

Coping  
with Hunger  
and Shortage  
under German  
Occupation in  
World War II

Edited by  
Tatjana Tönsmeier  
Peter Haslinger  
Agnes Laba



# Coping with Hunger and Shortage under German Occupation in World War II

Tatjana Tönsmeier · Peter Haslinger  
Agnes Laba  
Editors

Coping with Hunger  
and Shortage under  
German Occupation  
in World War II

palgrave  
macmillan

*Editors*

Tatjana Tönsmeier  
University of Wuppertal  
Wuppertal, Germany

Agnes Laba  
University of Wuppertal  
Wuppertal, Germany

Peter Haslinger  
Herder Institute  
Marburg, Germany

ISBN 978-3-319-77466-4      ISBN 978-3-319-77467-1 (eBook)  
<https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-77467-1>

Library of Congress Control Number: 2018937867

© The Editor(s) (if applicable) and The Author(s) 2018

This work is subject to copyright. All rights are solely and exclusively licensed by the Publisher, whether the whole or part of the material is concerned, specifically the rights of translation, reprinting, reuse of illustrations, recitation, broadcasting, reproduction on microfilms or in any other physical way, and transmission or information storage and retrieval, electronic adaptation, computer software, or by similar or dissimilar methodology now known or hereafter developed.

The use of general descriptive names, registered names, trademarks, service marks, etc. in this publication does not imply, even in the absence of a specific statement, that such names are exempt from the relevant protective laws and regulations and therefore free for general use.

The publisher, the authors and the editors are safe to assume that the advice and information in this book are believed to be true and accurate at the date of publication. Neither the publisher nor the authors or the editors give a warranty, express or implied, with respect to the material contained herein or for any errors or omissions that may have been made. The publisher remains neutral with regard to jurisdictional claims in published maps and institutional affiliations.

Cover illustration: © Herder Institute, Marburg, image archive  
Photograph: August Custodis

Printed on acid-free paper

This Palgrave Macmillan imprint is published by the registered company Springer International Publishing AG part of Springer Nature  
The registered company address is: Gewerbestrasse 11, 6330 Cham, Switzerland

# CONTENTS

## **Part I Introduction**

- Supply Situations: National Socialist Policies of Exploitation and Economies of Shortage in Occupied Societies During World War II** 3  
Tatjana Tönsmeier

## **Part II Economies of Scarcity and “Ersatz” Sites**

- Black Market in the General Government 1939–1945: Survival Strategy or (Un)Official Economy?** 27  
Jerzy Kochanowski

- Economies of Scarcity in Belarusian Villages During World War II: How New Findings from Oral History Projects Put a Perpetrator-Centred Historiography in Perspective** 49  
Aliaksandr Smalianchuk and Tatsiana Kasataya

- Supplies Under Pressure: Survival in a Fully Rationed Society: Experiences, Cases and Innovation in Rural and Urban Regions in Occupied Norway** 61  
Guri Hjeltnes

**‘The Black Market Is a Crime Against Community’: The Failure of the Vichy Government to Bring About an Egalitarian System of Distribution and the Growth of the Black Market in France During the German Occupation (1940–1944)** 83  
Fabrice Grenard

**The Black Market in Occupied Italy and the Approach of Italian and German Authorities (1943–1945)** 99  
Jacopo Calussi and Alessandro Salvador

**Bones of Contention: The Nazi Recycling Project in Germany and France During World War II** 119  
Chad B. Denton and Heike Weber

### **Part III Coping Strategies and Creating Privileges**

**Between Employer and Self-Organisation: Belgian Workers and Miners Coping with Food Shortages Under German Occupation (1940–1944)** 143  
Dirk Luyten

**‘Dem tschechischen Arbeiter das Fressen geben’: Factory Canteens in the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia** 167  
Jaromír Balcar

**‘In the Hope of a Piece of Sausage or a Mug of Beer’: Writing a History of Survival Sex in Occupied Europe** 183  
Maren Röger

### **Part IV Vulnerabilities: At the Bottom of the Supply Pyramid**

**‘Choosing’ Between Children and the Elderly in the Greek Famine (1941–1944)** 203  
Violetta Hionidou

<b>Food, Money and Barter in the Lvov Ghetto, Eastern Galicia</b>	223
Natalia Aleksium	
<b>The North Caucasus and German Exploitation Policies in World War II: Everyday Life Experience of Children Under the Occupation</b>	249
Irina Rebrova and Elena Strekalova	
<b>‘... Have Not Received Any Deliveries of Potatoes for Quite Some Time ...’: Food Supply and Acquisition in the Ghettos of Vilnius and Kaunas</b>	275
Joachim Tauber	
<b>Fighting Vulnerability: Child-Feeding Initiatives During the Dutch Hunger Winter</b>	293
Ingrid J. J. de Zwart	
<b>Index</b>	311

## NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

**Natalia Aleksium** is Associate Professor of Modern Jewish History at Touro College, Graduate School of Jewish Studies, New York, USA. Her research focusses on Polish Jewish history in the twentieth century, Jewish historiography and the history of anti-Semitism in Eastern Europe. She is currently working on a project dealing with the daily lives of Jews in hiding in Galicia during the Holocaust.

**Jaromír Balcar** is senior researcher in the research program ‘History of the Max Planck Society’ at the Max Planck Institute for the History of Science (Berlin, Germany), since 2014. Before that he held teaching and research positions at the Institute for Contemporary History Munich, Germany (1992–1999), the Ludwig-Maximilians University Munich, Germany (1999–2003 and 2005–2007), the University of Bremen, Germany (2003–2004 and 2008–2014) and the Collegium Carolinum in Munich, Germany (2004–2005). His research interests are mainly directed towards the contemporary history of Germany and East Central Europe.

**Jacopo Calussi** is a Ph.D. candidate at the University of Roma 3, Italy, with a project on Italian fascist violence during Mussolini’s final government (the Italian Social Republic) and the German occupation of Italy (1943–1945). He obtained his master’s degree in History in 2012. His central research topics are political violence in the first half of the twentieth century and the Nazi occupation of Europe.

**Chad B. Denton** is an Associate Professor of History at Yonsei University in Seoul, South Korea. His research focusses on the transnational history of World War II in occupied Europe, Japan and the South Pacific. He is currently revising the book manuscript of his doctoral dissertation ‘Metal to Munitions: Requisitions and Resentment in Wartime France’, completed at the University of California, Berkeley in 2009.

**Ingrid J. J. de Zwart** recently completed her Ph.D. in History (2018) at the University of Amsterdam and the NIOD Institute for War, Holocaust and Genocide Studies, with a thesis entitled ‘The Hunger Winter: Fighting Famine in the Occupied Netherlands, 1944–45’. Previously she was a visiting scholar at the European Institute and Department of Epidemiology at Columbia University, USA. Since autumn 2018 she has been a Niels Stensen post-doctoral fellow at the History Faculty at the University of Oxford, working on the politics of famine and relief in wartime.

**Fabrice Grenard** is the Historical Director of the Fondation de la Résistance in Paris. His work focusses on the history of French society during the German occupation and on the history of the Resistance. His books (in French) include *Black Market in France* (2008) and *A Legend of the Maquis: Georges Guingouin* (2014). He is also the author (in English) of ‘Traitors, traffickers and the confiscation of illicit profits in France 1944–1950’ (*Historical Journal*, 51, 2008) and ‘The French after 1945: Difficulties and Disappointments of an Immediate Post-War Period’, *The Legacies of Two World Wars* (2011).

**Peter Haslinger** has been Director of the Herder Institute for Historical Research on East Central Europe, a member institution of the Leibniz Association, since 2007. He holds the Chair in East Central European History at Justus-Liebig-University Giessen and the Giessen Centre for Eastern European Studies. He is also co-editor of the international research and editorial project ‘Societies under German Occupation—Experiences and Everyday Life in World War II’.

**Violetta Hionidou** is Senior Lecturer in Modern European History at Newcastle University, UK. Her research interest is the history of modern Greece, which she explores in an interdisciplinary perspective including historical demography, the history of the family, the history of medicine and the history of famines. She is the author of *Famine and Death in Occupied Greece, 1941–1944*, and co-winner of the 2007 Edmund Keely

book award, and has published widely in globally renowned academic journals such as the *Journal of Contemporary History*, *Population Studies*, *Medical History*, *Journal of Modern Greek Studies* and *Continuity and Change*.

**Guri Hjeltnes** has been the Director of the Center for Studies of Holocaust and Religious Minorities in Oslo, Norway, since 2012. She has been a professor since 2004 and was Provost at the BI Norwegian Business School from 2008 to 2010. As a historian she has written several studies on World War II, and her dissertation dealt with the seamen of the Norwegian merchant marine. Her books include *Hverdagsliv i krig* (1986) and *Avisoppgjøret etter 1945* (1990) and, together with Berit Nøkleby, she wrote *Barn under krigen* (2000). She is a regular columnist book reviewer in the Norwegian media.

**Tatsiana Kasataya** is a Ph.D. candidate at the Institute of Slavic Studies of the Polish Academy of Sciences in Warsaw, Poland. Using an oral history approach, she is investigating religious policy towards Evangelical Christian Baptists, as well as their community activities, and the structure and dynamics of their development in Belarus. In her research she also collaborates with the Belarusian Oral History Archive.

**Jerzy Kochanowski** is a Full Professor at the University of Warsaw, Poland. In 2007 he was a Visiting Professor at the Johannes Gutenberg University in Mainz, Germany and since 2013 he is the editor-in-chief of the journal *Przegląd Historyczny*. His main area of interest is the social history of Poland and Eastern Europe in the twentieth century.

**Agnes Laba** is currently working as a post-doctoral researcher at the Department of Modern History at the University of Wuppertal, Germany with a project on gender relations and the history of family in France and Poland after World War II. She received her Ph.D. in contemporary history from the University of Giessen for her research on discourse about the Eastern border of the Weimar Republic.

**Dirk Luyten** is a researcher at the Belgian State Archives/CegeSoma, Belgium. His research interests are the history of social policy, labour and industrial relations, the social and economic history of World War II and the history of justice; in particular, the post-war purges of economic collaborators. His recent publications include 'Corporatist institutions and Economic Collaboration in Occupied Belgium' in Hans

Otto Froland, Mats Ingulstad and Jonas Scherner, eds, *Industrial Collaboration in Nazi-Occupied Europe: Norway in Context* (Palgrave 2016).

**Irina Rebrova** is a Ph.D. candidate at the Center for Research on Anti-Semitism at the Technical University Berlin, Germany. The working title of her thesis is ‘Memory about the Holocaust in Soviet and Post-Soviet Russian Discourses on World War II (the Case of North Caucasus)’. She holds a Russian Ph.D. degree (candidate of science in history) and an MA in sociology (gender studies), and she is a research associate at the Hadassah Brandeis Institute at Brandeis University, USA. She has published a number of articles on oral history, gender history and social memory of World War II.

**Maren Röger** has been Associate Professor for Central European and German History at the University of Augsburg, Germany since 2015, and Head of the Bukovina Institute since 2017. Previously, from 2010 to 2015 she was a research fellow at the German Historical Institute Warsaw, Poland, and visiting professor at the University of Hamburg, Germany. Her research focusses on World War II, the Holocaust and its legacy in post-war Europe and on the history of forced migrations. Her most recent book is *Kriegsbeziehungen. Intimität, Gewalt und Prostitution im besetzten Polen 1939 bis 1945* (2015).

**Alessandro Salvador** is currently a research collaborator at the University of Siena, Italy. He studied Contemporary History in Trieste and Trento, achieving his Ph.D. in 2010. His main research interests are right-wing movements in inter-war Germany and, recently, the exploitation and management of resources during the German occupation of Italy (1943–1945). His most recent publication is *New Political Ideas in the Aftermath of the Great War* (Palgrave 2017), co-edited with Anders Granas Kjøstvedt (Oslo).

**Aliaksandr Smalianchuk** is an Associate-Professor at the Institute of Slavic Studies at the Polish Academy of Sciences in Warsaw, Poland. His research interests are national relations in Belarus and Lithuania in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. He also conducts research into collective and cultural memory and oral history.

**Elena Strekalova** is senior lecturer at the North-Caucasus Federal University (Faculty of Russian History) in Russia. In 2003 she presented

her master's thesis on the history of the intelligentsia in the Northern Caucasus in 1920–1930. Since 2005 she has been engaged in an oral history and historical memory project on the Great Domestic War. In 2008 she published 'The Memory of the Great Domestic War in the space of modern Russia'.

**Joachim Tauber** is Director of the Northeast Institute and Professor for Modern History at the University of Hamburg, Germany. Among his works about German–Lithuanian relations and the German occupation regime in Eastern Europe in World War I and World War II is the monograph *Arbeit als Hoffnung. Der jüdische Arbeitseinsatz in Litauen 1941–1944* (2015).

**Tatjana Tönsmeier** holds the Chair of Modern History at the University of Wuppertal. From 2012 to 2016 she was Head of the Research Area 'Europe' at the Institute for Advanced Study in the Humanities (KWI). She is co-editor of the international research and editorial project 'Societies under German Occupation—Experiences and Everyday Life in World War II'. Her main area of research are the history of National Socialism, World War II and occupied societies in Europe.

**Heike Weber** is Professor for Technological Culture Studies (*Technikkulturwissenschaft*) at the Karlsruhe Institute of Technology (KIT, Germany). Her main research interests lie at the intersection of consumption history, environmental history and history of technology. She has worked and published on everyday twentieth-century technologies and on the history of waste, recycling and repair. From 2014 to 2017, Heike Weber was Professor for the History of Technology and Environmental History at the Bergische Universität Wuppertal, Germany. Beforehand, she held positions at several technical universities and was guest researcher at the Smithsonian (Washington, DC, USA) and the EHESS (Paris, France).

## ABBREVIATIONS

ASSR	Crimean Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic
BA/MA	Bundesarchiv/Militärarchiv, Freiburg im Breisgau
BAB	Bundesarchiv Berlin
BSSR	Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic
CCI	Comité Central Industriel
CHS	Chemický spolek
ČKD	Českomoravská Kolben-Daněk
DAF	German Labour Front, <i>Deutsche Arbeitsfront</i>
EOHA	National Organisation of Christian Solidarity
EuL	Department of Food and Agriculture, <i>Ernährung und Landwirtschaft</i>
GG	General Government, <i>Generalgouvernement</i>
GKO	State Defence Committee
IKB	Interdenominational Bureau for Emergency Nutrition, <i>Inter Kerkelijk Bureau voor Noodvoedselvoorziening</i>
IKO	Interdenominational Counsel of the Churches, <i>Inter Kerkelijk Overleg</i>
INSEE	National Institute of Statistics and Economic Studies
JRC	Joint Relief Commission
NA	Národní archiv, Prague
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NS	Nasjonal Samling
OHNS	Mutual Aid Emergency Situation Schoolchildren, <i>Onderlinge Hulp Noodtoestand Schooljeugd</i>
OKW	High Command of the Armed Forces, <i>Oberkommando der Wehrmacht</i>
POW	Prisoner-of-War

PŽS	Pražská železářská společnost a.s. (Prague Iron Industry Corporation)
RfA	Reich Commissariat for Scrap Salvage, <i>Reichskommissar für Altmaterialverwertung</i>
RSFSR	Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic
RSI	<i>Repubblica Sociale Italiana</i> , Italian Social Republic

# LIST OF FIGURES

## **Bones of Contention: The Nazi Recycling Project in Germany and France During World War II**

- Fig. 1 ‘Bone tree’. Clipping from a 1939 Nazi propaganda brochure (*Source* H. Kühn, *Jeder muß helfen! Eine lehrreiche Unterhaltung von Dr. H. Kühn, Referent beim Reichskommissar für Altmaterialverwertung* (Berlin: n.p., around 1939), 15) 124
- Fig. 2 *Knochenlehrkarte*, designed as a material flow diagram of the steps and substances of bone recycling (*Source* Sammlung Forschungsstelle Historische Bildmedien, Universität Würzburg, FHBW/21231 (Schulwandbild ‘Die Verwertung des Knochens’. Serie: Haferkorn and Priemer, *Technologische Tafeln zur deutschen Nationalwirtschaft, I* (Leipzig: “Kultur” Verlag für Lehrmittel, around 1937))) 126

## **‘Choosing’ Between Children and the Elderly in the Greek Famine (1941–1944)**

- Fig. 1 Ratio of famine deaths to deaths between 1936 and 1939 by age group in Syros and the towns Chios and Vrontados (*Sources* Civil Registration Certificates for the years 1936–1944. Unpublished data available in the Local Municipal Offices) 209
- Fig. 2 Ratios of deaths in 1941 and 1942 to deaths in 1939 by age group in Athens and Piraeus (*Source* Author’s calculations based on data available in Magkriōtēs, *Thysiai*, 76) 210

## LIST OF TABLES

### **Black Market in the General Government 1939–1945: Survival Strategy or (Un)Official Economy?**

Table 1	Average daily calorific value of rations (kcal) in Krakow 1940–1944	29
Table 2	Annual rations of selected foodstuffs (kg) for Poles and Germans under the GG in 1942	30
Table 3	Official and (average) prices of selected foodstuffs and manufactured goods on the free market under the GG in 1941–1944 (in zloty)	31
Table 4	Summary of the charges, arrests and penalties for profiteering issued in Krakow, Warsaw, Radom, Lublin and Galicia between 1 April 1941 and 31 March 1942	39

PART I

---

# Introduction



# Supply Situations: National Socialist Policies of Exploitation and Economies of Shortage in Occupied Societies During World War II

*Tatjana Tönsmeier*

Wars cause breakdowns of economies by destroying production, trade and infrastructures. They disrupt sowing and harvesting as well as distribution chains of all kinds. During World War II the consequences thereof for people living in occupied countries were aggravated by ruthlessly implemented German exploitation policies. The resulting shortage took different forms, but was an issue from France to Russia and from Norway to Greece. To varying degrees, it concerned food, housing, heating and electricity as well as products related to medical care—to name just the most essential issues.

Research has so far focussed more on policies of exploitation than on coping strategies. Put more precisely, this history of exploitation has predominantly been written about in one of three strands. First, the focus has either been on economic macro-history with an interest in assessing the contributions of various countries regarding the German war effort,

---

T. Tönsmeier (✉)  
University of Wuppertal, Wuppertal, Germany  
e-mail: toensmeier@uni-wuppertal.de

© The Author(s) 2018  
T. Tönsmeier et al. (eds.), *Coping with Hunger and Shortage under German Occupation in World War II*,  
[https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-77467-1\\_1](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-77467-1_1)

among them the highly industrialised countries of Western Europe like France, without which Germany could not have continued the war for six long years.<sup>1</sup> Second, the approach has been perpetrator centred, paying close attention to those who enacted starvation policies.<sup>2</sup> As a result, we know how different German institutions organised exploitation and that hunger policies were deeply rooted in anti-Semitism and racism, resulting in mass starvation in the occupied territories of the Soviet Union, especially in the cities.<sup>3</sup> A third strand of research focusses on the exploitation of forced labour, paying special attention to the management of forced labour by German authorities, on living and working conditions in the Reich (much less in occupied territories) and especially on Jewish slave labour.<sup>4</sup>

In contrast to this, we know far less about how people handled shortage and scarcity or how they tried to survive in times when starvation hit whole societies. The question ‘Being hungry – what do people do?’<sup>5</sup> should therefore not be limited to subsistence economies of pre-modern and early modern times, but should be asked concerning everyday life under occupation during World War II as well. In these years, though shortages took different forms and concerned different commodities, scarcity made itself quickly felt in occupied Europe. It hit occupied Soviet cities, where the situation had already become one of utmost destitution and desperation by late summer and autumn of 1941. However, mortality rates were very high in Greece as well. Wherever hunger raged the effect was felt directly, but hunger played its part indirectly as well, because malnutrition and dire living conditions such as a lack of heating material, catastrophic sanitary conditions and insufficient medical care increased people’s exposure to tuberculosis, influenza and other illnesses.<sup>6</sup> Compared to this, most countries in Western Europe were better off. Nevertheless, the gnawing sensation of hunger and general scarcity was foremost on many people’s minds.

To discuss these issues in more detail and act as an introduction to this book, this chapter therefore starts with an overview on National Socialist exploitation policies. It then turns to economies of shortage in occupied societies. Special attention will be paid to rationing systems and makeshift economies as well as on how German occupying personnel criminalised the survival strategies of local populations. By addressing the interaction between ‘the occupiers’ and ‘the occupied’—though of course bearing in mind that both groups were far from homogenous—in supply situations, this chapter further aims at contributing to the

growing body of literature on how occupation moulded social order all over occupied Europe.

### EXPLOITATION POLICIES

Leading National Socialists regarded it a lesson learnt from World War I that the lost ‘battle for food’ (*Kampf um die Ernährung*) led to the breakdown of the German home front and, as a consequence, to defeat. Believing that Germany was overpopulated and endangered by being cut off from imports by blockades, they regarded the policy of *Lebensraum* as essential for space as well as food. Medical experts backed such assumptions. As early as 1921 they warned that childhood malnutrition due to the blockade during World War I led to ‘an intensive racial worsening of the growing generation’.<sup>7</sup> Therefore, Hitler himself advised Wehrmacht officers in February of 1939 that ‘the food question [is] ... the most vital problem ... that demands being solved by expansion’.<sup>8</sup>

The man in charge of dealing with this was Herbert Backe. He was made State Secretary (*Staatssekretär*) to Richard Walther Darré when Darré took office as Minister of Agriculture and became Head of the Food Commission in the Four-Year-Plan administration later on.<sup>9</sup> Backe was among those top officials who—only a few days after Hitler had met with the military leadership on 4 November 1940—were informed by Göring of the decision to invade the Soviet Union. It became his task to set up plans that would enable the German Wehrmacht to lead this war as a *Blitzkrieg*. This was only deemed possible if supplies were not to be brought in from Germany, where the population was to be spared hardships, but by feeding the troops from Soviet soil and requisitioning ‘surpluses’ for the home front. In this context, recent research stresses a certain interconnectedness between the envisaged ‘elimination of all [Soviet] political leaders’, especially the ‘Bolshevik–Jewish intelligentsia’ and nutrition policies.<sup>10</sup> The breakdown of the Soviet state was considered a prerequisite to ruthlessly requisitioning foodstuffs. Even before the German assault on the Soviet Union, military as well as civil personnel were well aware that this meant that ‘many millions’, some sources speak explicitly of ‘30 million’ were going to be starved.<sup>11</sup>

Set-up plans dividing the Soviet Union into so-called deficit zones—like the forest regions of Belarus and northern as well as central Russia—and zones in Ukraine, southern Russia and the Caucasus which were believed to produce surpluses<sup>12</sup> proved as early as July 1941 to be

impossible to realise, since robbing the local population of its supply and securing the hinterland could not be put into practice at the same time. As a consequence, more selective hunger policies were implemented, which differentiated between smaller sub-regions and various groups of local populations. The non-Jewish population in the former Baltic countries, in Western Ukraine and the Caucasus as well as those working for the German war effort were to be fed at least to some degree. It is worth noting that the acceleration and radicalisation of German anti-Semitic measures fit precisely within this context of extreme supply problems: German decision makers selected the Jewish population as ‘useless eaters’ and tried to reduce supply problems by murdering them. The same was true regarding Soviet prisoners of war who were already under German control. Though numbers are difficult to obtain, educated guesses speak of four million victims resulting from German starvation policies on Soviet territory.<sup>13</sup>

Of course, the chances of survival were massively influenced by the availability of resources not taken by the occupiers. In this regard, it is necessary to bear in mind that, even at the outset of fighting, the withdrawing Soviet troops and especially NKWD forces (troops of the Soviet Ministry of the Interior) were ordered to destroy whatever might be useful to the occupier. This scorched earth policy hit the civilian population severely by diminishing its resources from very early on.<sup>14</sup> The fighting added to the destruction; many of the Soviet cities were bombed and resources destroyed. Exploitation therefore hit local populations who were mostly far from being well off. Furthermore, though German officers initially handed out receipts for compensation of requisitioning, peasants quickly realised that redeeming these notes proved next to impossible. The policy was stopped fairly soon after its introduction anyway and advancing troops took to expropriation without compensation or paid very small amounts (in roubles). The longer the fighting lasted, the more looting became a common problem. Taking the area under the control of the Centre Army Group as an example, towns and villages were overrun several times. As a result, an 800–1000 km stretch of land was stripped of food and turned into a so-called *Kahlfräszzone*. Plundering by individual German soldiers aggravated the situation.<sup>15</sup> Last but not least, the longer the war lasted and the more the partisan movement developed, the more local peasants had to feed resistance fighters as well (and to fear German reprisals for doing so).<sup>16</sup>

Compared to this, the situation was less horrible in other parts of occupied Europe, although it was still very dire, e.g., in Greece. In Piraeus and Athens, mortality rates were five to seven times higher in the winter of 1941/1942 than the previous year. Medical reports pointed out that hunger was the direct cause of at least one third of these deaths.<sup>17</sup> Distribution of foodstuffs was part of the problem that led to the catastrophic situation. The breakdown of state structures did not help, and hunger on the islands was largely the result of trading and fishing restrictions in the Mediterranean introduced by the occupiers.<sup>18</sup>

In France, where about half of the population experienced hunger, the wealthy banker Charles Rist noted in his diary: 'People talk of nothing else but provisions and supply'.<sup>19</sup> This was not just a sentiment, shortage was real. For example, as early as October 1941 the prefect of Paris warned that diseases might be transmitted by eating stewed cat.<sup>20</sup> Schoolchildren in rural Aude related in June 1941 that they had already eaten a hedgehog, grass snakes, a fox, frogs, a squirrel, a cat, a falcon and a badger.<sup>21</sup> As severe as this was, deaths from hunger were rare in Western European countries (or not at all in the case of Denmark). This was due to the fact that exploitation rather than starvation policies were implemented here. Furthermore, exploitation itself took different forms compared to those in Eastern Europe. As a result of German demands, national economies were transformed into a war-oriented system of autarky.<sup>22</sup> However, in contrast to Eastern and Southeastern Europe, German occupation in Western and Northern Europe as well as in the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia did not take the production factors, but mostly the output.<sup>23</sup> In France, this policy only partly succeeded, and the country therefore lost much of its labour and foodstuffs.<sup>24</sup>

Massive intervention into industry was nevertheless rather rare, exceptions being the sequestration of individual plants in the iron and steel industry in Lorraine, aluminium and electricity generation in Norway or the chemical industry in the Netherlands.<sup>25</sup> At the factory level a set of regulations made sure that German demands were met.<sup>26</sup> The price policy regarding foodstuffs was meant to stimulate the delivery of agrarian products.<sup>27</sup> The resulting scarcity that hit local populations was aggravated by the fact that Wehrmacht soldiers went on shopping tours on such a great scale that, for example, the Wehrmacht intendant for Belgium warned his superiors that this might lead to all goods in the country being sold out.<sup>28</sup>

RATIONING SYSTEMS AND THE ATTRIBUTION  
OF SURVIVAL CHANCES

Introducing rations was *the* answer to war-induced shortages in occupied Europe at the administrative level. Based on nutritional research in the early twentieth century,<sup>29</sup> rations were thought to regulate the distribution of food, which was usually based on different age categories such as children, young persons, grown-ups, old people and extra categories like 'heavy labour' or 'pregnant and breast feeding women'. Rural populations were usually thought to be able to sustain themselves, without taking into consideration whether an individual actually worked in agriculture or had a garden or not.<sup>30</sup>

Due to the regulations, rationing systems confronted card holders with many problems on a daily basis. For example, cards and coupons were valid only for a certain time or in certain shops whether the goods were accessible or not. Even from an administrative point of view the handling was complicated because, in some cases, the same strips allowed for the purchase of different goods in different quotas.<sup>31</sup> As a result of the regulations themselves, inefficiencies and shortages, all kinds of fraud were commonplace.

However, rations were not only difficult to handle, they were usually insufficient as well and did not provide enough food to live on alone.<sup>32</sup> This was especially true for Eastern Europe. In the Polish district of Radom, a region that had both heavy industry and agriculture, inhabitants in early November 1939 were entitled to 200 g of bread per day, 200 g of sugar and salt each per month and up to 400 g of flour per month. The rural population had to supply itself via the market, which was next to impossible because trading flour and foodstuffs was by and large prohibited. Exemptions were only made regarding fruit and vegetables.<sup>33</sup> In the Soviet Union the population was worse off. Even those working for German war efforts were only entitled to supplies of the lowest quality and quantity. Although some military commanders set up rations to stabilise relations between the occupying forces and the local population in the hinterland, meat rations were only to be handed out in tiny quantities in the winter and were to be obtained from meat scraps. Furthermore, these regulations were destined for German bureaucracy alone, and not to be publicly communicated.<sup>34</sup>

Throughout occupied Europe, two groups were singled out for special rations: ethnic Germans and Jews. Ethnic Germans were entitled to greater-than-average rations, whereas rations for Jews, especially in Eastern Europe, were usually so low that nobody could survive on them. In the Radom district in Poland, Jews were accorded rations for children up to ten years, while in the Ukraine the rations for Jews were not to exceed those for (non-Jewish) children up to 14 years. Moreover, in all cases Jews were to be supplied food only when it was available. In Belarus, where the non-Jewish local population was only supplied foodstuffs that were left over after Wehrmacht requisitioning, German agencies decided to economise on rations for Jews. If they were supplied at all, their daily rations were set by the 403rd Sicherungs division (and other military units as well) at 125 g of bread, 14 g of flour and 11 g of groats which was about half that was received by non-Jewish local people.<sup>35</sup>

These represent a few of many examples. They all show the racist segregation of societies as implemented by German occupation authorities, who by and large determined the supply situation. Trying to find supplies where shortages prevailed was essential for the populations of occupied regions all over Europe. Systems of rationing were meant to regulate access to food. They were based on categorising populations according to the racist and utilitarian conceptions of the occupiers, represented in higher rations for ethnic Germans and those who did so-called heavy or very heavy labour. On the other hand, those who were perceived as so-called 'useless eaters', like the Jewish population, found themselves at the bottom of Nazi categorisations and were not meant to survive. Soviet prisoners of war in German camps, patients in hospitals (especially if mentally ill) and large groups of the overall Soviet population were in many cases doomed to starvation as well.<sup>36</sup>

Rationing meant that it was not just 'minority groups', however numerous, but whole societies in Eastern and Western Europe that were categorised and thereby hierarchised according to German perceptions. This categorisation had direct consequences on the everyday life of everyone: rations attributed survival chances and this applied not just to a few, but all members of occupied societies. Since exploitation on behalf of German war efforts was the general German intention, with shortages resulting from it, the attribution of survival chances by rations was a widely shared experience in occupied Europe.

## MAKESHIFT ECONOMIES ACROSS OCCUPIED EUROPE

Scarcity can lead to serious forms of malnutrition that take a major toll on people's everyday lives, especially if it prevails for weeks. When there is hunger the preoccupation with food even before the situation becomes fatal, may become so intense that it has the power to reverse a starving person's normal morality and sense of self. In the later phases of marasmus the organism tries to sustain itself with protein taken from its own muscles and cells, thereby severely damaging the heart and causing a breakdown of the immune system. Progressing malfunctioning of the immune system makes people prone to dysentery, typhus and other illnesses. Whereas about ten per cent of deaths caused by famine result from the final phase of starvation, most people die from infectious diseases against which their bodies no longer have any defence,<sup>37</sup> especially if medication, heating material in winter and sanitary articles, like soap, are in short supply.<sup>38</sup>

It therefore goes without saying that shortages and especially hunger were phenomena that very quickly began to influence people's daily lives. Since occupation during World War II affected up to 200 million people,<sup>39</sup> the numbers hit by shortages were very high. Furthermore, compared to the case in peacetime, occupied societies are characterised by important shifts in gender and age composition. Thus, men, especially of a certain age, were to a large degree absent—at the front, in captivity, dead or away from home for labour-related reasons, especially forced labour. Those struggling to cope with occupation were women, children, and the elderly, at a much higher percentage than in peacetime.<sup>40</sup> Babies and small children were especially endangered by prevailing scarcity, as were the elderly and sick. Marcel Junod of the Red Cross observed in Athens, where the population was starving, that women tended to go without food and keep what little there was for their children.<sup>41</sup>

Organising food was generally the task of women. Usually, their first port of call was trying to find shops that sold products they were entitled to according to their rations. However, as a result of German requisitions, lower agricultural productivity, price controls and disruptions in distribution, many shops were ill-supplied and goods could not be bought without queuing for hours. Jacques Biélinky, describing the French capital in September 1940, noted in his diary: 'The queues are

getting longer and longer and are overwhelming Paris'.<sup>42</sup> In front of a dairy where 60 small packs of butter were being distributed, he counted 350 people waiting in line.<sup>43</sup> Another entry, again from September 1940, describes: 'queues without end where potatoes are being sold. To buy two and a half kilos one has to wait in line for more than three hours. Totally exhausted women are sitting at the kerb'.<sup>44</sup>

Since rations and what was being sold in shops were not sufficient for survival, people had to look for other supply strategies. Hundreds of thousands of people all over Europe had to resort to makeshift economies. To sustain their families and themselves they started to grow vegetables and fruit wherever possible and used all kinds of preserving techniques. *Ersatz* ('substitute' in terms of materials and products) was the word of the day. This applied to bread, in particular, which was partly baked from surrogate ingredients such as corn flour, which was legal in France but not liked, or rye, which people complained about in the Protectorate, or from local traditional surrogates like chestnuts on Crete.<sup>45</sup>

Hoarding, barter, and sometimes smuggling were other ways in which people tried to cope with scarcity. Of great everyday importance was the black market. The overall picture is that everyone used it, although almost all condemned it. Accusations of black marketeering mirrored social dynamics. Generally speaking, people in the cities blamed peasants, workers blamed the rich and the old bourgeoisie blamed parvenu shopkeepers.<sup>46</sup> Wherever authorities had a hand in black market operations, they were despised by the common people, a situation from which political radicalism could grow, as occurred in Greece.<sup>47</sup> Blaming 'the Jews' was the most widespread response at a time when they were surely the weakest on the scene.<sup>48</sup>

If women had nothing left to barter, some took to prostitution. Oral history reports from Smolensk tell us that women, aware of the pressing situation, often looked at contacts between local women and German soldiers with a degree of moral condemnation, but accepted it because 'generally, you worked wherever you could'.<sup>49</sup> The reaction of local men was different. Recollections from the Smolensk countryside describe an old custom being revived when a girl was caught with a German: 'The boys tied her skirt over her head, and she had to run home with the bottom part of her body bare'.<sup>50</sup>

## CRIMINALISING SURVIVAL STRATEGIES

Local populations experienced the German occupation in many ways, not just exploitation but also in the criminalisation of their makeshift economies, e.g., by restricting mobility. Travelling to the countryside to supply oneself with agricultural products, therefore, became difficult or outright dangerous. In the occupied territories of the Soviet Union, German authorities and their auxiliaries suspected people who were not registered locally (so-called *Ortsfremde*) of being members of partisan movements.<sup>51</sup> Another way of criminalising makeshift economies was to limit all kinds of trade to markets determined by the occupiers and severely punishing any trading outside of these.<sup>52</sup> But not just marketplaces, the goods that were allowed to be traded were limited as well. In Nizhyn (in the Ukraine) the local Wehrmacht commander on 1 May 1942 prohibited the sale of ‘meat (pork, beef, mutton, goat, poultry, etc.), fats, potatoes, pearl barley, millet, flour, grain, milk, butter, cream, quark (i.e. milk curds), eggs’.<sup>53</sup> There was nothing much left to be sold and bought, and Nizhyn was by no way an exception. In the Ukraine these restrictions hit a peasant population which, compared to Soviet times, was locally better fed due to the possibility of working in family gardens, but lived in constant fear of German reprisals.<sup>54</sup>

In their intention to restrict all kinds of transactions, German occupation authorities even defined what was to be regarded as junk, and therefore unfit for bartering. Punishment in case of infringement again was severe, since the German authorities saw these transactions as smuggling or, as they put it as *Schleichhandel*, thereby indicating that they suspected Jews of being involved. Regulations like these gave German soldiers an even stronger position when going to the market place than they already had; soldiers were present in shops and on markets everywhere in occupied Europe. Compared to local people they could afford more and, due to financial manipulations in currency exchange rates, their pay made shopping trips possible, all the more so when supplemented by further means from home. Furthermore, the German authorities intended to give soldiers, especially those arriving from the Eastern front, a good time in France, and therefore offered to convert unspent Russian roubles into francs on favourable terms.<sup>55</sup> The same was true for Belgium, where the Wehrmacht Logistics Department acknowledged that enabling German soldiers to shop ‘led to a high degree to the sell-out of the country’.<sup>56</sup> The purchasing power of German soldiers was

not limited to their pay. In those parts of occupied Europe where trade was transacted by bartering, cigarettes, tobacco or alcohol were more important than cash. The Wehrmacht gave soldiers access to these substitute currencies and last but not least, they could simply barter goods they had confiscated.<sup>57</sup>

As these examples show, soldiers were involved in the makeshift economies in occupied countries in many ways. They were customers on restricted markets. They had higher purchasing power than the average local population and had access to goods for barter, all because of their army allowances and their power to confiscate. Given this situation, their involvement in local markets caused prices to rise, to the disadvantage of local customers. For local sellers, this could have a positive effect, but doing business with German soldiers was always risky, since they could criminalise transactions or simply confiscate goods they wanted to have (especially in the East). Last but not least, soldiers were actively involved in black market operations, whether small scale or big business, such as when whole wagonloads found their way onto the black market, which could hardly be done without their involvement, or the involvement of those higher up in rank.<sup>58</sup>

### OCCUPATION, SHORTAGES AND SOCIAL ORDER

Occupation caused shortages. Shortages in themselves had consequences as far as the social order of occupied societies was concerned, since it put these societies under severe social pressure. Hunger and severe scarcity are often perceived as equalising forces within a society. In fact, rations could blur social distinctions since they were usually higher for a person doing heavy labour than for white-collar professionals. At the same time, members of well-to-do households could afford more easily to buy on the black market whereas (lower) middle-class families often found themselves in between. Therefore, a supply system based on rations had paradoxical consequences since its mechanisms caused social distinctions within a society to become blurred and emphasised at the same time.

This can be shown by an example taken from the Netherlands. Here, many working-class men were allocated higher rations than white-collar people because they worked in heavy labouring jobs, but could use them only partially or not at all since they often lacked the money to buy the goods they were entitled to. This was especially true regarding meat or fat. Therefore, working-class families often sold these ration coupons

on the black market to people who were better off. They then spent the money gained to buy potatoes on the black market, though potatoes could usually be bought in shops as well. But, since these were ‘extra’, they had no ration coupons for them. The longer the situation lasted, the more annoyed those affected became: working-class families were not actually starving, but often had to accept meals without meat and fat consisting mostly of dry potatoes and bread baked with a high percentage of substitutes like pulses. People from middle-class households were annoyed because they were not entitled to rations that would allow them to maintain their standard of living and had to sell (some of their) property to be able to shop on the black market. Less affected were well-off families who could afford more easily to buy on the black market; they purchased different goods from working-class people, and in different ways. Usually, they bought everyday products in the shops and had high-calorie goods such as fat, fish or cheese delivered to them by a trusted black marketeer.<sup>59</sup>

These mechanisms of social pressure were not just experienced in private contexts. In fact, disturbances of the traditional social settings were visible in public. Queues, due to shortages—a phenomenon all over occupied Europe—became a new social space of scarcity and of attributing privilege in societies of shortage. Since only those at the head of a queue had a real chance of buying the sought-after goods, there were intense debates on who should have a right to these places. In France, one way older men would lay claim to these privileged positions, was by showing their medals from World War I and highlighting their merits in the name of the Fatherland. This, they demanded, justified their right to a place at the head of the queue when accompanying their wives to do the shopping. Aside from generational issues, more often it was established social hierarchies that were reversed in wartime queues. In Marseilles, Italian women, normally from the lower stratum of the working class, were said to have pushed to the front of queues saying, ‘Priority to the victors’. In Brittany, women who cooked for the Germans were given special rights to go to the head of queues. Since these women, too, were usually poor, housewives from respectable families resented making way for them. After the war, these women were quite frequently accused of ‘sleeping with the boches’—and had their heads shaven for ‘collaboration’ after liberation.<sup>60</sup>

As scarcity put whole societies under pressure, people looked for someone to blame. In particular, peasants were often confronted with incompatible demands since the occupiers made them deliver much

of their produce and punished offences severely, especially in occupied Eastern Europe. At the same time, members of resistance movements accused them of collaborating with the enemy and enraged city-dwellers accused them of earning a fortune on the back of their misery by asking unreasonably high prices. In fact, in rural Belarus and the Ukraine, consumer goods like sewing machines arrived in villages for the first time ever by way of bartering. Where scarcity turned to hunger, this freed up social dynamics and fuelled armed resistance (e.g., in Greece), because people believed that they might be better off within the resistance movement. In the partisan regions of the Soviet Union, peasants in many places tried to defend their produce from being taken by either the occupiers or the partisan units. As a consequence the local situation resembled a civil war with everyone fighting amongst each other.<sup>61</sup>

It is not only in settings disrupted by infighting or civil war that enduring shortages and especially severe hunger have massive consequences on how those affected perceive the social world they live in. For some the solidarity within families and close circles of friends became extremely important. Diaries, for example, tell of close personal ties being confirmed in sharing the little food that was available.<sup>62</sup> Where starving became commonplace, such as in the ghettos or in those regions of the Soviet Union and Greece where hunger was rife, time and again, parents, especially mothers, starved themselves to death, giving the food they could find to their children.<sup>63</sup>

Since research on the social dynamics resulting from shortages and hunger during World War II is still at its early stages, the frames of reference of those who had to handle scarcity are still something we know very little about. Although the results so far show growing social tensions within societies and ego documents emphasise the importance of family structures and circles of close friends, the social world of those concerned probably was not as restricted as it might seem at first hand. Even for Soviet cities, where shortages and hunger were common features under occupation, there is more than episodic evidence that women and children living near POW camps tried to help those imprisoned. Their situation was disastrous. Of those imprisoned about 1.8 million died in the winter of 1941/1942 alone, most from hunger and disease. To help, women and children threw bread over the fences, handed in parcels at the gates or hid food along paths used by labour columns. Doing this was dangerous, since German guards were prepared to shoot at women as well as children with fatal consequences.<sup>64</sup>

Examples like this beg such questions as: Why did these people do what they did? Why did they risk their lives for men they did not know by sharing their rations in times of shortage? One explanation is that they seem to have shared the belief that if women and children all over the occupied territories of the Soviet Union acted the same way they did, their husbands, fathers, sons or brothers might have a chance to survive as well.<sup>65</sup> How many men indeed survived because of this is impossible to tell. However, these episodes of helping let us catch a glimpse of the abovementioned frames of reference. Women and children integrated men they did not know personally into their ‘universe of obligations’. Helen Fein coined this term to describe the circle of individuals and groups toward whom obligations are owed, to whom rules apply, and whose injuries call for amends.<sup>66</sup>

Shortages and hunger put occupied societies under pressure with the effect that social cohesion was affected. These effects had many facets: growing class antagonism, turning to a family-structured world, but also adapting social rules to living under occupation. This might include a reframing of who belonged to one’s universe of obligations in the light of the occupiers’ norms, regulations and institutions. Regarding the Jewish populations, such a reframing indeed often happened. As mentioned earlier, Jews had a very weak position when bartering or on the black market. Prices and exchange rates in these situations tell their own stories of social proximity or distance. Peasants usually asked much higher prices from people they did not know than from those known to them.<sup>67</sup> The same is true when it came to bartering between Jews and non-Jews. Barter, exchanging whatever possession they might still have for food, was one of the few possibilities left for Jews in the ghettos. Some Jews in occupied Poland who went into hiding with non-Jews came to understand that they were bartering for their lives. If they had no possessions left, they were in danger of being turned over to the Polish gendarmerie, or killed by those they stayed with, mostly with the help of fellow villagers.<sup>68</sup> On black markets Jews were in very weak positions as well—paying the highest prices and risking denunciation. In contrast, the authorities, especially in Western Europe, be they domestic or German, might turn a blind eye when it came to non-Jews knowing that, without the black market, people were not able to survive.<sup>69</sup> Jews could not hope for such leniency; they were punished no matter what.

