, *The Third Reich*.

society in general.”²² Goldhagen has rightly been taken to task for his monocausal explanation, in particular because various Slavic groups, the French, and Austrians had no real problems shipping off or murdering Jews themselves. This is to say nothing of the millions of “inferior” Slavs, Sinti and Roma, mentally handicapped, and homosexuals who were murdered with similar zeal by the Nazis.

A more recent historiographical trend, one tapped directly by this dissertation, focuses on the material gains that Nazism afforded Germans, paying particular attention to its nascent consumer society. But the standard of living issue in particular, and consumption more generally, has puzzled historians for some time. Already in late 1945 the United States Strategic Bombing Survey had uncovered what appeared to be an economic contradiction. Despite Nazi Germany’s ability to fight six-year-long total war, statistics suggested that there had not been a total mobilization of the war economy. Using the work of Rolf Wagenführ of the State Statistics Office, the survey team found that while the production of consumer goods remained constant, weapons production remained modest until 1942. Based on this evidence, historians and economists had for decades put forth the so-called “*Blitzkrieg* argument.” Fearing popular unrest because of reduced living standards, the Nazi state launched a series of short, concentrated campaigns to minimize the burden on the populace.²³ It appeared

²² Daniel Jonah Goldhagen, *Hitler’s Willing Executioners: Ordinary Germans and the Holocaust* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1996), pp.392-393.

²³ Tim Mason even went as far as to suggest that Hitler launched the war against Poland prematurely out of fears of a working-class upheaval. See his *Social Policy in the Third Reich: The Working Class and the ‘National Community.’* Translated by John Broadwin and edited by Jane Caplan (New York and Oxford: Berg, 1993). Originally published in German in 1977.

that the regime pursued a policy of both “butter and guns.”²⁴ To some, the former even took precedence over the latter.²⁵ More recently, scholars have held the opposite view, arguing that more resources, materiel, and manpower were diverted to the war economy than previously believed.²⁶ The result was a gloomy economic existence for ordinary Germans strapped by scarcity and want.²⁷ This view of a poverty-stricken proletariat hidden behind Nazi pageantry just does not accord with many eye-witness accounts. Oral testimonies from the period of 1936 until the war soured in 1942 testify to the fact that many Germans considered those years as some of the best in their lives.²⁸ Even the slanted morale reports of the exiled Social Democrats show that the Nazis won applause from many for success in fighting unemployment, foreign policy, and restoring law and order. How does one then reconcile the apparent contradiction that Nazism appeared to both promote and suppress consumption?

It is here that scholarship on “getting and spending” has made insights.

Historians of Germany have in general been slow to study attempts to contain and fulfill the desires of consumers.²⁹ More recently scholars have become more sensitive to the

²⁴ For examples, see Burton Klein, *Germany's Economic Preparations for War* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1959) and Alan S. Milward, *The German Economy at War* (London: Athlone, 1965).

²⁵ A.J.P. Taylor, *The Origins of the Second World War* (London: Simon & Schuster, 1963), pp.17-18.

²⁶ On this see, Richard J. Overy, *War and Economy in the Third Reich* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), pp.259-261.

²⁷ Rüdiger Hachtmann, *Industriearbeit im 'Dritten Reich': Untersuchungen zu den Lohn- und Arbeitsbedingungen in Deutschland 1933-1945* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1989).

²⁸ See Lutz Niethammer's edited collection, *'Die Jahre weiss man nicht, wo man heute hinsetzen soll': Faschismuserfahrungen in Ruhrgebiet*, vol. 1 (Berlin and Bonn: J.H.W. Dietz, 1983).

²⁹ Early exceptions are David Schoenbaum, *Hitler's Social Revolution: Class and Status in Nazi Germany, 1933-1939* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1966); Richard Grunberger, *The 12-Year Reich: A Social History of Nazi Germany* (New York and Chicago: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1971); and Hans Dieter

importance of consumption and it is quickly becoming a cutting-edge narrative in German history.³⁰ Rejecting outright Soviet and American (“Fordist”) models for providing a higher standard of living for Germans³¹, the Nazis set out to redefine consumption in their own terms with the ultimate goal of autarky always in sight.³² What came to pass was a “paradoxical blend of belt tightening measures and foretastes of the good life.”³³ In trying to understand this paradox, I have found the work of Hartmut Berghoff useful in conceptualizing the regime’s motivations. For him, Nazi consumption policy meant a continuous vacillation between “enticement and deprivation.”³⁴ Berghoff argues that there were essentially three different types of Nazi consumption, namely increased, suppressed, and virtual. The Party pushed for certain commodities to be had in ever greater numbers. For example, the government heavily subsidized the production of the wireless *Volksempfänger* (people’s radio) so that even workers could

Schäfer, *Das gespaltene Bewusstsein: Über deutsche Kultur und Lebenswirklichkeit 1933-1945* (Munich: Hanser, 1981).

³⁰ For a useful overview of the nascent literature, see Alon Confino and Rudy Koshar, “Regimes of Consumer Culture: New Narratives in Twentieth-Century German History,” *German History*, vol. 19, no. 2, (2001), pp.135-161. See also Konrad H. Jarausch and Michael Geyer, *Shattered Past: Reconstructing German Histories* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2003). The increasing importance of the history of consumption in Germany is exemplified by the fact that the German Historical Institute in Washington D.C. has made it the core of its research agenda with the appointment of two scholars of consumption to its directorship (Hartmut Berghoff and Uwe Spiekermann).

³¹ Victorian de Grazia, “Changing Consumption Regimes in Europe, 1930-1970: Comparative Perspectives on the Distribution Problem”, in Susan Strasser, Charles McGovern, and Matthias Judt (eds.), *Getting and Spending: European and American Consumer Societies in the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

³² Wolfgang König, *Volkswagen, Volksempfänger, Volksgemeinschaft. “Volksprodukte” im Dritten Reich: Vom Scheitern einer nationalsozialistischen Konsumgesellschaft* (Paderborn: Schöningh, 2004).

³³ Shelley Baranowski, *Strength Through Joy: Consumerism and Mass Tourism in the Third Reich* (New York and Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p.4.

³⁴ Hartmut Berghoff, “Enticement and Deprivation: The Regulation of Consumption in Pre-War Nazi Germany,” in Martin Daunton and Matthew Hilton (eds.), *The Politics of Consumption: Material Culture and Citizenship in Europe and America* (Oxford and New York: Berg, 2001), p.165-184.

afford them. By 1940, when prices had sunk from seventy-five Reichsmarks on the first model (VE301) to thirty-five Reichsmarks for smaller DKE38 model, nearly seventy percent of households had a radio. Not only did it become a form of popular entertainment, it was also a convenient method of delivering propaganda, hence the nickname “*Goebbels Schnauze*” (Goebbel’s snout).³⁵ To the list of increased commodities, textiles, household items, and durable goods could be added.

After the advent of the Four-Year Plan in 1936 the Nazis began suppressing consumption in other areas. With the establishment of the *Reichsausschuß für volkswirtschaftliche Aufklärung* (Reich Committee National Economic Education) that same year, the task of steering private consumption and coordinating efforts at the national level, its main charge, was much easier. Combined with the research from the privately-owned *Gesellschaft für Konsumforschung* (Society for Consumption Research) on consumer behavior, the government was able to formulate policy and wage rationing campaigns.³⁶ Advertising played a key role here as well, but never fully succumbed to the demands of the regime and in fact appropriated many practices from America.³⁷ Suppressed commodities were basically anything not covered by domestic production. The regime pushed for the production of ersatz products in an attempt to compensate for fewer and fewer imported goods.

³⁵ Hans-Jörg Koch, *Das Wunschkonzert im NS-Rundfunk* (Cologne: Böhlau Verlag, 2003), p.51.

³⁶ Berghoff, “Enticement and Deprivation,” p.179.

³⁷ Corey Ross, “Visions of Prosperity: The Americanization of Advertising in Interwar Germany,” in Pamela E. Swett, S. Jonathan Wiesen, and Jonathan Zatin (eds.), *Selling Modernity: Advertising in Twentieth Century Germany* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2007), pp.52-77. More generally on advertising, see Hartmut Berghoff, ‘Von der ‘Reklame’ zur Verbrauchlenkung: Werbung in nationalsozialistischen Deutschland,’ in idem (ed.), *Konsumpolitik: die Regulierung des privaten Verbrauchs im 20. Jahrhundert* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1999), pp.77-112.

Some four decades ago the British historian Richard Grunberger noted that one of the most remarkable things about the NSDAP was its ability to overturn Marx's adage that "Being" (*Sein*) determined "Consciousness" (*Bewusstsein*).

"In the sphere of consumption psychologic affluence did not so much reflect material prosperity as precede it. Put crudely, this meant that the grounds for satisfaction at the prevailing state of affairs felt by the average German in, say, 1937 had probably more to do with his expectations for 1939 than his actual standard at the time."³⁸

This statement captures perfectly Berghoff's notion of "virtual consumption." Because of the limitations placed on consumers, as scarce materials were reallocated for rearmament, the regime used propaganda and marketing ploys to cast a variety of consumer goods as eminently obtainable by every member of the "national community." And because they were often very modern and very expensive, such purchases were traditionally confined to the middle and upper classes. Strength through Joy, the Nazi leisure organization, was essential in the promotion of virtual consumption. Not only did it attempt to raise the standard of living by subsidizing leisure opportunities for millions of workers, but the *Volkswagen* (people's car) gave them a glimpse of possibilities to come. Having been one of the least motorized nations in Europe, Hitler envisioned a Germany linked by *Autobahnen* on which Germans would cruise in an affordable, mass-produced automobile. Working closely on proto-type design with Ferdinand Porsche in 1937, Hitler personally unveiled the first model VW Beetle at the International Motor Show in Berlin in 1939.³⁹

³⁸ Grunberger, *The 12-Year Reich*, p.203.

³⁹ On the company history of Volkswagen, see Hans Mommsen and Manfred Grieger, *Das Volkswagenwerk und seine Arbeiter 1933-1948* (Düsseldorf: Econ Verlag, 1996).

Model design was one thing, but producing the car for public consumption was another matter entirely. Hitler had staunchly clung to his belief that cost for the vehicle must be capped at 1,000 Reichsmarks, far below actual production costs. For this reason private industry showed little interest in the Volkswagen project. The German Labor Front came to the rescue with the initial capitalization and KdF oversaw the project's development as well as the building of a state-of-the-art facility in Fallersleben (now Wolfsburg), Lower Saxony to rival Henry Ford's River Rouge plant near Detroit. However, even the final price of 990 Reichsmarks placed it out of reach for average workers, so a layaway plan was developed in 1938. At five Reichsmarks per week, Germans could fulfill the dream of car ownership in four years. But not a single car was ever delivered to the civilian public during the Third Reich. The outbreak of war against Poland in 1939 meant that the factory was converted for the war effort before mass production began. This did not, however, deflate consumerist aspirations as some 337,000 Germans had paid 280 million Reichsmarks into the saving system by 1945. While the regime maintained the illusion of future motoring masses, it was using the money to finance the war. It was only after the war that it became clear to the savers that they had been hoodwinked. Only through years of litigation did participants in the saving scheme get compensation. In 1961 VW reached a settlement to give either credit towards a new purchase (600 Marks) or 100 Marks in cash.

Whether virtual or real, the centrality of consumer desires and Nazi policies has recently become a "hot button" topic with the publication of Götz Aly's *Hitler's Volkstaat* (Hitler's people's state, or in the English edition *Hitler's Beneficiaries*). Aly's main thesis, that the material benefits provided by plundering enemy territories and

“Aryanizing” Jewish property were critical in the regime’s popularity, has ushered in a vigorous public debate in Germany. To his mind, the state-sanctioned larceny in Western and Eastern Europe and the associated redistribution of wealth, whether directly in the form of goods or indirectly via the reduction of tax burdens, led most Germans to believe that the government had their best interests in mind. It was the millions of care packages sent home weekly and the overstuffed suitcases that accompanied soldiers on leave, loaded with fine cheeses, suckling pigs, honey, shoes, and lingerie that people on the home front remembered. Soldiers were little more than “armed couriers of butter” and the German home front was filled with “well-fed parasites.”⁴⁰ In sum, Aly argues that ordinary Germans bore little of the costs of war. In his balance sheets, seventy percent was funded through pillaging, expropriation, and forced labor and another twenty percent by taxing the rich. It was thus material considerations, not ideology, which won consent and even cooperation among the masses.

Aly’s assertions, especially his economic reductionism, have been invariably attacked⁴¹, but his intimation that there are unquestionable links between consumption and violence has much merit.⁴² As this study will show, Aly exaggerates the bountifulness of the German diet. Although Germans never experienced privations

⁴⁰ Aly, *Hitler’s Beneficiaries*, p.324.

⁴¹ For more on the controversy, see one of Aly’s loudest critics J. Adam Tooze, “Economics, Ideology, and Cohesion in the Third Reich: A Critique of Götz Aly’s *Hitler’s Volkstaat*,” http://www.hist.cam.ac.uk/academic_staff/further_details/tooze-aly.pdf. Accessed on 8 February, 2011.

⁴² Some early essays by Michael Geyer have pointed in this direction. For example, see “The Stigma of Violence, Nationalism, and War in Twentieth-Century Germany”, *German Studies Review*, no. 2 (1993) and his “Germany, or the Twentieth Century as History”, *South Atlantic Quarterly*, no. 4 (1997). For a more thorough-going example in the British context, see Mike Davis, *Late Victorian Holocausts: El Niño Famines and the Making of the Third World* (London and New York: Verso, 2001).

similar to those of the First World War era, their diet on average remained surprisingly frugal.⁴³ The major problem, however, that I see with Aly's book is that it covers the period from 1939 to 1945 and has little to say about the first six years of the Third Reich. These years are particularly important in any attempt to gauge popular support for the Nazis as it was in this period that the regime overcame a series of social, economic, and political obstacles that could have quite feasibly made it go the way of so many other Weimar administrations. "Feeding the Volk" pays particular attention those critical years.

Sources and Chapter Summaries

In order to write a socio-cultural history of food in Nazi Germany, I have used a vast array of primary source materials. Because of the omnipresence of food in any society, the sources used to tease out the threads of history can be quite varied. For this study, I have relied not only on official documents of the Party and its various organizations found in archives, but also scientific literature, trade journals, women's magazines, technical manuals, newspapers, and cookbooks. Wherever possible, I have tried to balance the materials and offer a glimpse of the German *Alltag* (everyday) with memoirs, situational and mood reports.

"Feeding the Volk" is organized thematically and begins with a discussion of food and hunger in World War One and interwar Europe. It makes the case that one cannot fully understand the importance of food or the fears of hunger during the Nazi period without taking into account the miseries on the home front created by the exigencies of

⁴³ My argument is further corroborated by economic historians as well. See Mark Spoerer and Jochen Streb, "Guns and Butter—But No Margarine: The Impact of Nazi Agricultural Production and Consumption Policies on German Food Production and Consumption, 1933-1938." Paper prepared for the XIV International Economic History Congress, Helsinki, Finland, 21 to 25 August 2006.

this war. Not only did the hunger profoundly affect those civilians who experienced it directly, but even the “Front generation” and those who grew up in its stead. The experiences left powerful memories in the minds of many of the young men that would come to play key roles Nazi leadership, none more than Hitler. In many ways, the First World War was held up as a sort of case study in the 1920s and 30s by Nazi experts to learn from the host of mistakes and missteps.

Chapter Three then turns to the turbulent years of the early 1930s as the NSDAP jockeyed for, and ultimately, seized power. With the economy in shambles and millions of unemployed, Hitler well understood the precariousness of the situation and moved quickly to ensure basic necessities for the neediest of Germans with the development of a system of social welfare. In the winter of 1933 the Nazi Party announced that “no one shall go hungry or freeze” and began what would become the world’s largest charity organization. Winter Relief, as it was called, would come to take in and redistribute billions of Reichsmarks and become the largest single consumer of foodstuffs in the Third Reich. The ability of the regime to manage the “political stomach” of Germans, even if varying amounts of intimidation and coercion were used, did much to stifle dissent and boost its popularity as well as certain sectors of the economy.

But if the promises of bread and a standard of living befitting the Germanic race were not to be taken simply as empty political rhetoric, the Nazis quickly realized that sweeping changes needed to take place not only in food production, but in the area consumption as well. In the wake of the Four Year Plan, consumers, especially women, came to play a tremendously important role in the economy as Germany pursued autarkic food policies as it readied itself for war. Chapter Four explains how the

National Socialist government attempted to steer consumption patterns of housewives at every level, from shopping and meal preparation to storage, preservation, and even disposal. It was argued that women literally held the health of the nation and its economy on their grocery lists and in their cooking pots. The ability or inability of the Party to “coordinate” the menus of Germany’s seventeen million households, as well as tap all available food resources, was seen as critical in the pursuit of empire and Germany’s future.

Chapter Five then moves on to examine the spread and influence of mass provisioning by way of the German Labor Front’s “Hot Factory Meals” initiative. Heavily influenced by modern food science and the well-proven effects of a poor diet on human performance, Nazi nutritionists and policy makers increasingly strove to maximize the health and efficiency of industrial workers via factory canteens. Much like the rationalization processes implemented on shop floors to improve work flows and cut costs, the NSDAP’s attempt to rationalize the diets of urban workers makes clear the bio-political nature of Nazi food policy. As a conclusion, Chapter 6 then offers a brief glance at the intersection of food and war and makes the case that there is still much fruitful work to be done on the subject. In particular, it explores a nightmarish paradox. German soldiers on average were the best fed people in the Reich, yet the invasion of the Soviet Union was undergirded by a starvation policy for those “useless eaters” under occupation. Food, or better yet the withholding of food, came to be a powerful weapon wielded in the “breadbasket of Europe” to kill millions.

What becomes clear from this study is that the core components of the regime’s hateful ideology, namely racism, anti-Semitism, and ultra-nationalism, inform

Nazi food policy at every level. Simple everyday tasks like a trip to the market, choosing a recipe for dinner, or packing a lunch, became deeply politicized in the Third Reich. And with each action Germans were forced to wrestle with the consequences of acquiescence or resistance.

CHAPTER TWO

THE STARVED SPIRIT OF 1914 AND ITS (NAZI) DISCONTENTS

National Socialism was conceived in the experiences of the trenches. It can only be understood in terms of these frontline experiences.

—Early Nazi supporter¹

The revolution from below is always due to the sins of omission from those above.

—Johann Wolfgang von Goethe

The declaration of war in August 1914 was met with an outpouring of patriotism, euphoria, and nationalist rapture on both sides of the conflict. Crowds of all social and political stripes in London, Vienna, Paris, St. Petersburg, and Berlin cheered raucously the dawn of the Great War. On August 4 Kaiser Wilhelm repudiated domestic political friction and famously claimed he “recognized no parties, only Germans.” Heinrich Hoffmann’s well-known snapshot from the period captured an exuberant Adolf Hitler in front of the Feldherrnhalle on Munich’s Odeonsplatz celebrating after hearing the news. Recalling events that day, Hitler wrote that, hoarse from singing patriotic anthems like *Die Wacht am Rhein* and *Deutschland über Alles*, he “fell down on [his] knees and thanked heaven from an overflowing heart for granting [him] the good fortune of being permitted to live at this time.”² Two days later he petitioned authorities to let him as an Austrian volunteer to fight in a Bavarian regiment. It was granted.

This intoxicating “spirit of 1914” transcended traditional social, political, and cultural boundaries in Germany. It was not just energetic and naïve young men like

¹ Theodore Abel, *Why Hitler Came to Power* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1986), p.142. Originally published by Prentice Hall in 1938.

² Adolf Hitler, *Mein Kampf*. Translated by Ralph Manheim (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1971), p.161.

Hitler, even intellectuals like Thomas Mann, artists like Otto Dix, and theologians like Dieter Vorwerk who not only welcomed the war but also endorsed it. The “spirit of 1914” was in some cases even powerful enough to rise above national allegiances; such was the case with Polish miners working in the German province of Upper Silesia, who, just like the Germans, greeted the war with “unanimous enthusiasm.”³

But the realities of this first modern, mechanized total war soon dashed the feelings and emotions of the *Augusterlebnis* for many. Trench warfare, disease, death and destruction on a heretofore unimaginable scale, fostered deep-seated disillusionment. Popular discontent quickly manifested itself in all belligerent countries in various forms from literature and art to mass demonstrations and ultimately, in Russia and Germany, revolution. In Germany especially, the food shortages caused by the British blockade that set in by late 1914 and worsened as the war dragged on achieved the desired results by starving Germany of much needed supplies and crushing civilian morale. By the end of the war as many as three quarters of a million Germans had died of hunger- and starvation-related illnesses.

In September 1918, roughly two months before the First World War had ended, an article from American journalist F.W. Wile appeared in the *Weekly Dispatch* bearing the intriguing title “The Huns of 1940.” The article set out to discuss the effects and success of the so-called “Hunger blockade” on Germany and quoted several experts, one even brazenly claiming that “the German race will be annihilated, about this exists

³ Richard Bessel, *Germany after the First World War*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), p.2-3. Although very pervasive, there were important exceptions to this euphoria. See for example Michael Stöcker, *Augusterlebnis 1914 in Darmstadt* (Darmstadt: Eduard Roether, 1994) and Jeffrey Verhey, *The Spirit of 1914: Militarism, Myth and Mobilization in Germany* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000) .

not the slightest doubt.”⁴ Yet what in many ways is more striking is the article’s general conclusion. Perhaps Wile said it best when he noted that “I know that not only are the tens of thousands of Germans who till now unborn destined for a life of physical inferiority, but also that the thousands of Germans not yet conceived will have to face the same fate.” But the physiological effects of prolonged starvation on human development are only one side of the proverbial coin. On the other side lie the unintended emotional and ideological consequences. Thus Wile, in an almost a prophetic manner, suggests that it would be at least two generations before the real effects of the blockade were known.⁵

This chapter will examine the experience of war, trauma, and defeat in Germany paying particular attention to the food question and the lingering effects suggested by Wile already in 1918. What becomes immediately apparent is that the deprivations caused by the allied blockade were not only permanently seared into the minds of that generation of Germans, but it also dramatically changed their world view. Those memories of hunger and misery, food riots and mob violence, came to play an integral part in the formation of Nazi ideology and the political triumph of the NSDAP. This argument is not entirely new, but the role of food not been fully considered in this regard. Already in 1938 a pioneering study of some seven hundred autobiographical essays by sociologist Theodore Abel had clearly shown that bitter resentment about hunger and privation were integral parts of the memories of rank-and-file NSDAP

⁴ Quoted in Werner Schäffer, *Krieg gegen Frauen und Kinder. Englands Hungerblockade gegen Deutschland 1914-1920* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlagsanstalt, 1940), p.7.

⁵ This is discussed briefly in C. Paul Vincent, *The Politics of Hunger: The Allied Blockade of Germany, 1915-1919* (Athens, Ohio and London: Ohio University Press, 1985), pp.157-164.

supporters.⁶ Moreover, such experiences profoundly affected many of the young men who would forge a National Socialist revolution in Germany in 1933, above all Hitler. For him, the First World War was a blessing in disguise that made his meteoric rise possible and fashioned much of his *Weltanschauung* (worldview).

Slithering over the Brink

The history of the First World War has been told many times and only a general account need be sketched here.⁷ From a military perspective, the war plan unleashed by the Germans in 1914 must be seen as a failure. The Schlieffen Plan, named after the former Chief of the General Staff Alfred von Schlieffen and put into action by his successor Helmut von Moltke, neither brought about the swift defeat of France as calculated nor did it prevent the two-front war they feared. The plan called for German troops to subvert France's heavily fortified eastern border with an attack from the north through neutral Belgium. It was estimated that France would be dealt a knock-out blow in six weeks. The German army could then move against Russia before its armies were fully mobilized.⁸ However, Belgian resistance, especially the effectiveness of the *franc-tireurs*, was underestimated by the Germans and the army was bogged down long enough for the first troops of the British Expeditionary Force reach France. The German

⁶ Abel, *Why Hitler Came to Power*. In the new foreword by Thomas Childers he holds that the Abel's book received so little attention because it did not fall in line with the generally accepted version of Nazism as a movement of the lower middle class.

⁷ For an introduction to the origins of the war, see James Joll, *The Origins of the First World War* (London and New York: Longman, 1992). For an excellent overview, see Hew Strachan, *The First World War*, vol. 1, *To Arms* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001).

⁸ For an excellent discussion of the development of the Schlieffen Plan, see Strachan, *The First World War*, pp. 163-207. See also Gerhard Ritter, *The Schlieffen Plan: Critique of a Myth* (London: O. Wolff, 1958); Terence Zuber, *Inventing the Schlieffen Plan: German War Planning 1871-1914* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2002); and Robert Foley, *Alfred von Schlieffen's Military Writings* (London: Frank Cass, 2003).

army made it as far as the Marne River that summer, but, almost miraculously, was repelled by British and French forces that eventually recaptured cities like Ypres. The seemingly continuous string of attacks and retreats as well as the looming winter signaled the need for a new, more defensive strategy. On both sides the armies began to “dig in;” building a vast network of deep trenches and fortifications along the Western Front. The Germans were then required to turn their attention to the Russians and the eastern front.

The failure of the Schlieffen Plan and the stalemate in the west not only made it obvious that the “boys” would not be home by Christmas, but also added another strategic disadvantage for the Germans. A long war made them vulnerable to an economic attack from the British in the form of a naval blockade. The huge naval fleet which protected Britain’s empire and ensured open trading routes was then used to cut Germany’s supply lines, especially of food. The goal was to attack German civilians by starving them into submission. Secret plans for such a strategy by the British Admiralty and the Committee of Imperial Defense were already underway in 1906.⁹ Not only was this strategy a clear violation of the conventions of war because it targeted both civilian and soldier alike, but it also committed the British to the principle of total war. This was a principle which the British, at least theoretically, repudiated when it signed the Declaration of London in February 1909.¹⁰

⁹ Vincent, *Politics of Hunger*, p.26.

¹⁰ On this see Avner Offer, “Blockade and the Strategy of Starvation,” in Roger Chickering and Stig Förster (eds), *Great War, Total War* (Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 169-188. Offer mistakenly dates the signing of declaration to February 1910. The Declaration of London was an attempt for the maritime nations to regulate and safeguard trade during wartime. It did so by classifying goods based on use for civilian, military, or dual purposes. Those deemed to be contraband could be seized by neutral ships.

Because almost no one within the belligerent nations forecast a long protracted war, the military and civilian leadership on both sides found themselves scrambling to mobilize the needed resources and create a war economy. In Germany, the War Ministry moved swiftly in 1914 to establish its Raw Materials Section (*Kriegsrohstoffabteilung*). Headed by Walther Rathenau, then President of the hugely successful General Electric Company (AEG), this new division of the War Ministry set up a state-controlled acquisition of war-related raw materials to ensure the production levels of munitions remained adequate.¹¹ As is often the case, guns took precedence over butter and it was two years before similar actions were taken in the area of food production at a national level. Meanwhile, food shortages had already begun for certain commodities by winter 1914.

The problem for Germany concerning food was one of numbers. Before the onset of World War I, Germany's five million farms covered eighty percent of the needs of its sixty-five million strong population.¹² For commodities like dairy products, meat, and eggs, and above all fats, importation rates were higher, the latter as high as forty two percent. If Germany would have been able to maintain similar agricultural quotas during wartime, things would have been quite austere but manageable. However, a series of factors coalesced to make this impossible under the conditions of war. The Allied Blockade not only cut the availability of certain foodstuffs, but most importantly also of nitrates used as fertilizers and feed supplements (fatty oilcake) that had driven

¹¹ Gerald Feldman, *Army, Industry, and Labor in Germany, 1914-1918* (Providence, RI: Berg, 1992).

¹² On this point see Friedrich Aereboe, *Der Einfluss des Krieges auf die landwirtschaftliche Produktion in Deutschland* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlagsanstalt, 1927) and August Skalweit, *Die Deutsche Kriegsernährungswirtschaft* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlagsanstalt, 1927).

up production rates in the nineteenth century. Moreover, as much as sixty percent of agricultural labor was lost to the military. As a result, agricultural yields were reduced by some twenty-five percent early in the war and as much as fifty percent by 1918. And the weather did not cooperate either. An early frost in the winter of 1914 caused a shortage of potatoes, a mainstay in the German diet. Yet even though the quantities of available foodstuffs were declining, patterns of consumption did not necessarily follow. In fact, Germans consumed more in 1914 than they had in the previous year. Farmers were certain to ensure they and their families had enough to eat before selling off their harvest.¹³ Hard-fighting soldiers required proper sustenance and the military bought up huge quantities. The sick, elderly, mothers to be, and children required similar allotments. The remainder of Germans was forced to make do with what was left, which was almost always inadequate. Signals of rough times ahead meant that consumers emptied store shelves. As a result of the shortages of certain items and stockpiling of others, prices skyrocketed and women took to the streets in protest, demanding government intervention.¹⁴

Early attempts at regulating the German food supply often began at the local level, but were haphazard and ineffectual. By the fall of 1914 consumer protests became so worrisome that the federal government began to cap prices on food staples like milk, bread, and potatoes. Because the caps were set artificially low to appease consumers, farmers were often forced to withhold their products from market or switch

¹³ Robert G. Moeller, "Economic Dimensions of Peasant Protest in the Transition from Kaiserreich to Weimar," in Robert G. Moeller (ed.), *Peasants and Lords in Modern Germany: Recent Studies in Agricultural History* (Boston: Allen & Unwin, 1986), pp.81-109.

¹⁴ Belinda Davis, *Home Fires Burning: Food, Politics, and Everyday Life in World War I Berlin* (Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 2000).

to unregulated commodities so as to not bear the brunt of these policies.¹⁵ This led at first to shortages and then again to high prices as the caps were gradually raised to coax farmers back into the market. At the store counter in Karlsruhe a housewife shopping in June 1914 would have paid twenty-seven cents for a kilo of bread, twenty-two cents for a liter of milk, and RM 6.38 for 100 kilos of potatoes. One year later, she would have paid forty-two cents, twenty-four cents, and RM 11.50 respectively.¹⁶ Price fixing alone clearly did not work and the fluctuating prices and availability of foodstuffs meant that farmers were increasingly seen by urbanites as hoarders and profiteers. Moreover, Germans were increasingly demanding that the government take action to regulate food production and ensure equitable distribution.

In November 1914 State Secretary of the Interior Clemens von Delbrück announced the creation of War Boards (*Kriegsgesellschaften*) which were designed as rationing devices for certain foods. The first to be established was the War Grain Board as the imperial government tried to get a handle on the most important of the early shortages, namely bread. Ever-lengthening bread lines in cities around Germany were seen by officials as clear threats to the war effort and the *Burgfrieden* (political truce) between parties. The War Grain Board set about to regulate production by closely monitoring farmers' yields and grain distribution as well as outlawing the use of grains as animal fodder. To further "stretch" bread cereal supplies, the production of so-called

¹⁵ Avner Offer, *The First World War: An Agrarian Interpretation* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1989), p.26.

¹⁶ These figures come from the *Statistische Mitteilungen über das Grossherzogtum Baden* and are published in Roger Chickering, *Imperial Germany and the Great War, 1914-1918* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p.43. For more on household budgetary, see Armin Triebel, "Variations in Patterns of Consumption in Germany in the Period of the First World War," in Richard Wall and Jay Winter (eds.), *The Upheaval of War: Family, Work, and Welfare in Europe, 1914-1918* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1988), pp.159-195.

K-brot (bread made with a minimum of five percent potato flour) was mandated and rationing began in some cities.¹⁷ War Boards for just about every foodstuff, from butter to sauerkraut, soon followed as did propaganda which tried to allay public fears over insufficient food stores. However, by implementing rationing in such a piecemeal fashion, bureaucratic bottlenecks became the standard and shortages of staple commodities remained part and parcel of the disorganized system. By 1915 not only were bread lines a common sight, but increasingly so too were food riots of all types, especially in Berlin, as even imports from the neutral countries of Switzerland, Denmark, and Holland dried up. During the winter of 1915/16 the food situation had deteriorated to the point that meats and fats had vanished from the market and many were surviving on little more than dark rye bread, potatoes, and turnips alone.¹⁸ And those who could afford it were paying elevated prices on the now well-established black market to supplement their diet.

The winter of 1915/16 proved to be pivotal as reports came in from around the Reich documenting the seriousness of the situation. Violent protesters were smashing in shop windows in cities like Essen, Bonn, Berlin, and Cologne. In Bavaria, where women were vandalizing and looting shops, the War Ministry noted that not only had food shortages begun to poison morale on the home front, but popular protests now had

¹⁷ On the cultural and social importance of bread for Germans and the much maligned *K-brot*, see Davis, *Home Fires Burning*, pp.28-32.

¹⁸ On violence and riots, see Karl-Ludwig Ay, *Die Entstehung einer Revolution. Die Volksstimmung in Bayern während des Ersten Weltkrieges* (Berlin: Dunckner und Humblot, 1968) and Archibald Bell, *A History of the Blockade in Germany* (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1937). See also David Welch, *Germany, Propaganda and Total War, 1914-1918* (London: Athlone, 2000), p.110.

taken on a political dimension as Germans were demanding both “bread and peace.”¹⁹ Increasingly, the civilian population called for a more forceful intervention on behalf of the government. Calls for a “food dictatorship” were widespread in the popular press as many Germans assumed that military control would render similar successes as the appropriation of raw materials for the war effort had. Finally, in the spring of 1916 the Federal Council announced the formation of *Kriegsernährungsamt* (War Food Office or KEA) to regulate all food distribution at a national level.²⁰ Unfortunately, it would be too little, too late. Being that the KEA was a Prussian office, it had no jurisdiction over other German states and its regulatory powers were never clearly outlined. What is more, the head of the War Food Office Adolf von Batocki, a former Prussian rural administrator, never had the aggressive temperament necessary to push initiatives past the endless patches of nettlesome administrators at the federal, state and local levels. In the end, the War Food Office was hamstrung in what one historian has rightly called “a poorly controlled economy.”²¹ The general optimism that German civilians had for KEA and its ability to answer the food question had vanished by the winter of 1916/17 as food supplies dropped well below rationed levels.

¹⁹ Ibid., p.112.

²⁰ It was also becoming clear to the government that inadequate nutrition was negatively affecting the efficiency of workers in heavy industry. Field Marshal Paul von Hindenburg was one of the earliest advocates for the proper nutrition of armaments workers and saw it as a key to the success of the so-called “Hindenburg Program” for winning the war. On this, see Feldman, *Army, Industry, and Labor*, pp.150-168. For the physical effects of undernourishment on workers and the lessons learned by the Nazi regime, see chapter 5 below.

²¹ Robert G. Moeller, *German Peasants and Agrarian Politics, 1914-1924: The Rhineland and Westphalia* (Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 1986), p.44. See also Anne Roerkohl, *Hungerblockade und Heimatfront: Die kommunale Lebensmittelversorgung in Westfalen während des Ersten Weltkriegs* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner, 1991).

During the winter of 1916/17 there was an early frost that decimated the new potato crop. Germans were forced to rely on another heartier root vegetable for sustenance, the turnip.²² This ersatz potato sometimes referred to as the “Prussian pineapple,” further fueled resentment as it was traditionally only used for animal fodder and Germans found its taste to be quite wretched.²³ This was compounded by the fact that it was one of the coldest winters in decades. As one contemporary noted, “people are beginning to think that the torments of Dante’s *Inferno* are capped by the hardships of this deadly winter of 1916-17.”²⁴ With almost no protein or fat in their diets, it was during this time that real starvation set in for many and the average weight loss was nineteen kilograms a seven-month period. It was estimated that the average weight loss of urban dwellers hovered around twenty percent.²⁵ And it was not just the working class or the poor. Walter Koch, the head of the State Food Office in Saxony, noted during the dreadful “turnip winter” that he had lost some fifteen kilos in a short period of time. He lamented:

The sight of my children pulls at the heartstrings. I see them still, the 15 year-old Manfred and 11 year-old Vera, coming home from school and without saying a word searching through the pantry and the buffet for something edible for their hunger. The saddest were the tussles with the

²² These “turnips” were in actuality rutabagas. The German term for rutabaga *Kohlrübe* (literally “cabbage turnip”) makes this clear. The rutabaga was initially developed as a cross between a cabbage and turnip. Germans often shortened the word to *Rübe* (turnip) and the term became commonplace. Because of its prevalence (and perhaps origins) in Sweden, the rutabaga has come to be known in Britain as the Swedish turnip or simply Swede.

²³ Roger Chickering, *The Great War and Urban Life in Germany: Freiburg, 1914-1918* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), p.269-271.

²⁴ Evelyn Mary Blücher von Wahlstatt, *An English Wife in Berlin* (New York: E.P. Dutton & Company, 1920), p.162.

²⁵ Offer, p.33. See also the work of Germany’s leading nutritionist Max Rubner, “Das Ernährungswesen im Allgemeinen,” in Franz Bumm (ed.), *Deutschlands Gesundheitsverhältnisse unter dem Einfluss des Weltkrieges* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlagsanstalt, 1928).

wife who after all slipped her tiny portion to the children and with it put her own health at risk. We ate 5 or 6 hundredweight of turnips in that terrible winter. In the morning turnip soup, at lunch turnip cutlets, and turnip cake in the evening. And in spite of everything we were still better off than hundreds of thousands of others, especially in the border regions.²⁶

Even Princess Evelyn Blücher noted in her diary that “[w]e are all gaunt and bony now, and have dark shadows round our eyes, and our thoughts are chiefly taken up with wondering what our next meal will be...”²⁷ Reichstag Delegate Philipp Scheidemann (and future Chancellor during the Weimar Republic) complained that it took nearly five hours of scouring the streets of Berlin to get his family’s fifteen pounds of potato rations. “Who would have thought that such a thing could ever happen...that I, who am buried in work, should be forced to spend my time begging for a few pounds of potatoes along with women and children.”²⁸ After dinner with a very affluent family in February 1917, Scheidemann wrote in his diary that it had been a long time since he actually “was able to eat until full.”²⁹

The terrible state of food affairs on the home front during the *Kohlrübenwinter* improved little over the course of the war. In an attempt to provide alternative products for missing foodstuffs, eight to ten thousand ersatz products came on to the market during the last two years of the war. “It is impossible to think of an article of food for which there is not a variety of “*Ersatz*” preparations on the market,” remarked the New

²⁶ Erinnerungen von Walter Koch, Chef des Sächsischen Landeslebensmittelamtes, *Kollektives Gedächtnis (LeMo)*, http://www.dhm.de/lemo/forum/kollektives_gedaechtnis/065/index.html (accessed 11 July, 2010).

²⁷ Blücher, p.158.

²⁸ This quote is taken from the diary of Hans Peter Hannsen and is cited in Welch, *Germany, Propaganda, and Total War*, p.126.

²⁹ Philipp Scheidemann, *Der Zusammenbruch* (Bibliolife, 2009), p.22.

York Times correspondent in Germany Cyril Brown.³⁰ Ersatz coffees made of tree bark, jellies of colored gelatin and unidentifiable fruits, butter from yellow-colored straw meal, bread from turnips and potatoes, milk “stretched” with sixty percent water, and over eight hundred varieties of meatless sausage made with everything from pickled shellfish to cereal mixes appeared in markets. Germans found many of these products to be revolting, but had few options. Ersatz marmalade that hit store shelves in Freiburg in April 1917, for example, “smelled of boot polish and tasted of wood shavings.”³¹ The consumption of so many adulterated foods not only had considerable psychological effects on the population but physiological ones as well. Bedridden with what she called an “Ersatz illness” from chemicals in the food, Princess Blücher observed that “I don’t think Germany will ever be starved out, but she will be poisoned out first with these substitutes.”³²

The question of whether or not German civilians actually died of starvation during the Great War has been a contentious one among scholars, even when the moral dimensions of total war (civilian as target) are removed from the debate. Using starvation as a weapon against Germans was certainly a main objective for the British. According to First Lord of the Admiralty Winston Churchill, its purpose was to treat “the whole of Germany as a beleaguered fortress...to starve the whole population—men, women, and children, old and young, wounded and sound—into submission.”³³ But

³⁰ Cyril Brown, *Germany as It is Today* (New York: Gordon H. Duran, 1918), p.101.

³¹ Chickering, *The Great War and Urban Life in Germany*, p.267.

³² Blücher, *An English Wife in Berlin*, p.122.

³³ Winston Churchill, *The World Crisis 1911-1918* (New York: Free Press, 2005), p.686. Originally published in 1931 by Charles Scribner’s Sons.

gauging the effectiveness of the blockade *ex post facto* has been difficult. Post-war figures produced by German authorities set starvation-related deaths as high as 800,000.³⁴ While more recent studies suggest that these figures are highly exaggerated,³⁵ others still readily accept these early calculations.³⁶ Whatever the number of actual deaths, scholars now routinely attribute these figures not simply to the blockade, but to a multiplicity of factors, above all the Wilhelmine government's inability to establish an efficient command food economy.³⁷ What is even clearer is that statistical data on caloric intakes and mortality rates meant nothing to the hundreds of thousands of Germans who lost loved ones, not only on the battlefield, but also on the home front. "It was the contemporary *perception* of the scale of disaster, in combination with the very widespread loss of life and health which was really significant to morale and subsequent reactions."³⁸

³⁴ See for example Friedrich Siegmund-Schulze, "Die Wirkungen der englischen Hungerblockade auf deutschen Kindern", *Vierteljahresheft für Freundschaftsarbeit der Kirchen* (May, 1919). Typically, see Schäffer, *Krieg gegen Frauen und Kinder* and Hans Schadewalt, *Hunger Blockade über Kontinental Europa* (Berlin, 1941).

³⁵ Offer, *The First World War*, pp.45-53. Further see Richard Bessel, *Germany After the First World War* and Niall Ferguson *The Pity of War* (London: Allen Lane, 1998).

³⁶ Davis, *Homes Fires Burning*, p.22, f.n. 70. It should be clear that it was not just German authorities who found evidence of starvation. See the work of the British physiologist Ernest Starling, "The Food Supply of Germany during the War", *Journal of the Royal Statistical Society*, vol. 83 (1920), pp.225-254. See also William Van Der Kloot, "Ernest Starling's Analysis of the Energy Balance of the German People During the Blockade, 1914-1919", *Notes and Records of the Royal Society of London*, vol. 57, no. 2 (May 2003), pp.185-193.

³⁷ Moeller, *German Peasants and Agrarian Politics*. Others suggest that much of blame rests on the shoulders of German scientists who were unable to formulate an effective food policy. See Mikláš Teich, "Science and Food During the Great War: Britain and Germany", in Harmke Kamminga and Andrew Cunningham (eds.), *The Science and Culture of Nutrition, 1840-1940* (Amsterdam: Editions Rodopi, 1995), pp.213-234.

³⁸ Alyson Jackson, "Germany, The Home Front (2): Blockade, Government and Revolution", in Hugh P. Cecil and Peter Liddle (eds.), *Facing Armageddon: The First World War Experienced* (London: Cooper, 1996), p.571. Emphasis in the original.

As misery on the home front reigned supreme, a deluge of Imperial government propaganda insisted that Germans persevere (*durchhalten*) in those times of “patriotic austerity.” But if the situation was dismal in Germany three years on, the collapse of the Russian military after the Bolshevik Revolution in November 1917 hinted at better times to come. It was after all in the first few months of 1918 that the German army had chalked up some of its clearest victories by defeating Russia and Romania. With the signing of the peace treaties of Brest-Litovsk and Bucharest in March 1918 the dreaded “two-front war” had ended. For many in Germany, General Ludendorff’s push on the western front at the beginning of the summer signaled that victory was not far off. Indeed, its chances were never better.

But the tides of war turned quickly and by autumn of 1918 not only had the British, French, and newly arrived American forces repelled the German onslaught, most of which was censored by the German press, but the German Army High Command was urging Kaiser Wilhelm to sue for peace. Within months, major cities like Munich and Berlin were enveloped in a leftist revolution; the Wilhelmine Empire vanished; the majority Social Democratic Party (SPD) brokered the Treaty of Versailles; and Germany embarked on its first experiment with democracy under the shakiest of conditions. After four years of a disastrous, mechanized war over twenty million soldiers and civilians were dead and Europe hemorrhaged from the effects of the “lost generation.” The sense of shock and disbelief that came to consume many *Frontkämpfer* swept across Germany and not without some reason. It also gave rise to the most potent, toxic of myths which significantly aided the rise of the Nazi Party in Germany.

The “Stab-in-the-Back” Legend

The extent which the experience of the Great War had on Hitler would be difficult to overstate. Hitler had been in service with his Bavarian regiment for four long years in France and Belgium. As a dispatch runner, he was awarded two medals for bravery and made it to the rank of corporal.³⁹ In October 1916 during the Battle of the Somme, after two years of fighting, Hitler was wounded and transported to a hospital at Beelitz near Berlin. It was here for the first time that Hitler began to see the slow death of the spirit of 1914. While in hospital, fellow wounded soldiers around him criticized the war effort and spoke of shirking their duties at the front. One soldier even shamelessly admitted to purposefully cutting his hand on barbed wire to land a stint in the hospital.⁴⁰ Absolutely disgusted by what he deemed as cowardice all around him, Hitler went to Berlin as soon as he was able to get around. In the capital, Hitler was struck by what he saw. “Clearly there was dire misery everywhere. The big city was suffering from hunger. Discontent was great,” he noted.⁴¹ After a full recovery Hitler was shipped to Munich to meet up with a replacement battalion. Upon arriving, he remembered that he “could no longer recognize the city. Anger, discontent, cursing, wherever you went!” Unable to watch the everyday spectacles of misery and want, or listen to rumors of strikes and revolution, Hitler reported immediately for duty and was fighting with his unit again by March 1917.

³⁹ The exact nature of Hitler’s wartime service has been recently called into question. See Thomas Weber’s *Hitler’s First War: Adolf Hitler, the Men of the List Regiment, and the First World War* (Oxford University Press, 2010).

⁴⁰ Adolf Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, p.162.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

Hitler served until being wounded again during a mustard gas attack in the battle for Ypres in October 1918. Blinded by the attack, he was treated initially in Flanders and then sent to a hospital in Pasewalk, Pomerania. It was here, Hitler exclaimed, that he witnessed “the greatest villainy of the century.”⁴² Unable to read newspapers the young corporal listened intently to the chitchat around him. He sensed something “repulsive in the air” as rumors of naval strikes, capitulation, and leftist uprisings swirled around. On November 10 the news of Germany’s surrender was announced at the hospital. Upon learning this, Hitler claimed that his gradually improving sight had immediately relapsed to blackness. “I tottered and groped my way back to the dormitory, threw myself on my bunk, and dug my burning head into my blanket and pillow.”⁴³ For Hitler this meant the loss of his beloved German fatherland and the loss of everything he believed in and had fought for. This was the first time that he had wept since the loss of his mother. It was at this exact moment, Hitler later claimed, that “I, for my part, decided to go into politics.”⁴⁴

For Hitler and many like him defeat was not only unacceptable but unbelievable. How could this have happened, when foreign armies had never set foot on German soil? The answer was to be found in a dubious story that gained traction at the war’s end. Unable to accept the fact that the Allied powers were superior militarily, a legend quickly grew in the military High Command as well as conservative circles that the war effort had been sabotaged by internal enemies. The thousands of labor strikes and riots

⁴² Ibid., p.202.

⁴³ Ibid., p.204.