Black markets and barter are just two examples of spaces within the economies of scarcity that had their own rules and morality, which people had to learn to survive. They, much as queues in front of shops or ration cards, represented contexts where the social order of occupied societies materialised. This social order was not totally different from pre-war times insofar as internal cleavages according to class, religion, education, ethnicity, gender etc. prevailed. However, occupation as shown with regard to exploitation and the resulting shortage categorised and hierarchised *all* members of occupied societies and ascribed survival chances to them according to the racist and utilitarian conceptions of the occupiers. Jews found themselves at the bottom of these racist and utilitarian hierarchies, which determined people's survival chances, and affected them severely even before mass murder began. Thereby, occupation put the societies concerned under severe pressure. This in turn freed up social dynamics that directly and indirectly influenced people's everyday lives, and set this period apart from pre-war and post-war times.

## NOTES

1. Christoph Buchheim and Marcel Boldorf, ed., *Europäische Volkswirtschaften unter deutscher Hegemonie 1938–1945* (Munich: R. Oldenbourg Verlag, 2012); Adam Tooze, *The Wages of Destruction: The Making and Breaking of the Nazi Economy* (London: Penguin Books, 2006); Alan S. Milward, *The New Order and the French Economy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1970).
2. Christian Gerlach, *Krieg, Ernährung, Völkermord. Forschungen zur deutschen Vernichtungspolitik im Zweiten Weltkrieg* (Hamburg: Hamburger Edition, 1998); Christian Gerlach, *Kalkulierte Morde. Die deutsche Wirtschafts- und Vernichtungspolitik in Weißrussland 1941 bis 1944* (Hamburg: Hamburger Edition, 1999); Gesine Gerhard, "Food and Genocide. Nazi Agrarian Politics in the Occupied Territories of the Soviet Union," *Contemporary European History* 18 (2009): 45–65; Dieter Pohl, *Die Herrschaft der Wehrmacht. Deutsche Militärbesatzung und einheimische Bevölkerung in der Sowjetunion 1941–1944* (Frankfurt a. M.: S. Fischer Verlag, 2011), 183–200; Wigbert Benz, *Hans-Joachim Riecke. Vom Hungerplaner vor, zum "Welternährer" nach 1945* (Berlin: Wissenschaftlicher Verlag, 2014); Christoph Dieckmann and Babette Quinkert, ed., *Kriegsführung und Hunger 1939–1945. Zum Verhältnis von militärischen, wirtschaftlichen und politischen Interessen* (Göttingen: Wallstein Verlag, 2015).

3. Nicholas Terry, “‘Do Not Burden One’s Own Army and Its Hinterland with Unneeded Mouths!’ The Fate of the Soviet Civilian Population Behind the ‘Panther Line’ in Eastern Belorussia, October 1943–June 1944,” in *Kriegsführung und Hunger 1939–1945. Zum Verhältnis von militärischen, wirtschaftlichen und politischen Interessen*, ed. Christoph Dieckmann and Babette Quinkert (Göttingen: Wallstein Verlag, 2015), 185–209; Karel Berkhoff, “‘Wir sollen verhungern, damit Platz für die Deutschen geschaffen wird.’ Hungersnöte in den ukrainischen Städten im Zweiten Weltkrieg,” in *Vernichtungskrieg, Reaktionen, Erinnerung. Die deutsche Besatzungsherrschaft in der Sowjetunion 1941–1944*, ed. Babette Quinkert and Jörg Morré (Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh, 2014), 54–75; Tanja Penter, *Kohle für Stalin und Hitler, Arbeiten und Leben im Donbass 1929 bis 1953* (Essen: Klartext Verlag, 2010); Norbert Kanz, “Das Beispiel Charkow: Eine Stadtbevölkerung als Opfer der deutschen Hungerstrategie 1941/1942,” in *Verbrechen der Wehrmacht. Bilanz einer Debatte*, ed. Christian Hartmann, Johannes Hürter, and Ulrike Jureit (Munich: C.H. Beck, 2005), 136–144.
4. Marc Buggeln and Michael Wildt, ed., *Arbeit im Nationalsozialismus* (Munich: R. Oldenbourg Verlag, 2014); Dieter Pohl and Tanja Sebta, ed., *Zwangsarbeit in Hitlers Europa. Besatzung, Arbeit, Folgen* (Berlin: Metropol Verlag, 2013); Jürgen Hensel and Stephan Lehnstaedt, ed., *Arbeit in den nationalsozialistischen Ghettos* (Osnabrück: Libre Verlag, 2013); Karsten Linne and Florian Dierl, ed., *Arbeitskräfte als Kriegsbeute. Der Fall Ost- und Südosteuropa 1939–1945* (Berlin: Metropol Verlag, 2011).
5. E.P. Thompson, “The Moral Economy of the English Crowd in the Eighteenth Century,” in *The Essential E.P. Thompson*, ed. Dorothy Thompson (New York: The New Press, 2001), 316–377, here 317.
6. Mark Mazower, *Inside Hitler’s Greece: The Experience of Occupation, 1941–1944* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001), 40. Generally, Violetta Hionidou, *Famine and Death in Occupied Greece, 1941–1944* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).
7. Cited in Alice Weinreb, *Modern Hungers. Food and Power in Twentieth-Century Germany* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 51.
8. Cited in Rolf-Dieter Müller, “Die Mobilisierung der deutschen Wirtschaft für Hitlers Kriegsführung,” in *Organisation und Mobilisierung des deutschen Machtbereichs. Erster Halbband: Kriegsverwaltung, Wirtschaft und personelle Ressourcen 1939–1941*, ed. Bernhard R. Kroener, Rolf-Dieter Müller, and Hans Umbreit (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 1988), 349–689, here 397.
9. Gerhard, “Food and Genocide,” 46, 50.

10. Christoph Dieckmann, "Das Scheitern des Hungerplans und die Praxis der selektiven Hungerpolitik im deutschen Krieg gegen die Sowjetunion," in *Kriegsführung und Hunger 1939–1945. Zum Verhältnis von militärischen, wirtschaftlichen und politischen Interessen*, ed. Christoph Dieckmann and Babette Quinkert (Göttingen: Wallstein Verlag, 2015), 88–122, here 93ff.
11. Cited in Christian Streit, *Keine Kameraden, Die Wehrmacht und die sowjetischen Kriegsgefangenen 1941–1945* (Stuttgart: J.H. Dietz, 1978), 63 and in Dieckmann, "Scheitern," 97.
12. Gerhard, "Food and Genocide," 56f.
13. Ibid.; Dieckmann, "Scheitern," 111, 118f. Focusing on Belarus see Gerlach, *Morde*, 265–318.
14. Karel Berkhoff, *Harvest of Despair: Life and Death in Ukraine Under Nazi Rule* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004), 17–24.
15. Sergei Kudryashov, "Living Conditions in the Occupied Territories of the USSR, 1941–1944," in *Europäische Volkswirtschaften unter deutscher Hegemonie 1938–1945*, ed. Christoph Buchheim and Marcel Boldorf (Munich: De Gruyter Oldenbourg, 2012), 53–65, here 55f. On requisitions at the local level see, e.g., Laurie A. Cohen, *Smolensk Under the Nazis: Everyday Life in Occupied Russia* (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 2013), 97; Michaela Christ, *Die Dynamik des Tötens. Die Ermordung der Juden von Berditschew, Ukraine 1941–1944* (Frankfurt a. M.: Fischer Taschenbuch Verlag, 2011), 75; Mazower, *Inside*, 23.
16. See, e.g., Alexander Brakel, "'Das allergefährlichste ist die Wut der Bauern.' Die Versorgung der Partisanen und ihr Verhältnis zur Zivilbevölkerung," *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte* 55 (2007): 393–424.
17. Mazower, *Inside*, 40.
18. Ibid., 27f; Violetta Hionidou, "Why Do People Die in Famines? Evidence from Three Island Populations," *Continuity and Change* 56 (2002): 65–80.
19. Charles Rist, *Une saison gâtée: Journal de la guerre et de l'occupation, 1939–1945*, ed. Jean Noel Jeanneney (Paris: Fayard, 1983), 413 (entry for 3 July 1944).
20. Richard Vinen, *The Unfree French: Life Under the Occupation* (London: Penguin Books, 2006), 216.
21. Ibid., 228.
22. Marcel Boldorf, "Neue Wege zur Erforschung der Wirtschaftsgeschichte Europas unter nationalsozialistischer Hegemonie," in *Europäische Volkswirtschaften*, ed. Christoph Buchheim and Marcel Boldorf, 1–23, 6.

23. Hein Kleman and Sergei Kudryashov, *Occupied Economies: An Economic History of Nazi-Occupied Europe, 1939–1945* (London and New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2012), 174.
24. *Ibid.*, 368, 437.
25. Tooze, *Wages of Destruction*, 389f.
26. Boldorf, “Wege,” 8.
27. *Ibid.*, 13f.
28. Götz Aly, *Hitlers Volksstaat. Raub, Rassenkrieg und nationaler Sozialismus* (Frankfurt a. M.: S. Fischer Verlag, 2005), 114.
29. Nick Cullather, *The Hungry World. America’s Cold War Battle Against Poverty in Asia* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010), 28–33.
30. Tatjana Tönsmeyer, “Hungerökonomien. Vom Umgang mit der Mangelversorgung im besetzten Europa des Zweiten Weltkrieg,” *Historische Zeitschrift* 310 (2015), 662–704, 669–673.
31. For example, in the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia, the same strips usually allowing the purchase of 125 g of butter and 250 g of synthetic honey allowed card holders in mid-December 1942 to purchase a further 250 g of raisins or prunes and 150 g of almonds or nuts as a Christmas donation in twelve big cities and industrial towns. Two weeks later the same strips were valid for purchasing additionally 100 g of sultanas or almonds elsewhere in the Protectorate. Versorgungsanzeiger. Wochenblatt für die Versorgungs- und Ernährungspraxis/Zásobovací zpravodaj. Týdeník pro zásobovací a vyživovací praxi, 12.12.1942, 9.
32. With Denmark being the exemption to this rule.
33. Robert Seidel, *Deutsche Besatzungspolitik in Polen. Der Distrikt Radom 1939–1945* (Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh, 2006), 122f.
34. Jörn Hasenclever, *Wehrmacht und Besatzungspolitik in der Sowjetunion. Die Befehlshaber der rückwärtigen Heeresgebiete 1941–1943* (Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh, 2010), 287, 291, 302; Pohl, *Herrschaft*, 184f; Jürgen Kilian, *Wehrmacht und Besatzungsherrschaft im Russischen Nordwesten 1941–1944. Praxis und Alltag im Militärverwaltungsgebiet der Heeresgruppe Nord* (Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh, 2012), 274, 284, 292, 299; Gerlach, *Morde*, 277; National Archive Belarus, Fonds 393, 3/14, Wirtschaftsinspektion Mitte, Chefgruppe Landwirtschaft [Office of Economic Administration, Central Area, Agricultural Command Group] to the Gebietskommissar [District Commissar] for Minsk, 4 September 1941.
35. On ethnic Germans see, e.g., Seidel, *Besatzungspolitik*, 124; Gerhard Wolf, *Ideologie und Herrschaftsrationalität. Nationalsozialistische Germanisierungspolitik in Polen* (Hamburg: Hamburger Edition, 2012), 223f; Berkhoff, *Harvest*, 168; on Jews in the Radom district see, e.g.,

- Seidel, *Besatzungspolitik*, 124; on Jews in the Ukraine see, e.g., Wendy Lower, *Nazi Empire-Building and the Holocaust in Ukraine* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005), 139; on nutrition policies regarding Jewish populations in Belarus see, e.g., Gerlach, *Morde*, 668ff.
36. Dieter Pohl, *Verfolgung und Massenmord in der NS-Zeit 1933–1945* (Darmstadt: WGB Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2003), 40f.
  37. Thomas Keneally, *Three Famines: Starvation and Politics* (New York: Public Affairs, 2011), 12ff.
  38. On the closing of pharmacies, sequestration of medicine, and the overall lack regarding health care see, e.g., Gerlach, *Morde*, 290f.
  39. Dieter Pohl, “Herrscher und Unterworfenen. Die deutsche Besatzung und die Gesellschaften Europas,” in *Das “Dritte Reich”. Eine Einführung*, ed. Dietmar Süß and Winfried Süß (Munich, 2008), 267–285, here 276.
  40. On the concept of occupied societies see Tatjana Tönsmeier, “Besatzungsgesellschaften. Begriffliche und konzeptionelle Überlegungen zur Erfahrungsgeschichte des Alltags unter deutscher Besatzung im Zweiten Weltkrieg, Version: 1.0,” *Docupedia-Zeitgeschichte* (18.12.2015), accessed 9 March 2017, [http://docupedia.de/zg/toensmeier\\_besatzungsgesellschaften\\_v1\\_de\\_2015](http://docupedia.de/zg/toensmeier_besatzungsgesellschaften_v1_de_2015).
  41. Mazower, *Inside*, 36.
  42. “Entry for 13 September 1940,” *Die Verfolgung und Ermordung der europäischen Juden durch das nationalsozialistische Deutschland 1933–1945 (VEJ)* ed. Bundesarchiv, the Institut für Zeitgeschichte and the Lehrstuhl für Neuere und Neueste Geschichte an der Albert-Ludwigs-Universität Freiburg (Munich: Oldenbourg Verlag, 2012), vol. 5, doc. 243, 613.
  43. “Entry for 16 September 1940,” *ibid.*
  44. “Entry for 22 September 1940,” *ibid.*
  45. On France see, e.g., Vinen, *French*, 219. On the Protectorate see, e.g., Report about the complaints to the Office of Reich’s Protector, 11 June 1942. National Archive Prague, Státní tajemník u říšského protektora v Čechách a na Moravě 109-4/1335, box 81. On Greece see, e.g., Hagen Fleischer, “Schwert und Olive. Besatzungsalltag in der ‘Festung Kreta’, 1941–1945. Eine Dokumentation,” in *“Lern im Leben die Kunst ...”*. *Festschrift für Klaus Betzen*, ed. Willi Benning (Parousia, Sonderbd. 33.) (Athen: Universität Athen, 1995), 81–178, here 102.
  46. Vinen, *French*, 224.
  47. Mazower, *Inside*, 52–56.
  48. Mark Mazower, *Salonica. The City of Ghosts. Christians, Muslims, and Jews, 1430–1950* (New York: Vintage, 2006), 395; Christoph Dieckmann, *Deutsche Besatzungspolitik in Litauen 1941–1944* (Göttingen: Wallstein Verlag, 2011), 1064f.
  49. Cohen, *Smolensk*, 224.

50. Ibid., 225.
51. Berkhoff, *Harvest*, 177; Gerlach, *Morde*, 218ff.
52. On Poland see, e.g., Tomasz Szarota, *Warschau unter dem Hakenkreuz: Leben und Alltag im besetzten Warschau, 1.10.1939 bis 31.7.1944* (Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh, 1985), 128f; on Belarus see, e.g., Gosudarstvennyj Archiv Grodnenskoj oblasti (GAGrO), F. 1, Op. 1, d. 15, 2, Decree issued by the Kreiskommissar Grodno, 14 October 1941.
53. State Archive of the region of Tschernihiw, department Nizhyn, R-4394, op. 1, d. 3, l. 227.
54. Berkhoff, *Harvest*, 130–140.
55. Aly, *Volksstaat*, 102, 114–139.
56. Cited in *ibid.*, 114.
57. Szarota, *Warschau*, 124; Stephan Lehnstaedt, *Okkupation im Osten. Besatzeralltag in Warschau und Minsk 1939–1944* (Munich: De Gruyter Oldenbourg, 2010), 165–176.
58. Regarding Belgium see, e.g., Gérard Libois and José Gotovitch, *L'an 40. La Belgique occupée* (Bruxelles: CRISP, 1971), 338f.
59. Ralf Futselaar, “Incomes, Class, and Coupons. Black Markets for Food in the Netherlands During the Second World War,” *Food and History* 8 (2010), 171–198, 181–183, 187, 189.
60. Vinen, *French*, 217f; Fabrice Virgili, *Shorn Women: Gender and Punishment in Liberation France* (Oxford: Berg, 2002).
61. Gerlach, *Morde*, 248f; Dieckmann, *Besatzungspolitik*, 1093; Alexander Brakel, “‘Das allergefährlichste ist die Wut der Bauern.’ Die Versorgung der Partisanen und ihr Verhältnis zur Zivilbevölkerung,” *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte* 55 (2007), 393–424; Daniel Romanovsky, “The Soviet Person as a Bystander of the Holocaust. The Case of Eastern Belorussia,” in *Nazi Europa and the Final Solution*, ed. David Bankier (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem Publications, 2003), 276–306, 293f; on Greece see, e.g., Mazower, *Inside*, 24–28, 108–132; on Belgium generally see, e.g., Futselaar, “Incomes,” 184f. Here the reluctance of farmers to deliver their produce was very widespread and punishment a lot less severe than in the occupied territories of the Soviet Union. See, e.g., a report for the West of Flanders: Centre d’études et de documentation guerre et société contemporaine (CEGESOMA): AA 78/6 (Controledienst Kortrijk).
62. For examples see Tönsmeier, “Hungerökonomien,” 679.
63. Mazower, *Inside*, 36.
64. On the mortality of POWs see, e.g., Pohl, *Verfolgung und Massenmord*, 40f; for examples of helping see Berkhoff, *Harvest*, 95–104, 109f; Lower, *Nazi Empire-Building*, 64f.
65. Berkhoff, *Harvest*, 95–104.

66. Helen Fein, "Genocide and State Murders in the Twentieth Century," Presentation at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, 24 October 1995, accessed 20 March 2017, <https://www.ushmm.org/confront-genocide/speakers-and-events/all-speakers-and-events/genocide-and-mass-murder-in-the-twentieth-century-a-historical-perspective/genocide-and-other-state-murders-in-the-twentieth-century>.
67. Futselaar, *Incomes*, 181; Vinen, *French*, 225; on especially high prices that Jews had to pay see, e.g., Christopher Browning, *Remembering Survival: Inside a Nazi Slave-Labor Camp* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2010), 57; Christ, *Dynamik*, 153f.
68. Jan Tomasz Gross and Irena Grudzińska Gross, *Golden Harvest: Events at the Periphery of the Holocaust* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 50–57; Jan Grabowski, *Hunt for the Jews: Betrayal and Murder in German-Occupied Poland* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2013), 63–86; Natalia Aleksion, "Gender and the Daily Lives of Jews in Hiding in Eastern Galicia," *Nashim: A Journal of Jewish Women's Studies and Gender Issues* 27 (2014), 38–61, 38, 46.
69. Vinen, *French*, 225; Szarota, *Warschau*, 129.

## Economies of Scarcity and “Ersatz” Sites

The exploitative policies and practices of the German occupiers forced occupied people throughout Europe to adapt to a situation of shortage and to develop new strategies for securing adequate provision. This included the development of alternative or *Ersatz* sites, such as the black market, or other sites in which various forms of recycling were conducted. The black market, in particular, offered one of the few possibilities for securing even the most basic of supplies. This part therefore investigates the various sites of the makeshift economies which emerged in occupied Europe during the war.



# Black Market in the General Government 1939–1945: Survival Strategy or (Un)Official Economy?

*Jerzy Kochanowski*

## INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

The black market in occupied Poland was such a broad and diverse phenomenon that the author was forced to restrict this research to the General Government (GG), created in October 1939 following Berlin's refusal to allow any form of Polish *Reststaat* ("rump state"),<sup>1</sup> and to key groups involved in the black market on both the Polish and German sides. In both the territories incorporated into the Reich in 1939 and those occupied by the USSR in 1939–1941, where the scope of economic freedom for former Polish citizens was minimal, control significantly stricter and rations larger, illegal trade was lower in volume and usually conducted in closed trusted groups.<sup>2</sup> In the GG, however (especially in Warsaw), it even became a specialised field, and business was often conducted professionally. There, the black market turnover

---

J. Kochanowski (✉)  
University of Warsaw, Warsaw, Poland  
e-mail: j.p.kochanowski@uw.edu.pl

© The Author(s) 2018  
T. Tönsmeier et al. (eds.), *Coping with Hunger and Shortage under German Occupation in World War II*,  
[https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-77467-1\\_2](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-77467-1_2)

was larger, the product range broader, the number of people involved greater and the degree of transparency higher. Goods and services were exchanged on the streets, in marketplaces, shops or restaurants and the buyers and sellers were usually unknown to each other.<sup>3</sup> Poles and Germans were not the only ones actively involved in the informal economy. Ukrainians and Belarusians, for example, also took part, although we know comparatively little about them,<sup>4</sup> while the Jewish community and the strategies they used (especially smuggling food into the ghettos) would require a separate study.<sup>5</sup>

When Germany started the war, it had no definite economic plans for the Polish lands. During and immediately after the military action, ordinary robbery dominated, but as early as the autumn of 1939 the basic principles of an economic policy were defined for the various incorporated lands and the GG. However, one principle was common and distinguished the Polish lands from the occupied countries of the West—if the economy was exploited in the latter, in the former it was ruthlessly pillaged.<sup>6</sup> Although the GG acquired ‘only’ one third of Polish assets, the occupation structures’ struggle to secure this was just as fierce as in the lands incorporated into the Reich, where 99% of Polish and Jewish economic potential was confiscated. The ‘colonial’ nature of the GG was the deciding factor; it left a much wider margin for independent economic initiatives, which were not necessarily tolerated in the Reich. The GG’s administrative and police apparatus was also much more corrupt.

The GG was initially treated as a source of raw materials, food and labour: industrial production units were closed or their equipment removed and taken away. However, with the war with the USSR on one side and the intensification of the Allied air raids on the other, factories were established in the ‘safer’ Polish territories. About 100 companies were relocated from the Reich and pre-1939 investments were completed. The development of war production in the GG was justified by low costs. More was ‘exported’ to the Reich from the occupied areas than ‘imported’ from it. The Reich also fell into debt, and defrayed using local currency instead of gold or foreign exchange. The more the occupants exported, the more local banknotes were produced. So, of the 11.5 billion zloty issued by the *Bank Emisyjny w Polsce* [Issuing Bank in Poland] which operated from April 1940 onwards, 9.5 billion was Reich debt! To avoid the obvious result of such a situation, hyperinflation, wages and prices were frozen at pre-war levels, which of course shaped the black market.<sup>7</sup>

In parallel with the development of industrial production, agriculture was also increasingly exploited in the GG. At the turn of 1942 and 1943 the burden imposed on the countryside was radically increased. Peasants were threatened with a whole range of penalties for non-compliance with ‘quotas’, including deportation to a concentration camp. It is therefore no surprise that in 1943 the General Governor Hans Frank was able to boast that 60–68% of food supplied to the Reich came from the East, ‘from the Baltic to the Black Sea’. The degree of exploitation was only made possible by introducing a system of distribution for non-Germans which was an absolute socioeconomic fiction, to the extent that from the first months of the occupation, living exclusively on official rations, even assuming their full availability, was simply physically impossible. In Krakow, for example, the calorific value of rations (when the required average established in 1932 by the Expert Committee of the League of Nations was 2400 kcal) was as shown in Table 1.

Rations for Poles, not to mention Jews, in the GG were several times smaller than for Germans (who also received salaries that were many times higher, allowing them to purchase goods on the free market) (Table 2). The quality and range of regulated products were incomparable. Poles could only dream of buying fruit, sweets, poultry, fish or industrial goods at the official prices. It is also no surprise that receiving even a small meat or sugar ration was recorded in diaries

**Table 1** Average daily calorific value of rations (kcal) in Krakow 1940–1944

Year	Average daily calorific value of rations	
	Person not in employment	Person working in a public institution
1940	580	617
1941	736	1233
1942	644	1548
1943	675	923
1944	909	909

Source Stanisław Smoliński, *Przyczynek do zagadnienia wyżywienia miejskiej ludności polskiej w b. Generalnym Gubernatorstwie na tle ówczesnych warunków pracy i płacy* [Contribution to the Issue of Municipal Catering for the Polish Population in the General Government in the Context of Contemporary Working Conditions and Wages], *Rocznik Akademii Handlowej w Poznaniu za r. 1949/50* [Yearbook of the Academy of Economics in Poznań 1949/50] (Poznań, n.p., 1950), 21

**Table 2** Annual rations of selected foodstuffs (kg) for Poles and Germans under the GG in 1942

	<i>Poles</i>	<i>Germans</i>
Potatoes	90.0	Unlimited
Flour	4.7	12.0
Sugar	2.5	12.8
Eggs (units)	25	176
Butter	–	13
Cheese	–	16
Meat	4.1	38.4

Source Walczak, *Walka*, 25

during the occupation as a significant event.<sup>8</sup> It is estimated that under the GG the ration card covered the following proportion of the Polish population's nutritional needs: protein 23.9%, fat 4.1% and carbohydrates 30.1%.<sup>9</sup>

The supply of fuel or industrial goods, especially clothing and footwear, was even worse. Even having a *Bezugschein* ('ration coupon') did not in fact guarantee purchase. Furthermore, Polish merchants usually only received any official assignments of textiles if they were able to pay high bribes to German distribution institutions, and these costs were then passed on to customers.<sup>10</sup> The same was true for tobacco and alcohol, which were exempted from regulation and subject to a German monopoly.

Literary historian Kazimierz Wyka, who survived the war in Krzeszowice near Krakow, wrote in 1945: 'During the war I did not *legally* consume as much as one gram of lard, one drop of milk, one slice of sausage. Yet quite a lot of such foods came my way – and there were millions like me. ... [Just] During the winter of 1939–40, the population under the General Government faced a simple dilemma: to eat only what was permitted and die of hunger, or – *somehow to make do*. Naturally no one seriously entertained the first alternative, so the only important question was: *how to survive despite the regulation*. Each social class responded differently to that "how", with different conduct and collective reactions'.<sup>11</sup>

The illegal market, to which Polish society owes its biological survival, was enabled both by the enormous corruption of the German authorities and their inability to control implementation of the mass of rules and regulations, which were usually fortified with high penalties.

This draconian system of regulations and prohibitions, designed to protect against free market activity, paradoxically allowed it to prosper. Even the most severe sanctions were not able to instil real respect for the occupation law. On the one hand, illegal slaughtering or brewing was punished even by death but, on the other, these activities were extremely lucrative, and checking every pigsty, shed and road was beyond the occupiers' capabilities.<sup>12</sup>

The risk associated with involvement in the black market was one of the reasons for the high prices on it, which were usually several times greater than the official ones (Table 3). The trend in free market prices was steadily upward, with a few sharp shocks triggered by the Soviet–German war in 1941, then at the turn of 1942/1943 as a result of the increased burden on the countryside and police action related to so-called crop protection, which included a ban on the transportation of agricultural products and foodstuffs, and finally from the summer of

**Table 3** Official and (average) prices of selected foodstuffs and manufactured goods on the free market under the GG in 1941–1944 (in zloty)<sup>a</sup>

	1941		1942		1943		1944	
	Official	Free market	Official	Free market	Official	Free market	Official	Free market
Rye bread (kg)	0.50	5.99	0.51	8.0	0.61	9.03	0.63	7.32
Wheat flour (kg)	0.75	10.88	0.71	15.85	0.82	20.82	0.83	19.16
Lard (kg)	3.35	28.10	3.24	68.74	3.56	144.32	4.34	140.49
Sugar (kg)	1.65	15.64	1.67	41.93	1.73	74.40	1.80	76.24
Vodka (litre)	7.98	39.14	9.29	100.89	10.78	137.63	11.38	130.06
Coal (100 kg)	8.66	44.27	9.06	66.10	8.61	79.83	9.61	75.42
Men's clothing (set)	263.15	952.19	223.4	1560	231.7	3672.00	215.00	5846.68
Men's shoes (pair)	43.10	235.8	43.12	348.1	46.56	783.4	43.64	1211.00

Source Łuczak, *Polityka*, 418–421

<sup>a</sup>Prices are averaged; the cost of individual articles could differ radically in Warsaw, Krakow and Lviv. Typically, the prices were highest in Warsaw: whereas a ton of coal cost 300–350 zloty in Krakow, the Warsaw price was 1000 zloty. (Franciszek Skalniak, *Bank Emisyjny w Polsce 1939–1945* [The Issuing Bank in Poland, 1939–1945] (Warsaw: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Ekonomiczne, 1966), 141.)

1944 when the front cut off part of the GG's agricultural base.<sup>13</sup> At the same time, it must be remembered that official salaries had been frozen at the pre-war level (and sometimes even lower). Introduction of a new wage table for the Polish population at the beginning of 1943 was of no practical significance.

### THE BLACK MARKET UNDER THE GG: POLISH INVOLVEMENT

In the countryside both peasant farms and landowner estates profited, a large proportion of which remained in the hands of their former owners under the GG, who relinquished control. In order to maintain production the occupiers sought to improve agriculture, supplying the rural market (up to 1943) with equipment, fertilisers, seed and livestock. Farms, not only large-scale ones, could afford such purchases because price scissors were favourable for agricultural products. Thus, provisioning difficulties in cities increased faster than the burden on the countryside. In no small part due to natural management methods, its defence mechanisms worked more smoothly than in modern Western European agriculture. While universal impoverishment was a fact in the cities, a significant proportion of the rural population felt the tangible benefits of price rises on the black market.<sup>14</sup> The Polish economist Tadeusz Nowacki, who worked for the Exile government's Ministry of Information during the war, wrote in 1945: 'The Polish farmer waged a quiet but determined war against the forces of occupation. The weapons he used in the war were, above all, extraordinary cleverness and the ability to exploit the weaknesses of the German occupiers. ... He took every opportunity, every hailstorm, every frosty night, every real or imagined plunder by the partisans ... to show that his harvest was significantly smaller than he had expected'.<sup>15</sup>

The rural suppliers of large cities prospered most. For instance, each of the towns around Warsaw specialised in a different aspect of the black market: Karczew provided meat called *Prosiaków* ('Pigsville') for some reason; Jabłonna and Legionowo provided moonshine; Rembertów provided tobacco; and Piaseczno, Góra Kalwaria and Grójec provided flour.<sup>16</sup> It was no coincidence that these towns situated along the access narrow gauge railways to Warsaw, which were more gently controlled by the occupiers, supported by Polish crews and used mainly by Poles.

The transfer methods were based on the experience gained during the previous German occupation (1915–1918). It is worth mentioning that this was when the terms ‘smuggling’ and ‘smuggler’ were adopted to describe this transfer and the people who brought the butter or meat to town. As the number of people involved in illegal trade increased and it became professionalised (with the improvement of transfer and distribution methods and the establishment of illegal ‘wholesalers’), the inhabitants of large cities, especially Warsaw, ‘explored’ more and more distant areas, resulting in higher prices. The countryside was also looking for better-paying, although sometimes more distant markets.<sup>17</sup>

Like everywhere else in occupied Europe, the GG also experienced a massive redistribution of assets—money, gold, foreign currency, jewellery, furniture, carpets and clothes all flowed from cities to the countryside. ‘The countryside has now achieved a very high level of prosperity, exceeding records stretching back a very long time’, the Exile Government Delegation for Poland representative noted in 1944. ‘This prosperity is expressed not only in nutrition and clothing, but above all in the accumulation of construction materials (wood, blocks) the increased quantity and improved state of farm equipment, harnesses, vehicles and especially the record number of people owning farm machinery’.<sup>18</sup> The main beneficiaries of the economic situation however were the wealthier peasants, who were easily able—mainly through corruption—to reach an understanding with German and Polish officials and police officers.<sup>19</sup>

However, even poorer peasants were better provided for than average urban dwellers, who were most affected by frozen wages, unemployment and starvation rations. While the wealthier peasants were better off in the countryside, in the cities the intelligentsia—alongside the majority of the petty bourgeoisie—was in a privileged position. On the one hand, the vast majority of them were instantly deprived of their livelihood, and the wages of those who kept working were frozen at pre-war levels and soon ceased to cover the financial necessities for survival. On the other hand, despite being a social group more exposed to political repression than workers, they were also better off. They often possessed assets, both movable and fixed (e.g., a shop, restaurant or workshop), which they could sell, exchange or invest in a venture in order to provide for themselves during the occupation. In addition, they had the intellectual resources to analyse the situation and find the most rational way around it.<sup>20</sup> They were also better placed in social networks, both domestic and even international. Help from friends and relatives in neutral

countries—Sweden, Switzerland and Portugal (or, via these countries, also from the UK or, from the end of 1941, the USA)—was an important source of support for the intelligentsia, because articles received in packages, especially sardines, coffee and tea, were a huge source of supplies for the unofficial market.

The most common strategy was selling off jewellery, clothing, furniture or works of art, or exchanging them in the countryside for food products. The wealthiest or most resourceful tried to survive on trade and brokering from the very beginning of the occupation. As early as November 1939 the Warsaw writer Zofia Nałkowska wrote that ‘No-one earns any money, everybody wants to sell something, set up shop, trade’.<sup>21</sup> At the end of 1939, she used connections (natural to someone with her status) to get herself a tobacco shop concession. When it became obvious that the occupation was not going to be a temporary phenomenon, people started looking for permanent jobs, often as labourers or by establishing (il)legitimate small businesses—shops, bars or workshops. In all cases, this meant heavy involvement in the illegal market, whether for supply or product distribution channels. There were more restaurants, cafes and bars on the ‘Polish’ side in Warsaw at the beginning of the 1940s than there had been in the whole city before the war.<sup>22</sup> It is also estimated that there were about five thousand illegal, mostly family producers in the city—making alcohol, food, oil, textile articles, leather goods, household appliances, furniture and cosmetics.<sup>23</sup> Characteristically, this illegal production was ‘conducted in a completely irrational way, in private apartments, for example making fabric by hand in small workshops, preparing tobacco and making cigarettes, ... laboratory fabrication of certain chemical and pharmaceutical products, primitive leather tanning and so on. Interestingly this primitive organisation did not always go hand in hand with primitive techniques; on the contrary, the methods were sometimes ingenious and subtle, yielding a high-quality product’.<sup>24</sup>

The less wealthy became unofficial brokers, often in a triangle between Poles, Jews and Germans, in very different combinations. The sellers could be anyone, the buyers Germans and Poles, turning the profits of illegal operations or corruption into items of lasting value (gold, foreign currency, works of art or real estate). This type of exchange could not be conducted using the usual tools that regulate trade, such as marketing, advertisements, high turnover and storage volumes. All this honed a system in which people looking for a particular product

‘let their friends know what they were looking for, and the person with goods for sale did the same. Since everybody feverishly sought to take part in some sort of illegal transaction, over time a peculiar system of exchanging offers and information developed, and it was usually possible to establish a link between the buyer and the seller quite quickly, but as a rule with the help of numerous go-betweens, who all took their cut’.<sup>25</sup> As the methods of the unofficial occupation economy improved, these brokers became professionalised and increasingly frequently this became somehow their ‘job’ alongside or instead of official work.<sup>26</sup> An occupation joke, noted on 1 August 1942 in Krakow, illustrated the need for at least some family members to do so well: ‘Another street joke: “What do you live off? Well, I work and earn 200 zloty, my daughter works and also earns 300 zloty per month, and our unemployed son actually keeps us”—(from his dealings on the black market)’.<sup>27</sup>

Members of the intelligentsia were also typically involved in the illegal exchange of currencies and gold. Although the penalty was a concentration camp or even death, there was no shortage of people willing to participate in it as a buyer, seller or broker. It should come as no surprise that this part of the black market flourished, as valuables that were easy to hide or carry suddenly gained enormous significance, and the majority of large private transactions during the occupation were performed in hard currency. Those who had it also had a greater chance of survival. For instance, paying for a hiding place on the so-called Aryan side, usually in gold or US dollars, was often how people saved themselves from being murdered. The black market for currency exchange professionalised rapidly too, creating its own language, areas of operation, and security and rate information systems. Characteristically, the exchange rates for dollars and gold coins were common knowledge. A typical case is that of the Warsaw pensioner, Franciszek Wyszyński, who supplemented his starvation pension with trade in gold and securities—a note on their current rates started virtually every entry in his diary. He was by no means unique.<sup>28</sup>

One really exceptional figure was an ordinary janitor in the Warsaw courts, who bought a plot in exclusive Podkowa Leśna on the outskirts of the city from the well-known writer Jarosław Iwaszkiewicz in February 1941. ‘After signing the documents – what a surprise’, the author noted, ‘my janitor asks me for dinner at his place. ... dinner ... is splendid: the herrings as hors d’oeuvres with vodka, then red borscht with dumplings, roast turkey and compote. Black coffee *eo ipso*, and this is now a rarity.

It's been a long time since I've drunk it at home'.<sup>29</sup> The janitor was able to take advantage of the situation—the courts where he worked were in fact one of the most important illegal links between the ghetto and the Polish side. It usually took a high bribe to pass from one to the other, and although the Jewish district had existed for only a few months, he could afford an expensive investment. At the same time, the vast majority of manual workers, especially in factories, faced the question not of what to invest in, but simply how to survive the next day.

As mentioned above, the average working-class family was worse off than the intelligentsia. They did not have assets or savings, and their social capital was less effective. They were subject to more rigorous control in the workplace than white-collar workers, while their wages were just as low—in 1941 these covered barely 10% of the essential outgoings of a working-class family. In 1942, food obtained from the legal market was about 25% of the pre-war worker's standard consumption, while real wages, taking into account the free market which was needed to supplement their resources, stood at 5% of pre-war levels.<sup>30</sup> The situation which working-class families faced was well characterised by the most serious of the underground papers, *Biuletyn Informacyjny* ('Information Bulletin'). 'Starvation wages and terrible poverty mean there is only one way to survive: **every single** member of the working class family must earn money at all costs. Old people, mothers, wives, the sick and lame, even the youngest children. Everyone! Earn money in every possible way, grab every opportunity. And if there is no way of earning it – steal! Steal coal, wood, potatoes – because otherwise you will die of hunger' (original emphasis).<sup>31</sup>

Since male factory workers were subject to strict controls, it was mainly unemployed women from working-class families who were engaged in smuggling food from the countryside, usually by public transport and thus in small quantities. They would allocate a part for their own consumption, redistribute a portion to others and sometimes—risking more—they would deliver food for trade to ghettos. A fairly clear picture emerges from the surviving police reports on smuggling to the Warsaw ghetto during the first half of 1942. Large-scale smuggling was the preserve of specialist 'wholesalers' with resources such as a means of transport. In contrast, a large proportion of the 'retailers' who smuggled small amounts of grain or a few bottles of beer (usually taking old clothes back to the other side) lived in working-class neighbourhoods and suburbs.<sup>32</sup> For men to be involved in excursions

for food, they needed to work with the Polish administrative staff of factories who could mark absent workers as off sick, for example. They did not do this *pro bono*—usually they got the products brought in by their subordinates, or bought them cheaply. As a result, in some industrial plants, including munitions factories, worker absence rates even reached 30%.<sup>33</sup>

Even at the beginning of the occupation the productivity of literally starving workers plummeted by up to 70%, even threatening to halt production. Attempts to terrify workers into increasing productivity failed. Employers, both German and Polish, had to resort to methods to maintain production that radically diverged from the occupation law. To circumvent the ban on raising wages, facility managers supplemented them with produced goods, in the knowledge that they would end up on the black market. Employees were given payments which were not included in the salary. Food (less often, fuel and clothing) bought on the black market was sold to them at official prices or even simply handed out. Sometimes this assistance exceeded the value of the paid wages. For instance, in May 1941, in one of the Warsaw factories workers were paid 90,000 zloty a month, while the cost of the bread and soup distributed to them was worth about 100,000.<sup>34</sup> Polish companies (and a not insignificant proportion of the German ones) were forced to be creative with their accounting and keep two sets of books. ‘The company paid taxes as well as the costs of officially supplied raw material and wages from the first, and the second one was for goods purchased “on the side”, bribes and sometimes supplements to remuneration for work, which, however, did not bear any relation to the actual profits. Receipts for payment for goods delivered officially went into one, while the other was for goods on the black market’.<sup>35</sup>

The primary source of extra income for workers was stealing raw materials, finished products, coal, tobacco, leather, textiles and so on, which usually ended up on the illegal market (according to a 1944 estimate, up to 40% of goods consumed at that time may have been originally stolen). Other sources included illegal production in their own workplaces and profitable additional employment, such as in illegal workshops where they could count on making as much as ten to twelve times more than in their regular jobs. In 1943, German specialists in the GG estimated that a third of all workers worked four hours a day in illegal industry on factory machines and using factory raw materials.<sup>36</sup> Raw materials and tools taken from the factory were also used for production in the

abovementioned illegal workshops. Young people (sometimes children!) of worker families had a specialist field of their own—stealing from German rail transports. They stole cereal, canned goods, textiles, footwear, coal, military equipment and even live animals. This was profitable, although extremely dangerous. A surviving *Bahnschutzpolizei* ('Railway Protection Police') report for just one month (February 1944) in the Warsaw district alone recorded at least 22 dead and 14 seriously injured (including a ten-year-old girl).<sup>37</sup>

### THE BLACK MARKET UNDER THE GG: GERMAN INVOLVEMENT

Wehrmacht soldiers were also among those detained for stealing from railway transports.<sup>38</sup> Paradoxical as it may seem, the black market would never have reached the level of penetration that it achieved under the GG without the active participation of Germans, from rank-and-file gendarmes to high officials of the occupation authorities. On the one hand, unofficial trade solved a significant proportion of daily supply problems. As the Governor of the Warsaw district, Ludwig Fischer, wrote in May 1944: 'Fighting illicit trade is one of the most important tasks of the General Government administration, apart from the small-scale so-called illicit trade conducted by individuals to meet their most vital needs'.<sup>39</sup> In fact, such trade was also combated, for example, through police vigilance and activity as well as during 'crop protection actions'—mentioned above—when the city was surrounded by a tight cordon, which caused prices to soar. Examples of the results of police actions are shown in Table 4.

The modest difference between the districts of Warsaw and Krakow is striking, especially since the latter (particularly the city of Warsaw) was not only much more populous, but also the centre of illicit trade. This indicates both how the 'capital' of Krakow was saturated with the armed and police forces, and also how the level of corruption would allow a Polish dealer or bar owner to reach an understanding with a German police officer or administrative official. Kazimierz Wyka wrote: 'The Germans turned out to be fantastic bribe-takers. Everyone was on the take, from petty officials up to Nazi Party bigwigs. The system of bribery quickly evolved into a kind of contract, unwritten but mutually honoured. A pork butcher, baker or miller who paid regularly was not "done dirty". Bribery quickly became the cover that shielded our economic life from the crushing system'.<sup>40</sup> Of course the economic risk was inversely

**Table 4** Summary of the charges, arrests and penalties for profiteering issued in Krakow, Warsaw, Radom, Lublin and Galicia between 1 April 1941 and 31 March 1942

<i>District</i>		<i>Charges</i>	<i>Arrests</i>	<i>Penalties</i>	
				<i>Number</i>	<i>Amount in zloty from 1 July 1942</i>
Krakow		16,414	4017	56,651	926,757.83
Warsaw	City	4435	3838	18,875	200,540.00
	Countryside	7759	607	41,783	571,421.50
Radom		7987	665	20,675	284,520.13
Lublin		6302	862	35,260	662,482.00
Galicia		2667	422	13,349	From 15 September 1941 320,020.30
Total		45,564	10,411		2,965,741.76

*Source* Archiwum Akt Nowych, Rząd GG [Archive of Modern Records, Government of GG], 1150, 171

proportionate to the amount of capital one possessed: a small black marketeer caught with bacon or moonlight alcohol generally would end up in a concentration camp, while the wholesaler transporting entire wagon loads of goods was protected by the sheer size of the fraud, and, of course, by the number of interested, but silent, parties.

On 3 September 1942, the SS and police commander in the GG issued an ordinance aiming to give police officers personal interest in prosecuting illegal trade: they could now purchase 10% of the confiscated food at official prices.<sup>41</sup> It is difficult to say whether this actually encouraged stricter control, but it certainly made it possible to legitimise goods seized privately and bribes or purchases on the free market, whether these were used for personal consumption or sent in food parcels to Germany. It was not difficult to get the occupiers to pay high black market rates. Corruption and their own trading activity brought enormous income in the currency of the GG, and the exchange rate of the German mark was hugely profitable—in theory one Reichsmark bought two zloty, but by 1942 the rate was already 1:10. This increased purchasing power so greatly that Germans stationed in the GG often asked to be sent marks.<sup>42</sup>

It is no wonder that Polish newspapers from the occupation years reported extensively on German soldiers' involvement in black market operations. Zygmunt Klukowski, a doctor from Szczebrzeszyn in the Zamość region, visited Warsaw in September 1941. He noted: 'There are whole markets near the barracks where soldiers can buy not

only, as before, some items stolen from the occupied territories such as coffee, tea, underwear, jewellery, rugs or gramophones, but also individual pieces of military equipment such as blankets, coats, waterproof capes, bikes and even guns. All for a song...'<sup>43</sup> 'Yesterday I witnessed', a Kraków archivist wrote a year later, 'how ... a German soldier bought 2 kilos of butter for 95 zloty and ordered 13 kilos of flour and lard, all at profiteering prices, and explained that he needed these things because he was going on leave next week and was taking them to his family in the Reich. He pulled some children's clothes out of his case, women's combinations and *duds* like that which he wanted to sell'.<sup>44</sup>

These descriptions indicate both the scale of purchases and the peculiar nature of 'cross-border brokering'. Sales of the spoils from France and the USSR brought down prices the German soldiers or GG officials were prepared to pay, while at the same time draining the market and contributing to higher prices. As Witold Kula, economic historian and acute observer of everyday life under occupation, commented: 'A German soldier selling ... silk stockings stolen in France and buying sugar and bacon in return – strengthened our luxury market and weakened the market for necessities. Germans buying any article whatsoever on the illicit market meant a new injection of means of payment into the market but also reduced the quantity of goods, which ultimately had to be reflected in rising prices for necessities'.<sup>45</sup>

It is worth making a small digression at this point. German soldiers were not the only group engaged in the cross-border exchange of goods in war-torn Europe. This was also done on an (arguably) enormous scale by Polish workers freely employed by the Wehrmacht, Luftwaffe or private companies. They used these institutions' regulations creatively to transfer food, alcohol and luxury goods from Minsk to Paris and from Finland to Italy. The scale of the phenomenon is confirmed both by the memoirs of Polish citizens (Józef Makowski and Leopold Tyrmand)<sup>46</sup> as well as by the case of Spaniard Marian Sanchez, who worked in the Warsaw garages requisitioned by the Luftwaffe at the end of 1942, and 'received a pass from the Germans, with which he travelled several times to Paris ..., where he ... bought a variety of assorted materials he then showed in Warsaw'.<sup>47</sup> The phenomenon is still waiting for its historian.

The German activity described above corresponded to the level of retail sales by the Warsaw workers. Yet there were also large-scale 'wholesalers' among the occupiers, effectively exploiting the 'colonial' character of the GG and its inviolability (which sometimes turned out to be limited). Huge quantities of raw materials, building materials, coal and

food disappeared from German warehouses and factories, flowing into the black market.<sup>48</sup> It is difficult to determine the scale, because we only know about cases that ended up in court. But, they can give us some idea. One of the leaders of the Warsaw gasworks sold about a thousand tons of coke destined for Germans living in Warsaw on the black market. Following the disclosure of petrol scams by the commander of the Warsaw machinery site, Molzick, the price of fuel on the black market quickly jumped from seven or eight to 20 zloty per litre.<sup>49</sup> Conversely, when in March 1943, ‘some National Socialist idealist’ ordered—in accordance with the regulations—that the several tons of coffee remaining from pre-war stocks be given to military hospitals, it immediately made its way onto the free market, causing a drop in prices from 2000 to 1600 zloty per kilo.<sup>50</sup> Surprising items sometimes came into circulation. In May 1943, Warsaw was ‘flooded’ with living turtles, as several cartloads were bought from German guards.

Regulation of raw materials forced workplace owners and asset managers to make a choice—either to stop production, or to seek out supplies on the black market. Usually they chose the second solution.<sup>51</sup> This sometimes led to paradoxical situations; for example, in Kielce’s *Granat* (‘Grenade’) Munitions Plant, acquired by Hugo Schneider AG (then known as Hasag), supply was so problematic that, in 1942, steel was even bought on the black market at several times the official price. Also, in January 1942 they bought several tons of steel, although they knew that it was stolen from the not-too-distant Starachowice Plant, which was also under German management.<sup>52</sup> This did not so much have legal as economic consequences—higher expenditure had to be balanced, usually by selling part of the output on the unregulated free market, and at much higher prices.

The most characteristic phenomenon, however, was recorded several times in 1943–1944; namely, the sale of alcohol produced by the German General Directorate Monopoly at black market prices.<sup>53</sup> This was motivated by the homoeopathic principle *similia similibus curantur* (‘like cures like’). Hermann Senkowsky, the director of the General Directorate Monopoly, wrote in mid-May 1944 to the governor of the Warsaw district, Fischer, explaining the sale of about 500,000 litres of hard alcohol: ‘This action is an attempt, on the one hand, to take the financial wind out of the sails of illicit trade, and redirect the funds into the state coffers, and on the other, to combat illicit distilling or the distribution of potable spirits made from illicitly distilled alcohol’.<sup>54</sup> Fisher’s answer was unequivocal: ‘The sale of potable spirits at prices which far exceed the legal maximum is completely unacceptable’.<sup>55</sup>

## ASSESSMENT AND LEGACY

An unambiguous evaluation of the black market during the occupation is not possible. There is no doubt that the black market under the GG exceeded the limits usually designated for 'illegal economies'. It became simply an economy, however, as Kazimierz Wyka wrote: 'an economy morally excluded, separated from the state and society as a whole'.<sup>56</sup> Undoubtedly, it enabled survival by protecting people from cold and hunger. It was extraordinarily lively: there were no goods or services which you could not buy from or sell on it (including lice offered to soldiers, guaranteeing a two-week quarantine and extension of their leave).<sup>57</sup> The average cheap Polish bar (boozer) in Warsaw offered a menu difficult to imagine even in upmarket restaurants in Berlin or Paris.<sup>58</sup> But these were only appearances and there is also the other side of the coin. The black market was far from being a charitable activity. It punished the poor and rewarded the brave, the dynamic and the ruthless. It made people rich or poor. It was kind to those who had no qualms about taking advantage of the situation or decided to collaborate with the occupier. Contemporaries were ambivalent about the black market. The Polish clandestine press, for instance, was full of warnings about store owners raising prices. The underground propaganda created a picture of a typical black market shark, unfeeling towards his compatriots while closely cooperating with the occupiers. It was feared that the black market was going to have a negative moral impact on the functioning of society after the war and indeed these fears proved to be well founded. 'New kinds of enterprises emerged', wrote sociologist Jan Szczepański, 'run by people from different social classes without professional qualifications. It was a particular kind of small manufacture functioning usually in collision with the current law, all kinds of "shady businesses", which disregarded the regulations, bribed the German authorities and focused on quick profit. New business models appeared at that time and stayed after the war'.<sup>59</sup> The joke cited from the diary of Krakow pensioner Edward Kubalski, recounted years later, has lost none of its relevance.<sup>60</sup>

Furthermore, the Polish economic reality of the more than four post-war decades (somewhat) resembled the occupation period. 'Only now are we paying the price for the occupation' warned Kazimierz Wyka in 1945. Forty-six years later, American anthropologist Janine Wedel wrote: 'When I first read Wyka's prescient article, I was impressed with the parallels between wartime occupation and Communist omnipresence.'

... Forty years after Wyka depicted the “social fiction” of an economy “excluded” from and functioning contrary to both the moral fabric of society and the commands of its formidable rulers, Polish observers of the 1980s have drawn an extraordinarily similar picture.<sup>61</sup> That, however, is a matter for another article.

## NOTES

1. Czesław Madajczyk, *Generalna Gubernia w planach hitlerowskich. Studia* [The General Government in Hitler's Plans: Studies] (Warsaw: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 1961), 7–62; Jan T. Gross, *Polish Society Under German Occupation, The Generalgouvernement 1939–1944* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979).
2. Tadeusz Janicki, “Czarny rynek w Poznaniu podczas II Wojny Światowej” [The Black Market in Poznań During the Second World War], *Kronika Miasta Poznania* [Chronicle of the City of Poznań] 3 (2009): 94–116; Grzegorz Hryciuk, *Polacy we Lwowie 1939–1944. Życie codzienne* [Poles in Lviv 1939–1944. Everyday Life] (Warsaw, 2000); Stanisława Lewandowska, *Życie codzienne Wilna w latach II wojny światowej* [Everyday Life in Vilnius During the Second World War] (Warsaw, 1997).
3. W. Jastrzębowski, *Gospodarka niemiecka w Polsce 1939–1944* [The German Economy in Poland 1939–1944] (Warsaw: Spółdzielnia wydawnicza ‘Czytelnik’, 1946); Marian Walczak, *Walka ekonomiczna narodu polskiego 1939–1945* [The Economic Struggle of the Polish Nation 1939–1945] (Warsaw: Wydawn. Ministerstwa Obrony Narodowej, 1983); T. Szarota, *Okupowanej Warszawy dzień powszedni. Studium historyczne* [A Weekday in Occupied Warsaw: An Historical Study] (Warsaw, 1988); Jerzy Kochanowski, *Through the Back Door: The Black Market in Poland 1944–1989* (Frankfurt a. M.: Peter Lang, 2017).
4. At the end of 1940 Belarusians and Ukrainians made up 4.4% (530,000) of GG society, while at the end of 1942, after part of the areas occupied by the USSR until the summer of 1941 were joined to the GG, it was 6.7% (716,000). Ukrainians were favoured by the occupiers, also in terms of food rations and clothing: the average nutritional level in December 1941 was 654 kcal for Poles, 184 kcal for Jews, and 930 for Ukrainians. Czesław Madajczyk, *Polityka III Rzeszy w okupowanej Polsce* [Third Reich Policy in Occupied Poland], vol. 2 (Warsaw, 1970), 226.
5. M. Passenstein, “Szmugiel w getcie warszawskim” [Smuggling in the Warsaw Ghetto], *Biuletyn Żydowskiego Instytutu Historycznego* [Jewish Historical Institute Bulletin] 26 (1958): 42–72; C. Battrick, “Smuggling as a form of Resistance in the Warsaw Ghetto,” *Journal of Holocaust*

- Education* 4, no. 2 (1995): 199–224; Barbara Engelking and Jacek Leociak, *Getto warszawskie. Przewodnik po nieistniejącym mieście* [*The Warsaw Ghetto: Guide to a City That No Longer Exists*] (Warsaw, 2013), 481–496; Henryk Grynberg and Jan Kostański, *Szmulglerzy* [*Smugglers*] (Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Twój Styl, 2001).
6. See, in general Adam Tooze, *The Wages of Destruction: The Making & Breaking of the Nazi Economy* (London: Penguin Books, 2007); *Krieg und Wirtschaft. Studien zur deutschen Wirtschaftsgeschichte 1939–1945* [*War and the Economy: Studies in German Economic History 1939–1945*], ed. Dietrich Eichholtz (Berlin, 1999); Jastrzębowski, op. cit.; Czesław Łuczak, *Polityka ludnościowa i ekonomiczna hitlerowskich Niemiec w okupowanej Polsce* [*Nazi German Population and Economic Policy in Occupied Poland*] (Poznań, 1979); Walczak, op. cit.
  7. Łuczak, op. cit., 528–535.
  8. See, e.g., Remigiusz Moszyński, *Dziennik 1939–1945, Wojna i okupacja w Lublinie w oczach dorosłych i dzieci* [*Diary 1939–1945: War and Occupation in Lublin in the Eyes of Adults and Children*] (Lublin, 2014), 255.
  9. Jastrzębowski, op. cit., 49.
  10. Stanisław Smoliński, “Przyczynek do zagadnienia wyżywienia miejskiej ludności polskiej w b. Generalnym Gubernatorstwie na tle ówczesnych warunków pracy i płacy” [Contribution to the Issue of Municipal Catering for the Polish Population in the General Government in the Context of Contemporary Working Conditions and Wages], *Rocznik Akademii Handlowej w Poznaniu za r. 1949/50* [*Yearbook of the Academy of Economics in Poznań 1949/50*] (Poznań, 1950), 13; Jastrzębowski, op. cit., 47.
  11. Kazimierz Wyka, “Excluded Economy,” in *The Unplanned Society: Poland During and After Communism*, ed. Janine R. Wedel (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992), 25.
  12. Wyka, op. cit.
  13. Stanisław Meducki, *Przemysł i klasa robotnicza w dystrykcie radomskim w okresie okupacji hitlerowskiej* [*Industry and the Working-Class District of Radom During the Nazi Occupation*], PWN(Warsaw/Krakow: Państwowe Wydawn. Naukowe, Oddział w Krakowie, 1981), 145, 150.
  14. Andrzej Jezierski and Cecylia Leszczyńska, *Historia gospodarcza Polski* [*An Economic History of Poland*] (Warsaw, 1999), 354–355.
  15. Stefan Tadeusz Norwid (Tadeusz Nowacki), *Martyrium eines Volkes. Das okkupierte Polen* [*A People’s Martyrdom: Occupied Poland*] (Stockholm: Bermann-Fischer Verlag, 1945), 140.
  16. Walczak, op. cit., 67–68; Szarota, op. cit., 220–239; Kochanowski, *Through*.

17. Aneta JasioneK, “Szmugiel żywności do Warszawy w okresie okupacji hitlerowskiej w latach 1939–1944” [Smuggling Food to Warsaw During the Nazi Occupation 1939–1944], *Słupskie Studia Historyczne* [*Słupsk Historical Studies*] 17 (2011): 201–220.
18. Archiwum Akt Nowych, Delegatura Rządu na Kraj [Archive of Modern Records: Government Delegation for Poland (AAN, DRnK)], 202/III-56, 32.
19. AAN, DRnK, 202/VIII-4, 44.
20. Jerzy Kochanowski, “‘Życie adaptuje się do tego, co jest’. Inteligenckie strategie przetrwania 1939–1945. Rekonesans badawczy” [‘Life Adapts to What Is’—Intelligence Survival Strategies 1939–1945: A Research Reconnaissance], *Przegląd Historyczny* [*Historical Review*], CVI, no. 4 (2015): 787–814.
21. Zofia Nałkowska, *Dzienniki czasu wojny* [*Wartime Diaries*], ed. Hanna Kirchner (Warsaw, 1970), 101.
22. Anna Strzeżek, *Od konsumpcji do konspiracji czyli warszawskie lokale gastronomiczne 1939–1944* [*From Consumption to Conspiracy, or Restaurants in Warsaw 1939–1944*] (Warsaw, 2012).
23. Walczak, op. cit., 73–74.
24. Jastrzębowski, op. cit., 355.
25. Jastrzębowski, op. cit., 358–359; Wyka, 36–39.
26. Sabina Sebyłowa, *Notatki z prawobrzeżnej Warszawy* [*Notes from Right-Bank Warsaw*] (Warsaw, 1985), 223–224.
27. Edward Kubalski, *Niemcy w Krakowie, Dziennik 1.IX.1939–18.I.1945* [*Germans in Kraków: Diary 1 September 1939–18 January 1945*], ed. J. Grabowski and Z.R. Grabowski (Kraków/Budapest, 2010), 229; Gross, 110.
28. Franciszek Wszyński, *Dzienniki z lat 1941–1944* [*Diaries 1941–1944*], ed. J. Grabowski and Z.R. Grabowski (Warsaw, 2007); Ludwik Landau, *Kronika lat wojny i okupacji* [*Chronicle of the War and Occupation Years*], vol. I–III, ed. Zbigniew Landau and Jerzy Tomaszewski (Warsaw, 1962–1963).
29. Jarosław Iwaszkiewicz, *Dzienniki 1911–1955* [*Diaries 1911–1955*], ed. A. Papiieski and R. Papiieski (Warsaw, 2007), 175–176.
30. Jastrzębowski, op. cit., 341: *Dzień robotnika polskiego w okupowanej Warszawie* [*A Polish Worker’s Day in Occupied Warsaw*] (New York: American Friends of Polish Democracy, 1941).
31. “Biuletyn Informacyjny” [Information Bulletin], 43, 5 November 1942.
32. State Archives in Warsaw (APW), *Der Kommissar für den jüdischen Wohnbezirk in Warschau* [*The Commisar for the Jewish Residential Area in Warsaw*], 11, 23, 45, 58, 86, 129, 142, 167.

33. Adam Massalski and Stanisław Meducki, *Kielce w latach okupacji hitlerowskiej 1939–1945* [*Kielce During the Nazi Occupation 1939–1945*] (Wrocław: Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich, 2007), 128.
34. AAN, DRnK, 202/VIII-4, 23; 202/IV-1, 81; Tadeusz Kłosiński, *Polityka przemysłowa okupanta w Generalnym Gubernatorstwie* [*The Occupier's Industrial Policy in the General Government*], Instytut Zachodni [Western Institute] (Poznań, 1947), 103; Massalski and Meducki, op. cit., 139–140.
35. Karol Marian Pospieszalski, “Hitlerowskie “prawo” okupacyjne w Polsce” [Nazi “Law” in Occupied Poland], *Documenta Occupationis*, vol. VI (Poznań, 1958), 298.
36. AAN, DRnK, 202/IV-1, 80; Walczak, op. cit., 71.
37. APW, Amt des Distrikts Warschau (ADW) (Warsaw District Office), 63, Tätigkeitbericht der Bahnschutzpolizei im Bezirk der OED Warschau, Februar 1944 [Activity Report of the Railway Protection Police in the Police Operational District of Warsaw, February 1944].
38. Ibid., 6.
39. APW and ADW, 50, 38.
40. Wyka, 27; Walczak, op. cit., 80; Jastrzębowski, op. cit., 366.
41. Meducki, op. cit., 151.
42. Stephan Lehnstaedt, *Okkupation im Osten. Besatzeralltag in Warschau und Minsk 1939–1944* [*Occupation in the East: The Occupier's Everyday Life in Warsaw and Minsk 1939–1944*] (Munich: De Gruyter Oldenbourg, 2010), 172.
43. Zygmunt Klukowski, *Zamojszczyzna* [*The Zamość Region*], vol. 1: 1918–1943, ed. Agnieszka Knyt (Warsaw, 2007), 250.
44. Adam Kamiński, *Diariusz podręczny 1939–1945* [*Handy Diary 1939–1945*] (Warsaw, 2001), 174.
45. Witold Kula, “Życie gospodarcze ziem polskich pod okupacją” [The Economic Life of the Polish Lands under Occupation], *Dzieje Najnowsze* [*Recent History*], 1 (1947): 153.
46. Leopold Tyrmand, *Hotel Ansgar i inne opowiadania* [*Hotel Ansgar and Other Stories*] (Warsaw: Wydawnictwo LTW, 2001), 68; Józef Makowski, *Wehrmachtsgefolge* [*The Wehrmacht's Followers*], “Czytelnik” [The Reader] (Warsaw, 1961) (German tr. Henssel, Berlin, 1963).
47. Archiwum Instytutu Pamięci Narodowej [Archive of the Institute of National Remembrance], 00231/195, vol. 1, 63–64.
48. Walczak, op. cit., 69; Jastrzębowski, 362.
49. Lehnstaedt, op. cit., 173–174; Walczak, op. cit., 80–81.
50. Jastrzębowski, 362.
51. AAN, DRnK, 202/IV-1; Miesięczny przegląd sprawozdawczo-sytuacyjny, 31 XII 1943 [Monthly Indicators Report, 31 December 1943], 82.

52. Massalski and Meducki, op. cit., 74–75.
53. Skalniak, op. cit., 137.
54. APW and ADW, 50, 40.
55. Ibid., 38.
56. Wyka, op. cit., 29.
57. Lehnstaedt, op. cit., 176.
58. Strzeżek, op. cit.; Aleksandra Zaprutko-Janicka, *Okupacja od kuchni. Kobięca sztuka przetrwania* [*Occupation from the Kitchen: The Feminine Art of Survival*] (Krakow, 2015).
59. Citation from Zdzisław Zagórski, *Drobnomieszczaństwo w strukturze i świadomości społecznej* [*The Petty Bourgeoisie in the Social Structure and Consciousness*] (Wrocław: Wydawn. Uniwersytetu Wrocławskiego, 1988), 5.
60. S.M. Korowicz, *W Polsce pod sowieckim jarzmem* [*In Poland under the Soviet Yoke*] (London: Veritas, 1955), 31.
61. Janine R. Wedel, “Introduction,” in *The Unplanned Society*, ed. Janine R. Wedel (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992), 3.



# Economies of Scarcity in Belarusian Villages During World War II: How New Findings from Oral History Projects Put a Perpetrator-Centred Historiography in Perspective

*Aliaksandr Smalianchuk and Tatsiana Kasataya*

During World War II most of the population of the Belarusian territories occupied by German troops had direct experience of their personal safety and survival being threatened. Providing themselves and their families with food became an integral part of this problem. It was one of the main needs of everyday life during the war. However, this topic has never been specifically addressed in the historiography of the war in Belarus. Thus, the six-volume edition *History of Belarus* (Minsk, 2003–2007) describes the everyday life of the rural population only as a violent and universal pillage of villages at the hands of

---

A. Smalianchuk (✉) · T. Kasataya  
The Institute of Slavic Studies, Polish Academy of Sciences (ISS PAS),  
Warsaw, Poland  
e-mail: aleksander.smalianchuk@ispan.waw.pl

© The Author(s) 2018  
T. Tönsmeier et al. (eds.), *Coping with Hunger and Shortage under German Occupation in World War II*,  
[https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-77467-1\\_3](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-77467-1_3)

the occupiers and chronicles the absolute poverty of the villagers.<sup>1</sup> Depletion of livestock and insufficient food supply were explained only in terms of taxation and confiscations by the occupying authorities. Partisan requisitions were not even mentioned. In fact, the latest edition of the *History of Belarus* continued the tradition of Soviet historiography, which prioritised the theme of heroic resistance to the occupiers.

A different picture of everyday life during the war is presented in the work of Yuri Turinak, a researcher from Warsaw, in his book *Беларусь над нямецкай акупацыяй (Belarus under German Occupation)* (Warsaw, 1991). The author used documents from German archives, German and Belarusian periodicals, memoirs of the political leaders of that time as well as further sources in order to examine the situation in Eastern Belarus, which was in the area under military rule, and, separately, territories in the General District of Belarus. Yuri Turonak noted that, until 1943, the financial situation of the rural population in the General District was better than in Eastern Belarus, first of all because the region was still facing the consequences of pre-war mass collectivisation. In contrast to this, the private sector was prevalent in Western Belarus and German requisitions there were not devastating. In fact, even some signs of market mechanisms can be observed as the villagers were able to sell most of their agricultural products.<sup>2</sup> However, when punitive anti-partisan operations began, the position of the villages changed dramatically. Mass killings and deportations devastated the region and an urgent problem with food arose.<sup>3</sup>

The question of supplying the Belarusian population with food was also raised by German historian Bernhard Chiari in his study of everyday life during the occupation.<sup>4</sup> Based on reports by the heads of the local German administration, he wrote about a large number of people suffering from hunger after the winter of 1942, and commented on the lack of bread, potatoes, livestock, agricultural equipment and other everyday goods. The author argues that one of the main reasons for food shortages in the Belarusian villages was the unresolved land issue.

It should be noted that the studies of B. Chiari and Y. Turonak analyse the question of food provisions mainly on the basis of statistical data, which give information on, among other issues, the size of family land parcels and quantity of livestock, as well as on the obligatory food deliveries to the German authorities.

In order to make an in-depth analysis of the nutritional problems we should consult other sources—in particular, oral history. The internet project Belarusian Oral History Archive contains around 700 oral memoirs, which are the result of field trips carried out between 2011 and 2014, and there are also collections of interviews assembled by Belarusian historians and ethnographers at the turn of the twentieth and twenty first centuries. The interviews mostly contain autobiographical accounts of elderly residents from Belarusian villages. Many of the interviewees, in recalling the period of German occupation, comment on the food situation as well; so, we can use these recollections to try to answer the following questions: How serious was the problem of food supply in the Belarusian villages during the German occupation? What was the greatest concern among those tasked with providing themselves and their families with food? What were the main strategies for survival?

In analysing the respondents' memories of events during World War II, we should apply the concepts of 'cultural' and 'communicative memory' proposed by Aleida and Jan Assmann. Cultural memory, especially in the post-Communist regions, is largely determined by 'historical politics', whereby political authorities aim to promote a certain interpretation of history dominating in that society through the use of particular wording. To this end administrative and financial capabilities of the state are widely used. According to Jan Assmann the basis of communicative memory is an oral tradition or a kind of 'living memory' that usually lasts for three generations (grandparents—parents—children). It is communicative memory that has become the main object of interest for oral historians.

In the Belarusian case there is a huge discrepancy between history and historical policy, which strongly affected cultural memory and communicative memory. It should be acknowledged that Belarusian society has been subjected for decades to a version of history that older generations (parents and grandparents) have never experienced. This directly concerns the interpretation of the most important events of twentieth-century Belarusian history including World War II.

We will consider the problem of food supply and hunger in the Belarusian villages on the basis of the oral memories collected during fieldwork in 2011 and 2014 in the south of Belarus (the Brest and Gomel regions), as well as the central western regions (Minsk and Hrodna) and the northwest of Belarus (the Vitebsk region). During World War II, these represented regions situated in different

administrative divisions. Most of the respondents were women born in the 1920s and mid-1930s, who attended Soviet (Eastern Belarus/BSSR) or Polish (Western Belarus) primary schools. During the occupation, many of the respondents were children, which significantly affected their perception of events and can be seen in the peculiarities of the thematic and chronological structure of their autobiographical narratives.

The oral accounts have been gathered according to the method of recording biographical interviews used by the German scholar Gabriele Rosenthal.<sup>5</sup> They reflect a person's personal experiences, his or her individual perceptions and experiences of past events. The period of the war clearly dominates the autobiographical narratives as the war is associated with the strongest feelings and emotions, life-changing events and value systems. The war was often the starting point of the memories or a factor that divided life into two parts. In fact, the memory of the war even today serves as a means of self-identification. Within this context the problems of nutrition and food supply form an indelible part of the biographical narrative of the war.

As mentioned above, our respondents came from villages that were in the territory of the Belarus and Volhynia-Podolia General Districts. The situation across these areas differed significantly due, in particular, to the division of Belarus prior to 1939 and the peculiarities of economic management in the Soviet (eastern) and the Polish (western) regions. It should also be noted that the occupation's administration had various tasks in these districts, and local residents had differing attitudes towards them. There were also differences relating to the German troops—where they were stationed or if they were absent, as well as differences regarding the presence of the partisan movement and ways of dealing with it.

In order to gain a more thorough understanding of the problem of food supply, we need to refer to the common understanding of the term *hunger* as used by the older generation of Belarusian residents. In the memoirs of most of the respondents, hunger is predominantly understood as a situation when there was no food available at all. The term refers to the experience (personal and referred to by family members or friends from the Belarusian–Ukrainian borderland), as well as the situation in Eastern Belarus after pre-war collectivisation, when many villagers faced an absence or severe shortage of food, and also to the occurrence of all this in private households in Western Belarus at the end of the 1930s. In addition, the respondents remembered the famine of 1946

and 1947. They told, for example, how they prepared *pysbki* ('donuts'); that is, pancakes made with rotten potatoes that remained on the fields from the previous year's harvest.

In the majority of memories of the war, there was no mention of hunger as a situation of complete lack of food. Almost all of the respondents noted that there was not *strasłny* ('terrible') hunger, meaning that it could be worse: 'I was very hungry in the war, when everything was burned... As for starving we didn't starve [e]specially, we still had our own potatoes. But there was no good in the war'.<sup>6</sup>

There were problems with food supply, but people knew how to solve them. The principal means was working on the land: 'Because if you won't work, who would give you anything in wartime'.<sup>7</sup> 'And we sowed a lot, because it was our only hope'.<sup>8</sup>

### THE MAIN SOURCE OF PROVISION WAS LAND

The land issue in the occupied territory of Belarus was solved differently. The Ministry of the Eastern Territories of Rosenberg decided to keep collective farms in Eastern Belarus (former BSSR). However, spontaneous de-collectivisation began after the arrival of the Germans. The villagers started to divide collective farmland among members of their community. In Western Belarus the land was in private use, and some of the peasants increased their holdings at the expense of the landed estates with the arrival of the Bolsheviks. In 1941 in many localities these additional parcels had to be returned to their former owners, and the peasants were repressed.

Many decisions made by the German administration regarding land reform remained on paper. As Bernhard Chiari noted, in 1943 the occupation authorities had almost no control of the situation in the villages, and the peasants managed their own land themselves.<sup>9</sup> This is also confirmed by the memories of the villagers.

In general, it was natural for the residents of Western Belarus to possess and manage their own land, and they did not notice changes during the occupation: 'When it came to farming nothing [changed], it was the same land, the same work .... The situation that had existed under the Poles was the same as under the Germans, and then under the Soviets until the time [that] the collective farms were established'.<sup>10</sup> In every situation, work on the land remained unchanged for the villagers.

The residents of Eastern Belarus recalled the self-liquidation of collective farms and the redistribution of land amongst the villagers: ‘The war began and the collective farm fell apart. All the land there was equally divided. ... Somebody had 10, my father had 15 acres .... They took all the livestock from the collective farm’.<sup>11</sup> Land was usually divided according to the number of working men in the family.

Basic food items were those that the land provided: bread, potatoes, vegetables. The respondents said that if there was bread, there was no hunger. Therefore, the families who had land, workers, tools and seeds could provide themselves with everything they needed. This was typical of Western Belarus villages where farms had everything necessary for agricultural work. As for Eastern Belarus the availability of land did not always mean that people could provide food for themselves, because they did not have enough available men (many of them having being repressed or mobilised) or enough seeds, livestock, horses or tools.

Another source of food supply was livestock, but this was constantly under the threat of requisition by the Germans or by the partisans. Cows were especially valued and therefore mostly hidden in the woods.

There were also severe shortages of salt. The respondents could hardly recall any cases when salt could be obtained from the German authorities. More often it was procured by purchase or exchange in the city.

### THE VILLAGE FED ITSELF, THE CITY, THE GERMANS AND THE PARTISANS

If the villagers were able to be fed by the land, then the village would be transformed into a source of food supply for all other groups: citizens, the military, the German administration and the partisans. The collective interpretation of this situation can be given as follows: ‘During the day the Germans came, during the evening the partisans, shake’.<sup>12</sup> They came for the food.

The oral memories reveal an ambivalence among the respondents towards both Germans and partisans. They seldom came directly face to face with the Germans. People remembered military men in neat clothes, who gave sweets to children. But they also recalled cases when German soldiers threw bread into the mud in front of hungry children.

Before the beginning of massive counter-insurgency operations, the German soldier was seen as a representative of the new strong power and

as a certain guarantee of the 'new order'. He was perceived as a necessary evil. German requisitions functioned as if they were legal, and were accepted by the villagers. In the memoirs of the respondents, violence and robberies by the Germans were rarely mentioned. Food supplies were paid for by German marks. It was often noted that life for those villagers who lived in the territory completely controlled by the Germans was better since they were protected from requisitions by partisans.<sup>13</sup> In the memoirs of the majority of respondents, it was the latter who were linked with violence and robbery. This situation changed, however, during German anti-partisan raids, when villages were burned down, and many residents and civilians died.

The respondents made a distinction between *dobrykh* ('good') or *spraviadlivykh* ('fair') partisans, on the one hand, and *bandytau* ('bandits'), on the other. According to the memoirs the latter group took everything by violence, even children's or women's clothing. Robbery was often accompanied by the use of physical force, and sometimes local people were even killed. Furthermore, partisans from the surrounding villages would sometimes turn up as bandits. Fair partisans came to the village asking for products and necessities. For them, violence was severely punished and military discipline implemented. Fair partisans were usually led by former officers, and the respondents recalled baking bread for them. Witnesses were proud to describe their help for these men. This everyday 'honour' was probably the result of recent Soviet propaganda, in which baking bread for the partisans was promoted as a way for villagers to show their support. However, the same oral memories suggest that such helpful acts were often obligatory, and everything was done according to orders: 'Well, once they ordered us to bake bread. They gave orders, one day in one home, the next day in another, to bake for the partisans'.<sup>14</sup> The Soviet stereotype of a partisan-defender was therefore not compatible with their characterisation in many oral memories.

Continuing requisitions and looting forced farmers to develop behavioural strategies to protect their property. Thus, the villagers killed livestock to hide the meat and then sell it in the city. They hid food in special hidey-holes (i.e., pits near their houses) or in the woods: 'No, we had no hunger. ... And do you know why? People dug potatoes, well, you know, they hid the harvest. ... We knew what was dug into the ground, and where. ... That's why it stayed and we did not starve'.<sup>15</sup>

They hid potatoes, corn and salt. If hiding places were in the forest, they also baked bread and slaughtered livestock there.<sup>16</sup> Some witnesses noted that it was possible to hide products from the Germans, but it was much more difficult to do the same with the partisans, because they usually knew where people hid food.

The most difficult situation was for those villagers who lost their homes during counter-insurgency operations. They usually escaped into the woods, waiting for the punitive action to end. Sometimes they managed to prepare to run away in advance and they were provided with food for a while.<sup>17</sup> In the case of a sudden and abrupt departure to the woods, they sought help from the partisans, united with other families and ate what the forest provided.

A product that had a strategic importance for survival was moonshine. It helped to establish normal relations with both the partisans and the police. Moonshining was common, despite prohibition by occupation authorities and severe punishment.

The oral memoirs suggest that the food supply situation amongst the rural population changed throughout the course of the occupation, and depended on many factors. One of the main causes of deficiency in Eastern Belarus, where there had been collective farms before the war, was a lack of land and livestock, and even the elimination of collective farms did not always make normal land cultivation possible, because there were not enough helpers, seeds, tools, horses and the like.

The residents of Western Belarus were more practical and hard working. There, private farms had not been destroyed by collectivisation. Moreover, the male population survived, because the Soviet authorities did not have time to mobilise them in the summer of 1941. All this helped to solve the problems with food supply. The residents of Eastern Belarus often came here to trade their property for food or to work in order to obtain food. For some time the availability of land, livestock and farmhands ensured certain product supply.

The situation changed significantly, however, after the expansion of the partisan movement, starting in 1943, when partisan groups began providing for their own needs at the expense of the rural population.

The villagers developed their own survival strategies to prevent conflicts with either side: Germans, who represented power, and partisans. Situations of life and death forced many to resort to cheating, stealing other people's property, betrayal, violence, etc. The respondents recalled that often it was fear that dominated other feelings, and was the main

motive underlying behaviour. Perhaps amid mass killings (burning villages, the Holocaust, executions of partisans), problems with nutrition tended to diminish.

Conditions were better in villages where there were neither Germans nor partisans. Their inhabitants adapted to occupation authorities, tried to establish a normal life, raised families and gave birth to children.

Such a picture appears on the basis of factual analysis of oral memories. However, these memories do not fully reflect the problem of food supply during the occupation. Recorded oral accounts require more in-depth analysis, as a phenomenon of memory in this rural population is that it was strongly influenced by certain stereotypes of collective consciousness. It is obvious that the Soviet and post-Soviet historical policy in Belarus failed to significantly alter individual and collective memory among the witnesses of history in these villages.

Oral history provides new possibilities in the study of food shortages during World War II. Unlike traditional written historic accounts the respondents' stories show various strategies were adopted relating to food supply and reveal that it was not only military action and the new German order that were important factors in the issue of scarcity, but also that previous Soviet policy in Eastern Belarus and the partisan movement in the occupied territory played important roles.

## NOTES

1. Аляксандр Вабішэвіч і інш, *Гісторыя Беларусі: Беларусь у 1917–1945 гг.* (Мінск: Экаперспектыва, 2007), 521–522.
2. Юры Туронак, *Беларусь пад нямецкай акупацыяй* (Мінск: Інстытут беларусістыкі, 1993), 151.
3. Туронак, *Беларусь пад нямецкай акупацыяй*, 152.
4. Бернгард К'яры, *Штодзённасць за лініяй фронту. Акупацыя, калабарацыя супраціў і ў Беларусі (1941–1944)* (Мінск, 2005).
5. Gabriele Rosenthal, “Reconstruction of Life Stories: Principles of Selection in Generating Stories for Narrative Biographical Interviews,” *The Narrative Study of Lives 1* (1993): 59–91, accessed April 21, 2017, [http://www.ssoar.info/ssoar/bitstream/handle/document/5929/ssoar-tns1-1993-1-rosenthal-reconstruction\\_of\\_life\\_stories.pdf?sequence=1](http://www.ssoar.info/ssoar/bitstream/handle/document/5929/ssoar-tns1-1993-1-rosenthal-reconstruction_of_life_stories.pdf?sequence=1).
6. *Галадаў у вайну, кагда ўсё спалілі... Галадаць надта не галадалі, картошка яшчэ свая была. Але добра не было ў вайну* 40, no. 1: 602–1892. Зуеўскі Чэслаў Вікенцэвіч, 1931, в. Сосенка, Стаўбцоўскі

- р-н Мінскай вобл., 16.07.2013, The Belarusian Oral History Archive, accessed January 7, 2018, <http://nashapamiac.org/archive/home>.
7. *Потому што не будзеш работаць, хто табе што дасць уваіну?* 20, no. 1: 380–954. Гарбар Юльян Маісеевіч, 1929, в. Браніслаў, Жытквавіцкі р-н Гомельскай вобл., 02.08.2012, The Belarusian Oral History Archive, accessed January 7, 2018, <http://nashapamiac.org/archive/home>.
  8. *І сямлі много, потому што гэта была адна надзёжда* 20, no. 1: 380–954. Гарбар Юльян Маісеевіч, 1929, в. Браніслаў, Жытквавіцкі р-н Гомельскай вобл., 02.08.2012, The Belarusian Oral History Archive, accessed January 7, 2018, <http://nashapamiac.org/archive/home>.
  9. К'яры, *Штодзённасць за лініяй фронту*, 155.
  10. *У гаспадарцы нічога [не змянілася], тая самая зямля, тая сама работа [...] Што было пры паляках, тое самае пры немцах, тое самае пры саветах, як прыйшлі, аж да калхозаў* 1, no. 1: 42–110. Шэўка Пётр Іосіфавіч, 1925, в. Краснае, Карэліцкі р-н Гродзенскай вобл., 06.08.2011, The Belarusian Oral History Archive, accessed January 7, 2018, <http://nashapamiac.org/archive/home>.
  11. *Вайна пачалася, калхоз раскідаўся. Колькі было зямлі, усім пароўну падзялілі. У каго было 10, вот от майго бацькі было 15 гектараў [...] Скот які калгасны быў разабралі там* 1, no. 1: 43–113. Явоста (Кляцко) Ганна Аляксандраўна, 1931, в. Валеўка, Навагрудскі р-н Гродзенскай вобл., 05.08.2011, The Belarusian Oral History Archive, accessed January 7, 2018, <http://nashapamiac.org/archive/home>.
  12. *Удзень немцы, вечарам парцызаны ідуць, трэсуць* 1, no. 1: 31–86. Талочка (Сенкевіч) Гелена Вікенцьеўна, 1931, в. Дубровіца, Навагрудскі р-н Гродзенскай вобл., 02.08.2011, The Belarusian Oral History Archive, accessed January 7, 2018, <http://nashapamiac.org/archive/home>.
  13. 40(1), 602–1892. Зуеўскі Чэслаў Вікенцьевіч, 1931, в. Сосенка, Стаўбцоўскі р-н Мінскай вобл., 16.07.2013, The Belarusian Oral History Archive, accessed January 7, 2018, <http://nashapamiac.org/archive/home>.
  14. *Ну, некалі заказвалі вот хлеб пачы. Закажуць, сёння адной хаце, заўтра другой, каб парцызанам пяклі* 1, no. 1: 33–89. Урбановіч (Анацка) Марыя Рыгораўна, 1929, в. Альхоўка, Навагрудскі р-н Гродзенскай вобл., 05.08.2011, The Belarusian Oral History Archive, accessed January 7, 2018, <http://nashapamiac.org/archive/home>.
  15. *Не, не было ніякого галада у нас. [...] чому не было? Картошку людзі закопалі, ну, было ўрожай поховалі. Значі, што да хто дзе ў землю закопвалі. То так што осталось, не голодовали* 20, no. 1: 455–1261. Чыжова (Пятроўская) Валянціна Аляксандраўна, 1928, в. Цімашэвічы, Жытквавіцкі р-н Гомельскай вобл., 06.08.2012, The Belarusian Oral

- History Archive, accessed January 7, 2018, <http://nashapamiac.org/archive/home>.
16. 20(1) –20(1), 1190. Цуба (Пракаповіч) Марта Іванаўна, 1924, в. Маршчынавічы, Лунінецкі р-н Брэсцкая вобл., 05.08.2012, The Belarusian Oral History Archive, accessed January 7, 2018, <http://nashapamiac.org/archive/home>.
  17. 1(1), 43–113. Явоста (Кляцко) Ганна Аляксандраўна, 1931, в. Валеўка, Навагрудскі р-н Гродзенскай вобл., 05.08.2011, The Belarusian Oral History Archive, accessed January 7, 2018, <http://nashapamiac.org/archive/home>.



# Supplies Under Pressure: Survival in a Fully Rationed Society: Experiences, Cases and Innovation in Rural and Urban Regions in Occupied Norway

*Guri Hjeltnes*

## FIVE YEARS OF OCCUPATION

This chapter deals with a critical period in Norwegian history, with extraordinary pressures on society as a whole and on everyday life in particular. On 9 April 1940 Norway was invaded by Nazi Germany by land, air and sea. This was a blitz attack, and the country was taken by surprise, as Denmark had been. Hitler's plans for both Denmark and Norway were the same; the Germans wanted to occupy, but not to govern the countries. However, while Denmark surrendered on 9 April, Norway put up a fight lasting two months. The Norwegian government and King Haakon V managed to flee to the north of the country and sailed to the UK on 7 June in order to continue the struggle for freedom from exile in London. The Nazi occupation of Norway lasted

---

G. Hjeltnes (✉)

Center for Studies of the Holocaust and Religious Minorities, Oslo, Norway  
e-mail: guri.hjeltnes@hlsenteret.no

© The Author(s) 2018

T. Tönsmeier et al. (eds.), *Coping with Hunger and Shortage under German Occupation in World War II*,  
[https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-77467-1\\_4](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-77467-1_4)

five years, ending on 8 May 1945. The German occupation system that was established to control the country comprised three parts: a military part (the Wehrmacht), a civilian authority led by Reichskommissar Josef Terboven and the SS and police under Himmler. *Nasjonal Samling* (NS, ‘Norwegian Nazi Party’) developed into an integral part of the occupation regime, and was the only political party allowed. This was unique, and in no other Nazi-occupied country were national Nazis given access to state power and state resources. The reason for this was that the leader of NS, Vidkun Quisling, had met Adolf Hitler in December 1939 and had established contacts to support him and grant the NS a position in the occupation regime which was established in the autumn of 1940.