⁴⁴ Ibid., p.206.

that took place during the war as well as the Spartacist Revolution were held up as proof of the unwillingness of civilian population to maintain their patriotic duty by remaining resolute during hard times. But ordinary Germans, so the myth went, could not have undermined the war effort alone. Pulling the strings in positions of power were a host of Social Democrats, Jews, and Bolsheviks that, in coalition with beleaguered civilians, dealt the German military a *Dolchstoß* (literally “dagger stab”) to the back.⁴⁵

Although there were some in Germany, especially on the left, who had clearly disproven the veracity of the claims⁴⁶, the “stab-in-the-back” legend quickly flourished as many of Germany’s most powerful and popular figures repeated it time and again. Even Friedrich Ebert, Social Democrat and Provisional President of the Weimar Republic, propounded the myth in December 1918 when he welcomed returning troops with the words: “*kein Feind hat euch überwunden*” (“no enemy has conquered you”).⁴⁷ While the first known use of the term can be traced back to a speech given by Reichstag delegate Ernst Müller-Meiningen in Munich’s Löwenbräukeller in early

⁴⁵ For an excellent discussion of the “stab-in-the-back” legend, see Friedrich Freiherr von Hiller Gaertringen, “‘Dolchstoß’—Diskussion und ‘Dolchstoßlegende im Wandel von vier Jahrzehnten,” in Waldemar Besson and Friedrich Freiherr von Gaertringen (eds.), *Geschichte und Gegenwartsbewußtsein* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1963), pp.122-160. It has been argued that in the first few years after the war several “stab-in-the-back” legends coexisted only coalescing after 1925. See Boris Barth, *Dolchstoßlegenden und politische Desintegration: Das Trauma der deutschen Niederlage im Ersten Weltkrieg, 1914-1933* (Düsseldorf: Droste, 2003). Useful also is Joachim Petzold, *Die Dolchstoßlegende: Eine Geschichtsfälschung im Dienst des deutschen Imperialismus und Militarismus* (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1963).

⁴⁶ See for example Adolf Koester, *Fort mit der Dolchstoßlegende! Warum wir 1918 nicht weiterkämpfen konnten* (Berlin: Verlag für Politik und Wirtschaft, 1919) and “Was ist Dolchstoß,” *Süddeutsche Monatshefte* (April 1924), no author. For more on this point, see Rainer Sammet “Dolchstoß”: *Deutschland und die Auseinandersetzung mit der Niederlage im Ersten Weltkrieg 1918-1933* (Berlin: Trafo, 2003), pp.176-197.

⁴⁷ Cited in Gerd Krumeich, “Die Dolchstoß-Legende,” in Etienne François and Hagen Schulze (eds.), *Deutsche Erinnerungsorte* (Munich: C.H. Beck, 2003), p.592.

November 1918⁴⁸, it was the “silent dictator” General Erich Ludendorff who had done much to invent the myth and popularize the term. After returning from exile in Sweden in early 1919, he met with British General Neil Malcolm of the Allied Commission while staying at the posh Hotel Adlon in Berlin. During their chat, Ludendorff made the claim that the German army was never defeated, but rather had been treacherously sabotaged at home. Malcolm perplexingly asked “You mean you were stabbed in the back?” The phraseology struck a chord with Ludendorff and thus it became the official line. In November 1919 during court proceedings held to investigate the loss of the war General Paul von Hindenburg reiterated this “stab-in-the-back” account line for line.⁴⁹

Published in newspapers and pamphlets and repeated in speeches and sermons *ad nauseam*, the myth quickly became an accepted fact for many. The *Dolchstoßlegende* resonated strongly with Germans for others reasons as well. On the one hand, the underlying storyline was not only familiar to them but was deeply entrenched in German culture. The fate of the military during the Great War echoes that of the famous dragon-slayer Siegfried in the thirteenth-century Germanic epic *Das Nibelungenlied*. Hindenburg himself was already seeing the connection when he wrote his memoir after the war. He wrote “Just as Siegfried fell to the treacherous spear of terrible Hagen, so did our exhausted front line collapse. They tried in vain to draw new

⁴⁸ Barth, *Dolchstoßlegenden und politische Desintegration*, pp.144-148.

⁴⁹ Hindenburg’s testimony was given on 18 November 1919 and was originally published in the *Stenographischer Bericht über die öffentlichen Verhandlungen des 15. Untersuchungsausschusses der verfassunggebenden Nationalversammlung*. Reprinted in Anton Kaes, et. al. (eds.), *The Weimar Sourcebook* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1994), pp.15-16.

life from the dried-up well spring of the home front."⁵⁰ On the other hand, and this point at first appears contradictory, the stab-in-the-back legend was latched onto by so many Germans during the Weimar Republic because it exonerated them from a position of blame. Throughout the Weimar period conservatives, none more so than the National Socialists, attacked the Left using the stab-in-the-back legend to label them as grave-diggers of the empire. Yes, civilians certainly lost the "spirit of 1914" and their "will to victory" had waned (to use Ludendorff's words), but only because it was stripped from them by liberals, Marxists, and Jews using back-handed tactics and propaganda. These "November criminals", as they were labeled by the Nazis, were the true culprits.⁵¹ In reality, however, the "will to victory" of the home front was crushed by the disastrous material conditions after four years of war. And "of all commodities, food gave rise to the greatest discontent, and emerged as the war economy's weakest link."⁵²

The inability to provide working-class consumers with basic necessities, above all food, was hard lesson learned but one that remained prominent in the mind of Hitler and his ilk after both 1918 and 1933.⁵³ Indeed, it has been suggested that Hitler's nearly obsessive fear over a second "stab-in-the-back" played an important role in the Nazi regime's reticence over instituting economic policies that would decrease the standard

⁵⁰ Cited in Wolfgang Schivelbusch, *The Culture of Defeat: On National Mourning, Trauma, and Recovery*. Translated by Jefferson Chase (New York: Picador, 2003), p.271.

⁵¹ Verhey, *The Spirit of 1914*, pp.220-223.

⁵² Offer, *The First World War*, p.24.

⁵³ Tim Mason, "The Legacy of 1914 for National Socialism," in A.J. Nicholls and Erich Mathias (eds.), *German Democracy and the Triumph of Hitler: Essays in Recent German History* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1971), pp.215-239.

of living of the German working class.⁵⁴ For the purposes of this study, however, it is interesting to note that as the standardized “stab-in-the back” narrative merged with and became a cornerstone of Nazi ideology, along with it formed an influential, if in many respects erroneous, historical account of the food crisis during World War One. Not surprisingly, that other cornerstone of Nazi ideology, anti-Semitism, played a key role. No single person is more representative of this point, nor more connected to Nazi nutritional policy, than Reich Minister of Food and Agriculture R. Walther Darré.

A Darréan Take on WWI

Darré was born in Argentina to German parents in 1895.⁵⁵ His parents had left Germany in 1888 when his father took a managerial position with the import-export wholesaler Engelbert Hardt & Co. In 1904 the young Darré left Argentina at his parents’ behest for schooling in Heidelberg. After studying a year abroad at the elite King’s College School in Wimbledon in 1911, Darré returned to Germany eventually continuing his studies in 1914 at the German Colonial School for Agriculture, Trade, and Business in Witzenhausen near Kassel where for the first time he became interested in agriculture. The Great War cut his studies short as he volunteered for service that same year. After fighting for four years on the Western Front and reaching the rank of lieutenant, Darré, like so many of his generation, found it difficult to re-assimilate in the

⁵⁴ Tim Mason, *Social Policy in the Third Reich: The Working Class and the ‘National Community’*. Translated by John Broadwin (Oxford and New York: Berg, 1993). Originally published in 1977.

⁵⁵ On what follows, see the official biography by Hermann Reischle, *Reichsbauernführer Darré, der Kämpfer um Blut und Boden: Eine Lebensbeschreibung* (Berlin: Zeitgeschichte, 1933); Gustavo Corni, “Richard Walther Darré: The Blood and Soil Ideologue,” in Ronald Smelser and Rainer Zitelmann (eds.), *The Nazi Elite* (New York: New York University Press, 1993), pp.18-27; and more cautiously the apologetic biography of Anna Bramwell, *Blood and Soil: Richard Walther Darré and Hitler’s Green Party* (Bourne End, Buckinghamshire: Kensal Press, 1985).

Weimar Republic. The not-so-small fact that Germany had lost its empire in the war dampened Darré's dreams of becoming a colonial farmer. However, in 1922 the veteran began a program in agricultural studies at the University of Halle with a concentration in animal husbandry and heredity. He received his *Diplom* in 1926 and eventually landed a position as an agricultural expert for the German Embassy in Riga.

During the 1920s Darré was exposed to numerous right-wing, nationalist ideologies which profoundly influenced him, in particular those of the *völkisch* youth organization known as the Artaman League. Under the leadership of the anti-Semitic naturalist Willibald Hentschel, this group sought to combat the slow death of agriculture in Germany at the hands of industrialization and urbanization by promoting a utopian, racist, back-to-the-land movement. The *Artamanen* sought to establish a wide-ranging voluntary labor service that would reconnect the German people to its traditional agrarian past. While it was certainly problematic that the German peasantry was steadily leaving the fields for the factories, their replacement by "Slavic" migrant workers from Poland was especially vexing. As a member of the Artaman League, Darré not only soaked up many of the theories that would come to shape his worldview, but he also made his first contacts with the National Socialist movement and met several future "luminaries", including Heinrich Himmler (Reichsführer SS), Rudolf Höss (Commandant of Auschwitz), and the Nazi youth leader Baldur von Schirach.⁵⁶

⁵⁶ Michael H. Kater, *Die Artamanen: völkische Jugend in der Weimarer Republik* (Munich: R. Oldenbourg, 1971). A photo album from 1936 serves as a visual reminder of these early influences. Darré, Himmler, and Schirach are posing at a Hitler Youth Camp in the Harz Mountains in 1936. See "Reichsbauernführer R.W. Darré zur Erinnerung an das Harzlager 1936" (From Library of Congress), *Third Reich Collection*. <http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/2005678703/> (accessed July 12, 2010).

By the late 1920s Darré began publishing a series of papers and books that laid out his agrarian ideology rooted in a very nineteenth-century romantic understanding of the mystical union between *Blut und Boden* (“blood and soil”).⁵⁷ This line of thinking held that the integrity and vitality of the German people was linked both physically and spiritually to their millennial existence on and relationship to their hallowed land. Going as far back as the ancient Germanic tribes, the peasantry had served as the “backbone” of society by providing the necessities of life: food, labor, and offspring. The deep roots laid by these ancestors were responsible for Germany’s historical greatness. But unlike his nineteenth-century predecessors, the avowed Social Darwinist Darré infused the concept of race into the equation. For Darré the advent of the industrial age threatened not only the very foundations of agrarian life in Germany, but also that of the “Nordic race” as farmers increasingly moved into the cities where they had fewer children, many of whom were racially impure because of miscegenation.⁵⁸ The solution for Darré was to reorient Germany once again around its agrarian roots which would in turn produce a new and invigorated racially pure *Bauerntum* that would serve as the “life source” of a new peasant “aristocracy.” Only then could Germany be restored to its rightful place on top of the hierarchy of nations.⁵⁹ Darré fully believed he could apply his expertise in animal breeding to human beings and renew the racial purity of Germany. Because

⁵⁷ Darré was not the first to use the phrase although he certainly popularized it. Its origins can be traced back to ruralist ideologues in the previous century. Darré probably borrowed the phrase from fellow Artaman member August Georg Kenstler who was the founding editor of the magazine “Blut und Boden” in 1928.

⁵⁸ R. Walther Darré, *Das Bauerntum als Lebensquelle der nordischen Rasse* (Munich: Lehmann, 1929).

⁵⁹ R. Walther Darré, *Neuadel aus Blut und Boden* (Munich: Lehmann, 1930), pp.89-91. For the fullest treatment of his ideology, see Gustavo Corni and Horst Gies, *“Blut und Boden”: Rassenideologie und Agrarpolitik im Staat Hitlers* (Idstein: Schulz-Kirchner, 1994).

positive eugenics would only go so far, he accepted sterilization and even murder as legitimate methods to achieve this.⁶⁰

Although largely theoretical, Darré's publications, above all his books *The Peasantry as Life Source of the Nordic Race* and *New Aristocracy from Blood and Soil* were widely read, generally well-received in a variety of fields, and went through as many as seven editions.⁶¹ This suggests of course that his ideology "fitted perfectly with the ideas of certain German cultural milieu at the beginning of the century."⁶² Hitler had in fact read some of Darré's work and was very much interested in his research. The two met for the first time in 1930 at the home of the architect Paul Schultze-Naumberg in Saaleck. During the meeting Hitler confided to Darré that his treatment of the "Jewish problem" in his work needed more attention. It seems that Darré ably communicated his true convictions to Hitler that day as he was soon appointed to the political department of the NSDAP and charged with increasing the Party's rural electorate. Darré's successful campaign to win over the countryside played an important role in Nazi successes at the polls in 1933 as well as in his own career.⁶³

With the Nazi seizure of power in 1933 Darré moved up the ranks quickly becoming Minister of Food and Agriculture as well as Reich Farm Leader in that same year. He set about immediately trying to place agricultural considerations and his

⁶⁰ Clifford R. Lovin, "Blut und Boden: The Ideological Basis of the Nazi Agricultural Program," *Journal of the History of Ideas*, vol.28, no.2 (1967), p.285.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, pp.280-281.

⁶² Gustavo Corni, *Hitler and the Peasants: Agrarian Policy of the Third Reich, 1930-1939*. Translated by David Kerr (New York: Berg, 1990), p.22.

⁶³ Gesine Gerhard, "Breeding Pigs and People for the Third Reich: Richard Walther Darré's Agrarian Ideology," in Franz-Josef Brüggemeier, *How Green were the Nazis?: Nature, Environment, and Nation in the Third Reich* (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 2005), p.133.

“blood and soil” ideology at the forefront of Nazi policy. On 29 September Darré pushed through his first piece of major legislation designed to achieve his ultimate goal: the protection of farmers from the encroaching capitalist system. The *Erbhofgesetz* (Law of Hereditary Entailment) prevented the sale or division of family farm lands (generally 20-50 acres) and ensured they passed on to a single, usually male, racially pure heir known as an *Erbbauer*. The idea behind undivided inheritance, which had long been present if not particularly popular in Germany, was to create a society of self-sufficient family farms. Farming was a way of life, not a way to get rich, in the romantic ruralist ideology. After its passage though, the *Erbhof* Law was criticized for a variety of reasons. Farmers saw it as too rigid and restrictive and unfair for non-inheriting children. Other suggested that by removing farmers from the laws of the free market that this would clearly cause economic stagnation in the sector. Business people and large-scale farmers did not like the sudden removal of arable land from the market for obvious reasons. Only with heavy-handed maneuvering and Hitler’s personal support did Darré get the bill approved.⁶⁴

Darré however made his greatest impact with the establishment of the *Reichsnährstand* (RNS or Reich Food Estate), an agrarian corporation conceived as an apparatus to fix food prices to protect farmers from the forces of the free market as well set Germany on a path to *Nahrungsfreiheit* or self-sufficiency in foodstuffs. This massive organization with a seventeen million strong membership came to oversee and manage all aspects of food production and distribution in Germany down to smallest village. Because of this control, the RNS became a critical asset in the preparations for

⁶⁴ Corni, *Hitler and the Peasants*, p.145.

war after the announcement of the Four-Year Plan in 1936. Darré understood well many of the mistakes made during World War I concerning foodstuffs and worked tirelessly to ensure it never happened to again.⁶⁵ After a lackluster harvest in 1934, Darré and the RNS set out on a propaganda and educational campaign to increase agricultural output. In the typically militaristic language of the Third Reich, farmers were called to the “front” in an *Erzeugungsschlacht* “battle for production.” 60,000 agricultural experts from the RNS held over 400,000 meetings all across Germany and published millions of leaflets and booklets for advice on to increase yields.⁶⁶ While the RNS may never have brought Germany complete autarky in foodstuffs, domestic production increased by nearly thirty percent in some sectors and at no time did the specter of starvation haunt Germans during the Third Reich as had been the case during the Great War.⁶⁷

For Darré the lessons from 1914-1918 were clear and they were everywhere undergirded by a belief in the “stab-in-the-back” legend. The infamous “Pig Slaughter” of 1915 serves as an ideal example. During the first year of the Great War potato and grain harvests were lower than expected do to a variety of factors, from weather to fertilizer shortages. Reduced quantities of potatoes and grains hit two groups of

⁶⁵ Richard Darré, “Gegen die Aushungerung,” *Der Vierjahresplan*, no. 5 (1940), pp.178-180.

⁶⁶ Corni, *Hitler and the Peasants*, p.159. The “Battle for Production” was modeled after Mussolini’s *battaglia del grano*. For more on the Reich Food Estate, see Hermann Reischle, *Die deutsche Ernährungswirtschaft: Aufgaben, Leistung und Organisation* (Berlin: Junker und Dünnhaupt, 1935) and J.E. Farquharson, *The Plough and the Swastika: The NSDAP and Agriculture in Germany 1928-1945* (London and Beverly Hills: Sage, 1976), pp.71-106.

⁶⁷ Hans von der Decken, *Entwicklung der Selbstversorgung Deutschlands mit landwirtschaftlicher Versorgung* (Berlin: P. Parey, 1938) and Adam Tooze, *The Wages of Destruction: The Making and Breaking of the Nazi Economy* (New York: Viking, 2007), pp.188-195. For a more critical position, see Gustavo Corni and Horst Gies, *Brot, Butter, Kanonen: Die Ernährungswirtschaft in Deutschland unter der Diktatur Hitlers* (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1997).

consumers directly in the stomach, working-class Germans (whose diet consisted mainly of bread and potatoes) and pigs. Shortly after the war began a team of experts was put together by the Imperial government to produce an official study of food production and consumption for wartime planning measures. The Eltzbacher commission, as it became known under the stewardship of Berlin law professor Paul Eltzbacher, published the report in book form after months of research and made several recommendations from their findings.⁶⁸ The haste in putting the report together as well as incomplete data meant that many errors, exaggerations, and oversights were made.⁶⁹ Most glaringly, the belief that Germany could maintain acceptable consumption levels during the war without rationing by importing from Northern Europe now seems ludicrous. Other assessments, if not the actions to be taken, were more on point.

Based on the appraisal of livestock and feedstuff production, the Eltzbacher report concluded that under a blockade Germany could not maintain pre-war herd levels and thus suggested a reduction of livestock numbers, above all in pigs. When an early frost in the winter of 1914 significantly reduced potato yields, the staple of the porcine diet, the Eltzbacher commission's evaluation took on new meaning as pigs became "*Mitfresser*" ("co-eaters"). That is, they were in competition with Germans for a scarce and culturally important commodity. Germany's twenty five million pigs, it was

⁶⁸ Paul Eltzbacher, *Die Deutsche Volksernährung und der Englische Aushungerungsplan* (Braunschweig, 1914). The other members of the commission were Friedrich Aereboe, Karl Ballod, Franz Benschlag, Wilhelm Caspari, Hedwig Heyl, Paul Krusch, Robert Kuczynski, Curt Lehmann, Otto Lemmermann, Carl Oppenheimer, Max Rubner, Kurt von Rümker, Bruno Tacke, Hermann Warmbold, and Nathan Zuntz.

⁶⁹ See report by Alonzo Engelbert Taylor of the US Department of Agriculture, "Prewar Crop Estimates in Germany," *Yearbook of Agriculture, 1919* (Washington DC: Washington Government Printing Press, 1920), pp.61-68.

estimated, ate as many potatoes as 160 million Germans.⁷⁰ Eltzbacher and others championed the slaughter of nine to ten million pigs as a solution to both the shortage of potatoes (and grain) as well as high meat prices. It was argued that the pig was “*unser 9. Gegner* (“our 9th adversary”) in the war and a “*Feind hinter der Front*” (“enemy behind the front”). Angry consumers began to demand a *Schweinemord* (“pig slaughter”). In early 1915 the Delbrück administration pushed the initiative and German farmers were obligated to kill and send to market some nine million pigs. While this reduced numbers greatly, it did not have the desired effects. The massive influx of pork into the market in spring 1915 brought severe shortages later that summer and caused prices to skyrocket. Farmers wanting to increase profits began not only using potatoes but also grain to feed more hogs. Once an artificially low price ceiling was placed on pork in the winter of 1915, shrewd farmers once again held back the hogs from the market. Moreover, the thirty-six percent reduction in the swine herd meant an equal reduction in another much-needed commodity, namely fertilizer, which hurt subsequent harvests. Thus in 1916 Germans consumers were dealing with shortages in all three areas: potatoes, grains, and meat. For historians, the “Pig Slaughter” of 1915 has consequently become the classic example of agriculture misadministration during the Great War. The Darréan, and hence the typical National Socialist view, was much different.

In the aptly titled book *Der Schweinemord* published in 1937, Darré set out to

⁷⁰ In 1913 pig stock numbers hovered just above 25 million. For more on this see August Skalweit and Walter Klaas, *Der Schwein in der Kriegsernährungswirtschaft*. Beiträge zur Kriegswirtschaft, no.20/21 (Berlin: Hobbing, 1917). The figures are derived from Eltzbacher’s claim that “64 million people could eat off of the same potatoes required for 10 million pigs.” Cited in Davis, *Home Fires Burning*, p.66.

explain the true lesson of this event and of the war in general. The Agricultural Minister believed that “[t]he World War has shown us that the stability of a nation can be undermined even more from the nutritional side than through military operations. From this fact the enormous importance of the food industry has become clear with respect to National Socialism.” For Darré it was important to not only shed light on the agricultural and political effects of the so-called “Pig Slaughter,” but most importantly the “personal backgrounds” of its proponents. Historians have overlooked the importance of Darré’s own writings on the subject, especially concerning his ideology.⁷¹ From this point of view it was clear, at least to Darré, that one could not swing a dead cat among its supporters without hitting a “Jew”, a “Bolshevik”, a “socialist”, or some type of “non-Aryan.” The “Pig Slaughter” was thus held up as another example of the authenticity of the “stab-in-the-back” legend. Darré focused on the writings of the host of renowned experts associated with the Eltzbacher Commission and the *Schweinemord*. His anti-Semitism, in particular the belief in an international Jewish conspiracy, is unquestionably manifest. For Darré the fact that these academics and scholars cited one another (as is standard practice) suggested something much more sinister was going on. In fact, he believed, the “Pig Slaughter” was little more than plan hatched to destroy Germany by a group of Jewish propagandists beholden only to the golden calf of the capitalist system.⁷² Such rhetoric certainly makes untenable Anna Bramwell’s claim that Darré was not anti-Semitic.⁷³ One reads sentences in Darré’s book like:

⁷¹ R. Walther Darré, *Der Schweinemord* (Munich: Franz Eher, 1937), p.9.

⁷² *Ibid.*, p.124.

⁷³ Bramwell, *Blood and Soil*. Bramwell’s general assessment is that Darré has been misconstrued in the historical record, particularly because he was at odds with many in the regime, so much so that he was

“So the half-Jew Sering quotes the Jew Zuntz declaring him ‘our first animal physiologist.’ Then the Jew Kuczynski cites again the half-Jews Sering and Mr. Rubner, the same goes for the Jew Eltzbacher [who cites] Rubner, the Jew Zuntz again [citing] Eltzbacher etc... The ball could not be passed more shrewdly.⁷⁴

Chief responsibility for the disastrous “Pig Slaughter”, according to Darré, lay at the feet of Paul Eltzbacher as head of commission.⁷⁵ Born in 1868 to a Jewish family in Cologne, Eltzbacher studied at the Universities of Leipzig, Heidelberg, and Göttingen becoming a lawyer and, after attaining his doctorate in 1899, a Professor of Law at the Handelshochschule in Berlin. He is perhaps best remembered for his writings on anarchism.⁷⁶ Until the end of the war Eltzbacher was a member of the German Nationalist Party but after 1919 was a committed communist and his pamphlet published that same year entitled *Der Bolshevismus und die deutsche Zukunft* (Bolshevism and the Future of Germany) argued that a nationalist-infused style of Bolshevism and a reorientation to the East offered the best opportunities for Germany moving forward. Darré saw Eltzbacher as nothing more than a Jewish “dilettante” who

pushed out as Minister in 1942 and replaced by his adjutant Herbert Backe. For challenges to this, see Horst Gies and Gustavo Corni, “*Blut und Boden*”: *Rassenideologie und Agrarpolitik im Staat Hitlers* (Idstein: Schultz-Kirchner, 1994) and Gerhard, ‘Breeding Pigs and People for the Third Reich.’

⁷⁴ Darré, *Der Schweinemord*, p.21. Those referred to in this quote were well-known experts. Robert R. Kuczynski (1876-1947) was a pioneering demographer and economist and was the founding editor of the *Finanzpolitische Korrespondenz*. In 1933 he fled Nazi Germany and found exile in England where he taught at the London School of Economics. Max Rubner (1854-1932) was a physician and physiologist best known for his research on metabolism and caloric values (the basis of which is still used today). In 1891 he succeeded Robert Koch as Director of the Hygiene Institute in Berlin and in 1913 was co-founder the Kaiser Wilhelm Institute for Labor Physiology. Max Sering (1857-1939) was a professor of agriculture and economics holding posts at the University Bonn, Technical University Berlin, and Humboldt University. He was also a member of the German Agricultural Council. Nathan Zuntz (1847-1920) was a physiologist and professor at the Agricultural College in Berlin. Most of his research was dedicated to the study of metabolic rates during strenuous activity and in high-altitude situations. His work paved the way for the new field of sports medicine.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, p.40.

⁷⁶ Paul Eltzbacher, *Der Anarchismus* (Berlin: J. Guttentag Verlagsbuchshandlung, 1900).

offered up Germany to its enemies during the war. He believed he had found a central contradiction in Eltzbacher's views on the war-time food situation. In contrast to the higher-ups in the German military, Eltzbacher was of the opinion in 1914 that the war would last years and not months. It would follow, suggested Darré, that a massive reduction of the livestock herd would have to be carefully considered as it would obviously endanger the ability of Germany to hold out in the following years. But such time-consuming and painstaking analysis did not occur. The "Jewish Pig-Slaughter propagandists" pushed the measure through prematurely. "Here then lies one piece of the evidence that proves the pig slaughterers, as political representatives of the Jewish International, were on a mission to exterminate Germany from within."⁷⁷ Darré found further "proof" for his conspiracy theories within the Eltzbacher family itself. In an appendix to *Der Schweinemord* Darré's detective work found that J. Ellis Barker, the outspoken British patriot who in a series of publications between 1900 and 1914 appealed for war preparedness in the face of a menacing Germany, was actually Otto Julius Eltzbacher, the younger brother of Paul Eltzbacher.⁷⁸ After working as a journalist in his native Germany, Barker emigrated to Britain in 1900 and quickly disassociated himself with his former homeland. Changing his name to escape anti-German sentiments in Britain during that time, he published several highly critical

⁷⁷ Eltzbacher, *Der Schweinemord*, p.124. "*Hier liegt also eines der Beweismittel, daß die Schweinemörder als politische Vertreter der jüdischen Internationale die Aufgabe hatten, Deutschland von innen heraus zu vernichten.*" It has recently been argued that the cultivation of the myth of an international Jewish conspiracy played an important part in the political rationale behind the Judeocide. See Jeffrey Herf, *The Jewish Enemy: Nazi Propaganda during World War II and the Holocaust* (Cambridge, MA and London: Belknap Press, 2006).

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, pp.142-148.

assessments of Germany's foreign policy, war aims, and colonial ambitions.⁷⁹ In the seventh edition of his *Modern Germany* published in 1919 Barker even placed the blame for the Great War squarely on the shoulders of the Germans. Without seeing the clear contradictions, Darré attempted to discredit Barker by labeling him everything from a communist and Freemason to war agitator and anarchist. But for Darré the connections between the two brothers were unambiguous.

“If Eltzbacher orchestrated the weakening and starvation of Germany by way of the pig slaughter as economic advisor to the government and threw the anarchistic-Bolshevistic balls to his brother, who utilized these against Germany when needed. Then both of them were working for their Fatherland, namely for world Jewry! One of them as Eltzbacher, the other as Ellis Barker.”⁸⁰

What should now be clear is that both the trauma of defeat in WWI and the “stab-in-the-back” legend came to be the lenses through which an entire generation of Germans who lived through the experience viewed and understood the recent past. However, what is more striking, and perhaps proves more than anything else the pervasiveness and tenacity of those memories, is the fact that they were intergenerational. That is, even those too young to remember the war were shaped by defeat, national humiliation, revolution, and material deprivations at it became

⁷⁹ See for example J. Ellis Barker, *Modern Germany: Her Political and Economic Problems, Her Foreign and Domestic Policy, Her Ambitions, and the Causes of Her Successes* (London: Smith, Elder & Co., 1905). This book was greatly expanded in the subsequent half-dozen editions.

⁸⁰ Darré, *Der Schweinemord*, p.148. “Wenn Eltzbacher in Deutschland als Wirtschaftsberater der Regierung die Schwächung und Aushungerung Deutschlands schweinemordmäßig betrieb und seinem Bruder die anarchistisch-bolschewistischen Bälle zuwarf, die dieser nach Bedarf gegen Deutschland auswertete, so arbeiteten sie beide für ihr Vaterland, nämlich für die Weltjudenheit! Der eine als Eltzbacher, der andere als Ellis Barker.” Such conspiracy theories were a mainstay in many party publications. See for example “Wie das deutsche Volk ausgerottet werden soll. Das ist Judas satanische Mordplan”, *NSK*, no. 201 (1941).

entrenched the post-war culture.⁸¹ This age cohort, which the historian Ulrich Herbert has termed the “*Kriegsjugendgeneration*” (born between 1900 and 1910), missed the experience of the front their older siblings had, but nonetheless were radicalized in their youth.⁸² In fact, it was from this *Kriegsjugendgeneration* that the Nazi movement often found its most ruthless followers, many of which outstripped the old guard in their fanaticism. Michael Wildt’s study of some two hundred functionaries in the Reich Security Main Office, which played a critical role in planning and carrying out the Final Solution, found that two-thirds were from this age cohort.⁸³ When the international economic crisis of the late 1920s began to ravage Germany, both the *Frontgeneration* and the *Kriegsjugendgeneration* began to relive terrible memories.

“Not Enough to Live on—too Little to Die on:” Food and the Great Depression

The Great Depression hit Germany harder than any other industrialized nation. The economic recovery enjoyed during the so-called “good years” of the Weimar republic had been funded largely by American investment by way of Dawes Plan credit. When ominous signs of an economic downturn began surfacing in 1928, namely a steady decrease in both prices and production levels in the world economy, these funds dried up as American investors turned inward. Many believed at the time that the root of the problem was “cheap money” or low interest rate loans which had flooded the

⁸¹ Jürgen Reulecke (ed.), *Generationalität und Lebensgeschichte im 20. Jahrhundert* (München: Oldenbourg, 2003).

⁸² Ulrich Herbert, “Drei politische Generationen im 20. Jahrhundert,” in Reulecke, *Generationalität und Lebensgeschichte im 20. Jahrhundert*, pp.97-98.

⁸³ Michael Wildt, *Generation des Unbedingten: Das Führungskorps des Reichssicherheitshauptamtes* (Hamburg: HIS Verlag, 2003). Not only were the perpetrators of the same age, but they also had similar social backgrounds as well. For example, they largely came from socially mobile families and had college degrees. Further see Ulrich Herbert, *Best: Biographische Studie über Radikalismus, Weltanschauung und Vernunft, 1903-1989* (Bonn: J.H.W. Dietz, 1996).

market. In what has since been understood as a serious misstep, America and Britain began raising interest rates and soon after other countries followed suit. As purchasing power dried up everywhere, levels of consumption and production began to slow. After “Black Tuesday” on 29 October 1929, when over sixteen million shares were offloaded in a frenzied selling spree often below value, Wall Street crashed. On that single day American companies lost ten billion dollars. This was double the amount of currency in circulation at the time. Businesses and banks began folding overnight. Worried lenders began recalling many of the short-term loans that made the German recovery possible. The timing could not have been worse. The Weimar economy needed an infusion of large amounts of capital, or in today’s terms, an economic stimulus package. German industrial output had already become stagnant and as loans became more expensive, investment rates fell. Businesses and firms across Germany began austerity measures. By 1932 industrial production fell by forty percent and one in every three Germans was unemployed.⁸⁴

Contemporary accounts of everyday life painted a grim picture, but for many, it was an all too familiar one.⁸⁵ Writing in 1932 the German journalist Heinrich Hauser recounted a common scene as he traveled from Hamburg to Berlin. Along the entire two-hundred mile stretch of highway there was “an almost unbroken chain of homeless” people making their way towards the big city in search of work. Entire families with everything they owned in wheelbarrows and baby strollers looked like a “whole nation on the march.” Potato fields en route were looted by groups of men as the farmers and

⁸⁴ Richard Evans, *The Coming of the Third Reich*, p.235.

⁸⁵ Alf Lüdtkke, “Hunger in der Großen Depression: Hungererfahrungen und Hungerpolitik am Ende der Weimarer Republik,” *Archiv für Sozialgeschichte*, no.27, pp.145-176.

police looked on from afar with little recourse. “What did it remind me of?” asked Hauser. “Of the War, of the worst periods of starvation in 1917 and 1918, but even then people paid for the potatoes...”⁸⁶ After arriving in Berlin Hauser found lodging at a municipal shelter. His bourgeois background left him unprepared for the sights and smells emanating from the masses of gaunt, poverty-stricken, diseased men in the public bath. After the shower, enamel-ware bowls and spoons bearing the words “Property of the City of Berlin” were passed out as men in yellow smocks began ladling out the food. Sitting on crowded benches that reminded Hauser of a “fourth-class railway carriage”, he watched the men.

“The men sit bent over their food like animals who feel that someone is going to take it away from them. They hold their bowl with their left arm part way around it, so that nobody can take it away, and they also protect it with their other elbow and with their head and mouth, while they move the spoon as fast as they can between their mouth and the bowl....” Hauser was again struck by *déjà vu*. He had seen this before. “In a prison that I once helped to guard in the winter of 1919 during the German civil war. There was the same hunger then, the same trembling, anxious expectation of rations.”⁸⁷

Both the rapid descent of the German economy and the duration of the Depression coalesced to make conditions in the country unbearable for many. Unprecedented unemployment rates meant that many Germans did not have money to spend on basic necessities like food, which in turn led to many farm foreclosures and rural job loss, but also that the national, state and local governments lost significant tax

⁸⁶ Originally published as “Die Arbeitslosen,” *Die Tat* 25, no.1 (1933), pp.76-78. Reprinted in Kaes, et. al., *The Weimar Sourcebook*, pp. 84-85.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

revenues.⁸⁸ This meant that not only did unemployment insurance benefits suffer greatly, but so too did the public welfare system which so many people had begrudgingly come to rely on.⁸⁹ Memories of the *Kriegsküchen* (war kitchens) or the peacetime *Volksküchen* (peoples' kitchens) of the early 1920s were particularly bitter as people complained often about prices and the quality of food. For many during the Great Depression very little seemed to have changed with *Massenspeisung* (mass provisioning) since WWI. The communist *Hamburger Volkszeitung* reported in July 1932 on one such meal hall experience. On the menu was a "cabbage soup" containing "two to five old potatoes in a thin gelatinous...fluid" and "pieces of meat small enough for a sparrow, each weighing about ten to thirty grams." The "rice broth" served on the following Tuesday contained "all sorts of unidentifiable items. My wife estimated the entire cost of such a soup at not more than 10 pfennig. But as a welfare client, I must pay 40 pfennig for it."⁹⁰

Scenes of desperation and despair were ever apparent during the latter years of the Weimar Republic. The social and political stability of Germany hung in the balance as both the National Socialist and Communist parties increasingly garnered support.⁹¹

⁸⁸ For more on the causes and effects of unemployment, see Peter D. Stachura (ed.) *Unemployment and the Great Depression in Weimar Germany* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1986) and Richard J. Evans and Dick Geary (eds.), *The German Unemployed: Experiences and Consequences of Mass Unemployment from the Weimar Republic to the Third Reich* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1987).

⁸⁹ David F. Crew, *Germans on Welfare: From Weimar to Hitler* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998).

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, p.170.

⁹¹ On communism in general, see Eric D. Weitz, *Creating Communism in Germany: From Popular Protests to Socialist State* (Princeton University Press, 1996). For a detailed account of the rise of Nazism in Northeim, see William Sheridan Allen, *The Nazi Seizure of Power: The Experience of a Single German 1922-1945* (New York and London: Franklin Watts, 1965). Revised edition 1984.

The United States, with thirty-eight percent of its total foreign investments (four billion dollars) in Germany, had a vested interest in the preservation of free market capitalism there. To get an insider's view of the situation, the American, Pulitzer Prize-winning correspondent for the New York Evening Post H.R. Knickerbocker, traveled to Germany in the winter of 1930. His travel report was soon after published as a book entitled *The German Crisis*.⁹² The book begins in "Germany's Moscow", Berlin, where the German Communist Party had just won some twenty-seven percent of the September Reichstag elections. Knickerbocker takes his reader on journey through the "red" district of Wedding to a restaurant at dinner time named "Zum Ollen Fritz." Although there were forty or so patrons in the restaurant, none could afford anything on the menu, despite the fact that only horsemeat (i.e. cheapest of all) was available. Only an old couple shared even a beer. The customers were hungry and gazed intently at the "fly-specked platter of fried horsemeat and a pair of horsemeat sausages" from their tables, but ordered nothing.⁹³ Out of the dozen restaurants he visited in Berlin's "jobless underworld" with some five hundred patrons "not more than one-tenth had so much as a beer before them."⁹⁴ Heading southward to Berlin's Alexanderplatz Knickerbocker came across a small crowd of people and two policemen helping (a presumably drunk) man to his feet. When a woman in the crowd asked what was the matter with him, one policeman replied; "Hunger!" Knickerbocker noted that "when a Berlin 'Schupo,' surely

⁹² H.R. Knickerbocker, *The German Crisis*. Photographs by James Abbé (New York: Farrar & Rinehart, 1932).

⁹³ *Ibid.*, p.9. See also Lütke, "Hunger in Großen Depression," pp.145-146.

⁹⁴ Knickerbocker, *The German Crisis*, p.17.

no sentimentalist, exclaims “hunger,” it may be taken for granted that he at any rate believes his diagnosis to be correct.”⁹⁵

What was perhaps most surprising to Knickerbocker after speaking directly to many working-class Germans was that his preconceived notions of the German welfare system were proven entirely wrong. He and many Americans had assumed that welfare benefits in Germany were high enough that many preferred them over actual work. Quite to the contrary, he found that an unemployed man with a wife and one child who was on public assistance received 51 marks per month. Using conservative estimates, rent and household necessities ran 32 marks 50 pfennig, leaving 18 marks 50 pfennig for food. According to the Labor Office, one could purchase forty-five pounds of bread, a quintal of potatoes, nine pounds of margarine, fifteen liters of milk, twenty pounds of cabbage, ten herrings, and a mark’s worth of salt and sugar. After weighing it out in his own kitchen, Knickerbocker noted that the daily ration (three meals for a single person) fitted easily on a single dinner plate. His observations led to the following assessment. “It is enough to live on in the sense that it might take ten years to die on it.”⁹⁶

Comparing the standard of living between the German and Russian capitals, Knickerbocker concluded the “Muscovite who does not get enough of the proper kind of food may get more than the Berliner...”⁹⁷ And all told, it was estimated that fifteen million Germans (the unemployed and their families) depended on such assistance.

⁹⁵ Ibid., p.18. “Schupo” is short for *Schutzpolizei* (regular uniformed police).

⁹⁶ Ibid., p.25.

⁹⁷ Ibid., p.24.

Leaving the capital Knickerbocker traveled southward to Saxony where he saw different worlds. In Falkenstein, where “half the population is on the dole,” the one-time communist stronghold of Max Hoelz experienced a religious revival as many turned to God to help them through their tribulations. The local Lutheran pastor appreciated the situation. “The misery of this community is beyond description... I have never seen such an attendance at our services, and I recognize the connection.”⁹⁸ From Falkenstein Knickerbocker traveled to Jena, where the Carl Zeiss glass works was still operational and workers there were lucky to be spared the worst ravages of unemployment. But in Thuringia, the story was entirely different. Traveling southwestward from Saxony to the Thuringian Black Forest, Knickerbocker came upon village after village on the brink of starvation and suffering from ninety percent unemployment rates. “We had thought a strong candidate for the head of the misery list was Falkenstein in “Saxon Siberia” with its 50 percent unemployed and its barracks full of families living half a dozen to a room on a dole that left 6 cents per day apiece for food. But here ...is a group...whose wretched inhabitants make Falkenstein’s poverty-stricken citizens appear almost well-to-do in comparison.”⁹⁹ The area was home to a well-renowned glass blowing industry that relied heavily on export trade. A protective tariff placed on glassware by the British in December 1931 crippled the region.¹⁰⁰ The only prospect that Knickerbocker saw for these villagers was starvation-level hunger.

⁹⁸ Ibid., pp.54-55.

⁹⁹ Ibid., p.72.

¹⁰⁰ See chapter 3 above for a discussion of how the Nazi regime sought to put many of these artisans back to work producing for the Winter Relief campaigns.

The aforementioned snapshots of the everyday realities in Germany during the Depression clearly display the miseries suffered. The economic crisis of the 1920s and 1930s, and long-term unemployment in particular, instigated a host of reactions from the populace. For many men, joblessness brought a sense of shame and embarrassment as their traditional role of “bread winner” disappeared, especially if wives worked.¹⁰¹ Some became apathetic and lost all hope, above all when children were often forced to leave school and take up under-the table jobs to help support their families.¹⁰² Although not inevitable, many more followed other avenues such as those of crime and violence.¹⁰³ Still others searched for answers in political activism as it was becoming increasingly clear that the Social Democrats had few solutions to fix the failing capitalist system. Not only did membership in the KPD triple between 1929 and 1932 under the leadership of Ernst Thälmann, but the chasm between the Social Democrats and the Communists widened as the latter’s hopes for a proletarian revolution drifted further from sight. A significant number of unemployed workers shifted to the left and cast their ballots for the KPD. Of course the violent, roving cliques of young communists in German cities and the radical calls for a “Soviet Germany” terrified many Germans, above all the middle class. Many began to look to the nationalist, anti-Marxist, Nazi Party of Adolf Hitler, whose Brownshirts had for years been in the streets battling

¹⁰¹ Pamela E. Swett, *Neighbors & Enemies: The Culture of Radicalism in Berlin, 1929-1933* (New York and Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p.86.

¹⁰² This sense of apathy created by unemployment was duly noted in the classic study of Marie Jahoda, Paul Felix Lazarsfeld, and Hans Zeisel, *Die Arbeitslosen von Marienthal* (Bonn: Verlag für Demoskopie, 1960). Original 1933.

¹⁰³ Dirk Schumann, *Political Violence in the Weimar Republic 1918-1933* (New York and Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2009).

against the “Red Menace.” In the Reichstag election of July 1932 the fledgling party received 37.4 percent, up over 34 percent from the 1928 election and the most votes they would ever achieve. The KPD received 14.6 percent of the vote in July 1932, 10 percent more than in 1928. In both instances it is clear that the wretchedness and want created by the Great Depression provided both these parties with a mass audience for their radical doctrines. As Knickerbocker said in 1932, “German Fascism might have appeared without German Communism. Neither could have appeared without German poverty.”¹⁰⁴

Of course food was a central theme in the political jockeying and propaganda of this period between the National Socialists and the KPD. The Nazis cast themselves as the best and only option for securing the daily bread of Germans. For example, the labor periodical *Arbeitertum* regularly ran a section entitled “Bolshevism Without its Mask.” Articles often claimed to depict the reality of the Soviet working class. One such article held that workers got only “dried fish heads [to eat] and had to work ten-hour days...7 days a week. There is absolutely no oil or fat. Only gruel and fish heads.”¹⁰⁵ And as we will see in more detail below, the early Nazi Party certainly used food as a political tool to win over the hearts and minds of the people by way of the stomach. During a strike in 1932 over impending wage reductions at the Wippermann plant in Westphalia, to cite just one example, the National Socialist Factory Cell Organization (NSBO, precursor of the German Labor Front) set up a kitchen to feed the strikers and

¹⁰⁴ Knickerbocker, *The German Crisis*, p.9.

¹⁰⁵ “Im sibirischen Urwald,” *Arbeitertum*, no. 6 (May, 1932), pp.12-13.

show their solidarity and support for their cause. From October 3-10, 1932 the NSBO handed out over 1,800 free meals.¹⁰⁶

When Hitler took power in January of the following year the German economy was stagnant and in shambles. Industrial production had fallen below the pre-crisis levels (1928) of the Weimar Republic and the unemployment rate hovered at over thirty three percent. In his first proclamation to the German people in February of 1933 the new Chancellor announced the first of two Four-Year plans to reverse the destruction of “14 years of Marxism.”¹⁰⁷ The plan was to focus on two groups in particular that had been ruined by the “November Parties”, namely hungry German workers and disillusioned farmers. It is not surprising that in this, his first national radio address to the German nation, Hitler chose to hearken back to November 1918 with his very first sentence. It not only runs like a red thread through this speech, but as we have seen in this chapter, for him and those of his generation the traumas and privations after WWI were permanently stitched in their memory and shaped their entire worldview (*Weltanschauung*). For Adolf Hitler, World War One proved to be a defining, life-changing experience. As Ian Kershaw has written:

“The First World War made Hitler possible. Without the experience of war, the humiliation of defeat and the upheaval of revolution the failed artist and social drop-out would not have discovered what to do with his life by entering politics and finding his *métier* as a propagandist and beerhall demagogue. And without the trauma of war, defeat and revolution, without the political radicalization of German society that this trauma brought about,

¹⁰⁶ “N.S.B.O. gibt Essen am alle Streikenden,” *Arbeitertum*, no. 18 (November, 1932), p.13.

¹⁰⁷ Max Domarus, *Hitler: Reden und Proklamationen 1932 bis 1945* (Munich: Süddeutscher Verlag, 1965), vol. 1.1, pp.191-195.

the demagogue would have been without an audience for his hate-filled message.”¹⁰⁸

Once in power, Hitler had to begin making his promises of “bread and work” into realities. If the changes were not rapid and effective, he understood that he risked losing the fragile support he enjoyed. The fight against poverty, he believed, was critical in maintaining his precarious position of power in 1933.

¹⁰⁸ Ian Kershaw, *Hitler 1889-1936: Hubris* (New York and London: W.W. Norton & Company, 1999), p.73.

CHAPTER 3

NO ONE SHALL GO HUNGRY OR FREEZE

This socialism is not content with empty phrases and class theories; it is socialism of the deed, one which envelops the whole nation.

—Joseph Goebbels at the opening of Winter Relief in 1933

The table-top fellowship of the nation lies in stew (Das Eintopfgericht ist die Tischgemeinschaft der Nation)

—Winter Relief motto

For two consecutive years during the coldest months of year Friedel Schumann donned a thick woolen coat, mounted her noble steed affectionately known as “Bubi,” and zigzagged her way across Germany collecting donations for the Nazi social welfare program known as Winter Relief.¹ During the winters of 1936/37 and 1937/38 she was in the saddle for 302 days and rode some eight thousand kilometers through snow, wind, and rain. As she made her way through every Gau in Germany, her arrival was celebrated in small villages and big cities alike. Often greeted by dignitaries and welcomed with parades and gifts, Schumann delighted in the friendliness, compassion, and support of fellow Germans that allowed her to single-handedly collect over 366,000 Reichsmarks during her rides. Her fondest memories were of her receptions in Berlin at the culmination of her four-and-a half month journeys.

Leaving Potsdam in March 1938 she and Bubi made their way through Wannsee, Nikolassee, Zehlendorf, and then in Lichterfelde met up with a musical mounted troop. Proceeding slowly toward the inner city of Berlin, Schumann wound her way along

¹ On what follows, see Friedel Schumann, *8000km im Sattel. Zwei Werberitte durch deutsche Gaue für das Winterhilfswerk* (Berlin: Verlag Sankt Georg, 1938).

Schlossstrasse, Hauptstrasse, to Potsdamer Strasse where a group of sixty five SA men on horseback joined the procession. Music blaring, they clip-clopped along Leipzigerstrasse, Friedrichstrasse, Unter den Linden, and Schlossplatz before finally arriving at city hall where Mayor Julius Lippert, Deputy Gauleiter Artur Görplitzer, NSV Chief Erich Hilgenfeldt, and a whole host of other Party and civil functionaries welcomed her and proceeded to stuff their donations into her over-flowing collection tin. She collected 42,000 RM in total from Berlin during her rides.