With the Norwegian government, the King and the Royal Family in exile (and a large group of Norwegians fleeing over the North Sea or over the border to Sweden to go to the UK and join the war effort in different ways) Norway was divided into two: *Ute-Norge* (‘ex-territorial Norway’) and *Hjemme-Norge* (‘territorial Norway’). Ex-territorial Norway represented Norway’s participation in World War II alongside the Allies and the ambition of restoring democracy in Norway. In territorial Norway the political processes were marked by actions of the occupational regime, on the one hand, and those of a Resistance movement opposing the German and Norwegian Nazi authorities, on the other. It was also characterised by challenging and creative actions aiming to provide enough food and other supplies in a society under strong control and political pressure.<sup>1</sup>

## A DUAL ECONOMY

What were the main challenges under the Nazi policies of exploitation? How did the shortages develop?

Before the war Norway relied heavily on the international economy. Its level of imports per capita was the highest in Europe, and only Sweden’s level of exports per capita was higher. Few other countries relied more on food imports, particularly bread grain, to feed its people through the winter. Only 43% of calorie consumption was met by domestically produced food. Furthermore, industry was heavily dependent on imports of raw materials and various types of semi-finished goods. Norway’s sizeable trade deficit was balanced by shipping and whaling revenues. Given Norway’s heavy dependence on vital goods and its merchant fleet, it was inevitable that the German occupation would create serious problems.<sup>2</sup>

At the same time the Norwegian economy was equally dependent on export revenues. Timber constituted its main export commodity, predominantly in terms of processed products such as wood pulp, cellulose, paper and cardboard, followed by fish and various mineral ores and metals.

Following Nazi occupation, all formal economic contact with the UK–Norway’s main trade partner and Nazi Germany’s foremost opponent—was broken off, and the country became heavily dependent on imports from German-controlled areas.<sup>3</sup> Although the occupiers pumped resources into Norway in the form of economic investment and forced labourers, and had no plans for exploiting the Norwegian population in the same way it did the populations in German-controlled areas in Eastern Europe, the scarce war economy also made its mark in Norway. Norway became dependent on coal, coke and corn from the territory of Greater Germany. Fish, ore and metals were sent in the opposite direction.<sup>4</sup> Thus, the history of the occupation in Norway is not only political or economic, nor is it merely a history of collaboration and/or resistance or a history of war crimes, victims and heroism. It is also the history of everyday life changing under pressure and scarcity.<sup>5</sup>

### A WATERSHED: A COMPLEX PICTURE

How did life in Norway change for the Norwegians—for women, men and children? All Norwegians had their own personal wartime experiences. The occupation years in the east or west side of Oslo were not the same as in Toten in inland Norway, Kristiansand in the south, the Lofoten Islands in the north or in Kirkenes, even farther north, to mention just a few of the far-flung reaches of the country.<sup>6</sup>

When the German occupation force arrived the troops were surprised by Norway’s rugged landscape, characterised by dispersed settlement patterns, a poorly developed road infrastructure, and vast regions of mountains and fjords. Everywhere, people were living in small villages.

Norway’s economic development was two pronged: it was making the transition from an agricultural economy to an industrial economy. By 1940, almost one third of economically active Norwegians were employed in the industrial sector. Typically, Norwegian industry consisted of small businesses; less than one third worked in companies with more than 50 employees. Both primary and secondary industries were intertwined with Norway’s export trade. The occupation seriously affected years of work spent establishing economic traditions.<sup>7</sup>

Prior to 9 April 1940, around 50% of Norway's imports came from countries that were under Allied control after 1940. Norway's pre-war trade with Sweden had been particularly important. Trade with countries other than Germany and German-occupied areas came to a complete halt during the war, but trade with Sweden remained crucial throughout the occupation. In 1938, Germany supplied only around 18% of Norway's imports, and received around 15% of its exports. In 1943, Germany alone accounted for around 68% of Norway's imports and more than 72% of its exports.<sup>8</sup>

This picture is complex. The balance of food commodities between Norway and the German-controlled economy demonstrated a clear surplus in the import of calories which prevented hunger and death by starvation among ordinary Norwegian citizens. On the other hand, the Norwegian export of fish provided important contributions to scarce German supplies of fat and vitamins.<sup>9</sup> The British economic historian Alan Milward stated that no other economy proved as difficult to integrate into the *Grossraumwirtschaft*, thanks in large part to Norway's heavy dependence on imports.<sup>10</sup> If Hitler was to exploit the resources he wanted from Norway, both man and beast would need to be supplied with food and other provisions; otherwise the system would fall apart. And this is what happened.

### THINGS WERE DIFFERENT THEN

What kind of experiences did the population meet and seek to challenge?

During the occupation new daily routines developed. People counted coupons and ration cards and stood in queues. New enterprises and words emerged: *matauk* ('foraging') to supplement food rations, and *matorg* ('organising ways of procuring food'), gradually became the norm. Families, neighbourhoods and businesses established allotments and kept rabbits, pigs and goats. Young and old set off on foot, on their bicycles or by train in search of food to put on the table. It took some courage and strength to fight the battles on the kitchen front in the wartime years. What is true for heroes is also true for most people: they are no good for anything without food and water. Bartering, black marketeering, wasted trips and standing in endless queues amounted to a full-time job for women, in particular, but also for children and men (it was only in queues for liquor and tobacco that men formed the majority). As the five years of occupation wore on, everyone gradually learned new lessons in

how to survive. Families planted and picked everything from seed potato and carrot and turnip seeds to dandelion roots and tobacco plants. The Norwegian diet during the occupation is a study in poverty and creativity, and serves as a gauge of the vast differences within the population.<sup>11</sup>

An occupation can turn life upside down. War and occupation can have both a preservative and also a radicalising effect on society. War divides and entangles. Many statements made about this period illustrate the situation at the time, very often using ‘we’ and ‘our’, meaning Norwegian society as a whole:

‘For the most part you lived on potatoes and news from London’, says Inger Robberstad.<sup>12</sup>

‘What really mattered was coming together *around* the table, not what the hostess could put *on* the table’, says Anne-Lise Lagesen.<sup>13</sup>

‘We experienced a sense of empathy between people you’d barely known before’, says a woman in Nord-Trøndelag.<sup>14</sup>

‘Things were different during the war’ is an expression familiar to new generations, and one that carries special meaning for the wartime generation. This generation carried with them large rations of the two key wartime recipes: memories of virtue and of evil. People talk about World War II with enthusiasm: ‘Never before had we experienced such a sense of unity’, and with loathing: ‘Five long and arduous years’.

For most people, circumstances changed in terms of accommodation, population density and access to supplies, depending on the degree of control the Germans had in a particular neighbourhood or on the local presence of Norwegian Nazis.

‘The war’, ‘the occupation’ or ‘everyday life’ proceeded very differently between north and south, east and west, coastal and inland regions and between towns and villages. The occupation was both dramatic and prosaic at the same time.<sup>15</sup>

Some regions remained unaffected by wartime events and the occupation, while others were devastated and suffered permanent scars. Kirkenes was at the centre of a theatre of war for almost three years. Its inhabitants were subjected to constant bombing, in a city with no adequate air raid shelters. The city was subjected to 1012 air raid warnings and 328 Russian air raids in three years. After Valletta on Malta, Kirkenes was the most heavily bombed city in Europe during World War II.<sup>16</sup>

Life for the people of Øst-Finnmark and Nord-Troms in the north ended in a major catastrophe. In fact, one fifth of Norway was transformed into a no-man's-land when the Germans withdrew in the autumn of 1944. In Tana-Berlevåg and farther west, the Germans torched houses one by one, blowing up ports and slaughtering livestock. The Germans' scorched earth strategy left people barely able to recognise what was left of their homes among the burnt-out ruins. Some 53,000 men, women and children were evacuated southwards, and 25,000 survived the final winter of the war in northern Norway, hiding in turf huts in the mountains, in caves, on the mainland or on islands. Some even spent the winter living under the hulls of boats covered with turf or inside a burnt-out ruin covered with a tarpaulin.<sup>17</sup>

The war left its mark in many forms. Those who experienced the ravages of war and who came through it alive were left either whole or broken, unaffected or marked for life.<sup>18</sup>

### THE RATIONED SOCIETY

On 9 April 1940 the only commodities that were rationed were household flour, sugar and coffee.<sup>19</sup> The food situation in the ensuing five years of occupation can be divided into two periods: the first two and a half years of occupation, and the remainder of the period until liberation. The food situation deteriorated rapidly between the spring of 1940 and the autumn of 1942; one by one, commodities disappeared from the market and were rationed. During the first year, rationing covered all imported food commodities as well as bread, fat, sugar, coffee, cocoa, syrup and coffee substitutes. That same year, all types of meat and lard, eggs, milk and dairy products were similarly rationed. During the summer of 1942 rationing was expanded to potatoes and all types of vegetables, which by that time had already disappeared from the market.<sup>20</sup>

The occupation made it imperative to organise a comprehensive system for rationing and regulating food commodities. Two main systems of rationing and regulation were implemented, based on ration cards and the registration of customers. Consumers in every household—children and adults alike—were issued with ration cards while institutional households, hospitals and others were assigned rations by the Provisioning Board. Initially, consumers were provided with basic stock items, after which they could only buy prescribed items in exchange for coupons.<sup>21</sup> Ration cards were used for most grocery items. The authorities had

control over the long-term supply situation for these goods, which had a certain shelf life. Ration cards were supplemented with a quota system from wholesalers for goods that were low in stock, such as butter and margarine. Some goods were in such short supply that rations were only issued intermittently. Items had to be ordered in shops, which clipped one coupon on the ration coupon and stamped another. The shops were allocated goods based on the coupons it had clipped when placing orders. As an extra control on each sales transaction, shops also clipped the coupon it had stamped when ordering the rations.<sup>22</sup>

Rations were never equally distributed; some groups, such as infants, pregnant women and labourers, were particularly favoured. Gradually the system by which consumers were grouped according to age and gender became increasingly specified. Initially, children under five years were not entitled to coffee coupons, but this age limit was later raised to 12. Ration cards were gradually introduced for bread and flour for children under two years and for children aged between two and five, as well as age-specific clothing coupons and milk books for full-cream and skimmed milk. Consumers could be divided into 27–30 different groups for some commodities, and all of these were allocated different amounts of rationed goods. The longer the occupation lasted, the more commodity types were rationed, and some of them were increasingly restricted as the years wore on.<sup>23</sup>

This was like a jigsaw puzzle, and it did not take much for the situation to spiral out of control. Many comical situations arose as people stood in queues, their stomachs rumbling, yearning for something tasty to eat. These were often serious too. Many people, particularly townspeople, were totally dependent on whatever the ration coupons allowed. At one stage there were four different series of ration books: an A-series *with* coffee coupons, an A-series *without* coffee coupons, a C-series *with* coffee coupons and a C-series *without* coffee coupons. The first ration books were issued to everyone aged over 12, and A-series ration books without coffee coupons to children aged between 2 and 12. Cocoa and chocolate coupons compensated for the lack of coffee coupons. C-series ration books for unsifted flour were normally only issued to children under the age of two, who were not entitled to cocoa or chocolate rations. C-series ration books were only issued to people with special medical certificates, who then had to exchange their coffee cards for tea cards.<sup>24</sup>

Regular A-series ration books initially contained ten cards, including six for milk, 1 for coffee, 1 for fat and 1 for sugar. The sugar card had

12 coupons for coffee substitute printed on the left-hand side. Tea cards which were issued to replace coffee cards were valid for four weeks at a time. Children and youths aged between 12 and 18 could exchange their coffee cards for cocoa and chocolate cards<sup>25</sup>:

‘We had many arguments at home. Mum and dad wanted coffee, while my brother and I wanted cocoa. I thought it was so unfair that we should be cheated out of cocoa. The children won!’ says a girl from Oslo.<sup>26</sup>

People were asked to bring along coffee cards for all persons aged under 21 so that the Provisioning Board could clip the left-hand corner to prevent children and youths from exchanging them for liquor, but not everyone complied. It was difficult to get by without a card; they had to be presented in hospitals, in restaurants, everywhere. The hospitals clipped patients’ cards to record the number of bed days. These cards required organising. A teacher with pupils on potato vacation also had to hand over cards to the farmer. A holiday trip was no joking matter. Butchers kept special hours for registering new meat cards, and it was important to turn up to get these. Townspeople who left town to take a holiday had to have their milk book signed to allow them to redeem their quota elsewhere. When invited to social gatherings or special celebrations, guests brought along whatever rations they could spare.<sup>27</sup>

### THE OCCUPATION AT SCHOOL—A LEARNING PROCESS

New concepts mean new knowledge and new experiences. In a time characterised by a permanent scarcity of goods, rationing and controls, the Norwegian people underwent a *learning* process:

‘I also remember the joy of being able to help find food, especially during the wintertime when times were harder. My grandfather taught me how to catch hare, fowl and grouse. It was impossible to get hold of brass wire for the traps, so we twined traps using horsehair. My grandfather had learned this technique many years ago, with specific rules for how much horsehair was needed for each type of trap’, says Per G. Kvernbekk in Trysil.<sup>28</sup>

All kinds of techniques were passed on to family members, neighbours, friends and children. Handicrafts were kept alive, and the village smith had never been so busy. Many developed carpentry skills if they could get

hold of some nails and materials. Rabbit hutches and pigsties were often the first things they tried their hand at.<sup>29</sup>

The production of *Ersatz* ('substitute') items grew dramatically. Home made was well made. Soap was made from sheep tallow and porpoise fins. Candles were moulded as in the old days. People grew tobacco for personal consumption, sale or barter. Potatoes were grated to make potato flour. Syrup was made from home-grown sugar cane and dandelion root. People roasted coffee from herbs, acorns and rye. The leaves of wild and cultivated berries were carefully preserved:

'We used dried blueberries for currants, gooseberries for raisins, and dried blackcurrants and elderberries for tea. We did the same with caraway and elderflower, which were used to treat colds. We dried rose hips for use as tea, or boiled them and mashed them together with apples to make a paste or soup', says Inga Nitter Walaker in Solvorn.<sup>30</sup>

Ironmongers and hardware stores sold bits and pieces from their stocks. Defect items and all sorts of junk were quickly snapped up: pieces of metal wire and other objects were transformed into crucial parts for a home-made torchlight or a bicycle brake. A bent bike wheel was a find; all those spokes were recycled and uses in other practical devices. Rusty, bent nails were put to new uses. When the shop ran out of rope the customer had to twine it themselves out of remnants. Not one piece went to waste. People cut off the leather straps on train windows and the passenger straps on city trams. The leather was put to new uses, such as leather vamps on shoes. A father of five learned how to make clogs and became the local cobbler.<sup>31</sup>

Many domestic animals were replaced by wild boar, goats, ducks, hens, sheep and rabbits. When have children fought over dandelion leaves in the ditch edges since the end of the war? Formal agreements were made over access to neighbours' weed patches. Children mounted wire mesh in all kinds of creative ways, and rabbit breeding became common knowledge among thousands of children. Different kinds of rabbits, Beveren, white land rabbits and Smålens rabbits were as familiar to them as the names of professional footballers are today. Boys set up forecasts where only the sky was the limit: sales of breeding animals for this year, next year, in ten years' time...<sup>32</sup> The five years of occupation were like a school for men, women, adults and children. The war was a rigid teacher, a broad curriculum with no limits.

## A MEAGRE EXISTENCE

Rationing became a way of life. In 1940 and 1941 vital commodities, such as potatoes and milk, had not yet been rationed. By the autumn of 1942, practically all food items had been rationed. The last food item to be regulated during the occupation was fish, which was rationed on the principle of registered customers in November 1943. Whether they liked it or not, everyone in Norwegian society had to comply with the new wartime rationing regime. Rationing required organisation and moderation: How much could the family eat every day? Parents went without so that their children would have enough to eat. Women did likewise so that their sons and husbands could perform heavy labour. Siblings calculated how many slices of bread each of them could have. The less there was to eat, the tighter the regime had to be<sup>33</sup>:

‘My children, who cycled 20 kilometres each way to Hamar Cathedral School, had large appetites: they took twelve or thirteen slices of bread to school with them every day, and I had to make *porridge* from boiled potatoes and the small rations of butter we could buy. That’s what we ate for four years’, says a woman in Hedmark.<sup>34</sup>

‘During one month we could amass a large number of coupons. We had a rule at home that every Sunday afternoon we sorted, counted and packed our coupons’, says a man in Hidrasund, Vest-Agder. ‘The whole family was living at home then. It could take two or three hours, so it was quite a job. We handed over the coupons once a month to the Rations Office. There was always wastage, so we never received all the coupons we were entitled to’.<sup>35</sup> A newlywed couple says: ‘We calculated four slices of bread each, but then no-one could cheat on the thickness of the slices. The heel of the loaf was like a small extra reserve’.

The reality was unrelenting: rations shrank drastically, while the quality steadily deteriorated.<sup>36</sup>

The amount of calories in rations were far below what men and women needed—an adult should have around 2500 calories a day. In the first half-year of 1940, rations equated to 1198 calories a day (although at that time many products were not yet rationed). In 1942, rations reached a peak of 1501 calories—only to decrease during the last years of occupation to 1349 calories during the months of January–April 1945.<sup>37</sup> People’s patience and flexibility were put to the test: do without, share or

save the rations, join the queue for one item and be prepared to end up with something else—or nothing at all.

The Norwegian people soon learned how far five grams could really stretch. For breakfast, for example, thirty grams of margarine—if there was any available—would be carefully divided into daily rations. At one stage coffee substitute was rationed to ten grams per person per week—not quite enough for a daily cup of steaming hot coffee at breakfast.<sup>38</sup> And smokers—what did they have to look forward to once their tiny ration of 25 grams of tobacco was inhaled?<sup>39</sup> In those days cigarette butts seemed to last forever.

For many men and women these five years were also when they had their first encounter with bureaucracy and red tape. They had to apply, request, reapply and follow up.

### DAILY BREAD AND MILK

The Germans requisitioned a considerable share of the good-quality flour that Norway had stored in 1940. Norwegians had to make do with a new baking ingredient: wartime flour, made from early-harvested grain with a high milling rate and mixed with chalk dust; a combination that offered poor baking properties and a bitter taste. Milk quality varied frequently and widely as the years of occupation wore on, and always for the worse:

‘The flour we got for our rations cards was dark brown, and it was hopeless trying to make decent bread from it. The loaves had a crusty top and wet raw lumps underneath’, says a woman in Foldereid, Nord-Trøndelag.<sup>40</sup>

Flour was mixed with potato, fishmeal, seaweed and green pea flour, and housewives exchanged recipes with each other. Most of the bread people ate was home baked, and was made to go further by using equal portions of potato and flour. Potatoes had to be mashed while freshly cooked and still hot, and getting the mix right was no easy task.<sup>41</sup>

Juliane Solbraa-Bay, a nutrition expert and author of popular booklets on food during the occupation said: ‘Iron-heeled Germans in the streets meant less milk for us. The port in Drammen was often used for exporting goods and bringing soldiers ashore. Whenever the Germans crossed Bragernes Square, there was less for us’.<sup>42</sup>

Access to food supplies was a sensitive issue. Typically, it was milk that triggered the first German wave of terror and the state of emergency in Oslo in the autumn of 1941.

Living conditions for working people in Oslo were dire in 1941; prices had risen while wages were low. Milk supplies to larger workplaces were important. Milk rations were reduced from one litre to half a litre per worker per day. The situation came to a head when milk deliveries stopped completely:

‘The workers were indignant. The food was already bad, and that daily half-litre of milk enabled us to endure being undernourished’, writes Johan Johnsen, a union official at Christiania Spigerverk.

As far as the workers were concerned, it was the last straw. Between 20,000 and 30,000 workers went on strike in protest. Iron manufacturers and textile and shoe factories in Oslo went on strike. Terboven’s response included declaration of a state of siege.<sup>43</sup>

### COD LIVER OIL

There were long periods when fats were scarce. Fat consumption in 1940 and 1941 was covered by pre-war stocks and the ongoing production of herring oil and butter. After 1942, fat imports of different sorts of oil from Nazi Germany were vital.<sup>44</sup>

Cod liver oil was what saved people’s health. The smell of it summed up the wartime years. It wafted down stairways and through courtyards, kitchens and living rooms, and through windows, keyholes and doorways. Nothing stopped the reek of fried cod liver oil! In the absence of butter and margarine, what would women, men and children have done without these valuable vitamins?

Before the war, around 300 tonnes of cod liver oil were consumed annually for medical reasons. Once rationing was introduced on 15 October 1942, annual consumption rose to around 500 tonnes. Cod liver oil rations varied between winter and summer. For most of the war the official ration was three grams (or half a teaspoonful) per day, but pharmacies also sold it under the counter with tacit approval of the provisioning authorities. Families stockpiled it, and barrels of cod liver oil stacked up. Annual consumption of cod liver oil could reach 2000 tonnes.<sup>45</sup>

*Tran* ('cod liver oil') was never drunk; it was used as a topping on bread and for baking, added to porridge and used for frying. One technique that soon spread to kitchens all over the country entailed heating cod liver oil to a high temperature to get rid of the taste before using it to fry with. Unfortunately, it was this method that caused the smell to permeate through every home.

### GROWING 600,000 TONNES OF POTATOES A YEAR

The scope of land reclamation was considerable during the occupation, mainly for growing potatoes and other vegetables. The area used for potato cultivation in Norway grew by 44.8% between 1939 and 1944.<sup>46</sup> Nonetheless, potatoes became scarce in Norway. How was this possible? The answer is both simple and complicated: Norwegians ate far more potatoes than ever before. Food was scarce, and potatoes were an excellent nutritional substitute. To meet demands during the occupation, it was estimated that 600,000 tonnes of potato would be needed every year. This was twice the pre-war figure. And it should not be forgotten that the occupying forces also had a healthy appetite and frequently requisitioned outside of the regulations set by the Germans themselves or by the Norwegian Nazi authorities.<sup>47</sup>

Norway's potato yield was sufficient in the first two years of the occupation. The potato crop in 1940 was very good (1.3 million tonnes) and demand was met without the need for regulation. In 1941, however, the crop was poorer (1.1 million tonnes), but still no rationing was introduced. This was because no controllable system of potato supply was found for organising German requisitions.<sup>48</sup> Potato supplies in Norway were destroyed by unregulated procurements by the occupying forces—far in excess of the agreed supply quota—and by what the Ministry of Provisioning referred to as 'direct supply from the fields at excess prices'; in other words, the black market. The harsh winter of 1941/1942 led to a marked scarcity of potatoes. It is not known how many tonnes of potato ended up in German stomachs in Norway or were sent to Germany. Local German troops spread around the countryside secured their own diet by purchasing and requisitioning local supplies of herring, fish, meat and potato.<sup>49</sup> A table produced by the Ministry of Provisioning shows that German military authorities' potato procurements ranked highest; a total of 542,645 tonnes of potato was recorded.<sup>50</sup> When the numerous unregulated procurements are included, this figure could probably be doubled.

## NATURAL GREEN VEGETATION

‘We generally made more use of nature than we do today,’ says a woman in Narvik.<sup>51</sup>

A host of other vegetables followed the potato: carrot, swede, cauliflower, pointed cabbage, headed cabbage, turnip, pea, bean, beetroot and sugar cane:

We dreamed of making syrup. Maybe got a cooking pot full of sugar cane which we boiled and boiled, there wasn’t enough and it tasted awful. Boiling beetroot together with sugar cane was better because it gave the cane a red colour and made the beet taste sweeter.<sup>52</sup>

Norwegians’ eating habits were restricted and transformed. The Norwegian kitchen was expanded with dishes that had never been tasted before. As for plant life, nature provided an abundance of ingredients: dandelion (for salads and rabbit feed), nettle (for soups and as a spinach substitute), sorrel (for salads), meadowsweet and linden (for tea), caraway shoots, leaves from beetroot, carrot and spring turnip and parsley (vitamin C), sugar snap pea leaves, sugar cane leaves (as a spinach substitute) and rhubarb leaves (stewed acid). It was important to grow leaf lettuce and kale (which lasted through the winter and retained its vitamin C content), and cress was kept on window sills. Windfall fruit was canned.<sup>53</sup>

Some of these ingredients are still used, such as rose hip, mushrooms, wild berries, cloudberry, cabbage, cauliflower and carrot. Vegetables were not generally grown everywhere in Norway before the occupation, nor were they easily available. A little book entitled *Gratis mat av ville planter (Free Food from Wild Plants)* by Jens Holmboe and Juliane Solbraa-Bay became a bestseller.<sup>54</sup> The green leaves from fruit bushes such as raspberry, blackcurrant, redcurrant and lingonberry and from birch and juniper trees were dried for use in teas. An advanced tea blend could be composed of raspberry and redcurrant leaves mixed with dried apple peel and fireweed. Ground peas were used to make coffee. Foraging trips into the forest in search of wild berries and plants again became popular activities. Families and neighbours came together to pick berries, pick mushrooms and chop wood.<sup>55</sup> Employers gave their staff time off during the week to go foraging in the forests, since the berry season was short. Many of these activities continued after the war, though not all.

## TOWN AND COUNTRY: HATRED AND FRIENDSHIP

How did the relationship between town and country develop? Edvard Bull, a respected Norwegian professor of history, has characterised this relationship as one sided: ‘The farmers almost always had the upper hand in barter because their products were more crucial. That’s how it had to be, even if the transaction was between relatives and friends and no black-market prices were involved.’<sup>56</sup> Before the war, on average, townspeople had more money and a higher material living standard than farmers. They had more possessions in their attics, basements, cupboards and drawers than was normally found in rural communities. Bartering therefore came naturally, since townspeople had something to exchange. This could be almost anything at all: cash—subject to local rates or a sizeable black market rate—or clothing, shoes, sleeping bags, anoraks, cigarettes, alcohol, sewing thread, scissors, nails, cement, tools or wire for a hay-drying rack. For example, a barter might involve exchanging a grouse for brass wire to make animal traps.

But, did this type of interaction between town and country bring people closer together? The answer is unquestionably yes—or perhaps both yes and no. Tens of thousands of townspeople spilled into the villages, evacuated to farms and lived there for weeks and months, enjoying holidays, eating well and regaining their health. “‘So much for the eggs we were going to barter with,’” said mum once the town guests left,’ recalls a woman in North Trøndelag. Many townspeople found the countless trips to the villages to procure food both wearisome and humiliating, but there are as many stories about kind and generous farmers as there are about unsympathetic and exploitative ones.<sup>57</sup>

## SOCIAL COHESION AND INNOVATION

One clear result of the war and the occupation was the elimination of social disparities between town and country. In the inter-war years the contrasts had been sharp. The occupation stepped up the pace of the equalisation process in many respects. Foreign trade, from which Norway had been excluded by its Western trading partners, meant that its primary industries became more important to the country’s economy. Self-sufficiency rendered agriculture and fisheries more valuable. When food became such a scarce commodity the economic scales tipped in favour of the producers, and farmers and fishermen were generously

recompensed. At the same time the occupying authorities issued large volumes of banknotes. Right from the beginning of the occupation the Wehrmacht paid for the expenses incurred by its troops and its extensive construction activities. Unemployment disappeared. The printing press for banknotes kept rolling, and much of the money flowed into rural districts. The monetary expansion during the occupation and the ensuing inflation relieved the debt burden which farmers and fisherman had been carrying since the 1920s. In 1946 the size of the debt in the Norwegian agricultural sector was only 20% of the value of the farms.<sup>58</sup>

The same applied to the debts of the municipalities, which had been considerable in rural districts before the war. Municipalities in northern Norway, where most of the German troops were stationed, therefore received significant economic subsidies. Average earnings doubled, partly because many earned good money selling supplies to the occupying forces. Overall, the debt situation in rural and agricultural municipalities improved markedly.<sup>59</sup>

On the other hand, conditions for urban communities during the occupation became more challenging. Wages did not rise as they did in the districts, but the cost of living did. The equalisation process therefore came about partly at the expense of the decrease in living standards in the towns and cities. However, unemployment disappeared.<sup>60</sup>

Several other important areas must be omitted here, such as the trend in child and adult health in a rationed society towards prolonged malnutrition—for some but not for all.<sup>61</sup> Another topic omitted concerns the value of the infrastructure development which took place in Norway during the occupation: the construction of roads, railways, various installations and airports—often built with the extensive use of foreign prisoners of war at a high cost to life—which remained in post-war Norway.<sup>62</sup>

Economic historians have also highlighted how the reorganisation of industry during the occupation pointed towards the future and marked a period of innovation and transformation. There were a number of examples of this: the transition to increased use of electricity; stimulation of the capital goods industry provided by exclusion from the global market; production of new goods under licence; production of substitute goods which in turn stimulated innovation in product development; and facilitation of investment in planning for peacetime production provided by higher wages.<sup>63</sup>

In Norway, as elsewhere, a closer study of supplies and individuals' stories will reveal many examples which speak for themselves.

## ALTERNATIVE AND INNOVATIVE FOOD CHANNELS

How was the Norwegian population saved by their everyday endeavours? How were adequate diets ensured?

It has to be said that, overall, the population remained largely healthy—although there were many differences between the lives of people in the cities and those in the countryside with easy access to fields and farms. Medical research has provided evidence of malnutrition and sickness, and reductions in growth, particularly affecting children in big cities like Bergen (with long distances to farmland) and Oslo. However, there was no acute hunger in the sense of famine in Norway. Insufficient diet and malnutrition were the most important reasons for the drop in overall health which undoubtedly took place during the occupation.<sup>64</sup> The most critical situations with regard to supplies were in the late winter and spring of 1942 and the final winter of 1944/1945.<sup>65</sup>

First of all, the diet and health of the Norwegian population was preserved because food and supplies were secured through the implementation of systematic public measures, such as regulation and rationing. Second, substantial imports from Germany were also important. The same was true of vital supplies of humanitarian aid from Denmark and Sweden such as the popular *svenskesuppen* ('Swedish soup') given to school children.<sup>66</sup> Third, food was provided through the tireless informal local production of home-grown produce. And, finally, food and various other supplies were obtained via alternative channels, such as gifts, bartering, illegal hunting and the black market.<sup>67</sup>

Without these private, popular initiatives during the occupation years, public health would undoubtedly have deteriorated to a much greater extent. It is worth dwelling here on the new crazes that swept across the country: *matauk* or foraging to supplement food rations, and *matorg* or organising ways of procuring food.

Farmers in rural districts expanded their potato cultivation, mostly at the expense of pastures. Families with limited resources, and municipal and industrial workers living in rural communities also cultivated plots, gardens and any suitable green patches of land.<sup>68</sup>

The character of rural and urban landscapes was transformed. Green belts sprang up around towns and rural communities. Allotments became a familiar sight, and the potato was the predominant vegetable. Amateur gardeners took on a supporting role. Office workers with stiff

backs, sore knees, soft hands and poor tools worked alongside labourers who were used to getting their hands dirty, though not necessarily from gardening. Regardless of experience, everyone dug into clay, sand and mud to create their own little vegetable patch. A surgeon in Drammen donned white kid gloves to protect his hands while harvesting his potatoes.

Ornamental shrubs made way for useful ones. Allotments were established in private gardens. Fruit trees and berried plants were grown in playing fields, football pitches, churchyards, hills, school lawns, city parks and in the grounds of the royal palace in Oslo. Companies and private individuals supported foraging efforts, and allotments bore witness to the right attitude.

Allotments made a valuable contribution to food supplies, but they were also a source of worry and annoyance because people were tempted to steal from them. In August 1942 the mayor of Fredrikstad wrote: ‘Almost daily the newspapers write about potato and carrot allotments being looted, and crimes like these carry strict penalties, but they have no effect.’ Crops had to be guarded by the gardeners themselves.<sup>69</sup>

It is documented that farmers and controllers came up with a creative registration system.<sup>70</sup> Registered statistics for crops showed an overall decrease, in spite of a massive expansion in fields suitable for growing different crops and total area. A substantial part of agricultural production such as meat, milk, corn, potatoes and other farming commodities was withdrawn from public registration—and from the attention, and hence the reach, of the Nazis. In other words, people sabotaged public and Nazi prescriptions and injunctions in order to help their own families and fellow citizens. There were many variations of these differences between real and registered agricultural production in various regions of Norway.

Contrasts in everyday life caused by the relentless search for sufficient food and nutrition in Norway during the Nazi occupation were significant and various, depending upon whether one lived in the north, west, south or east, in a city or in the countryside, or whether there were parks to cultivate or not, or whether they were occupation force strongholds or a strong local Norwegian Nazi authority. All in all, however, since they qualified as high-standing “Aryans” in the Nazi worldview,<sup>71</sup> Norwegians led a more protected and generally better life in terms of supplies and survival than men, women and children in harsher occupational regimes in Central and Eastern Europe.

## NOTES

1. Ole Kristian Grimnes, "Okkupasjon og politikk i Norge.;" Iselin Theien, "Det politiske system og den tyske okkupasjon i året 1940," both in *Danske tilstander Norske tilstander 1940–4*, ed. Hans Fredrik Dahl et al. (Oslo: Press, 2010).
2. Hjeltnes, *Hverdagsliv*, 46ff; Even Lange, *Samling om felles mål 1935–1970*, vol. 11 (Oslo: Aschehougs Norgeshistorie, 1998), 99f.
3. The research on the Norwegian economy during World War II was sparse for many years, but several studies have filled in the picture over the past 20 years. See Alan Milward, *The Fascist Economy in Norway* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1972), 39–43; Harald Espeli, "Det økonomiske forholdet mellom Tyskland og Norge 1940–45," in *Danske tilstander Norske tilstander 1940–45*, ed. Hans Fredrik Dahl et al. (Oslo: Press, 2010), 140ff, states that 80% of exports and 67% of imports in Norway were with German-controlled areas.
4. Espeli, Det økonomiske forholdet, 140.
5. The main source for this article is Hjeltnes, *Hverdagsliv*, vol. 5, *Norge i krig 1940–1945*, ed. Magne Skodvin (Oslo: Aschehoug, 1986).
6. Several regional and local studies have been published in recent decades telling the story of war, occupation and everyday life in different areas all over Norway. See, e.g., on the North, Nenne Rachløw Isachsen, *Min krigsdagbok* (Stamsund: Orkana, 2016); on the capital; Øyvind Reisegg, *Oslo under krigen* (Oslo: Pegasus, 2016); Ottar Samuelsen, *Det var her det skjedde. Oslo under andre verdenskrig – sett i dag* (Oslo: Dinamo, 2008), and on the west; Grethe Eithun, Kjell-Ragnar Berge, and Hermund Kleppa, *Krigsår. Lagnader i Sogn og Fjordane 1940–1945* (Førde: Selja, 2005), Guri Ingebrigtsen, and Merete Berntsen, *Hverdagsbilder Vestvågøy 1940–1945* (Stamsund: Orkana, 1995).
7. A recent research project in Norway (2011–2015) focussed on the intense construction of buildings, roads, railroads, airports and other infrastructure led by Organisation Todt, <https://www.tekniskmuseum.no/forskning/organisasjon-todt-i-norge>, which affected everyday life and supplies in many ways. This OT project cooperated with the didactic project *Zwangsarbeit 1939–1945. Erinnerungen und Geschichte*. [www.zwangsarbeit-archiv.de/index.html](http://www.zwangsarbeit-archiv.de/index.html).
8. Hjeltnes, *Hverdagsliv*, 45ff; *Statistisk-økonomisk utsyn over krigsårene, Statistisk Sentralbyrå 1945* (Oslo: I kommisjon hos Aschehoug); *Historisk statistikk 1968, Statistisk Sentralbyrå 1969*; Lange, *Samling om felles mål*.
9. Espeli, Det økonomiske forholdet, 135f.
10. Milward, *Fascist Economy*, 32. Pioneer Milward (1972), a pioneer writing on the war economy of Norway in the 1970s, has been criticized for an

- overly simplistic analysis by later economic historians. See, e.g., Espeli, *Det økonomiske*, 137, 140; Anette H. Storeide, *Norske krigsprofitorer. Nazi-Tysklands velvillige medløpere* (Oslo: Gyldendal, 2014), 7, 163.
11. Described in several local and regional books. See, e.g., Martin Dehli, *Fredrikstad under krig og okkupasjon*. (Fredrikstad: Fredrikstad kommune, 1981); Sigmund Fjeldbu, *Et lite sted på verdenskartet: Rjukan 1940–1950* (Oslo: Tiden, 1980); Arvid Johanson, *Grenseland i ufredsår: Halden og distriktet under den andre verdenskrigen 1939–45* (Halden: Halden Sparebank, 1985).
  12. Quotation from Hjeltnes, *Hverdagsliv*, 23. The oral material where the names of persons have been mentioned dates from material gathered for a radio series produced by the Norwegian Broadcasting Corporation (NRK) in the early 1980s. Hjeltnes corresponded with several of the contributors to NRK, thereby producing new material for her book.
  13. Quotation from Hjeltnes, *Hverdagsliv*, 13. The oral history material used in Hjeltnes with anonymous people stems from a collection of oral history material, *Minneoppgaven for eldre, 1981*, at the Institute of Folkloristics, University of Oslo.
  14. Quotation from Hjeltnes, *Hverdagsliv*.
  15. Hjeltnes, *Hverdagsliv*, 19.
  16. Hjeltnes, *Hverdagsliv*, 19; for details see, e.g., H. Nordhus, *Kirkenes i krigsåra 1940–1945. Kirkenes brannvesens og Det Sivile Luftverns beretning* (Sør-Varanger: Kommune, 1948); a recent account given in Asbjørn Jaklin, *Brent jord 1944–1945. Heltene. Ofrene. De skyldige* (Oslo: Gyldendal, 2016).
  17. Several local and regional books have been published on the occupation in the north. See, e.g., Jaklin, *Brent jord*. A new large-scale research project has just started exploring World War II in the North in depth, *In a World of Total War: Norway 1939–1945*, led by the Arctic University of Norway (UiT), Tromsø (2017–2020), see [https://uit.no/forskning/forskningsgrupper/gruppe?p\\_document\\_id=501](https://uit.no/forskning/forskningsgrupper/gruppe?p_document_id=501).
  18. Hjeltnes, *Hverdagsliv*, 23.
  19. Hjeltnes, *Hverdagsliv*, 100; St. meld. no. 22, 9, 19; St. meld. no. 37, 20–21, 24. A major source on supplies and shortages during the occupation used by Hjeltnes, *Hverdagsliv* was produced by the Ministry of Provisioning: St. meld. no. 37 (1945–1946), *Forsyningsdepartementets virksomhet i Norge under okkupasjonen* (White Paper on the Ministry of Provisioning's activities in Norway during the occupation).
  20. Hjeltnes, *Hverdagsliv*, 100–101; St. meld. no. 37. (1945–1946), 35.
  21. Hjeltnes, *Hverdagsliv*, 101, 104.
  22. Hjeltnes, *Hverdagsliv*, 104; St. meld. no. 37, 20.
  23. Hjeltnes, *Hverdagsliv*, 104–105.

24. Hjeltnes, *Hverdagsliv*, 105, 108.
25. Hjeltnes, *Hverdagsliv*, 108.
26. Quotation from Hjeltnes, *Hverdagsliv*, 105.
27. Hjeltnes, *Hverdagsliv*, 108.
28. Quotation from Hjeltnes, *Hverdagsliv*, 30.
29. Hjeltnes, *Hverdagsliv*, 30.
30. Quotation from Hjeltnes, *Hverdagsliv*, 30.
31. Hjeltnes, *Hverdagsliv*, 30–31.
32. Hjeltnes, *Hverdagsliv*, 32.
33. Hjeltnes, *Hverdagsliv*, 109–110.
34. Quotation in Hjeltnes, *Hverdagsliv*, 112.
35. Quotation from Hjeltnes, *Hverdagsliv*, 112.
36. Ibid.
37. St. meld. no. 37, 35.
38. St. meld. no. 37, 24 (coffee).
39. St. meld. no. 37, 32 (tobacco).
40. Hjeltnes, *Hverdagsliv*, 116.
41. Ibid.
42. Quotation from Hjeltnes, *Hverdagsliv*, 117.
43. Hjeltnes, *Hverdagsliv*, 117. For a good insight on the state of siege in 1941 see, e.g., Harald Berntsen, *To liv – én skjebne: Viggo Hansteen og Rolf Wickstrøm* (Oslo: Aschehoug, 1995).
44. Hjeltnes, *Hverdagsliv*, 119; St. meld. no. 35, 29, 30.
45. St. meld. no. 37, 23–24.
46. Hjeltnes, *Hverdagsliv*, 123ff; St. meld. no. 37 (1945–1946), 28.
47. St. meld. no. 37, 28, 39.
48. Hjeltnes, *Hverdagsliv*, 125; St. meld. no. 37, 40 (meat, potatoes), 41 (fish, herring).
49. On heavy requisitions, St. meld. no. 37–38.
50. Hjeltnes, *Hverdagsliv*, 125ff; St. meld. no. 37, Bilag 4, 50.
51. Quotation from Hjeltnes, *Hverdagsliv*, 129.
52. Same quotation from Hjeltnes, *Hverdagsliv*, 129.
53. Hjeltnes, *Hverdagsliv*, 130–131.
54. Jens Holmboe, *Gratis mat av ville planter*. Med oppskrifter av Juliane Solbraa-Bay (Oslo: Cappelen 1941, several editions published during World War II).
55. Several local examples in Arvid Johansson, *Grenseland i ufredsår: Halden og distriktet under den andre verdenskrigen 1939–45* (Halden: Halden Sparebank, 1985); Fjeldbu, *Et lite sted*.
56. Edvard Bull, *Klassekamp og fellesskap 1920–1945*, vol. 13 (Oslo: Cappelen Norgeshistorie, 1979), 383.

57. Quotation from Hjeltnes, *Hverdagsliv*, 166; Bull, *Klassekamp* gave a tight analysis of World War II in Norway, 336–442.
58. Hjeltnes, *Hverdagsliv*, 56, 156; Lange, *Samling om felles mål*, 98.
59. Lange, *Samling om felles mål*, 1998, 98.
60. Hjeltnes, *Hverdagsliv*, 48–49; Lange, *Samling om felles mål*, 98–99.
61. Anders Chr. Gogstad, *Helse og hakekors. Helsetjeneste og helse under okkupasjonsstyret i Norge 1940–45* (Bergen: Alma mater, 1991), 275, 297.
62. Marianne Neerland Soleim, *Sovjetiske krigsfanger i Norge 1941–1945, Antall, organisering og repatriering* (Tromsø: Universitetet i Tromsø, 2004); Bjørn Westlie, *Fangene som forsvant. NSB og slavearbeiderne på Nordlandsbanen* (Oslo: Spartacus, 2015).
63. Hjeltnes, *Hverdagsliv*, 92–93; Olav Wicken, “Industrial Change in Norway during the Second World War. Electrification and Electrical Engineering,” *Scandinavian Journal of History* 1, no. 4 (1983): 119–150; Finn Erhard Johannessen, “Fiskeskinn og brune alger. Surrogat og innovasjon i krig og etterkrigstid,” in *Det som svarte seg best. Studier i økonomisk historie og politikk*, ed. Edgar Hovland (Oslo: Ad Notam forlag, 1990), 167–176.
64. Gogstad, *Helse og hakekors*, 297, 299, 305, 308.
65. St. meld. no. 37, 35.
66. St. meld. no. 37, 34.
67. Hjeltnes, *Hverdagsliv*, 128–129.
68. Hjeltnes, *Hverdagsliv*, 129.
69. Quotations from Hjeltnes, *Hverdagsliv*, 129; several local and regional studies and books document the same efforts and developments, see, e.g., Dehli, Fredrikstad; Fjeldbu, *Et lite sted*; Johanson, *Grenseland*; Isachsen, *Min krigsdagbok*.
70. St. meld. no. 37 has ample examples and tables showing the decrease in different crops where areas were extensively expanded; Håkon Hovstad, “Landsbygda og 2. Verdenskrig,” in *Jord og gjerning 1989: Årbok for norsk landbruksmuseum* ed. Elisabeth Koren (Ås: Landbruksforlaget, 1989); many examples in Hjeltnes, *Hverdagsliv*.
71. The large research project, conducted from 2012 to 2016 at the Center for Studies of Holocaust and Religious Minorities, called *Demokratiets institusjoner i møte med en nazistisk okkupasjonsmakt. Norge i et komparativt perspektiv* (DIMNO), has, among other things, focussed on the “privileged position” of Norwegians in the Nazi race hierarchy.