Looking back on the whole experience, Schumann, the avid equestrian, noted that it was the “consciousness” of helping her “poor and needy national comrades” that drove her on. “My motto” through it all, she noted, was “everything for the Führer and for Germany!”² This ebullience for the Winter Relief campaign was not uncommon. Often hailed as the world’s greatest poor relief work, no other single institution within the Third Reich brought forth the pride of both the party and even Hitler himself.³ The Nazi Winter Relief Program was the earliest, fullest, and most popular expression of the fledgling party’s brand of socialism. As Hitler remarked in the winter of 1936, “after all, one is not born a socialist; one has to be educated to become one.”⁴ Germans were to become “socialists of the deed” and the realm of social welfare offered the perfect lesson. At the opening ceremony of the Nazi Winter Relief program in October 1933, Hitler exclaimed that the essence of the campaign against cold and hunger lies in the

² Ibid., p.97.

³ Herwart Vorländer, *Die NSV: Darstellung und Dokumentation einer nationalsozialistischen Organisation* (Boppard am Rhein: Harald Boldt, 1988), p.44.

⁴ Adolf Hitler, *Führer-Reden zum Winterhilfswerk 1937-1939* (Berlin: Zentralverlag der NSDAP, 1939), p.7.

creation of a “lively national solidarity of the German people.”⁵ This, of course, was in contrast to the international Marxist solidarity of the proletariat espoused by the Left which the Nazis had been fighting against since the early 1920s. In his appeal for national solidarity, the Chancellor made it clear that he would not forget the millions of unemployed and destitute Germans suffering from consequences not of their own making. *Winterhilfswerk* or Winter Relief (WHW) was established to not only demonstrate the new regime’s interest in the welfare of the German people by providing public assistance (mainly food, clothing, and fuel) during the most inclement months of the year, but also to dissolve the class divisions that threatened to plunge the country into revolution after the Great Depression.

This chapter will explore the ideological underpinnings of National Socialist welfare policies as well as the Winter Relief program in an attempt to gauge both the impetus for and popular reaction to Nazi relief efforts. I argue that social welfare programs like *Winterhilfswerk* positively affected popular opinion, not by wholly winning over the working class, but by staving off collective agitation and showing everyday Germans that the Nazi regime had their interests at heart. The ability to deal satisfactorily with the “politics of the stomach” during the early years of the Nazi Revolution played a key role in their ability hold on to the reins of powers during this tumultuous period. Moreover, this social welfare arm of the Party played a not insignificant role in the swelling of its ranks and in stimulating certain flailing sectors of the German economy. Previous studies of the *Nationalsozialistische Volkswohlfahrt*

⁵ Adolf Hitler, *Führer-Reden zum Winterhilfswerk 1933-1936* (Berlin: Zentralverlag der NSDAP, 1937), p. 4.

(National Socialist People's Welfare Organization or NSV), the social welfare umbrella organization under which the WHW operated, have rightly documented repressive measures which the regime used to extract donations of goods, money and labor from the population, but in so doing the importance of relief efforts and its successes have been overshadowed.⁶ Repression or coy strategies alone cannot fully explain the intoxicating achievements or widespread popular support. As Eckhard Hansen has said, "it is hardly conceivable" that some 17 million members joined the NSV by 1943 "only under pressure or out of tactical considerations."⁷ Part of the problem stems from the influence of popular histories which deemed Winter Relief simply as "one of the scandals of the Nazi regime."⁸ This oversight also stems from still influential, but highly problematic, totalitarian conceptions of the Third Reich.⁹ This line of thinking held that German citizens were simply compelled to cower or cooperate by way of the Nazi

⁶ See for example Florian Tennstedt, "Wohltat und Interesse. Das Winterhilfswerk des Deutschen Volkes: Die Weimarer Vorgeschichte und ihre Instrumentalisierung durch das NS-Regime," *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* 17 (1987), pp. 157-180; and Peter Zolling, *Zwischen Integration und Segregation: Sozialpolitik im 'Dritten Reich' am Beispiel der 'Nationalsozialistischen Volkswohlfahrt' (NSV) in Hamburg* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1986). For other works that discuss the Winter Relief more generally, see the dissertations of T.E.J. de Witt, *The Nazi Party and Social Welfare, 1919-1939* (PhD University of Virginia, 1971) and M.A. Siegel, *The National Socialist People's Welfare Organization 1933-1939: The Political Manipulation of Welfare* (PhD University of Cincinnati, 1976). See also Peter Hammerschmidt, *Die Wohlfahrtsverbände im NS-Staat: Die NSV und die konfessionellen Verbände Caritas und Innere Mission im Gefüge der Wohlfahrtspflege des Nationalsozialismus* (Opladen: Leske+Budrich, 1999). None of these works examine Winter Relief as part of a larger National Socialist food policy though.

⁷ Eckhard Hansen, *Wohlfahrtspolitik im NS-Staat. Motivationen, Konflikte, und Machtstrukturen im 'Sozialismus der Tat' des dritten Reiches* (Augsburg: Maroverlag, 1991), p.36.

⁸ William L. Shirer, *Berlin Diary: The Journal of a Foreign Correspondent* (Tess Press, 2004), p.395. Originally published in 1941.

⁹ For an excellent historiographical overview, see Ian Kershaw, *The Nazi Dictatorship: Problems and Perspectives* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), pp.23-26, 36-40.

government's use of fear, intimidation, and state-sanctioned terrorism.¹⁰ More recent research suggests that not only was the state far more disorganized than previously believed, but the Nazis also enjoyed a fair amount of popular support, especially in the pre-war years.¹¹

Yet interest in the theory of totalitarianism as an explanatory model has never disappeared and in fact has resurged in the last decade. Michael Burleigh's wide-ranging synthesis, *The Third Reich: A New History*, is but one example. Because he casts Nazism as both a "political religion" and totalitarian, his approach leaves little room for any sustained analysis of society, culture, or the economy. This allows him to quickly discredit the Third Reich's social welfare system. After assessing a WHW propaganda brochure, which attempted to make understandable to everyday Germans the amount of coal re-distributed after four years (over 5.5 million tons) of winter collections by depicting a coal wall standing nine meters high that ran along Germany's border, he suggested rather smugly that "[t]his may have impressed the gullible."¹² In fact, the achievements of the National Socialist Winter Relief campaigns were quite impressive at home and abroad. Ernst Wulff, an NSV functionary, mocked the British war collection efforts for the Red Cross in 1939 because after an entire five months of

¹⁰ The classic works are Hannah Arendt, *Origins of Totalitarianism* (New York: Schocken Books, 1951) as well as Carl Friedrich and Zbigniew Brzezinski, *Totalitarian Dictatorship and Autocracy* (Cambridge Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1956).

¹¹ On this point see Lutz Niethammer (ed.), *Die Jahre weiss man nicht, wo man die heute hinsetzen soll. Faschismuserfahrungen im Ruhrgebiet* (Berlin: Dietz Verlag, 1983), Shelley Baranowski, *Strength Through Joy: Consumerism and Mass Tourism in the Third Reich* (New York and Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004); Peter Fritzsche, *Germans into Nazis* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998); Robert Gellately, *Backing Hitler: Consent and Coercion in Nazi Germany* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001); and Ian Kershaw, *The 'Hitler Myth': Image and Reality in the Third Reich* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987).

¹² Michael Burleigh, *The Third Reich: A New History* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2000) p.225.

campaigning only one million pounds (not quite ten million Reichsmarks) had been collected. “And this”, he continued, “from the motherland of the greatest world empire, in the land of millionaires and global enterprises.”¹³ By comparison, on the Day of National Solidarity in December 1938 and only in a matter of hours, the German Volk collected nearly sixteen million Reichsmarks.¹⁴ Herwart Vorländer, a leading scholar on the NSV, has noted that “nowhere could one have been in a similar manner so intoxicated as with the balance sheets of WHW, which went into the hundreds of millions and finally billions.”¹⁵ Even Lothrop Stoddard, the American journalist and correspondent in Nazi Germany, regarded the winter relief campaigns as “an amazing cross between the Salvation army and Tammany Hall.”¹⁶ Given these conflicting views of Winter Relief in particular and Nazi social welfare in general, it seems a reappraisal is in order.

The Ideological Origins of Nazi Social Welfare

Like everything in the Third Reich, National Socialist ideology redefined the concept of welfare as well as social policy to correspond with its central beliefs. Yet with the social Darwinistic nature of Hitler’s thinking and Nazi ideology, it is not immediately clear why the needy should have been helped. Were not the strong the ones who could pull themselves up by the boot straps? Indeed, even the term “*Wohlfahrt*” (meaning relief or welfare) carried a negative connotation in the 1930s as it was associated with the inefficiency that plagued the liberal “Weimar welfare state.”

¹³ Ernst Wulff, *Das Winterhilfswerk des Deutschen Volkes*. (Berlin: Zentralverlag der NSDAP, 1940, p.8.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Vorländer, *Die NS-Volkswohlfahrt*, p.44.

¹⁶ This quote from Stoddard’s *Into the Darkness* is cited in T.E.J. de Witt, *The Nazi Party and Social Welfare, 1919-1939* (PhD Dissertation: University of Virginia, 1971) p.186.

And if we are to believe Hitler's account of his "struggle for existence" in Vienna in the 1920s, then his experience with public aid left much to be desired as he castigates such "useless welfare sentimentalities" (*Wohlfahrtsduseleien*) in his political testament.¹⁷ Although the NSDAP continued to use the word, most noticeably in the title of its main relief organization NS People's Welfare (*NS-Volkswohlfahrt*), it sought to redefine it wholly and create a clear break with the past. And not just from Weimar. The Christian tradition of glorifying austerity and the giving of alms to the poor were seen as being too individualistic and as a promotion of weakness. Nor did it help the State. Even more problematic for Nazi ideologues was the so-called "liberal" tradition that began after the emancipation of European Jews in the nineteenth century. With the rise of Marxism and communism, so this line of thinking went, the "liberalistic-Jewish worldview" came into "full bloom" whereby the State played an increasingly greater role in welfare to ensure the equality of all people despite perceived racial and biological disparities.¹⁸

The Nazi understanding of welfare differed dramatically. Nazi ideology deemed welfare to be important insofar as it helped with the creation and continuation of a cohesive *Volksgemeinschaft* (national community). The health and well-being of this national community was the ultimate goal, and each and every German was called upon to do his or her part. "Giving is thus not an act of 'generosity' or a fad, rather giving is a social duty."¹⁹ By helping the individual, one was in fact helping the entire

¹⁷ Vorländer, *Die NSV*, p.117.

¹⁸ Josef Franz Zimmerman, *Die NS-Volkswohlfahrt und das Winterhilfswerk des Deutschen Volkes als die vom Hauptamt für Volkswohlfahrt der Reichsleitung der NSDAP betreuten Sozialgemeinschaften des Dritten Reiches* (Dissertation: Julius-Maximilians-Universität Würzburg, 1938), pp.12-13.

¹⁹ BAL NS 5/VI Zeitschriftauschnittsammlung, no. 4691, „Die praktische Aufgaben der NS-Volkswohlfahrt,“ (13.10.1935).

Volksgemeinschaft through sacrifice. This national community was understood in very organic and corporeal terms. Like many social Darwinists, the Nazis understood the body politic to be itself a living organism always in competition, in fact in a struggle for existence. If any part of the *Volksgemeinschaft* was impoverished or sick, then it followed that this diminished the overall health of the nation and would inhibit Germany from achieving its fullest potential. However, it was clear from very beginning that the Nazi State would not give handouts. On the contrary, NSV Director Erich Hilgenfeldt admitted in 1937 that his popular catchphrase “*nicht mitzuleiden, mitzukämpfen sind wir da*” (we’re not here to commiserate with each other, but to fight alongside one another) became the “rationale for our work.”²⁰ Needy Germans would have to rely on sacrifices of the *Volk* to alleviate their suffering, not state-sanctioned humanitarianism. The state thus promoted above all *Selbsthilfe* (“self-help”) and *Vorsorge statt Fürsorge* (“prevention not protection”). Hence the term *Volkswohlfahrt* (People’s Welfare) for the regime’s main welfare institution. Popular Party mottos like *Ein Volk hilft sich selbst* (“a nation helps itself”) or Point 24 of the Party platform *Gemeinnutz geht vor Eigennutz* (“public need before private greed”) reaffirmed this aspect of Nazi welfare. NSV Oberbereichsleiter Ernst Wulff noted that words like “charity” or “alms” were typical in capitalist countries but had been “struck from the vocabulary in today’s Germany.”²¹ Writing in 1937 on the tenets of National Socialist welfare, Hilgenfeldt noted that “through alms man becomes weak, not strong” and that “the most powerful educational

²⁰ Erich Hilgenfeldt, *Ideen der nationalsozialistischen Wohlfahrtspflege* (Munich and Berlin: Zentral Verlag der NSDAP, 1937), p.15.

²¹ Ernst Wulff, *Das Winterhilfswerk des Deutschen Volkes*, p.7-8.

device is sacrifice.”²² Although Nazi ideologues certainly pared out much of the “caritas” from its conception of welfare, the Christian notion of “sacrifice” remained central.²³

Once in power, it would certainly have been possible for the authoritarian dictatorship to raise taxes to help alleviate the suffering of Germany’s needy, but in their view this would have been a lesson lost. Hitler addressed this issue pointedly in Berlin’s Deutschlandhalle in October 1937. “Certainly it would much easier and much less burdensome for countless people [if a special tax were implemented]”, but that would miss the point of “what we want to achieve with Winter Relief, the education of the national community.”²⁴ Moreover, such “pedagogy” removed the need to set in place another state-sponsored burden like higher taxes and possibly jeopardize popular support, especially that of the working class. The Nazi leadership knew full well its limitations in gaining the support of Germany’s working class. Hitler in particular was fixated on November 1918 and the so-called *Dolchstoß* (stab-in-the-back) legend. He believed the loss of the Great War was due in large part to Imperial Germany’s failure to gain the total support of the working class.²⁵ Winning over the working class was a crucial element in the success or failure of creating this national German-blooded community and achieving the regime’s expansionist goals.

²² Hilgenfeldt, *Ideen der nationalsozialistischen Wohlfahrtspflege*, pp.9-11.

²³ Richard Steigmann-Gall, *The Holy Reich: Nazi Conceptions of Christianity, 1919-1945* (Cambridge University Press, 2003) pp.124-126.

²⁴ *Deutschland-Berichte der Sozialdemokratischen Partei Deutschlands* (Sopade), (1938) 5, entry dated 5 January 1938, p.78.

²⁵ On this point, see above all Tim Mason, *Social Policy in the Third Reich: The Working Class and the ‘National Community’*. Translated by John Broadwin (Oxford and New York: Berg, 1993).

Because social welfare policies in the Third Reich were inextricably linked to the creation of the *Volksgemeinschaft*, social, racial, and political “undesirables” were eventually barred from receiving relief benefits.²⁶ The exclusion of social outsiders meant that in the 1930s the NSV became one of the more extensive persecutory institutions in Germany. While so-called Aryan blood was one of the decisive factors when it came to receiving NSV assistance, it was by no means a guarantee. As Nazi ideology increasingly crept into the welfare system and it was “coordinated” along Party lines, especially after the passage of the Nuremberg Laws in 1935, enemies of the *Volksgemeinschaft* were excluded. These were namely Jews, “asocials” (alcoholics, beggars, prostitutes, the workshy, and political unreliaables), homosexuals, Gypsies, and the hereditarily ill. NSV block wardens, armed with an intimate knowledge of their neighborhood and its inhabitants, made certain that the *minderwertig* (unworthy) could not exploit the system.

Aside from the ideological origins of the NSV, there were of course practical and political aspects as well. Like many of the political parties vying for power in inter-war Germany, NSDAP began social relief efforts early on as way to maintain current members and woo future prospects. This was not a centralized system of welfare reform emanating from the Brown House in Munich, but as was often the case was launched at the local level by regional leaders to provide assistance for Party members and increasingly to their families. The expansion of relief efforts during the late 1920s and early 1930s helped to swell the ranks of the NSDAP and the SA, especially with

²⁶ While many used theories propagated in the “racial sciences” to legitimize such exclusion, so too were historical arguments used. Contemporaries often claimed that their forefathers in the ancient Germanic clans ruthlessly expelled the weak and sick for the betterment of the whole. See Zimmerman, p.10.

former German Communist Party members (KPD). As a miner and former KPD member recalled about his experience with WHW, “[a]s a communist I demonstrated in the street for bread and coal, I led the fight...against the ruling class. And now my former political opponents have become the first to give me real help.”²⁷ After the seizure of power, this restructuring of the welfare system undoubtedly alleviated some of the financial burdens on the State and freed up billions of Reichsmarks for other purposes, even rearmament.

The Nazis wished to further extend their influence by setting up kindergartens, maternity homes, school lunch programs for children, and daycare centers, but having to rely on donations and party dues severely limited their ability to compete with initiatives from the church, as well as state and private sectors. As such, most of the aid was directed towards party members, especially the SA, as its ranks swelled to nearly a quarter million by 1932, many of whom were unemployed. In response, a wave of soup kitchens (*NS-Notküchen*) and hostels (*SA-Heime*) were opened across Germany.²⁸ These were funded largely by collection campaigns. Female members of Nazi organizations, such as the *Braune Schwestern* and *NS-Frauenschaft*, played a fundamental role in this charitable work as nurses, cooks, educators, and caretakers. Other relief efforts took various forms. The *Hilfskasse* (later renamed *Hilfskasse der NSDAP SA-Versicherung*), an insurance program, was one of the earliest and most popular. For around thirty cents per month it insured policy holders against accidents

²⁷ BAL NS 5/VI Zeitschriftauschnittsammlung, no. 4725 „Zwei Arbeiter über das Winterhilfswerk“ (1934).

²⁸ Richard Bessel, *Political Violence and the Rise of Nazism: The Storm Troopers in Eastern Germany 1925-1934* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 1983) pp.49-53. It is not surprising that Peter Hagen’s fictional *Die Strasse zu Hitler. Eine SA-Erzählung* (Berlin: Nationaler Freiheitsverlag, 1933) begins with a chapter entitled “Hunger” as misery and suffering were all too common.

and deaths resulting from party service. It also protected private property such as musical instruments that might be damaged at party rallies or meetings.²⁹ Not surprisingly, the number of claims from September 1930 to 1932, the zenith of the *Kampfzeit*, multiplied seven-fold and required cutbacks on high-risk individuals such as motorcyclists. Claims not directly linked to skirmishes with political opponents were rejected, but a life insurance policy (*Sterbekasse*) was introduced which guaranteed beneficiaries a lump sum of three or six hundred marks depending on their premium.³⁰ Whereas early relief efforts for the fledgling Party were limited for fiscal reasons³¹, this would certainly change after the *Machtergreifung*.

National Socialist People's Welfare

It was not until 18 April 1932 that the *NS-Volkswohlfahrt* (NSV) officially became the “social arm” of the Nazi party, but even then it was a small welfare agency that most people had never heard of and was run by a handful of men and women with little experience. Erich Humbert and Hermann Kluge, officials in Berlin-Wilhelmsdorf, had started it as an emergency aid group to help party members hurt by the Great Depression only a year earlier.³² The NSV grew gradually and only strengthened significantly when Gauleiter Joseph Goebbels placed it under his office's administration

²⁹ de Witt, *The Nazi Party and Social Welfare*, p.68.

³⁰ For more on financial and welfare assistance to the SA, see Conan Fischer, *Stormtroopers: A Social, Economic and Ideological Analysis, 1929-35* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1983), pp.110-142.

³¹ Attempts to generate sources of revenue by the SA often made for abrasive relations with the Nazi Party. For example, in 1932 the SA set up its Kameradschaft Zigaretten-Speditionsgemeinschaft in Gera. It sold four brands of cigarettes (Kommando, Neue Aera, Spielmann, and Staffel) produced by the “pure German” factory of Paul Rothe. See files in BAL NS 23-474. On this see also Thomas Grant, *Stormtroopers and Crisis in the Nazi Movement: Activism, Ideology and Dissolution* (London and New York: Routledge, 2004) pp. 99-128.

³² de Witt, *The Nazi Party and Social Welfare*, p.139-141.

for social affairs. But it still concentrated its efforts in Berlin. With Hitler's chancellorship in January 1933, the NSDAP sought greater control of this agency and Erich Hilgenfeldt, an "old fighter" and veteran, was appointed as its new chairman.

Hilgenfeldt was born on 2 July 1897 as Georg Paul Erich Hilgenfeldt in the Saarland. He volunteered for service during the Great War and was assigned to the Eastern Front where he earned both the rank of lieutenant and the Iron Cross (First and Second Class). After the war, the disenfranchised Hilgenfeldt began associating with right wing groups such as the *Nationalverband deutscher Offiziere* (National Association of German Officers) and later joined the *Stahlhelm* (Steel Helmets) and the SA. In 1927 he took a job as a statistician in the Statistics Office in Berlin where he first came in contact with members of the NSDAP. He joined the Nazi Party in August of 1929 and SS in November of 1937.³³

Hilgenfeldt's first order of business as head of the NSV was to hold a general meeting to streamline the organization and amend the constitution. By doing so, he solidified his position at the top and ensured he had the final say in all matters concerning the policies of the NSV and its organization. However, it was not until 20 April 1933 (Hitler's birthday) that the NSV first grabbed public attention by handing out donations of food and clothing to the needy on a massive scale. An estimated 575,000 people received some form of aid regardless of "racial" makeup or political leaning. Hitler believed the work of the NSV so important that he donated his annual salary of

³³ Hansen, p.389. The author has produced an excellent and very handy, although by no means comprehensive, biographical appendix on members of the Gau leadership offices of the NSV and Local Affairs (Kommunalpolitik), pp.375-459.

45,000 Reichsmarks as chancellor to it.³⁴ These funds were in turn used to start up the *Kinderlandverschickung* program which gave sick and hungry children a chance to leave Berlin for a relaxing holiday in the country. These early successes of the NSV were vital for Hilgenfeldt's career. In May of 1933 Hitler made an official announcement that "the NSV is hereby recognized as a party organization for the Reich. It is responsible for all questions of national welfare and relief and has a headquarters in Berlin."³⁵

Like the German Labor Front (DAF) or the National Socialist Teacher's League, the NSV was an affiliated party organization (*angeschlossener Verband*) that had legal independence but remained under the administrative control of the *Hauptamt für Volkswohlfahrt* (People's Welfare Main Office). The *Hauptamt* was created in 1934 and was directly subordinate to NSDAP *Reichorganisationsleiter* Robert Ley. Hilgenfeldt was also named *Hauptamtsleiter*. The *Hauptamt* was divided horizontally into five autonomous offices.³⁶ The Organization Office oversaw the creation of various NSV offices throughout the Reich as well as helped out with the creation and implementation of winter relief (WHW). The Finance Office processed and managed monies coming into the NSV and WHW *separately*, but both were supervised by the Reich Treasurer.

³⁴ Hitler had criticized Papen for taking his Chancellorship salary despite being a millionaire. On this see, Ian Kershaw, *Hitler, 1889-1936: Hubris* (New York: Norton, 2000), pp. 388-389. Hitler was of course a multi-millionaire as well from the royalties he received from *Mein Kampf*, publications of his speeches, and for the use of his likeness on postage stamps. See Richard J. Evans, *the Third Reich in Power* (New York: Penguin, 2005), p.402.

³⁵ Helmut Störmer, *Das rechtliche Verhältnis der NS-Volkswohlfahrt und des Winterhilfswerkes zu den Betreuten im Vergleiche zur öffentlichen Wohlfahrtspflege* (Berlin: Zentralverlag der NSDAP, 1940), p.30; and Hermann Althaus, *Nationalsozialistische Volkswohlfahrt: Wesen, Aufgaben, und Aufbau* (Berlin: Junker und Dünnhaupt Verlag, 1935), p.40.

³⁶ Der Reichsorganisationsleiter der NSDAP (ed.), *Organisationsbuch der NSDAP* (Munich: Zentralverlag der NSDAP, 1938), p.275.

The Office of Health dealt with all questions concerning social security and health care for both party members and the general public. It also played a major role in the tuberculosis campaigns. The Office of Propaganda and Education was responsible for the development of propaganda materials and supplying it to various presses. It also schooled lower level volunteers in the “ideological foundation” (*weltanschauliche Grundlage*) of the NSV.³⁷ Lastly, the Office of Welfare and Childcare oversaw all social welfare issues in Germany. It even dealt directly with the blind, the deaf, alcoholics, and itinerants at the party and state levels as well as initiating and managing such programs as the Nurse’s League and Youth Relief.

From the horizontal organization of the *Hauptamt* stemmed the vertical organization of the *NS-Volkswohlfahrt* which mirrored that of the Nazi party. Therefore it was divided into regions (*Gaue*), districts (*Kreise*), villages/towns (*Ortsgruppen*), cells (*Zellen*), and neighborhoods or blocks. Each of the divisions had their own *Amtsleiter* or office leader. Thus, an order following the chain of command would come from the *Reichsleiter* of the *Hauptamt* (Hilgenfeldt), to the Gauleiters, then to the *Kreisleiter* until it reached the lowly *Blockwarter* (block warden) at the bottom. By June of 1939, Greater Germany, the *Ostmark*, and the Sudetenland consisted of 48 *Gaue*, 961 *Kreise*, 31,716 *Ortsgruppen*, 122,818 cells, and 627,775 blocks.³⁸ By 1943, the NSV had some seventeen million members making it the second largest mass organization in the Third Reich behind the German Labor Front (DAF). But why did so many join? There are numerous reasons for such numbers. Nazi party members were of course “expected” to

³⁷ Ibid. p.277.

³⁸ Wulff, *Das Winterhilfswerk des deutschen Volkes*, p.22.

their duty and join the NSV. Sometimes, entire businesses enrolled and employees had dues taken from their wages with little say in the matter. Others joined to work their way up the political and social ladder. Undoubtedly, a significant proportion fell to the relentless pressure and tactics of block officials who visited homes during the frequent membership campaigns. Lastly, although some Germans did not necessarily agree with Nazi ideology, they could still join the NSV out of moral or religious obligations, particularly because its relief efforts involved in so many areas.

The responsibilities of the NSV were wide-ranging as it endeavored to supplement, not replace, public welfare. There were well over a dozen NSV programs that, generally speaking, were charged with maintaining the health of the national community. Thus the various NSV sections dealt with everything from tuberculosis care and alcoholism to assisting parolees and transients. However, at the heart of the NSV's mission was the protection and promotion of family, above all mothers and children. By 1943 roughly two thirds of NSV expenditures were going to a single program, namely *Hilfswerk 'Mutter und Kind'* (Mother and Child Relief).³⁹ The establishment of *Hilfswerk 'Mutter und Kind'* was announced by Goebbels in April 1934 as yet another example of "socialism of the deed." But it was clear from the outset that this new NSV venture would not only focus on family welfare, but also help to coordinate Nazi population policies. Goebbels did not mince words when he exclaimed that with this "grand and essential program" it is clear that the "German mother and her *hereditarily healthy* child

³⁹ BAL NS 5VI 4724 "Die fünfte Milliarde Reichsmark weit überschritten" *Völkischer Beobachter* no. 275, (02.10.1942).

stands at the forefront of our interests.” “Mother and child are the pledge for an immortal people.”⁴⁰

The work of the *Hilfswerk 'Mutter und Kind'* focused on caring for pregnant women, mothers, and small children. Because education was seen as highly important to increasing the birth rate, especially by reducing miscarriages and infant mortality, a series of consultation offices (*Hilfstellen Mutter und Kind*) were opened up all over the Reich. By October 1943 there were over 30,000 such offices offering up advice to women on everything from proper nutrition to medical and child care. No less than 36 million women got help from these offices between 1934 and 1942.⁴¹ New mothers who applied for and were granted assistance could receive milk or clothing for babies, strollers or bassinets, groceries for the household, or bed linens. So-called *kinderreich* families could get household helpers, usually a young girl in training from the League of German Maidens (BDM), to ease everyday burdens of cooking, cleaning, and taking care of children. *Hilfswerk 'Mutter und Kind'* also established *Erholungsheime* (convalescent homes) for mothers deemed by doctors physically or emotionally exhausted after giving birth. By 1941 some 545,000 women (and 43,000 infants) found respite there and were thankful.⁴² One woman likened her experience to living in a fairy tale, so much so that during leisurely strolls through the forest she expected “the seven dwarves and Snow White” to appear at any time. Another woman noted “I felt so

⁴⁰ BAL NS 37/1033 Rundschreiben an alle Gauleitern, *Hilfswerk 'Mutter und Kind,'* (04.04.1934). My emphasis.

⁴¹ Report compiled by exiled SPD member Fritz Heine in 1944. Published by the Arbeiterwohlfahrt Bundesverband (ed.) *Die Nationalsozialistische Volkswohlfahrt* (Bonn: Widi Druck, 1988) p.12. Other sources place the figure at 41 million. Cf. BAL NS 5 VI 4703 “Taten in Zahlen” N.S.K. no. 20, (24.1.1943).

⁴² *Ibid.* See also Lisa Pine, *Nazi Family Policy, 1933-1945* (Oxford and New York: Berg, 1997), pp.24-29.

unspeakably happy there, and can say, that up to now those were the best days of my life. When I contemplate whom I have to thank for all this, then I must say a triple 'Sieg Heil' to 'our Führer Adolf Hitler.'"⁴³

For single mothers and women who held jobs outside of the home, access to quality child care was extremely important, especially as war loomed in the late 1930s. Already in 1934 the *Hilfswerk 'Mutter und Kind'* began to establish childcare facilities for working mothers. There were nurseries for 1-2 year olds, all-day kindergartens for children aged 2-6, and in rural areas *Erntekindergärten* (harvest kindergartens) so that rural housewives could help in the fields during the busiest times of the agricultural calendar. While under the care of the welfare workers and nurses, children received healthy doses of Nazi ideology and were taught about the benefits of exercise, cleanliness, and proper nutrition. Because of the importance attached to a proper diet, a nutritious breakfast and lunch was provided by most of the kindergartens at reduced prices. "In addition to carbohydrates, protein, and fat, a well-prepared lunch must above all have high vitamin content from fruits and vegetables as well as minerals for building up the body."⁴⁴ Especially frail children were administered calcium, vitamin tablets, or cod-liver oil in NSV institutions on doctor's orders. Although figures are incomplete, by 1943 there were at least 30,899 NSV child care facilities with room for 1,500,000 children.⁴⁵

⁴³ For these and other letters from mothers, see BAL NS 37/1035 Bericht über das Hilfswerk 'Mutter und Kind' vom 1.4.1934-31.12.1934.

⁴⁴ BAL NS 37/1030 Reichnährstand, "Speisung in Erntekindergärten," (07.04.1939).

⁴⁵ Arbeiterwohlfahrt Bundesverband, *Die Nationalsozialistische Volkswohlfahrt*, p.14.

After January 1933, the new government faced not only a depressed economy and sky-rocketing unemployment, but nearly seventeen million destitute Germans. As Richard Evans has recently noted, overlooking this group would have amounted to nothing less than “political suicide.”⁴⁶ The NSV was at the forefront of relief efforts from the beginning by providing basic necessities such as clothing, fuel for heat, and above all food. Accordingly, NSV kitchens expanded across Germany giving the poorest national comrades a warm, filling lunch. Because of the difficulty finding locations with suitable space and accommodations, NSV kitchens popped up in various places. In Berlin for example, they could be found in train stations, school and factory cafeterias, apartment buildings, and even a former break room in the Berliner Kindl Brewery. The fledgling NSV relied very heavily on donations from kitchenware and appliance stores to outfit kitchens as well as the volunteerism of skilled workers and unemployed storm troopers for set up. Staffed by women from the *NS-Frauenschaft* (National Socialist Women’s League) as well as good-willed housewives, the kitchens were run initially by Party volunteers, most of whom had no vocational training in either culinary arts or catering management.⁴⁷

NSV kitchens were not, however, established willy-nilly wherever suitable accommodations could be found. The Nazis sought to place them where they would be most effective, both in practical and political terms. In the capital, for example, eight NSV kitchens were set up in the summer of 1933 in areas without public soups kitchens and in historically working class (and Left leaning) boroughs like Wedding. By 1937

⁴⁶ Richard J. Evans, *The Third Reich in Power*, p.484.

⁴⁷ As questions of cost effectiveness and nutritional requirements arose, this changed very quickly. For more on culinary arts training, see chapter 3.

there were 115 such kitchens in Greater Berlin. For twenty-five cents patrons of the “national kitchen” received a one-liter portion of the daily offering, usually a stew. Discounted or free lunches were given to those registered with Winter Relief and in possession of a meal voucher. Within the first year, NSV kitchens were doling out 40,000 portions a day to appreciative Berliners and the Nazi propaganda machine never missed the opportunity to pat its own back. “[T]here is no longer a single person in Germany who has not taken a seat at the great table of the German nation.”⁴⁸ During the month of January patrons cast their eyes upon the following menu in NSV kitchens:

Sunday: Meatballs with red cabbage and potatoes;

Monday: Rice pudding with cinnamon and sugar;

Tuesday: Fresh blood sausage, sauerkraut and boiled potatoes;

Wednesday: Sweet and sour lentils with bacon;

Thursday: Carrots with pork;

Friday: Fried fish with mustard sauce, boiled potatoes;

Saturday: Savoy cabbage and beef.⁴⁹

As a way of separating themselves from the dreaded soup kitchens of the Kaiserreich and as well as attempting to make good on the promise of destroying class divisions, NSV officials early on pressed for the use of superior and wholesome ingredients in its *Volksküchen*, even at a time when certain commodities were in short supply. After kitchen inspections in Saxony were concluded in March 1935, a NSV

⁴⁸ *Sozialisten der Tat. Das Buch der unbekanntenen Kämpfer der NSV Gau Gross-Berlin, Winterhilfswerk 1933-1934*, p.74.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p.70.

report communicated the need for higher standards and as such banned the use of margarine in its kitchens. Mandatory signs hung in the dining halls to let patrons know that “NSV kitchens do not use margarine in food preparation, but rather only butter and stearin-free beef suet, as well as other pure fats.”⁵⁰

Throughout the 1930s the need for NSV-kitchens remained and as the number grew, so too did food and production costs. To curb this trend in Berlin, the NSV began in early 1939 moving forward on plan to build a large-scale kitchen in the Hohenschönhausen section of Berlin. The parcel of land on which this facility was to be built was owned by Richard Heike, a Jewish factory owner. Heike had bought the land in 1910 and went into business making machinery for the meat processing industry. Because he had about 250 employees, Heike’s factory was the largest in the area. In October 1938 Heike’s property was “aryanized” by the *Gauleitung* of Berlin and soon after the well-known architect Hermann Bartels began work on the project.⁵¹

This massive “*Essfabrik*”, boasting roughly 100,000 square feet in three stories, could crank out some 30,000 lunches per shift. The modern facility utilized the latest technology to produce such quantities. The basement of the main building contained the coolers, a slaughterhouse, and a potato storage facility with a four-week capacity. The huge quantities of potatoes used daily, as much as 5,000 kilos, were transported

⁵⁰ BAL NS 37/1062 “Inspektions-Bericht über die NSV-Küchen im Gau Sachsen” (1935). For more on the links between margarine and health issues, see Robert Proctor, *The Nazi War on Cancer* (Princeton University Press, 2000), pp.165-169.

⁵¹ Peter Klaus and Hubertus Knabe, *Der verbotene Stadtteil* (Berlin:Jaron Verlag, 2005), pp.22-26. After the war, the NSV kitchen was used by the Soviet NKVD (*Speziallager Nr 3*).and later the East German Stasi as a prison to incarcerate and interrogate „enemy elements.“ Between 1951-1989 some 20,000 Germans were imprisoned there of whom 3,000 died. The prison was top-secret and this area outside of Berlin did not even appear on maps until the early 1990s.

from the basement via a conveyer belt to an automated scale and portioned out. A hoist would then take the batches to up to the top floor to the five washing- and ten peeling-machines. Another conveyer belt sent the clean, peeled potatoes to another room where forty women proofed them and with the help of small cranes, lifted the batches into the twenty (800 liter) cooking pots. The meat and fish rooms were similarly outfitted but with massive ovens, grills, and fryers. Completed meals were then placed in huge insulated containers, loaded on trucks, and then delivered to individual WHW *Essenausgabestellen* (food distribution centers).⁵²

While NSV kitchens got off to good start in the first two years of the Third Reich, their continued efforts and growth owe everything to the best known and successful of the NSV social welfare programs, namely *das Winterhilfswerk des deutschen Volkes*. A considerable amount of NSV expenditures, including money and food for its kitchens, came from collection campaigns of the Winter Relief program. An even larger proportion of NSV offices and personnel busied themselves with WHW activities.

Winter Relief

Winterhilfswerk, or Winter Relief, was an annual fundraising drive wherein donations of money, food, fuel, and clothing were solicited and redistributed in the fight against poverty during the coldest months of the year. Despite the best efforts of the NSDAP and Hitler to claim Winter Relief as a product of their own invention in 1933, an untruth publicized by the *Führer* every October as he inaugurated the opening of WHW with successively longer speeches, its origins go back to Brüning's Weimar Republic.

⁵² BAL NS 5 VI 4722, "Grossküche für das Berliner WHW" *Völkischer Beobachter* no. 200 (17.8.1939).

Indeed, almost all National Socialist welfare programs were carry-overs.⁵³ Although *Winterhilfswerk* was organized and put into operation by the NSV, the Nazis sought to ensure that it was not mistaken for this or another voluntary or state agency. They actively publicized it as stemming “alone from the socialist ideas of the Party.”⁵⁴ Legally speaking, however the WHW was not a party organization, but rather an organization of the State.⁵⁵ This was the result of a law passed on 1 December 1936 that placed the WHW ultimately under the leadership and supervision of the Goebbels and the Reich Ministry for Propaganda and Enlightenment.⁵⁶ To be sure, this is only technically speaking as there was a nearly inseparable relationship between the party and state. This is perhaps best exemplified by the fact that NSV leader Erich Hilgenfeldt was named as Reich Commissioner (*Beauftragter*) of the *Winterhilfswerk* and many other NSV officials simply took on new WHW titles. To physically separate the NSV and the WHW though, an official headquarters was set up in an unburned portion of the Reichstag building. Nonetheless, by placing the WHW under the purview of Propaganda Ministry in lieu of the Interior Ministry, the NSDAP demonstrated its importance to them and ensured the Party received credit for successes.⁵⁷

⁵³ For an overview of social welfare in Germany see the three volume work by Christian Sachse and Florian Tennstedt, *Geschichte der Armenfürsorge in Deutschland* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1988). On this point, see in particular volume 3, *Der Wohlfahrtsstaat im Nationalsozialismus*, p.121. For more on the Weimar period, see Young-Sun Hong, *Welfare, Modernity, and the Weimar State, 1919-1933* (Princeton University Press, 1998).

⁵⁴ Störmer, *Das Rechtliche Verhältnis der NS-Volkswohlfahrt und des Winterhilfswerkes*, p.53.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ The law was published in whole in Wulff, *Das Winterhilfswerk*, pp.15-16.

⁵⁷ Sachsse und Tennstedt, *Das Wohlfahrtsstaat im Nationalsozialismus*, pp.121-122.

A constitution for *Winterhilfswerk* was drawn up and signed by Goebbels in March 1937 which outlined its organizational structure (not surprisingly almost identical to that of the NSV). Although the law and constitution mentioned above made the WHW a legal entity after four years of Nazi rule, it had been actively pursuing “socialism of the deed” (*Sozialismus der Tat*) since 1933. This first Winter Relief campaign, which was opened jointly in September by Hitler and Goebbels under the motto “No one shall go hungry or freeze,” was extremely successful and brought in just over 350 million *Reichsmarks*. This surpassed Goebbels’ goal of out-collecting the last Weimar campaign by three hundred percent. Its achievements allowed the Nazis to begin winning over popular support by helping out Germans who had been pressed by “the lost war, the democratic parties and Jewish power, the inflation..., [and] the disappearance of the authority of the state.”⁵⁸ Not only had Nazi Winter Relief outdone campaigns of the *Systemzeit* (a favorite Nazi epithet for the Weimar Republic), but it had also dwarfed collection campaigns of the Kaiserreich like that held for Graf Zeppelin in 1908.

How and why was *Winterhilfswerk* so successful? Firstly, it maneuvered early on to lessen competition as Hilgenfeldt and the NSV negotiated deals with the religious charities *Innere Mission* and *Caritas* so that they would not hinder the success of its own Winter Relief. Both the Protestant and Catholic charities agreed to collect and distribute money and materials on behalf of the WHW. In return, the WHW worked out

⁵⁸ Wulff, *Das Winterhilfswerk des deutschen Volkes*, p.5.

a guaranteed reimbursement plan with the churches.⁵⁹ The so-called “Donation Law” and the “Law for Regulation of Public Collections and Collection Related Activities” passed in March and November of 1934 respectively, legally paved the way for the NSV to monopolize social welfare in Germany. More significantly though were the expansive and wide-ranging collection campaigns that complimented the more traditional reliance on donations alone. Again, winter aid was not held up as charity by the Nazis, but rather the “voluntary” donations were a way to teach Germans their duty to one another.

The various types of WHW collection drives were diverse, but all were tethered to the notion of individual sacrifice for the betterment of the *Volksgemeinschaft*. The most significant contributions came in the form of money, but voluntary labor and materials were important as well. Donations were solicited in countless and ever-expanding ways. The onus of collecting most definitely fell on the shoulders of the NSV block wardens and their helpers. Volunteers were not only culled from the Party and other organizations like the Hitler Youth or the NS- Women’s League (Hilgenfeldt called such women “the *Führer’s* female soldiers”)⁶⁰, but also many citizens joined to give a helping hand. Some did so out of ideological or moral considerations, but many did so because they were assured a hot meal from NSV kitchens at no cost. Each of the first seven Winter Relief campaigns had between 1.1 and 1.5 million voluntary block helpers to

⁵⁹ On this point see Jochen-Christoph Kaiser, *Sozialer Protestantismus im 20. Jahrhundert: Beiträge zur Geschichte der Inneren Mission 1914-1945* (Munich: R. Oldenbourg Verlag, 1989); and Rainer Bookhagen, *Die evangelische Kinderpflege und die Innere Mission in der Zeit des Nationalsozialismus: Mobilmachung der Gemeinden, Band 1 1933-1937* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1998).

⁶⁰ Erich Hilgenfeldt, *Aufgaben der nationalsozialistischen Wohlfahrtspflege* (Munich and Berlin: Zentral Verlag der NSDAP, 1937), p.12.

assist the wardens in making their rounds.⁶¹ Whereas in 1932 a block warden was responsible for nearly two hundred households, as voluntary labor pool increased it was cut down to roughly forty households by 1939. This was but one clear sign of the program's popularity.

The most visible, if not the most lucrative, of the Winter Relief campaigns were the monthly street collections. During these events, block officials armed with red-colored collection tins bearing the NSV logo sought out contributions from passers by on the first weekend of each Winter Relief month. Oftentimes, parades, public concerts, or other similar events were used attract crowds. In return for a twenty-cent "sacrifice", donors were given cheaply manufactured pins, badges, jewelry, or other mementos. Some of these items carried obvious messages. One metal pin bore a swastika, Hitler's likeness, and the words "For Work and Bread."⁶² Others were less obvious, but the items always carried a *völkisch* theme and had propagandistic value: like an *Edelweiss* pin (Hitler's favorite flower), wood figures from "German" fairy tales, or (more ominously) metal battleships, airplanes, and soldiers. By displaying them on a coat or a lapel, one was of course playing a part in Nazi spectacle as well as advertising that they had done their part for the nation. The well-trained eyes of WHW collectors meant that those without these symbols of sacrifice would be repeatedly accosted while in the streets.

On the Day of National Solidarity every December WHW staged its largest, most elaborate, and most lucrative collection as a veritable "who's who" of top Nazi brass hit the streets armed with collection tins in a show of support. Weeks before the event

⁶¹ Wulff, *Das Winterhilfswerk des deutschen Volkes*, p.25.

⁶² *Handbuch der WHW Abzeichen* (Munich: Gerber, 1940).

began Goebbel's propaganda machine inundated Germans with staged press releases. Snapshots of eager Germans giving donations to Goering, Goebbels, Hess, Himmler and Schacht as they walked along Unter den Linden were published in newspapers along with statistical data of previous victories and future goals. From 1934 to 1938 the Day of National Solidarity donations increased almost four-fold, from four million to fifteen million Reichsmarks. WHW street collections had netted almost ninety-eight million Reichsmarks in the winter of 1939/40 alone.

But it was not simply individuals who were asked by the regime to sacrifice. In fact, businesses of all types, including banks, were to do their part. It was these contributions that were the most lucrative for Winter Relief. Industrialists wanting to secure government contracts were obliged to give generously. In 1933, the Reich Association of German Industry set up a fund in Hitler's name and gave annually to it. I.G. Farben donated *RM* 1 million at the opening of the first Winter Relief campaign (and another 39 million to the NSV, WHW, and other agencies over the twelve years of the Third Reich) while Krupp gave over eleven million to Winter Aid.⁶³ Business contributions differed depending on size. Large corporations were asked to give at least fifteen percent of their annual income taxes while small companies donated varying amounts relative to the number of employees.⁶⁴ WHW placards were given out so that they could be affixed to storefronts as proof of sacrifice. In 1939 some 185 million Reichsmarks worth of monetary contributions reached WHW coffers from German businesses.

⁶³ de Witt, *The Nazi Party and Social Welfare*, p.202.

⁶⁴ Siegel, *The National Socialist People's Welfare Organization 1933-1939*, p.77.

Not far behind business donations was the *Lohnsteuerabzug* or wage tax deduction. Beginning in 1933, workers were requested to pledge twenty percent (reduced to 10% in 1935) of their wage tax to WHW. Even underemployed workers who did not make enough to pay the tax were asked to at least give twenty five cents. A national donation registry was composed from the list of wage earners. The funds were often automatically deducted before employees picked up their pay packets. Contributors were given a WHW door plaque which advertised their “sacrifice” to the public and exempted them from all other collection campaigns.⁶⁵ With each monthly donation, a colored sticker was given out to be affixed on the door plaque. Those without a plaque or the proper monthly sticker were seen as shirking their duties to the *Volksgemeinschaft* and could easily catch the ire of neighbors and WHW officials. Block wardens carried updated *Sammelliste* and those not on it would certainly be awaiting a knock at the door. From 1933 to 1939 the *Opfer von Lohn und Gehalt* had an annual increase from 29 million to 131 million Reichsmarks.

It would be nearly impossible to outline all the measures employed by the WHW to solicit monetary donations, but a few should be mentioned so that one could get some idea of the thoroughness and inventiveness of Winter Relief workers as well as the reasons for the public’s increasing resentment. Collection cans appeared increasingly at the check-out counters of retail stores beckoning customers to deposit their *Winterpfennigs* or *Zwillingspfennigs* (one penny for each mark spent). Special commemorative stamps were offered by the post office. During intermission in movie

⁶⁵ The so-called *Reichsgeldsammelliste* was discontinued in the WHW campaign of 1937/38. Accordingly, those contributing by way of the wage tax deduction were no longer exempted from other collections. See Zimmerman, *Die NS-Volkswohlfahrt*, p.126.

theaters collectors would pass around collection tins, not unlike a church offertory. In Bavaria, elephants from a zoo were enlisted by WHW to attract crowds in the streets. The Hitler Youth sold individual stones to be used in large mosaics (requiring ten to twenty thousand pieces) that were placed in communities throughout Germany by the WHW. A lottery was developed and tickets were sold for fifty cents wherein winners could receive as much as five thousand marks. Riders on street cars were expected to round the fare up to the nearest mark and donate the difference, usually to inexhaustible collectors rattling the cans as they combed through the cars. *Wunschkonzerte* were held over German radio wherein one could hear a favorite tune for a donation of ten cents. And in Chemnitz even those enjoying a WHW parade from third floor apartments had the red NSV collection tins waved in their faces by mounted SA volunteers using bamboo poles six to eight meters long.⁶⁶

But it was not just money that was important, so too were material donations, especially in fighting off the ravages of cold and hunger during harsh German winters. Because food donations played such a prominent role in relief efforts, the sacrifices from the countryside were vital and so officials from WHW worked closely with the Food and Agriculture Ministry to set up the Farmer's Donation (*Bauernspende*). For their part, farmers were implored to contribute agricultural commodities, above all potatoes and grain, but also meat, fruits and vegetables, milk, and honey whenever possible to help fight urban poverty. By linking the urban and rural, the regime believed that it could build solidarity and overcome longstanding anxieties. Farmer's also received WHW door

⁶⁶ The *Sopade* reports on Winter Relief are an excellent source for the various, often clever, methods of collection. See in particular the entries for May 1936.

placards to signify their commitment to the *Volk*. The urban counterpart to the *Bauernspende* was the *Pfundspende* (pound donation). Once or twice a month, each household was called upon to donate foodstuffs, usually non-perishable items such as sugar or canned goods. WHW volunteers, usually from the Women's League, HJ, and BDM, would drop off sacks at residences to be filled and later returned to pick them up. Of course, the WHW collector would stamp their donation certificate as evidence for their generosity. School children would even compete against students from other schools trying to collect the most.⁶⁷

One of the more imaginative contributions of food to Winter Relief came at the behest of Hermann Göring. While Göring is best known for his role as commander of the Luftwaffe and President of the Reichstag, he also had numerous other titles and positions. As an avid outdoorsman, Göring was also the Superintendent of Reich Forestry as well as the *Reichsjägermeister* (literally "Reich Master of the Hunt", but perhaps better translated as "Reich Gamekeeper").⁶⁸ It was his latter position that allowed him to contribute by declaring a hunting week in which all game taken from German forests would be donated to the WHW. The rabbits, fowl, wild boar, and other game were then redistributed to *kinderreich* families and to blue collar areas in large cities throughout the Reich. To deliver the game expeditiously, WHW worked at the *Kreis* level to ensure that game taken from specific hunting grounds (*Jagdrevier*) stayed

⁶⁷ BAL NS 5 VI 4715 „Ein Pimpf schreibt uns,“ *Völkischer Beobachter*, no. 198, (24.10.1936).

⁶⁸ Erich Gritzbach, Göring's personal assistant, gives much attention to the air marshal's love of nature in his (very biased) biography. See Gritzbach, *Hermann Goering: The Man and His Work*. Trans. by Gerald Griffin (London: Hurst & Blackett, 1939), pp.48-72. The now popular German digestive Jägermeister was created by the avid hunter Curt Mast in 1935. Its name was inspired by the occupation (gamekeeper) and not the air marshal.

local. During the winter of 1938 needy residents in Munich exchanged their vouchers for “2 kilos of venison, or a rabbit, or 2 pheasants, or 2 partridges” depending on availability.⁶⁹ While wild game may not have been the first choice for needy urbanites, many were thankful. In Saxony on the Saturday before Christmas in 1938 a party was organized by WHW for unemployed and needy national comrades. Nearly five hundred guests arrived at the nicely decorated hall where assorted *hors d'œuvres*, roasted rabbit, coffee and cake awaited them. As one guest remarked, “in the past there was nothing like this!”⁷⁰ In the first three winters, the *Wildspenden* amounted to some three million kilograms of wild game.⁷¹ Once the war began in 1939, the needs of the newly renamed *Kriegswinterhilfswerk* (War-time Winter Relief or KWHW) changed dramatically. Göring, always a passionate supporter of Winter Relief, discontinued the *Wildspenden* and asked hunters to make monetary donations instead.⁷²

The Christmas season was particularly important for Winter Relief and it intensified efforts beginning in 1933 to not just simply ensure food and warmth for the unemployed and their families, but to also “bring them joy” at the “*Riesengabentisch der sechs Millionen.*”⁷³ Extra allowances of certain food stuffs, special vouchers, and care

⁶⁹ BAL NS 44/53 “Wildverteilung” WHW, Dienststelle des Kreisbeauftragten, Rundschreiben no. 39, (22.11.1938).

⁷⁰ *Deutschland-Berichte der Sopade* (1938) 5, entry dated 5 January 1938, p.113.

⁷¹ Wulff, . *Das Winterhilfswerk des deutschen Volkes*, pp. 36-37. Many were pushing for an increase in wild game consumption as one way to help Germany achieve autarky. See for example “Das Betriebskaninchen.’ Werksküchen, die sich selbst versorgen,“ *Zeitschrift für Gemeinschaftsverpflegung*, no. 8 (April 1942), p.125. For a nutritional perspective, see Hans Walter Schmidt, “Die ernährungsbiologische Wert der Jagd”, *Die Ernährung*, vol. 7 (April 1942), pp.98-102.

⁷² BAL NS 37/1056 WHW Reichsbeauftragte an Gaubeauftragte des WHW (10.01.1942).

⁷³ BAL NS 5 VI 4712, “Winterhilfe im Weihnachtsmonat” N.S.K. no. 561 (4.12.1933).

packages were given out to needy families. Toys of all varieties, from wooden trains to dolls, were produced by volunteers and distributed to children. While certainly a pleasant surprise for children, it was also a big relief for parents who could not afford such gifts. The sentiments of Karl V. could not have been uncommon when he graciously thanked the WHW for bringing joy “to the kids and us parents this Christmas...because toys were in very short supply this year.”⁷⁴ The Food and Agriculture Ministry, even in the midst of war and severe shortages, worked with WHW to ensure that destitute children had the very traditional gingerbread during the holidays.⁷⁵ And of course it would not be Christmas without a tree so the WHW donated tens of thousands of those too, often with vouchers and gifts placed under them.⁷⁶

Given the importance of food for Hitler, it is not surprising that *Eintopfsonntage*, or “Stew Sundays”, were a favorite for the *Führer*. On the second Sunday of every month from October to March, Germans were called upon by the WHW to sacrifice their traditional roasts and opt for the more frugal vegetable stew (*Eintopf*). The difference in cost between the two meals (never to be more than 50 cents per head) was to be donated to the WHW during its stew collections (*Eintopfsammlungen*). Because the WHW negotiated with local proprietors, those not eating at home even had the chance to “sacrifice” at their favorite restaurant or pub. The prices of such meals were

⁷⁴ Brandenburgisches Landeshauptarchiv (hereafter BLH), Pr. Br. Rep. 61 A WHW/NSV, Brief an die N.S.V. Ortsgruppe-Rehfelde von Familie Karl V. am 3. Januar 1943.

⁷⁵ BAL NS 37/1055, WHW Reichsbeauftragte an alle Gaubeauftragten, “Lebkuchen für die Weihnachtsfeiern im WHW. 1940/41”, (27.8.1940).

⁷⁶ BAL NS 5 VI 4712, “Jedem Deutschen einen Tannenbaum” *Der Deutsche* no. 269, (16.11.1933).

regulated and fell into three categories depending on the venue. A meal from the first category would cost a patron 0.70 Reichsmarks, from the second one Reichmark, and the third two Reichsmarks. From the cost of the meal, anywhere from 0.20 Reichsmarks (first class) to 1.20 Reichsmarks (third class) would be given to the WHW.⁷⁷ Upon finishing the meal a receipt was given in case one was called on to donate again by street collectors. Those traveling on Stew Sundays were also given the opportunity to contribute as dining cars on the Reichsbahn or even KdF cruise ships offered up stew as well.

Even though it did not differ dramatically from his regular diet, Hitler took Stew Sundays very seriously. Albert Speer, Hitler's architect and later Armaments Minister, noted in his post-war memoir that on such Sundays "only a tureen of soup was served at Hitler's table too" and consequently "[t]he number of dinner guests thereafter shrank to two or three." It did not help matters either that a donation list was passed around the table each and every time at Hitler's behest. Speer remarked that [e]very one-dish meal cost me fifty or a hundred marks."⁷⁸ This lackluster spirit of sacrifice irritated Hitler to no end. At the Kroll Opera House in Berlin on 8 October 1935, Hitler chastised listeners:

You have never known hunger, otherwise you would know what a bother it is to be hungry...And if the other then says: 'But you know all these stew Sundays—I would like to give something, but it's my stomach. I [Hitler] have stomach problems all the time anyway, I don't understand it...Millions of your national comrades...would be happy if they only had that stew all winter long that you perhaps eat once a month.'⁷⁹

⁷⁷ Wulff, *Das Winterhilfswerk des deutschen Volkes*, pp.43-44.

⁷⁸ Albert Speer, *Inside the Third Reich: Memoirs*. Trans. by Richard and Clara Winston (New York: Macmillan, 1970), pp.143-144.

⁷⁹ Max Domarus (ed.), *Hitler: Speeches and Proclamations 1932-1945* (Wauconda, IL: Bolchazy-Carducci, 1992), vol. 2, pp.716-717.

Hitler addressed those grumbling about Stew Sundays again the following year at the opening of Winter Relief. “You say: God, every month one is now supposed to eat plain stew. To that I say: how often, often, and often in these years of struggle I some days ate only a single piece of plain bread, just like in 1932.”⁸⁰ He went on to remind them of the sacrifices of brave SA men and WHW volunteers who worked for hours in the rain and snow, collecting to help secure German livelihood without so much as a scrap of bread. He scornfully questioned: “And now? Now you complain because of a pot of stew?”⁸¹

Whether at the Reich Chancellery in Berlin or at his Eagle’s Nest retreat in Obersalzberg, Hitler never missed the opportunity for snapshots of him and high Party officials dining on the simple fare for its propagandistic value. In one oft-used photo Hitler and Goebbels are eating together with a large cast iron pot of stew in the foreground, thus subtly hinting at the importance of national sacrifice on Stew Sundays.⁸² However one felt about a one-pot meal on Sunday, the *Eintopfsammlungen* were successful as they surpassed the street collections by nearly twenty percent to bring in just over one hundred million Reichsmarks by the winter of 1938/39.

While the food drives were used in an attempt to alleviate hunger, WHW concurrently held collection drives for clothes and fuel to fight the ravages of cold. At any time of the year “better-off” Germans could drop off materials in the WHW clothing collection bins at local offices. Announcements for major collection drives of clothing

⁸⁰ Hitler, *Führer-Reden*, p.29.

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² The photo is reprinted in Vorländer, *Die NSV*, p.205.

and bath linens were made over the radio and in the newspapers as WHW ramped up its activities in late fall and early winter. Even the Wehrmacht, SS, SA, and police pitched in by providing vehicles to transport the massive amounts of clothing collected. Wehrmacht vehicles, laden with used clothing, drove through the streets of Germany while onlookers listened as trumpets sounded for the collection volunteers. Women and young girls volunteered their time to wash and disinfect the second-hand goods as well as mend them in the *Nähstuben* (sewing rooms) set up by the WHW. It would seem difficult to place a value on used clothing but the Nazis boasted that by 1939 they had collected 460 million *Reichsmarks* worth of clothing for men, women, and children as well as sixteen million meters of fabric.⁸³ Fuel donations came in the form of wood, peat, and coal. Most wood and peat came from private owners of forested areas. The WHW struck bargains with coal companies by guaranteeing markets for their donations. The needy were given vouchers which could be redeemed at local shops. In the winter of 1933/34 alone, the WHW gave out 52,000,000 vouchers good for a hundredweight of coal each.⁸⁴ Vouchers were also given out for gas and electric, theater, movie, and concert tickets.

Gauging Success

After briefly examining the major collection campaigns noted above, one can get a very good sense of the magnitude of the Winter Relief program in Germany. It was an enormous undertaking that required dozens of party and state organizations as well as millions of people to work in concert. Given what we know about the Winter Relief

⁸³ Wulff, *Das Winterhilfswerk des deutschen Volkes*, p. 83.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.* 98.

campaigns and its aid distribution, it must be regarded as successful. While WHW certainly did not contribute enough to stamp out poverty in Germany for good, it did manage to provide the vast majority of needy Aryans with some form of aid or another. Small subsidies of food, clothing, coal and firewood made the harsh winter months more bearable for millions of Germans. An extra twenty to thirty Reichsmarks, that is the average amount given to each person annually by the WHW, was not much, but was greatly appreciated, especially by the unemployed and single mothers.⁸⁵ With roughly seventeen million destitute in Germany after the Nazi seizure of power, it is estimated that 16.6 million received WHW aid. As the economy got stronger and more people went back to work, the number of recipients decreased to 13.9 million in 1934/35 and 10.7 million by 1936/37.⁸⁶

Winter Relief was also important for the economy in Germany in a variety of sectors. Goebbels reminded Germans of this at the opening of the second Winter Relief in 1934. Because of WHW, he exclaimed, 70.8 million Reichsmarks worth of foodstuffs would be purchased and help to secure agriculture. 76.4 million worth of coal and lumber would flow out of mines and forests, and 46.7 million would go to the textile and shoes industries. Even trade would be bolstered by the 45.2 million Reichsmarks worth of vouchers and for 16.8 million Reichsmarks given out by WHW for additional goods.⁸⁷ Winter Relief was the largest single consumer of foodstuffs in Germany, especially

⁸⁵ This figure comes from Zimmerman, *Die NS-Volkswohlfahrt*, p.147. He places the average support per person at 3-3.50 RM in 1933/34 and at 5-6 RM in 1936/37. In the same year, Germany's 3.5 million needy households received between 350-420 million RM in aid from WHW.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, p.146.

⁸⁷ *Völkischer Beobachter*, no. 283, (10.10.1935).

dominant in potatoes, flour, and fish.⁸⁸ It is easiest to see the economic importance of WHW in the fishing sector. Except for those living on the coast, fish was not a regular part of the German diet. Most of the fish caught by North-Sea fishermen went to fish meal production and thus drove prices down making it very difficult to eke out a decent wage. In fact, when the Nazis came to power Germans consumed less fish than the city of London. With such a rich, but unused source of healthy protein as well as a shortage of meat, WHW was soon purchasing large quantities of Germany's deep-sea catch to feed the poor. Thus, WHW served as a guaranteed market for North Sea fisherman as well as provided the land-locked non-traditional fare.⁸⁹ By intentionally focusing its distribution on the "meat-loving areas of Germany," the Nazi regime forever altered the German diet.⁹⁰ By 1938 WHW was purchasing 105,087 hundredweight of fish, or 14.37% of the total annual catch coming into the markets in Wesermünde, Cuxhaven, and Altona.⁹¹ The rate went as high as thirty-five percent at times. WHW was thus able to breathe life into an ailing sector of the German economy by keeping some twenty percent of fishing vessels busy all year round and raising the price of fish some fourteen percent.

⁸⁸ BAL NS 5 VI 4721 "Das Winterhilfswerk als Wirtschaftsfaktor", *Der deutsche Volkswirt*, no. 28, (14.4.1939); BAL NS 5 4719 "Das WHW in der Wirtschaft. Einer der größten Konsumenten" *Der Angriff*, no. 95, (24.4.1937). After the Wehrmacht, WHW was also the largest purchaser of textiles and shoes in Germany.

⁸⁹ Werner Reher, *Die NS-Volkswohlfahrt* (Berlin: Zentralverlag der NSDAP, 1943), p.23.

⁹⁰ BAL NS 5 VI 4719, "NSV geht neue Wirtschaftswege. Pg. Hilgenfeldt zieht Bilanz vor Wirtschaftsführen," *Der Angriff*, no. 83, (7.4.1936). WHW worked closely with the various women's organizations to develop recipes for housewives unfamiliar with seafood. Recipes were even printed on specially made red (WHW) parchment paper to wrap up the fish. Those receiving fish in January 1937 near the Güterbahnhof in Potsdam received recipes to make „Fish in Tomato Sauce“, „Pilchersteiner Fish Stew“, „Fish Ragout,“ and „Fish Cakes,“ BAL NS 5 VI 4718, "Mucki' kocht sechs Pfund Fischfilet," *N.S.K.*, no. 41, 19.2.1937. For more on this, see chapter 4.

⁹¹ BAL NS 5 VI 4721 "Das Winterhilfswerk als Wirtschaftsfaktor."

But it was not just on the northern coast or in major industrial areas that Winter Relief made an economic impact. Many of the areas hardest hit by unemployment and general misery after the Great Depression were on the periphery. For the production of the various badges and trinkets sold during its street collections WHW relied largely on skilled artisans in small towns throughout Germany. A WHW contract for the production of its five million daffodil pins in 1935 and a further seven million daisy pins in 1936 put the well-known (but jobless) comb makers near Darmstadt back to full employment for much of the year. In Erbach some 1200 unemployed ivory carvers were given work. Unemployed handicrafters from the Eifel mountain region were contracted to produce millions of fairy tale figurines for the December 1936 collection. The same thing happened for porcelain-producers in the Bavarian Ostmark and wood carvers from the Erzgebirge. Between 1933 and 1938 nearly a half billion trinkets were produced and this number increased greatly after with the incorporation of Austria and Sudetenland. It was in this way, and countless others, that WHW put thousands of people back to work, many of them for the first time in years.⁹²

But even if the impressive collection and distribution figures for Nazi Winter Relief can be deemed highly successful and a clear demonstration of its “socialism of the deed”, its ideological success, that is the creation of a unified *Volksgemeinschaft* through sacrifice, is much less clear. Part of the problem stems from the fact that most of the so-called opinion reports (*Stimmungsberichte*) concerning WHW activities written by *Gau* leaders were destroyed during the war and therefore a complete picture is impossible. But despite the fact that much of the remaining source base is laced with

⁹² Ibid.

positive reactions to Winter Relief⁹³, much of it renders a negative popular view with recurring themes of coercion and corruption.

Although donations to Winter Relief were cast as voluntary in Nazi rhetoric and propaganda, in reality heavy-handed collection methods were used. The pressure exerted on individuals to donate was often intense and nowhere could one escape the indefatigable collectors. Shaming nonconformists was the “educational” tactic of choice by the party as evidenced by the aforementioned door placards. Articles regularly appeared documenting the selflessness of even the most down and out in society. One claimed that a family consisting of an unemployed father and two sick children was still able to donate thirty cents during a stew collection. Regular guidelines for donations depending on income and family status were regularly distributed as well.⁹⁴ The idea of course was to quash any and all excuses. Workers who refused to contribute the wage tax deduction could have their names published on lists as way to embarrass them into cooperation. Sometimes wages were even docked without employee permission. The well-known philologist and diarist Victor Klemperer remarked already in 1933 that the “voluntary winter aid” deducted from his paycheck without authorization was “scarcely veiled coercion.”⁹⁵ In a similar tactic, the names of contributors were published in

⁹³ There is strong evidence to suggest that Winter Relief was one of two Nazi organizations (the other was Strength through Joy) looked upon favorably by large segments of the working class. See for example Ian Kershaw, *Popular Opinion and Political Dissent in the Third Reich: Bavaria 1933-1945* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1983), pp.79-80.

⁹⁴ See BAL NS 5 VI 4712 “Hemmungen waren zu überwinden. Erfahrungen aus der ersten Sammeltätigkeit für das W.H.W. 1934/35“ *N.S.K.* no. 246, (19.10.1934); and “Wieviel gibst Du der Winterhilfswerk? Die Beitragsspenden der Arbeitnehmer“ *Hamburger Tageblatt* no. 286, (16.10.1934).

⁹⁵ Victor Klemperer, *LTI—Notizbuch eines Philologen* (Leipzig: Reklam, 1975), p.47.

special books of honor, such as was the case in Northeim in 1933.⁹⁶ WHW worked closely with tax, welfare, and police officials to not only assess need, but also an individual's ability to donate. Therefore, collectors could even refuse donations they deemed too small. Intimidation was also employed as the WHW frequently sought the assistance of SA, SS, or Wehrmacht men who were undoubtedly more imposing than the average WHW volunteer. By the late 1930s block wardens were even seen carrying pistols. In rare cases, people were even roughed up or thrown into "re-education" camps for not doing their sacrificial duty.⁹⁷

Because of this Germans became increasingly more critical, and in many instances resistant to, what they saw as an overbearing institution within the Nazi State. But there was almost no organized resistance against Winter Relief.⁹⁸ Farmers, even the well-to do, seem to have given WHW the most problems and the Reich Food Estate worked continually to bolster their support. Reports from the spring of 1937 repeatedly speak of the shortage of "socialism among farmers" and their lacking a "spirit of sacrifice" (*Opfersinn*).⁹⁹ But resistance unquestionably came from all parts of German society. Many certainly tried to escape the collection cans of WHW volunteers. Women

⁹⁶ The book was entitled *Northeim Sacrifices*. See William Sheridan Allen, *The Nazi Seizure of Power: The Experience of Single German Town 1922-1945* (New York: Franklin Watts, 1984), p.275.

⁹⁷ See de Witt, *The Nazi Party and Social Welfare*.

⁹⁸ The rift between the Bavarian Protestant Church and the Nazi Party did lead to boycotts of WHW, not as an attack on social welfare per se, but to resist the Nazi regime. On this see Kershaw, *Popular Opinion and Political Dissent*, pp.156-184.

⁹⁹ *Deutschland-Berichte der Sopade* (1937) 4, entry dated May 1937, pp. 721-722. Several provinces in Brandenburg, mainly those with a "*landwirtschaftlichen Charakters*", were so far behind collection expectations that the Interior Ministry took notice and demanded action. BLH Pr. Br. Rep. 2A, 68 Betrifft: Rundschreiben des Herrn Preußischen Ministers des Innern vom 31. Okt. 1933 –IV W 6230/31.10, Der Oberpräsident der Provinz Brandenburg und von Berlin am den Herrn Regierungspräsidenten in Potsdam, 9. Nov. 1933.

would borrow eggs or milk from the neighbor so as to not go out during the street collections. On Stew Sundays some would just simply refuse to open the door.¹⁰⁰ With no valid excuses to offer, others would lie to get away from collectors with change in their pockets. One SS man collecting for Winter Relief on Berlin's Potsdamer Platz was told by five people in thirty minutes that they were Adventist and therefore out of religious obligations could not handle money on the Sabbath. An article in *Das Schwarze Korps* found this astounding as there were "hardly 300,000 Adventists in the entire Reich" and not a single "Adventist congregation registered in the area." Equating Adventists with Jews, the article continued "[o]nly the rattling collection cans awake their religious sentiments, in order to not desecrate the Sabbath at any price."¹⁰¹ Others were sly as well. In Augsburg and Munich eighty-eight kilos of counterfeit money, buttons, and other oddities were slipped into collection cans unnoticed by street canvassers.¹⁰² And out of the 35,000 letters sent to factory owners in Saxony in late 1937 by WHW to solicit donations, seventy-five percent did not respond.¹⁰³

Even recipients of winter aid were critical. Late shipments, inadequate supplies, long lines, spoiled foods, and especially uneven distribution were among the most common complaints about Winter Relief. The latter was especially galling for the poor. In Berlin in December 1938 WHW distributed its annual Christmas packages, but they

¹⁰⁰ Block wardens would often just return the next day. For a humorous but accurate cartoon depicting the various types of WHW donors (from miserly to willing), see BAL NS 5 VI 4735 "So sieht er sie—wenn sie die Sammelbüchse sehen," *Der Angriff* no.283, (3.12.1937).

¹⁰¹ BAL NS 5 VI 4716 "Die Adventisten," *Das schwarze Korps*, no. 46, (12.11.1936).

¹⁰² *Deutschland-Bericht der SOPADE* (1938) 5, entry dated January 1938, p.99.

¹⁰³ BAL NS 37/1062 Winter-Hilfswerk des deutschen Volkes 1934/35, Der Gaubeauftragte Gau Sachsen, 1. März, 1935.

were not all alike. Whereas some got “really good” ones filled with both clothes and valuable foodstuffs, others got only “a can of milk, a little bit of flour or semolina, perhaps some gingerbread or similar trivialities (Nichtigkeiten) and not a thing more.” (sonst gar nichts).¹⁰⁴ Such grievances were aired in various ways, but usually in private. Eavesdroppers in the living rooms and pubs of Saxony might have heard, for example, that the acronym WHW stood for “*Wir hungern weiter*” (We’re still hungry)!¹⁰⁵ Others suggested that WHW stood for “*Waffenhilfswerk*” suggesting of course that all the money collected was not making its way to needy Germans, but was rather funneled into the regime’s rearmament campaign. Such rumors of corruption were not uncommon. One commentator from the Wasserkante district of Hamburg believed that money raised by the WHW was used to pay for “Hitler’s Christmas party for thousands of old fighters in Munich and Göring’s Christmas party for a couple of hundred poor children in Berlin.”¹⁰⁶ Some events lent credence to the people’s suspicions such as in September 1936 when a block official was arrested at the Dutch border with 1,500 Reichsmarks of WHW funds.¹⁰⁷ Such scandals were taken very seriously by the government because of the very close and well-publicized relationship it had with Winter Relief. Given this sensitivity, the regime often went out of its way to quash rumors, however innocuous they seemed. For example, an article in the *Völkischer Beobachter* was published in February 1936 to correct reports that the Wesermünde Fish Market

¹⁰⁴ *Deutschland-Berichte der Sopade* (1938) 5, entry dated January 1938, p. 114. See also the NSV activity reports in BAL NS 37 1062.

¹⁰⁵ *Deutschland-Berichte der Sopade* (1935) 2, entry dated 2 February 1935, p.169.

¹⁰⁶ *Deutschland-Berichte der Sopade* (1935) 2, entry dated 2 February 1935, p.173.

¹⁰⁷ *Deutschland-Berichte der Sopade* (1936) 3, entry dated 3 September 1936, p.1151.

had donated five of the nine and a half million pounds of fish filets distributed during that year's Winter Relief campaigns. It was to be known that not only did WHW pay cash for the five million pounds, but also the four and a half million pounds from Cuxhaven and Altona too. This was done of course to allay suspicions of "back door deals."¹⁰⁸

In fact, the Nazis were so concerned about its image both at home and abroad that it contradicted the very foundations of Party ideology by allowing Jews, communists, and foreigners to receive winter aid, if only for the first two years. This was done not out of concern, but for purely propagandistic purposes. It was believed that all the "mendacious" claims about the "bloodthirsty persecution" of Jews in Germany would be vitiated. Detailed statistics published in the domestic and international press attempted to curb foreign criticism. Reports claimed, for example, that during the 1933/34 Winter Relief campaign 8,791 Germans Jews and 5,272 foreigners received WHW assistance in Berlin alone.¹⁰⁹ Roughly two hundred thousand Jews and foreigners were said to have benefited from Nazi "socialism of the deed" by 1935.¹¹⁰ There is little evidence to suggest that such tactics changed any minds abroad about the Nazi regime, but some countries did show their support. Greece donated five million pounds of currants to WHW in 1936. Two years later Egypt donated 5,000 kilos

¹⁰⁸ BAL NS 5 VI 4719 "9,5 Millionen Pfund Fischfilet durch das Winterhilfswerk aufgekauft" *Völkischer Beobachter*, no. 39, (8.2.1936).

¹⁰⁹ *Sozialisten der Tat*, p.88. The graphs were often very detailed, including this one, which had data for twenty six different countries. The publication also made sure to note that of those 5,272 foreigners 2,250 were Jews.

¹¹⁰ In actuality, aid given to "non-Aryans" was selective and local Nazi officials did not always follow national policy. Anti-Semitic WHW officials in Hessen, Bavaria, and the Palatinate refused donations both to and from Jews. See David Kramer, "Jewish Welfare Work under the Impact of Pauperisation" in Arnold Paucker, et. al., *The Jews in Nazi Germany 1933-1945* (New York: Leo Baeck Institute, 1986), p.181.

of dates and 15, 500 kilos of mandarin oranges and Mussolini contributed one thousand hundredweight of Abyssinian coffee.¹¹¹ It does appear, however, that among ethnic Germans living abroad WHW proved popular. Some twenty million Reichsmarks was collected during Stew Sundays which took place around the globe, from Cameroon and China to Pernambuco and California as a clear sign of support.¹¹²

With the enactment of the Nuremberg Laws in 1935, however, the thin veil that covered the exclusionary and racist realities of Nazi social welfare was removed. Now completely excluded from Winter Relief, Germany's Jewish community, which had higher unemployment rates than their gentile counterparts, had to rely on their own devices.¹¹³ In October of the same year German Jews began their own *Jüdische Winterhilfe* (Jewish Winter Relief or JWH). Although organized and run strictly by Jewish organizations, the JHW looked remarkably similar to WHW. This was due in large part to the fact that the Jewish Winter Relief program had to be approved by Erich Hilgenfeldt, head of the NSV/WHW. Like Nazi Winter Relief, JHW relied on sacrifices from businesses and individuals to help needy Jews. It carried out similar collection and distribution schemes, redoubling efforts during important holidays like Pessac, but of course on a much smaller scale. Nonetheless, of the estimated 409,000 Jews that remained in Germany during the winter of 1935/36, 83,761 received winter aid. Unlike

¹¹¹ See various folders in BAL NS 5 VI 4714-4720.

¹¹² BAL NS 5 VI 4719 "Alle Deutschen am Tisch der Nation" *N.S.K.*, no. 234, (9.10.37). See other articles in this file as well.

¹¹³ For more on this, see Marion A. Kaplan, *Between Dignity and Despair: Jewish Life in Nazi Germany* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1998).

WHW though, JHW seems to have met less popular resistance and was thus more effective in creating a true German Jewish solidarity.¹¹⁴

Even with the varying amounts of prohibition, intimidation, and condemnation, Nazi Winter Relief nonetheless seems to have remained what might be best described as an acceptable nuisance by a majority of the population. Popular reaction certainly ran the gamut from outright resistance, like the Flensburg businessman who only finally chose to become part of the “national community” after being taken into “protective custody”¹¹⁵, to fanatical support, like that of the butcher Joseph Zöpfchen who bequeathed 150 Reichsmarks to the WHW after his death in 1935.¹¹⁶ But most people fell somewhere in between. Given the figures associated with the Winter Relief campaigns, it is clear that Winter Relief was successful at many levels and dwarfed all predecessors. While the effects of these achievements in the past have largely been underestimated or written off as products of totalitarian exploitation, such explanations are misleading. Not only was the eradication of severe poverty and social instability vitally important for the Nazi government as it cut its teeth in the early 1930s, but so too was the political and economic impact of Winter Relief throughout the life span of the Third Reich. As the Nazi regime sought to “re-educate” Germans to its own understanding of welfare as national sacrifice, millions of volunteers became conscientious “socialists of the deed” and billions of RM flowed into WHW coffers. Moreover, as the largest consumer of many foodstuffs, textiles, and coal in Germany,

¹¹⁴ Kramer, “Jewish Welfare Work”, pp.182-186.

¹¹⁵ Burleigh, *The Third Reich*, p.227.

¹¹⁶ BAL NS VI 4715 “Das W.H.W. im Testament bedacht” *N.S.K.*, no. 47, (25.2.36).

Winter Relief became and remained an integral part of the economy as well as a wellspring for labor.

At another level, the Nazi Winter Relief scheme has not only served as a lens through which one can get a glimpse everyday life in the Third Reich, it has also been a barometer of popular reaction to the regime's social welfare policies. The various snapshots, it is hoped, have given a much more nuanced picture of life under the swastika by showing how both conformity and opposition were possible at a variety of levels and in various ways. Thus Germans were never simply for or against, however simplistically portrayed by Nazi propaganda. Indeed, the everyday experience and interactions of Germans with the Nazi regime were infinitely more complicated by a nexus of factors. As the historian Detlev Peukert has argued:

The Nazis' claims and demands on individuals and social groups were such that approval, rejection and acceptance became intertwined within the individual in a host of different ways. Even an uncompromising political resister had to make compromises in daily life, if only to camouflage his illegal work. But each confrontation, even a mere call to donate to the Winter Relief Fund, not only raised the tactical problem of whether to accede or hold out, but posed the fundamental dilemma that consent to the regime in toto consisted in any case precisely in taking a large number of similar small steps of compliance. In addition, the Nazi scheme of social order backed up by terror moved into areas which previously lain on the margins of, or quite outside, the traditional domain of political controversy. This was the case with anti-Semitism, of course, but also applied to the racist social policies of the Third Reich quite generally.¹¹⁷

But the Nazi revolution could not rely on new-fangled welfare policies to feed Germans over the long term and make good on its promise to raise the standard of living. There would need to be a fundamental reworking of many aspects of the

¹¹⁷ Detlev Peukert, *Inside Nazi Germany: Conformity, Opposition, and Racism in Everyday Life*. Translated by Richard Deveson (Yale University Press, 1987), p.244.

economy and society if Germany was to become, in the words of Goebbels, a “*Not- und Brotgemeinschaft*.” And although still very much a male-dominated society, women would come to play an indispensable role in the food policies of this new Germany.

CHAPTER 4

THE COOKING SPOON IS OUR WEAPON

John Bull has declared war on us.
We are wise to his tricks.
Men take up the sword,
Women to the kitchen.

—a popular wartime poem

Your art of war is the culinary arts!

—a motto of the Nazi women's organizations

In his speech at the Sportpalast in Berlin on 28 October 1936 Hermann Göring, Minister President and Head of the Four-Year Plan to put the German economy on a war footing, spoke poignantly about securing Germany's food supply. This was of course not a novel topic in the speeches of high ranking Nazi officials as the political legitimacy of the regime rested solely on making good its promise to provide Germans with "bread and work." The speech began in rather typical fashion by highlighting the importance of increasing production, the role of farmers, and above all the necessity of ensuring that the vast majority of Germans, especially manual laborers and the "less well off" (*minderbemittelte*), had enough to eat. Göring, who assumed full responsibility for guaranteeing supplies, also made it very clear that shortages of certain foodstuffs would exist. It is here that his speech takes what at first seems like a curious turn.

"It goes without saying that one must accept certain restrictions, if one wants to achieve greatness. And for that reason I turn to German housewives. A great responsibility lies upon your shoulders. You must always above all put foods on the menu which are in season, which are available, those which are presently yielded by our own national production! It is a sin if one always just wants to buy and have what is at the moment not put forth by nature. Wealthy households should above all bear this in mind! There was at an earlier time such a trend, in which it was particularly

nice to dish up extra tender vegetables from overseas in the winter and so on, always what there 'wasn't any of' just then."¹

This was not simply rhetoric. By linking food production and consumption, not only was Göring laying out some of the central tenets of the Nazis' progressive food policy, but he was also highlighting the important role women would play in Germany's future. While it was the ultimate goal of the Four-Year Plan to create an autarkic, war-ready Germany, this would take time. Moreover, it would divert materials away from the production of consumer goods and put them to use for rearmament. As already shown in chapter one, Nazi leaders, above all Hitler, reflected incessantly on the privations caused by the "Hungerblockade" of the First World War and believed them to be at the root of Germany's demise. In their view, the German army had not been defeated militarily, but had been "stabbed in the back" by hungry civilians manipulated by, in Hitler's words, "Jewish-Marxist wire-pullers."² Safeguarding a decent standard of living for German workers, which was critical for staving off another dreaded "stab-in-the-back", meant that the Nazi regime was rightly concerned about consumer demand.³

The Nazi government realized early on that women, as the largest group of consumers, must be at the crux of any attempt to solve the "food question"; to raise the standard of living; or to create a self-sufficient Germany. Indeed, all three goals were often conflated and heaped upon the shoulders of German women. The research of

¹ Speech reprinted in *Der Vierjahresplan*, vol. 1, Jan. 1937, pp.31-36.

² See, for example, Adolf Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1943), chapter 7.

³ On this point, see above all Timothy W. Mason, *Social Policy in the Third Reich: The Working Class and the 'National Community'*. Translated by John Broadwin and edited by Jane Caplan (New York and Oxford: Berg, 1993). First published as *Sozialpolitik im Dritten Reich. Arbeiterklasse und Volksgemeinschaft* (Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag GmbH, 1973).

statisticians published time and again in contemporary newspapers, periodicals, and reports made clear the importance of female consumers. Official statistics estimated that housewives in Germany's 17.5 million households spent roughly seventy-five percent of national income on their everyday purchases and expenses.⁴ Because at least forty-three percent of the income of average German families in the 1930s was spent on foodstuffs⁵, it is no wonder that why the regime set about quickly to organize women and "co-ordinate the menu plans" of Germans. Without doing so, it was well understood that the "Battle for Production" in agriculture and the *Marktordnung* (ordered market) had little chance of success.⁶ In order to better understand the role of women in the economy, one must first examine more generally the place of women in the Third Reich.

German Women, Mothers, and Housewives

Historical literature on women in Nazi Germany has flourished since the 1970s and has resulted in both a significant widening and deepening of our knowledge of the Third Reich.⁷ Much of this scholarship has focused, not surprisingly, on social policy as

⁴ BAL NS 5/VI Zeitschriftauschnittsammlung, no. 6929, "Hausfrauen geben drei Viertel des Volkseinkommens aus," (27.07.1937). By 1941 there were some 23 million households in Greater Germany. See Erika Kirmsse (ed.), *Deutsches Frauenschaffen. Jahrbuch der Reichfrauenführung* (Berlin, 1941), p.36.

⁵ Deutsche Arbeitsfront, "Wirtschaftsrechnungen von 350 Arbeiterhaushaltungen für das Jahr 1937. Teil 1: Die Einnahmen und Ausgaben," *Wirtschaft und Statistik*, no. 4 (1939), pp.121-123.

⁶ Nordrhein-Westfälisches Staatsarchiv Münster (hereafter NWSM), Bestand NS Frauenschaft Westfalen-Nord Nr.39, Else Vorwerck, "Hausfrau—Nahrungsfreiheit—Devisenfrage," (03.03.1936).

⁷ The most important early contributions on the subject include: Jill Stephenson, *Women in Nazi Society* (London and Totowa, NJ: Croom Helm and Barnes and Noble, 1975); Tim Mason, "Women in Germany, 1925-1940. Family, Welfare and Work," *History Workshop Journal*, no. I (1976), pp. 74-113 and no. II, pp.5-32; Dörte Winkler, *Frauenarbeit im 'Dritten Reich'* (Hamburg: Hoffmann and Campe, 1977); Jill Stephenson, *The Nazi Organization of Women* (London and Totowa, NJ: Croom Helm and Barnes and Noble 1981); Dorothee Klinsiek, *Die Frau im NS-Staat* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 1982); Renate Bridenthal, Atina Grossman and Marion Kaplan (eds.), *When Biology Became Destiny: Women in*

Nazi ideology assigned women an exalted place in German society because of their reproductive capabilities. In fact, most scholars agree that it was only in the realm of reproduction that women's experiences under Nazism differed markedly from other western, industrial, patriarchal societies.⁸ As historians have shown, this role also placed women at the center of Nazi racial planning. The regime's pronatalist policies to counter a declining birthrate were tightly interwoven with its antinatalist policies to strengthen the *Volksgemeinschaft* (national community) by eliminating racial, physical, social, and sexual "undesirables."⁹ By highlighting the inextricable link between what were once seen as clearly divided social "spheres of influence," scholars have shown the advantages of moving beyond the outmoded view of women as passive subjects in the "private sphere" of patriarchal society.

While it would be misleading to suggest that there was a single National Socialist ideology regarding the role and nature of woman, there was general agreement that they were to be first and foremost (married) mothers and homemakers. At the Nuremberg Party Rally in September 1936, Hitler reaffirmed his position on the importance of women as child bearers for the German nation when he compared a successful female lawyer and a mother of multiple, healthy children noting that the latter "has achieved more and done more!"¹⁰ Such views had long been touted by Nazi

Weimar and Nazi Germany (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1984); and Claudia Koonz, *Mothers in the Fatherland: Women, the Family and Nazi Politics* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1987).

⁸ Jill Stephenson, *Women in Nazi Germany* (London: Pearson Education Limited, 2001), p.5.

⁹ See Gisela Bock's pioneering essay "Racism and Sexism in Nazi Germany: Motherhood, Compulsory Sterilization, and the State" in Bridenthal, et al. *When Biology Became Destiny*, pp. 271-296. See also Michael Burleigh and Wolfgang Wippermann, *The Racial State: Germany 1933-1945* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

¹⁰ Document reprinted in Stephenson, *Women in Nazi Germany*, p.141.

ideologues; indeed core aspects of the Party platform were openly anti-feminist. The Nazis challenged women's emancipation during the Weimar Republic arguing that liberal democracy combined with urbanization and modernization during the 1920s had led the "new woman" astray from her "natural" role in society as mother and caretaker. Given the fact that women made up an increasingly larger part of the Nazi electorate from 1928 onwards, it is clear that this message was appealing not just to men.

Like all other aspects of Nazi ideology, their understanding of a woman's place in the nation was undergirded by their peculiar brand of socialism that emphasized the state above all else. Nazism held "liberal democracy" as inherently individualistic because self-interest seemed to trump national well-being. This was epitomized in Point 24 of the NSDAP's platform drawn up by Gottfried Feder in 1920 which boasted "public need before personal greed."¹¹ Accordingly, Germans had a responsibility to do their share for the *Volksgemeinschaft* and even personal choices, such as having children or how to run a household, were connected to notions of national sacrifice. This not only gauged the "value" of ordinary men and women in Nazi Germany based on how they benefited the state, but also politicized the private sphere and thereby erased perceived boundaries.¹²

Although being a prolific mother of hereditarily healthy children was central to the Nazi ideal of womanhood, so too was the ability to run a well-managed household and

¹¹ For further discussion of this point, see chapter 2 "No One Shall Go Hungry or Freeze': Social Welfare and Winter Relief." The NSDAP 25-point platform is published in Jeremy Noakes and Geoffrey Pridham (eds.), *Nazism, 1919-1945: A Documentary Reader* (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1983-1988), vol. 1, p.16.

¹² Nancy Reagan has shown that the state had little interest in housekeeping in Germany before 1914 which she attributes to demands placed on the civilian economy during WWI. See, *Sweeping the German Nation*, pp.72-78.

take care of her family. This is clearly exemplified by the well-known Cross of Honor of the German Mother. The Mother's Cross program was initiated in 1939 as a pronatalist propaganda ploy to reward women who bore four or more children. Modeled after the Iron Cross—the prestigious military decoration for German men—the Cross of Honor of the German Mother was awarded in bronze, silver, and gold for giving birth to four, six, and eight children respectively. Nearly five million women received this distinction in large, elaborate ceremonies.

What is often not stressed is that “hereditarily sound” children were not the only criterion for what in contemporary, popular parlance was known as the “rabbit award.” The household management and lifestyle of all applicants was also investigated by local Party officials using police, social welfare, housing, and Health Office records as well as input from neighbors.¹³ The Nazi vision of German domesticity was guided by the firmly entrenched bourgeois standards of an “ordered, squeaky clean and rationally managed” household that had been promoted by women's groups, social workers, and housewives' organizations since the nineteenth century.¹⁴ Any women found to have deviated from these standards could be denied the Mother Cross as they were not fit to serve as exemplary models of the *Volksgemeinschaft*.

While the Mother Cross was a source of pride for millions of women, for those deemed “unworthy” it may well have proved to be a bane to their existence as it brought unwanted attention from Nazi authorities. Not only could they be denied the distinction, but those deemed poor housekeepers could lose access to state benefits such as

¹³ Ibid., pp.132-133.

¹⁴ Ibid., pp.110-125.

Kinderbeihilfe, which was a grant in the form of cash or coupons given to *kinderreich* (literally, “child rich”) families as financial assistance.¹⁵ In exceptional cases where the household was repeatedly unclean, the children unkept, or the bills not paid on time, German housewives could be labeled “asocial” by Nazi authorities. Such was the case in 1941 when social workers denied one applicant from Detmold the Mother Cross because “the family is an asocial family, whose house is dirty and untidy...”¹⁶

“Asocial” was a very elastic, catch-all term which had long been in use in Europe before the Nazi seizure of power and was used most often to describe someone who shirked the social responsibilities of a “good citizen.”¹⁷ “Asocials” were basically everything that valuable, national comrades were not. Many different types of “undesirables,” from prostitutes, beggars, “Gypsies” and the unemployed to alcoholics, homosexuals, criminals, and single mothers, could be deemed “asocial” in the Third Reich. It is not surprising that a vague concept like “asociality” provoked differing views on how it should be dealt with.

On the one hand, the prevailing view of “asociality” by so-called experts, especially Nazi racial hygienists, was that it was an irreparable hereditary disorder. On the other hand, there were those who advocated for “resocialization” as the solution to the “asocial problem.” That is, it was believed they could be socially engineered,

¹⁵ On economic assistance for *kinderreich* families, see Lisa Pine, *Nazi Family Policy 1933-1945* (New York and Oxford: Berg, 1997), pp.109-112.

¹⁶ Quoted in Irmgard Weyrather, *Muttertag und Mutterkreuz. Der Kult um die ‘deutsche Mutter’ im Nationalsozialismus* (Frankfurt: Fischer Verlag, 1993), p.105.

¹⁷ For a discussion of “asociality” see Pine, *Nazi Family Policy*, pp.117-146; Klaus Scherer, ‘Asozial’ im Dritten Reich. *Die vergessenen Verfolgten* (Münster: Votum Verlag, 1990); and on social outcasts more generally see, Robert Gellately and Nathan Stolfus (eds.), *Social Outsiders in Nazi Germany* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2001).

usually by way of exclusion, hard physical labor, and strict surveillance, to become valuable members of the *Volksgemeinschaft*. This “engineering” most often took place in the form of a stint in a concentration camp like Dachau; resettlement in *ad hoc* facilities like that of the Columbia Haus prison in Berlin for those awaiting Gestapo interrogation; or by way of relocation to an “asocial colony” like the Hashude Settlement in Bremen.¹⁸

Formally called a *Wohnungsfürsorgeanstalt* or “welfare housing institution,” the experimental “asocial colony” known as Hashude was established under the auspices of welfare authorities in Bremen in October 1936. Its purpose was to gauge the feasibility of reintegrating “asocials” back into society as productive members of the national community. Because local welfare authorities in Bremen as well as Hans Haltermann, a member of the SS and originator of Hashude, firmly believed that the “asociality” of even a single parent tainted the rest of the family, entire families were interned so they could be “re-educated” as a group. In 1938, Haltermann denied the appeal of one woman because of the poor condition of the home, the uncleanliness of the family, and the failure to pay the rent on time. He noted that their internment would “certainly be beneficial” and would give them a chance to prove their worth to society.¹⁹ Modeled after a “controlled housing estate” that was constructed in The Netherlands in the style of a Benthamite prison²⁰, the panoptic layout ensured families were under constant

¹⁸ On what follows, see Lisa Pine, “Hashude: The Imprisonment of ‘Asocial’ Families in the Third Reich,” *German History*, no. 13 (1995), pp.182-197.

¹⁹ Pine, *Nazi Family Policy*, p.137-138.

²⁰ For more on Jeremy Bentham, see Janet Semple, *Bentham’s Prison: A Study of the Panopticon Penitentiary* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993).

surveillance from social workers and guards. Once inside the closed institution, welfare workers set out to “re-educate” all members of the family, but the emphasis fell on women. Small children were taken care of in the children’s home while older siblings were at school. While men were off working to pay for rent and the family’s living expenses, women were instructed on household management. The proper education of women as housewives and mothers had the utmost importance, according to authorities, because they were largely responsible for the children’s upbringing, for the health of the family through proper nutrition, and ensuring that the family stayed on budget.

Households were regularly inspected and those found not complying with the strict rules were punished with fines, extra work, or for repeated offenses, were even sent to the nearby forced labor camps at Teufelsmoor, Esterwegen, or Moringen. Whether or not a family was able to leave the Hashude Settlement after the typical twelve month “re-education” period was based on the assessment of welfare authorities. If families proved that they could be productive and responsible with clean, orderly households and well-cared for children, they were released. The incorrigible ones either had their internment extended or were transferred to different facilities. Some went directly to concentration camps.

Examples like those above demonstrate what were often glaring discrepancies between Nazi ideology and the realities of everyday life in Germany. They also show, however, that although motherhood was understood to be the supreme function of women, their role as homemaker was inextricably linked to the future of the Fatherland. Nazi leaders, like many from that generation, located the origins of countless

contemporary social ills in the loss of proper housekeeping skills as women increasingly sought employment outside of the home. Unable to juggle the dual roles that working and married life required, so went the thinking, it led to the neglect of children, spouses and the household and ultimately the breakdown of family and society. But it was not only for social policy that the Nazi regime emphasized the importance of domesticity. There were equally important economic interests as well.