# ‘The Black Market Is a Crime Against Community’: The Failure of the Vichy Government to Bring About an Egalitarian System of Distribution and the Growth of the Black Market in France During the German Occupation (1940–1944)

*Fabrice Grenard*

The occupation era in France was known in Britain as ‘the dark years’.<sup>1</sup> There were many things that made the period a sombre one, not least the difficulties of everyday life such as shortages, rationing, trafficking

---

This communication surveys the main conclusions of my PhD on the black market in France, published under the title *La France du marché noir 1940–1949* (Paris: Payot, 2012 for the 2nd edition in paperback). This work is based on the archives of the Administration of Economic Control and the police forces that specialised in repressing the black market.

---

F. Grenard (✉)  
Fondation de la Résistance, Paris, France

© The Author(s) 2018  
T. Tönsmeier et al. (eds.), *Coping with Hunger and Shortage under German Occupation in World War II*,  
[https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-77467-1\\_5](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-77467-1_5)

and the black market. In all periods of war and economic crisis, irregular commercial dealings increase. Because of its characteristics the period of German occupation stands as the most significant era in contemporary French history in terms of black market activity. Though food shortages in occupied France were never as severe as in parts of the Soviet Union, Poland or Greece during World War II the preoccupation with shortages affected the whole of French society. On 3 July 1944 the banker and economist Charles Rist wrote in his diary: 'people everywhere talk of nothing but provisions and supply'.<sup>2</sup> The black market was not only the business of traffickers, in fact the majority of French people became involved with it in some way in order to survive.

During the spring of 1943, the Vichy government<sup>3</sup> developed a large-scale propaganda campaign against the black market and tried to suppress its growth. Posters were displayed in cities across France featuring the image of a gallows to frighten traffickers together with the slogan 'The black market is a crime against community'. Because the black market was widespread in France and people at all levels of society were complicit in it, it was necessary for the authorities to remind the population that the black market was a crime and traffickers were criminals. Government propaganda emphasised that selling products on the black market would mean shortages of official supplies. The main victims were particularly the poor and the most vulnerable (children, women and the elderly). But the efforts of the Vichy government failed. The black market continued to grow until the end of German occupation.

This importance of the black market in France from 1940 to 1944 raises several issues: Which factors had allowed it? How did trafficking evolve over the period? Who were its main players, organisers and profiteers? How did official policies to repress it work?

Given that the consequences of defeat and German occupation made France a fertile ground for the black market, trafficking evolved greatly and changed in nature over the period from 1940 to 1944. Efforts to repress the black market involved attempts to adapt to these changes, but such operations became overwhelmed. At the end of the war, investigations were set up to try and measure the black market. They helped to reveal the economic and social consequences of the phenomenon.

## FRANCE AFTER THE DEFEAT: A FERTILE GROUND FOR THE BLACK MARKET

The black market was a phenomenon that affected all the countries occupied by Nazi Germany. This was due to shortages that were caused by the war and exploitation by the Third Reich.<sup>4</sup> Shortages of supplies and enforced rationing had encouraged several forms of parallel economy that we include under the general term 'black market'.<sup>5</sup> However, France had a special place in German Europe and became a fertile ground for black market activity after its defeat due to several specific factors.

The military defeat in June 1940 had many consequences for the French economy. It plunged the country into a very serious crisis. Before the war, France imported most of its resources, in particular from its colonial empire. But after the defeat and the beginning of the German occupation, these external supply channels were broken. It was impossible to find sugar, coffee, chocolate or oil. Because there were one million French prisoners of war in Germany, the country lacked manpower, particularly for agriculture. Agricultural output accounted for only 50–60% of its pre-war level.<sup>6</sup>

The armistice treaty of June 1940 imposed harsh economic and financial conditions on France. The French government had to pay vast sums of money for the occupying German troops, set by the German authorities at four hundred million francs per day. This system allowed the Germans to pay for their own purchases on the black market in France with French money (to avoid inflation in Germany the money paid by the French government needed to be spent in France). Each year, France had to hand over a certain percentage of its national resources to the Reich. Because of its important agricultural resources, France was one of the most exploited countries under Nazi occupation. France and Ukraine were the two nations that provided the largest wheat exports to supply German civilians.<sup>7</sup>

Finally, the conditions of the armistice resulted in France being divided into several areas, including an occupied zone in the north and west and an unoccupied zone in the south. This division disrupted trade and exchange, and shortages worsened because the areas were isolated from each other. The geographical division of France was an important factor in the emergence of the black market.

To cope with economic difficulties and shortages, state measures and regulations were introduced in France in September and October 1940 by

the new government led by Marshal Pétain. This involved reinforcement of a supply policy, relating to the collection of agricultural resources, restrictions, price control and distribution of raw materials. The majority of food-stuffs were rationed, as were most industrial products such as shoes and clothes. Because everything was controlled by the administration, historians use the term ‘administrated economy’ to describe the functioning of the economy during the period between 1940 and 1944 in France.<sup>8</sup> This state control was symbolised by cards, coupons and tickets needed to buy products. Consumers had to give their tickets to merchants in order to purchase products. Ration cards were given out and the population was divided into various categories. The ‘E’ category was for children, the ‘J’ for teenagers, the ‘A’ for adults engaging in a ‘normal level’ of activity, the ‘T’ for workers with strenuous labouring jobs (e.g., miners), the ‘C’ for farmers and the ‘V’ for the elderly. The newly established administration of General Supply was responsible for organising the collection of resources and distributing them among the population. Collection and distribution plans were adopted. French regions were divided into three categories: deficient regions, self-sufficient regions and producing regions.<sup>9</sup> Producing regions were to supply deficient regions.

However, these measures of economic regulation were not always respected, for two main reasons: first, they were too restrictive and, second, because they came into force soon after the German occupation began the common perception among French people was that these measures had been imposed by the Germans to serve their own interests while starving the French population.

With these new regulations, fraud and trafficking grew. This explains the first forms of the black market in France, which appeared at the end of 1940 and caused the growth of a large parallel economy throughout the country. This black market took many forms, all of which allowed people to get round the new constraints of economic regulation and make more money than in the official economy controlled by the state.

Traders and shopkeepers refused to apply the new regulations such as rationing and price control. They sold some products that should have been rationed to privileged clientele without asking for ration cards in exchange. They did not respect the prices fixed by the government and sold their products at higher prices than the legal ones. Breaches of economic regulation were widespread in trade. Control services filed 20,000 charges of it in December 1940 and January 1941 alone.<sup>10</sup>

Intermediate traffickers went to the countryside to buy products directly from farmers and sold them on the black market in the cities. A report written by an agent of the police headquarters in Paris in December 1940 describes how trafficking groups visited the rural areas closest to Paris in order to secretly buy agricultural products.<sup>11</sup> They returned by train but got off before the train reached Paris to avoid controls in stations. Consequently, the police needed to establish roadblocks and controls all around the town.

Forgers printed fake rationing cards, which they would then sell to customers who wanted more than the rations they were entitled to. In January and February 1941, thousands of fake rationing cards were seized by the police in Paris.<sup>12</sup>

Traffickers became specialised in clandestine inter-zone trade. The Germans forbade exchanges between the northern and southern zone, but traffickers bought industrial and agricultural products in one zone and resold them fraudulently in the other.<sup>13</sup> This kind of trafficking between the two areas was very common. A report from October 1940 by General Picquendar, responsible for controlling the demarcation line, mentions ‘widespread trafficking’ and ‘many profiteers who acted like smugglers’.<sup>14</sup>

Finally, the Germans developed their own black market system in France. They believed that many stocks of raw materials and industrial products had been hidden in the southern, unoccupied zone, which was beyond their control. To capture these stocks the Germans used intermediaries, who went to the southern area and approached clandestine stock owners, offering very high prices for their stocks. Then, the stocks would be sold on to offices set up for German purchases. The system did not cost anything because the Germans used the money paid by the French government.<sup>15</sup> The most famous German purchasing office, which organized this black market system, was the ‘Otto’ Office, headed by an officer of the *Abwehr*, Ehrman Brandl (Otto was his nickname). But the Otto Office was not the only one. In 1942, there were over 200 German purchasing agencies in Paris. The two main intermediaries who worked for the Germans as traffickers were two of the biggest black marketers in occupied France: Joseph Joanovici and Michel Szkolnikoff. Joanovici specialised in trafficking metals and raw materials for the Germans whereas Szkolnikoff worked in textile trafficking. At the end of the war the fortunes they had amassed through the black market were valued at several millions.

## EVOLUTION OF THE BLACK MARKET DURING THE GERMAN OCCUPATION FROM 1941 TO 1944

From 1941 to 1944, several changes took place relating to the organisation and development of the black market in France. These changes were caused by the evolution of both economic and political factors: increasing shortages and the growth of the French Resistance.

First, the professional traffickers perfected their organisation. They acted as true entrepreneurs or directors of companies. They had vehicles but also illegal storage locations. Products were bought, transported and sold by different members of the organisation, with a real division of labour. In December 1942, for example, the Economic Control Authority arrested 17 intermediaries who were involved in a single food-trafficking operation. They all worked for the same professional trafficker who was the head of the organisation.<sup>16</sup> These ‘trafficker-entrepreneurs’ had very privileged customers: Germans, but also a number of very wealthy people as well as owners of important restaurants or hotels, who refused to comply with restrictions.

Second, there was widespread trafficking throughout French society. The black market was no longer just the work of professional traffickers who wanted to make money; the official rations provided by the authorities were getting increasingly low<sup>17</sup> and trafficking became a way to survive. Everyone was trying to find informal and illegal channels to secure a better supply. In this context, common people turned to illegal trafficking. For example, they would travel to the countryside by bicycle or train to buy food directly from the producers, which was prohibited by law. But these examples of illegal trafficking were not all of the same nature; the black market was not just a way to make money, it was also necessary for survival. The expression ‘grey market’ was introduced to refer to activity that, though illegal, was less reprehensible than the real black market. Because they showed the extent to which the law was being violated, minor instances of trafficking posed a real challenge for the Vichy government. As a lawyer at the time wrote: ‘the whole society was in violation of the law’.<sup>18</sup> These widespread trafficking offences did not just concern individual consumers but large firms as well since they needed resources, particularly raw materials, that could not be obtained through official channels. Canteens of administrations or companies developed unofficial channels in order to get food for their employees. Canteens of governmental ministries did the same. In this way, civil servants and

members of ministerial cabinets were supplied indirectly through the black market, while the government condemned it.

The black market operated by the Germans from 1940 to 1942 was banned in 1943 by the government of the Third Reich. This was not just the case in France, but in all occupied countries. German black market activities had adverse effects in these countries, including inflation, widespread fraud and corruption. The black market represented a contradiction for Nazi authorities: Was Germany using occupied economies to supply the Reich or just plundering them?

There might be a second reason to explain why the Germans gave up the black market in France. After 1942, collections of French agricultural and industrial products for Germany increased significantly. These collections were negotiated with the Vichy government, who accepted the demands but asked in return that Germany stop plundering the country via the black market. The German authorities agreed, but not to satisfy the Vichy government. It was simply more advantageous for them to exploit the French economy by means of taxation, which, on the other hand, was accepted by the Vichy government. From November 1942, as the whole of France was occupied, the Germans had access to all the resources throughout the whole territory. They no longer needed to use the black market to seize the resources of the southern zone as in the previous period.

This German turnaround on the black market explains why, in 1943, the occupation authorities put pressure on the Vichy government for more severe measures to be taken to suppress its operation. All French products on the black market were now exempt from German taxation. Offices of German purchases, like the Otto Office, were forced to close. The black market system organised by the Germans was over. But this did not mean that small-time trafficking operations, developed individually by German soldiers in France, would all come to an end.<sup>19</sup>

The final evolution of the black market from 1943 was the result of the growth of the French Resistance. Supplying people who lived underground, the French Resistance relied heavily on trafficking. In 1943 the *maquis* appeared in France. These groups of resistance fighters settled in forests and mountainous regions. At the end of 1943, about 50,000 *maquisards* were active in France and shortly after the Allied landing on 6 June 1944, they were 100,000. To supply these fighters, clandestine channels needed to be set up. Instead of giving their products to collections organised by the Vichy government to supply the cities, farmers

preferred to sell their products to Resistance representatives. For the Resistance, this was a patriotic act. But, for the Vichy government, it was treason and a kind of black market. Thus, an important propaganda battle raged between both sides. The Resistance asked farmers not to obey the Vichy government and to keep their products to help members of the Resistance, while the Vichy government portrayed Resistance members, particularly the *maquisards*, as criminals and traffickers and held them responsible for food shortages. However, by the end of the German occupation the population was clearly on the side of the Resistance. Parallel supply channels grew in all regions where the *maquis* was important. But the Resistance did not want to appear as an accomplice of black marketers. Therefore, the *maquis* leaders developed an intermediate system in the territories under their control: small frauds and clandestine supplies were encouraged but traffickers who took advantage of the situation and secured high profits were sanctioned with fines or arrests.<sup>20</sup>

#### REPRESSION OF THE BLACK MARKET AND ITS EVOLUTION

This way trafficking evolved had a meaningful impact on repression of the black market. Initially, all the law enforcement agencies such as the police and the *gendarmerie* (the police force for rural areas in France) were mustered against the black market. However, policemen and members of the *gendarmerie* became overwhelmed by the multitude of tasks they were given during the German occupation. They were expected to fight the growth of delinquency as well as the development of the Resistance, but they also had to arrest Jews, Communists and all opponents to the regime. Moreover, they were not very well trained when it came to business activities and therefore their actions against the black market were not very effective. They were only able to repress surface activity, such as breaches of the law, but did not investigate the sources of fraudulent channels.

That is why the Vichy government created specialised agents to repress trafficking. A new institution, the Administration of Economic Control, was set up. Its agents were tasked with monitoring companies accounts and prices in shops or markets. They also operated checkpoints in stations or on roads to prevent illegal transports. Initially, in 1940–1941 the power and the means of this new administration were quite limited but, as the black market continued to grow, the Administration of Economic Control became more important and its powers were

increased in 1942.<sup>21</sup> In all departments, Economic Control brigades began working under the authority of the Prefect. The administration had the authority not only to conduct investigations and make arrests, but also to impose penalties for traffickers. The Administration not only acted as a police force, but as judge and jury as well.<sup>22</sup>

Until 1942, repression of the black market in France was hampered by several problems: first, French controllers did not have the power to punish traffickers working for the Germans. These traffickers had special passes. If they were arrested the Germans intervened for their release.<sup>23</sup> Secondly, repression of the black market was accepted and desired by the population if it involved important traffickers, but it was very unpopular if it concerned small traffickers engaged in the black market to survive. In many cities the inspectors from the Administration of Economic Control were physically attacked by the crowd during their investigations.<sup>24</sup> A third problem involved the administration of justice. Violations of economic regulation measures were growing in number and arrests of traffickers multiplied,<sup>25</sup> causing prisons to become overcrowded. In addition to this, the courts, which were already dealing with a lot of cases (especially political and Resistance-related cases), could not judge economic cases as a priority. Because sanctions were not imposed immediately, repression of the black market was not very effective and did not discourage traffickers.

Clear solutions were adopted in 1942 to deal with these three issues, and repression of the black market evolved significantly. As the German black market was banned, controllers could now arrest French traffickers who traded with the Germans, and cooperation was established between the German police and the French controllers to heighten the effectiveness of policing. They were finally able to dismantle the channels of French and German traffickers.

While the unpopularity of repression against the “grey market” was becoming a real problem the Vichy government decided in the spring of 1942 to adopt a new law on the subject. This law strengthened repression of professional traffickers and those who cheated to get richer. These people had to be treated as criminals. But, the same law stated that inspectors, controllers and judges had to be lenient vis-à-vis people who were involved in the black market to survive and to cover personal needs. These people should not be condemned.<sup>26</sup> This law was responding to the wish of the population, and was an admission that the black market had become necessary to survive. It also caused an increase in

minor trafficking offences. Under these conditions, it became impossible for the authorities to remove the black market. If a trafficker was arrested, he would always try to explain that he was trafficking for survival and not to make money.

Finally, to speed up repression of the black market at a time the courts were overwhelmed, the government favoured administrative sanctions to judicial repression. Departmental directors of the Administration of Economic Control or Prefects could impose administrative penalties against traffickers in the form of fines, confiscations, shop closures or internments in an administrative centre (several months in general). Under the German occupation, most black market cases (80%) ended with administrative penalties. A few of them, the most serious, were brought before a court of law. Judges could impose prison sentences for traffickers. In 1943, for example, of the 379,405 charges brought for breaching economic regulations, 26,118 (7%) were abandoned, and 278,411 (73%) had an administrative resolution (fines, confiscations, internments). Only 31,916 (8%) cases were brought before a court of law.<sup>27</sup> To frighten traffickers the law allowed the death penalty for their deeds. However, no black market trafficker was ever sentenced to death under the occupation in France. Yet, the sentence was regularly pronounced against Communists, Resistance members and even women who are abortionists, which shows that judges refused to consider economic breaches as crimes. They did not apply the directives of the Vichy government in this field. This preference given to administrative punishment over judicial repression had an undeniable advantage: it allowed immediate sanctions. But the drawback was that the penalties (a fine, or a few months in an internal camp) were not very dissuasive, and the courts were rather lenient (on average, prison sentences did not exceed a period of a few months). That is why repression failed to stop the black market from growing.

#### ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL CONSEQUENCES OF THE BLACK MARKET IN FRANCE DURING THE GERMAN OCCUPATION

The black market was obviously a hidden phenomenon. As for other illegal and clandestine practices, it seems impossible to measure its exact significance. However, at the end of the occupation, statistical surveys were carried out by the French National Institute of Statistics (INSEE) in order to find out as much as possible about the role the black market had played. The data were needed for reconstruction after the war

and the French authorities therefore tried to measure the real resources of the country—not just those within the legal economy.<sup>28</sup> The statistics were based on surveys led by the Administration of Economic Control and on the quantities of reports established.

The results mainly concerned agricultural production. With regard to industrial products the importance of the black market was even more difficult, and perhaps impossible to evaluate. In 1943, black market transactions absorbed 10–20% of basic agricultural output, such as meat, butter, eggs and potatoes. If we add small cases of trafficking (“grey market” practices, barter) or products hidden by producers for their own consumption, we can estimate that 30–40%, sometimes 50%, of products escaped from the regular and legal economy in France at the end of the German occupation.<sup>29</sup>

Another interesting finding of the survey concerned prices on the black market. On average, black marketers used to sell their products at a price that was five times the official one. Under these conditions the black market was reserved for a very privileged clientele. A worker earned about 1000 francs per month in France. A kilo of meat could cost 500 francs on the black market in a large French city, and a kilo of butter 200 francs. In contrast, the “grey market” was more accessible. “Grey market” prices were only twice as expensive as the official ones, when directly negotiated with producers, and there was no need to resort to a trafficker.

Two important conclusions can be made about the social consequences of the black market. First, because the black market and trafficking were so widespread, they were essential to the survival of the French population due to very significant restrictions and insufficient rations. Although the French population suffered from malnutrition during the occupation the country did not experience food shortages to the extent that other countries occupied by the Germans did. A significant portion of resources went into clandestine circuits (not just the black market, but the “grey market” too) and thereby escaped German requisitions. Moreover, these clandestine circuits allowed the French population to compensate for the inadequacy of the official supply. In this regard the social and economic structures of the country were advantageous. France remained a rural and agricultural country: 49% of French people lived in the countryside according to the census of 1936, the last before the war. As a result, people who lived in big cities, where shortages were more

severe than in rural areas, generally had family or friends who lived in the countryside. This situation facilitated illegal supplies from producers.

Second, many French people were involved in trafficking during the German occupation. But, who were the main profiteers of this social phenomenon? Which categories of traffickers made the biggest profits? As in other countries, farmers and traders were accused of being the main black marketers. Many letters of denunciations against farmers and shopkeepers were sent during this period.<sup>30</sup> But the real situation was more complicated. Farmers were involved mostly in the “grey market”, selling their products directly to consumers. “Grey market” prices were indeed higher than the legal prices but, as we have seen, the difference remained limited. It did not allow farmers to build large fortunes, though they could make small profits. After the Liberation, however, farmers were accused of having earned millions. They were suspected of hiding ‘dirty money’ earned through the black market in *lessiveuses* (‘washtubs’) or in their gardens.<sup>31</sup> For common people the simple fact of having made small profits while the majority of the population was suffering under extremely miserable circumstances amounted to a scandal.

In the area of trade, consumers accused retailers of imposing higher-than-legal prices, and thus of participating in the black market. But many retailers were forced to do this because intermediaries (wholesalers) were asking them higher prices for supplies too. In fact, those who made the greatest profits were not retailers, who were at the end of the chain, but those who were inside or at the head of the supply chain, such as wholesalers or merchants. These categories of traders intervening between producers and retailers imposed their own conditions and made the biggest profits. The main professional traffickers, the so-called kings of the black market, like Joanovici or Szkolnikoff, started off as wholesalers or merchants. These professional categories were more invisible to the public eye than farmers or retailers. The latter had direct contact with the consumers, but they were in fact simple actors in the black market and not organisers. We can draw an interesting conclusion based on all the charges made during this period for violations of economic legislation. The two most important categories were agricultural producers and retailers. However, if we focus on the central database for the Administration of Economic Control, which identified the most significant traffickers who were making profits in excess of 50,000 francs, the most important categories were traders, wholesalers and semi-wholesalers.<sup>32</sup>

Many French people thought the black market and supply difficulties would disappear at the end of the war and after the Liberation. During the liberation of several French cities, especially Paris, consumers tore up their supply cards and ration tickets. They thought they would no longer need them. But this was a mistake. Actually, reconstruction of the country was to take several years even after the end of the war. Restrictions and rationing persisted in France until 1949. As a consequence, black market structures survived the war and remained important to French society. From 1945 to 1947 the black market was just as important as under the occupation. It started to decline in 1948 and disappeared in 1949–1950.

Like rationing and restrictions the black market was part of daily life in France for ten years. Though not an exception, France was perhaps the country where the black market had the biggest impact on daily life, and even cultural life.<sup>33</sup> It remained therefore within collective memory as a symbol of this period of ‘dark years’ and inspired many movies and novels after the war, like *La Traversée de Paris* (a film by Claude Aurtant-Lara, 1955) or *Au bon beurre* (novel written by Jean Dutourd, 1954).

## NOTES

1. Julian T. Jackson, *France, The Dark Years, 1940–1944* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001).
2. Richard Vinen, *The Unfree French, Life Under the Occupation* (New York: Penguin, 2007), 215.
3. After the defeat of France in 1940, Paris was in the occupied zone. The Third Republic failed and a new regime led by Marshall Pétain was set up, with a new capital, Vichy, in the unoccupied zone.
4. For comparisons between the different countries occupied by the Germany from 1939 to 1945, see Keim Klemann and Sergei Kudryashov, *Occupied Economies: An Economic History of Nazi-Occupied Europe* (London: Berg, 2012).
5. A directive adopted by the Vichy government in February 1941 intended for the Prefects—State Representatives in Departments—stated that ‘all violations of economic legislation must be considered as black market.’
6. Agricultural statistics from Alfred Sauvy, *La vie économique des Français de 1939 à 1945* (Paris: Flammarion, 1978).
7. For the German plans to redistribute food in Europe, Adam Tooze, *The Wages of Destruction: The Making and Breaking of the Nazi Economy* (New York: Penguin, 2006), 544; Alan Milward, *The New Order and the French Economy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1970), 257, 283.

8. Michel Margairaz and Henry Rouso, "Vichy, la guerre et les entreprises," *Histoire, économie et société* 3 (1992): 337–367.
9. The regions that suffered most from shortages and hunger are urban areas (Paris, Marseille, Lyon, Bordeaux) and also monoculture regions where supply was difficult (Languedoc-Roussillon, for example).
10. Minutes of the meeting on the direction of the administration regarding price control, Archives of the Ministry of Economy and Finance (Savigny-le-Temple) [CAEF, Centres des archives économiques et financières], B 49 888 (notes and reports of the administration of price control, 1941–1944).
11. Archives of the prefecture of police (Paris) [APP], BA 1810 (supply and black market), report of December 7, 1941.
12. APP, monthly report on the situation in Paris, March 1941.
13. Fabrice Grenard, "Le marché noir en zone non occupée et les circuits clandestins interzones," in *L'économie de la zone non occupée 1940–1942*, ed. Hervé Joly (Paris: CTHS, 2007), 118–138.
14. National archives (Paris) [AN], AJ 41 177, report of Odilon Picquendar about the demarcation line in the centre of France, October 1940.
15. CAEF, B 49 476, report of the administration of economic control on the German black market in France, 1945. This report was written at the end of the war by investigators of economic control to assess the importance of trafficking for the German occupiers in France. He was quoted at the trial of Nuremberg when the issue of looting in France was discussed.
16. AN, 72 AJ 40, report by the administration of economic control, December 5, 1942.
17. In 1942, on average, official rationing provided a consumer with only 1300 daily calories. According to nutritionists, 2500 calories are needed.
18. Anatole de Monzie, *La saison des juges* (Paris: Flammarion, 1943), 22.
19. CAEF, B 49 476, report by the administration of economic control on the German black market in France, 1945.
20. Georges Guingouin, the leader of the maquis in the Haute-Vienne department (in the Center-West of France), published for example many 'decrees of the prefect of the maquis' penalizing excessive profits made through the black market. Fabrice Grenard, *Une légende du maquis, Georges Guingouin* (Paris: Vendémiaire, 2014).
21. A law of June 6, 1942 gave more power to this administration, called the Direction générale du contrôle économique (DGCE). In 1941, only 2000 employers worked for this administration. One year later, there were 4500.
22. Fabrice Grenard, "L'administration du contrôle économique en France," *Revue d'Histoire moderne et contemporaine* 57, no. 2 (2010): 132–158.
23. People who trafficked for the Germans were called 'acheteurs SA' ('Schwarz Anforderung').

24. In Vitet near Bayeux, for example, controllers were molested by 200 people while they were inspecting the city market on July 28, 1941. AN, BB 18 3290 (1), dossier 858/41R. The consequence of these attacks was that the Vichy government decided in 1942 to arm the agents of economic control (initially, these agents were unarmed).
25. One million economic offences were identified between 1940 and 1944. See statistics in ‘Bilan de la répression des infractions économiques’ in Fabrice Grenard, *La France du marché noir, 1940–1949* (Paris: Payot, 2012), 387.
26. “Law of March 15, 1942 on the Repression of the Black Market,” *Official Journal of the French State (JOEF)*, March 19, 1942, 1075.
27. CAEF, B 9860, annual report on the activities of the Administration of Economic Control.
28. The authorities expected that the black market would disappear after the war and all products would enter into official economic circuits. However, this was not the case. The black market continued to operate in France until 1949.
29. The results of this survey were published in INSEE (Institut national des statistiques et des enquêtes économiques), *Enquête diverse sur les prix et la consommation de 1942 à 1944* (Paris: Imprimerie nationale, 1947).
30. Laurent Joly, *La délation dans la France des années noires* (Paris: Perrin, 2012), 139.
31. In many departments, farm attacks increased in number during the Liberation. Criminals even tortured farmers to find out where their money was hidden. In June and July 1944, in the department of Maine-et-Loire, 25 farms were attacked. Marc Bergère, *Une société en épuration: épuration vécue et perçue en Maine-et-Loire* (Rennes: Presses universitaires de Rennes, 2004), 309.
32. Statistics in Fabrice Grenard, *La France du marché noir*, 2012, 208. Calculations were made with reference to three sectors: wine, fruit and vegetables, and meat.
33. Kenneth Moure and Paula Schwartz, “On vit mal: Food Shortages and Popular Culture in Occupied France, 1940–1944,” *Food, Politics and Culture* 2 (2007): 261–295.



# The Black Market in Occupied Italy and the Approach of Italian and German Authorities (1943–1945)

*Jacopo Calussi and Alessandro Salvador*

## INTRODUCTION

This chapter will focus on problems related to the lack of food supplies during the German occupation of Italy and the development of the black market. Specifically, it will investigate the problems and peculiarities of the black market by analysing the existing literature and archival sources from Italian archives, including reports from Italian intelligence agencies analysing the private correspondence of citizens.

When the Fascist regime entered the war in 1940, it was clearly unprepared both from a military and economic point of view. Even though Mussolini's politics during the 1920s and 1930s were directed towards the creation of a militarised state the country's production systems were unable to face the challenges of the conflict, despite the

---

J. Calussi (✉)

Universita degli Studi Roma Tre, Rome, Italy

A. Salvador

Università degli Studi di Trento, Trento, Italy

© The Author(s) 2018

T. Tönsmeier et al. (eds.), *Coping with Hunger and Shortage under German Occupation in World War II*,  
[https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-77467-1\\_6](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-77467-1_6)

belligerent rhetoric of the regime. The rationing system, the centralised organisation of production and distribution of goods and the highly regulated and bureaucratic Fascist economy proved unable to provide the population with its basic needs.

Thus, Italy was hit with shortages of food and resources from the very beginning of the war and this created the conditions for a widespread black economy. The situation was aggravated by military failures and the inability of Italian forces to prevent Allied control of the Mediterranean. When the bombs started to fall over the peninsula the situation worsened and resulted in the eventual collapse of the regime. However, the provisional government of Pietro Badoglio<sup>1</sup> did not improve the situation. In fact, the delicate situation that Badoglio tried to manage, by keeping the Germans as far as possible away from Italy while secretly dealing with the Allied forces, did not help in resolving issues that had arisen during the previous years.

While Badoglio was making contact with the Allies the Germans prepared their invasion plans, foreseeing the possibility of an Italian defection. Their aim was to try to secure Italian resources while keeping the front far away from German borders.

After the Allies invaded Italy in September 1943 the Germans had to face significant challenges in getting the Italian system to work for the war instead of just being a liability. The chapter will also consider how Italian and German authorities reacted to the invasion, with a specific focus on interactions between the two forms of power that controlled occupied Italy. Finally, we will demonstrate how German and Italian authorities dealt with the widespread and uncontrollable issue of the black market.

This chapter shows how the efficient and brutal German occupation of Italy after 1943 gave rise to an array of peculiar situations, relating to shortages and hunger, that hardly fit into the broad categories of German occupation—namely, exploitation and violent coercion. We will analyse sources that describe specific cases in which the occupiers, in order to reach their goals, had to face the peculiarity of the Italian situation and react pragmatically and creatively to shortages, hunger and the black market, which was a direct consequence of these.

## THE GERMAN OCCUPATION OF ITALY AND THE FOOD CRISIS

After the armistice of 8 September 1943 the German leadership and the Oberkommando der Wehrmacht (OKW) implemented Operation Achse. This was a contingency solution that had been prepared since the spring

of 1943 in case Italy left the Axis to seek a separate peace agreement with the Allies. German armed forces occupied Italian territory and areas controlled by the *Regio Esercito* ('Italian Royal Army'), disarming and deporting around 800,000 Italian soldiers to the Reich and to concentration camps.

Italy was split into two territorial entities: the centre and the north were occupied by the Germans while the south hosted the Italian Royal government under the control of Allied forces. The regions occupied by the Germans were further divided into two administrative areas: one, the occupied territory, was nominally ruled by the *Repubblica Sociale Italiana* (RSI) ('Italian Social Republic'),<sup>2</sup> the puppet regime created after the liberation of Mussolini and strongly influenced by German military and political authorities; the other was represented by so-called military operation areas annexed to the Reich and administered by German authorities.<sup>3</sup>

Such a division answered the needs of the German government and was the result of fierce debates within the leadership of the Reich.<sup>4</sup> Formation of the RSI fulfilled the need to have indigenous staff collaborating inside the administration of Italy's occupied territories,<sup>5</sup> while the occupiers maintained actual control of sensitive areas. However, this governmental entity would later be used by V. Ribbentrop and Rudolph Rahn, the German ambassador to Italy, to transfer real powers to German military authorities and to representatives of other Reich ministries. Thus, the set-up of the occupiers had a dual nature: it was a civil administration, headed by Rahn, the *Reichsbevollmächtigter* ('plenipotentiary') in Italy, and a military administration of approximately 20 *Militärkommandanturen* (MK) ('military commandants'), headed by the plenipotentiary General Rudolph Toussaint.<sup>6</sup>

In the autumn of 1943, several divisions were established by the occupiers in the military administration. Division II, relating to the Department of Food and Agriculture (*Ernährung und Landwirtschaft* or EuL), was headed by Pehle, *Sturmbannführer* ('assault unit leader') of the SS and Herbert Backe's representative in Italy.<sup>7</sup> Pehle was one of the cruellest leaders in Italy; he was responsible for the ministerial programme supplying the Reich by exploiting occupied territories.<sup>8</sup> After the summer of 1944 the northern part of Italy was the only remaining area devoted to agricultural exploitation outside German borders,<sup>9</sup> but Rahn's primacy and the needs of the territorial MK often set a limit to EuL's activity.<sup>10</sup> However, it is hard to understand what Pehle and

Backe's plans in Italy were since the EuL's documents were mostly lost apart from some exploitation plans dating from 1945.<sup>11</sup>

This set-up was achieved in the six months following the armistice between Italy and the Allies; the territory controlled by the Nazis was established according to Kesselring's winning military strategy against Rommel's compliant strategy.<sup>12</sup> The central and southern regions of Italy would be defended until May 1944,<sup>13</sup> while in the rest of the country the Nazis would act to exploit Italy's food, industrial and human resources.<sup>14</sup>

However, the expectations of the Germans to efficiently exploit Italian resources clashed with the highly inefficient production, stocking and rationing system that had been operating in Italy since the beginning of the war. Mussolini had already decided to apply wartime measures after the German invasion of Poland, but the strategies turned out to be a failure. Chronic issues with the Italian economic system worsened as a result of forced application of exploitation policies by the occupier, which in turn increased both the population's dissatisfaction and the risk of social and political unrest.<sup>15</sup>

Although the Italian economy was highly militarised, it was insufficiently mobilised, thus the centralisation and planning of the economy did not reach expected goals.<sup>16</sup> Ministerial estimates for fixing prices and limiting the distribution of certain goods caused frequent shortages of staple foods on market stalls during the first three years of the war despite rationing efforts. There was a chronic lack not only of fats, but also of soap, sugar, salt and coal.<sup>17</sup>

Rationing was organised by means of a large-scale stockpiling system: regulated goods were collected in large storehouses and then distributed. This process was disrupted by chronic inefficiency and large-scale evasion by producers.<sup>18</sup> Such evasion and unclear links between big producers and public authorities led to the establishment of the first black market structures during the autumn of 1940, less than three months after the beginning of the war.<sup>19</sup>

Poor planning and autarchic policies led to frequent imbalances in agricultural production.<sup>20</sup> Due to distribution shortages and the first waves of bombings of the national transport network, wholesale prices of agricultural products rose by 119% in 1943 compared to 1939.<sup>21</sup> According to Italian historiography, inflation<sup>22</sup> and food distribution shortages were among the main causes of the crisis of the Fascist regime.<sup>23</sup> Amedeo Osti Guerrazzi argued that a form of unorganised

anti-Fascist movement started developing among people queuing for rationed goods, particularly in big and crowded cities such as Rome and Milan.<sup>24</sup>

The German military occupation therefore added pressure to an already critical situation. First, inflation continued to rise at an intolerable pace due to introduction of the *Reichskreditkassenscheine* ('German occupation currency') from September to November 1943.<sup>25</sup> Furthermore, a monthly tax levied by the RSI on German troops' spending stopped the war of official prices, but had little effect on rising black market prices.<sup>26</sup>

Italian food supplies requisitioned by the Reich right up to the autumn of 1944 and the decision by the Germans to exploit Italian industrial resources aggravated inflation.<sup>27</sup> Mussolini and Rahn often debated, at times in a heated manner, whether to raise the official prices of food commodities in order to stop illegal exchanges.<sup>28</sup> Rahn remained evasive, not to say negative. In 1944 the prices of industrial products rose by 300% at the national level, while the real, but unofficial value of agricultural products increased by 250%.<sup>29</sup> As a result, the mechanism behind storing and distributing large stockpiles failed and the amount of stored goods steadily declined.<sup>30</sup>

Italian small and sharecrop farmers gained no great advantage from paying quotas on products for stockpiling. Moreover, average productivity per hectare was in steady decline owing to the shortage of fertiliser, fuel, equipment and industrial goods.<sup>31</sup> In diverse ways, big farms and local landowners took advantage of the national crisis and the rise in prices, thus fuelling illegal trafficking and underground distribution.<sup>32</sup>

One of the main causes of the food crisis was the irrational and complex system of regulations and institutions controlling the production and distribution of goods under the Fascist regime. The civil German administration gave the RSI limited freedom both at the state and local level. However, occupying forces often severely attacked national bodies tasked with calculating and distributing products.<sup>33</sup> Lutz Klinkhammer refers to five organisations dealing with cereal distribution and production quotas and to four different organisations for meat production.<sup>34</sup>

By collaborating with Berlin the German EuL attempted to implement a centralised policy of exploitation, but to no avail.<sup>35</sup> During the autumn of 1943, 200 *Landwirtschaftsführer* ('agronomists') from Eastern Europe were sent to Italy to deal with the distribution problems, but this was not enough to change the country's situation.<sup>36</sup>

The inefficiency of the Italian economy turned out to be a liability that not only affected Germany's goals for exploitation, but also seriously threatened its military goals.

### ACTORS AND PECULIARITIES OF THE ITALIAN BLACK MARKET

As stated above the irregular and insufficient food distribution by regular channels nourished a widespread black market. This caused complaints among the population and significant trouble for the authorities.<sup>37</sup>

In contrast to the chronic lack of food and resources that symbolised distribution by the government, on the black market almost everything was available and, according to sources, in abundance.<sup>38</sup>

After September 1943, Italy's collapse produced a widespread sense of panic in which the population was gripped by a kind of hoarding frenzy.<sup>39</sup> Civilians started to fear shortages and used every means in their possession—money and goods—to buy food through the black market, far beyond what they needed. In the months to come, they sold the excess food for profit.<sup>40</sup> Anyone who could afford to buy food started actively trading on the black market. The German authorities observed that the black market in Italy was consistently different from what they experienced in the Reich. In one report a German officer even uses two different words to indicate the black market in Germany (*Schwarzhandel*) and the atypical Italian manifestation (*Schwarzmarkt*).<sup>41</sup>

The typical black retailer in Italy was not the usual big profiteer able to gather copious quantities of food and making large profits in limited circles of distribution. The illegal business in Italy mostly took the form of small legal retailers hiding some goods and selling them on the side.<sup>42</sup> This happened also in shops where the official governmental distribution usually took place.<sup>43</sup>

In addition, soldiers, *carabinieri*<sup>44</sup> and white and blue-collar workers, faced with rising inflation, entered the black market seeking enough goods or money to sustain their daily living costs.<sup>45</sup>

The black market in Italy before and during the German occupation was not merely based on providing special goods unavailable in ordinary shops under governmental distribution, it was a matter of survival for a population that could not get basic goods from ordinary channels. As a German officer said, it was a way of life involving the entire population.<sup>46</sup>

The main reasons for that lay in years of insufficient vigilance or interest by the authorities.<sup>47</sup> The impotence of the government towards the

black market caused criticism among the population and the German authorities.<sup>48</sup> On the other hand, the black market was often unavoidable, unless the entire system of production and distribution could be changed.<sup>49</sup>

Analysis of private correspondence by the Italian intelligence agencies showed that the phenomenon was widespread and that many citizens did not even bother to hide their involvement.<sup>50</sup> In the city of Salsomaggiore (province of Parma) the population started to produce salt illegally.<sup>51</sup> Throughout the province, illegal activities were so widespread that they created a parallel economy, producing conspicuous wealth ‘off the books’ at the local scale.<sup>52</sup>

To counter the black market, German officials proposed reorganising production and distribution chains to guarantee adequate food supplies for the population and to establish an autonomous police force with agents who would be generously paid and would work independently of the prefects.<sup>53</sup> Not one of these goals was achieved during the occupation.

### SHORTAGES AND THE ROLE OF THE RURAL AREAS

Following the armistice, strikes and protests happened in central and northern Italy. Eventually, to counter dissent, some wage adjustments for workers were introduced.<sup>54</sup> However, the effects were immediately nullified by rising prices.<sup>55</sup> Prefects oversaw the observance of official prices and many of them, as was the case in the Milan prefecture, lifted controls in the interests of public order.<sup>56</sup>

Taking back control and preserving order in the cities was the main priority for the occupiers, alongside strengthening their positions at the front and preventing the Allies from advancing further. Keeping order meant limiting the need to divert forces from the front to counter internal struggles.