German Housewives and the National Economy

It is well known that millions of women had a large impact on the Germany economy as workers in the textile, armament, and service industries. Millions more labored as domestics and in agriculture.²¹ But scholars have not yet fully explored the importance of German women as consumers and their impact on the economy. Indeed, this topic has received astonishingly little attention for the Nazi period.²² This is curious given the fact that many outside of and within the Nazi regime regarded female consumers as vital components of Germany's short and long-term economic plans. As a major trade organization put it, women are "nationally decisive" in two ways. First they are the "responsible guardian of German heredity and teacher of true German ways." And secondly, they are decisive as a "consumer in the German economy, as

²¹ For a useful overview, see Stephenson, *Women in Nazi Germany*, pp.51-69. See also Winkler, *Frauenarbeit im 'Dritten Reich'*; and Stefan Bajohr, *Die Hälfte der Fabrik. Geschichte der Frauenarbeit in Deutschland 1914-1945* (Marburg: Verlag Arbeiterbewegung und Gesellschaftswissenschaft, 1979).

²² Notable works that deal with women as consumers are Stephenson, *The Nazi Organization of Women*; Kate Lacey, *Feminine Frequencies: Gender, German Radio, and the Public Sphere, 1923-1945* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1996); Jennifer Loehlin, *From Rugs to Riches: Housework, Consumption, and Modernity in Germany* (New York: Berg, 1999); and Nancy Reagin, *Sweeping the German Nation*. Although not the focus of Reagin's excellent study, it does include some discussion of food and consumer demand. See also her "Marktordnung and Autarkic Housekeeping: Private Households under the Nazi Four Year Plan," *German History*, no. 19 (May 2001), pp.162-184.

provider for German consumers, and therefore responsible administrator of German national wealth at the shop counter.”²³

The image of German housewives at the “shop counter” or as “managers” of the nation’s wealth was both a powerful *motif* in Nazi propaganda and a reality the regime came to terms with early on. As we have already seen, Germany had long been economically constrained by domestic deficiencies in raw materials and foodstuffs. Indeed, on the eve of the First World War Germany imported one-third of its foodstuffs to cover need. This dependence made Germany vulnerable to an economic attack via Britain’s naval blockade which proved to be fateful. This was a lesson well-learned by Nazi leadership. After seizing the reins of power in 1933, Nazi leaders adopted an economic model which stressed self-sufficiency, protectionism, and stringent government control as the best road to recovery from the Depression. But autarky would take time and a solution to the “food question” was needed as soon as possible. Moreover, many like Walther Darré, who became the Reich Minister of Food and Agriculture in 1933, were skeptical that Germany, at least at its present size, could ever reach self-sufficiency in food production.²⁴ If German autonomy could not be achieved from the supply side, then demand would also have to be controlled.

In the militaristic language that was typical in the Third Reich housewives were often spoken of as soldiers who were fighting an economic war, not with guns, but with

²³BAL NS 5/VI, no. 6920, “Die Frau als Trägerin der Verantwortung für die Gesundung unserer Volkswirtschaft”, NS-HAGO Merkblatt 6 (no date).

²⁴ On this point, see John E. Farquharson, *The Plough and the Swastika: The NSDAP and Agriculture in Germany 1928-45* (London: Sage Publications, 1976).

“cooking spoons.”²⁵ Reasons for the focus on housewives were quite apparent. As one newspaper reported in 1934, from the 100 Reichsmarks (RM) that a husband brings home monthly, the housewife pays roughly 48 RM for food, 13 RM for clothes and washing, 10 RM for rent, 4 RM for heating and electric, and 4 RM for odds and ends around the apartment. “21 RM remain for him.” To put this in a larger perspective, the article ended by noting that of Germany’s 60 billion RM of monthly national income, “40 billion will be spent by the housewife.”²⁶ The regime wisely looked to Nazi women’s organizations to educate German housewives about economic realities and to attempt to manipulate their traditional patterns of consumption, which, as shown below, was not always successful.

Nazi Women’s Organizations and the Four Year Plan

Women’s associational life has a long and vibrant history in Germany. Community, religious, vocational, and political organizations offered working- and middle-class women important social activity outside the home. Many of these women’s groups flourished during the Weimar Republic. Large organizations such as those affiliated with the Catholic and Protestant Churches had as many as two million members by the late 1920s. Nazi women’s organizations also grew along with the fledgling party as it spread out from Bavaria. As local party branches were set up in

²⁵ Gertrud Scholtz-Klink, the head of all Nazi women’s organizations, used the metaphor often in speeches. See for example, Nachrichtendienst der Reichfrauenführung, *Einsatz der Frau in der Nation* (Berlin, 1937), p.6-8. „Wenn auch unsere Waffe auf diesem Gebiet nur der Kochlöffel ist, soll eine Durchschlagkraft nicht geringer sein als die anderer Waffen.“ See also, *Offizieller Bericht über den Verlauf des Reichparteitages mit sämtlichen Kongressreden* (Munich, 1938), p.235.

²⁶BAL NS 5 VI, no. 6920, “Die Frau in der Volkswirtschaft. Die Frau verwaltet das Volksvermögen,” (28.05.1934).

cities like Leipzig, Nuremberg, and Berlin, so too were women's auxiliary groups which were often established by the wives of Party men.²⁷

Early Nazi women's groups played an important role in the National Socialist revolution during the 1920s and 30s. They performed "womanly" (*weiblich*) tasks such as setting up and running soup kitchens for needy party members, first-aid for SA men injured during street brawls with communists, making uniforms and party regalia, as well as taking up and handing out donations. In the fall of 1931 Gau leaders ordered emergency kitchens to be set up in all of the large cities in Baden. By 1 October women were running a kitchen in the "communist quarter" of Mannheim because of the terrible unemployment there. The choice of location was calculated as the struggling party sought to win converts from the Left. A donated two-hundred liter "goulash cannon" made hearty soups and stews from donated food. Party members and SA men enjoyed hot lunches (for twenty cents or ten cents respectively) at dining tables that were "pleasantly decorated."²⁸

As the party grew, so too did its attractiveness to many German women. This was especially true for older, middle-class women who had endured the privations of the Great War and loss of loved ones, as well as had "witnessed" Germany's stab-in-the-back and subsequent turn to the left. Even some politically unaffiliated women's organizations, like Elsbeth Zander's Berlin-based *Deutscher Frauenorden* (Order of German Women or DFO), actively sought Nazi Party association. This was by no means a one-sided relationship though as many within the party, including Hitler and

²⁷ Jill Stephenson's *The Nazi Organization of Women* is still the best account of this early period.

²⁸ "Die Notküche der N.S.F. Mannheim", *NS Frauen-Warte*, no. 2 (July 1932), p.44.

Gregor Strasser, realized both the value and the potential of “women’s work.” But the multiplicity and the amorphous nature of the women’s organizations, many of which were openly hostile to others, caused problems for the NSDAP. As a result, all women’s organizations were brought under party control in 1931 with the creation of the *NS- Frauenschaft* (Nazi Women’s League or NSF) and Elsbeth Zander at the helm.

The NSF set about immediately in its roles as caretakers of party members and needy Germans struggling with the effects of the Depression. This was a function that not only won the party some support at the grassroots level, but also a role many women cherished. In late 1931 at a party rally in Berlin’s Sportpalast one member of the NSF witnessed more than a dozen SA men, flag carriers, and bodyguards “overcome with hunger and exhaustion during the festivities.” Calling for collective help from the NSF she concluded that this may “under no circumstances happen again” and that these men deserve a warm supper while working large events. “We, the N.S. Frauenschaft, have to take care, that the fitness to fight (*Kampffähigkeit*) and joy to fight (*Kampffreudigkeit*) will be maintained and strengthened. To overcome difficulties and never falter in this task, that is our struggle and our victory!” (emphasis in original).²⁹

After the seizure of power in 1933 all other women’s organizations quickly fell prey to the “co-ordination” policies of the regime. Groups considered objectionable, such as those with feminist, socialist and communist ties, were disbanded immediately. Those groups that survived the initial purges and wished to continue existence were absorbed into one of two Nazi women’s organizations, namely the NSF or the newly

²⁹ BAL NS 44/64, NSDAP Frauenschaft Gau Gross-Berlin an die Referentinnen der N.S. Frauenschaft bei den Sektionen der Bezirke Westen und Süden, Rundschreiben 6a, (09.11.1931). Emphasis in original.

created German Women's Bureau (Deutsches Frauenwerk). The DFW was a large umbrella organization created in 1933 and was comprised of various women's associations, some of which were "co-ordinated" Weimar groups and others quite new. While theoretically two separate entities, the former being a division of the party and the latter a registered organization, the appointment of Gertrud Scholtz-Klink to the head of both of these organizations in November 1934 made differences often very blurry.³⁰

Responsibility for organizing and training housewives fell upon the various departments of the DFW. One department of the DFW in particular, the *Abteilung für Volkswirtschaft/Hauswirtschaft* (hereafter Abt. V/H) or Department for National Economy/Home Economics was tasked with educating housewives on the economy.³¹ Given the polycratic and polymorphic nature of the NSDAP, there were also women's divisions in the Reich Food Estate and the Labor Front, for rural and employed housewives respectively, which undertook coordinated activities with the Abt. V/H. The education took a variety of forms, from cooking classes, demonstrations, lectures, exhibitions, and films, to recipe publications, advice centers, and radio broadcasts. The material stressed the importance of order, frugality, and cleanliness in the household as well as how to make the most out of what was available. While there were tips and training on everything from sewing and decorating to keeping rabbits and bees, the vast majority of material was geared toward food and nutrition.³²

³⁰ Dammer, "Kinder, Küche, Kriegsarbeit," p.220. Zander went into retirement in 1933.

³¹ Institut für Zeitgeschichte—München (hereafter IfZ) MS 332, Akz.6573/82, Else Vorwerck, "Hauswirtschaft in Selbstverwaltung. Ein erster großer Versuch 1934-1945" (1948).

³² See for example, BAL NS 37/1013, Reichsfrauenführung, "Richtlinien für die Zusammenarbeit zwischen der Reichsfrauenführung und dem Hauptamt der NSV" (no date).

Nazi women's organizations set about to "steer" the consumption patterns of housewives in a variety of ways: from shopping and storage tips to recipes and food preparation instruction.³³ First and foremost women were inundated with propaganda reminding them of their duty to buy "German." Publications tried to dispel myths about the inferiority of German goods as compared to foreign ones as well as educate women on the importance of their collective buying power. Housewives were often chastised for falsely believing that "one looks more beautiful or elegant in British or French clothes." It was suggested to "[m]ake it a principle to only buy German goods, which are not of inferior quality" and reminded them that they "do not need to be ashamed to have given a German worker his daily earnings."³⁴

The food supply issue, where women had the most influence, was a favored topic. The Nazi Party railed against what it saw as the backward and insufficient trade policies of the "Systemzeit." As one publication noted, Germany had lost 2,969 million Reichsmarks in 1930 to food imports and foreign agricultural investments, despite the fact that Germany's current agricultural status was in a position to cover a majority of food needs. And still yet the German market floods us with "foreign eggs from Poland (!) and Lithuania, even China while our farmers reduce acreage and must sell at crash prices. A change to this situation can only be carried out from the consumer side.

³³ BAL NS 5 VI/6846, Friedl Huber, "Verbrauchslenkung" (no date).

³⁴ *NS Frauen-Warte*, no. 1/1 (Juli 1932), p.14. For more on fashion, see Irene Guenther, *Nazi Chic? Fashioning Women in the Third Reich* (Oxford and New York: Berg, 2004).

Housewife, demand German goods, that way the market will be self-sufficient because of German products.”³⁵

If the general economic importance of using “homegrown” products was clear to Nazi officials, it was less obvious to many housewives whose shopping habits were based not solely on price, but also on availability and quality. Many times women chose imported goods not simply because of cheaper prices, but also because of limited domestic supply and deeply entrenched consumption patterns based on personal choice. In trying to steer housewives towards indigenous foodstuffs propaganda often emphasized “German quality.”³⁶ “The German producer eagerly strives, through a rigorous sorting of fruits, to keep poor quality products from the market... Take into consideration that foreign fruits are picked from the tree half ripe, so there is no doubt about the better quality of German fruit.” As a visitor to a traveling exhibition on German agriculture noted in the summer of 1933, one always hears “we have such exquisite things here in Germany?” They can not believe “that such excellent Swiss cheese is produced in our Allgäu” and “that we Germans have ‘specialty’ cheese producers that won the highest accolades at the last Gourmet Food Exhibition in Paris.”³⁷

Buying “German”, not surprisingly, was also undergirded by anti-Semitism as were all aspects of Nazi ideology. Women were urged not to buy “Jewish” products or

³⁵ *NS Frauen-Warte*, *Ibid.*, p. 14-15. Advertisements also urged housewives to buy German. For example, see advertisements appearing shortly before Easter reminding women to pay the wages of Germans and not foreigners by purchasing “German” eggs. See, *NS Frauen-Warte*, no. 19/1 (April 1933).

³⁶ For more on this topic, see Alf Lüdtke, “The ‘Honor of Labor:’ Industrial Workers and the Power of Symbols under National Socialism,” in David F. Crew (ed.), *Nazism and German Society: 1933-1945* (New York: Routledge, 1994).

³⁷ *NS Frauen-Warte*, no. 1/1 (Juli 1932), p.15. Allgäu is an Alpine region of southwestern Bavaria and southeastern Baden-Württemberg long famous for its cheese and dairy products.

shop at stores owned by Jews as it would eventually yoke Germans into an economic system run by Jews wielding the “hunger whip.”³⁸ A headline in the *Schlesische Zeitung* in 1937 read “An Appeal to the German Women: Buy German or else International Jewry will be Abetted.”³⁹ Jews were characterized as a “parasite among nations” whose only goal to subjugate them and make them “timid slaves.” The Nazis believed that the German women “could battle Jewry most effectively through her [consumer] behavior.” A common Party slogan, apparently influenced by the Gospel of Matthew, put it more pointedly by reminding national comrades that “whoever eats from Jews, dies from it.”⁴⁰ (*Wer von Juden frisst, stirbt daran.*)

Despite all the effort from the regime and from Nazi women’s organizations to boycott “Jewish” goods, there is strong evidence to suggest that these actions were partly unsuccessful. One *Gauamtsleiter* reported that even after four years of National Socialist government there were still here in Breslau “a number of *Judenknechte* (slaves of Jews) who do not balk at buying from Jews.”⁴¹ Reports from the *NS Frauenschaft* noted that even female party members time after time were warned about buying from Jews.⁴² This is perhaps not surprising given that no less a figure than Hermann Göring

³⁸ *NS Frauen-Warte*, no. 18/11 (August 1943), p.327. This article “Die Hungerpeitsche” is of course drawing on the long held belief among anti-Semites that there was an international Jewish plot to take over the world. This belief was also applied to the world’s food supply by many Nazi officials, perhaps most importantly by Reich Food Minister Walther Darré.

³⁹ BAL NS 5 VI/6921, *Schlesische Zeitung*, “Eine Mahnung an die deutsche Frau. Kaufe bei Deutschen, sonst wird das internationale Judentum unterstützt,” (26.01.1937).

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

⁴² Cf., Reagin, *Sweeping the German Nation*, p.154.

was seen in 1936 patronizing a Jewish-owned carpet store in Munich where he bought two pieces for a whopping 36,000 Reichsmarks.⁴³

Certainly the most public example of the regime's failure to quickly squeeze Germany's Jews out of the economy came with the national boycott in April 1933. Nazi Propaganda Minister Joseph Goebbels gave a speech in Berlin's Lustgarten which initiated this first nationwide, planned action against Jews in Nazi Germany.⁴⁴ At Hitler's request, Germans were to simultaneously boycott all Jewish-owned businesses as a "defensive measure" to protect German labor. SA men and Hitler Youth members menacingly stood outside of businesses with anti-Semitic posters and placards bearing slogans such as "Germans! Defend yourselves! Buy only at German shops!" or "Don't Buy from Jews." The Star of David was painted on windows and doors in an attempt to shame and ostracize. Verbal and even physical harassment of customers was not rare.

The boycott, however, officially only lasted a day as most Germans were not keen on the disruption and foreign reactions were harsh. Moreover, the plan had not been well thought through. Officials in the Ministry of Economics soon realized that closing down Jewish-owned businesses would be detrimental to Germany's already depressed economy as they employed many thousands of Germans. Although the regime was forced to back-peddle on this issue for the time being, it set a dangerous precedent of state-sanctioned anti-Semitic persecution in Germany and ultimately

⁴³ Richard Evans, *The Third Reich in Power* (New York: Penguin Press, 2005), p.383.

⁴⁴ On the boycott, see Avraham Barkai, *From Boycott to Annihilation: The Economic Struggle of German Jews 1933-1943*. Translated by William Templer (Hanover, N.H.: University Press of New England, 1989), pp.13-53. For an examination that places the boycott in the larger context of the German population's general knowledge of the Holocaust, see Peter Longerich, *"Davon haben wir nichts gewusst!" Die Deutschen und die Judenverfolgung 1933-1945* (Munich: Siedler Verlag, 2006), especially pp.55-74.

allowed for local Party groups to continue to harass, pressure, and discriminate against Jewish business owners in a variety of ways.⁴⁵

Once housewives were buying “German” products, at least theoretically, Abt. V/H stepped in to ensure the right “German” products were being purchased. This began simply enough with a broad-based, public education campaign to teach women on how to plan their menus and shop seasonally. Countless publications were aimed at women who either naively or carelessly committed “home economic household sins.” Much of it boiled down to simple market economics. Women were urged to buy what was in ample supply because it was most often a good value. Put bluntly, “[i]f now women adjust their menu plan according to the seasons, they will no longer have to groan about fruits and vegetables that are too expensive or too scarce.”⁴⁶ Weekly and monthly menu plans were published in newspapers and magazines as a helpful guide. Not only did they offer meal suggestions, but also included pricing down to the penny for each dish and ingredient, earning dutiful housewives the respectful moniker “number cruncher” (*Rechenkünstlerin*).⁴⁷

Weekly Menu Plan

Monday: Left over sauerbraten, warm potato dumplings, fruit salad

Tuesday: Rice soup, fish poached in an onion sauce

Wednesday: Spinach soup, quick noodles

Thursday: Milk soup, fried liver with apples, potato porridge

⁴⁵ On this point, see Peter Longerich, *Politik der Vernichtung. Eine Gesamtdarstellung der nationalsozialistischen Judenverfolgung* (Munich: Piper, 1998).

⁴⁶ BAL NS 5 VI/6922, “Hausfrauen im Dienste der Volkswirtschaft,” (30.07.1938).

⁴⁷ See for example, *NS Frauen-Warte*, no. 1/1 (July 1932), p.22.

Friday: Sauerkraut soup, flour pudding with fruit sauce/marmalade
Saturday: Carrot and potato stew with bacon
Sunday: Cups of chicken consommé, pork roulades, beans
Second Festive Day: Chicken Fricassee⁴⁸

Housewives were to also carefully consider how best to go about preparing for and carrying out their trips to the market. “Proper shopping”, as one cook book put it, “is very important and not all that easy.”⁴⁹ As the *Kölnische Zeitung* reported in 1937, female consumers were integral to the success of the Four-Year Plan by feeding their families economically; through the proper management of household goods; and through “purposeful shopping.”⁵⁰ Not only did this mean that housewives were to plan meals according to budget and season always asking themselves “how have I managed the income of my husband, my family?”, but they were also supposed to keep fellow members of the *Volksgemeinschaft* in mind.⁵¹ This meant that women were never to hoard and were to shop at appropriate times. Middle class women who could afford “top shelf products” (*Spitzenerzeugnisse*) were not to buy up the cheap products from “national comrades with less purchasing power” (*den weniger kaufkräftigen*

⁴⁸ BAL NS 44/44 Reichsfrauenführung, menu given over Hamburg radio on 4 April, 1936.

⁴⁹ Reichsausschuss für volkswirtschaftliche Aufklärung (Schriftenreihe für die praktische Frau), *Gut Kochen! Gut Wirtschaften! Guter Einkauf, Gesunde Kost, Bewährte Rezepte für: Gemüse, Salate, Fleisch, Fisch, Kartoffeln, Obst, Hülsenfrüchte, Eier u. dgl.* (1935), p.3.

⁵⁰ BAL NS 5 VI/6929, “Das Wirtschaften der Hausfrau im Haushalt,” (15.03.1937).

⁵¹ BAL NS 5 VI/6929, “‘Volkswirtschaft—Hauswirtschaft’ legt Rechenschaftsbericht vor,” (05.01.1939).

Volksgenossen).⁵² Employed women complained often and bitterly, especially during the war, that they were greeted by long lines and depleted stocks at the markets after work because of jobless and middle-class housewives. And women were often admonished for improper shopping behavior. Officials in the women's organizations even admitted that "[e]xperience has shown that what is ample and at a good price, will mostly not be bought. After all the fresh fruit has been bought up first, housewives stand in line, all the while there are fresh vegetables, like lettuce, lying there." They even acknowledged the need "to induce artificial shortages in order to provide incentives for buying."⁵³

While getting women to plan menus based on supply would alleviate some of the strains on the market, it was certainly not enough because shortages of certain foodstuffs remained a problem throughout the Third Reich. This was especially true for fats of all types and meats. Since production increases were in most instances either not an option or would take time, even more so as the regime stockpiled food in preparation for war after 1936, the NSDAP set about to promote *ersatz* and underused products that could "fill in the gaps" and, at least in their thinking, retain a reasonable standard of living.

Changing the German Diet

The diet of most Germans was both humble and monotonous. Starches, such as breads made of rye flour and potatoes, were consumed in the largest quantities. Meats,

⁵² Reichsnährstand unter Mitwirkung der Reichsarbeitsgemeinschaft für Volksernährung und der Abteilung Volkswirtschaft—Hauswirtschaft, *Ernährungsdienst*, no.11 (1936), p.9.

⁵³ BAL NS 44/48, Reichsfrauenführung Hauptabteilung Presse und Propaganda, Pressematerial "Appell an die Einsicht," (02.08.1940).

when available and affordable, made up a substantial part of the German diet as well. This consisted largely of pork, especially lesser quality cuts and sausages, but also small amounts of beef, poultry, or game. Native vegetables, like cabbage, kohlrabi, and turnips found their way to tables most regularly. Fruits were most often consumed in the form of preserves and jams to moisten dry bread. Small quantities of pork fat, butter and margarine were used for cooking and consumption. This was all washed down with water, milk, coffee or coffee substitutes, or beer.

It is important to keep in mind, however, that variation in regional tastes and cuisine meant that these basic foodstuffs were consumed in different quantities. Whereas Bavarians were known for having some the highest rates of meat consumption, they consumed less than half the amount of potatoes as most other German states. This was largely due to the popularity of dumplings and other flour-based dishes in the cuisine. Saxons and Brandenburgers consumed over three times as much butter as Rhinelanders. A four-person family in Westphalia ate an average of eighteen kilos of bacon per annum, but Bavarians ate negligible amounts.⁵⁴

Like the rest of the western world, industrialization brought dramatic changes to German foodways in the nineteenth century. As rural Germans moved *en masse* to cities in search of better wages, the inability of farmers to meet urban demand became ever clearer. At the beginning of the nineteenth century, less than ten percent of Germans lived in cities. By the 1930s, nearly forty percent of the population lived in

⁵⁴ Udo Tornau, "Verbrauchsstatistik und Ernährung," in *Beiträge zur Ernährungsstatistik* (Beihefte zur Zeitschrift "Die Ernährung"), vol. 4, no. 1, (Leipzig: Verlag von Ambrosius Barth, 1938), pp.26-27.

urban areas. Moreover, a quarter of the population lived in cities with more than 100,000 inhabitants.⁵⁵ Nearly six percent of all Germans lived in Berlin.

Because it was impossible for cities to feed themselves, food itself was industrialized. Production and supply intensified through mechanization and scientific advancements. Technology instigated a restructuring of distribution systems as the distance between producer and consumer increased. Urban workers, both men and women, many of whom had been used to the natural rhythms of rural life, now lived by the clock.⁵⁶ Long hours meant that not only did mealtime structures change, but also that city dwellers short on time, money, and energy increasingly depended on cheaper processed foods. With this dependence came the very real risks of food adulteration as producers, middlemen, and sellers tried to eke out extra profits by artificially covering up unwanted smells, tastes, and colors or by increasing volume or weight.⁵⁷

One of the byproducts of the nineteenth-century “food revolution” in Germany was a dramatic change in meat consumption. Generally speaking, meat consumption nearly tripled between 1800 and the eve of the First World War. Germans were eating roughly fifty kilos per person per year by 1900. This amount would only be surpassed again by West Germany during the *Fresswelle* of the late 1950s. Meat, above all pork, became an important source of protein and fat for Germans, even the urban poor. In

⁵⁵ See Friedrich Aeroboe, *Der Einfluss des Krieges auf die landwirtschaftliche Produktion in Deutschland* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 1927).

⁵⁶ On the relationship between the perception of time and technology, see Wolfgang Schivelbusch, *The Railway Journey: The Industrialization of Time and Space in the Nineteenth Century* (University of California Press, 1987).

⁵⁷ For a brief introduction, see Hans J. Teuteberg, “Der Kampf gegen die Lebensmittelverfälschungen,” in Hans J. Teuteberg and Günther Wiegmann (eds.), *Unsere tägliche Kost. Geschichte und regionale Prägung* (Münster: F. Coppenrath Verlag, 1986), pp. 371-377. This was confined to the nineteenth century.

his study of nutrition during WWI, the famous German physiologist Max Rubner called meat the “food of the people” and noted that rich and poor ate it regularly. While it never outstripped potatoes or bread in the German diet, it held both physiological as well as symbolic importance as a marker of prosperity. Hence the popular adage “better a louse in the cabbage than no meat at all.”⁵⁸

The upswing in meat consumption during the nineteenth century was also accompanied by a similar increase in fats consumption. In the first decade of the twentieth century Germans ate as much as twenty kilos of pure fat (butter, lard, suet, margarine, etc.) yearly.⁵⁹ This figure does not include fats consumed from meats or dairy products. Many German dishes, especially in northern Germany, called for the use of butter or lard in preparation giving them a heartiness and richness that appealed to the northern German palate.⁶⁰ Pieces of bread smeared heavily with butter or lard (known as *Stullen*) were a staple in the working class diet.⁶¹ Like meat, fats, and especially butter, carried cultural notions of luxury and wealth. Shortages of these foodstuffs during World War One were particularly galling for many Germans.⁶² Similar

⁵⁸ Davis, *Home Fires Burning*, p.69.

⁵⁹ Hans von der Decken, “Die Verschiebungen beim Nahrungsmittelverbrauch seit der Vorkriegszeit. Über die Notwendigkeit verschärfter Kritik bei der Auswertung von Statistiken,” *Die Ernährung*, vol. 3, no. 2 (1937), pp. 113-122. For a good introduction to the history of margarine, see Birgit Pelzer and Reinhold Reith, *Margarine: Die Karriere der Kunstbutter* (Berlin: Klaus Wagenbach Verlag, 2001).

⁶⁰ Berliners consumed as much as three times the national average of butter. As a result, during the Third Reich Berlin’s housewives were periodically criticized for causing butter shortages. See for example, NWSM, Bestand NS Frauenschaft Westfalen-Nord Nr. 90, DFF Frauenwerk Abt. V/H. Kreis Lüdinghausen an die Ortssachbearbeiterinnen der Abt. V/H im Kr. Lüdinghausen, (10.12.1935).

⁶¹ The German Labor Front actually launched a campaign called “Fight against the Sandwich” to improve the health and efficiency of workers. It was also, not surprisingly, an attempt to further steer consumption away from scarce foodstuffs. See chapter 5 below.

⁶² See Davis, *Home Fires Burning*, pp.69-78.

consumption levels returned during the interwar period but dipped dramatically during in the Depression years. This was but one of many problems the NSDAP would inherit as Germans still wanted what had been for generations integral parts of the their diet.

When the Nazi regime set out to find a solution to the “food question,” filling the “fat gap” posed by far the greatest problem. Even after the “food revolution” Germany never domestically produced enough fats to cover needs and relied heavily on imports, especially from Denmark, Sweden, and Holland. In 1936 Germany imported some 550 million RM worth of butter alone.⁶³ Already a year into the Four-Year Plan and with significant attempts to increase production in place, Germany could still only cover roughly half of required fats through domestic supplies.⁶⁴ Steering consumption offered the only viable solution to the fats problem and the women of Abt. V/H set in motion to provide fat-saving tips and especially promote alternative products.

Cooking demonstrations were offered by the tens of thousands across Germany in a variety of venues. At the “Miracle of Life” exhibition near Berlin’s radio tower the women of the Abt. V/H prepared food as “unending questions came from the audience.” During a dough-kneading demonstration the apprentice was “not allowed to scatter a speck of butter or a grain of flour.” The audience, made up of young couples, “spirited male companions,” and experienced women, looked on intently as those women “showed the work of the German housewife in such popular, life-like form that every one

⁶³ BAL R 16/1, Reichsnährstand, Denkschrift, “Wie die Lücke in der deutschen Speisefettversorgung geschlossen werden?” (no date).

⁶⁴ Hermann Ertel, *Die Grundlagen der deutschen Volksernährung. Zugleich ein Überblick über Tagesfragen der Ernährung* (Leipzig: Metzger & Wittig, 1938), p.63.

unintentionally said ‘that’s me...’ (Das geht mich an...) ⁶⁵ Women’s magazines routinely offered “practical tips” for saving fat. Some were commonsensical like softening and whipping butter or margarine so that it could be easily spread in a very fine layer across the bread. Others were far more imaginative. One fat-saving tip called for halving an onion, dipping the cut-side into fat, and grating it into the pan before making pancakes. Another reminded women never to stir soups or sauces with a wooden spoon as it would soak up small amounts of fat. ⁶⁶ If butter turned rancid, it was never to be thrown away. Women were instructed to knead the butter in a liter of water mixed with baking soda (*Natron*) or vinegar, rinse and use. For the housewife who did not have any sour cream one could simply and quickly make “fake cream.” Just beat a mixture of flour and milk until smooth and add a couple of tablespoons of lemon juice or vinegar. ⁶⁷

Because of the constant shortages of fat throughout the Third Reich much of the work of women’s organizations went to promoting ersatz products and none more so than *Quark* (curd cheese). A fresh cheese made simply by heating and constantly stirring the soured milk left over from the butter churning process, *Quark* was championed as the perfect substitute. Not only was production cheap (the soured milk had in the past been mixed in with feed for livestock), but its creamy texture could be easily spread on bread in place of lard or butter or used for a variety of dips and desserts. Moreover, its high milk protein content made it a nutritious alternative to

⁶⁵ BAL NS 5 VI/6928 “Das geht mich an. Meisterin und Lehrling kochen,” (29.04.1935).

⁶⁶ Such tips were published routinely in the *NS Frauen-Warte*.

⁶⁷ These come from “Wenn man Pech in der Küche hat,” in *Vobachs Frauenzeitung*, no. 4 (Jan. 1933), p.12.

meat.⁶⁸ Little known to German urbanites at the time, the women from the Abt. V/H developed thousands of recipes, handed out samples, offered cooking courses, and gave advice over the radio as well as through its consultation offices on the use of *Quark* in the kitchen. The advertising campaign was by all accounts successful. At the national meeting of German Advertising in late October 1937 State Secretary Herbert Backe noted that “the consumption of *Quark* is now roughly 60 percent higher than at the beginning of the *Quark* publicity [campaign].”⁶⁹ In 1937 alone the Abt. V/H offered 2,742 cooking classes devoted solely to *Quark* with 68,610 participants.⁷⁰ Doubtless the unavailability of other options played a role in its success.

While not as dire as the dearth of fats, periodic shortages of meats of all types plagued Germany as well during the 1930s and worsened substantially during the war. The nation of meat-eaters consumed some 2.7 million tons in 1932. This number increased to 3.1 million tons by 1937. 1.9 million tons of this was pork. This amounted to roughly 46.3 kilos of meat per person.⁷¹ Domestic production covered almost ninety percent of need but relied on imports for the rest. Turning away from imported goods under the Four-Year Plan the Nazi regime promoted fish as the best alternative for both

⁶⁸ *Für wenig Geld eine gute Ernährung*, p.46. This was often wishful thinking.

⁶⁹ “Ernährungspolitik und Werbung”, “Kowo” *Die Kolonialwaren- und Feinkost-Woche*, no. 40 (1937), pp.3. It is interesting to note that *Quark* consumption has remained high in Germany since 1930s suggesting that Nazi foodways survived *Stunde Null*. Germans produce and eat more cheese per capita than any other country. Half of all cheese produced in Germany today is *Quark*.

⁷⁰ Erika Kirmsse, *Deutsches Frauenschaffen. Jahrbuch der Reichsfrauenführung 1939*. (Dortmund: Westfalen-Verlag G.m.b.H, 1939), p.35.

⁷¹ “Die Entwicklung des Lebensmittelverbrauchs im Jahre 1937”, *Die Gaststätte*, no. 1 (1938). Hans Jürgen Teuteberg has suggested that meat consumption was as high as fifty three kilos per person by 1938. It should be noted that his figures include offal. See Teuteberg, “Der Verzehr von Nahrungsmittel in Deutschland pro Kopf und Jahr seit Beginn der Industrialisierung (1850-1975): Versuch einer quantitativen Langzeit,” *Archiv für Sozialgeschichte*, vol. 19 (1975), pp. 331-388.

economic and health reasons. Health reformers and nutritionists had long been throwing light on the deleterious effects of a high meat and fat diet. This was for one contemporary simply one of the “main sins of modern living.”⁷²

Fish had for centuries, however, played only a minor role in the diet of Germans and other central Europeans. While it held religious significance during fasting periods, Germans living inland ate relatively little fish. Freshwater fish was expensive and so only the well to do consumed it with any regularity. In the pre-industrial age, poor transportation systems and ineffective means of preservation meant saltwater fish stayed near the coast. Canned sardines, herring, salmon, and crab were produced in the first decades of the nineteenth century and did make it inland, but not in significant quantities. This began to change slowly only in the late nineteenth century with refrigeration, better transport options, as well as improved preservation techniques learned from the Norwegians. By the end of the century, inexpensive fish products, above all herring, became viable substitutes for pricey meats for the working poor. Although cheap, fish was not particularly filling, especially for manual laborers. Therefore, producers and fishmongers began to use smoke to increase its satiability. It was during this time that the kipper (*Bückling*) became popular in Germany.⁷³

⁷² Hanns Müller, “Ernährungsreform?,” *Volksgesundheitswacht*, no. 7 (1934), p. 11. On the nutrition reform movement in Germany, see Jörg Melzer, *Vollwerternährung: Diätetik, Naturheilkunde, Nationalsozialismus, Sozialer Anspruch* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner, 2003). Also see my discussion of nutrition, health, and performance in chapter 5.

⁷³ Günther Wiegelmann and Annette Mauss, “Fischversorgung und Fischspeisen im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert. Versuch einer quantitativen Analyse,” in Teuteberg and Wiegelmann *Unsere tägliche Kost*, p. 83. Herring was promoted above all as the ideal fish by the Nazis. It was very cheap and had a high fat content which meant it was more satiating.

Nonetheless, even by the 1920s fish consumption remained comparatively low in Germany. Where as northern Germans and East Prussians had the highest annual consumption rates at 10-12 kg per head, they still ate four times as much meat. In Baden and Bavaria annual rates were less than three kilos per person.⁷⁴ The British ate more than double the amount of fish as the Germans. Yet the Nazis pushed for higher fish consumption for a variety of reasons, not just as a substitute for meat. First, eating more fish made good economic sense. The German fishing industry had been ailing for decades and tens of thousands of fishing families on the North Sea and Baltic coasts were barely eking out an existence. A little more than half of Germany's fishing fleet was docked because sales from catches often could not cover sailing costs. As one commenter put it, "poverty and hardship reigned in all German fishing villages and harbors."⁷⁵ Moreover, fish was a healthy, protein and vitamin-packed food. If Germans increased fish consumption to at least one time per week, they would not only be contributing to their physical health, but also the economic health of the nation by putting Germans back to work, resuscitating a dying sector, and relieving some of the burdens on the meat supply.

Not only did the fishing industry benefit from large government purchases for use during the Winter Relief campaigns⁷⁶, but also because of the Nazi women's groups enthusiastic promotion of seafood consumption. By offering thousands of cooking courses, demonstrations, and recipe publications, these women helped raise levels of

⁷⁴ Ibid. p.85.

⁷⁵ "Jede Woche einmal Fisch!," *Die Küche*, no.1 (1934), p.3.

⁷⁶ See chapter 3.

consumption drastically. These women worked very closely with the fishing industry in the major ports of Wesermünde, Bremerhaven, Cuxhaven, and Altona. Members of the Abt. V/H often participated in training courses offered by individual companies or the Fish Market Administration to hone their skills and expand their knowledge. In July 1936 twenty women from the Gau Mecklenburg-Lübeck participated in the weekly course offered by the United Fish Market of Altona/Hamburg. The women toured the canning facilities, market, harbor, and museum to learn all they could about varieties of fish, fishing techniques, and preservation. They even attended cooking courses led by one Ms. Alberti who stressed that they need not learn anything new because fish could be substituted for meat in any dish.⁷⁷ It was their job first of all to get housewives to put more fish on the family's table. "Such an adjustment to the menu plan" reported one publication, is "socialism of the deed."⁷⁸

The Abt. V/H itself offered 7,187 fish cookery classes in 1937 with 159,556 women taking part. Between January and July of 1938 some 4500 courses had already taken place suggesting that popularity was growing. A few women, in coordination with the Reich Fishery Committee, even toured cities and villages in a "mobile kitchen" measuring ten meters long, painted sea green, and sporting fish cutouts on the top (Verdeck).⁷⁹ Brochures like "Fish 25 Ways" (*25 mal Fisch*), "Salted Herring of a Different Kind" (*Salzhering einmal anders*), and "Fish Especially in Summer" (*Fisch*

⁷⁷ BAL NS 5 VI/6929, "Eine mecklenburgische Teilnehmerin erzählt "Neues aus dem Fischlehrkursus. Müssen wir uns umstellen in der Ernährung?," (7.7.1936).

⁷⁸ Ibid., "Man nehme einen Fisch... Seefischgerichte, die Vorurteile und Lügen strafen—Hochseefischerei und Speisezettel—Auf die Einsicht kommt es an," (19.4.1937).

⁷⁹ "Jede Woche einmal Fisch," *Die Küche*, no.1 (1938), pp.1-6.

gerade im Sommer) had reached a circulation of almost five million by 1938. This did not include the four million copies of the popular recipe pamphlet "*Herring—Kipper*" already in circulation.⁸⁰ All the effort it seems paid off as it was repeatedly claimed that fish production and consumption in Germany doubled between 1930 and 1936 and quintupled since the First World War.⁸¹ It also did not hurt that the Reichsbahn gave special shipping rates for fish.⁸² In 1936 with the advent of the Four-Year Plan nineteen new fishing trawlers were put into the waters and an additional forty trawlers were commissioned in 1937. Deep sea fishing catches alone increased from 345,600 tons in 1935 to 421,300 tons in 1936.

The Nazis sent expeditions in the late 1930s to investigate the viability of building a West African fishery, harbor, and an industrial complex on Jandia in the Canary Islands. Positive catch reports, detailed maps, land and agricultural surveys as well as construction estimates by Siemens Bau Union suggest that plans were moving forward in 1939, but were undoubtedly cut short by the outbreak of war.⁸³

Although the seas played an increasingly important role in the Four-Year Plan in providing a substitute for meats in the Third Reich, they also played an important role in "plugging the fat gap" by providing whale oil. The origins of whaling in Germany are

⁸⁰ Kirmsse, *Deutsches Frauenschaffen*, p. 35. For local women's reports on the success of the fish cooking classes, even in the countryside, see NWSM, Bestand NS Frauenschaft Westfalen-Nord Nr. 340.

⁸¹ Johannes Lundbeck, "Der Fischbestand als Produktionsgrundlage," in *Der Fisch in der neuzeitlichen Ernährung* (Beiheft zur Zeitschrift "Die Ernährung"), no. 3 (1938) pp. 7-9. Similar claims are found in Walther Hoffman, *Das Wachstum der deutschen Wirtschaft seit der Mitte des 19. Jahrhunderts* (Berlin: Springer-Verlag, 1965).

⁸² Costs for shipping fish 400 kilometers from Hamburg to Cologne were about 2 Reichsmarks per 100 kilos. See "Fischversorgung auf neuen Wegen," *Arbeitertum*, no. 5 (1939), pp. 12-14.

⁸³ On this, see folder BAL R 26 IV/6, Geschäftsgruppe Ernährung.

somewhat obscure but date back at least to the early seventeenth century and grew precipitously in Hamburg, Bremen, Lübeck, and Altona in the following century and a half. However, after the Franco-Prussian War in 1870-1871 German whaling almost went extinct as the strength of German currency allowed for imports of large quantities of fats rather cheaply and thus making profit margins for domestic oil to shrink significantly. Initiatives by new companies, like the Germania Corporation in Hamburg and the German South-West African Whaling Corporation, despite the latter's geographic advantage of being within sailing distance of the whale-rich waters of the Arctic sea, were unsuccessful with the outbreak of hostilities again in 1914. The Nazis, however, would come to greatly expand on these early achievements in a few short years.

Attention turned toward whaling in 1936 as the regime sought to find new ways find "nutritional freedom" under the Four-Year Plan and a solution to the "fats question." The seas, frequently spoken of as Germany's only remaining "colony," held promise. Whereas whale oil had earlier been used largely for technical purposes, after World War One it became one of the most important raw materials in margarine production. This was due in no small part to German chemist Wilhelm Normann's patenting of an oil hydrogenation method in 1902. Shortly thereafter the margarine industry in Germany expanded with the emergence of companies like Vitello, Sana, Sanello, and Rama. Margarine consumption in Germany, like many countries in northern Europe with a fondness for butter, was very high. This was especially true among the working class because it could be purchased for half the price of butter. Margarine consumption in Germany was so high that it became the largest consumer of whale oil on earth with

some 200,000 tons annually.⁸⁴ The vast majority of which was imported from the world's whaling leader, Norway, and cost after currency exchange roughly sixty million Reichsmarks annually.

Many in the German government and the whaling industry sought to redress this problem by exploiting the swimming mammal. But this was not easy. On the one hand, Germany lacked a proper whaling infrastructure. Most of the whale research and hunting undertaken by Germans during the 1920s and early 30s was done on Norwegian expeditions as Germany did not have a suitable fleet. Change was not long in coming though. In 1936 Germany sent its first and only fleet into the Antarctic brandishing Nazi flags. Just a year later, not only was an Institute for Whale Research set up in Hamburg on orders from the Ministry for Food and Agriculture, but also four full fleets sailed into the icy waters of the Arctic harvesting some four thousand whales and 84,000 tons of oil.⁸⁵

On the other hand, Germany's whaling industry faced problems beyond sourcing. Whale oil, often called "Tran,"⁸⁶ was infamous for its disagreeable smell and taste and was unappetizing to the German palate. Moreover, whale oil goes rancid in minutes once in contact with air. Teams of German scientists and researchers in the 1920s and

⁸⁴ Fritz Lücke, "Fischansteigerung—ein Mittel zur Nahrungssicherung" in *Aufgaben und Ergebnisse zeitgemäßer Ernährungsforschung* (Leipzig: Verlag von Johann Ambrosius Barth, 1937), p.23.

⁸⁵ On this point, see "Die Bedeutung des Wales für die Volksernährung." *Zeitschrift für Gemeinschaftsverpflegung*, vol. 21, no. 9, pp.145-146.

⁸⁶ It appears that "Tran" is originally a Dutch word that made its ways in to German and English sometime in the late seventeenth or early eighteenth century. On this point see Carl Heinrich Hudtwalcker, *Der Walfang als volkswirtschaftliches Problem* (Ph.D Dissertation: Munich, 1935), p.31.

30s pioneered methods of neutralizing unwanted odors and flavors in whale oil.⁸⁷ By the late 1930s, most margarine in Germany was produced using roughly twenty-five percent whale oil and seventy-five percent vegetable oil. Some was even made entirely from a mixture of hydrogenated and non-hydrogenated whale oil.

In the spirit of stopping wastage under the Four-Year Plan a good deal of the efforts went towards using as much of the whale as possible. Traditionally, only the blubber was cut from the back and belly of harpooned whales and the rest of the carcass was simply thrown overboard. This practice, termed "*Raubbau*" or "exploitation" by critics, made use of only twenty percent of the animal. During the 1930s Germans began utilizing much more of the whale, especially the meat, bones, and organs, although the trace amounts of oil found in these parts made it difficult as they too quickly turned.⁸⁸ A good indicator of the advances made can be seen through the pride and joy of the German whaling fleet, namely the 22,000 ton "Walter Rau" processing ship built in 1937.

Named after the owner of a large margarine manufacturing firm, this "swimming factory" was outfitted in the "most modern ways" by the German Labor Front's department Beauty of Labor.⁸⁹ Built by the Deutsche Werft Company in Hamburg, the "Walter Rau" was the first "cooking ship" of its kind, a combination of both tanker and factory. Outfitted with eight blubber and seven bone cookers as well as holding tanks for 19,000 tons of oil, the ship could run continuous twenty-four hour shifts. The best

⁸⁷ Wegener, "Die Bedeutung des Walfanges für die deutsche Ernährung," *Fette und Seifen*, no. 1 (1938), pp.17-18.

⁸⁸ H. Schmalfuß and H. Werner, "Walfleischverwertung," *Fette und Seifen*, no. 1 (1938), pp.61-63.

⁸⁹ BAL NS 5 VI/6268, "Schönheit der Arbeit in der deutschen Walfangflotte."

cuts of meat were flash frozen and stored in freezers to be sold in stores. Lesser cuts were cubed “goulash” style, cooked, and placed in sterilized tins in the onboard cannery. Two further separate operations produced blood meal and feed meal by drying meat scraps and innards, grinding, and packaging them for animal fodder. Liquids produced during cooking and drying procedures were collected and used by a separate onboard facility to make meat extracts and glue.⁹⁰

Getting Germans to eat margarine made from whale oil was one thing, but whale meat was quite another. Even those who had never tasted it generally understood it to be inedible. Even more experienced individuals struggled with descriptions. “It’s not fish, not meat and tastes disgustingly oily.”⁹¹ Increasingly, however, marketers began to more frequently compare whale meat to beef. At a meeting of researchers in Hannover in 1937, advances made in whale processing (i.e. keeping the meat from turning via pickling, smoking, salt curing, and freezing) were demonstrated by way of samples. Whale was served in “smoked ham” and “smoked salmon” styles, canned in its own juices, potted meat style like “corned beef”, in oil, and in sausages of all types. One attendee not so convincingly noted that “[t]he in no way small samples were fully eaten and in general found appeal.”⁹² In markets whale extract was pushed as an equivalent to beef extract. In butcher shops whale intestines were pushed as a superior

⁹⁰ Wm. Scholz, “Bau schwimmender Walkochereien,” *Fette und Seifen*, no. 1 (1938), pp.36-39.

⁹¹ Schmalfuß and Werner, “Walfleischverwertung,” p.60.

⁹² “Die Bedeutung des Wales für die Volksernährung,” p.146.

substitute for “unnatural” cellophane casings and canned whale meat was stocked on counters for housewives.⁹³

Fleets of hunting vessels were soon accompanied by cooking ships (*Kochereien*) which processed the oil by rendering blubber in large pots while at sea and thus vastly increasing catch sizes. Hunting and killing the giant mammals became easier too. Hamburg captain C. Kirchieß admitted that it once took six harpoons and two hours of fighting to kill a blue whale. “If it had been able to let out its cries and pains, some whalers would have become fearful” (Wenn er schreien und seinen Schmerz in die Welt hätte hinausheulen können, würde manchem Walfänger bange geworden sein.)⁹⁴ The harpoon cannon, invented in middle of the nineteenth-century, was improved upon by adding explosives. Tipped with a twenty pound grenade containing over two pounds of gunpowder, the harpoon would detonate three seconds after burrowing deep inside the whale. Even with a well-placed first shot it almost always took several harpoons to kill. In 1929 a German electrical engineer working in Oslo further improved on this by developing an electrified harpoon canon to dispatch whales more quickly.

Food from German Soil

But not all of the food that the Nazi regime promoted was so unfamiliar to the German diet. Indeed, most of what they pushed for was that which was easily accessible and from “German soil.” Nothing fit these categories quite like the ubiquitous

⁹³ Cellophane casings (*Darm*) were increasingly used due to meat shortages. See for example the advertisements of the Wiesbaden manufacturer Kalle & Co. Aktiengesellschaft in *Zeitschrift für Gemeinschaftsverpflegung*, vol. 21, no. 7, p.122.