The crisis of 1943 hit the urban population hard—especially, the white-collar workers and the middle-lower classes. This resulted in a significant growth in already existing and endemic corruption.<sup>57</sup> Several functionaries in the middle and lower echelons of administrative services made concessions and turned a blind eye to production quotas, evasion of deliveries or stockpile management. The tertiary sector (service sector), which had been developing within Italian society during the previous 20 years, tried to safeguard its economic conditions.<sup>58</sup>

The result was increasing shortages of supplies in the regular market—in particular, fats, sugar, salt, wood, any kind of fuel and agricultural products, especially vegetables. Southern Italy was the biggest producer of these kinds of supplies, particularly in winter. Its occupation by Allied forces presented a major difficulty for the rationing system.<sup>59</sup> The lack of fats constituted a threat to public order and available supplies failed to provide the minimum rations citizens were entitled to.<sup>60</sup>

The SS commander in Bologna considered the shortage of fats a major issue of public security, as they were the most important ingredient of each meal. He also accused the Italian administrators of the authority responsible for fats and oils of promising rations that could not be provided, thus raising expectations and, eventually, bringing about disappointment and discontent among the population.<sup>61</sup>

Besides fats, the insufficiency of salt and fresh vegetables represented the second most important reason for complaints from the population and concerns relating to public order for the occupiers.<sup>62</sup>

Cities began to depend significantly on rural areas due to the scarcity of supplies. Some scholars pointed out that landowners and agricultural workers now had more power and autonomy than ever before.<sup>63</sup>

Especially in regions with a high percentage of sharecroppers and small farmers the ability of the authorities to ensure correct implementation of regulations for production, delivery and distribution was particularly low. Small farmers tended to defend their privileged positions and saw the chance to make political capital from the situation for use after the end of the war.<sup>64</sup> Nevertheless, small farmers and sharecroppers did not account for the highest quotas on the black market. Their production rates were too low to cover the needs of a huge and growing illegal economy. Big farms and landowners subsidised the black market by diverting resources officially meant for regular stockpiling.<sup>65</sup> In Tuscany, for example, the so-called big wheat producers, those providing more than 2,000 kg annually to stockpiling systems, covered almost 62% of regional black market needs.<sup>66</sup>

Small producers proved to be very important for anti-Fascist guerrillas who were rising up. Partisans could easily claim that the large-scale stockpiling system was merely a way to improve the capability of the German occupation authorities to exploit Italian resources. Thus, evading the system could also fulfil moral expectations. Furthermore, partisans created a system in which the producer could take a profit for helping the Resistance. They would raid farmers to obtain supplies

leaving a note showing the amount of goods taken and the promise of future compensation. Sometimes the amounts taken were deliberately inflated to give the farmer the chance of ‘gaining the day’ by selling the remaining, allegedly stolen, goods on the black market. This strategy made it easier for small owners to hide goods, while reducing the risk of being discovered by the authorities.<sup>67</sup>

However, cooperation between producers and partisans was far from being the general rule. Resistance fighters found themselves in the inconvenient position of needing ties with the farmers and landowners to obtain supplies.<sup>68</sup> On the other hand, producers often regarded the partisans with suspicion both because their activities led to repressive action by the Germans and the Fascists and because several common criminals had found a safe haven in the Resistance.<sup>69</sup> Despite the efforts of the partisan leader to prevent and punish pillaging and other forms of illegal exploitation of resources by threatening capital punishment, such cases happened on several occasions, increasing general mistrust among farmers.<sup>70</sup>

Cooperation between the Resistance and some producers further stirred mistrust and sometimes hostility towards Fascist authorities. Following the collapse of state power in September 1943, rebuilding and reorganising the stockpiling and distribution system mostly fell into the hands of local authorities—namely, the prefects. Small farmers and producers had little bargaining power with them and usually found themselves in a difficult position and subject to abuses.<sup>71</sup> Armed formations representing the Republican government, for instance, oversaw repression of the black market, while being involved in racketeering against small producers who were unable to appeal to the proper authorities to receive protection.<sup>72</sup>

Instead of tackling the actual problems of the rationing system, such as inefficiency, corruption and abuses, the Fascist authorities used propaganda to prevent the urban and rural population from joining forces and posing a threat to public safety. Thus, the press blamed the egoism and greediness of the farmers for the lack of food supplies and depicted rural workers and landowners as profiteers.<sup>73</sup>

#### CONFLICTING AUTHORITIES: OCCUPANTS AND COLLABORATORS

As previously underlined, Backe and Pehle’s plans for Italy were not completed due to imbalances of power inside the German administration. The so-called plan of *Nahrungsfreiheit* (‘food freedom’) for the

German people was only partially achieved owing to transportation and public order issues in Italy.<sup>74</sup> Although food continued to be transferred to the Reich until the winter of 1944, Pehle's plans for Italy often met with obstacles at the local level (caused both by Italian and German authorities) and were hampered by air raids that damaged the railways.<sup>75</sup>

The German authorities, particularly those dealing with the exploitation of resources, were moved to mistrust if not hatred towards Italians. However, the initial resolution toward strong rule over the Italian population and local authorities changed, the main priority becoming keeping the situation away from the front as quiet as possible. When it helped their military and exploitation goals, the German authorities dealt pragmatically with problems related to the black market.

The Wehrmacht and the *Sicherheitsdienst* (SD) (SS intelligence agency) took part in illegal trafficking in Italy, the case of Rome being the most famous example.<sup>76</sup> During the spring of 1944 the situation in the city was so hopeless that banning military vehicles in the city streets<sup>77</sup> engendered a feeling of discouragement among the SS.<sup>78</sup>

It was reported that the black market would suffer and the population would not receive supplies if German trucks could not reach the city, thus showing that German forces had an active role in illegal trades.<sup>79</sup> Concerns, especially about food, linked to public order in Italy often led the Reich to consider the black market as vital for civilians.<sup>80</sup> This happened in Venice during the winter and autumn of 1944, in Milan during the spring of 1944, and in Liguria which, in the autumn of 1944, became cut off from supply chains from other regions.<sup>81</sup>

Although, in principle, the German authorities considered the black market something to be fought in every conceivable way, experience on the ground led them to apply some flexibility. They found themselves dealing with an Italian system of hoarding and distribution that was highly inefficient and apparently unfit to meet the need of workers and lower classes or to provide enough industrial and agricultural resources to be sent to Germany.<sup>82</sup>

Thus, besides supplying goods to be transported to Germany the occupation authorities had to deal with the problem of supplying the population to prevent unrest and public discontent. The occupiers did not shy away from using repressive or violent measures to keep the situation near the front under control or as retaliation for guerrilla actions by partisans. However, where possible, the use of troops and military

force was mostly avoided in the interior. Repressive actions in some parts of northern Italy were by and large delegated to Italian Republican troops.<sup>83</sup>

Thus, alongside repressive strategies the German officials tried to understand the reasons behind the black market. For instance, they blamed the policy of regulating prices for agricultural but not for industrial products as partial justification for the behaviour of farmers supplying the black market. They were forced to sell products at a low price, while they had to buy industrial goods at the regular market price.<sup>84</sup>

The occupying forces held back from blaming either the population or the illegal traders. While some German memoranda supported the introduction of more effective controls and punishments, they also blamed the Italian authorities for the tricky situation affecting the life of the population.<sup>85</sup> Furthermore, they accused Italian Fascists of being bad role models by holding banquets in the party's headquarters or in other public buildings, despite widespread misery among the civilian population.<sup>86</sup> This led to a paradoxical situation in which, in a few cases, the German occupiers were seen by the population as the guardians of order and legality. In some cases, Italian civilians asked the Germans to remove corrupt or incompetent Italian public servants.<sup>87</sup>

There were occasions when Wehrmacht soldiers intervened to allow illegal trafficking when they considered it vital for the population. The idea of partially legalizing the black market to achieve better control over prices and to allow the poorest citizens to have enough food was also considered.<sup>88</sup>

Thus, the occupation forces had the challenging task of maintaining public order while dealing with severe shortages, resistance fighters and Italian authorities that were mostly incompetent or inefficient. For those reasons, especially in areas away from the front, they occasionally became 'defenders' of the population.<sup>89</sup> This showed, however, how weak and superficial the power of Italian authorities was, and how easily they could have been bypassed by the occupying forces.

## CONCLUSIONS

The situation in Italy after September 1943 was peculiar and complicated. The existence of two Italian national authorities and two enemy armies facing up to each other within the national territory considerably worsened an already challenging situation.

The inability of the Fascist government to provide for the basic needs of the population started at the beginning of the war and never improved, while the division of the peninsula only aggravated the situation. First, there were no longer supply lines from southern Italy. Second, the war resulted in great material damage, forcing civilians to flee as refugees and destroying important infrastructure. Third, the needs of occupation forces severely burdened the already chronically insufficient supplies of food and resources. The population was already suffering serious conditions as a result of the war and this was further aggravated by heavy military activities and increasing violence brought about by the occupation. Furthermore, many people lost their jobs and social position because of the political and military collapse of Italy.

Psychologically, the ever closer front line provoked panic and fear of starvation that led to compulsive hoarding and the spread of illegal trades on the small scale. The black market consequently became the only possible response to chronic shortages of supplies, distribution delays and the inefficient mechanisms of rationing. Corruption and selfishness among Fascist civil servants as well as the laziness of the police prevented any effective control of the black market. In fact, the black market was no longer the exception but the rule.

As German officials noticed, it was a survival strategy of the population, even if it damaged the poorest members of society who lost all their savings and personal belongings by having to pay for increasingly expensive basic alimentary goods.<sup>90</sup>

Scarcity of food as well as political, military and administrative chaos after 8 September 1943 together with mounting resistance prevented the German occupiers from efficiently achieving the goals of the occupation—namely, organising a rapid resistance force against the Allies and providing additional supply lines to Germany through exploitation of Italian resources. In fact, after the fast-moving and brutal occupation of the peninsula and the obliteration of the Italian Army, the Germans faced significant issues that prompted them to adopt a more rational approach.

The occupiers made some efforts to analyse the situation and develop solutions to the problem as they were aware of the threat that the difficult food situation could pose to their own aims, both economically and military. On the other hand, they could not resolve issues that were rooted deeply in Italian society and did not seem to receive any adequate support from the Italian side.

The mood of the population appeared to be closely linked to the food situation, which not only caused social unrest and fear, but also fostered social conflicts between blue-collar and white-collar workers as well as between the upper classes—rural landowners and farmers. The former saw their situation worsening every day while the latter found ways to prosper despite all the difficulties. Many letters and accounts written by citizens at the time show a growing class struggle between fixed loan workers and profiteers.

The problem of supplies radically affected the behaviour of the occupiers and collaborators and responses varied according to context. Whereas near the front and in strongly militarised areas the coercive force of the German occupiers developed entirely through requisitions, relocations of populations and the destruction or reuse of infrastructure and buildings, the situation was different behind the front and in main production areas.

Where it was in the interests of the Germans to maintain social peace, regular working conditions and civilian activities, they acted pragmatically and ‘fairly’ compared to their Fascist collaborators. The attitude of the Italian authorities fluctuated as well. The prefects usually seemed to respond to everyday issues in a proper way, despite their authority being limited by the Germans. At the smaller scale, however, local notables and *podestà* (‘high-level officials’) often used their position to gain personal advantage at the cost of the population. This attitude in particular produced cases, few in number but significant nonetheless, in which the Germans paradoxically appeared to be the guardians of law and order rather than occupiers.

## NOTES

1. Pietro Badoglio, 1871–1956, was an Italian general and prime minister. During the World War I he reached the rank of lieutenant colonel. He played a basilar role in the capture of the Kingdom of Ethiopia, and was later charged as a war criminal for his conduct. In July 1943, King Vittorio Emanuele III nominated Badoglio prime minister to replace Mussolini. In the following months, Pietro Badoglio reached the agreement that led Italy to the armistice with the Allied forces.
2. The first comprehensive book on the RSI was: Friedrich William Deakin, *The Brutal Friendship: Hitler, Mussolini and the Fall of Italian Fascism* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1962). However, for more than

- 40 years, historians omitted the matter of Italian collaborationism. Several works appeared in the last 20 years. See, e.g., Luigi Ganapini, *La repubblica delle camicie nere, i combattenti, i politici, gli amministratori, i socializzatori* (Milano: Garzanti, 1999); Aurelio Lepre, *La Storia della Repubblica di Mussolini, Salò: il tempo dell'odio e della violenza* (Milano: Mondadori, 1999); Dianella Gagliani, *Le Brigate Nere, Mussolini e la militarizzazione del partito fascista repubblicano* (Turinorino: Bollati Boringhieri, 1999).
3. Lutz Klinkhammer, *L'occupazione tedesca in Italia, 1943–1954* (Turinorino: Bollati Boringhieri, 1993): 41–45. Together with Italian prefectures, provinces were ruled by *Militärkommandanturen* (MK).
  4. *Ibid.*, 56.
  5. Enzo Collotti, *L'amministrazione tedesca nell'Italia occupata* (Milano: Lerici, 1963): 126.
  6. *Ibid.*, 100–110; Klinkhammer, *L'occupazione tedesca*, 56–60.
  7. *Ibid.*, 66–67.
  8. Gustavo Corni, “Terzo Reich e sfruttamento dell'Europa occupata. La politica alimentare tedesca nella seconda guerra mondiale,” *Italia Contemporanea* 209/210 (1997/1998): 6–8; Collotti, *L'amministrazione tedesca*, 171–173.
  9. *Ibid.* This strategy has been influenced by the economic theory of the German elite, about the role of the Italian economy in the ‘New European Order’. According to this, the agricultural nature of the Italian economy should have been reinforced to the detriment of the national industry: Roland Sarti, *Fascismo e Grande Industria, 1919–1940* (Milano: Moizzi, 1977): 45; Collotti, *L'amministrazione tedesca*, 144.
  10. Klinkhammer, *L'occupazione tedesca in Italia*, 97–98.
  11. Collotti, *L'amministrazione tedesca*, 290–292, 480–482.
  12. The defensive strategies of Rommel and Kesselring are depicted in Klinkhammer, *L'occupazione tedesca in Italia*, 44–46; Deakin, *The Brutal Friendship*, 612, 617.
  13. On 19 May 1944 the German defensive line at Cassino collapsed and in the following months the central regions of Italy were occupied by the Allied forces (Rome was liberated on 4 June 1944, Florence was reached by Allied and partisan forces on 4 August 1944).
  14. Maximiliane Rieder, “Aspetti economici dell'occupazione tedesca in Italia,” *Rivista di storia contemporanea* 2/3 (1993): 289–291.
  15. Giorgio Candeloro, *Storia dell'Italia moderna. Vol. X. La seconda guerra mondiale, il crollo del fascismo, la Resistenza, 1939–1945* (Milano: Feltrinelli, 2014), 113–114; Giacomo Beccantini and Nicolò Bellanca, “Economia di guerra e Mercato nero, note e riflessioni sulla Toscana,” *Italia Contemporanea* 165 (1986): 8–9.

16. Fabio Degli Esposti, "L'industria bellica italiana e le commesse tedesche (1937–1943)," *Rivista di storia contemporanea* 2/3 (1993): 203.
17. Beccantini and Bellanca, "Economia di guerra," 9–10.
18. Candeloro, *Storia dell'Italia moderna*, 113.
19. Beccantini and Bellanca, "Economia di guerra," 11; Ganapini, *La repubblica delle camicie nere*, 297–298.
20. Candeloro, *Storia dell'Italia moderna*, 113.
21. Ibid.
22. Rieder, "Aspetti economici dell'occupazione tedesca in Italia," 296.
23. Ibid.
24. Amedeo Osti Guerrazzi, *La repubblica necessaria, il fascismo repubblicano a Roma, 1943–44* (Milano: Franco Angeli, 2004): 11–12, 16–17. This theory was exposed for a small city—I am not sure what this means, Pesaro; Mario Pinotti, 'Pesaro,' in *Linea Gotica 1994*, ed. Giorgio Rochat et al. (Milano: Franco Angeli, 1986): 249.
25. Klinkhammer, *L'occupazione tedesca*, 119.
26. Ibid., 122–125.
27. The German strategies towards Italian industries during the occupation were influenced by the critical situation of the Reich's industrial production. Minister Speer and his representative in Italy, Hans Leyers, pursued a policy of 'on-site exploitation' for the major Italian industries: Klinkhammer, *L'occupazione tedesca*, 70–84, 195–200.
28. Ibid., 226–233.
29. Collotti, *L'amministrazione tedesca*, 151.
30. Gianfranco Bertolo, "Le Marche," in *Operai e contadini nella crisi italiana del 1943–1944*, ed. Gianfranco Bertolo et al. (Milano: Feltrinelli, 1974): 299; Libertario Guerrini, "La Toscana," in *Operai e contadini nella crisi italiana del 1943–1944*, ed. Gianfranco Bertolo et al. (Milano: Feltrinelli, 1974): 320.
31. Ibid., 298.
32. For instance, this was the situation in Turin and Milano: Ganapini, *La repubblica delle camicie nere*, 298.
33. Klinkhammer, *L'occupazione tedesca*, 185. The limited autonomy of Italian provincial organisations has to be interpreted as a means by which Rahn could ensure his leadership over the RSI and the Italian occupied territories, to the detriment of other German authorities: Ibid., 187–188.
34. The different public organisations are theoretically ruled by the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry: Edoardo Moroni in *ibid.*, 185–187.
35. Ibid., 98–99.
36. In the first months of 1945, more than 1700 LA *Führer* were in Italy: Collotti, *L'amministrazione italiana*, 172.

37. Archivio Centrale dello Stato [ACS], Rome, Segreteria particolare del Duce RSI 43–45 (SpDRSI), Carteggio riservato folder 9, *Esame corrispondenza censurata—notiziario quindicinale*: giugno 1944 (56), luglio 1944 (48), dicembre 1944 (54), marzo 1945 (33).
38. ACS, Rome, SpDRSI, Carteggio riservato folder 9, *Esame corrispondenza censurata—notiziario quindicinale*: March 1945 (33).
39. ACS, Rome, Uffici politici e comandi militari tedeschi in Italia, *Bericht über die Ernährungslage in Rom, Willi Kofler, Rom 01.04.44*.
40. ACS, Rome, Uffici politici e comandi militari tedeschi in Italia, *Bericht über den Schwarzmarkt in Rom, SS-Sturmbannführer Gunther Amonn, Rom 05.12.43*.
41. Ibid.
42. ACS, Rome, Uffici politici e comandi militari tedeschi in Italia: *Bericht über die Ernährungslage in Rom, SD Willi Kofler, Rom 01.04.44*.
43. ACS, Rome, SpDRSI, Carteggio riservato folder 9, *Esame corrispondenza censurata—notiziario quindicinale*: gennaio 1945(II) (48).
44. *Carabinieri* was and is a gendarmerie and military police force, considered disloyal by National Socialists and Fascist forces because of their links with the Savoia family.
45. ACS, Rome, SpDRSI, Carteggio riservato folder 9, *Esame corrispondenza censurata—notiziario quindicinale*: luglio 1944 (50).
46. ACS, Rome, Uffici politici e comandi militari tedeschi in Italia: *Bericht über den Schwarzmarkt in Rom, SS-Sturmbannführer Gunther Amonn, Rom 05.12.43*.
47. Ibid.; ACS, Rome, Uffici politici e comandi militari tedeschi in Italia: *Bericht über die Ernährungslage in Bologna, SD Heinz Reiner, Bologna 28.04.44*.
48. ACS, Rome, SpDRSI, Carteggio riservato folder 9, *Esame corrispondenza censurata—notiziario quindicinale*: giugno 1944 (54–56).
49. ACS, Rome, SpDRSI, Carteggio riservato folder 9, *Esame corrispondenza censurata—notiziario quindicinale*: giugno 1944 (55), luglio 1944 (49).
50. ACS, Rome, SpDRSI, Carteggio riservato folder 9, *Esame corrispondenza censurata—notiziario quindicinale*: gennaio 1945(I) (43); ACS, Rome, Uffici politici e comandi militari tedeschi in Italia: *Bericht über die Ernährungslage in Italien, SS-Brigadeführer Dr. Harster, Verona 06.11.43*.
51. ACS, Rome, SpDRSI, Carteggio riservato folder 9, *Esame corrispondenza censurata—notiziario quindicinale*: gennaio 1945(II) (49).
52. ACS, Rome, SpDRSI, Carteggio riservato folder 9, *Esame corrispondenza censurata—notiziario quindicinale*: gennaio 1945(I) (42–43), gennaio 1945(II) (47–48).
53. ACS, Rome, Uffici politici e comandi militari tedeschi in Italia: *Bericht über die Ernährungslage in Italien, SS-Brigadeführer Dr. Harster, Verona 06.11.43*.

54. Klinkhammer, *L'occupazione tedesca*, 200–201.
55. *Ibid.*, 203.
56. *Ibid.*, 188–189.
57. Marco Borghi, *Tra fascio littorio e senso dello Stato. Funzionari, apparati e ministeri della RSI, 1943–1945* (Padua: CLEUP, 2001), 77–78.
58. *Ibid.* and Beccantini and Bellanca, “Economia di guerra,” 21–24.
59. ACS, Rome, Uffici politici e comandi militari tedeschi in Italia, *Bericht über die Ernährungslage in Verona, SS-Sturmbannführer [illegible], Verona 30.12.44.*
60. Intelligence reports referred to several complaints about that, see ACS, Rome, SpDRSI, Carteggio riservato folder 9, *Esame corrispondenza censurata—notiziario quindicinale*: luglio 1944 (48), agosto 1944 (56), dicembre 1944 (54), gennaio 1945 (47), marzo 1945 (31 and 44). In some cases, olive oil was available but was of such bad quality that was not adapt for human consumption: ACS, Rome, Uffici politici e comandi militari tedeschi in Italia: *Bericht über die Ernährungslage in Florenz, SS-Oberscharführer Rabanser, Florenz 08.11.43.*
61. ACS, Rome, Uffici politici e comandi militari tedeschi in Italia, *Bericht über die Ernährungslage in Bologna, SD Heinz Rainer, Bologna 28.4.44*; ACS, Rome, SpDRSI, Carteggio riservato folder 9, *Esame corrispondenza censurata—notiziario quindicinale*: gennaio 1945(II) (47), marzo 1945 (31), agosto 1944 (56), luglio 1944 (48).
62. ACS, Rome, SpDRSI, Carteggio riservato folder 9, *Esame corrispondenza censurata—notiziario quindicinale*: aprile 1944 (38).
63. Beccantini and Bellanca, “Economia di guerra,” 23–34.
64. Ernesto Brunetta, “Il Veneto,” in *Operai e contadini nella crisi italiana del 1943–1944*, ed. Gianfranco Bertolo et al. (Milano: Feltrinelli, 1974): 358–364. The two regional cases show different types of relations between partisans and rural workers. In the latter case the traditional Catholic culture of Veneto produced a deep scepticism among farmers the following is unclear: For the political instances partisan explained.
65. Luigi Ganapini, *Una città, la guerra: lotte di classe, ideologie e forze politiche a Milano, 1939–1945* (Milano: Franco Angeli, 1988): 115; Guerrini, “La Toscana,” 370–371; Klinkhammer, *L'occupazione tedesca*, 182.
66. Sharecrop farmers and small property owners (within the 15 quintals of goods to be delivered to stockpiles yearly) covered just 12% of regional needs. In Guerrini, “La Toscana,” 370–371.
67. Guerrini, “La Toscana,” 364–366.
68. On ‘partisan justice’ and their punishment system see Claudio Pavone, *Una Guerra civile. Saggio storico sulla moralità della Resistenza* (Turinorino: Bollati Boringhieri, 2006): 449–475.
69. Bertolo, “Le Marche,” 316–318.

70. Pavone, *Una Guerra civile*, 449–475.
71. Beccantini and Bellanca, “Economia di guerra,” 15–16; Bertolo, “Le Marche,” 275.
72. Luigi Cavazzoli, “Vita quotidiana e Seconda guerra mondiale,” *Italia contemporanea* 174 (1989): 105; G. Bertoldo, “Introduzione,” in *Contadini*, op. cit., 267–268. On the constitution of the armed formations of the Republican fascism (*Brigate Nere*), and on their criminal conduct see: Gagliani, *Le Brigate Nere*.
73. Ganapini, *Una città*, 115–116. The same propaganda system was executed in the countryside, but was here aimed at blaming the industrial workers and their special food treatment: Bertolo, “Le Marche,” 267.
74. Collotti, *L'amministrazione tedesca*, 172.
75. In particular, the ‘collision’ happened in relation to the general structure of the *Militärverwaltung*, at a provincial level.
76. Klinkhammer, *L'occupazione tedesca*, 193–194.
77. This was the consequence of the Roman partisans’ attack on a military police regiment, executed in via Rasella on 23 March 1944. The German victims numbered 35 and in the retaliation, carried out in *Fosse Ardeatine*, 355 Italians were killed. Kesselring used this occasion to block the German military transportations through the city.
78. Klinkhammer, *L'occupazione tedesca*, 191.
79. *Ibid.*
80. *Ibid.*, 179, 182.
81. Antonio Gibelli and Massimo Ilardi, “Genova,” in *Operai e contadini nella crisi italiana del 1943–1944*, ed. Gianfranco Bertolo et al. (Milano: Feltrinelli, 1974): 140–143.
82. ACS, Rome, Uffici politici e comandi militari tedeschi in Italia: *Notiz, SS-Hauptsturmführer (illegible), Verona, 04.11.43.*
83. ACS, Rome, Uffici politici e comandi militari tedeschi in Italia: *Notiz, SS-Hauptsturmführer (illegible signature), Verona, 04.11.43.*
84. ACS, Rome, Uffici politici e comandi militari tedeschi in Italia: *Ernährungswirtschaft, SS-Obersturmführer Haupt, undated.*
85. ACS, Rome, Uffici politici e comandi militari tedeschi in Italia: *Promemoria contenente misure per l'eliminazione del mercato nero, undated.*
86. ACS, Rome, Uffici politici e comandi militari tedeschi in Italia: *Bericht über den Schwarzmarkt in Rom, SS-Sturmbannführer Gunther Amonn, Rom 05.12.43.*
87. ACS, Rome, Uffici politici e comandi militari tedeschi in Italia: *Ernährungswirtschaft, SS-Obersturmführer Haupt, undated.*

88. ACS, Rome, Uffici politici e comandi militari tedeschi in Italia: *Bericht über die Ernährungslage in Rom*, SD Willi Kofler, Rom 01.04.44.
89. ACS, Rome, Uffici politici e comandi militari tedeschi in Italia: *Bericht über die Ernährungslage in Florenz*, SS-Oberscharführer Rabanser, Florenz 08.11.43.
90. ACS, Rome, Uffici politici e comandi militari tedeschi in Italia: *Bericht über die Ernährungslage in Bologna*, SD Heinz Rainer, Bologna 28.04.44.



# Bones of Contention: The Nazi Recycling Project in Germany and France During World War II

*Chad B. Denton and Heike Weber*

In May 1941 an official of the Vichy government's Service for the Salvage and Use of Waste and Old Materials (hereafter Salvage Service) made the following observations about his visit to German-occupied Bordeaux:

Four-fifths of the slaughterhouses are requisitioned by the occupation troops.... all the by-products of the slaughter for the German troops are shipped in full train cars (bones, hooves, horns, hair, etc.) towards Germany. I know that SUDOS [*Société d'Utilisation des Os*] has taken some steps in Paris to try to keep the bones in France, but until now they have achieved no result.<sup>1</sup>

---

C. B. Denton (✉)  
Yonsei University, Seoul, South Korea  
e-mail: chaddenton@yonsei.ac.kr

H. Weber  
Karlsruhe Institute of Technology, Karlsruhe, Germany  
e-mail: heikeweber@kit.edu

© The Author(s) 2018  
T. Tönsmeier et al. (eds.), *Coping with Hunger and Shortage under German Occupation in World War II*,  
[https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-77467-1\\_7](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-77467-1_7)

The next month the Salvage Service director asked the State Secretary for National Education to order academic inspectors throughout France, both occupied and non-occupied, to organise school collections of aluminium foil, bottle caps, corks, gramophone records, metal tubes, newspapers, rags, string and bones.<sup>2</sup> That train cars filled with animal bones made their way to German factories, while French children began dutifully bringing leftover bones to school was no accident. The establishment of the Salvage Service in Paris on 24 January 1941, with its separate divisions for research, propaganda, second-hand clothing, rags and paper, iron and metals, glass and bones and with jurisdiction over all French territory was a Franco-German initiative that placed the French waste stream under Nazi German supervision.<sup>3</sup> Yet, French private industry also sought to control this waste stream as suggested by the reference to the Company for the Use of Bones (hereafter SUDOS), a massive conglomerate with factories in several French cities producing chemicals, glue and gelatine.

During World War II, cities throughout Europe discovered that they controlled a valuable, critical resource: urban waste. Fresh and used bones were particularly sought after as a crucial raw material for the chemical industry and for the production of war-relevant substances such as glue, lubricants and explosives. Meeting this demand posed two particular challenges: food shortages constricted their supply and lack of transportation prevented them from being quickly processed, thus diminishing their value as a primary resource. Historians have described how National Socialist policies pushed recycling in Germany to mobilise both people and resources. From 1936 onwards, urban dwellers as well as municipal waste services had to collect paper, bones, metals and other waste materials separately as part of a Nazi project for 'total' waste exploitation.<sup>4</sup> From 1939 to 1945, as historians have amply documented, the German military and the Nazi Party began systematically plundering the occupied territories for raw materials, foodstuffs and livestock, but—less noticed by historians—they equally exploited the waste of these regions through requisitions and through the forced creation of economic control organisations that managed both raw materials and waste.<sup>5</sup> These organisations aimed to restructure local urban waste management systems and everyday practices of consuming, wasting and recycling to mirror the 'total' waste recovery project back in Germany.

The Nazi recycling system relied heavily on the labour of women, children and forced labour and functioned along the lines of National Socialist racial ideology, leading to many inhuman, even perverse, consequences,

such as reusing the belongings of concentration camp victims and even their hair or gold teeth.<sup>6</sup> In this chapter we foreground a further feature of Nazi recycling—namely, its outreach to occupied Europe and beyond through both coercion and cooperation. For the specific case of collecting and recycling bones, we sketch how Nazi Germany established collection infrastructures back home and how that system was transferred to and adopted in France from 1940 onwards. Drawing on World War I experiences, Nazi economic planners identified bones as a surplus resource early on and soon turned schools into collecting centres to raise recycling quotas. After 1940, they extended these waste policies to occupied Europe with different approaches and procedures depending on the regional settings. Focussing on the specific case of bones in Germany and France provides a detailed look at the range of key participants—occupation administrators, political leaders, local authorities, industrialists, teachers, hygienists and citizens—and their ongoing struggle over who owned and controlled the valuable waste of leftover bones.

### MOBILISING BONES IN WARTIME: BONES AS A CHEMICAL AND MARTIAL RESOURCE

Until the early twentieth century, bones provided the foundation of the so-called bones industry. Since bones consist in large part of minerals, azotic mucilage and fat, this animal waste component could be turned into basic chemical stocks like glycerine, stearin, phosphates and phosphorus, as well as products like gelatine, tallow, glue, lubricants or fertiliser (bone meal). Slaughterhouses, canteens or restaurants sold their bones to a vibrant bone trade that increasingly included overseas imports from cattle-raising countries such as Argentina. The bones' value was dictated by their freshness: fresh bones provided a source of many different fats, including lubrication oils, and could then be exploited in respect to their phosphate and azotic content. In contrast, older bones delivered only minor fat qualities (such as for soap production) and served to produce glue or bone meal, while most household bones had lost all their fat through cooking. Nevertheless, until the 1920s, these household bones also had some economic value inside the so-called rag-and-bone trade—a trade we would nowadays describe as the recycling industry. In urban agglomerations, rag-and-bone men—the German *Lumpensammler* and the French *chiffonniers*—bought bones as well as other waste materials such as metals, paper or rags from private households or picked them up from waste bins and dumps.<sup>7</sup> Around 1910, this door-to-door waste

trade was dominated by rags, followed by paper and then bones. As long as such household leftovers had some economic value, they were amassed by the local *Lumpensammler*. In the 1920s, however, laboriously picking up bones in spatially dispersed households no longer made economic sense, and the same was true for household paper by around 1930.

Bones' importance came to the fore during wartime when naval blockades hampered imports and the war machinery required 'martial' material such as glycerine for the production of explosives or lubricants to grease military equipment. In late 1914, some German municipalities installed waste collection services to recover kitchen scraps to be used for livestock feed and bones as fertiliser. As spontaneous, local responses to shortages, these recycling efforts were communal or citizens' initiatives, but by 1916 the state began more systematically to explore waste recovery at the national scale. The 1916 Voluntary War Aid implemented forced collections of bones, paper and fruit stones, and in 1917 the War Committee for Collection and Aid institutionalised bone collections throughout Germany in cooperation with the bone industry and the German wartime control offices.<sup>8</sup>

Germany's bone industry endured up to the mid-1920s with around 50 bone factories in place.<sup>9</sup> Having one in nearly every region kept transport fast and short. Production capacities declined with the recession of the late 1920s but were soon reanimated by the autarchic policies of Nazi Germany. From 1934/1935 onwards, bones, including those from households, once again became a sought-after asset. Production capacities were rehabilitated, and while overseas bone imports dropped the national bone supply rose through intensified collections. In 1937 the main points of origin such as slaughterhouses, meat-processing plants or restaurants were obliged to collect their bones and sell them to the bones industry. In parallel, different Nazi organisations and institutions such as the *Reichserziehungsministerium* (Reich Ministry of Education) or the *Reichsfrauenausschuss* (National Women's Committee) advocated for or implemented household bone collections in urban areas.<sup>10</sup> As a result, almost 100,000 tonnes of bones were gathered in that year, and propaganda reported that 10,000 tonnes of fat, 15,000 tonnes of glue, gelatine and bone meal, as well as some 45,000 tonnes of feed and fertiliser could be obtained from them. At the same time, the recovery rate was seen as still too low when compared to the estimated 420,000 tonnes of bones annually produced in Germany.<sup>11</sup> In the ensuing years the recycling quota was raised so that roughly a third of these bones were recovered.

Waste recycling was integral to Nazi autarchy plans, as demonstrated by Adolf Stöcker's widely disseminated brochure 'Used Materials Management'.<sup>12</sup> It listed figures on material quantities and financial exchanges that could be saved through waste recycling—in the case of bones, for instance, Stöcker counted that the import surplus of 33,800 tonnes, worth 2.48 million Reichmarks, could be substituted by national bone recovery efforts—ranking third behind rags and scrap iron with import surpluses worth 34 million and 5.2 million Reichmarks, respectively. To reach the autarchic aims through exploiting waste, in 1937 Göring appointed Wilhelm Ziegler as *Reichskommissar für Altmaterialverwertung* (Reich Commissioner for Scrap Salvage) under his *Vierjahresplanbehörde* (Office of the Four Year Plan), and an array of decrees and orders began to systematically restructure waste flows. Urban municipalities were forced to collect kitchen wastes and to recover reusable materials inside their municipal waste services; the rag-and-bone trade was aryanised; private households were told to hoard items like tin foil, paper, leather and bones for the rag-and-bone men and for separate collections or *Stossaktionen* (shock actions), carried out by party organisations and, increasingly, by school children. In 1938 a *Reichskommissariat für Altmaterialverwertung* (Reich Commissariat for Scrap Salvage) was formed under the roof of the Economics Ministry, and in 1940 Hans Heck took over from Ziegler.

Initially, bones were primarily seen as a means to cover the so-called *Fettlücke* (fats gap). Nazi Germany lacked industrial as well as edible fats; the soap and detergent industry in particular imported most of their needed fats and oils.<sup>13</sup> In 1936 the *Überwachungsstelle für industrielle Fette* (Supervisory Office for Industrial Fats) determined that any bones recovered for stock feed and fertiliser had to be degreased of up to 1% of their fat content beforehand, and prohibited the relatively inefficient fat removal process of boiling or steaming bones in favour of extraction via benzene or other solvents.<sup>14</sup> Later on, in addition to the fat and soap argument, Nazi propaganda highlighted the broad spectrum of important base materials that could be gained by bones. The 'bone tree' (Fig. 1) visually illustrated the multiplicity of substances and derivatives extracted from bones. The tree's trunk, represented by bones, expanded into three main branches ('bone fat', 'degreased bones', 'raw neatsfoot oil') that gave way to several bifurcations: derivatives, technical and consumer goods such as glue, colourants, soap, medicines, varnishes, matches, wire insulation and precision oils. Wartime propaganda regularly pointed out that around 80–100 manufactures were generated on



children were asked to collect paper, metals, tin foil and so on from their own as well as their neighbouring families and bring them along to school.<sup>16</sup> Additionally, special *Altstofflehrer* (Waste Materials Teachers) were appointed to control and handle the results and transfer them to the local rag-and-bone trade. In 1941 a new scoring system motivated children by awarding prizes to those pupils and schools that reached the highest results at the *Gau* (political district) and national level.<sup>17</sup>

Bones led the way for this development. Schools had been tested as collection points to intensify and accelerate bones' return to industry from 1937 onwards. On 28 January 1937 the Ministry of Education allowed the different *Gaue* to install regional school collections, and early that year, Berlin pupils collected bones under the slogan 'Germany needs resources!'<sup>18</sup> On 24 November 1939 the Ministry of Education reissued the 1937 order now under war conditions, specifically calling for more collections in regions where the bone industry lacked supply.<sup>19</sup> When schools in 1938 had to include the subject of *Altstoffkunde* (waste materials and their recycling) in lesson plans, the *Knochenlehrkarte* (bone chart) (Fig. 2) was the first sample of several *Rohstofflehrkarten* (raw material charts) for schools to use as didactic teaching aids. All of them suggested a flawless recycling of bones, scrap, rags and paper, respectively, into new goods.<sup>20</sup>

Focussing on the material transformations of recycling, these illustrations overlooked the more critical, labour-intensive and occasionally unhygienic processes such as accumulating, stockpiling, disassembling, sorting or transporting the actual waste. Collecting bones—like kitchen waste—could easily produce a foul, even unhygienic result. Parents, teachers and even public health authorities regularly expressed worries about insanitary conditions, including the spread of infectious diseases. Indeed, when transport capacities dwindled, the collections of bones—that citizens meanwhile were not allowed to throw out any more—were temporarily banned in some regions in the name of hygiene.<sup>21</sup>

In total, schools collected between 22,000 and 26,500 tonnes of bones annually.<sup>22</sup> By 1943 the accumulated sums, which were to be regularly reported to regional economic authorities and the RfA, included not only the cities of Vienna, Salzburg and Gdansk, but also Luxembourg, Kattowitz, Poznan and Liberec. In 1944, waste collections reached their limit. For one, consumption was extremely restricted—paper was hardly available, textile ration cards were temporarily suspended altogether and meat rations were reduced. For another, in bombed-out

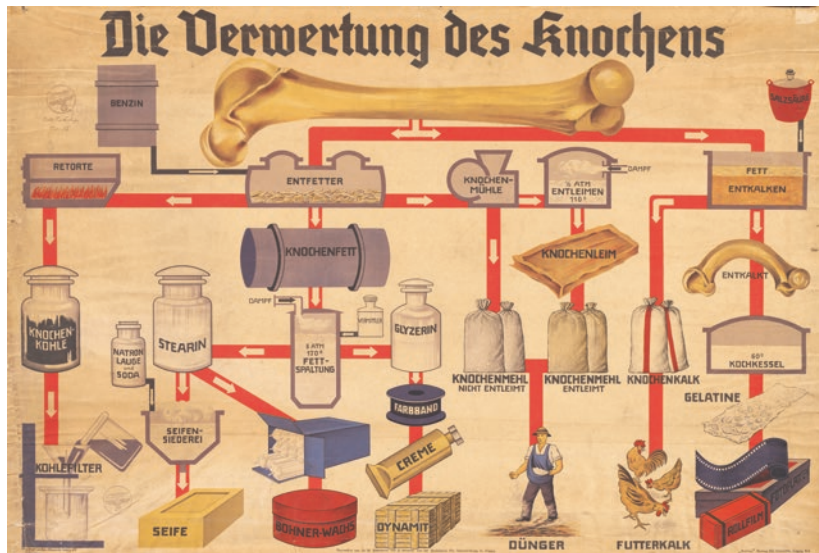


Fig. 2 *Knochenlehrkarte*, designed as a material flow diagram of the steps and substances of bone recycling (*Source* Sammlung Forschungsstelle Historische Bildmedien, Universität Würzburg, FHBW/21231 (Schulwandbild ‘Die Verwertung des Knochens’. Serie: Haferkorn and Priemer, *Technologische Tafeln zur deutschen Nationalwirtschaft*, 1 (Leipzig: “Kultur” Verlag für Lehrmittel, around 1937)))

cities, schools closed and transport became unfeasible. In response, the *Reichsstelle für industrielle Fette* (Reich Office for Industrial Fats) helped develop the ‘soap for bones’ system.<sup>23</sup> For nearly five years, soap had been available only through a special ration card. From April 1944 onwards, central collection points provided a stamp for each kilogram of bones that citizens handed over; five such stamps gave authorisation to obtain one bar of soap.

### MOBILISING FRENCH BONES

These efforts to mobilise bones were not limited to German civilians. In February 1940, shortly before his appointment as Reich Commissioner for Scrap Salvage, Hans Heck drafted a memo explaining that shortages in bone supply threatened to cut off German military production;

fewer bones meant less glycerine and phosphorus for the production of ammunition and explosives, less lubricant for guns and airplanes and less *Klaufenfett* (neatsfoot oil) for torpedo tube grease, the supply of which he estimated would be depleted in two months.<sup>24</sup> To increase this supply, Heck encouraged collections from Wehrmacht troops—the largest consumers of meat rations—although his office received little support for these efforts. In July 1940, following the successful invasion of Western Europe, the *Reichsstelle Chemie* (Reich Office for Chemicals) requested the Wehrmacht supreme command to allow a special delegate to target the bones supply of the newly occupied territories and help restart production of two bone-processing facilities in Paris. The request, however, was denied because the Wehrmacht wanted to reserve the right to all seized raw materials, including bones.<sup>25</sup>

Though the Wehrmacht had nominal control over the bone supply in occupied Western Europe, their initial reluctance to work with the Reich Commissioner for Salvage meant that local actors had more room to take the initiative. This independence was particularly the case in France—Western Europe's largest supply of bones—particularly because of the peculiar political and economic situation. Following the June 1940 Franco-German Armistice the Germans allowed Marshal Philippe Pétain to head a French government in Vichy in the unoccupied southern zone, separated by a demarcation line from the German-occupied north, including Paris. Despite this physical separation, Vichy representatives carried out economic negotiations with the Germans in occupied Paris and legislation subsequently passed in Vichy applied to the whole country (with the exception of de facto annexed Alsace and Lorraine).

Nevertheless, the original impetus for French bone collections came from neither the Vichy regime nor the Germans, but from a representative of the French chemical industry, René Liger—simultaneously Secretary-General of SUDOS, President of the Glues and Gelatines Group and Vice-President of the Chemical Bones Industries Syndicate. In September 1940, when German companies began ordering large amounts of gelatine, glue and tallow from French companies, Liger took action. He convinced the Chemical Bones Industries Syndicate to hire six out-of-work salesmen from their factories as 'technical inspectors', tasked with travelling throughout France—including the non-occupied zone—to encourage mayors, prefects and other officials to oversee separating bones from municipal waste, to direct them to the traditional bone-trading industry and to facilitate their bulk transport

to factories. Perhaps through Liger's lobbying an inter-ministerial order of 12 November required mayors to organise bone collections as part of regular rubbish collection and limited fat removal to extraction via organic solvents like benzene or gas.<sup>26</sup>

Local authorities did not appreciate these initiatives, which they perceived as an unnecessary, costly and unhygienic burden. On 5 December 1940, one of Liger's technical inspectors sent Lyon's municipal administration a copy of the 12 November order along with a questionnaire asking for the names of those currently collecting bones, the locations of their warehouses and the companies using those materials. Within a week the director of Lyon's incinerator, René Martin, replied that almost no bones remained in the waste stream; *pioyeurs* (bone-pickers) pulled out the most valuable bones from waste bins and sold them to a local factory, the Maison Coignet. For that reason, he discouraged any special collection. The pressure from the chemical industry continued through spring 1941, when a commercial representative of Coignet (and member of Liger's syndicate) formally complained that Lyon's incineration plant violated the 12 November order by not separating out bones. Nevertheless, Martin's arguments convinced City Hall to prevent the organisation of household bone collections.<sup>27</sup>

This reticence on the part of municipalities continued even after Marshal Pétain issued his decree on the 'salvage and use of waste products and scrap' on 23 January 1941. Like German scrap legislation from 1937 and 1938, it forbade anyone 'to burn, throw away, or destroy ... rags, scrap iron and scrap metal, old paper, feathers, rubber, bones, furs and hides, animal hair and manes, [and] glass'. To enforce this legislation, Pétain created the Salvage Service in Paris on 24 January 1941, an office under the supervision of the German administrative officer Paul Niessner. Tellingly, Niessner's first action was to request a German translation of the 12 November Vichy bones legislation.<sup>28</sup>

A March 1941 Salvage Service report confirmed that most French cities had not implemented the 12 November order, the 'provisions [of which were] difficult to apply, and, in fact, [were] not applied'. As in Lyon, rag-and-bone men traditionally ignored the smaller, less lucrative bones, and French housewives did not usually set them aside. Furthermore, transportation difficulties—as had already been discovered in Germany—could prevent the efficient recycling of collected bones. In one Parisian waste-processing facility a pile of bones quickly attracted 'vermin', 'spread an unbreathable odour', and had to be destroyed in

order to prevent conditions that could have 'favoured an epidemic'. For these reasons, the report concluded that bringing bones to school was 'quite utopian' and to be avoided.<sup>29</sup>

Although the Salvage Service did not support the idea of school children collecting bones, this was the favoured strategy of the Nazi representatives in France. On 20 February 1941, Hans Heck chaired a 'mixed committee for salvage' with French officials in Paris. He opened by detailing how salvage operations had progressed in Germany from the initial reliance on professional salvage trade to the increasing use of party organisations carrying out so-called shock actions targeting one type of waste product for a fixed period of time. He then turned to his pet project: school collection drives. For bones, Heck argued, children had 'performed best of all collectors'. After the Salvage Service director expressed his worries about hygiene, Heck explained how German schools had been equipped with separate bins to keep the bones.<sup>30</sup> In his final closing speech two days later, Heck returned to the importance of bones:

Many see in this secondary raw material a worthless, contemptuous, even quite unappetising material. These people should learn from the surprising fact that one produces about eighty articles made of bones: glue, glycerine, soap, candles, fats, gelatine, photo materials, etc. Most surprising and interesting for the French housewife would be the fact that you would not need soap [ration] tickets if all bones were collected in households.<sup>31</sup>

Heck concluded by calling for 'action committees' to be set up throughout France that would coordinate shock actions and school collections.