⁹⁴ C. Kirschieß, “Die Technik des Walfangs,” *Fette und Seifen*, no. 1 (1938), pp.33.

potato which had long held a special place in the German diet. Not only was it one of the most important nutritional sources for everyday Germans in providing essential starch, protein, vitamins, and minerals, but also because it was inexpensive and usually readily available. One expert described the potato as “incomparable” because it was a “nutritious, filling and at the same time cheap foodstuff.”⁹⁵ Potato consumption made up roughly twelve percent of nutritional requirements in the average German diet. The importance of the tuber is echoed by the title of an educational film produced by the Reich Food Estate for use in the teaching kitchens of the DFW which heralded Germans as “Children of the Potato.”⁹⁶ Doctors recognized the potato as the most important source of Vitamin C in the German diet, especially during the winter when other sources were scant, and noted its importance in preventing scurvy and similar illnesses among the population. Moreover, the potato was economically important because it was one of the few items Germany produced more than enough of to cover consumption and agricultural needs. Potato production in the late 1930s hovered around fifty million tons annually and only twelve percent went for human consumption.⁹⁷ The rest was used as feed for pigs.

Because of the availability, price, and nutritional benefits the regime strongly pushed housewives to “dutifully use lots of potatoes for dishes.”⁹⁸ Yet authorities were well aware that a monotonous diet was uninspiring at best and could negatively affect

⁹⁵ Ertel, *Grundlagen*, p.30.

⁹⁶ BAL NS 44/47, Reichsfrauenführung Hauptabteilung Volkswirtschaft/Hauswirtschaft, Rundschreiben Nr. FW 34/39, Betrifft: Schmalfilm “Kinder der Kartoffel,” (28.03.1939).

⁹⁷ Hauptvereinigung der deutschen Kartoffelwirtschaft, et al., „Was wissen Sie von der Kartoffel?“, (1939), pp.27-28.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, p.28.

health and productivity at worst. “The skilled housewife (*geschickte Hausfrau*) can make numerous tasty dishes from the potato” and “bring desired variety to the menu plan” through a “multiplicity of preparation possibilities.”⁹⁹ Therefore, much of the educational materials, recipes, and training courses taught women how to properly prepare a variety of potato dishes using “modern standards” to maximize nutrition and minimize waste. This often went against conventional practices.

Traditional methods of preparing dishes like *Salzkartoffeln*, a simple dish of small, peeled potatoes boiled in salt water, were labeled as wasteful. Scientists and nutritionists determined through experimentation that cooking potatoes in this way led to a ten percent loss of nutritional properties. They ascertained that boiling *Pellkartoffeln* (unpeeled potatoes) led to a six percent loss. But steaming a potato with the skin on led to only a two percent loss. As a result, Party cookbooks, publications, and courses always recommended that whenever possible, such as when making mashed potatoes, they were to be prepared by steaming them in the peel.¹⁰⁰ To get this point across in a humorous manner, one publication depicted animated veggies running and screaming “we don’t want to be boiled, we’ll lose our nutritive value” while being chased by a housewife with a stockpot.¹⁰¹

⁹⁹ Reichsarbeitsgemeinschaft für Volksernährung (Schriftenreihe der Reichsarbeitsgemeinschaft für Volksernährung beim Reichsausschuss für Volksgesundheitsdienst e.V.), *Für wenig Geld eine gute Ernährung. Ein Volksbuch* (Leipzig: Verlag von Johann Ambrosius Barth, 1936), pp.12-13. For more on food research and nutritional values of vegetables, see “Über den Vitamin C-Gehalt in Gemüse und daraus zubereiteten Gerichten,” *Gemeinschaftsverpflegung und Kochwissenschaft*, no. 5 (1942), pp.33-36.

¹⁰⁰ See Hauptvereinigung der deutschen Kartoffelwirtschaft, “Was wissen Sie von der Kartoffel?,” p.28.

¹⁰¹ Wirtschaftsgruppe Gaststätten- und Beherbergungsgewerbe, “Ernährungsfibel” (1939), p.11.

Of course removing the peel from potatoes after cooking also reduces the loss of the fleshy white part of the potato.¹⁰² Sloppy peelers, it was estimated, squandered some sixty grams of potatoes per day per household. This amounted to roughly 378,000 tons of potato waste in Germany annually, or the entire harvest of the province of Saxony. “If the housewife peeled thinner,” reported one newspaper, farmers could then fatten an “additional 100,000 pigs per year” for human consumption.¹⁰³ This was one of the many ways, according to Nazi “logic,” that housewives could raise the standard of living in Germany.¹⁰⁴ Reducing waste and making use of neglected foodstuffs were central to keeping consumption rates palatable.

Another problem addressed by women’s organizations was the monotony of eating potatoes daily. Many housewives found it difficult to make use of potatoes outside of traditional side dishes which were served boiled, mashed, or fried. The women’s groups pushed housewives to provide a more “varied” menu (*abwechslungsreich*) and even to feature the potato as a main dish instead of meat. Women’s magazines regularly carried such recipes. An early example appeared in *Vobachs Frauenzeitung* which featured pictures of chic sauciers as well as recipes for twelve simple sauces which could be used to make the potato a “full-fledged meal.”¹⁰⁵ Weekly radio broadcasts aired programs like “Only a Couple of Potatoes.” Probably no other single food source was featured more in Nazi recipe publications than the potato.

¹⁰² Even during the WWI women were urged to cook jacketed potatoes. See flyer calling women to “fight against England with the weapon of thriftiness, BAL NS 5 VI/47, “Kämpft gegen die Engländer mit den Waffen der Sparsamkeit!,” (1914/1915).

¹⁰³ BAL NS 5 VI/4716, “Wenn die Hausfrau dünner schält,” (07.08.1936).

¹⁰⁴ BAL NS 5 VI/6929, “‘Volkswirtschaft—Hauswirtschaft’ legt Rechenschaftsbericht vor,” (05.01.1939).

¹⁰⁵ “Warme und kalte Soßen,” *Vobachs Frauenzeitung*, no. 10 (1933), p.14.

Although the domestically produced potato was a mainstay on German tables, there were also many “unused treasures of nature,” according to the Nazi women’s organizations, that could clearly aid in securing Germany’s food supply. Wild fruits and vegetables, herbs, and mushrooms were increasingly tapped as a foodstuff, especially once the flow of consumer goods onto the market was pinched during the war. Radio broadcasts like “German Herbs”, “Herbs in the Kitchen Window,” or “A Chat about Cheap and Vitamin-Rich Lettuces and Vegetables” were heard throughout the country educating housewives on the health and economic benefits of wild herbs and vegetables. Many publications sought to offer up native substitutes for imported herbs and spices. “Some cooking experts believe that cloves, allspice, bay leaves, and ginger are indispensable for various dishes. If we add pepper, nutmeg, and cinnamon to aforementioned, we then have seven imported spices, for which there are approximately 33 alternative indigenous spices and herbs.”¹⁰⁶

That the Nazi regime trumpeted the need to return to a more organic diet for health reasons was of course part and parcel of their ideology. Troubled by the often unforeseen byproducts of modern, urban, industrial life, National Socialism called for a “return to the earth” and older, traditional ways of living to resuscitate the German soul and body. The modern diet, that is one consisting of mainly of cooked and processed food and large amounts of meat, was seen by many, including Hitler, to be the root of many health problems.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁶ Georg Tabbert, “Deutsche Gewürze in unseren täglichen Speisen”, *Volks-Gesundheits-Wacht*, no.18 (1935), p.11.

¹⁰⁷ On this point, see Robert Proctor, *The Nazi War on Cancer* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000), pp.120-133.

On the contrary, diets heavy in fruits, grains, and vegetables were seen as “natural” and critical in creating a healthy *Volksgemeinschaft*. A proper diet, so it was believed, would not only help Germans to ward off a host of diseases and ailments, but also increase their physical capacity to help the nation, whether as laborers, soldiers, or mothers. The call for Germans to use more of nature’s bounty was often cast in a spiritual, almost Darréesque “blood and soil” rhetoric. The use of domestic plants was like an exercise in time travel. Germans could warp to the simpler times of their forefathers. It meant a “connection to native soil and to their nutritive and curative powers, which is especially suited to serve the people, who live under the same conditions of sun and heat, under which these plants grow and blossom.”¹⁰⁸

The economic side of the equation was of course taken very seriously by the regime as well. When the Nazis seized power in 1933 Germany imported nearly 200 million RM worth of medicinal plants, despite the fact that many of these plants grew naturally in the wild. Moreover, for nearly a century in parts of lower Franconia medicinal herb cultivation had been flourishing. Villages around Schweinfurt, especially Schwebheim and Röthlein, began cultivating wild, medicinal plants in the middle of the nineteenth century and supplied pharmacists and chemical factories around the world. The villagers called the herbs “the bread of the poor.” Because the government saw the economic and health potential in such plants, the Reich Health Office, the Reich Food Ministry, as well as the German Pharmacists Association all backed a plan to begin large scale medicinal plant cultivation. Lower Franconia was an obvious choice for location given the region’s experience. In 1934, plans for the Frankish Pharmaceutical

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

Garden included planting 100 acres of marshmallow, 200 acres of valerian, 100 acres of Franconian peppermint, and 23-30 acres of mullein flowers.¹⁰⁹

While cultivation did indeed help produce plants for medicine and industry, there was still the issue of making use of all the valuable items that grew in the wild. In the wake of the 4 Year Plan, the Health Ministry created the Reich Labor Group “Food from the Forest” to educate Germans and organize collection campaigns focused on reaping the benefits of wild edibles. Headed by Reichamtsleiter Dr. Bernhard Hörmann, a specialist in wild vegetation, the Food from the Forest group was to help secure the health of the nation, both literally and economically, by helping the masses to utilize nature’s bounty of wild fruits, vegetables, herbs, and mushrooms. This was yet another important way in which Germans could “supplement” their income. Here too women’s organizations played an important role through education and organizing collection campaigns. The women often turned to German youths as a crucial source of labor.

Members of the Hitler Youth and League of German Maidens were regularly found wandering around the fields and forests of Germany picking wild edibles “in the service of national health.” Incomplete figures for 1940 show collection figures from the children groups of the NS Frauenschaft/Deutsches Frauenwerk amounted to no less than 215,000kg of herbs, 6,800kg of sunflower seeds, chestnuts, and acorns, as well as 5,800kg of wild fruits and mushrooms.¹¹⁰ It was estimated that there were some five hundred useful varieties of plants that were simply thought of as weeds and killed or left unused. The Reich Working Group for the Study of Medicinal Plants published a list of

¹⁰⁹ BAL NS 5 VI 6929, “Eigenversorgung mit heimlichen Drogen. Ein Besuch im Heilkräuter-Dorf,” (15.11.1934).

¹¹⁰ BAL NS 44/63, Reichsfrauenführung, “Mitteilungen aus der Frauenarbeit” (1941).

nineteen of the most useful and urged Germans to collect and make use of them. The list included well-known varieties like dandelions, rose hip, and stinging nettles, as well as lesser known types such as horsetail (*Zinnkraut*) and snake grass (*Ackerschachte*).¹¹¹ For the 1940/41 Winter Relief Campaign workers produced nearly fifty million badges (Abzeichen) depicting twenty different kinds of “German medicinal plants” to be sold during street collections.¹¹² This was of course a subtle way to educate the public during the popular charity campaign.

While there were important economic and health reasons for using native plants, there were culinary ones as well. Various herbs and spices could ensure that what might otherwise be monotonous foods become “diverse, tasty, dishes.” After September 1939 imports of foreign spices had all but stopped and this made cooking for housewives that much more difficult. Science and the chemical industry made up for this in some ways as in the production of artificial vanilla and cinnamon.¹¹³ “German soil” picked up the rest of the slack. Take for example pepper. Once the various types (black, white, and red) of the “colonial spice” disappeared from German shops it was replaced by paprika. Originally from South America, the bell pepper used to make paprika made its way to Germany in the late sixteenth or early seventeenth centuries via Austria-Hungary. Prized for its aroma and mild, not overly spicy taste, the bell pepper was soon cultivated in Germany and became a permanent part of German

¹¹¹ BAL R 86/4006, Reichsgesundheitsamt, “Jungvolk sammelt Heilkräuter. 500 verschiedene Arten—Von der Brennessel zum Ackerschachtelhalm” 17.09.1939.

¹¹² BAL NS 37/1056, WHW, “Propagandarichtlinien für 7. Reichs-Strassensammlung,” (March 30, 1941).

¹¹³ Elinor Goetze, “Unsere heimischen Würzstoffe”, *Gemeinschaftsverpflegung und Kochwissenschaft*, no. 9 (May 1939), p. 66.

cuisine. During the 1930s and 40s it was pushed as “better” alternative to pepper. Not only did it not have the “bite” of other peppers, and hence was more palatable to Germans, it was available in “unlimited quantities” and nutritious. Indeed, the Hungarian Nobel-Prize winner Albert Szent-Györgyi had shown that bell peppers contain as much as six times the amount of Vitamin C as either orange or lemon juice.¹¹⁴ Dried and ground up or used fresh, the capsicum fruit gave diverse and nuanced flavors to dishes. Such substitutions were common throughout the Third Reich. When recipes called for lemons, ersatz ingredients like “German” rhubarb, the wild herb melissa (lemon balm), vinegar, or barberry juice were pushed as alternatives. A healthy sprinkling of fine-chopped parsley or celery leaves on soups or vegetables would render the much loved nutmeg “unnecessary.” Pearlwort, watercress, or green elderberries could “deliver an adequate substitute for foreign, usually Indian, capers.”¹¹⁵

Once the war began in 1939, wild edibles were promoted as essential ingredients to war efforts and national health. Wild mushrooms especially, often called the “meat of the forest,” were promoted endlessly by women’s organizations urging housewives to use them as widely as possible. Mushrooms had long been a part of the German diet and many varieties were available in markets when in season. As supplies dried up after 1939, the regime pushed consumers to take measures in their own hands, literally, and collect their own. Collecting wild mushrooms, however, requires special knowledge because of the toxicity of some varieties. Responsible offices within the Nazi apparatus set out to increase consumption levels through education. Articles, pamphlets, and

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

radio broadcasts focused on varieties of mushrooms, harvesting, cooking, and drying.¹¹⁶ A series of recipes featuring the fungus, like “Mushroom Dishes with German Herbs,” made its way into kitchens and left little doubt as to the will of the regime.¹¹⁷

Of course the written word alone could not possibly convey all the knowledge needed to ensure safety and action. Local officials in many Gaue organized “mushroom hikes” to give onsite training. Participants were instructed to always cut, never pull, mushrooms and to leave unidentified varieties alone as they might be edible, if not for humans then for livestock. Indeed, scientists were already successfully experimenting with feeding poisonous mushrooms to animals as a way to stretch fodder quantities. *Pilzstellen* or mushroom consultation offices popped up around Germany and were staffed by members of the various women’s groups offering advice on anything from proper harvesting to recipes.¹¹⁸ In March of 1941 Dr. Werner Bockhacker of the Health and Public Protection Office (*Amt Gesundheit und Volksschutz*) of the DAF announced the start of a collaborative effort between his office and the Reich Labor Group Food from the Forest. Food from the Forest officials began a variety of training programs by taking factory workers on hikes to familiarize them with various species; by giving slide show presentations during breaks or roll calls; and by making educational materials available in the work place.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁶ See for example, *Pilze: gesund und wohlschmeckend*. Leipzig: Verlag für Volkswirtschaftliche Aufklärung (1943); and Emmy Schledung, “Pilze”, *Gemeinschaftsverpflegung und Kochwissenschaft*, no. 17 (1944), pp. 298-302.

¹¹⁷ BAL NS 44/45, RFF, “Frauenfunksendungen”, Jan. 10-16, 1937.

¹¹⁸ BAL NS 44-42, RFF Hauptabteilung Presse/Propaganda, no. 153/42, (26.06.1942).

¹¹⁹ BAL NS 5 I/276, Amt “Gesundheit und Volksschutz” Hauptabteilung III an alle Gauabteilungen, no. 16/41, (17.03.1941).

Nature also provided Germany with products that could be used for drinks to supplement both the economy and their health. Despite popular opinion, beer was not the staple drink for most Germans. In fact, in the mid 1930s Germans drank roughly four times as much coffee as beer. In 1938 Germans drank nearly five billion hectoliters of beer, but nine billion hectoliters of ersatz coffee (usually chicory, roasted barley or oats), eight billion hectoliters of bean coffee, seven billion hectoliters of milk, and one billion hectoliters of tea.¹²⁰ Achieving self-sufficiency meant, on the one hand moving away from imported coffee beans and teas, but on the other hand ensuring that all domestically produced grains and cereals went to the production of bread and other foodstuffs. This meant an increase in the consumption of the much maligned, but cheap, *Kaffee-ersatz* as well as the new domestically produced “German Teas.”

The production of chicory-based coffee in Germany dates back to the eighteenth century. A favorite of Frederick the Great, the cultivation of chicory began in middle Germany in Saxony, near Magdeburg. The first chicory factories were set up in the 1760s at Holzminden and then Brunswick.¹²¹ By the end of the nineteenth century, important sites for chicory cultivation developed in Baden and Württemberg as well allowing Germany to produce nearly one third of the world's chicory supplies. During the Third Reich, Germany's most consumed beverage became particularly important as

¹²⁰ “Was trank das deutsche Volk 1938?”, *Gemeinschaftsverpflegung und Kochwissenschaft*, no. 3 (November 1942), p.60. The article does not mention water, but it was certainly more prominent than beer in German gullets as well.

¹²¹ See H.G. Maier's Introduction to R.J. Clarke and R. Macrae (eds.), *Coffee: Related Beverages* (Elsevier Applied Science, 1987). Chicory-based coffees remain popular in certain countries and regions. Scottish Camp Coffee has made a recent resurgence in Britain although its logo depicting a Sikh servant has raised complaints. Chicory coffee was brought to the United States by the French during the colonial period and has been a mainstay in New Orleans, Louisiana.

an “indispensable...tasty and salubrious, inexpensive, warm drink” for civilians and soldiers alike.¹²² As the Nazi empire grew, Poland, and above all the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia became important areas for chicory cultivation. The latter outstripping production in the *Altreich* by some sixty percent.¹²³

Yet the deficit caused by the loss of nearly all coffee and cocoa bean imports could not have been overcome by *Kaffee-ersatz* alone. Rationing measures of all types began in the mid-1930s in an attempt to stretch meager supplies of bean coffee and the criticism of barley-based coffee substitutes increased as well. The latter was seen as waste of grain which could be better put to use in making bread and other foodstuffs. As a result, the government further attempted to steer consumption and change German foodways via the introduction of the *Hausteeaktion*. Educational materials and propaganda illuminated the public about the health and economic benefits of drinking “German tea” in lieu of the imported Chinese black tea that many had become accustomed to.

In typical romantic fashion, teas that were made from native bushes and plants which were described as “indispensable to [our] ancestors” and had long been forgotten after the introduction of Asian teas. “We want to again bring back the custom, to prepare tea from German plants, which are grown in native soil, to make it ours.”¹²⁴ Certainly herbal teas made from chamomile or lime blossoms were still ingested for medicinal purposes, but the attempt was to get the population drinking “German tea” daily not only

¹²² Hugo Ahlfeld, “Die Zichorienfabrikate”, *Der Vierjahresplan*, no. 12 (December 1943), p.411.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, p.409.

¹²⁴ BAL NS 5 I/282, Frauenamt Hauptabteilung II Volkswirtschaftliche Erziehung an der Verwaltung der Deutschen Arbeitsfront, “Wir sammeln und verwerten einheimische Hausteepflanzen” (no date).

for economic reasons, but also as a healthier alternative. Reports from the Health Ministry and newspaper articles regularly warned that *Genussmittel*, or intoxicants, like coffee or tea, have “harmed our nation and our health through constant consumption more than most people realize.” The caffeine content was said to “mess with nature” and upset the natural rhythms of life.¹²⁵ Other caffeinated imports like Coca-cola or South American Mate were more heavily derided as consumers were less likely to be aware of the ingredients.

After 1934 store shelves were quickly filled by manufacturers trying to tap into this new market with products under a variety of labels, most often “German Black Tea.” Most manufactures tried to replicate the flavor, aroma, and color of Chinese black tea with a host of ingredients and mixtures. Sugar beet, strawberry, blackberry and woodruff leaves were often used for flavor and the shells of various nuts for coloring. Because it was hoped that suitable ersatz teas could be produced in large quantities and then used widely for health and economic reasons in hospitals, schools, the labor service, and the military, the Ministries of Food and Economics collaborated from the outset and entrepreneurs quickly moved in an attempt to get lucrative government contracts. The Niedersächsische-Schwarztee-Kräuterwerk of Wilhelm Kramer in Hannover submitted samples of two of his products in 1934 with high hopes. After the samples were sent out for chemical analysis and taste tests were held, the dark, nearly

¹²⁵ BAL R 86/4006, Reichgesundheitsamt, “Vom vielfachen Wert des deutschen Hausteess”, *Volksgesundheits Macht: Zeitschrift des Sachverständigenbeirates für Volksgesundheit bei der Reichsleitung der N.S.D.A.P.*, no. 10 (1939) p.129.

odorless teas which tasted like dried, green nut shells were rejected as a “substandard product.”¹²⁶

Despite such early failures, German teas were consumed in increasingly larger quantities throughout the 30s and 40s as more and more doctors extolled the health benefits and it was adopted as the drink of choice for the military, for schools, and for the German Labor Front.¹²⁷ In fact, the sheer amount and variety of teas that had come on the market with various ingredients and names began to cause problems. In 1939 the Economics Ministry was forced to standardize labeling under the label “*Deutsche Haustees*” so that the Advertising Standards Council (*Werberat*) could make sure that proper teas were being marketed and consumed. Most of the problems stemmed from ingredients. Some teas like peppermint or chamomile were seen as medicinal and questions were raised (likely from pharmacists) as to whether or not such teas should be sold in stores as foodstuffs owing to the 1934 Law for the Protection of Retail Trade. In any case, the Economic Ministry resolved the question in 1940 by stating that such teas were not considered medicinal as defined by the aforementioned law.¹²⁸

Like in other areas, the National Socialist government promoted self-sufficiency in terms of tea in households as well. Women were called upon to familiarize themselves with the various leaves, blossoms, and tender shoots that could be used for tea as well as proper harvesting and drying methods. This was of course aided by educational materials and recipes aimed at consumers. Women were never to collect

¹²⁶ On this point, see memos from the administration of the Reich Farmer’s Leader to the Health Ministry in BAL R 86/3984, Reichsgesundheitsamt.

¹²⁷ For more on this, see chapter 4.

¹²⁸ BAL R86/4006, Abschrift der RMdI an den Herrn Reichsstatthalter in Thüringen, (May 1940).

leaves when it was raining as they would rot prematurely. Nor was one supposed to collect when the sun was out as they would dry too fast and lose vitamins. The ability to make such healthy, non-alcoholic drinks was often cast as an important marker of a women's skill in housewifery. If one did not have the proper ingredients on hand, skilled housewives improvised. For example, instead of throwing away the apple cores, seeds, and peels, one could dry them and brew them in water for a "light, aromatic, fruity drink." To change it up a bit, one could first brown them in a pan for a "stronger, reddish-brown tea, reminiscent of Chinese black tea, with a distinct roast taste."¹²⁹ Indeed, the ability of housewives to make do with what was available and utilize every scrap of it were key attributes the model housewife.¹³⁰

The Fight against Waste

Fighting waste was a critical part of Germany's "struggle for food independence" under the Four Year Plan and women played a major role. A national campaign under the slogan "*Kampf dem Verderb*" (Fight Waste) was initiated in the fall of 1936 to complement the Four Year Plan as well as the farmer's "Battle for Production." The action called for a massive collaborative effort from the Ministry of Propaganda, the Ministry of Food and Agriculture, the Reich Food Estate, the Reich Committee for National Economic Enlightenment, the German Labor Front, and the Working Committee for National Nutrition to educate consumers through a variety of mediums in order to combat the estimated one and a half billion Reichsmarks worth of waste in

¹²⁹ Ibid. "Apfelschalentee-ein wohlschmeckendes Getränk!" (no date).

¹³⁰ Similar campaigns like the British "Make Do and Mend" were found elsewhere. See Ina Zweiniger-Bargielowska, *Austerity in Britain: Rations, Controls, and Consumption, 1939-1945* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000). For the United States, see Amy Bentley, *Eating for Victory: Food Rationing and the Politics of Domesticity* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1998).

Germany each year due to “inefficient care and incorrect storage.”¹³¹ The campaign opened on 27 October with a week-long publicity launch that was aimed at exposing and rationalizing it “politically and economically” to the public. This coincided with an exhibition held in Cologne strikingly called the “Battle for 1 ½ Billion” which does not seem to have had a good start. Ironically, accounting figures show that the Party doled out RM 104, 664.85 to put on the exhibition and took in only RM 68,980 from admission tickets and rental space. This was a loss of RM 35,684.85 in its first “battle against waste.”¹³²

The most visible aspects of the *Kampf dem Verderb* campaign from the educational and promotional materials which sought to teach women to become protectors of the national economy via frugality. One of the first publications, a simple colored brochure of which there were well over one million copies in circulation by 1938, serves as a fitting example. Women were to “take note” of the fact that every day each household in Germany lost twenty cents worth of “national assets and valuable foodstuffs.” Wastage could only be stopped if every housewife was informed and knew what she must do and what she should refrain from doing. A table reminded consumers which items to buy on a month-to-month basis. Proper storage techniques were reviewed and tips for preserving meats, fish, and dairy products were offered. Housewives were to be mindful of food’s “enemies”, namely dust and dirt, heat, sunlight, humidity, and poor ventilation. The pantry, cellar, and meat safe (*Fliegenschrank*) were

¹³¹ “Aufruf an die Mitglieder der Reichsarbeitsgemeinschaft für Volksernährung und der Deutschen Gesellschaft für Ernährungsforschung”, *Die Ernährung. Zeitschrift für das Gesamte Ernährungswesen in Forschung, Lehre, und Praxis*, vol. 1, no. 4 (1936), p.149. On the planning of *Kampf dem Verderb* more generally, see files of Reichsnährstand in BAL R 16/26.

¹³² BAL R 16/26, Reichsnährstand, Abrechnung der Ausstellung “Kampf um 1 ½ Milliarden” (no date).

to be used appropriately and pictures of homemade storage racks were subtle hints for future projects. Another section gave practical hints for using leftover meats, veggies, and fish. One could for example use remaining meat from yesterday's dinner to "prepare a delicious salad by adding [it] to cucumbers and tomatoes and a slightly spicy dressing." A picture of a woman rolling out dough in an immaculately clean and impeccably organized kitchen reminds readers that the "efficient housewife" lets "nothing go to waste."¹³³

Similar themes and information were regularly disseminated in newspapers, journals, women's and consumer's publications as well as through radio broadcasts. National and regional radio aired programs several times daily that were directed at housewives. Women in Hamburg who tuned in during March 1936 heard programs like "What are we cooking this week?" In Leipzig listeners heard "Market and Kitchen" several times weekly as well as "Cheap but Good—The Housewife's Menu Plan."¹³⁴ Posters and film propaganda in theaters caught consumers while out and about. Between 1936 and 1938 alone over thirty million copies of recipe publications were produced on everything from potatoes, mutton, and skimmed milk to marmalade, kippers, and herring. Small pamphlets educated readers on the "ordered market", rationing, and a host of other health and nutritional issues. Nearly two million "fight against waste" postcards were produced in those two years as well as almost one

¹³³ Brochure produced by the Deutsche Frauenwerk, "'Kampf dem Verderb'. Deutsche Frau merk' auf!"

¹³⁴ For these and many more examples of scheduled radio broadcasts aimed at women, see BAL NS 44/63.

million board games (*Würfelspiel*) which were obviously marketed to firmly establish National Socialist consumption patterns at an early age.¹³⁵

Another major aspect of the “fight against waste” for women focused on food preservation. “Proper” housewives had to be able to provide healthy, nutritious, well-rounded meals for their family regardless of the season. Winter, of course, was the most challenging time of the year, but a “dutiful” housewife could overcome such obstacles by way of a well-planned canning regimen. During the summer and fall harvests women in the Third Reich were deluged with publications, radio broadcasts, live demonstrations, and classes on proper preservation techniques. Weeks in advance the Recipe Office of the Abt. V/H would announce that canning season is “just around the corner.”¹³⁶ Screenings of films such as *Haltbarmachen von Obst und Gemüse* were held regularly and Party presses fired off copies of its well-circulated instructional brochure *Einmachen von Obst und Gemüse*. The latter was not only widely distributed but was the standard reference work in the consultation offices of the Abt. V/H and was promoted as “essential literature for political education during the war.”¹³⁷

According to this information, there was almost nothing that could not be pickled, jellied, juiced or dehydrated. Not only were women were instructed on proper methods, but they were also reminded of the necessity to make use of underutilized foodstuffs. To the list of standard fruits and vegetables, were added numerous wild fruits, herbs, and mushrooms. For example, to make “German capers” one only needed to bottle up

¹³⁵ Margarete Adelung, *Der “Kampf dem Verderb” im Haushalt mit sparsamen Mitteln* (PhD. Diss. Munich, 1940), pp.24-28.

¹³⁶ BAL NS 44/36, Hauptabteilung V/H, Press/Prop., Finanzverwaltung, Rndschr. Nr. F 76/41, (18 June, 1941).

¹³⁷ BAL NS 44/48, RFF Hauptabteilung Kultur/Erziehung/Schulung Schrifttumsstelle, (1 July, 1940).

green elderberries or watercress seeds with salt and vinegar.¹³⁸ Rose hip was to be dried lest its high Vitamin C content be diminished through over-processing, rendering less nutritious “German tea.” Housewives were reminded “that much excellent and delicious marmalade can be made from tomatoes, pumpkin, cucumbers, melons, and carrots, which will be more ample in the market than pip and stone fruits.”¹³⁹ Making ciders and juices from available fruits not only helped to secure food levels, it also played an important moral role in the “fight against alcohol abuse.” This was of particular significance for an agency set up under the auspices of the Mother’s Office in the late 1930s known as “Kampf gegen Volksgiften.” In trying to find a solution to the “*Süssmostfrage*” (cider, or unfermented fruit juice), these women believed that the proper utilization of fruit could offer a partial solution to both food shortages and problems stemming from alcohol usage.¹⁴⁰

But like many of the initiatives coming from the Women’s Bureau, preserving foods for later use was hard work. Many (already overworked) women were simply not won over by the rhetoric.¹⁴¹ While repayment for such labor could be had “a hundred times over” once the women sees the “thankful and laughing eyes of the children” as she pulls “colorful glass jars of sweet fruit from the pantry in winter,” many could not find the time nor muster the effort.¹⁴² After September of 1939, however, stopping wastage

¹³⁸ *NS Frauenwarte*, “Fleischlose Hauptgerichte,” no. 18 (1943) pp.255.

¹³⁹ BAL NS 44/48 RFF, “Wie kann sich die Hausfrau helfen bei knappem Obst?.” Hauptabteilung Presse und Propaganda., V/H, Pressematerial (2.8.1940).

¹⁴⁰ BAL NS 44/49 RFF, “Süssmostarbeit,” Hauptabteilung Mutterdienst Rundschreiben FW Nr. 131/40.

¹⁴¹ On this point, see Reagin, *Sweeping the German Nation*, pp.173-178.

¹⁴² *NS Frauenwarte*, “Praktisches zur Einkochzeit,” no. 3 (1933) p. 77.

in all areas became vitally important for the war effort. Accordingly, the Reich Food Estate redoubled efforts to compel women to fight waste more enthusiastically beginning in December 1939. With a fresh motto “Fight Waste—Now More than Ever,” the regime increasingly linked the success of the war to German housewives. Propaganda often focused on a particularly troublesome motif in recent German history, namely the “Hunger Blockade” of the First World War. “That’s right, housewives, your kitchen has become a theatre of war,” noted one source, “but this doesn’t mean that heads of cabbage will be aimed at Tommies.” “Proper cooking and sensible home economy...” it continued, “are *your duties* in this war against the umbrellas [Brits] on the Thames. *That is how a woman breaks the blockade!*”¹⁴³

Pigs and Potatoes: The Nutritional Relief Campaign (EHW)

Nonetheless, no matter how watchful and frugal women were with foodstuffs, seemingly unusable scraps still made their way into waste bins and production limitations ensured that food shortages existed, above all in fats. With the advent of the Four-Year Plan in 1936 a solution to these correlating problems was proposed by way of the creation of the *Ernährungshilfswerk* (EHW) or Nutrition Relief Campaign. The mission of the EHW was to collect kitchen and food waste and utilize it to feed the nation’s pig population which consumed a considerable amount of agricultural fodder. This of course had long been standard practice in the countryside as the table scraps of rural folk always made its way into the troughs. Proponents of this initiative argued that not only would it help in plugging the “fat gap” by bringing more hogs to market, it would

¹⁴³ BAL NS 44/47 RFF, “Kampf dem Verderb—jetzt und recht!” pp.9-11. Emphasis in the original.

also free up land to grow more foods for human consumption. Much of the emphasis was placed on potato yields as it was a staple in the porcine diet.

In 1936 Germany's potato harvest equaled 46 million tons. It was estimated that some 12.5 million tons found its way into "the cooking pots of housewives," 6 million tons went for seed, 2.5 million tons for alcohol production, .8 for potato starch production, and 24.2 million tons went to feed hogs. This meant that Germany's nearly 26 million pigs ate twice as many potatoes as its 67 million citizens.¹⁴⁴ To remedy this, on 10 November 1936 Göring charged the NSV with overseeing the collection of all food waste in Germany and its utilization as pig fodder.

The EHW developed into an elaborate organization run ultimately by Erich Hilgenfeldt after becoming head of the NSV in June 1937. But in the characteristic fashion of the Third Reich, Hilgenfeldt delegated the responsibility to his deputy Wilhelm Janowsky, who then placed Hans Werdelmann in charge of the daily affairs of the EHW Main Office. The EHW consisted of four departments. The Department of Collections, overseen by Arthur Schumann, was in charge of private and commercial food waste collections and advertising initiatives. Kitchen waste was then delivered to local farms that contractually served as fattening operations for EHW pigs bought on the open market. After tripling their purchase weight of 45-50 kilograms via food waste, the hogs were sent to slaughter. Only those with state certification as a *Schweinemeister* or equivalent years of experience could become managers of the facilities. Most often existing farms took on EHW hogs, but new EHW facilities were also constructed if suitable accommodations were not available. Planning, establishing, and constructing

¹⁴⁴ BAL NS 5 VI DAF, "Schweine fressen uns reich," N.S.K., no. 94 (1938).

such fattening facilities was in the hands of Oskar Fietz. Hans Linder, as head of Fattening Operations, oversaw all the facilities, livestock and fodder transactions, animal care, and personnel. As head of accounting, Walter Meyer kept track of profits and expenditures.

There were two main challenges on which the success of the EHW would hinge. First and foremost was the formidable task of gaining popular support for the recycling campaign as well as active participation. Predictably, the onus fell once again on German women and their “sacrificial spirit.”¹⁴⁵ In fact, Göring said as much during his announcement of the EHW in 1936.¹⁴⁶ The Nazi propaganda machine bombarded housewives with dizzying statistics showing how their individual efforts would collectively lead to the EHW achieving its ultimate goal, which was to feed an additional one million pigs for the *Volksgemeinschaft* annually without straining national resources. Estimates suggested that for every 120 people enough food waste was created to feed one hog. The figures seemed to hold up. In 1937 the *Schlesische Zeitung* reported that the kitchen waste from a small town’s 27,000 residents fattened 254 pigs. But the EHW was not confined to small towns and rural areas. Between 1936-1942 Hamburg sent 55,000 hogs to market. In 1943 the *Berliner Börsen-Zeitung* boasted that in the Gau’s twenty-four fattening facilities 10,000 pigs were “leading a comfy, grunting existence” (*führen ein behaglich-gruzendes Dasein*).¹⁴⁷

¹⁴⁵ BAL NSD 30/20-3, *Richtlinien für das Ernährungshilfswerk* (1939), p.3.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁷ BAL NS 5 VI, 4754 DAF, “Jungvolk hilft mit”, *Berliner Börsen-Zeitung*, no. 75 (14.2.1943).

The task set before women was to prepare “her kitchen” for the collection of food waste suitable for pigs. The women were to have a separate container in their homes aside from the garbage can. The official NSV *Zwillingseimer* was highly recommended for reasons of hygiene and space. This “dual bucket” was simply a metal garbage can with an insert for waste, a lid, and the NSV logo. Women were of course reminded where the buckets could be purchased. After preparing meals, housewives were to place all leftover meats, bones, fish, egg shells, vegetables, fruits, soups, bread, and coffee grounds in the *Zwillingseimer*. Peels from citrus fruits, bananas, apples or asparagus, as well as spices and flowers were not allowed. The women were then supposed to empty their waste buckets daily into larger collection buckets provided by the landlord. Landlords, under a police order issued by Kurt Daluege, had to provide the proper size and quantity of collection buckets for their property and keep them clean and accessible. This was seen as “his contribution to the Four-Year Plan.” It was not legal to pass the cost of the buckets, which ranged from RM 3,0 to RM 4,50, on to his tenants. Furthermore, it highly encouraged that landlords put the buckets to the curb on collection days to ease the collection process.¹⁴⁸ NSV block stewards oversaw the entire collection operation on the ground ensuring proper care and positioning of containers, fielding complaints and suggestions from residents, as well as reporting noncompliance to the NSV main office.

All evidence shows that the EHW was initially very successful in helping, although by no means eliminating, certain shortages. Hilgenfeldt reported that between the fall of 1936 and the summer of 1939 some twenty-four million kilos of meat and fat

¹⁴⁸ BAL NSD 30/20-3, “Richtlinien für das Ernährungshilfswerk” (1939), p.5.

came from hogs fed solely on kitchen waste. By 1942 that number jumped to sixty million kilos with 1,250 EHW fattening operations up and running. After the war began in September 1939 the face of the EHW changed drastically. The war effort took not only collection and delivery vehicles but also much need agricultural labor. Like in most other areas of the German economy, the EHW used slave labor to make up the deficit. Indeed, the importance of maintaining and even expanding EHW efforts during the war for the Nazi regime were clear, as only eight days after the invasion of Poland Hilgenfeldt noted that Polish POWs were suitable for use on EHW farms, as they had long been “active in agriculture and animal husbandry.”¹⁴⁹

Despite some successes the EHW was constantly battling a host of problems that threatened its overall effectiveness. Wartime food shortages not only meant less for people but also for pigs. More stringent collection efforts were put in place to make use of *Sonderabfall* such as blood and waste from slaughterhouses and used yeast from breweries. Sheep, guinea pigs, and rabbits were introduced at some EHW facilities in an attempt to further increase production.¹⁵⁰ Many of the problems came from the population itself. Reminders were published noting that razor blades, ashes, feathers, paper, and other non-edibles had no place in NSV buckets. Residents with a pig or two of their own often called (unsuccessfully) on the EHW for help in feeding the livestock as times got tough. Party functionaries complained bitterly that some women

¹⁴⁹ BAL NS 37/1051, Notification from Hilgenfeldt to Janowsky, no. 100/39, (9.9.1939).

¹⁵⁰ After a short time though, guinea pigs were forbidden in EHW facilities because of their tendency to spread disease. Experiments undertaken at the Research Center for Pig Breeding in Ruhlsdorf proved that comparatively rabbits require more feed than pigs to fatten and they provide less calories upon consumption. Even with the pelt taken into consideration, rabbit breeding in EHW facilities was soon deemed “undesirable.” See decrees in BAL NS 37/1054 EHW, no. 1/42 10 September, and no. 4/42 14 Oktober.

were still throwing much needed waste into the garbage, despite clearly coercive tactics to garner compliance. Not only did NSV block stewards keep a watchful eye not doing their “national duty,” the contents of the buckets was also monitored. In 1942 the *Hamburger Fremdenblatt* published an article which broke down the average composition of EHW buckets by food groups.¹⁵¹

As we have seen, the Nazi regime spent considerable time, money, and effort trying to “coordinate the menu” of everyday Germans. Like so many initiatives undertaken during the Third Reich, these were not novel; indeed most of them found their origins in the *Kaiserreich*. On the one hand, however, the Nazis were uniquely innovative in the scope and depth in which they sought to secure Germany’s “nutritional freedom” through steering patterns of food consumption and preparation. On the other hand, the novelty of their approach lies in the political, social, and economic importance placed on German women as consumers and caretakers of not only their individual families but also the *Volksgemeinschaft*. If grocery lists could not be coordinated, it was well understood that increased agricultural quotas meant little; that any acceptable standard of living could not be maintained; and that Germany would likely suffer a repeat of the Great War. But the regime went much further than trying to manage what the populace was eating in the privacy of their homes. As we shall see, they also took interest in what was being consumed at work.

¹⁵¹ BAL NS 5 VI, EHW, ““Wir füttern 10 000 Schweine,” *Hamburger Fremdenblatt*, no. 292 (22.10.1942).

CHAPTER 5

FEEDING THE WORKERS: NUTRITION SCIENCE, LABOR EFFICIENCY, AND HOT FACTORY MEALS

Knowledge about the fundamentals of Volksernährung (people's nutrition) must today be the requisite for every national comrade who is to lead the German people politically or otherwise to take care of them.

—Hermann Ertel (Director of the Reich Labor Committee for People's Nutrition)

Away with the sandwich economy! Serve up hot meals in the factory.

—a Beauty of Labor motto

In April 1933 Hitler made an unexpected gesture toward the working class whose support he so much needed and whose dissatisfaction he so much feared. He declared May 1 to be paid holiday and then went on to organize grand ceremonies and parades around Germany to celebrate this “Day of National Labor.” This first day of May had of course long been associated with the international labor movement in Europe wherein workers demanded eight-hour days and a variety of benefits. At the festivities, Hitler and other top Nazis gave rousing nationalistic speeches that announced the total destruction of class-based divisions in Germany. No longer would there be a proletariat and bourgeoisie, but rather an “*Arbeitertum der Stirn und Faust*” united into a single *Volksgemeinschaft*.¹

Many within the labor movement were drawn to the socialist aspects of Nazi ideology and had hoped a working relationship was possible. The events caught the socialist trades unions off guard, but they were obliged to show their support for the

¹ Literally this translates as “workers of the mind and fist,” but was often used by Hitler and Goebbels to mean white and blue collar workers.

celebrations for fear of losing face with workers. The very next day however, May 2, Hitler's true intentions became clear as his Brownshirts and SS raided the offices of trade union leaders across the country and brought them into "protective custody." Dazed and confused, the workers did not resist. The "synchronization" of the labor movement into the Nazi system proceeded quickly as only one week later all trade unions were banned and their properties were turned over to the newly-created *Deutsche Arbeitsfront* (German Labor Front, DAF). Under the leadership of the hard-drinking, megalomaniac Robert Ley, known to many as the "Reich drunkard," the DAF served as a Nazi surrogate union for all German workers including professionals and entrepreneurs.² It ended the collective bargaining system in Germany and thus gave the DAF total control over wages which were set by its board. Membership was not exactly compulsory, but one had little chance of getting a job without having it. Because of this, the German Labor Front became the largest Nazi organization with some thirty five million members by 1936 and over a million employees.

The DAF was created ostensibly to protect worker's rights and to ensure a forum for their grievances. In actuality, the German Labor Front served as state-sanctioned control apparatus of the labor movement, not via the workers directly, but rather through the factory leaders. In lieu of class conflict, the DAF wanted to create a harmonious *Betriebsgemeinschaft* ("plant community") in which the employer and employees would coalesce around their commonalities as members of the German *Volk* and pay less attention to the alienation caused by the differences between their pay stubs. Raising

² On the creation of the German Labor Front and its leader see Ronald Smelser, *Robert Ley: Hitler's Labor Front Leader* (Oxford and New York: Berg, 1988). Interestingly, still no comprehensive history of the DAF has been written.

the standard of living for workers was of course a goal long touted by the Nazi government and was crucial in chipping away at social unrest. The problem, however, was that the economic situation and the regime's priority to rearm meant wage increases were strictly limited as thus new methods to better the lot of workers had to be conjured.³ In November 1933 two new sub-organizations of the German Labor Front were created with these goals in mind, namely *Kraft durch Freude* (Strength through Joy, KdF) and *Schönheit der Arbeit* (Beauty of Labor, SdA).

Ballyhooed as the height of "socialism of the deed," Strength through Joy was the Nazi organization set up to offer German workers subsidized leisure opportunities, traditionally a bourgeois activity that few members of the working class had been able to enjoy.⁴ Not surprisingly, combined with Winter Relief, KdF was one the most popular programs initiated by the Nazi government. Modeled after its Italian Fascist counterpart *Dopolavoro* ("After Work"), KdF offered discounted tickets to theaters, operas, museums and concerts, swimming and tennis lessons, as well as domestic and international travel destinations.⁵ By 1938 well over 50 million Germans had partaken of KdF activities. The acme of the KdF experience was found in its cruises to places like Italy, Libya, or

³ "Kraft durch Freude hebt den Lebensstandard," *Die Deutsche Arbeitsfront. Eine Darstellung über Zweck, Leistungen und Ziele* (Berlin: Verlag für Sozialpolitik, Wirtschaft und Statistik, 1940).

⁴ The fullest treatment of KdF to date is Shelley Baranowski, *Strength through Joy: Consumerism and Mass Tourism in the Third Reich* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004). This work has built on the ground-breaking essays on German tourism by Hasso Spode. See for example his "Der deutsche Arbeiter reist!" Massentourismus im Dritten Reich," in Gerhard Huck (ed.), *Sozialgeschichte der Freizeit: Untersuchungen zum Wandel der Alltagskultur in Deutschland* (Wupperthal: Peter Hammer Verlag, 1980), pp.281-306 and more recently "Fordism, Mass Tourism, and the Third Reich: Strength through Joy as Index Fossil," in *Journal of Social History*, vol. 38, no.1 (2004), pp.127-155.

⁵ For a comparison between After Work and Strength through Joy, see Daniela Liebscher, *Freude und Arbeit: zur internationalen Freizeit- und Sozialpolitik des faschistischen Italiens und NS-Regimes* (Cologne: SH Verlag, 2009). For more on leisure in Italy, see Victoria de Grazia, *The Culture of Consent: Mass Organization of Leisure in Italy* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1981).

Madeira on modern ships built specifically for that purpose.⁶ Here too food played a vital role as it was a not so subtle reminder of the disparities between the German standard of living under Nazism and their Spanish fascist counterparts. When passengers disembarked from the maiden voyage of the “Robert Ley” in 1939 on the island of Tenerife, they were struck by the sight of children who looked “pale and poorly fed.” The German tourists were unimpressed with their gastronomic ventures into Spanish restaurants and shops that turned up little more than “hard and coarse bread.” “Butter is not to be had, and the few cakes and pastries which one saw were reminiscent of a barren time.” Meanwhile, one of the two daily menus on the “Robert Ley” boasted:

Breakfast:

Coffee, tea, cocoa, milk, rice pudding with cinnamon and sugar, marmalade, butter, rolls, brown bread, dark rye bread

Lunch:

Yellow pea soup with bacon, baked cod, herb dip, potatoes, fruit, white bread, coffee, tea, milk, Rhenish raisin cake.

Dinner:

Grilled pork cutlet, roasted potatoes, coleslaw, cheese, white bread, brown bread, dark rye bread, tea

10 p.m. Assorted sandwiches with butter⁷

At the heart of Ley’s mission in creating Strength through Joy was the belief that work and leisure were not mutually exclusive endeavors, but rather complemented one

⁶ One such ship, notably named the “Robert Ley,” was outfitted with the most modern kitchen technology to efficiently serve tourists. BAL NS 5 VI 4484, DAF Zeitschriftausschnittsammlung SdA, “Stand und Aufgabe der Gemeinschaftsverpflegung”, *Technik und Betrieb*, no. 1 (March 1940).