The Salvage Service director quickly implemented these initial measures. Preceding the meeting, he had already asked the Ministry of Interior to create 'departmental action and propaganda committees for waste and scrap salvage', a 'project ... to which the occupation authorities attached an extreme importance'.<sup>32</sup> But, just as municipal governments opposed the 12 November order, so too did local officials oppose this latest effort to collect bones. In early June the head of one departmental action committee decided to exclude bones from the list of collected materials 'for hygienic reasons'.<sup>33</sup> Another departmental action committee director objected to bones, not only because households had relatively few to spare but also because 'asking children to bring the bones of meat consumed by their family, would lead certainly to discussions in families [by children] who would not understand how some eat

more meat than others'. Rationing meant that this objection emerged less from class divisions than from a fear that children might unwittingly reveal that their families purchased meat on the black market or illegally butchered their own animals.<sup>34</sup>

In September 1941, Hans Heck returned to Paris to discuss school collections with the heads of the Salvage Service and by the end of the year the departmental action committees had divided France into separate zones, each with a designated collector from the traditional rag-and-bone trade.<sup>35</sup> In mid-March 1942 the Salvage Service sent out detailed instructions for organising school collections along with forms for keeping track of the kind, quantity and value of the materials. They advised teachers to nominate students as 'scholar collectors' and to direct profits to the state-run charity *Secours National*.<sup>36</sup>

Despite these instructions, confusion reigned at the local level. The promised forms often failed to materialise and school administrators addressed their complaints to the *Secours National*, rather than to departmental action committees. By summer 1942 the Salvage Service had suspended the collection of bones from schools because of the summer heat and the inability to store bones hygienically.<sup>37</sup> By late 1942, it had become clear that school collections had failed. The *Secours National* formally withdrew their support and requested that school teachers remove the posters from their classrooms and destroy all the 'salvage authorisation cards' given to the children to prevent any future illicit trade or sales. In a meeting with the Commissioner of National Education a Salvage Service official admitted that these collections 'relied uniquely on charitable incentives and that these incentives [had] become more and more insufficient given the frequency of the appeals made to public generosity and the hesitation ... of individuals to part from their household rubbish'. To compensate for the transportation difficulties and the lack of individual incentives for participation the Salvage Service official suggested having more limited drives, focussed on one material at a time and possibly rewarding children through lotteries with prizes such as bicycle tyres.<sup>38</sup>

Niessner, who had been receiving monthly statistics of the collections since April 1942, supported these suggestions. His intervention in the local salvage collections increased significantly after the Germans occupied much of the southern zone after 11 November 1942. At that time, local field commanders surveyed prefects on the subject of salvage 'actions' and school collections, asking about the status of such collections, tonnages acquired, means of propaganda and destination of the recovered material.

At the end of December, Niessner instructed the Salvage Service to order that all prefects provide the requested information.<sup>39</sup>

Parallel to these school collections, Liger continued to advocate for an intensification of bone collections from municipal waste, even though statistics showed that bones were almost entirely absent in the waste stream; one study claimed that they comprised 1.38% of the trash in 1936, 0.55% in 1940 and 0.38% in 1942.<sup>40</sup> In early 1941 a lack of bones had shut down operations at Liger's SUDOS factory in Bordeaux. When Liger first met with a Salvage Service official in April 1941, he told him 'to uproot the old encrusted bureaucrats' and urged the recovery of bones from household rubbish. He also explained that the director of his Bordeaux plant had cooperated with local authorities to set up a household kitchen waste collection using a system of two waste bins.<sup>41</sup>

Even after this local experiment failed because of transportation difficulties, Liger closely followed the drafting of a decree to regulate the processing of bones from butcher shops, kitchens and canteens and was 'particularly happy' to learn of its being passed in January 1942. The new legislation facilitated municipal bone collections by requiring cities with more than 2000 inhabitants to install 'covered receptacles' for bones in all places that prepared food, including 'restaurants, cafeterias, hotels, hostels, hospices, hospitals, clinics, middle schools, high schools [and] prisons'. Designated collectors in each department were to remove the bones regularly from these receptacles and to provide monthly declarations of the total amount of bones they had sold and the amount of stock on hand. The following September, Liger inquired whether it might be possible to set up a bone-soap exchange based on the rag-textile exchange that the Salvage Service had already put in place.<sup>42</sup>

Though Hans Heck emphasised the connection between bones and soap collection in his speeches to the Salvage Service in February 1941, he did not propose a bone-soap exchange at that time. As early as 21 August 1941 the Salvage Service delegate for the non-occupied zone in Lyon reported that many departmental action committees had proposed reimbursing those who brought bones with additional ration tickets for soap; he thought that city halls could distribute small bars of soap, '300 grams for 10 kilograms of bones'. A year later, after receiving no support from the main office, the same delegate discovered that the Section for Chemical Industries objected to such an exchange, a position he characterised as 'truly deplorable'. He advocated for a trial run in one department which could be 'quickly extended to all of France'.<sup>43</sup>

Such an experiment came about in Saint-Quentin, in northern France, through the initiative of a local factory owner who wanted to make a low-grade soap from a stock of collected bones that had accumulated because of a lack of transport. Discussions began in October 1942 and by the end of the year the Salvage Service had decided to use Saint-Quentin to test the efficacy of a bone–soap exchange. The exchange opened on 12 January 1943 (thus preceding the exchange points in German cities) with two distribution centres, where every 2 kg of bones would earn a coupon for one small bar of soap or a packet of detergent.<sup>44</sup>

The first results were promising, bringing in 820 kg on the first day and an additional 700 kg on the second day, including 100 kg from a ‘German source’. Informal surveys of participants revealed that housewives had previously thrown out or burnt their bones.<sup>45</sup> The Saint-Quentin experiment was soon extended to other large cities in the region as well as Bordeaux, because of the presence of the local SUDOS plant. These exchanges also brought in bones from hotels, restaurants and bars—establishments that had been required since January 1942 to set aside bones, but that had largely ignored the order.<sup>46</sup>

Although Niessner harshly criticised the disorganised way the French had handled the school bone collections, he strongly approved of their bone–soap exchanges. On 1 August 1943 the German delegate for bone salvage, Dr. Panneck, met with Niessner and Salvage Service officials in Paris to encourage the ‘intensification of the bones output in France’, including extension of bone–soap exchanges to all French cities.<sup>47</sup> He returned on 17 September 1943 to complete his discussions with the French authorities. Before his arrival the Salvage Service provided Niessner with statistics on the capacity of factories processing bones, the monthly amounts processed in 1943 and a table of the materials produced, including glues, gelatines, fats, oils and bone meal, as well as a request for additional allocations of fuel and tyres.<sup>48</sup> During the meeting with Panneck, Niessner complained that the French authorities were ‘studying things too closely’ and urged them to scale up bone–soap exchanges immediately.<sup>49</sup>

This extension proved to be more difficult than anticipated. By December 1943 the lack of available railway cars completely shut down the sale of bones in places like Lyon, Lille, Rennes, Toulouse and Montpellier.<sup>50</sup> Niessner ordered German field commanders to make inquiries and they followed through by meeting with prefects, technical inspectors and regional delegates. This intervention helped alleviate

transportation difficulties as German authorities cooperated with local officials to prioritize bone shipments.<sup>51</sup> Renewed propaganda for bone–soap exchanges came into force in mid-January 1944 and new centres opened with varying degrees of success on 13 March 1944 in Besançon, Dijon, Macon, Toulouse, Saint-Etienne and Lyon.<sup>52</sup>

These centres were closely monitored by Liger, who maintained his influence until the end of the occupation. At a June 1944 meeting with representatives from the chemical industries, he argued forcefully to continue with bone–soap exchanges.<sup>53</sup> Although the liberation of French territory in August and September 1944 temporarily disrupted the activities and organisation of the Salvage Service, the collection and sale of used bones continued uninterrupted. Fourteen cities maintained their bone–soap exchange centres through October 1944 and an additional three cities had reopened centres by November. In March 1945 the Salvage Service—which continued to function under the new Provisional government—drafted a long report on bone–soap exchanges with the intention of continuing them in the near future. From January 1943 to February 1945 the program netted 933 tonnes, the equivalent of two trains with 60 fully loaded cars. Yet, in liberated France, these train cars represented economic collaboration. Not surprisingly the report claimed that deliveries to companies during the occupation ‘had been very small’ and ‘the near totality of the bones collected ... didn’t profit the German war effort’. Rather than attribute that lack to transportation difficulties the report attributed the low numbers to ‘the resistance spirit of the [bones] traders’ who ‘knew [how] to profit ... from the disorganisation of transports in order not to deliver the bones to factories and conserve in their storehouses the reserves’. Now, however, with a public who would no longer have the ‘thought in the back of their minds that they were contributing to the enemy’s war effort’, participation could increase, particularly with a new propaganda campaign, using posters, pamphlets and radio broadcasts.<sup>54</sup>

This peculiar transfer of bone recycling from Nazi Germany to France from summer 1940 to 1945 complicates our understanding of economic collaboration with, and passive resistance to, German economic demands. Bone recycling was neither a direct imposition by the Germans nor an independent innovation of the Vichy regime. It was a conjoint Franco-German initiative, but—as this study shows—an initiative shaped greatly by conditions on the ground. Heck’s desired bone collections in schools, supported by Niessner, were stymied by local French

actors—mayors, teachers, departmental action committees and the leadership of Secours National—but it was paradoxically many of those same local actors who guaranteed the success of the bone–soap exchange. Furthermore, that programme may be an example of a French initiative that was encouraged by the Germans and then exported to German cities, although further study would be needed to confirm that transfer. Finally, the continued involvement of Liger and representatives from SUDOS from 1940 to 1945 emphasises the key role of industrialists in shaping recycling policy.

## NOTES

1. Archives nationales, Pierrefitte-sur-Seine, France [AN], 68AJ/497, ‘Rapport sur voyage fait à Bordeaux du 11 au 13 mai 1941,’ May 1941.
2. Archives départementales [AD] Côtes d’Amor, S. Jolly, Director of Primary Education to Academic Inspectors, 28 June 1941.
3. The term ‘Salvage Service’ simplifies a complicated bureaucratic history. The *Service de la Récupération et de l’Utilisation des Déchets et Vieilles Matières* (SRUDVM) created in January 1941, became the *Section de Récupération et Mobilisation* in September 1942. Its financial duties were eventually transferred to the *Groupement Auxiliaire pour la Récupération des Produits Industriels et Commerciaux* (GARPIC), which was created in April 1943 and reconstituted as *Comptoir Administratif et Financier de la Récupération* (CAFR) in August 1944. This central administration also interacted with the organising committee for the scrap trade, *Comité Général d’Organisation des Industries et Commerce de la Récupération* (COGIREC), created on 21 June 1943, and renamed *Office Professionnel des Industries et Commerces de la Récupération* (OPIREC) on 26 October 1945. All these organisations maintained their functions until 1946.
4. Susanne Köstering, ‘“Pioniere der Rohstoffbeschaffung.” Lumpensammler im Nationalsozialismus, 1934–1939,’ *WerkstattGeschichte* (1997): 45–65; Susanne Köstering, ‘“Millionen im Müll?” Altmaterialverwertung nach dem Vierjahresplan” in *Müll von gestern? Eine umweltgeschichtliche Erkundung in Berlin und Brandenburg*, ed. Susanne Köstering and Renate Rüb (Münster: Waxmann, 2003), 139–149; Heike Weber, *Reste und Recycling bis zur ‘grünen Wende’ – Eine Stoff- und Wissensgeschichte alltäglicher Abfälle* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, forthcoming in 2018).
5. Götz Aly, *Hitlers Volkstaat. Raub, Rassenkrieg und nationaler Sozialismus* (Frankfurt a. M.: S. Fischer Verlag, 2005); Hein Klemann and Sergei Kudryashov, *Occupied Economies: An Economic History of Nazi-Occupied Europe, 1939–1945* (London: Berg, 2012), 43–182; Hans Otto Frøland,

- Mats Ingulstad and Jonas Scherner, "Perfecting the Art of Stealing: Nazi Exploitation and Industrial Collaboration in Occupied Western Europe," in *Industrial Collaboration in Nazi-Occupied Europe: Norway in Context*, ed. Frøland et al. (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 1–34.
6. Anne Berg, "The Nazi Rag-pickers and Their Wine: The Politics of Waste and Recycling in Nazi Germany," *Social History* 40, no. 4 (2015): 446–472; Richard Kühn, "Die Gräuel an den Leichen der Ermordeten der nationalsozialistischen Konzentrations- und Vernichtungslager: Forschung und Erinnerung," in *Objekt Leiche: Technisierung, Ökonomisierung und Inszenierung toter Körper*, ed. Jasmin Grande and Dominik Groß (Frankfurt a. M.: Campus, 2010), 361–386. There is some discussion as to what extent the Holocaust victims' bones were channelled into industry. The Nuremberg Trial Proceedings report some delivery of bones to the firm Strem for the manufacture of fertiliser; also, there is a rumour that soap-making experiments were conducted in the Institute of Anatomy in Gdansk (cf. Nuremberg Trial Proceedings, Vol. 7, 19 February 1946, online: <http://avalon.law.yale.edu/imt/02-19-46.asp>); Bożena Shallcross, *The Holocaust Object in Polish and Polish-Jewish Culture* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2011), 55–70. A recent PhD dissertation makes the argument that the Institute did not hold the necessary equipment or personnel for experiments to reach an industrial scale: Matthias Berlage, "Der Anatom Prof. Dr. Rudolf Spanner in der Zeit von 1939 bis 1945" (PhD diss., Heinrich-Heine-Universität Düsseldorf, 2016).
  7. Sabine Barles, *L'invention des déchets urbains. France: 1790–1970* (Champ Vallon: Seyssel, 2005); Weber, *Reste und Recycling*.
  8. Heike Weber, "Towards 'Total' Recycling: Women, Waste and Food Waste Recovery in Germany, 1914–1939," *Contemporary European History* 22, no. 3 (August 2013): 371–397; Roger Chickering, *The Great War and Urban Life in Germany: Freiburg, 1914–1918* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 159–187.
  9. "60.000 Lumpensammler in Deutschland," *Der Tag*, Berlin, 19 January 1926.
  10. 'Anordnungen und Richtlinien der Geschäftsgruppe Rohstoffverteilung und des Reichskommissars für Altmaterialverwertung in der Zeit vom November 1936 bis Februar 1940'. Berlin 1940, 55, 60; Städtereinigung, No. 1940, 14–16 ('Knochenaufkommen, Knochenanfall, Knochenverteilung und Maßnahmen zur Steigerung des Knochenanfalls'); Deutschland-Berichte der Sozialdemokratischen Partei Deutschlands (Sopade) 1934–1940, A 29 1394 (Salzhause/Frankfurt a. M.: Petra Nettelbeck Verlag, October 1937).
  11. Claus Ungewitter, *Verwertung des Wertlosen* (Leipzig: n.p., 1938), 152; Wolfgang Schneider, "Der Knochen als Rohstoff," *Vierjahresplan* 8 (1938): 462–465.

12. Adolf Stöcker, *Die Bedeutung der Altmaterialwirtschaft in Deutschland* (Halle: Ebel, 1938) and *Altmaterial. Die wirtschaftliche Bedeutung für Deutschland: Was jeder Deutsche wissen muß* (Halle: Ebel, 1938).
13. Birgit Pelzer-Reith and Reinhold Reith, "‘Fett aus Kohle?’ Die Speisefettsynthese in Deutschland 1933–1945," *Technikgeschichte* 69 (2002): 173–205.
14. Schneider, "Der Knochen als Rohstoff," 462–465.
15. Reichskommissar für Altmaterialverwertung, *Der Knochen als Rohstoff und seine Verwertung* (Berlin: n.p., 1939), 3.
16. Köstering, "Pioniere der Rohstoffbeschaffung," 45–65.
17. Hans Heck, *Warum Alt- und Abfallstoffe sammeln?* (Berlin: n.p., 1942).
18. Margarete Adelung, "Der 'Kampf dem Verderb' im Haushalt mit sparsamen Mitteln" (PhD diss., Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München, 1940), 78; "700 Berliner Schulen sammeln Knochen," *Völkischer Beobachter*, 15 January 1937; Anordnungen und Richtlinien, 248f.
19. Margarete Götz, *Die Grundschule in der Zeit des Nationalsozialismus* (Bad Heilbrunn: n.p., 1997), 315–318.
20. Reichskommissar für Altmaterialverwertung, ed., *Zu den Lehrkarten: Rohstoff Schrott, Rohstoff Altpapier, Rohstoff Knochen, Rohstoff Lumpen* (Berlin: n.p., 1940); "Erlass des Reichsministers für Wissenschaft, Erziehung und Volksbildung," 5 September 1938, *Deutsche Wissenschaft, Erziehung und Volksbildung* 4 (1938): 431; Elisabeth Vaupel, "Wertvolle Knochen. Ein Thema im Schulunterricht der NS-Zeit ('Knochenlehrkarte')," *Kultur & Technik* 41, no. 3 (2017): 54–59.
21. Bundesarchiv [BA], R2/2160, Reichswirtschaftsminister an Reichskommissar für Altmaterialverwertung, 15 May 1942.
22. "Die Schulaltstofffassung – Jahresergebnis 1942," *Altmaterialwirtschaft* 2 (30 April 1943): 3; "Ein stolzes Ergebnis," *Altmaterialwirtschaft* 6 (20 June 1944): 121f; Winfried Thomsen, Reichsbeauftragter für Altmaterialerfassung, "Altstoffwirtschaft in Europa," *Vierjahresplan* 11 (1942): 520–524.
23. Der Reichskommissar für Altmaterialverwertung, Runderlass no. 25/44, LWA, 11 April 1944.
24. National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, Maryland, United States [NARA], RG 242, T77, roll 205, secret note for the file from Hans Heck, Reich Commissioner for Salvage, 2 February 1940.
25. NARA, RG 242, T77, roll 205, letter from Head of Wehrmacht Supreme Command to Reich Office for Chemicals, 23 July 1940.
26. AN, 68AJ/519, Salvage Service Director to Niessner, 18 November 1943; "Arrêté du 12 novembre 1940 relatif au ramassage et au traitement des os," *Journal Officiel* (21 November 1940): 57–62.

27. AM-Lyon, 963WP/52, Stevenson to President of the Special Delegation of the City of Lyon, 5 December 1940 and René Martin, 'Ramassage des Os', 17 December 1940, letter from Paul Gourd, Maison Coignet, to Special Delegation of the city of Lyon, 24 March 1941, and Delegate for the Special Delegation to managing director of Société aux Produits Chimiques Coignet, 18 July 1941; Chad B. Denton, "Entre résidus et ressources: René Martin et le traitement des déchets à Lyon, 1939–1945," in *Lyon dans la seconde guerre mondiale. Villes et métropoles à l'épreuve du conflit*, Hervé Joly et al. ed. (Rennes: Presse Universitaires de Rennes, 2016), 135–146.
28. AN, 68AJ/496, letter from Salvage Service Director to Paul Niessner, 23 January 1941.
29. AN, 68AJ/498, Michel Couturaud, "Récupération des os," 8 March 1941.
30. AN, 68AJ/499, French translation of the summary for the 20 February 1941 salvage meeting, "Au Service de la Récupération," [n.d.] and "Sitzungsprotokoll über die Tagung des gemischten Ausschusses (Altmaterialerfassung) vom 20.II.41," 7 March 1941.
31. AN, 68AJ/499, "Auszugsweise Wiedergabe der Rede des Herrn Reichskommissars H. Heck bei der Schlussitzung der Tagung der deutschen Reichsstellen mit den französischen Repartiteuren am 22.2.1941," 27 February 1941.
32. AN, 68AJ/499, François Delannoy to Minister of Interior, Head of Departmental Administration, "Création dans les départements de comités d'action et de propagande pour la récupération des déchets et vieilles matières," 14 February 1941.
33. AN, 68AJ/484, Salvage Service Delegate for the Non-Occupied Zone to Delannoy, 8 August 1941.
34. AN, 68AJ/479, Michel Couturaud, "Rapport sur le voyage fait à Dijon, Chaumont, Chalons-sur-Marne," 11–13 June 1941.
35. AN, 68AJ/496, Niessner to Delannoy, 12 September 1941.
36. AN, 68AJ/476, draft circular from Delannoy, Salvage Service Director to Director of Action and Propaganda Committee, no. 16, "Ramassage par les écoles," 14 March 1942.
37. "La récupération par les enfants des écoles," *Bulletin officiel du Service de la récupération et de l'utilisation des déchets et vieilles matières*, 15 September 1942.
38. AN, 68AJ/477, "Compte-rendu de la visite du commissaire à l'Education Nationale, M. Moussau" [n. d., but ca. December 1942]; "Le Secours National cesse de participer au ramassage des vieilles matières," *Bulletin officiel du Service*, 15 January 1943.
39. AN, 68AJ/496, "Note pour M. Niessner," 14 April 1942, Feldkommandantur 529 to Prefect of Gironde, "Recensement des vieilles matières," 30 November 1942, and Niessner to Salvage Service Director, "Altmaterialerfassung," 28 December 1942.

40. AN, 68AJ/518, B. Hubert, "Traitement & Utilisations des Ordures Ménagères," 1 May 1942.
41. AN, 68AJ/518, note concerning meeting on 'ordures ménagères' with Secretary-General of the SUDOS [and] Mr De Penguern, 22 April 1941; AN, 68AJ/497, "Rapport sur voyage fait à Bordeaux du 11 au 13 mai 1941," May 1941.
42. AN, 68AJ/498, "Réunion à la SUDOS," 16 January 1942 and note from Couturaud, meeting at Industrie Chimique des Os, 11 September 1942; "Arrêté du 17 janvier 1942 concernant la récupération et le commerce des os," *Journal Officiel*, 31 January 1942.
43. AN, 68AJ/484, letters from Salvage Service Delegate of the Non-Occupied Zone to Salvage Service Director, 21 August 1941 and 11 June 1942.
44. AN, 68AJ/519, letter from Glues and Gelatines Group to Salvage Service Director, 15 October 1942, "Compte-rendu voyage à St. Quentin, Visite à la prefecture régionale, le 13 October 1942," "Voyage effectué à Saint-Quentin par Monsieur Couturaud le 3 et 4 novembre 1942," 7 November 1942, and "Note pour M. Lafon," 29 December 1942; "A Saint-Quentin, Os contre Savon," *Bulletin officiel du Service*, 15 January 1943.
45. AN, 68AJ/477, "Réunion trimestrielle du syndicat de l'industrie chimique des os le 22 janvier 1943," 27 January 1943; AN, 68AJ/519, Dourlet, Ville de Saint-Quentin, "Rapport d'activité," January 1943.
46. AN, 68AJ/478, "Compte-rendu de la réunion du 8 avril 1943 à l'échange os contre savon à Saint-Quentin," 8 April 1943 and "Echange os contre savon," 10 April 1943; AN, 68AJ/519, "Expérience de l'échange os contre tickets de savon, Saint-Quentin, Janvier, Février, Mars 1943," 8 April 1943; AN, 68AJ/483, Bordeaux Regional Delegate to Salvage Service Director, 4 July 1943.
47. AN, 68AJ/496, Niessner to Salvage Service, notes no. 343/43 and no. 294/43 from 12 August 1943; AN, 68AJ/478, M. Cauchy, "Compte-rendu de la Réunion du 18 août 1943 chez M. Destoumieux," 18 August 1943.
48. AN, 68AJ/496, Niessner, no. 434/43, 8 September 1943; AN, 68AJ/478, "Compte-rendu de la réunion du 15 septembre COGIREC Section" [15 September 1943]; AN, 68AJ/497, Salvage Service Director to Niessner, 15 September 1943.
49. AN, 68AJ/478, "Réunion des services français-allemands intéressés à la campagne os-savon," 19 September 1943.
50. AN, 68AJ/485, Lyon Regional Delegate to Salvage Service Director, 1 December 1943; AN, 68AJ/478, "Compte-rendu de la réunion des délégués du 7 janvier 1944," 7 January 1944.

51. AN, 68AJ/483, "Rapport d'activité de M. Ch. Thomas, Délégué à Bordeaux," February 1944 and Bordeaux Regional Delegate to Salvage Service Director, "Intervention des autorités d'occupation dans la récupération des os," 14 February 1944; AN, 68AJ/478, reports of the technical inspectors Abat, Brun, Bazin, Carrique, and Doyen from 21, 23, and 29 February 1944.
52. AN, 68AJ/478, "Activité du group des industries diverses au cours du mois de décembre 1943," 12 January 1944; "Compte-rendu de la réunion de la chimie du 29 février 1944," 1 March 1944, reports of technical inspectors Brun, Carrique, and Doyen, 15 May 1944.
53. AN, 68AJ/478, M. Cauchy, "Compte-rendu de la réunion de la chimie du 9 juin 1944," 9 June 1944.
54. AN, 68AJ/519, "Rapport général sur l'action 'os-savon'," 13 March 1945.

## Coping Strategies and Creating Privileges

Coping strategies under German occupation were extremely varied, ranging from the establishment of private companies to prostitution resulting from poverty. An important role in this respect was played by attempts to gain a position of relative privilege—for example, as a worker in a vital wartime industry or as the recipient of benefit payments.



# Between Employer and Self-Organisation: Belgian Workers and Miners Coping with Food Shortages Under German Occupation (1940–1944)

*Dirk Luyten*

## INTRODUCTION: FOOD SUPPLY AS AN ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL ISSUE

In 1941, the second year of the occupation, hunger was back in Belgium. The situation was so critical that, as food historian Peter Scholliers puts it, food consumption in most cases no longer reflected social standing as it typically had since the nineteenth century. Having money no longer equalled access to food, let alone substantially more and better food than others.<sup>1</sup> The causes of this situation were structural: industrialised and densely populated Belgium was not self-sufficient in food. Before the war, about 50% was imported, mostly from overseas. The imports ended with the occupation and the British blockade so that imports were now

---

D. Luyten (✉)

Belgian State Archives/CegeSoma, Brussels, Belgium  
e-mail: dirk.luyten@arch.be

© The Author(s) 2018

T. Tönsmeier et al. (eds.), *Coping with Hunger and Shortage under German Occupation in World War II*,  
[https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-77467-1\\_8](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-77467-1_8)

143

only possible from Nazi Germany or territories dominated by Germany. The German occupiers also took some home-grown food for their own needs. The state created a food-rationing system intended to give each individual access to a basic quantity of food at a reasonable price, while the occupier had a say in the amounts of these rations.

Standard official rations in Belgium were average compared to neighbouring countries: lower than in Germany and the Netherlands, but higher than in France.<sup>2</sup> Some categories of the population, such as pregnant women, industrial workers or miners were entitled to extra rations. Next to objective factors, political considerations (including economic exploitation) determined which groups of the population would be allocated these additional food rations. Underground miners received significantly higher rations—in February 1941, for instance, they received twice the normal bread and meat rations—as the heavy work required a greater calorie intake and coal production was key to the German war economy.<sup>3</sup>

The production, distribution and processing of food was organised by the National Corporation for Agriculture and Food, a new institution based on the Nazi model.<sup>4</sup> Success was limited: consumers did not receive the food they were entitled to according to the rationing table.

The Belgian consumer needed additional sources of nutrition next to the official rations to cover even the minimum food intake. As a consequence, other actors became involved in food supply—for example, employers in heavy industry and coal-mining, which formed the backbone of the Belgian economy and were of central interest for the German war effort. The problem was the same as for the ‘normal’ consumer: *theoretical* (higher) rations were seldom provided in reality and workers with a physically demanding job needed additional sources of food to get the necessary minimum calorie intake.

Food shortages were problematical both for workers and employers, who wanted to continue with production and needed a workforce able to perform at the necessary level of effort. This position was argued for from a macro-economic perspective in an internal memo of the Société Générale, Belgium’s main holding company at that time, which controlled about 40% of (heavy) industry. The Société Générale had played a central role in food supply in World War I.<sup>5</sup> The memo was about the position of business regarding production for Germany and was based on a macro-economic assessment of the capacity of the Belgian economy

to export industrial products in order to pay for necessary food imports. The calculations were based on the nutritional needs of the population. The point of reference was World War I, more precisely the amount of food deemed necessary at that time by the Commission for Relief in supplying Belgium with basic food from abroad. Such rations were low, but they would ensure the population could survive. In the inter-war period, it was argued that the standard of living had increased and it would be 'dangerous' to impose the same deprivations on the Belgian population in 1940 as in World War I, although it was acknowledged that rations at the time the memo was written (July 1940) were indeed low.<sup>6</sup> The memo does not take into account a key difference between World War I and what was planned for the second occupation. Whereas in World War I, Belgian industrial production dropped dramatically and industry nearly came to a standstill (the coal mines excepted), the argument in this memo was that industry had to produce in order to import enough food to cover the structural shortage. This implied that more food would be needed than during World War I to maintain labour productivity.

Whereas in the beginning of the occupation food had been the concern and responsibility of the state, it soon became clear that employers had to play a role as well to make sure that workers had a minimum supply of food. The employers intervened with the authorities to improve the official rationing system, presenting themselves as spokesmen of their workers in order to provide extra food in the factories. This policy was an economic necessity: the deficiencies in the official rationing system were such that, without extra food, production could not be maintained in the long run. A telling example is the contents of the packed lunch of a miner in 1941, who had only two or three slices of bread with marmalade. Before the war, a miner consumed during his lunch 700 g of bread with butter or fat and 100–150 g of cheese or meat.<sup>7</sup> Such a dramatic drop in food intake bore no relation to the difference between pre-war food intake and the quantities listed in the rationing tables. These workers were in a certain sense 'privileged': they were entitled to extra rations and their wages were above average, which made it easier for them to cope with shortages as compared to workers with low wages. However, productive capacity was undermined, as evidenced by the example of decreased production of coal mines in the south of Belgium (Wallonia), which was often attributed by the management and the occupier to lack of nutrition.<sup>8</sup>

Next to economic and humanitarian motives, political considerations played a role: food supply was highly politicised. The German occupying forces wanted to enhance the sense of their legitimacy by giving extra food directly to the population, although only to those directly useful for economic exploitation of the country. A good example is the *Hilfszug Bayern* ('Bavarian aid train'), which had been operating in the coal-mining regions since March 1941, distributing soup directly to the miners.<sup>9</sup> The political significance can be seen in the problems that occurred at the Zolder coal mine. The soup arrived at the railway station, but would be cold when served to the miners returning from the early shift; it had often also started to ferment. The management of the mine was summoned by the local German commander, and ordered to install a kitchen to serve soup of the same quality as the soup offered by the *Hilfszug Bayern*. The employer, therefore, had to take responsibility for the initiative from the occupier.<sup>10</sup> The occupier also used food to intervene directly in the day-to-day management of the coal mine. The fact that the local German commander insisted that the soup should be consumed by the miner himself and not shared with his family indicates that maintaining production was the central objective of the *Hilfszug*. The success of the initiative was hindered by the fact that miners had to hand in rationing stamps for the soup.<sup>11</sup>

Food supply was also a concern for the military administration since shortages triggered labour protests and threatened *Ruhe und Ordnung* ('law and order'), one of the basic objectives of the military administration. From that perspective, it was not altogether logical that the new Agriculture Corporation was dominated by newcomers from the New Order parties. This Corporation was not capable of organising food supply in an efficient way and made itself unpopular with the farmers, to the extent that a dispute on paying the compulsory membership triggered a crisis in the judiciary. The same was true for the special administrative judiciary, established under German pressure to cope with massive breaches of food supply regulations. Since the system conflicted with the separation of powers, it was often met with a passive boycott by the Belgian authorities.<sup>12</sup>

The political significance of food is obvious from this macro- and institutional perspective, but politics played a role at the shop floor level as well.

## FACTORY AND FOOD

The chronic lack of food undermined individual labour productivity and threatened the supply of the workforce (food shortages motivated some miners to accept work in Germany), as well as the regularity and continuity of the production process: some miners were weakened and had to stop work before the end of the shift, and cases were even reported of death due to malnutrition.<sup>13</sup>

Production was disrupted when workers began finding alternative ways of obtaining the food that they lacked. Priority was given to direct food production over wage labour. In young industries situated in rural areas (e.g., coal mines in the north of Belgium), wage labour was combined with farming. The working class here had recently formed and maintained its agrarian roots.<sup>14</sup> Miners combined wage labour by continuing together with their wives to exploit their small farms.<sup>15</sup> Those living in *cités* ('grouped housing' which miners rented from the coal mine) did not have enough land to grow vegetables and kept rabbits or a goat instead. To feed these animals, they cut and gathered grass and leaves in the shared garden areas of the *cité*.<sup>16</sup> In industrial regions, where this combination of wage labour and farming was not possible, workers left the factory for a few days to work with a farmer, especially during harvest, in return for a part of the production. Others travelled to the countryside to buy food directly from the farmers, which was one of the multiple faces of the black market.<sup>17</sup>

Organised small-scale gardening had existed since the late nineteenth century as a Catholic charity initiative to educate workers and keep them away from Socialism. Workers could rent a small plot of land to grow vegetables. This initiative expanded after 1940: the local section of the organisation tasked with fulfilling the initiative in Berchem (near the city of Antwerp) received hundreds of new applications in 1941 and bought extra land for the newcomers, whose preference was to grow potatoes, a basic and popular staple.<sup>18</sup> The organisation modernised itself and successfully resisted integration into the National Food and Agriculture Administration. The number of members skyrocketed from about 50,000 in 1938 to 373,000 by the end of 1941.<sup>19</sup>

Workers tried to produce at least some food themselves, even in the industrial regions. In Courcelles, a typical industrial town in the industrial heartland of Wallonia, 217 of the total urban area of 1098 hectares was used for gardening in April 1941.<sup>20</sup>

An extensive black market developed in Belgium, the result of a chronic lack of food supply, inefficient organisation of food distribution, a dirigist system where farmers received too little and a bureaucracy that was unable to suppress fraud. For the whole Belgian economy, it is estimated that, depending on the year, between 8 and 19% of GDP was unofficial.<sup>21</sup> The black market was an alternative way of getting extra food. More products were available and some could only be obtained via these unofficial channels. However, high prices meant that the black market was less of an option for workers, especially those who were not well paid. The family of a worker in the glass industry would have been relatively well off before the war, but could take only 48% of its food from the official rationing system in 1941. Such families purchased items on the black market, but could only do so using their savings.<sup>22</sup>

Workers did have alternatives to being black market consumers. They could use the supply side of the black market instead of the consumer side to make money in order to buy food. Some workers had access to products they could sell. Miners were entitled to a certain amount of coal for the needs of their family. In World War II a portion of this could be sold to get money to buy food or else the coal could be bartered directly for food. Women in the coal-mining regions also had opportunities to participate in this coal trafficking outside the workplace. The trains transporting coal lost some of their load while driving or when they halted for a red light. Women would seize these opportunities to try and take some coal from the ground or from the train. In the Limburg coal-mining region an informal system was built on this type of trafficking: one man bought the coal and, with the money gained, lard could be bought from another person, who had via the black market access to meat.<sup>23</sup>

The black market developed into an ‘institution’ external to the firm, but the shop floor also served as a place for black marketeering—for example, in the Tudor battery factory, where about twenty workers sold food and tobacco during working hours. Workers’ participation in the supply side of the black market could threaten the regularity of their work. In the Tudor factory, some workers were frequently absent. One gave as an explanation his commercial activity on the side. He had bought a large stock of wood and had been absent for a day during which the whole stock had disappeared. The presumption was that he had sold the stock on to make money. One of his colleagues was more explicit about why he was not turning up at work. Asked why he was regularly absent

from work for one or two days a week at a time, he answered that one day spent at work would mean *a loss* that could amount to 300 francs a day (the daily minimum wage was about 40 francs). In other words, not going to work and being involved instead in black market activities, would generate a higher income than his normal wage.<sup>24</sup>

In 1943 a supervisor of a coal mine spotted a miner who was on sick leave taking a train to the capital city Brussels from the remote village where he lived. He received a sanction but made an appeal to the mining administration. He did not deny having travelled to Brussels during his sick leave, but argued that he did this to buy fish for his family, which was cheaper in Brussels. The administration's inquiry revealed that on another day of his sick leave he was seen carrying a sack of coal. Since it was forbidden to engage in commercial activity during sick leave, the sanction was maintained.<sup>25</sup> This man was apparently at the same time both a buyer and a seller on the black market or the non-regulated market.

### FOOD VERSUS MONEY

Employers provided extra food for their workers as part of a broader political project. The end of the pre-war trade unions and collective bargaining was compensated for by the *Comité Central Industriel* (CCI) ('Central Employers' Organisation') who, in September 1940, established a social policy programme at the factory level aimed at strengthening the link between worker and company. The intention was to foster social harmony by establishing factory councils and social services often led by a social worker.<sup>26</sup>

During the early phase of the occupation the issue of food shortages was incorporated into this policy. Big factories offered extra food to their workers: soup, complete dinners in the canteen or food products at a low price. It was a systematic initiative—an example of which was a project of the CCI in early 1941 whereby cheese was imported directly from the Netherlands to be distributed in the factories.<sup>27</sup> Employers also supported the auto-production of food by their workers by making areas of land available. The employer monitored the production together with the workers as a means of strengthening the ties between worker and company.<sup>28</sup> A large chemical company offered the Catholic Gardening Organisation chemical fertilisers to increase production and also housed the extended staff of the organisation in its building in Brussels.<sup>29</sup>

Providing extra food was also a method used to encourage regular working habits among employees. From January 1942 on, miners were entitled to extra rationing stamps only if they had worked for 12 days without interruption.<sup>30</sup> For Russian POWs, who had been working since 1942 in the Belgian coal mines, food was used in an even more sophisticated and repressive way to maintain regular productivity. These new miners were divided into three categories, depending on their output: those whose output was 70% or more of a Belgian worker were labelled as 'good' and received a complete meal and an extra ration, those who had an output of 50–70% were 'normal' and were entitled to a complete meal, while the 'bad' (less than 50%) did not even receive a complete meal. In addition, there was a system of 'motivation', also aimed at enhancing regularity in work: those who had worked well during the week received 125 g of sunflower pith for free. Russian POWs had a wage, but it was not paid in money. They received instead a canteen book in which the salary was recorded and a credit given, but this was dependent on productivity. The credit could be used to purchase products for daily use, including beer, tobacco, extra food and other beverages. In the Zolder coal mine, for instance, Russian miners bought 400 g of fruit per day. The canteen was run by the mining company, but controlled by German authorities, for whom the canteen was a means to increase productivity. The German authorities complained that the food on offer in the canteens was insufficient and was therefore not stimulating productive work. A small poll organised by the Germans showed that foodstuffs were high on the list of POWs. An alternative way for Russian POWs to obtain extra food was making wooden objects with wood found in the mine. The POWs exchanged these objects with Belgian miners for food.<sup>31</sup>

Food served as a disciplinary tool for Belgian miners as well. One of the measures to increase coal production was enforcing work on a Sunday. To make sure that workers would show up, the extra food miners received for work on a Sunday was used as a sanction: the extra food was taken from those who did not show up and distributed to those who had worked, who received a supplementary incentive.<sup>32</sup> As such, this technique to promote regularity at work was not entirely new. After the 1941 strike, next to the wage increase of 8%, a system of premiums was introduced in the coal mines, one of which was labelled a 'regularity' premium.<sup>33</sup> Giving extra food was a more powerful incentive than giving

money. Food was an immediate and certain reward, while money was an intermediate means to access food, involving much more uncertainty and offering as a general rule less return in terms of quantity of food. In general, providing extra food in kind gave the employer a more direct means of impact and control over the worker.

These efforts to provide food at the factory level were not only part of the strategy to strengthen the position of employers at the expense of the labour movement and public initiatives, and to maintain production, they were also a means to avoid monetary wage increase. Food shortages and rising black market prices incited workers to demand higher wages, as became clear with the growing strike activity by the end of 1940.<sup>34</sup> Employers intervened with the authorities to improve the official rationing system aimed at containing monetary wage costs. If the official rationing system functioned well, workers would be less inclined to demand higher wages. If the authorities did not succeed in improving the rationing system, the alternative was providing financial compensations for businesses. In 1942 the Coal Mine Employers' Organisation obtained financial support to provide the miners with rations equal to those of miners in Germany.<sup>35</sup>

Why a monetary wage increase was to be avoided was explained to the Head of the Economic Section of the German administration in February 1941. He insisted on the necessity of higher wages in the near future. Belgium was cut off from overseas trade and needed food from Germany, Russia and other European countries, where prices were rising. A wage increase was inevitable and would lead to higher industrial prices in Belgium.<sup>36</sup> Here, the German officer touched on a sensitive topic for his interlocutors. Belgian workers had argued they did not want higher wages, but a better food supply. It might be true that prices of food were on the rise, but since other products were scarce, more money was left to spend on food. Belgium had to consider its economic future, the argument ran; prices should be at a level that would enable the Belgian economy to remain competitive in the European market. As a consequence, wages had to be low. This was in line with the long-standing competitive strategy of the labour-intensive, export-oriented Belgian industry, which was based on low-priced semi-finished products.<sup>37</sup> The representatives of the CCI finally used a *political* argument against a monetary wage increase—namely, that taking it back would be difficult. The only acceptable alternative was an increase of child benefits, the argument ran

in an internal memo, where it was accepted that the prices of food and products of prime necessity had risen sharply since the invasion. But a wage–price spiral had to be avoided, since it would endanger the competitive strategy of Belgian industry and threaten the Belgian franc. Another political danger was that the German authorities might make a concession on a wage increase in order to make the new collaborationist single trade union popular with the workers. In the propaganda, a wage increase could be framed as a victory for this union.<sup>38</sup> Avoiding a monetary wage increase explains to a large extent the efforts to provide workers with extra food. This concern for food supply was also in line with the economic policy of the Belgian business sector.