⁷ Maria Anna Granz, “Schwimmender Großbetrieb E.S. ‘Robert Ley’”, *Zeitschrift für Gemeinschaftsverpflegung*, vol. 9, no. 12 (1939).

another. When properly structured the restorative powers of leisure and recreation were critical in maximizing the productive capabilities of the workers as well as de-politicizing the shop floor.⁸

The shop floor and indeed the entire plant environment came under the purview of the KdF office, Beauty of Labor, as it attempted to create a hygienic and aesthetically pleasing workplace.⁹ The reasons for this were twofold. First, Nazi ideologues held that the beautification of industrial facilities would in actuality increase the standard of living of workers by restoring honor and integrity to what had in the wake of industrialization become inferior, trifling jobs. It was not what one did, so to speak, but rather how one performed one's duties that mattered. Infused with "joy" and a sense of "worth," labor became "ennobling."¹⁰ Seen in this light, the labor of neither the press operator nor the sales clerk commodified them, but rather set them on "a path to German [national] socialism."¹¹

Secondly there was belief that happy workers made more productive workers. The Nazi regime became increasingly concerned with the rationalization of labor and the maximization of efficiency as the prospect of war loomed greater after 1936. In the wake of the Four-Year Plan, the SdA campaigns worked toward cleaning up interiors

⁸ On this, see Anatol von Hübbenet, *Die NS-Gemeinschaft 'Kraft durch Freude.' Aufbau and Arbeit* (Berlin: Junker and Dünnhaupt Verlag, 1939).

⁹ For an official account of Beauty of Labor's organization, see Anatol von Hübbenet, *Das Taschenbuch Schönheit der Arbeit* (Berlin: Verlag der Deutschen Arbeitsfront, 1938).

¹⁰ Alf Lüdtke, "The Honor of Labor': Industrial Labor and the Power of Symbols under National Socialism", in David Crew (ed.) *Nazism and German Society 1933-1945* (London and New York: Routledge, 1994), pp.67-109 and Joan Campbell, *Joy in Work, German Work: The National Debate 1800-1945* (Princeton University Press, 1989).

¹¹ Karl Kretschmar, "'Schönheit der Arbeit'—ein Weg zum deutschen Sozialismus!' *Wege zur neuen Sozialpolitik* (Berlin, 1936).

and exteriors of facilities and making the shop floor safer and more pleasant. However, it also sought to increase worker production by ensuring the proper nutrition of workers. This was another lesson of World War One not lost on the Nazis. The undernourishment of workers in heavy industry between 1914 and 1918 helped to reduce industrial output by some forty percent. The effects were clear to Field Marshal Paul von Hindenburg already in September 1916 as he wrote to the Emperor.

The solution to the labor problem is vital, and it does not just concern the number of workers, but rather it above all concerns their individual productive efficiency... Your Excellency, I urgently ask all state governments as well as administrative and municipal agencies to stay on top of the serious situation that is before our eyes and request of you to organize with all means available the sufficient nutrition for our industrial workers.¹²

Based on caloric intake recommendations produced by Nazi nutritionists, it was found that heavy industrial workers, in areas like mining or steel production, were able to consume on average only 40-50% of their daily requirements in 1917.¹³ It was only after Hindenburg's plea that industrial workers began receiving special rations but even then it was far too late. This decisive mistake would not be made again. While the importance of aesthetic improvements undertaken by Beauty of Labor has been examined in the extant literature, this nutritional aspect is largely missing.¹⁴ By focusing

¹² Cited in Fritz-Adolf Schilling-Voß, "Arbeiterernährung und Massenspeisung im Kriege 1914-1918", *Zeitschrift für Volksernährung*, no. 10 (May 1937), p.143.

¹³ Wilhelm Ziegelmeier, "Die Kost der Schwerarbeiter," *Zeitschrift für Volksernährung*, no. 14 (Juli, 1937), pp. 205-220.

¹⁴ See Anson G. Rabinbach, "The Aesthetics of Production in the Third Reich," *Journal of Contemporary History*, no.1 (1976), pp.43-74; Chup Freimert, *Produktionsästhetik im Faschismus: Das Amt "Schönheit der Arbeit" 1933-1939* (Darmstadt Verlag, 1980); and Baranowski, *Strength through Joy*, pp.75-117. Factory canteens in the Third Reich are briefly discussed by Ulrike Thoms, "Essen in der Arbeitswelt. Das betriebliche Kantinenwesen seit seiner Entstehung um 1850," in Hans Jürgen Teuteberg (ed.), *Die Revolution am Esstisch. Neue Studien zur Nahrungskultur in 19./20. Jahrhundert* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2004), pp. 219-231.

on the nutritional campaign “*Warmes Essen im Betrieb*” (Hot Factory Meals), this chapter will demonstrate the importance of *Gemeinschaftsverpflegung* (communal feeding) within the context of Nazi rearmament as well as social and economic policy.

Food and the German Workers’ Lot

When Hitler took power in January 1933, as we have already seen, the German economy was stagnant and in shambles. Industrial production had plummeted far below the pre-crisis levels of the Weimar Republic and unemployment remained uncontrollably high. Critical in the recovery of the German economy was work creation and Nazi propaganda quickly ensued announcing its *Arbeitsschlacht* (Battle for Work). Within four years, Hitler boldly exclaimed, unemployment would be a thing of the past in Germany. Moving quickly, in May of 1933 the government passed a one-billion Reichmark job-creation scheme. The Law on the Reduction of Unemployment enacted the following month made credits available to private businesses looking to expand through construction and mass hirings. But what about those Germans who were lucky enough to have steady work? Comparatively speaking they were not paid well.¹⁵ The average hourly income of male skilled workers in Germany in 1933 was 80 *Reichpfennigs* per hour. Male apprentices brought in an average of 68 *pfennigs* per hour while general laborers, who were the largest group, earned roughly 63 *pfennigs*. Female skilled laborers and apprentices earned around 52 *pfennigs* per hour and women who worked as general laborers could scarcely hope for more than 43

¹⁵ International Labor Office, *An International Enquiry into Costs of Living: A Comparative Study of Workers’ Living Costs in Detroit (USA) and Fourteen European Cities* (Geneva, 1931).

pfennigs.¹⁶ Because pay rates varied based on type of industry and even region, these figures, while representative, can be misleading, especially for the lowest paid workers in the textile factories and saw mills.¹⁷

These figures begin to take on new meaning when one compares them with the costs of everyday life. A trip to the market in January 1933 for a dozen eggs set Berliners back about RM 1.32, or two hours of work for an unskilled laborer. A loaf of brown bread cost about 31 cents. Dairy products were especially pricey. In Munich a liter of milk was priced at 23 cents and in Nuremberg buying a stick of butter required more than an hour's wages at 67 cents. Meat was expensive as well. In Stuttgart shoppers paid 1.47 Reichsmarks for one kilogram of beef with bones and in Hamburg fatty pork was selling at 1.38 Reichsmarks per kilo.¹⁸ It is no wonder then why potatoes, cabbage, kohlrabi, turnips, and other cheaper foodstuffs were staples of the German diet. But just how much did the average German household spend on food?

In 1939 the Reich Statistics Office and the German Labor Front published the results of a joint study on the standard of living of the German worker.¹⁹ Data from 1937 was collected on 2,600 households, of which, 350 were selected as representative samples from twenty seven *Gaue*. These households fell into one of three income brackets. 136 of the households made annually between 960 and 2,000 RM (average

¹⁶ *Statistisches Jahrbuch für das Deutsche Reich*, 1933, pp.273.

¹⁷ Gustav Plum, "Die Einkommensentwicklung 1937. Weiter große Unterschiede in den einzelnen Reichsgebieten," *Kowo*, no. 10 (1938), pp.5-6.

¹⁸ *Statistisches Jahrbuch für das Deutsche Reich*, 1933, pp, 252-253.

¹⁹ „Wirtschaftsrechnungen von 350 Arbeiterhaushaltungen für das Jahr 1937,“ in *Wirtschaft und Statistik*, no. 19, pp. 118-126, 323-329. This was published in two parts. The first dealt with income and expenditures and the second with food expenditures and consumption figures in detail.

of 1,783 Reichsmarks). 137 households had an annual income between 2,000 and 2,500 Reichsmarks (average of 2,220 Reichsmarks) and seventy-seven households made more than 2,500 Reichsmarks (average of 2,837 Reichsmarks). Based on these figures, the study concluded then that the average income per annum of a typical German household made up of 4.1 members (2 adults, 2 children under 15) was 2,186 Reichsmarks. Despite the modesty of the figures, it is doubtless flattering as the study calculates “income” to include the paychecks of other family members as well as money brought in from subletting, from keeping a garden or animals, from insurance, public welfare, interest, and other sources.²⁰ It is likely that some or most of these income sources were not applicable to many families. Moreover, in 1936 some sixty-two percent of the tax-paying population, about 14.5 million, recorded earning less than 1,500 Reichsmarks annually.²¹

While the income figures for average German working households are indeed very telling, what is most striking are figures for expenditures, above all for food. After scrutinizing the household budgets of 350 families and taking stock of even the smallest expenditures, the survey found that nearly forty-three percent of a worker’s income went to food. The figure jumps to nearly forty-seven percent if beverages and tobacco products are included. To put this in perspective, the average American food expenditures for 2009 amounted to roughly thirteen percent of income.²² Although

²⁰ Ibid., p119.

²¹ Adam Tooze, *Wages of Destruction: The Making and Breaking of the Nazi Economy* (London: Allen Lane, 2006), p.141-142.

²² “Consumer Expenditures 2009,” Bureau of Labor Statistics, accessed November 3, 2010, <http://www.bls.gov/news.release/cesan.nr0.htm>.

Germans were consuming on average eighteen percent less meat than they had in the previous century, meat and meat products still consumed the largest portion of their food budget at some twenty-three percent. At just under fifteen percent were bread and baked goods followed by milk (8.4%), margarine, lard, suet, and other raw fats (6.2%), and butter (5.9%). While potatoes only took an average 3.7% of a working-class household income, it dominated the diet with a daily consumption of some 1,453 grams. Bread consumption was also high at 1,040 grams followed by vegetables at 323 grams, fruits at 178 grams, and meat at 177 grams.²³ These figures clearly show that the inability or the unwillingness of German workers to obtain sufficient quantities of fruits and vegetables meant that the average diet was dominated by the satiating properties of carbohydrates, protein, and fats. This was problematic for Nazi nutritional policy for two reasons. First, meat and fats were not produced domestically in sufficient quantities to meet current demand and therefore had to be imported. This obviously ran counter to the regime's autarkic goals. Second, a host of nutritionists since the nineteenth century had been trumpeting a lower protein, lower fat diet as critical for improved health. The *Volksernährung*, or people's nutrition, was latched onto during the Third Reich as a way to not simply improve the health (and productivity) of German workers, but also as way to improve the health of the entire *Volkskörper*.²⁴

²³ „Wirtschaftsrechnungen von 350 Arbeiterhaushaltungen für das Jahr 1937. II. Teil Lebensmittelausgaben und Lebensmittelverbrauch,“ p.323.

²⁴ On the idea of a “people's body” and its antithesis, see Boaz Neumann, “The Phenomenology of the German People's Body (Volkskörper) and the Extermination of the Jewish Body”, *New German Critique*, no. 36 (2009), pp. 149-181. For an excellent study during the war, see Winfried Süß, *Der “Volkskörper” im Krieg: Gesundheitspolitik, Gesundheitsverhältnisse und Krankenmord im nationalsozialistischen Deutschland 1939-1945* (Munich: R. Oldenbourg, 2003).

The People's Nutrition

Although there has long been concern and interest in the links between diet and health, it was only during the nineteenth century that one could speak of a science of nutrition in the modern sense. It was in the middle decades of that century that scientists began systematically investigating the chemistry of foodstuffs in relation to animal physiology.²⁵ In many respects, Germany became a foremost pioneer in modern nutritional science. In fact, the world-renowned American chemist Russell Henry Chittenden, who is credited with establishing the field of bio-chemistry, noted that “in 1878 any American student desirous of making progress in physiological chemistry had no recourse other than going to Germany...”²⁶ Chittenden himself studied at Heidelberg from 1878-1879 under the “enzyme” physiologist Wilhelm Kühne. Beginning with founder of physiological chemistry Justus von Liebig, a successive group of German scientists changed the ways about we think about the human diet. Steeped in the science of the day, many began to advocate for a radical alteration of the human diet; one that stressed the consumption of foods based on their nutritional values and not simply because of taste, convenience, or cultural tradition.

Nutritionists argued that industrialization had significantly altered traditional foodways, often for the worse. While the proletariat no longer worried much about droughts and famine, urbanization did much to hurt their health via constant undernourishment. After they came to the city, rural folk began to eat “irrationally,” it

²⁵ W.C. Coleman and F.L. Holmes, *The Investigative Enterprise: Experimental Physiology in Nineteenth-Century Medicine* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988).

²⁶ Russell H. Chittenden, *The Development of Physiological Chemistry* (New York: Chemical Catalog Company, 1930), p.27.

was argued.²⁷ As their standard of living rose, workers increasingly consumed cheap, ready-to-eat canned goods as well as pre-cooked or preserved meats. The traditional rural diet heavy on potatoes and fresh vegetables gave way to one centered around meat as the major protein source. But still yet workers often could not afford enough meat to reach daily protein requirements as indicated by nutritionists. What is more, the cheap cuts accessible to workers ensured they consumed more satiating fats. With caloric gaps still left to fill, urban laborers often turned to quick energy sources, in particular sweets and alcohol.²⁸ This resulted in an unbalanced diet that unwittingly robbed workers of energy. An article from the *Preußische Zeitung* summed it up in equationally: "*Fleisch + Fett x Bier = Leistungsschwund*" (meat + fat x beer = loss of performance).²⁹ Such a diet, it was believed, could also lead to a variety of diseases and health issues, everything from cancer to tooth decay.

Thus it became clear to many that the issue of nutrition extended far beyond the realm of personal health. Not surprisingly, as the rise of modern nutritional science coincided with the rise of the modern nation state, governments began to intervene in a variety of ways in the diets of their citizens. This was done either indirectly through funding research in universities and laboratories or more directly through the establishment of consumer protection laws or welfare services. On the one hand, state governments began to understand that nutrition played a central role in the

²⁷ Corinna Treitel, "Food Science/Food Politics: Max Rubner and 'Rational Nutrition' in Fin-de-Siècle Berlin," in Peter J. Atkins, Peter Lummel, and Derek J. Oddy (eds.), *Food and the City in Europe since 1800* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2007), pp.51-61.

²⁸ The regime was very irregular in its attempts to control alcohol consumption. On this see Geoffrey J. Giles, "Die Alkoholfrage im Dritten Reich," *Drogalkohol*, no.3 (1986), pp.257-265.

²⁹ BAL NS 5/VI 4925 "*Fleisch + Fett x Bier = Leistungsschwund*," *Preußische Zeitung* (08.04.1939).

social, economic, and political problems of the day. On the other hand, food scientists also increasingly understood how their work could serve as a solution to many of those same problems. In Germany, these ideas were subsumed under the concept of *Volksernährung* (people's nutrition).³⁰ Interest in *Volksernährung* increased dramatically at the beginning of the twentieth century as the pace of industrialization accelerated and the advent of the Great War brought the so-called "food question" into the mainstream.³¹ What are the minimal nutrition requirements for a soldier to maintain peak performance? For civilians to stave off diseases? For industrial workers to achieve maximum efficiency? The latter question was taken up by the Kaiser Wilhelm Institute for Labor Physiology in Berlin under the leadership of none other than Max Rubner.³² With the rise and influence of scientific management (Taylorism) and the rationalization of labor in the late nineteenth century, German factory owners sought out ways to increase profits by cutting costs and the maximizing efficiency of their workflows, machines, and even their workers.³³

³⁰ Max Rubner, *Volksernährungsfragen* (Leipzig, 1908). For a case study on the American food scientist Wilbur O. Atwater, see Naomi Aronson, "Nutrition as Social Problem: A Case Study of Entrepreneurial Strategy in Science," *Social Problems*, vol. 29, no. 5 (June 1982), pp.474-487. For Britain, see Madeleine Mayhew, "The 1930s Nutrition Controversy" *The Journal of Contemporary History*, vol. 23 (1988), pp.445-464. See page 60 above.

³¹ See for example the work of Max Winckel. As a nutritional expert and food chemist, he began working with the Bavarian government to publish informational brochures. See for example his *Krieg und Volksernährung* (Munich: Gerber, 1914) and *Kriegsbuch der Volksernährung* (Munich: Gerber, 1915).

³² Dietrich Milles, "Working Capacity and Calorie Consumption: The History of Rational Physical Economy," in Harmke Kamminga and Andrew Cunningham, *The Science and Culture of Nutrition, 1840-1940* (Amsterdam and Atlanta, Editions Rodopi, 1995), pp. 75-96.

³³ On the influences of American business, see Mary Nolan, *Visions of Modernity: American Business and the Modernization of Germany* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994). Further see Phillip Gassert, *Amerika im Dritten Reich: Ideologie, Propaganda und Volksmeinung, 1933-1945* (Stuttgart: Steiner, 1997).

Under Nazism, the concept of *Volksernährung* took on new meaning. Influenced by the “science” of race and racial hygiene prominent at the time, Nazi nutritionists argued that it was impossible to set standard nutritional guidelines for everyone in the world as the various peoples and races were biologically and physiologically different.³⁴ For example, it was believed that the Japanese, Malays, Russians, Estonians, and Latvians had longer intestinal tracts and larger salivary glands that allowed for better processing of carbohydrate-rich diets. Also stomachs performed differently depending on race as evidenced by their belief in the existence of “the rice stomach of the Malays and the banana stomach of Negroes.”³⁵ Because it was also believed that nutrition had at one time influenced the development of races, this factor still had to be considered. At the 1936 Berlin Olympic Games the doctor Paul Schenk of Danzig surveyed the diet of participants from the forty- two nations who had competed. He catalogued the basic diets of the participants, paying particular attention to differences based on country of origin, physical stature, and whether they were *Schwerathleten* or *Leichtathleten*. He was surprised to find that one thing all the athletes had in common that they ate lots of meat for energy, sometimes as much as six and a half pounds per person per day. While his observations led him to believe that in general “the muscle machine [human body] of all peoples of the earth worked in similar ways,”³⁶ he also concluded that

³⁴ Hermann Ertel, *Die Grundlagen der deutschen Volksernährung. Zugleich ein Überblick über Tagesfragen der Ernährung* (Leipzig: Johann Ambrosius Barth, 1938), p.2.

³⁵ Otto Flößner, “Allgemeine ernährungsphysiologische Fragen,” in Reichsarbeitsgemeinschaft für Volksernährung, *Aufklärung! Eine Vortragsammlung*, no. 4 (1936), p.10. “Hierher gehört weiter der Reisbauch der Malaien und der Bananabauch der Neger.”

³⁶ Paul Schenk, “Bericht über die Verpflegung der im ‘Olympischen Dorf’ untergebrachten Teilnehmer an den XI. Olympischen Spielen 1936 zu Berlin”, *Die Ernährung*, vol. 2, no.1 (January 1937), p.18.

doctors and nutritionists still needed to take “physique, age, and race” into consideration when prescribing diets.³⁷

But race was not the only emphasis in the Nazi conception of *Volksernährung*. Equally important was the health of the nation and the so-called “national community.” It was often said that during the Third Reich that privacy did not exist and one’s diet was not excluded. Party mottos like “Stay healthy!” made clear the belief that eating properly was a patriotic duty. Franz Wirz, a dermatologist and expert member of the NSDAP’s Committee for Public Health, explained it in the simplest of terms in 1936 when writing a piece on *Volksernährung* requirements under National Socialism. “The criteria [for *Volksernährung*] correlate to the same requirements which National Socialism has placed on purely political areas. One may not live just the way it suits him, but rather he has to always question his actions: Will I help or hurt my people by it?”³⁸ To prove his point, Wirz focused on changes to the German diet over the previous century and linked it to series of health problems which appeared ever more frequently. The sudden increase of metabolic diseases (*Stoffwechselkrankheiten*) of the liver, kidneys, and bowels spoke for themselves, he believed. Wirz wanted to delve deeper into other less conspicuous health issues, namely tooth loss and infertility. He held that peoples who ate naturally (i.e. no artificial additives) from the bounties of their own fields knew nothing of tooth decay, but “a large portion of our people suffer from tooth loss

³⁷ Ibid., p.23. For contemporary accounts on food and the 1936 Olympics, see Herbert Kreimeyer, “Die Küche im Zeichen der Olympiade 1936. Die Internationale Speisekarte für die Olympia-Gäste,” *Die Küche*, no.6 (June 1936), pp.121-123 and C. Friebel, “Die Speisung der 5000 im Olympischen Dorf,” *Die Küche*, no.8 (August 1936), pp.173-177.

³⁸ Franz Wirz, “Nationalsozialistische Forderungen an die Volksernährung,” *Die Ernährung*, vol. 1, no. 3 (1936), p. 107.

and its often grave circumstances.” It was not just the middle-aged and older folk either. After the last medical exams for military service were given it was found that seventeen out of one hundred young Germans were not physically fit for service, fifteen percent because of bad teeth.³⁹ Obviously under Nazism it was believed that one had a patriotic duty to eat healthfully. Citing a rather dubious claim that French émigrés to Canada exhibited “extraordinary fertility” after changes to their lifestyle and above all their diet after leaving their homeland, Wirz asserted that proper nutrition was key to the “healthy development of nation and race.”⁴⁰

But what did a healthy German diet actually consist of? Here Nazi nutritional policy was greatly influenced by the *Lebensreformbewegung* (Life Reform Movement) that grew precipitately in the late nineteenth century in Germany and Switzerland in reaction to modern, industrial society. Advocates pushed for a return-to-nature style of living that emphasized the reestablishment of the traditional bond between the human body and its natural environment. The reformers attempted this in a variety of ways, most often seeking self-improvement through dietary reform, vegetarianism, homeopathy, nudism, sun worship, or physical fitness (gymnastics). The idea was that by individually eschewing luxury and excess through self-discipline and self-control, one could gradually reform society at large.⁴¹ Under Nazism, the various reform clubs and

³⁹ Ibid., p106.

⁴⁰ Ibid. Wirz also cited American research which drew links between sterility and metabolic dysfunctions caused by abnormal coli flora in the intestines. The importance of “economic” health and its connections to Nazi food policy have already been discussed in chapter 4.

⁴¹ On the movement, see Wolfgang R. Krabbe, *Gesellschaftsveränderung durch Lebensreform* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1974); Eva Barlösius, *Naturgemässe Lebensführung: Zur Geschichte der Lebensreform um die Jahrhundertwende* (Frankfurt and New York: Campus-Verlag, 1996); and Matthew Jeffries, “Lebensreform: A Middle-Class Antidote to Wilhemism”, in Geoff Eley and James Retallack

associations, many of which dated back to the nineteenth century, were either shut down or “co-ordinated” into the party-backed *Deutsche Gesellschaft für Lebensreform* (German Society for Life Reform).

This new Life Reform Society, under obvious pressure from the NSDAP’s Office for Public Health, propagated a German diet that fell between the extremes of the movement and in line with economic and agricultural realities as well as the science of the day. It did not support one-sided diets like vegetarianism or the raw food movement, but did not wholly reject them either. The preferred Nazi diet was referred to as “*gemischte Kost*” (literally mixed fare, but is better translated as “well-balanced”). That is, a natural, simple, sustainable, and affordable diet that made use of both animal and plant products delivered by German farmers from German fields. It was not about quantity, but rather the quality and variety of ingredients. “Natural nutrition for Germany is well-balanced, that means not only vegetables [and] meat, but also cooked food [and] raw food or rather protein, fat, carbohydrates, salts, vitamins, and water.”⁴² The first three guiding principles of the German Society for Life Reform show clearly the intertwining of Nazism with nineteenth-century back-to-nature ideals.

I.

The worldview of the German life reform movement is National Socialism. From this stems its goal and actions. The German life reform movement developed out of defense against the naturally alienating transformation of our environment.

II.

At the core of life reform stands the human being as a member of the superior unit of life, the nation.

(eds.), *Wilhelminism and Its Legacies: German Modernities, Imperialism, and Meanings of Reform* (Berghahn Books, 2003), pp.91-106.

⁴² Flößner, “Allgemeine ernährungsphysiologische Fragen,” p.11.

Life reform stands for: the reestablishment of the long gone natural order of life. Life reform means: the affirmation of life in its entire splendor. Life reform does not stand for: the timid nurturing and protection of one's own self, the sectarianism and paternalism of others.

III.

Life reform begins with the soil. Food that is grown on German land is offered to us. The polymorphic life in soil is an essential link in the eternal circle of life. Only rich healthy soil can create wholesome life-enhancing food....

Nazi nutritionists were rightly skeptical about the feasibility of mandating rigid nutritional rules, but they set out general guiding principles which could be modified based on the weight, health, sex, and occupation. At the heart of nutritional debate for at least five decades had been the so-called *Eiweißfrage* (protein question), in particular how much protein did the human body require. Justus von Liebig had in the mid-nineteenth century not only been the first person to take a chemical approach to food by breaking it into the constituent parts of protein, fats, and carbohydrates, but his experiments suggested (erroneously) that protein was required to feed the high-protein muscular structure of the human body.⁴³ Carl Voit, Liebig's student at the University of Munich, had through later research overturned Liebig's "meat makes meat" theory, but still yet set the daily protein minimum for the average adult doing moderate activity at 118 grams (56g fat, 500g carbohydrates). Backed by the science of the day, the Voitean high-protein diet was considered by many to be healthful and was very influential. But not everyone in the scientific world agreed and in the first few decades of the twentieth century a series of publications appeared suggesting much lower

⁴³ Justus von Liebig, *Animal Chemistry, or Organic Chemistry and its Applications to Physiology and Pathology*, edited edition by William Gregory (London: Taylor and Walther, 1842).

minimum intake requirements. Mikkel Hindhede, an influential Danish physician, suggested a minimum of only 28g was required after self-experimenting with the Voitean high-protein diet.⁴⁴ Nazi dietary recommendations fell in the middle at 70-80 grams of protein, 50-70 grams of fat, and 400-500 grams of carbohydrates. Such a diet would contain roughly 2,351-2,429 calories.⁴⁵ Put simply, Germans were to eat less meats and fats and more vegetables and fruits.⁴⁶

From the Nazi perspective, modern nutritional science clearly had much to teach Germans about the irrationality of their diets, but putting this scientific knowledge into practice presented a challenge. Part of the problem during the Kaiserreich and the Weimar Republic, so their thinking went, was that there were many gifted German scientists and organizations working on various sides of the nutrition issue, but they worked independently and without a common goal. This problem would be resolved with the creation of the *Reichsarbeitsgemeinschaft für Volksernährung* (RAGVE, or Reich Labor Committee for the People's Nutrition) in August 1933. Initial discussions about such a venture began between various ministries and institutions at a meeting the German Agricultural Society in Berlin in the spring of 1933. Representatives from the Reich and Prussian Interior Ministries, the Propaganda Ministry, the Office for Agricultural Policy, the Public Health Office, the NSDAP Administration, and other agencies agreed to meet on 5 July 1933 to discuss their objectives and put a plan in

⁴⁴ Mikkel Hindhede, *Gesundheit durch richtige und einfache Ernährung* (Leipzig: J.A. Barth, 1935).

⁴⁵ See for example Ertel, "Die Grundlagen der deutschen Volksernährung," p.70. These figures are for an average healthy adult.

⁴⁶ See the various articles in Reichsarbeitsgemeinschaft für Volksernährung (ed.), *Obst und Gemüse in der deutschen Volksernährung* (Leipzig: J.A. Barth, 1939).

place. This led to the establishment of the RAGVE the following month under the leadership of Hans Reiter, the President of the Reich Public Health Office.⁴⁷

The stated goal of the RAGVE was to “carry out an assessment of all questions pertaining to the people’s nutrition, in order to ascertain which measures are required in these areas to maintain a healthy, efficient (*leistungsfähig*) German Volk.”⁴⁸ This was not an institution in which individual members joined, but rather one which other organizations and institutions became affiliated with. These included the Food, Health and Propaganda Ministries, the Reich Food Estate, the German Labor Front, the Life Reform Society, and NS-Women’s League among others. The RAGVE was comprised of the three departments, two of which dealt with scientific and clinical issues while the third focused on the “people’s nutrition,” in particular issues of provisioning and the dissemination of nutritional information. The latter was seen as an essential and important part of the RAGVE’s mission. It was to carry out a “continuous, reliable briefing for the German people on the state of nutritional questions.”⁴⁹

One of the most consistent and widespread informational campaigns carried out by the Reich Labor Committee for People’s Nutrition was centered on the so-called “*Brotfrage*” (bread question).⁵⁰ Nazi nutritionists argued that as meat consumption increased over the past century along with it came decreased consumption of healthy

⁴⁷ For more on the RAGVE, see Jörg Melzer, *Vollwerternährung: Diätetik, Naturheilkunde, Nationalsozialismus, sozialer Anspruch* (Stuttgart:Franz Steiner Verlag, 2003), p.162-173.

⁴⁸ Hermann Ertel, “Die Reichsarbeitsgemeinschaft für Volksernährung, ihre Gründung und Aufgaben”, *Die Ernährung*, vol. 1, no. 1 (1936), p.20.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰ For an excellent overview of the “bread question”, see Uwe Spiekermann, “Vollkorn für die Führer. Zur Geschichte der Vollkornbrotspolitik im ‘Dritten Reich’,” *Zeitschrift der Geschichte des 20. und 21. Jahrhunderts*, no. 16 (2001), pp. 91-128.

bread.⁵¹ Moreover, the increasing tendency of German consumers to choose white, pleasantly-textured, refined-flour breads over traditional whole-grain, dark breads meant not only a loss of nutrients but was also seen as wasteful. As the name implies, *Vollkornbrot* (whole-grain bread) is made of flour using all three parts of the grain, including the bran (outer shell, *Kleie*), the endosperm (kernel, *Kern*) and the germ (the seed, *Keim*). The popularity of lighter, refined-flour breads was seen as problematic because they were made using only the kernel (endosperm), the least nutritious part of the grain.⁵² The germ contains the highest concentration of nutrients (about 40%), in particular protein, fat, and minerals but above all Vitamin B1. In fact, whole-grain bread contains three times as much B1 as meat, spinach, or carrots and eight times the amount of milk, potatoes, and tomatoes. Not only did it not make nutritional sense to mill away the bran and the germ, but it did not make economic sense either. In 1934 the wheat and rye harvests in Germany yielded roughly nine million tons, from which nearly 2.7 million tons of germ was separated. The protein content of the latter would have been enough cover the total annual requirement for six million Germans. The germ was not totally going to waste; rather it was used to feed livestock. But even this was seen as irrational by Nazi food experts because for every hundredweight of germ used in

⁵¹ It was claimed that Germans used to eat 200kg of bread and 12kg of meat, but now 100kg of bread and 55kg of meat. See "Ißt du richtig, Berliner? Volksernährung von morgen---Verdorbener Geschmack und verweichlichte Verdauung," *Völkischer Beobachter*, no.287 (1936).

⁵² "Was ist Vollkornbrot?," *Mehl und Brot. Wochenschrift für Wissenschaft, Technik und Wirtschaft der Bäckerei*, no 11 (March 1937), p.1-4.

bread making it produced four times the amount of calories for human consumption than if used to feed livestock.⁵³

Beginning in 1935 the Nazi government stepped up its efforts to increase whole-grain consumption by pressing the bakery industry to begin making necessary adjustments for whole-grain bread production. The change over seems to have proceeded slowly and not without significant problems as by 1939 only one percent of all German bakeries were engaged in whole-grain bread production.⁵⁴ Getting Germans to alter their patterns of consumption proved challenging, especially because the quality of the breads that came to market from bakeries and bread factories left much to be desired.⁵⁵ With the outbreak of war in 1939 finding a solution to the “bread question” expeditiously became critical and the onus fell onto the newly created *Reichsvollkornbrotausschuss* (RVBA, or Reich Whole-Grain Bread Committee). Closely aligned with the Public Health Office, the RVBA was charged with steering production and consumption toward whole-grain rye breads as wheat quantities dwindled.⁵⁶ Consequently a *Vollkornbrotaktion* (whole-grain bread campaign) was announced and the RVBA began a massive propaganda launch to make clear the importance of the issue. Posters in the office, in factories, at doctors’ and dentist’s offices, on street corners and in shops reminded Germans to “Eat whole-grain bread...because it’s better

⁵³ Wilhelm Heupke, “Brot vor tausend Jahren und Heute”, in Reichsvollkornbrotausschuß (ed.) *Kampf ums Vollkornbrot. Stimmen und Zeugnisse zur Vollkornbrofrage*, (Dresden and Planegg: Müllersche Verlagshandlung, 1941), p.12-13.

⁵⁴ Robert N. Proctor, *Racial Hygiene: Medicine under the Nazis* (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 1988), p.237.

⁵⁵ BAL NS 5 I-275 Amt für Volksgesundheit der DAF, Rundschreibung, Hptabt. II, Abt. 3 (04.09.1940).

⁵⁶ On the rye versus wheat debate, see Spiekermann, “Vollkorn für der Führer,” pp.100-102.

and healthier.” Another such poster “Why whole-grain bread?” gave information about various cereal grains and outlined nutritional values.⁵⁷ The Women’s League worked with the RVBA to publish recipes wherein homemakers could use whole-grain flour, not just in breads, but in soups, porridges, dumplings, meatless patties, and pastries.⁵⁸ In order to increase the quality and hence the attractiveness of whole-grain breads, the RVBA began working with the bread industry and the Baking Institute to offer baking classes and instruction. It also began to closely monitor bread production in bakeries and factories. Samples had to be sent to the RVBA in Berlin or affiliates in Dresden, Munich, Dessau or Cologne for testing. Breads were not only checked for nutritional contents, but also taste, texture, and smell.⁵⁹ Approved bakeries were given *Gütemarken* (seals of approval) to be placed on their products.⁶⁰ By all accounts the RVBA was successful as by 1943 nearly a quarter of all German bakeries were selling whole-grain breads.⁶¹

But as the saying goes, one cannot live on bread alone. And herein lies one of the ironies the National Socialist push toward whole-grain bread consumption. Historically, bread had dominated the monotonous German diet, especially for the poor. Because of this, its nutritional and cultural significance for Germans would be hard to

⁵⁷ BAL NS 47/44 Reichsfrauenführung, “Vollkornbrotbewerbung”, Hptabt. V/H, Presse/Prop., Rndschr. Nr. FW 21/41 (12.02.1941).

⁵⁸ Reichsvollkornbrotausschuss, *Wir kochen und backen mit Vollkornschrot* (Planegg by Munich: Müllersche Verlagshandlung, 1941).

⁵⁹ See for example, Kurt Meyer, ‘Bericht über die Bekömmlichkeit des Vollkornbrotes des Institutes für Bäckerei, Berlin, auf Grund von Untersuchungen im Frühjahr 1941,’ *Die Ernährung*, vol.7, no. 4 (1942), pp102-103.

⁶⁰ See the announcement published in *Mehl und Brot*, no.39 (1939), p.716.

⁶¹ Proctor, *Racial Hygiene*, p.237.

overstate. German workers literally labored to “earn one’s bread.” Pious Germans prayed for their “daily bread.” The centrality of bread in many German proverbs shows its importance as well: *Besser eigenes Brot als fremder Braten* (Better to have one’s own bread than some else’s roast), *Kein Mahl taugt ohne Brot* (No meal suffices without bread), or alternatively *In der Not ißt der Bauer die Wurst auch ohne Brot* (In tough times even the farmer eats his sausages without bread). The linguistic importance is still apparent. The traditional late evening meals of bread, butter, cold cuts, and cheeses in northern and central Germany are called *Abendbrot* (evening bread). In southern Germany, the similar light meal is referred to as *Brotzeit* (bread time). In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, rolls and slices of bread were the main components of the industrial laborer’s diet as they always short on time and money. As we will see below, the Nazi regime sought to modify this bread-heavy diet of German workers so that it fell in line with their vision of a true *Volksernährung*.

The Beauty of Labor and Factory Canteens

One of the most transformative social aspects of industrialization was the clear demarcation it brought between the home and the workplace. Working far from the hearth meant that for the first time the large urban workforce would be required to take their midday meals on the job. Initially wives or children, if the home was close enough, often met husbands at the factory gate with warm lunches. However, as the pace of industrialization quickened and break times got shorter, this became increasingly rare. And with factories often outside the city center and mines in even more remote areas, workers seldom had access to cheap restaurants or street vendors. They either brought small, simple meals from home or simply went without. The result was virtually a constant state of undernourishment among the working class that was evident

everywhere.⁶² As companies and factory owners more and more looked to rationalize production in order to eke out ever greater profits, they also began to rationalize the diet of their workforce via factory canteens. This was part and parcel of the movement toward industrial discipline.⁶³ In Germany during the Great War the patronage and creation of industrial canteens increased dramatically, but there was always resistance to such mass provisioning.⁶⁴ Whether critical of the food, prices, or perceived economic benefits for bosses, workers often viewed owner-sponsored canteens with distrust. Workers in Switzerland's chemical industry, for example, staunchly opposed mass provisioning efforts as overly paternalistic.⁶⁵ The negative associations attached to *Massenspeisung* (mass provisioning) would have to be overcome in the Third Reich.

Attempts to overturn the general pessimism Germans had toward communal feeding programs began in typical fashion by first altering the language. Terms like *Massenspeisung* or the more disparaging *Massenabfütterung* quickly became *passé*.⁶⁶ To emphasize the National Socialist character of the new programs, more congenial substitutes like "*der gemeinsame Kochtopf*" (the common cooking pot), or the far more

⁶² International Labor Office, *Worker's Nutrition and Social Policy* (1936), p.5. For the British case, see *Welfare Work in British Munitions Factories* (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1917). From a hygienic perspective, see Edgar L. Collis and Major Greenwood, *The Health of the Industrial Worker* (Philadelphia: P. Blakiston's Son & Co., 1921).

⁶³ Ulrike Thoms, "Industrial Canteens in Germany, 1850-1950," in Marc Jacobs and Peter Scholliers, *Eating Out in Europe: Picnics, Gourmet Dining, and Snacks Since the Late Eighteenth Century* (New York and Oxford: Berg, 2003), pp.356-357. Rationalization and bodily control have been seen as hallmarks of modernity. The classic statements on this are Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (New York: Scribner 1958), originally published in 1904 and Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978).

⁶⁴ Belinda Davis, *Home Fires Burning*, pp.152-185.

⁶⁵ Jakob Tanner, *Fabrikmahlzeit: Ernährungswissenschaft, Industriearbeit und Volksernährung in der Schweiz, 1890-1950* (Zürich: Chronos, 1999).

⁶⁶ The German verb *füttern* (to feed) is often, but not always, associated with animals.

common *Gemeinschaftsverpflegung* (communal feeding or catering), became standards in the Nazi lexicon when referring to mass provisioning.⁶⁷ Indeed, *Gemeinschaftsverpflegung*, a term coined in the 1930s and still common today, became the default term for the Nazi regime. But it was not simply a matter of semantics as the ideological underpinnings behind mass provisioning changed too. Nazi ideologues argued that in the typical capitalist conception of economics all aspects of business were viewed through the dual lenses of sound capital investment and profitability. Thus factory owners would only feed workers if it was beneficial to their bottom line. National Socialism found such economic thinking as overly materialistic and “Jewish.” “Not capital and profit, but labor stands at the center of economic life.”⁶⁸ Labor produced capital, not the other way around. German workers were neither proletarians nor simply cogs in the wheels of industrial production lines, but rather integral and important members of a *Leistungsgemeinschaft* (community of achievement) between a factory leader and his retinue (*Gefolgschaft*).

To prove the point, the KdF office *Schönheit der Arbeit* (Beauty of Labor or SdA) began operations in November 1933 under the motto “the German everyday shall be beautiful.” Charged by the DAF with eradicating class distinctions and raising living standards by making the workplace safer and more aesthetically pleasing, the SdA oversaw a series of campaigns whose goal was nothing less than to transform

⁶⁷ On the language, see for example BAL NS 5 VI 4487, DAF -“Der große Topf. Probleme und Tatsachen der Gemeinschaftsverpflegung” (24.3.1944).

⁶⁸ Erich Walter, “Die Gemeinschaftsverpflegung im Betrieb,” (PhD Dissertation: Ruprecht-Karls Universität Heidelberg, 1941), p.45.

Germany's industrial landscape.⁶⁹ The main functions of the Beauty of Labor Office were to inspect all commercial construction projects and to oversee all building projects of the DAF, in particular factory renovations. These tasks were greatly expanded, however, with the announcement of the Four-Year Plan and the replacement of Karl Kretschmer with Herbert Steinwarz as SdA director in 1936. Beauty of Labor inspectors visited plants throughout Germany making suggestions for improvements and detailing infractions. Much of the SdA's propaganda was directed at factory owners and managers to demonstrate the economic and social benefits that would come if they footed the bill for enhancement projects. Most of the projects were focused on increasing safety in the plant as well as the health of workers by improving lighting and ventilation systems, reducing noise and airborne particulates as well as promoting cleanliness, health, and hygiene by constructing washrooms, changing and exercise facilities as well as gardens for employees during breaks.⁷⁰ The tax benefits and promises of increased worker efficiency seem to have been effective as by 1938 over 67,000 plant inspections took place and German employers had spent over 900 million Reichsmarks on improvements.⁷¹ Such successes suggested to contemporaries that the Beauty of Labor was the "culmination of a revolution in German factories" and a "socialist obligation..." that is "part of the new social policy in the new Germany."⁷²

⁶⁹ Rabinbach, "The Aesthetics of Production," p.191.

⁷⁰ See for example, Wilhelm Lotz, *Schönheit der Arbeit in Deutschland* (Berlin: Deutscher Verlag, 1940); Amt Schönheit der Arbeit, "Sechs Vorträge zum Thema Schönheit der Arbeit, Technik, und Wirtschaft (1941); "Abortanlagen gewerbliche Betrieben" (Berlin: DAF Verlag, 1942); and "Erfahrungen und Anregungen des Amtes Schönheit der Arbeit"(no date).

⁷¹ Rabinbach, "The Aesthetics of Production," p.193.

⁷² BAL NS 5 VI DAF 6262, "Ein Geschenk an den schaffenden Werkmann," Württembergische Landeszeitung, no.104 (17.7.1936).

It has been noted that one of the most interesting and unique features of the SdA was the attention it paid to the bodies of workers, especially their personal hygiene and the cleanliness of the work environment in which they toiled.⁷³ Filthy wardrobes and washing facilities, typical in many industries, were to be a thing of the past as they robbed workers of the “joy” of labor. The Beauty of Labor pressed for properly outfitted, spacious, and sanitized facilities befitting racially superior Germans. But it was not just simply the physical appearance of the workers they were concerned with. Much like the components of any piece of equipment on the shop floor, their internal parts had to be cared for as well. “Everyone knows how important proper maintenance and a good greasing is for the machines... so they remain operable and protect them from wear and tear.”⁷⁴ The same was true for productive workers and proper nutrition was seen as vital in this regard.

As we have already noted above, a byproduct of the industrial revolution was the fact that workers would regularly take their lunches away from the home. But few employers offered either sufficient lunch breaks, easy access to food, or adequate space to eat in. Because of this it was commonplace for workers to simply eat at their station, often holding a self-packed sandwich in one hand and a lever or tool in the other. Others might simply overturn boxes or crates lying about to serve as makeshift tables and chairs. Equipment for warming leftovers from the prior evening’s meal packed in a *Henkelmann* (thermos) was rare, as was suitable storage. Thus, it became routine for German workers to eat cold, easily transportable foods quickly amongst the

⁷³ Baranowski, *Strength through Joy*, p.87.

⁷⁴ Berliner Kraft und Licht (Bewag)—Aktiengesellschaft, *Warmes Essen im Betrieb* (Berlin: Paß & Garleb A.G, no date), p.2.

dirt, dust, noise, chemicals, and the hubbub of the shop floor. When break rooms were provided they were often cramped, dank, and filthy. Such eating habits and environments were seen as the root causes for a variety of health, economic, and political problems in the Third Reich and the Beauty of Labor campaign *Warmes Essen im Betrieb* (“Hot Factory Meals”) was called into action in February 1939 to fix them.

Advances in modern nutritional science as well as modern medicine had clearly shown that not only would improper nutrition sap the energy and performance of a worker, but was also the cause of many ailments common to the urban working class. Everything from stomach ulcers to indigestion was linked to the poor diet of the urban working class. Indeed, it was often claimed that along with the migration of people to the urban centers came a massive surge in so-called “*Zivilisations-Krankheiten*”, most of which were caused by an improper diet.⁷⁵ “Short lunches, eating hastily, cold foods (sandwiches) are the cause, and 55% of workers suffer from these ailments” one expert noted.⁷⁶ German workers, it was argued, were literally suffering from a “*Stullenleben*” (a life of sandwiches).⁷⁷ Bread would certainly satiate the appetites of workers, but it was not particularly easy to digest, especially when it was not well-chewed before swallowing, and it could not provide the variety of essential nutrients needed to maintain peak performance.⁷⁸ It should also be noted that with the lack of refrigeration,

⁷⁵ BAL NS VI DAF 4484, “Gesunde Lebensführung—nationale Pflicht”, *Hamburger Fremdenblatt*, no. 307 (1940).

⁷⁶ “Magengeschwür und Ernährung,” *Zeitschrift für Volksernährung*, no. 20 (20.10.1940).

⁷⁷ Walter Kretschmer, “Warmes Essen im Betrieb,” *Die Ernährung*, vol. 4, no. 4, (1939), pp.109.

especially during the warmer months of the year, workers had worry about eating spoiled foods.

Many of these problems could be avoided, it was believed, if hearty, warm meals were supplied for workers. Doctors held that the human organism had a physiological *Tageskurve* (daily curve) in which energy levels increased throughout the morning but reached their peak at midday and then began to decline. A nutritious, well-balanced, cooked lunch was seen as the best way to restore that energy.⁷⁹ Healthy caloric intake levels of course depended on the type of labor one did or more precisely the amount of muscle activity. For example, a person holding an occupation wherein they stood for most of the shift required twenty-five percent more calories than someone who held a desk job. Those in heavy manual labor jobs like mining could require as much two hundred percent more. In caloric terms, this meant a variation of 2000 to 5000 calories.⁸⁰

But why the necessity of a hot meal? Scientists argued that primitive humans had been herbivores, but had adapted over time to the demands of the environment, in particular the use of fire to cook foods. Over thousands of years human beings physiologically adjusted to these new foodways and ultimately evolved into omnivores.⁸¹ During this process, cooked food became more easily digestible for humans, that is, the

⁷⁹ Richard Kopsch-Rossin, "Warmes Mittagessen oder Stullen?," *Arbeitertum*, no.11 (1937), p.6.

⁸⁰ Hans Schein, *Die Werkverpflegung der Arbeiter. Mit besonder Berücksichtigung der Werkdiätküche* (Leipzig: Johann Ambrosius Barth Verlag, 1940), p.9.

⁸¹ Many of the publications cite the work of Dr. Hermann Gerbis who was the *Gewerbemedizinalrat* (Senior Health Consultant for Industry) during the Weimar Republic. See in particular, "Ärztliche Probleme zur Frage der Fabrikspeisung." *Beiheft zum Zentralblatt für Gewerbehygiene und Unfallverhütung*, no. 16 (1930), pp.19-38.

time it takes to break down and process the food into energy is much shorter. The reasons for this are numerous. First, simply the aroma of a cooked meal starts the digestive process. The smell of herbs and spices, of sprinkled “chives on a soup or fried onions over potatoes,” stimulates the salivary glands while at the same time the stomach begins to secrete its digestive juices. Not only that, but cooked foods generate more blood flow to the stomach than cold foods resulting in higher production of the Pepsin enzyme and more efficient protein digestion.⁸² Fats, which are not water soluble, are much harder for the human body to digest. In fact, dietary fats are little affected by mouth and stomach secretions and only begin to significantly break down when in the duodenum (*Zwölffingerdarm*). Bile, stored in the gallbladder, is introduced via a duct to the duodenum which then emulsifies the fats allowing the molecules to be absorbed into the bloodstream. Thus, *Butterbrot*, the quintessential mainstay of the German workers diet, was one of the more difficult to digest foods.⁸³ Given the short lunch breaks of the urban workforce, a warm meal was not surprisingly deemed critical in maintaining their *Leistungsfähigkeit* (productivity).⁸⁴

The Beauty of Labor’s “Hot Factory Meals” propaganda campaign declared a “*Kampf gegen Stullen*” (“fight against sandwiches”) as it attempted to both compel employers provide access to meals and employees to pay for and eat them. A deluge

⁸² Lotte Müller and Wilhelm Ziegelmayr, “Auch für wenig Geld eine gute Werksverpflegung. Warmes und billiges Essen in den Betrieben,” *Zeitschrift für Gemeinschaftsverpflegung*, vol. 8, no.5 (1939), pp.69-71 and Kretschmer, “Warmes Essen im Betrieb,” p.110.

⁸³ *Ibid.* *Butterbrot* (literally bread with butter, but margarine or schmalz is common as well), or *Stullen/Schnitte* (in the dialect of Berlin and northeast Germany) was a very common choice for packed lunches of urban laborers.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, pp.17-18.

of literature, lectures, and film shorts produced by the Research and Enlightenment Division of the SdA assured business owners and shop managers that their investments would pay off in form of productive, healthy, and happy workers. Although there appears to have been no hard statistical data, the German Labor Front nonetheless made bold, wide-ranging claims based on experiments undertaken by doctors in factories where *Gemeinschaftsverpflegung* (mass provisioning) existed. In its brochure entitled “Arbeit und Ernährung” the DAF summarized the findings. It had found that in factories that dispensed hot meals workers had greater *Arbeits- und Leistungsfreudigkeit* and that they found it not just a “convenience” but that it also raised their “well-being and efficiency.” During a two-week long renovation of one kitchen a “glaring decrease in the productive efficiency of the workforce” was observed. On Saturdays when no meals were prepared, over-time workers preferred “re-heated potatoes and coffee over the best *Butterbrot*.” It even alleged, although much harder to believe, that workers “sometimes refused overtime when not receiving hot food.” Interestingly, it also claimed that those workers required to take sick leave throughout the year were not regular patrons of the factory canteen.⁸⁵ Employers and employees were also repeatedly reminded that participation was a national duty and very much “in the interest of the State” as it would allow for the food rationing system to be more easily controlled.⁸⁶

⁸⁵ Reprinted in Walter, “Die Gemeinschaftsverpflegung im Betrieb,” pp.35-36.

⁸⁶ Hübbenet, *Das Taschenbuch Schönheit der Arbeit*, p.144. See also Ernst H. Sommert, “Warmes Essen im Betrieb: Der Gemeinschaftsverpflegung in der Fieseler-Flugzeugsbau Gesellschaft,” *Zeitschrift für Gemeinschaftsverpflegung*, vol. 8, no. 3 (1939), p.40.

Of course for many businesses the prospect of implementing a system of *Gemeinschaftsverpflegung* was daunting and posed numerous, significant challenges depending on budget, space, location, and the size of the workforce. Moreover, actions taken had to meet the strict criteria developed by the SdA if they wished to reap tax and credit stimulus packages. Here the engineering and plant design experience of SdA Director Herbert Steinwarz proved very helpful as the tasks of the Beauty of Labor Office expanded into more architectural, technical, and design areas.⁸⁷ To help make this process as smooth as possible, Steinwarz placed consultation offices manned with specialists at the local level to help factory owners in all matters concerning mass provisioning including appropriate designs of kitchens and dining halls as well as recommendations on kitchen management, personnel, and meal planning. They were the “*Ideeträger*” (concept carrier) of the SdA.⁸⁸ Accordingly, Beauty of Labor became increasingly involved with model prototype designs on everything from wallpaper and lighting to furniture and tableware.⁸⁹

Why did Beauty of Labor go to such great lengths? Previous experiences had shown that even when tasty, warm meals were provided the vast majority of workers did not patronize the canteens, due in no small part to the uninviting dining areas. “Food alone doesn’t do it; the eye eats and savors as well.”⁹⁰ Furthermore, providing sufficient

⁸⁷ Amt “Schönheit der Arbeit”, *Unser Ziel: Warmes Essen im Betrieb* (no date).

⁸⁸ BAL NS 5 VI DAF 6268 “Kulturarbeit im Betrieb,” *Bremer Zeitung*, no.270 (1937).

⁸⁹ See for example Herbert Steinwarz, Georg Mewes, and Paul Simma, *Das Kameradschaftshaus im Betrieb* (Berlin: Verlag der deutschen Arbeitsfront, 1939). See also the Office’s periodical of the same name (*Schönheit der Arbeit*) for various model designs of its flatware and crockery. For example, no. 1 (May, 1937), pp. 41-43.

⁹⁰ Berliner Kraft und Licht (Bewag)—Aktiengesellschaft, *Warmes Essen im Betrieb*, p.2.

wash, dining, and recreation facilities for the working class tied directly into the ideological foundations on which the Beauty of Labor stood. It was part and parcel of the attempt to restore the long lost “joyous spirit” into work. The dining hall was not to resemble a “*Massenabfertigungsanstalt*” (mass processing plant), but rather was to be “beautifully and comfortably” furnished so that the lunch break was a time of rest and relaxation.⁹¹ Walls were to be decorated tastefully, not with the common “kitsch wallpaper” found everywhere that had in their view contributed “to no small extent to a deterioration of taste” (*Geschmacksverderb*). In accordance with National Socialist principles, such “evils” were to be “exterminated” by seizing “it at the root.”⁹² Not only did the SdA work closely with the wallpaper industry to develop acceptable designs, it also contracted artists to paint *völkisch*-themed murals and dictums like “Honor labor and honor the laborer and you honor the nation” on walls. To further “prevent the infusion of national kitsch,” famous sculptors like Arno Breker were commissioned to produce various-sized busts of “leading men” in stucco or terra cotta to adorn break rooms.⁹³

Likewise, furniture was supposed to complement the style of the room all the while being handsome, comfortable, yet rugged and easy to keep clean. Chairs were usually recommended over bench-style seating because they took up less space, are easy to arrange, and allowed workers to come and go without bothering others. Tables

⁹¹ Hübbenet, *Das Taschenbuch Schönheit der Arbeit*, p.146.

⁹² BAL NS 5 VI DAF 6268 “Und nun die schöne Tapete...Eine neue Aufklärungsfeldzug des Amtes ‘Schönheit der Arbeit’”, *Bremer Zeitung*, no.297 (1937).

⁹³ BAL NS 5 VI DAF 4486 “Kein nationaler Kitsch in Gemeinschaftsräumen,” *Der Angriff*, no. 261, (30.10.41).

were to be made of hardwoods with or without veneers, depending on whether table cloths were to be used. And fresh flowers were always to be placed on tables as they infused life and color to the room. The entire space was to be brought together with appropriate sconces or chandeliers for lighting as well as curtains to accentuate windows. Decisions were made easier for factory owners as they could choose from the 158 different furniture designs published in the SdA's own catalogue.⁹⁴ A beautiful canteen needs beautiful tableware lest the "many hidden connections between tableware and eating and drinking" are broken and the "harmony of pleasure" is interrupted.⁹⁵ Therefore, the Beauty of Labor worked with the porcelain, glass, and pottery industries to develop suitable and cost efficient designs. Plates, cups, bowls, saucers, pitchers, and serving dishes of various styles were produced.⁹⁶ And just like good tools were needed on the shop floor, so too were utensils that met utility requirements, but were also "beautiful" and had the "perfect form."⁹⁷

As important as aesthetics were to dining areas, functionality was essential when it came to canteen kitchens. It must not only be close to the shop floor, but its arrangement and output should be such that the lines move quickly so that "the soup does not get cold before they get to the table and that precious break time is not lost on

⁹⁴ Karl Nothhelfer and Hans Stolper, *Das Möbelbuch Schönheit der Arbeit* (Berlin: Verlag der deutschen Arbeitsfront, 1937).

⁹⁵ "Essen und Essen ist zweierlei", *Schönheit der Arbeit*, no. 11 (1938), p.446. The author uses the example of beer being drunk from a tea cup arguing that the unfamiliar vessel would disrupt the senses and alter both the taste and enjoyment of the beverage.

⁹⁶ BAL NSD 50/295 "Schönheit der Arbeit". This is a collection of brochures and special prints housed in the library of the Federal Archive in Lichterfelde. See also Franz Günther Schäfer, "Die Porzellangeschirre 'Schönheit der Arbeit' (1935-1945), in Schäfer, *Sechs Aufsätze zur oberfränkischen und oberpfälzischen Wirtschaftsgeschichte* (Marktredwitz, 2001), pp.80-141.

⁹⁷ For examples see "Modelle des Amtes Schönheit der Arbeit", *Schönheit der Arbeit*, no.11 (1938).

unnecessary waiting.”⁹⁸ The number of patrons to be served in any one shift dictated much of the layout. A handbook published by Beauty of Labor gave a variety of possible floor plans for 50, 100, 200, 500, or 1,000 people. But there were many other particulars to be worked out as well. How many shifts and/or meals would be served? How would food deliveries be made? What types of storage would be needed? What type of heat source (coal, steam, gas, or electricity) would be used?⁹⁹ Sanitation and the safety were extremely important as well. Perhaps one of the most important aspects though was staffing the kitchen with a skilled workforce. As we will see below, the regime had a solution for this too.

Nazi Cooking Schools

For many within the Nazi ranks *Gemeinschaftsverpflegung* became increasingly important in the late 1930s for Germany’s economy and the creation of a strong *Volksgemeinschaft*. Already in 1937 it was estimated that 35-40% of the population patronized some form of communal feeding operation, so much so that canteen kitchens witnessed a shortage of skilled personnel. The food served to these millions of Germans could not simply just taste good, it needed to be healthy and the recipes needed to always use seasonal ingredients which accorded with the rationing system. In essence, the health of the people and the economy was very much in the hands of the cooks of canteens. Because of this responsibility, the government averred that they needed proper training that would allow them to fulfill the above goals all the while using their artistry to avoid the monotony often found in mass provisioning. “And we have no

⁹⁸ Hübbenet, *Das Taschenbuch Schönheit der Arbeit*, p.146.

⁹⁹ Herbert Steinwarz, *Speiseräume und Küche in gewerblichen Betriebe: Zusammenstellung und Gesamtbearbeitung* (Berlin: Verlag der Deutschen Arbeitsfront, 1942).

interest in adopting the methods of the giant Soviet industrial kitchens which day in and day out deliver to its people a standardized soup with a few, paltry alternating add-ins” (*mit kümmerlich wechselnden Einlagen*).¹⁰⁰

To remedy the shortage as well as coordinate all mass provisioning in Germany, the Labor Front leader Robert Ley announced the creation of the *Reichsarbeitsgemeinschaft für Gemeinschaftsverpflegung* (Labor Committee for Mass Provisioning, or RAGGV) in November of 1937. Under the leadership of Hans Feit, a colleague of Ley’s as head of the DAF Commerce Office, the RAGGV was a working group that consisted of over thirty offices, agencies, associations, and technical experts connected in any way with food and mass provisioning in Germany. The idea was to bring together their vast experiences with *Gemeinschaftsverpflegung* from both the civilian and military sectors so that they could learn from one another. Its main goals were to compile recipes and meal plans, to serve as technical support for canteens, to aid the Reich Food Estate in securing food security through consumption controls, and to “promote meticulous training and educational work.”¹⁰¹ One of the most important actions taken by the RAGGV was to establish the *Reichsschule für Gemeinschaftsverpflegung* in Frankfurt am Main which offered continuing education

¹⁰⁰ This came from a speech made by Dr. Wilhelm Ziegelmeier (food expert in the War Ministry) at the seventh annual International Culinary Arts Exhibition in Frankfurt a.M. in October 1937. BAL R36/1275 DAF Gemeindetag, “Aus der Arbeit der Reichsarbeitsgemeinschaft für Gemeinschaftsverpflegung. Eine Kundgebung von geschichtlicher Bedeutung.”

¹⁰¹ BAL R36/1275 DAF Gemeindetag, “Gemeinschaftsverpflegung. Gründung einer Reichsarbeitsgemeinschaft,” *Berliner Börsen-Zeitung*, no. 111 (10.11.1937). The RAGGV also worked very closely with the Beauty of Labor in the „Hot Factory Meals“ campaign. See also BAL R36/1275 DAF Gemeindetag, „Bericht über die erste Arbeitstagung der Reichsarbeitsgemeinschaft für Gemeinschaftsverpflegung am 25.11.1937“ and more generally BAL NSD 50/97 „Reichsschule für Gemeinschaftsverpflegung der Deutschen Arbeitsfront“ (no date).

courses and vocational training for cooks and chefs working in the industry or wanting to.

In coordination with the restaurant and hospitality industry (*Gaststätte und Beherbergungsgewerbe*), the German Labor Front had already in January 1936 opened a school in Frankfurt am Main to train cooks and wait staff. The *Reichskoch- und Sprachenschule für Gaststättengewerbe*, housed in the beautiful Sommerhof palace, also became the home of the RAGGV. In typical polycratic style, the *Gaufacharbeiterinnen* in the Home Economics Division of the DAF's Women's Office were also brought in.¹⁰² Training programs varied in length depending on experience. A two-month course cost 290 *Reichsmarks* which included room, board, materials, and accident insurance. A ten-day course was also available for 65 *Reichsmarks*. On the second floor of the building were sleeping rooms, showers, as well as recreation and reading areas. The first floor contained classrooms, a library, and the teaching kitchen outfitted with the latest in kitchen technology.¹⁰³ The training programs focused on both practical and theoretical instruction. Not only did they hone their skills in the kitchen, participants were also lectured on dietetics, nutrition and health, food science, cooking science, the food industry, kitchen administration as well as the "duties of a communal cook in the current State."¹⁰⁴

¹⁰² See the various articles published in *Die Deutsche Gaststätte* in the winter and spring of 1938. For example, no. 1, (1938) and no. 5, (1938). See also BAL R36/1275 "Aufbau und Zweck der Reichsarbeitsgemeinschaft für Gemeinschaftsverpflegung" (1938). There was also foreign language instruction for wait staff trainees.

¹⁰³ "Aus dem Betrieb der Reichskochschule für das Gaststättengewerbe in Frankfurt a. Main", *Die Küche*, no. 3, (March 1936), pp.66-67.

¹⁰⁴ BAL NSD 50/97 „Reichsschule für Gemeinschaftsverpflegung der Deutschen Arbeitsfront“ (no date).

Given the pace at which mass provisioning expanded as a result of the German Labor Front's activities as well as the outbreak of war, cooks and chefs had little trouble finding work. In 1944 the Reich Food Estate estimated that no less than twenty-six million people were using communal food services for part or all of their nutritional needs. Of the roughly 43,000 communal feeding sites, 17,300 were factory canteens (up from 6,500 in 1939) and 19,400 were work camp kitchens.¹⁰⁵ It further estimated that since the beginning of the war those fed by factory canteens had risen from 1.5 million to 12 million and in the work camps from 1 million to 14 million.¹⁰⁶ With these sorts of figures it is obvious that an ever increasing number of qualified personnel were needed as well. To help meet demand, the German Labor Front employed twenty-five *Gaulehrköche* (District Teaching Chefs) to provide technical training and support in every region of the country. The number of participants in the courses increased annually, going from 1,280 in 1940 to 4,350 in 1943.¹⁰⁷ Despite these impressive figures, the question remains: was the Beauty of Labor successful in its stated goals?

This is a difficult question to answer, given the multiplicity of objectives as well as the many variables outside the Office's sphere of influence. Some policies and actions

¹⁰⁵ Accord to Beauty of Labor, mass provisioning was not economically viable for factories and businesses with less than fifty employees. Because of this, the Labor Front began pushing *Fernverpflegung* (catering), wherein the food would be made offsite by a contracted kitchen or restaurant and then delivered in large insulated containers. This was even done for coal miners. There were approximately 2,000 such services in 1944. See, "Fernverpflegung: Neue Maßnahmen der DAF. sichern zweckmäßige Ernährung in den Betrieben," *Arbeitertum*, no.22 (1940), pp.4-5.

¹⁰⁶ BAL NS 5 VI 4487 DAF "Die volkswirtschaftliche Bedeutung der Gemeinschaftsverpflegung", *Zeitungsdienst des Reichnährstandes*, no.48 (30.11.44). Compare with Joachim Drews, *Die "Nazi-Bohne": Anbau, Verwendung, und Auswirkung der Sojabohne im Dritten Reich und Südosteuropa (1933-1945)* (Münster: LIT Verlag, 2004), p.155.

¹⁰⁷ BAL NS 5 VI 4487 DAF Gustav Leitz, "Die Gemeinschaftsverpflegung," *Die Deutsche Sozialpolitik*, no.2 (1944). See also the cookbook of Gaulehrkoch Alexander Novotny, *Küchenzettel zur Gemeinschaftsverpflegung in Lager- und Werksküchen* (Berlin: Verlag der Deutschen Arbeitsfront, 1942).

were clearly popular. As women increasingly joined the work force in the late 1930s, the prospect of leaving young children at home unattended must have been terrifying. The push to set up kindergartens in factories, although late in war, certainly lessened the burden of many women.¹⁰⁸ For many women, the “Hot Factory Meals” campaign also kept them from long hours in front of the stove. Nonetheless, some of the efforts of the SdA must be seen as a failure. Beauty of Labor had two clearly stated goals. First, it intended to redress discontent within the working class by raising the standard of living, not by significantly increasing their wages or reducing the long hours, but via improvements in the workplace. Hence it was not through economic means, but by propagandistic means. Certainly there is ample evidence to show that tens of thousands of workplace beautification projects were completed. For example, in 1940 alone the SdA completed 4,332 inspections which led to 2,600 shop floor construction and technical improvements as well as the building of 800 new canteens and recreation rooms, 67 camaraderie houses, 12 gymnasiums, and 22 pools.¹⁰⁹ But there is also significant evidence which suggests that the workers were not won over by such chicanery, especially because expenses were often foisted upon them. Employers trying to cut corners and costs often had employees engaged in “volunteer overtime” after their shifts cleaning up green spaces, painting walls, and completing building projects. Various tactics were used to enlist support, usually by public shaming or the threat of dismissal, but talk of a stint in a concentration camp was known to work well

¹⁰⁸ Ley issued an order on 7 September 1944 for day care facilities to be set up in factories for the children of working mothers. See BAL NS 5 VI 4487 DAF “Betriebe betreuten Kinder,” *Deutsche Bergwerks-Zeitung*, no.108 (10.05.44).

¹⁰⁹ BAL NS 5 VI 6229 DAF “Leistungen des Amtes ‘Schönheit der Arbeit’,” *Deutsche Bergwerkzeitung*, no. 41 (18.02.41)

too.¹¹⁰ Despite the potential economic benefits that were to come to factory owners from the improvements, many forced workers to share a burden of the cost by docking their pay. So much so, that already in 1937 lawsuits were flying and a regional court in Duisburg ruled that such salary reductions were illegal. Press releases by the regime repeatedly admonished factory leaders for such actions.¹¹¹

Beauty of Labor's second goal with its improvement projects, and above all with its "Hot Factory Meals" program, was to increase worker productivity and morale. Judging irrefutable success or failure here is much more difficult as comprehensive hard data for all industries is lacking. There is certainly much evidence to suggest that attempts to return the "spirit of joy" to work were largely ineffectual. Records from the late 1930s point to widespread discontent exemplified, for example, by the spikes in absenteeism. Berlin's rearmament factories reported in September 1939 (during the war!) that twenty percent of the workforce did not bother to turn up the day after payday each week. Complaints about refusals to work overtime, poor workmanship, drunkenness, and damaged equipment were quite common. Nearly two hundred small, isolated strikes were reported by authorities over an eighteen-month span (1937/38) as well.¹¹² Even the annual May Day parties and "camaraderie evenings" organized by factory leaders complete with food and drink were increasingly ridiculed and avoided.

¹¹⁰ Richard J. Evans, *The Third Reich in Power* (New York: Penguin, 2005), p.475.

¹¹¹ See for example BAL NS 5 VI 6268 DAF "Es geht nicht auf Kosten der Gefolgschaft. Für 'Schönheit der Arbeit' darf kein Lohn einbehalten werden," *Frankfurter Volksblatt*, no.275 (08.10.37) and "Pächter oder Verpächter? Wer trägt die Kosten für 'Schönheit der Arbeit?," *D.A.K.*, no. 4 (02.01.38).

¹¹² The list of strikes is incomplete, but still telling. On this as well as the forms of worker discontent noted above, see Tim Mason, "Workers' Opposition in Nazi Germany," *History Workshop Journal*, no.11 (1981), p.120-137.

Many workers complained that in actuality their Labor Front dues were subsidizing the festivities.¹¹³

The recent resurgence of interest in economic history in the last decade further complicates our assessment of the SdA's efficacy as long held assumptions about the Nazi war economy are being challenged. It is no longer clear that industrial productivity slumped, or was even headed toward crisis levels in the late 1930s.¹¹⁴ A reinterpretation and quantitative analysis of key sources renders a view of the war economy that was much more stable and continuous than previously thought. If this is true, and so it seems, then the so-called "armament miracle" of Albert Speer does not seem so miraculous after all.¹¹⁵ Does this then mean that the "Hot Factory Meals" program achieved the desired results of increasing worker efficiency? It would be very difficult, probably impossible given the dearth of evidence, to make such a case irrefutably. One detailed study of mass provisioning written in 1941 does give some suggestive evidence from a single district. Of 82,783 factory workers in the seventeen *Kreise* that comprised the Gau Baden, on average only 17.7% spent the 35-50 cents required to purchase a meal. This figure, however, includes workers lacking access to hot meals. Of the workers who could patronize canteens, 41% took advantage of the

¹¹³ See for example, *Deutschland-Berichte der Sopade 5* (1938), entries for April/May, pp.464-467.

¹¹⁴ Although these views find their origins in the 1940s, a fierce debate ensued in the 1990s between two British historians. See Richard Overy, *War and the Economy in the Third Reich* (Oxford University Press, 1994). For the crisis argument, see Tim Mason, *Nazism, Fascism, and the Working Class* (Cambridge University Press, 1995).¹¹⁴ For a recent reassessment, see Tooze, *Wages of Destruction*.

¹¹⁵ J. Adam Tooze, "No Room for Miracles: German Industrial Output in World War II reassessed," *Geschichte und Gesellschaft*, no. 31 (2005), pp. 439-464. Further see Jonas Scherner, "Nazi Germany's Preparation for War: Evidence from Revised Industrial Investment Series," *European Review of Economic History*, no. 14, pp. 433-468.

opportunity in Gau Baden.¹¹⁶ Whatever the effectiveness of the Nazi mass provisioning system, its significance is beyond a shadow of a doubt substantial as it sustained the German economy through six long years of war. As the need for higher levels of industrial production became acute, labor shortages in key areas meant that German workers were pushed harder and worked longer hours. While factories in Germany produced war goods in record numbers, the German war machine in Eastern Europe extinguished lives in record numbers.

¹¹⁶ Walter, "Die Gemeinschaftsverpflegung im Betrieb," pp.195-196. The author notes that rural areas often had the fewest patrons.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION: FOOD, WAR, AND THE PARADOX OF CONSUMPTION

Hitler, Göring, Goebbels and the Food Minister Backe are holding a war council. Hitler asks Göring: “How long will the planes and fuel last?” Göring: “Five years, my Führer!” Hitler asks Goebbels: “How long will the propaganda keep the people occupied? Goebbels: “Ten years, my Führer!” Hitler asks Backe: “And how long can you feed us?” Backe: “Twenty years, my Führer!” Hitler says with his usual energy: “Then we can still carry on the war for some time!” Sheepishly Backe speaks up again: “But I meant only us four!”

—Popular joke during the Third Reich¹

The Russian has been enduring poverty, hunger and frugality for many centuries. His stomach is elastic, therefore let there be no false pity for him.

—Eleventh “Commandment” for the German military in occupied Soviet Union²

During the planning stages of the war against the Soviet Union, a perverse, murderous logic was applied to food policy. Nazi nutritionists and food planners were forced to reckon with the fact that its agrarian policies were ineffectual in achieving the “food independence” deemed crucial for the war effort. In 1939 Germany was still importing some seventeen percent of its food needs. Forecasts for the 1940 growing season were lackluster and ration reductions for key foodstuffs, above all meat, were slated for early summer. This news was coming directly on the heels of a series of shortages and price spikes that led to considerable popular discontent as well as anxiety from Nazi leadership.³ In order to avoid a dreaded repeat of 1918 and have any chance of winning a protracted war with Britain and its allies, it became clear that the vast resources held in the USSR were crucial for the survival and future of the Nazi

¹ The joke is recounted in Rudolph Herzog, *Heil Hitler, das Schwein ist tot! Lachen unter Hitler—Komik und Humor im Dritten Reich* (München: Wilhelm Heyne Verlag, 2008), p.207.

² Quote taken from Susanne Heim, *Plant Breeding and Animal Research in Kaiser Wilhelm-Institutes 1933-1945: Calories, Caoutchouc, Careers* (Springer, 2008), p.23.

³ On this Alex J. Kay, *Exploitation, Resettlement, Mass Murder: Political and Economic Planning for the Occupation of the Soviet Union, 1941-1945* (New York: Berghahn, 2006), pp.49-50.

empire. What this entailed was nothing less than the premeditated murder of million of Soviets by way of a state-sanctioned starvation policy (*Hungerpolitik*).⁴ The mastermind behind the plan was the undersecretary of the Reich Food Ministry Herbert Backe.

Backe was uniquely qualified for this job.⁵ Born in 1896 to German émigrés living in Russia (in what is now Tbilisi, Georgia), Backe lived there as a German citizen into his teenage years. With the onset of the Great War, however, he was arrested and interned for four years until he eventually escaped and made his way to Germany with the aid of the Swedish consulate in Petrograd. This experience left indelible feelings of resentment and he became a committed anti-communist. In 1920 Backe began studies in agricultural science at the University of Göttingen and soon after joined the Nazi SA. In 1924 he attended the Technical University in Hannover writing a dissertation on the Russian cereals market in which he attempted to use a racial/biological argument to explain problems in the Russian food economy. It was rejected.⁶ Backe then left school and moved to the countryside and began farming with his wife Ursula. With the economic downturn after 1929, he became politically active again as an agricultural expert and was eventually elected to the Prussian Parliament in 1932. After Hitler's seizure of power, Backe was appointed to the Food Ministry under Darré. In contrast to the *Blut und Boden* romantic, Backe was quickly recognized by Hitler, Göring, and

⁴ Götz Aly and Susanne Heim, *Architects of Annihilation: Auschwitz and the Logic of Destruction* (London: Weidenfield & Nicolson, 2002, pp.234-252. This work appeared in German in 1991. A similar argument has been made by Christian Gerlach, *Krieg, Ernährung, Völkermord: Forschung zu deutschen Vernichtungspolitik im Zweiten Weltkrieg* (Hamburg: HIS Verlag, 1998).

⁵ For Backe's personal history, see Gesine Gerhard, "Food and Genocide: Nazi Agrarian Politics in the Occupied Territories of the Soviet Union," *Contemporary European History*, no. 18 (2000), pp.45-65.

⁶ After the invasion of the Soviet Union, he had ten thousand copies of the dissertation manuscript published for official government use. See Heim, *Plant Breeding and Animal Research in Kaiser Wilhelm-Institutes 1933-1945*, p.19.

Goebbels as the sort of “can do” man they needed. In 1936 Backe was appointed by Göring as the food expert for the Four-Year Plan Committee and to the General Council. With it, in many respects, he had usurped Darré and became the dominant political force in food policy. From 1939 onwards, Backe controlled Germany’s entire food economy.

At the beginning of 1941, that is the third year of the war, Backe faced a dilemma as Britain’s naval blockade was making the food situation increasingly difficult despite the rationing system he developed. Newly occupied territories were not picking up the slack either and grain reserves were dwindling despite a controlled livestock slaughter. Nazi leadership had come to the realization that Germany did not stand a chance in the war if something did not dramatically change. In his year-end report on the food situation, delivered to his superiors in January 1941, and only several weeks after Hitler made the announcement to plan Operation Barbarossa, Backe’s research showed that the invasion “could only be continued if Russia feeds entire Wehrmacht in the third year of the war.”⁷ Backe did not mean a gradual reworking and rationalization of the Soviet agricultural system, but rather the decimation of twenty to thirty million “useless eaters” via starvation. Or as he referred to them, a “surplus population.” Thus before the details of “Final Solution to the Jewish Question” had been worked out, another larger program of mass murder had been cooked up.⁸ And because it accorded so well with

⁷ Cited in Christian Gerlach, *Kalkulierte Morde: Die deutsche Wirtschafts- und Vernichtungspolitik in Weißrußland 1941 bis 1944* (Hamburg: HIS Verlag, 1999), p.46.

⁸ This is not to suggest that there were not linkages between the food policy in the occupied east and the Judeocide. Christian Gerlach has shown clearly that food shortages in the General Government played a role in the initial decision to “liquidate” Jews to better feed Polish slave laborers. See *Krieg, Ernährung, Völkermord*, pp.181-210.

basic tenets of Nazi ideology, which held Slavs as “subhumans,” the so-called “Hunger Plan” found general acceptance at all levels.⁹

With the invasion of the Soviet Union on 22 June 1941, some three million German soldiers (and 600,000 horses), all needing to be fed “off the land,” rapidly advanced toward the Red Army in an attempt to quickly defeat them before they had a chance to retreat behind the Dnieper. Operation Barbarossa consisted of three main striking elements. Army Group North smashed into the Baltic States overrunning Lithuania and much of Latvia in the first two weeks. Army Group Center focused its invasion on Belorussia which fell under total German control in matter of weeks with the encirclements of Bialystok and Minsk. Army Group South pushed through southern Poland and into the Ukraine, resulting in the capture of Kiev and half a million Soviet prisoners of war.¹⁰ As the Wehrmacht moved eastward, it was trailed by the mobile killing squads, or *Einsatzgruppen*, whose job it was to “pacify” the rear areas. With explicit orders to kill political commissars, Jewish intelligentsia, and “partisans,”¹¹ the *Einsatzgruppen*, with the aid of the Waffen SS, Wehrmacht, and various police units, murdered 439,826 civilians between July and December 1941, most of whom were

⁹ On the importance of anti-Bolshevism, see Arno J. Mayer, *Why did the Heavens not Darken? The “Final Solution” in History* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1988), pp.200-233. On how anti-bolshevism and the brutalizing effects of war came to play a role in the soldier’s justification of atrocities, see Omer Bartov, *Hitler’s Army: Soldiers, Nazis, and War in the Third Reich* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992).

¹⁰ Gerhard L. Weinberg, *A World at Arms: A Global History of World War II*. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), pp.264-270.

¹¹ For an early, but still important study, see Raul Hilberg, *The Destruction of the European Jews* (New York and London: Holoems & Meier, 1985), pp.99-156. Originally published in 1961.

Jews.¹² The string of quick victories over the Red Army in the summer of 1941 signaled to Hitler that the gamble had paid off and victory was assured. It was likely to have been in the “euphoria of victory” in the USSR that Nazi leadership recommenced plans on the “Jewish question” and made the decision to extend the mass murder of Soviet Jewry to all European Jews.¹³

The troops began immediately to follow the “Hunger Plan” as laid out by Backe and ordered by military command. The large urban industrial centers of the Western Soviet Union were cordoned off as best as possible from food sources. German troops plundered food stores and requisitioned grain reserves, but the envisioned famine never materialized as they were never capable of completely sealing off the cities. Civilians simply got food however possible, either via foraging, the black market or moving to countryside. This does not mean that death tolls were minimal however. In 1941 approximately five million Jews lived in the Soviet Union, most of whom were concentrated in cities in the western part of the country.¹⁴ With the invasion, approximately 1.5 million fled to east, but the remainder was soon overrun by the Germans. Those not killed immediately by the *Einsatzgruppen* were used as slave labor and put on starvation rations that ultimately claimed hundreds of thousands of lives in the first year. But the occupational policies of the German military in general, and Backe’s “Hunger Plan” in particular, came to bear most on Soviet POWs swept up in the

¹² Leni Yahil, *The Holocaust: The Fate of European Jewry* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), p.270.

¹³ Christopher R. Browning, *The Origins of the Final Solution: The Evolution of Nazi Jewish Policy, September 1939-March 1942* (Lincoln and Jerusalem: University of Nebraska Press and Yad Vashem, 2004), pp.309-373.

¹⁴ 87-90% of Soviet Jews lived in cities. See Hilberg, *The Destruction of the European Jews*, p.107.

initial *Blitzkrieg* victories. By the beginning of 1942 the Wehrmacht had captured just under four million Soviet soldiers, of whom just over one million were still alive. Most had died of starvation and exposure, but tens of thousands were executed as well. Between June and December 1941 an average of six thousand POWs died each day.¹⁵ To put this in perspective, of the 232,000 British and American captives held by the Germans in World War II, 8,342 died. Of the 5.7 million Soviets POWs in German captivity between 1941 and 1945, 3.3 million died.¹⁶

It must certainly be one of the great paradoxes of the Second World War that the same soldiers who enforced this starvation policy against the Soviet Union were some of the best fed in Germany throughout the 1930s and early 1940s. Joseph Goebbels, just three weeks before the invasion, griped that the Wehrmacht “was too well provided for and consumes too much. Three times as much per head when compared to the civilian population....”¹⁷ Similar consumption patterns are evident from the amounts of food extracted from the Soviet Union for the Wehrmacht or shipped to the home front. From 1941-1943 food transfers to the Wehrmacht amounted to 3.3 million tons of grain, 4.3 million tons of meat, and 1.8 million tons of potatoes. For those same years and products, transfers to the home front were at 988,000 tons, 60,000 tons, and 15,500 tons respectively.¹⁸

¹⁵ Aly and Heim, *Architects of Annihilation*, p.248.

¹⁶ On these figures, see Christian Streit, *Keine Kameraden: Die Wehrmacht und die sowjetischen Kriegsgefangenen 1941-1945* (Bonn: Dietz, 1997). Originally 1978.

¹⁷ Cited in Kay, *Exploitation, Resettlement, Mass Murder*, p.49.

¹⁸ Götz Aly, *Hitler's Beneficiaries: Plunder, Racial War, and the Nazi Welfare State* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2005), p.178. Such figures are likely underestimates as they do not record the unofficial pillaging.

Perhaps even more ironic, if not surprising given the importance the Nazi regime attached to nutrition, only months after the start of Operation Barbarossa the Wehrmacht in cooperation with the Hermann Esser Research Group for Tourism set up an Institute for Culinary Science at the University of Frankfurt. Unlike the German Labor Front's cooking school established in Frankfurt three years prior, this institute was to be geared more towards science and research. At its opening on 31 October 1941, Ernst Pieszczeck, the new President of the Institute and General Staff Member of Army High Command, summarized its work in simple terms. The research done there was to focus on ways to make food preparation more economical and to use the fewest means. It was to use cutting-edge nutritional science to ensure the best methods of preparation were employed to make food as healthy and nutritious as possible. And it was to do so using German products and German culinary arts.¹⁹

By setting up the institute, the German military was to become an “educator in purposeful national nutrition” (*Erzieher zu einer zweckmäßigen Volksernährungsweise*). From the military's perspective in late 1941, it was already obvious that when compared to the food of “Czech, Polish, Danish, Norwegian, Dutch, Belgian, French, English, Yugoslavian, Greek and finally Russian soldiers..., the vittles of the German soldier are the best.”²⁰ Indeed, the German military was in many ways ahead of its time when it

¹⁹ On the opening, see various files of the Institut für Stadtgeschichte Frankfurt am Main (hereafter IfSFM) Magistratsakten 8.262. For the speech, see *Sonderdruck der Wirtschaftsbriefe für die Verwaltung von Verpflegungs- und Unterkunftsstätten—der Wehrmacht—des Arbeitdienstes—der Partei und deren gliederungen—Heil- und Pflege-Anstalten—der Wirtschaft usw. Institut für Kochwissenschaft* (no date).

²⁰ IfSFM KS 4934, *Reden gehalten zur Eröffnung des Instituts für Kochwissenschaft Frankfurt a.M.* (31.10.41). One would certainly add Japan to the list since the majority of Japanese soldiers fighting in the Pacific War died not on the battlefield, but from malnutrition-related diseases or starvation. See Katarzyna Joanna Cwietra, *Modern Japanese Cuisine: Food, Power, and National Identity* (London: Reaktion Books, 2006), p.70.

came to nutrition. It took quite literally Napoleon's truism that "an army marches on its stomach." Whereas in previous times soldiers were left to their own devices to cook meals, the mass provisioning of field kitchens had come to quickly replace it. In 1941 the Wehrmacht had 60,000 field kitchens in operation manned by 150,000 field cooks and legions of prep personnel. The German Wehrmacht was the first in world to publish a sophisticated field cookery manual that was suitable for troops. Healthy and nutritious recipes were developed specifically for the realities of the battle field, not like the French or Italian field manuals with recipes for *Bolognese*, *Ochs bourguignon* (slow braised beef in red wine), or *Ochs soubise* (beef with a béchamel sauce containing pureed onions) which could only be prepared in the "relaxed atmosphere of a stationary kitchen" and with exact ingredients.²¹

The field manuals were designed to allow troops to eat well even without a field kitchen nearby, suggesting appropriate ingredients, recipes, and methods of preparation as well as tips for slaughtering, processing, and preserving based on climate and location. For example, the rather presumptuously titled 1941 "Field Manual for Provisional Cooking and Baking in the Colonies" contained a recipe for "Sliced Meat Hottentott Style" wherein the protein was cooked by laying it directly on glowing coals or ashes. The recipe noted it was especially suited for tough guinea fowl (*Perlhühner*) or Francolins (*Savannenhühner*).²²

²¹ IfSFM KS 4934, *Reden gehalten zur Eröffnung des Instituts für Kochwissenschaft Frankfurt a.M.* (31.10.41).

²² Oberkommando der Wehrmacht, *Feldkochbuch für behelfsmäßiges Kochen und Backen in den Kolonien* (Berlin, 1941), p.13. I say the title is presumptuous because the German *Afrikakorps* did not even arrive on the continent until January 1941 to help the Italians in Libya and Germany held no "colonies." More interestingly, the habitat of the pheasant –related Francolin is mostly in southern Africa, in particular the former colony of German Southwest Africa (present-day Namibia). It would seem then

Because roughly half of the men working in the field kitchens had no real world experience, the army had set up two training kitchens in each military district (*Wehrkreis*) for the training of field cooks. Those running the training kitchens in the military districts kept on top of their trade by attending classes at one of four Army Training Kitchens (*Heereslehrküchen*). Furthermore, attached to every army corps was a cookery training staff (*Kochlehrstab*), consisting of a purser (*Zahlmeister*) and two trained chefs. This staff was required to attend training sessions at the Army Training Kitchens every six months. The opening of the Institute for Culinary Science in Frankfurt was meant to provide the scientific backbone for the military's food operations. Under the Director Wilhelm Ziegelmayr, the Institute was divided into several areas. A Cooking Science Division worked on maximizing nutritional values of foodstuffs by rationalizing methods of preparation. The Nutritional Science Division worked closely with agriculture and industry to steer consumption towards foodstuffs that were in season. The Culinary Arts Division was charged with developing recipes compatible with the German palate. The Kitchen Economy and Equipment Division researched and provided information on kitchen design and product efficiency. Another division published the research from these areas. The Institute also had library built on the holdings of the International Confederation of Chefs which had been incorporated by the German Labor Front in 1933.

It was not just the military that had an interest in the soldiers' diet. The question of what the "boys" were eating seems to have captured popular interest as

that Hitler had big plans for Rommel's *Afrikakorps* south of the equator. There is also evidence of this in Hitler's various foreign policy ramblings on Africa. See Gerhard L. Weinberg, *Visions of Victory: The Hopes of Eight World War II Leaders* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), pp.13-17.

well. Much of the curiosity appears to have focused on the Wehrmacht in Africa as the issue popped up regularly in trade literature.²³ Popular visions of these soldiers' diet often went to the extremes believing "wild and romantic Africa" offered exotic fare. Less exciting were the realities. As one war reporter said, "[w]e live in the desert." Sufficient quantities of fruits and vegetables were impossible to find. "We can therefore totally destroy the illusion that we fry camel chops with eggs in a pan; that we make young heart of palm into a tasty slaw; that we eat boiled bananas for dessert after gazelle kebobs." The truth was the *Afrikakorps* subsisted largely on shipments of canned goods sent from Europe. "Most of us haven't seen a palm in months, much less chopped one down."²⁴ Because the troops relied so heavily on "*Büchsenverpflegung*" (canned food), concerns over vitamin deficiencies were extant. Here is another area where advanced nutritional research paid dividends. Besides "the two big Zs" (*Zwiebeln und Zitrone*, or onions and lemons), the troops relied on yeast extracts, soy bean flour, dried herbs and spices, as well as concentrated vitamin bonbons to stave off health problems. Slave laborers at the Dachau concentration camp outside of Munich worked and died tending the medicinal herb gardens where many of these supplements were produced.²⁵

²³ See for example, "Die Ernährung der Panzerarmee in Afrika. Das Feldkochbuch für warme Länder," *Zeitschrift für Volksernährung*, no.16 (1942), pp. 233-250 and "Feldverpflegung," *Gemeinschaftsverpflegung und Kochwissenschaft*, no.3 (1942), pp.85-88.

²⁴ "Was essen Rommels Soldaten? Falsche und richtige Vorstellungen," *Gemeinschaftsverpflegung und Kochwissenschaft*, no. 3 (1942), pp.53-54.

²⁵ This comes from the Rudolph Höss, *Death Dealer: Memoirs of the SS Kommandant at Auschwitz* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1996).

As we can see from the above example, the deadly paradox of consumption in the Third Reich extended to the realms of food science research as well. By early 1943, that is after the German defeat at Stalingrad, it was clear that the NSDAP had severely underestimated the wherewithal of the Soviet Union. As the food supply situation worsened on the home and Eastern fronts, experiments on new food production methods increased. In 1943 the well-known Oetker firm, the Hamburg-based Phrix Werke, and Himmler's SS formed a new company to develop artificial foodstuffs.²⁶ The new firm, named the Hunsa Research Corporation after small group of people from the Himalayas, was headquartered in Hamburg. While the Hunsa people were noted for their extraordinary health and vitality, attributed to their local, sustainable, largely vegetarian diet, the work of the Hunsa Research Corp. seemed to be anything but. Its goal was to produce foodstuffs by reprocessing "byproducts and residual products" from food industries to create entirely new food stuffs. While we know little about the work done there, the evidence we do have suggests the outcome was often lethal as concentration camp inmates were used as guinea pigs for experiments. Take for example Ernst-Günther Schenck, a doctor who worked in the Food Inspection Office of the SS. Not only was Schenck affiliated with the herb gardens at Dachau, he worked closely with Hunsa on experimental foods. One of these foods, a "protein sausage" made from byproducts of a cellulose and paper factory with the scent of liver added,

²⁶ Rüdiger Jungbluth, *Die Oetkers: Geschäfte und Geheimnisse der bekanntesten Wirtschaftsdynastie Deutschlands* (Cologne: Bastei Lübbe, 2006), pp.186-188.

was tested on numerous Mauthausen inmates, many of whom died of painful intestinal ailments.²⁷

The paradox of Nazi consumption was thus based on the laws of inverse proportionality. Domestically this meant that every attempt to boost the German standard of living in one area was counterbalanced by sacrifices in another area. As we have seen in the food sector, *Quark* was to replace butter and fish was to replace meat until Hitler was able to provide Germans with a material standard of living on par with other advanced industrial nations, above all America. Internationally, this meant that the NSDAP's dreams of autarky, *Lebensraum*, and eventually world domination translated into the persecution, suffering, and death of millions of people. The war was on a certain level an ideologically-driven murderous means to a utopian materialist end. The linkages between consumption and brutality sketched above then suggest fruitful ways scholars might move forward as we try to understand more fully this nightmarish episode in German and world history. Moreover, as the issue of consumption was a central concern not just for the Nazis, but for all successive regimes in Germany, more work must be done to show that the vestiges of Nazi consumption policies did not vanish at *Stunde null* (zero hour).²⁸

Although the Second World War best illustrates the brutal ironies of consumption and nutritional policy in the Third Reich, it was the First World War which served as a constant, unsettling reminder of the importance of the "political stomach" in Germany. A multitude of miscalculations by experts as well as negligence on the part of the imperial

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ For one example, see Paul Betts, *The Authority of Everyday Objects: A Cultural History of West German Design* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004).

government left the *Kaiserreich* woefully unprepared to feed Germans on both the home and war fronts. As the British Blockade increasingly garroted food supply lines, hunger and want among consumers quickly destabilized Wilhelmine Germany. Unable to meet demands for bread or repel the Allied onslaught, 1918 brought about the dissolution of the Second Reich while cities across Germany hemorrhaged from angry protests, food riots, and communist uprisings. The loss of the war was a tough pill to swallow and it proved impossible for many. Blame for the defeat was deflected away from the military and directed toward home front as the “stab-in-the-back” legend gained more and more traction. For both the “front generation” and the subsequent one, the primary reasons for the Germany’s defeat were to be found in both (Jewish) leftist subversion and inadequate food policy. These beliefs were particularly potent within the National Socialist movement, especially among its leadership.

The lessons of the Great War were hard learned and were never forgotten. Actions taken to achieve and maintain suitable living standards for the working class after Hitler’s accession clearly demonstrate that the phantoms of 1918 were everywhere apparent. Fearful that high unemployment rates, tax hikes, or impoverishment would reawaken those ghosts and lead to the impromptu demise of the Nazi movement, Hitler hastily set about to ensure wherever possible that Germans had basic necessities. Already in the winter of 1933 the NSDAP charged forward with its social welfare activities in an attempt to beat back the worst effects of the Great Depression in Germany. Millions of destitute Germans received aid from either the NSV or Winter Relief in the form of a hot meal, clothes, or coupons for basic necessities. While such activities did not make poverty disappear, it was a public display of the regime’s

commitment to everyday Germans and played an important role in garnering much needed popular support in the early 1930s.

With the announcement of the Four Year Plan in 1936 and Germany's expeditious move toward rearmament, the "food question" became a critical component of both domestic and foreign policy. Of paramount importance to Germany's war preparedness was self-sufficiency in the food sector. Because domestic agricultural production could not possibly meet such quotas, the Nazi State took a series of actions to work towards autarky by controlling consumer demand. It was the typical German "*Hausfrau*" that was summoned to guarantee the economic (and physical) health of the nation by purchasing native, seasonal foodstuffs and preparing them in the most nutritious manners. Nazi women's organizations churned out millions of recipe publications and offered tens of thousands of cookery classes. As the largest group of consumers in Germany, the regime realized that self-sufficiency was impossible without influencing women to "coordinate" family meals along rationing guidelines.

Nazi consumption policies did not just affect what was in the cooking pots of Germany's seventeen million households, but also what went into the gullets of millions while on the job. In an attempt to increase the health and productivity of workers, the German Labor Front division Beauty of Labor led a campaign to establish factory canteens to provide hot meals. Here modern nutritional science clearly influenced the NSDAP's politics of the body. Not only had scientists proven the traditional meager diet of the urban working class to be irrational, they had also clearly shown that caloric reductions during the Great War severely reduced industrial production and thus hampered the war effort. If Germany's industry and war machine were to be functioning

at maximum capacity, so to must the “human motors” who powered them. Millions of factory canteens were built and provided nutritious lunches. Because of the rapid increase in the number of communal feeding operations, Nazi cooking schools were set up to deal with the dearth of properly trained cooks and personnel.

As this dissertation has shown, Nazi food policies profoundly affected German foodways during the Third Reich and beyond. By closely monitoring production and consumption, the regime was able to allay much of the criticism waged against many Weimar administrations and institute an adequate, if not wholly sufficient, food economy. Despite calls for “patriotic austerity” throughout the twelve-year existence of the Third Reich, the levels of deprivation never approached parity with those of 1918 or the early 1930s. The ability of the regime to secure a basic standard of living for the majority of Germans helped to gain popular support, or at least tacit approval, even as violence against perceived enemies within Germany and beyond its borders ratcheted up to unimaginable proportions.

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