### SURVEYING THE STANDARD OF LIVING OF THE BELGIAN WORKING CLASS

The economic policy outlined in the memo of July 1940 aimed at safeguarding a minimum level of food consumption for the population. Belgium's economic elite took this seriously. In the spring of 1941 the Société Générale requested the sociologist and historian Guillaume Jacquemyns (1897–1969) to conduct an inquiry into the living conditions of the working class. He was a recognised specialist in social surveying and had studied the social situation of the miners and unemployed in the 1930s.<sup>39</sup> Jacquemyns' research was not only a source of information on the conditions of the working class, but also a *political* document. The initial idea was to organise a small inquiry involving miners and metalworkers, who would be asked to fill out a form during their lunch break on their personal situation regarding food supply. An internal memo argues that, from a methodological point of view, this would not lead to a reliable result. Some workers would bring only a little food with them to make their colleagues and employer feel sorry for them. The survey, it was recommended, should include all the meals in one day, the worker should be monitored in a family context and the period should be longer—the span of one rationing period. The survey should be supervised by a social worker and comprise several families per factory. The need for a more elaborate survey was not only motivated by methodological considerations. Scientific authorities as Jacquemyns cautioned that the survey would become a valuable instrument to justify and defend the policy of the Belgian economic elite, during and after the war.<sup>40</sup>

The first results of the inquiry were not encouraging. Jacquemyns compared the 'vital minimum' of four families without children, in 1937 and again in August/September 1941, ranging from those living with a permanent shortage of money to those who had just enough money, but lived prudently and thriftily. Jacquemyns concluded that these four families would all be in a situation of structural shortage in 1941 even though they had twice as much money as in 1937.<sup>41</sup> The focus on the lowest strata of employees shows that a dramatic drop in the standard of living was taken for granted and that the objective had become to just maintain a vital minimum for the period of occupation.

Jacquemyns was enthusiastic about the social policy in the factories, showing that the employers cared about their workers. In a letter to the sponsor of the research, governor Galopin, Jacquemyns referred to a recent increase of the bread ration for the miners. He was convinced that the interventions of the governor of the Société Générale had had an impact on that decision.<sup>42</sup> He hinted at the systematic interventions by Belgian businesses in the policy making of Belgian and German authorities in order to improve food supply and rations. In March 1941 the Federations of Coal Mining, Steel, Engineering, Textiles and Building (all sectors useful to the German war economy) asked for a hearing with the secretaries-general (the top civil servants and the supreme political authority in occupied Belgium) for the departments of labour, economy and agriculture to improve food supply for their workers and for the whole Belgian population. The arguments developed in the letter refer not only to the issue of food shortage in the spring of 1941, but also to the political risks the deteriorating supply posed for Belgian businesses. Food shortages were critical in the industrial regions, where people had no direct contact with the countryside, and in the coal mines. The situation in semi-rural areas was somewhat better, but would worsen when the harvest of 1940 was consumed and the loss of livestock would intensify food scarcity. Industry representatives protested against the German policy to give extra rations to those workers producing directly for the German army and the coal mines, steel, engineering and clothing manufacture, since this would lead to social divisions. At the social level, it was recognised that, as long as the food supply of the Belgian population as a whole was insufficient, the inequality would continue to trigger feelings of envy, discontent and even social disorder. From the perspective of labour productivity, this favouritism was inefficient since the workers

concerned would try to share the extra food with their family and not consume it all themselves. Since specific groups of workers were targeted, conflicts within the enterprises were triggered where workers were excluded from extra food handouts. Therefore, the first demand was to make sure that the needs of the whole population were covered and what was left could be distributed to workers with a physically demanding job. Otherwise, as the Federation of Coal Mining argued, the population might think that the extra rations for the miners and other workers were given at the expense of rations otherwise intended for the general population. The industrialists feared being perceived as economic collaborators. This arose from the second key argument: the occupying forces had an obligation to feed the Belgian population properly and should not confiscate Belgian food for their own needs. This would be in conflict with international law (The Hague Convention) and, more importantly, would put into question the economic policy of Belgium's economic elite. Belgian industry had agreed to produce for Germany, the argument ran, in order to be able to feed the population, but the situation was dramatic: Belgium did not receive enough food imports in return for its industrial production and people were not receiving the food they were entitled to according to the rationing tables. The situation of food supply was even worse than in the darkest periods of World War I. In Germany, rations were higher and not only on paper. Since industrial production was continuing in order to guarantee food supply, rations for the Belgian population should equal the German level.<sup>43</sup>

The secretaries-general were reluctant to act as go-betweens with the Germans. The idea to give priority to rations for the greater population was good in principle, but the Germans favoured the workers who were producing what their war economy needed most, if necessary at the expense of the rest of the population. The Secretary-General for Agriculture argued that mining companies had asked his ministry for potatoes and food just for their workers. The delegate of the Federation of Coal Mining answered that these interventions were carried out under pressure from local German commanders, who in turn were answerable to delegations of miners asking for more food. The same was true if, as the Secretary-General for Agriculture argued, the management of the mining companies intervened with the local German commanders. Such interventions were also a reaction to the demands of workers' delegations.<sup>44</sup>

## WORKERS' DISCONTENT

This political discussion refers to the practice of workers to make an appeal to different authorities—employers (organisations), Belgian administrations, local German authorities and the official trade union—and to play these authorities off against each other. A grass roots trade union in the industrial basin of the so-called *Centre*, in the province of Hainaut in the southern part of the country, founded in October 1941 as an alternative to the official trade union, used this strategy in a sophisticated way. The new association was based on the unity of all the workers and was organised in such a way that its leaders—a committee composed of elected delegates of the different factories in the region—were accountable to the rank and file.<sup>45</sup> The association focussed on material defence of the workers according to the framework set by the employers at the beginning of the war, with the dialectics between extra food supply in the factory and monetary wage increase as the central point. One of the first demands was the distribution of extra food, in this region coordinated by the regional employers' organisation. This coordination was copied by the workers' association. It was agreed that delegates would ask for the same amount of extra food in all the factories where they had a spokesman: 'the same demands in all factories, on the same day, at the same hour' was the guideline. The common list of demands was presented in December 1941 to all the metal companies in the region. Delegates were to put pressure on the employers to make sure that they kept their promises.<sup>46</sup>

Distribution of extra food in the factory by the employer had become for this association a *right* for the workers and employers were held responsible for the food supply of their employees. This right could if necessary be exacted from the employers via the military administration, so that when food was refused in a factory the delegates had the right to complain to the local military commander.<sup>47</sup>

When an employer was unable to provide workers with sufficient extra food at a reasonable price the alternative was a wage increase. In 1942 the association presented the *doléances* ('lists of grievances') of the working class from the *Centre*: workers needed sufficient food, coal for heating at work and at home, clean working clothes, transport from home to work and health protection at work as well as for school children. An alternative to food was 'money' (higher wages) enabling workers to

consume on the black market.<sup>48</sup> But, this was only the second option. The black market, it was argued, should disappear, since it institutionalised social inequality: workers obtained nothing, while rich people could procure everything they wanted.<sup>49</sup>

The employers accepted the trade union as a negotiation partner and the representatives had access to the regional employers' association.<sup>50</sup> In line with the policy of the CCI, these employers did not recognise the official trade union, which had obtained the monopoly of workers' representation from the Germans. Moreover, the employers in the *Centre* region tolerated and offered a framework for the organisation to develop its activities (it could, for instance, organise meetings with the workers). There was room for workers' representation *in* the factory. Their impact depended basically on a balance of power in which representation was one of the elements. In contrast to the pre-war situation the employer became the first and main point of reference for the actions of trade unionists, the political and administrative authorities being relegated to the second plan. Demands were first put on the agenda with the employers, from whom a solution was expected. If the employer refused to give extra food a workers' delegation went to the local German military commander.<sup>51</sup> The occupier was a temporary ally, putting pressure on the employers to make concessions, but the Germans were more of a threat to this association than a help. At the meeting where the association was founded, it was stated that the new organisation was *illégal pour l'autorité occupante, mais légale pour nous, ouvriers de la région du Centre* ('illegal for the occupying authority, but legal for us workers of the *Centre* region').<sup>52</sup> The association warned its militants against too violent attacks against the Germans, since such campaigns could endanger it.<sup>53</sup>

The employers reacted to the common list of demands of December 1941, including a wage increase, by shifting the responsibility to the Belgian state: wages were blocked and authorisation from the Commissioner for Prices and Wages was needed to meet workers' demands.<sup>54</sup>

The association sent letters and a delegation to the Commissioner but tried to send a representative of the employers' organisation as well, so there would be no doubt that responsibility lay with the employers in the first place and not with the state. It was only in June 1942 that a delegation of the employers could be convinced to accompany a workers' delegation to a hearing with the Secretary-General of Agriculture.<sup>55</sup> Although the association was satisfied that it was recognised by the

Belgian authorities and the employers, the joint delegation involving the employers and the Department of Agriculture was not a complete political success. First, the delegation met the Secretary-General of Agriculture, a domain where the employers were not *directly* involved in contrast to the Commission for Prices and Wages, which had powers over wage formation. Moreover, it was not just one representative of the employers who joined the workers' delegation, but the delegation as a whole was composed of an *equal number* of employers and workers. The president of the regional employers' association opened the meeting by exposing *les doléances de la classe ouvrière du Centre* ('the lists of grievances of the *Centre's* working class'). Just as was the case in the first months of the occupation the employers acted as the spokesmen and representatives of the workers. Then, he gave the floor to the workers' delegates. The focus was on the deficiencies of the rationing system (an old problem), the lack of potatoes, fraud, the black market and the problem of food supply in general. The workers complained that in their region large quantities of potatoes had been delivered, but workers could not get access to any. The employers' association volunteered to organise the transport and distribution of potatoes. The Secretary-General of Agriculture firmly rejected this suggestion since it would undermine the official rationing system and encourage fraud.<sup>56</sup> Politically, the employers had shown that they understood the sorrows of the workers and were prepared to offer an alternative to the deficiencies of the official rationing system, but they were also frustrated by the Belgian political authorities responsible for food supply.

The representatives of the workers had to go alone to meet the Commission for Prices and Wages in January 1942. The efforts to convince a delegate of the employers' association were to no avail. The Commission refused to accept the trade union as a dialogue partner and workers were forced to voice their demands via the official union. Since this was not an option the employers were pressed again, due to a slow-down in production, to provide extra food and pay higher wages. In parallel, the efforts continued to be heard by the Belgian authorities, using the internal divisions of the Belgian administration: the Commissioner for Wages was a member of a collaborationist party, while the Head of the Department of Labour was close to political Catholicism. Through the intermediation of a pre-war Catholic trade union leader, who also opposed the official single union, the organisation was granted a hearing with the Head of the Department. In response to the threat of social

action, he gave them new arguments for their negotiations with the employers: the employers could give loans to their workers and, although officially it was forbidden, the employers could distribute food obtained via the black market. The Head of the Department gave a hint as to what was going on: 10,000 kg of peas had recently been sold to personnel at the ministries at a low price. The Head of the Department even succeeded in organising a meeting with the Commissioner for Wages the same day. He explained that a new wage classification was in preparation and would be binding on employers.<sup>57</sup>

Since the Belgian authorities were not helping workers, in September 1942, after a period of slowdown in production, a strike ultimatum was presented to the employers to obtain a wage increase that would compensate for the rising cost of living, as well as extra food distribution in the factories and an extension of the distribution of supplementary food stamps for workers with a physically demanding job.<sup>58</sup> This catalogue of claims was to a certain extent a return to the pre-war system of industrial relations based on index-linked wages, with the incorporation of extra food provided by the employers to substitute the failing food supply organised by the state. For the association, extra food was an acquired right and the association returned the strategy of the employers: when their lobbying with the political authorities failed to bring results the employers had to take over. The employers were not prepared to give in and the workers went on strike, although without leaving the buildings, thus transforming the action into a kind of sit-in. The local German commander intervened initially as a mediator, then employers' and workers' representatives were both summoned. Shortly afterwards hostages were taken and the strike spread to more factories. It ended when the leader of the association was imprisoned, but the employers still made no concessions.<sup>59</sup>

The series of actions carried out by this association allows insight into the strategy of the employers to shift labour relations to the factory. This unofficial trade union succeeded in imposing itself as the representative body of the workers at the expense of the official trade union. This ambition was not really obstructed by the employers, who were prepared to negotiate and, to a certain extent, even to support the workers. The fact that the employers had organised themselves at the regional level was used as an implicit argument by the association to do the same and to put into question the monopoly of the official union. In this, the employers supported the workers, but their support had clear limits. To the extent that the demands of the association called into question the legitimacy of the state-organised rationing system, they could accept a

partnership with the workers' organisation. However, by sending a delegation equal in number to the workers' delegation the employers put themselves on the same footing as the workers when their demands were voiced with the authorities. Monetary wage demands were a controversial issue: a partnership with the workers at the state level to increase monetary wages was ruled out and confrontation in the form of strike action prevailed on the shop floor. The employers were in a stronger position as they were backed by the occupier, even though the employers as a general rule made no appeal themselves to the Germans who expected labour relations and disputes to be settled directly between employers and workers.

The strategy of the employers to grant only extra food had its limits. There may have been valid economic arguments against a wage-price spiral, but this does not mean that workers were convinced that a wage increase was not necessary. As a consequence of the rationing of food and the bad organisation of food supply, the black market flourished; much food was available there, but at a very high price, and thus wage increases were necessary for participation in the black market. As it was summed up in an internal meeting of the unofficial trade union: *Toute l'assemblée se trouve d'accord pour reconnaître que nos salaires sont de beaucoup inférieur au coût de la vie. De là si nos patrons ne savent pas nous fournir du vivre à des prix abordables, qu'ils nous donnent des augmentations de salaires qui puissent nous permettent (sic!) de nous approvisionner au marché noir* ('All present at the meeting agree that our salaries are much too low as compared to the cost of living. So, if our employers can not provide foodstuffs at an affordable price, they should pay a higher salary to enable us to buy food at the black market').<sup>60</sup>

Obtaining higher wages was often a strike motive, as in the case of the major strike in May 1941, in which 70,000 workers were mobilised for 21 days. As a result of the strike, wages increased by 8% across the whole private sector. This wage increase was a political defeat for the employers, since their aim was to avoid a monetary wage increase. The strike also gave workers their political voice back. A delegation headed by a Communist leader negotiated with the authorities and employers could no longer present themselves as the only spokesmen of the workers.<sup>61</sup>

Next to strikes, workers were building new types of representation, factory based and bottom up: representatives of factories in specific industrial sectors federated into regional associations. After the May 1941 strike the Communist Party started to organise trade union sections in the factories. These *Comités de lutte syndicale* ('Committees of

Union Struggle’) favoured a more radical trade unionism and used the threat of strike as a weapon, even though Germans had prohibited strikes.<sup>62</sup> Via the illegal press the *Comités de Lutte Syndicale* criticised the employers by pointing to concrete elements of their social policy in the factory and, in general, by accusing the Belgian business sector of economic collaboration as they were producing for the enemy and driven by profit making. The *Comités de Lutte Syndicale* demanded a pay rise—such demands were always high (50%)—explaining that the workers were suffering from hunger and shortage, transforming shortage of food into a political argument.<sup>63</sup> This demand for wage increases can be read as a call for production profits from Germany to be redistributed among the workers, who were incited to slow down or sabotage production.

Other illegal, non-Communist unions organised in the (big) factories as well and had a radical programme including social demands and organised strikes.<sup>64</sup> Depending on the balance of power, representatives of these radical unions were able to set themselves up as spokesmen of the workers or were integrated into the factory councils established at the initiative of the employers as an alternative to the pre-war trade unions.<sup>65</sup> Belgian business was in a position of strategic dominance to deal with this threat: the reconfiguration of labour relations put into the hands of the factories offered the employers a means to answer the demands of the radical unions. Although wages were blocked, employers had alternatives to pay their workers more. After 1943, they offered illegal wage increases, often disguised as ‘loans’.<sup>66</sup> This was not limited to some firms, but was a policy and an answer to the situation in factories and the demands and pressure on the workers and their organisations, where labour market shortages and the value of production for the German war economy played a role. Strikes in 1940–1941 were most frequent in sectors directly useful for the German war effort such as coal mining and engineering.<sup>67</sup>

Illegal wage increases not only had an economic, but also a political relevance, as was evidenced in the cement sector. This sector was producing directly for the war effort: cement was used to construct German military defence structures such as the Atlantic Wall. The Belgian cement companies decided to sell their surplus cement bags to the Organisation Todt (a civil and military construction group) on the black market. The profit was distributed directly to the workers as an (illegal) financial bonus.<sup>68</sup> This not only created solidarity in the production for Germany, it also enabled the workers to participate in an indirect way in the black market and share some of the profits it generated.

Something similar was attempted in the coal mines in 1943. The director for the coalmines of the Société Générale proposed to pay a financial bonus in coal. Everyone knew that the miners would not use the coal themselves, but would prefer to sell it on the black market. This would lead to greater availability of coal on the Belgian market.<sup>69</sup> This proposal had a financial background (it appeared to be less of a cost and avoided monetary wage increases), but it had political significance as well. The proposal would associate the workers with the black market, not as consumers, but in their capacity as producers, putting them in a position to take profit from the black market, of which they were in general a victim, while offering businesses an opportunity to make profits. Moreover, the whole idea also provided an answer to the issue of economic collaboration. Economic collaboration was framed as favouring Germany at the expense of the Belgian market and population. Products badly needed by the Belgians (in this case for heating and preparing food) were shipped directly to Germany or used for the needs of the German economy via the organised economy. The miners would act as an intermediary to fuel the black market, increasing the share of Belgian production available for Belgian small consumers while at the same time withdrawing coal from the German war economy.

The relocation of labour relations onto the shop floor put the employers in a position to react in a flexible way to social demands, without having to make concessions that would be binding for the whole sector of the economy. The fact that employers increased wages and broke with regulations not only enhanced their political legitimacy, but also implied that morally they had the right to decide on the future of the concessions they had made, since these were not legally binding. Peter Scholliers has made it clear that employers were more inclined to pay higher wages from 1943 onwards. While prices had risen sharply in the first half of the war the increase was much lower in later years: in 1941, food prices multiplied by a factor of five; in 1944 the increase was limited to 5%. Workers were accustomed to high price levels and received relatively more compensation from their wages by the end of the war than at the beginning. This eased social tensions in the transition from war to peace in 1944/1945, especially compared to the post-World War I situation, when the social climate was more tense.<sup>70</sup>

## CONCLUDING REMARKS

Belgian workers and miners were confronted with a permanent lack of food since the official rationing system did not provide the nutrition they were entitled to. For economic and political reasons, employers gave their workers extra food and lobbied with the authorities to improve the official rationing system. The workers considered this extra food as an acquired right and felt that the employers had a responsibility for their food supply. This led to political tensions with the creation of new workers' organisations, also demanding a monetary wage increase, which the employers wanted to avoid for economic reasons. Since prices were extremely high the black market was little more than a second option for workers who found other means of getting by. Using their capacity as the country's producers, they participated in an allocation mechanism that was necessary to survive the war.

## NOTES

1. Peter Scholliers, *Arm en rijk aan tafel. Tweehonderd jaar eetcultuur in België* (Berchem: EPO, 1993), 175.
2. The standard ration (kilocalories) in 1942: Germany 1845; The Netherlands 1805; Belgium 1365; France 1115. See Hein Klemann and Sergei Kudryashov, *Occupied Economies. An Economic History of Nazi-Occupied Europe 1939–1945* (London and New York: Berg, 2012), 380.
3. Nathalie Piquet, *Charbon-travail forcé-collaboration. Der nordfranzösische und belgische Bergbau unter deutscher Besatzung, 1940 bis 1944* (Essen: Klartext, 2008), 162.
4. Anne Henau and Mark Van den Wijngaert, *België op de bon. Rantsoenering en voedselvoorziening onder Duitse bezetting 1940–44* (Leuven: Acco, 1986).
5. Gislle Nath, *Brood willen we hebben! Honger, sociale politiek en protest tijdens de Eerste Wereldoorlog in België* (Antwerpen: Manteau, 2013).
6. CEGESOMA Brussels, *Papiers L'an 40*, no. 25, *Devons-nous reprendre la production industrielle en Belgique? Dans quelle mesure?* (15.VII.1940), 5–7.
7. Guillaume Jacquemyns, *La Société Belge sous l'occupation allemande, 1940–1944. Privations et espoirs* (Bruxelles: Office de publicité, 1945), 20.
8. Piquet, *Charbon-travail forcé-collaboration*, 161, 168; Bert Delbroek, *In de put. De arbeidsmarkt voor mijnwerkers in Belgisch Limburg 1900–1966* (Hilversum: Verloren, 2016), 210.
9. Piquet, *Charbon-travail forcé-collaboration*, 162.

10. Jean Put, *Russische krijgsgevangenen in Limburg 1942–1945* (Leuven: Acco, 2002), 120–121.
11. Piquet, *Charbon-travail forcé-collaboration*, 162.
12. Henau, and Van den Wijngaert, *België op de bon*, 201–203.
13. Algemeen Rijksarchief 2 [ARA 2] (Depot Cuvelier), Fedechar, Note concernant l'alimentation de la population ouvrière des charbonnages 5.III.1941, *Archief Société Générale*, Papieren Nokin, 59; Delbroek, *In de put*, 105; Leen Roels, *Het tekort. Studies over de arbeidsmarkt voor mijnwerkers in het Luikse kolenbekken vanaf het einde van de negentiende eeuw tot 1974* (Hilversum: Verloren, 2014), 127.
14. Delbroek, *In de put*, 83.
15. Margriet Vandeloek, *De toestand van de arbeidersbevolking van Koersel* (n.p., 1943), 27.
16. Put, *Russische krijgsgevangenen*, 120
17. Mark Van den Wijngaert et al., *België tijdens de Tweede Wereldoorlog* (Antwerpen: Manteau, 2004), 83.
18. Luc Vandeweyer, “Tuintjes in oorlogstijd,” in *Volkstuinen. Een geschiedenis*, ed. Yves Segers and Leen Van Molle (Leuven: Davidsfonds, 2007), 175.
19. Peter Heyrman, “Het Werk van den Akker. Georganiseerd tuinieren met een sociale missie,” in *ibid.*, 64, 69.
20. E. Clersy, *Enquêtes et études sociales sur les conditions de vie dans la classe ouvrière en égard aux difficultés du ravitaillement consécutives à l'occupation* (Bruxelles: Ecole Ouvrière Supérieure, 1941), 1.
21. Hein Klemann and Sergei Kudryashov, *Occupied economies*, 330.
22. Clersy, *Enquêtes et études*, 24.
23. Put, *Russische krijgsgevangenen*, 127.
24. Tina Windmolers, *Oorzaken van afwezigheid bij de arbeiders en arbeidsters in het jaar 1943–44 in de fabrieken Tudor* (Brussels: n.p., 1944), 88.
25. ARA, Administration des mines. Deuxième série, no. 2, Exchange of letters between F and the Mining administration March–April 1943.
26. Dirk Luyten and Rik Hemmerijckx, “Belgian Labour in World War II: Strategies of Survival, Organisations and Labour Relations,” *European Review of History—Revue Européenne d’Histoire* 7 (2000): 207–227.
27. Van den Wijngaert et al., *België tijdens de Tweede Wereldoorlog*, 85.
28. M. Laloire, *Les réalisations sociales patronales en temps de guerre* (Bruxelles: Association des Ingénieurs et Patrons Catholiques, 1941).
29. Heyrman, “Het Werk van den Akker,” 67.
30. Put, *Russische krijgsgevangenen*, 122.
31. *Ibid.*, 192–193, 203–210.
32. Piquet, *Charbon-travail forcé-collaboration*, 166–167.

33. Guy Coppieters, “De politiek van de minste weerstand? Belgisch-Limburgse mijndirecties tijdens de Tweede Wereldoorlog,” in *Thuisfront. Oorlog en economie in de twintigste eeuw. Veertiende jaarboek van het Nederlands Instituut voor Oorlogsdocumentatie*, ed. M. de Keizer et al. (Zuthpen: Walburg Pers, 2002), 232–249.
34. Dirk Luyten, “Stakingen in België en Nederland, 1940–1941,” *Bijdragen tot de Eigentijdse Geschiedenis* 15 (2005): 149–176.
35. Roels, *Het tekort*, 127–128.
36. ARA 2 (Depot Cuvelier), Note CCI. Entretien avec M. Westphal 13.II.1941, *Archief Société Générale*, Papieren Nokin, 59.
37. Robin Hogg, *Structural rigidities and policy inertia in interwar Belgium* (Brussels: Koninklijke Academie voor Wetenschappen, Letteren en Schone Kunsten, 1986).
38. ARA 2 (Depot Cuvelier), Le problème des prix et salaires. Projet de note. Le 15 Janvier 1941, *Archief Société Générale*, Papieren Nokin, 59.
39. R. Devleeshouwer, “Guillaume Jacquemyns (1897–1969),” *Revue belge de philologie et d’histoire* 48 (1970): 286–288.
40. ARA 2 (Depot Cuvelier), Note à propos de l’enquête alimentaire des ouvriers 12.III.1941, *Archief Société Générale*, Papieren Nokin, 78.
41. G. Jacquemyns, Le minimum vital avant la guerre et actuellement, *ibid.*, 63.
42. ARA 2 (Depot Cuvelier), G. Jacquemyns to A. Galopin, 2.X.1941, *Archief Société Générale*, Papieren Nokin, 78.
43. ARA 2 (Depot Cuvelier), The Federations of Coalmining, Steel, Engineering, Textiles and Building Industry to the Secretaries General for Labour, Economy and Agriculture 7.III.1941, *Archief Société Générale*, Papieren Nokin, 78.
44. ARA 2 (Depot Cuvelier), Note Fédération des Associations Charbonnières 7.III.1941 *Archief Société Générale*, Papieren Nokin, 78.
45. Association des ouvriers métallurgistes et sidérurgistes de la région du Centre fondée le 16 Octobre 1941. Cahier des procès-verbaux. Séance du 23 novembre 1941. Procès-verbal, 132; Rik Hemmerijckx, “Pour une histoire ouvrière de l’occupation. Le cahier des procès-verbaux de l’association des ouvriers métallurgistes du Centre (1941–1942),” *Cahiers-Bijdragen* 16 (1994): 117–161, 128.
46. Association, 132, 135.
47. Association, 133.
48. Rapport de l’entrevue entre Messieurs les Secrétaires Généraux Vervaeke et Wouters et les délégués ouvriers du Centre. Association, 155.
49. Association, 150.
50. Association, 138.
51. Association, 133.

52. Association, 130.
53. Association, 137.
54. Association, 135.
55. Association, 148.
56. Association, 148–149.
57. Association, 153–158.
58. Association, 158.
59. Association, 159–160.
60. Association.
61. José Gotovitch, “La ‘grève des 100.000’,” in *Jours de guerre. Jours de lutte*, ed. F. Balace (Bruxelles: Crédit communal, 1992), 91–100.
62. José Gotovitch, *Du rouge au tricolore: les communistes belges de 1939 à 1944, un aspect de l’histoire de la Résistance en Belgique* (Bruxelles: Labor, 1992), 110 s.s.
63. See, e.g., *De Metaalbewerker. Orgaan der Syndicale Strijdkomiteiten der Metaalbewerkers van Mechelen-Leuven-Willebroek*, December 1943, <http://warpress.cegesoma.be>, accessed 15 March 2017.
64. Rik Hemmerijckx, “Le mouvement syndical unifié et la naissance du Renardisme,” *Courrier Hebdomadaire du CRISP*, no. 1119–1120 (1986).
65. Luyten and Hemmerijckx, “Belgian Labour in World War II.”
66. Peter Scholliers, “Strijd rond de koopkracht, 1939–1945,” in *België, een maatschappij in crisis en oorlog, 1940=Belgique, une société en crise, un pays en guerre, 1940* (Brussels: NCWO II/CREHSGM, 1993), 245–276.
67. Luyten, “Stakingen in België en Nederland.”
68. Expertiseverslag Cementkartel. Auditoraat-generaal Brussel, *Documenten John Gilissen*.
69. CEGESOMA Brussel, Overtuigingsstukken auditoraat-generaal, AA 1314, no. 652; M. Nokin, Note adressée au Referat Bergbau en répondant aux propositions faites par ce dernier dans son allocution du 2.6.1943, 4.
70. Scholliers, *Arm en rijk*, 176–177.



# ‘Dem tschechischen Arbeiter das Fressen geben’: Factory Canteens in the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia

*Jaromír Balcar*

## INTRODUCTION

It was none other than the self-proclaimed chief expert on the ‘Czech question’, Adolf Hitler, who—as late as October 1941—vehemently opposed the introduction of communal mealtimes in the Protectorate. ‘The installation of factory canteens had to be avoided in the *Tschechei*’, the ‘Führer and Reich Chancellor’ blustered in one of his infamous table talks, ‘since the worker, in spite of small rations, would get better food at home, for the Czech woman is famous for her cooking skills’.<sup>1</sup>

But things turned out completely differently. In the course of World War II, gastronomic institutions, which had still been widely unknown in Bohemia and Moravia during the inter-war period, were introduced for the provisioning of the (mainly Czech) workers in the Protectorate according to the Reich German role model. In a first step already taken in 1940 but not yet centrally enforced by state authorities, soup kitchens

---

J. Balcar (✉)

Max Planck Institute for the History of Science, Berlin, Germany  
e-mail: jbalcar@mpiwg-berlin.mpg.de

© The Author(s) 2018

T. Tönsmeier et al. (eds.), *Coping with Hunger and Shortage under German Occupation in World War II*,  
[https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-77467-1\\_9](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-77467-1_9)

167

were set up in a number of armaments factories. In August 1941 the Office of the Reich Protector, the highest German occupation authority, obliged all armament factories in the Bohemian lands to run lunchrooms or canteens, in order to feed employees at their workplace.<sup>2</sup> The mandatory installation of canteens across almost all branches of the industrial sector of the Protectorate finally began in July 1942.<sup>3</sup>

Although factory canteens never came close to the claims of German propaganda that most of the workers in the Protectorate were fed at their workplace, the scale of the enterprise was impressive. By the summer of 1943, works kitchens or canteens had been set up at 1300 sites, feeding approximately 500,000 of the 1.8 million employees in the industry.<sup>4</sup> At the time it was assumed that, by the end of the year, approximately 80% of the industrial employees in the Protectorate would be fed at their workplace. Although this assumption was far from reality the introduction of communal meals made an impact, especially in large enterprises. By the summer of 1943 the canteens of the Prague Engineering Corporation ČKD were feeding some 12,500 workers completely. In the first half of 1943, they provided nearly 1.4 million lunches, and in the same period the company subsidised its provisioning department with a pay-out of 3.5 million crowns.<sup>5</sup>

Based on research in German, Russian and Czech archives and focussing on three large enterprises from different branches of the Protectorate's industrial sector,<sup>6</sup> this chapter tackles the following questions: What were the motives and reasons for the establishment of canteens in the industry of the Protectorate? In other words: Why was communal eating indispensable under the conditions of Nazi war economy and occupation? Who initiated the installation of works kitchens? Did the German occupation authorities comply with the wishes of the Czech workers or did the Germans pursue their own goals? Also, what was the role of the enterprises in setting up canteens? How did the workers react to them? And did communal feeding actually improve the nutritional situation of the Czech labour force, as the Nazi propaganda would not tire to affirm?

#### BOHEMIA AND MORAVIA: A SPECIAL CASE AND A CASE OF PARTICULAR INTEREST

Before addressing these questions, we have to take a closer look at the region surveyed in this chapter, the western part of former Czechoslovakia, today by and large the territory of the Czech Republic.

At that time, it was the first European region with a predominantly non-German population to be forcefully integrated into Nazi Germany. Its border regions had been transferred in the course of the infamous Munich agreement in September 1938, before the Wehrmacht occupied the heartland of Bohemia and Moravia in March 1939. The area then became attached to the Reich as the Protectorate.<sup>7</sup>

Although located to the east of Germany, Bohemia and Moravia were not among the European regions the Nazis wanted to exploit as a reservoir for labour slaves, agricultural products and raw materials. Due to both its level of modernisation, which was unparalleled in East Central Europe, and a traditionally large sector of arms production,<sup>8</sup> the Protectorate emerged as the *Rüstammer des Reiches* (‘Arsenal of the Reich’) within the *großdeutsche Wirtschaftsraum* (‘Greater German Economic Sphere’) in the course of World War II.<sup>9</sup> Owing to the remarkable contribution of Bohemia and Moravia to the German war effort the Nazi occupation policy in the Protectorate differed significantly from the blunt terror in other occupied regions of Eastern and South Eastern Europe. In short, the Germans implemented a Western-style occupation policy in the Protectorate, which can be compared to their procedure in France, Belgium or the Netherlands rather than to the atrocious crimes committed in Poland, the Balkans or in the occupied regions of the Soviet Union.<sup>10</sup> Despite this, however, the Czech people did not count among the more favourable Slavonic nations according to racial (or rather racist) perspectives of the Nazis.<sup>11</sup>

Focussing on the installation of factory canteens reveals a significant long-term difference between developments in Germany and in the Bohemian provinces. In Germany the first canteens had already been established around 1850 and then expanded quickly after the turn of the century.<sup>12</sup> In the Bohemian lands, only a few factories—most of them located in the major cities of Prague and Pilsen—installed facilities to feed their employees before the beginning of World War II. In the Protectorate, canteens were only implemented on a large scale from 1940 on, starting with companies in the armament industry. Factory canteens had their heyday in Bohemia and Moravia during the Nazi occupation. It was not until after the war began that Czech trade unions started to organise the education of cooks, who would later work in factory canteens. More and more factories also began to raise cattle and grow vegetables and fruit in order to improve the food supply for their canteens.

The main reason for this remarkable delay in establishing factory canteens were significant differences in the socioeconomic structures prevalent in the industrial sectors. In Germany, industrialisation had gone hand in hand with urbanisation. Thus, the large industrial enterprises were to be found mainly in big cities like Berlin or in urban agglomerations like the Ruhr Basin. Since the late nineteenth century the labour force in these areas had increasingly been housed in industrial residential centres, workers' barracks or communal tenements. An example frequently mentioned in historiography are the Krupp factories in Essen, where mandatory communal meals in factory canteens had been introduced very early on.<sup>13</sup> In the Bohemian lands, however, the industrial village was the predominant socioeconomic signature. Accordingly, outside the major cities of Prague and Pilsen, the so-called *kovorolníci* ('steel farmers') dominated the labour force. They derived their main income from working in the industry, but supported themselves with a small amount of agriculture on the side<sup>14</sup> and were therefore not dependent on being fed in canteens. They even refused to receive meals at their workplace because they were unwilling to pay for something they could obtain for free at home. This structural peculiarity later on created problems for the Protectorate authorities and enterprises alike, because the steel farmers often did not turn up at the factories during harvest time, which caused notable losses in production.<sup>15</sup>

Even after the canteens were introduced in the Protectorate, they remained significantly different from their counterparts elsewhere in the Reich in terms of how they were organised, governed, so to speak, and run. Though the factory kitchens in the Protectorate were run by the respective enterprises, they were controlled centrally by the Representative for Communal Catering who resided in the liaison office of the Reich Protector for the Czech trade unions, the existence of which was another special feature of the Protectorate under Nazi occupation.<sup>16</sup> The liaison office also handled the central distribution of extra food rations, from which the canteens benefitted initially, though only for a short period of time, while the company bosses and factory committees enjoyed a certain, though rather limited, freedom in arranging the menus and fixing the prices for the meals. Due to the limited power of the so-called food committees, which existed in a number of enterprises, the labour force ended up having little influence over the works kitchens.<sup>17</sup> In short, the workers had to pay for the food they obtained

at their workplace, but had little say regarding the menu or the price. Moreover, both the quality and the quantity of the dishes served in factory canteens were a constant source of complaint.

### THE ADMINISTRATION OF SCARCITY: MOTIVES FOR THE INTRODUCTION OF FACTORY CANTEENS IN THE PROTECTORATE

Although agriculture was still an important part of the Protectorate's economy, Bohemia and Moravia were unable to produce enough food to sustain their population and thus depended on the import of food-stuffs.<sup>18</sup> The Germans, however, used all the hard currency available to them to purchase indispensable raw materials on the world market in order to keep their armaments production running at full speed—and in the spring of 1939 the Germans also took control of the revenues for industrial exports from the Bohemian provinces. Consequently, food shortages became a signature of everyday life in the Protectorate almost immediately after the German invasion, when food imports came to an end. The situation was all the more alarming to the occupation authorities, because the Czechs blamed the Germans for the long queues in front of the grocery stores and the scarcity of food. As the *Sicherheitsdienst* (SD) ('Security Service of the SS') reported in June 1941, there were rumours among the Czech population that the supply situation was becoming even worse because 'the Germans would eat everything up'.<sup>19</sup> This attitude resulted in panic buying of food, which further worsened the supply situation in the Protectorate. Thus, the question of food supply turned into a potential threat to the maintenance of public order in Bohemia and Moravia. Something had to be done to calm public opinion among the Czech population.

The worsening of the supply situation was one problem the Germans tried to address by creating new institutions for communal feeding of the labour force at their workplace. However, it was the special socio-economic structures of the Bohemian provinces described above and, even more so, the decisive changes of these structures under the German occupation that turned the introduction of factory canteens in the Protectorate into a necessity. As a matter of fact the war presented the Germans with a dilemma they were unable to solve.<sup>20</sup> Throughout World War II the occupation authorities could not make up their minds whether they wanted to exploit the Protectorate as a reservoir of labour

force—as they later did in other conquered territories east of the Reich—or whether they should use the region’s considerable industrial capacities to produce arms and ammunition for Hitler’s war. In the end the Germans went both ways at the same time: on the one hand, (Czech) workers from the Protectorate—mostly indispensable skilled workers—were sent to the Reich on a large scale in order to replace those (German) workers drafted into the Wehrmacht. Experts estimate that approximately 600,000 Czechs were conscripted to work in Germany within the so-called *Reichseinsatz* (‘Reich deployment’) over the course of the war.<sup>21</sup> On the other hand, the authorities of the German Reich and the Protectorate, as well as enterprises from the Reich, shifted more and more tasks crucial to the German war effort into the Protectorate,<sup>22</sup> which remained safe from Allied bombs longer than most regions of Germany. This development triggered a considerable armament boom in the Bohemian lands.

As a result of this balancing act the industry of the Protectorate as well as the state authorities were confronted with enormous difficulties. They had to raise the output of the armament factories continuously and at the same time cope with the loss of a larger and larger portion of the enterprises’ regular staff. In order to compensate for this permanent bleeding, various transfers of labour force from other sectors of the Protectorate economy to the armament industry were implemented. First farm workers, then university graduates and independent professionals and later, increasingly, youngsters and women were now sent into the armaments factories.<sup>23</sup> In the course of this process not only the staff of the enterprises, but also large sections of the Protectorate’s population were mixed up and shifted around a great deal. Thus, the daily trip to work became longer and longer while means of transport deteriorated. Above all, the increasing employment of women created problems as female workers had to do their job in the factory and take care of their families at the same time. This double burden was even harder to bear in the face of ever longer working hours and ever longer queues in front of the grocery stores.<sup>24</sup> Feeding the workforce in the factories thus promised considerable relief in the everyday life of Czech workers, specifically for the increasing number of working women. Moreover, canteens enabled the Germans to distribute scarce foodstuffs exclusively among those Czechs who were willing to work for the new masters of Bohemia and Moravia and thus contributed to the Nazi war effort. Last but not least, the Germans hoped that canteens would contribute to their project of

‘depoliticising’ the Czechs by redirecting their interests from a national level to their personal well-being, in other words, to the social aspects of life under German occupation.<sup>25</sup>

However, the establishment of canteens was also favourable from the perspective of the enterprises. The conscription of ever more Czech workers for the *Reichseinsatz* turned labour into a scarce resource. Thus, strong competition among the Protectorate’s enterprises emerged, specifically for urgently needed skilled workers. Since the state fixed salaries and wages centrally,<sup>26</sup> measures of social policy within the factories provided the managers with a substitute tool in order to hold on to their indispensable staff or to recruit additional workers. A good canteen certainly was an asset to this end. Moreover, the constant increases in production the Germans demanded as the war went on made rationalisation imperative.<sup>27</sup> One way in which enterprises throughout the Protectorate reacted to this continuous pressure was by establishing works kitchens, which rationalised, so to speak, the everyday life of the workers and most notably their food consumption. Clearly, workers had to eat in order to work—and if, as both the German representatives and the managers of the enterprises hoped, adequate meals could also contribute to raising the working spirit of the labour force, all the better.

It might appear strange that there were common interests shared by the German administration of the Protectorate, on the one hand, and the industry with its—predominantly Czech—management, on the other, but this was a common characteristic of the Protectorate. Both the German administration and the company management saw social policy as being instrumental to their aims. Their main motivation was not improving the quality of life or the supply situation of the workers, but simply increasing the output figures of the industry in Bohemia and Moravia. The Germans had yet another motive: for them social policy was a means of propaganda through which they could break the Czech labour force out of a closed national phalanx of the Protectorate’s majority population and to secure the loyalty of Czech workers, at least within the production process.<sup>28</sup>

The introduction of canteens thus lay at the intersection of social policy on a company level and state control of the economy. The motive was the same for both: raising the efficiency and performance of the labour force and thus increasing production output. Moreover, the introduction of factory canteens demonstrates some basic characteristics of Nazi social policy in the Protectorate. The German authorities forced

companies to implement measures of social policy at the factory level. The costs of these social benefits, which the Germans liberally used for their propaganda, had to be borne by the enterprises.<sup>29</sup> But, while the company management at least had a say in this kind of social policy, the representatives of labour in the factories and across the individual enterprises had very little influence on its implementation. As was the case with wage policy the works councils and the trade unions of the Protectorate proved to be toothless paper tigers, designed merely to serve the purposes of German propaganda.<sup>30</sup> This marks another important difference from the Reich, where the *Deutsche Arbeitsfront* (DAF) ('German Labour Front') quite often started initiatives of social policy at the factory level.

### THE CZECH WORKER AND THE WORKS KITCHENS

Acting partly in alliance with companies and their managers, German occupation authorities initiated and implemented the installation of factory kitchens in the Protectorate. The first calls for communal catering facilities within the factories, however, had in fact come from the labour force before the outbreak of the war. As stated above, the German invasion immediately caused a noticeable deterioration of the food supply situation in the Protectorate. In the face of increasing supply problems the workers of several factories demanded that the enterprises provide them with basic necessities. This demand, however, did not meet with the approval of the company management. Already in the summer of 1939 the factory committee of the mine at Nučice, which belonged to the Prague Iron Industry Corporation, demanded that the management take measures to improve the food supply for employees.<sup>31</sup> Prague Iron's CEO refused the proposal, since this was—in his eyes—'not part of our company's business, as long as any possible shortages in food supply do not impinge on the effectiveness of the company's work'.<sup>32</sup> These hard-hearted words demonstrate the manager's lack of understanding for the needs of his employees. Only after the German authorities exerted pressure on the enterprises were works kitchens finally established. This happened in the autumn of 1941, when Heydrich took up office at Prague castle and when the increasing transfer of skilled workers to the Reich together with the worsening mood among the remaining Czech workers began to threaten armaments production in the Protectorate. By this time, output of the Protectorate industry had already become indispensable to Hitler's war.

The initial enthusiasm Czech workers felt towards factory canteens soon wore off when Heydrich’s well-staged propaganda coup proved to be a straw fire.<sup>33</sup> The special food rations from the Reich, which the deputy Reich Protector brought with him to Prague to celebrate taking up office, had created great expectations, which were soon sorely disappointed. When the special food rations for canteens came to an end the quantity and quality of meals in the factories deteriorated.<sup>34</sup> Furthermore, employees could not choose whether to eat in the canteen or not, because taking part in communal meals was mandatory. Moreover, the workers had to hand in their scarce alimentary coupons for these meals, which continuously gave rise to bitter complaints.<sup>35</sup>

Unfulfilled expectations soon turned into protests and harsh criticism. In Brno a police report summed up the bitter feelings of the workers in face of the meagre results of Heydrich’s grandly proclaimed ‘soup action’ with the words: ‘Lots of humbug and in the end nothing at all!’<sup>36</sup> The Germans were well aware of the fact that the increasingly precarious supply situation in the Protectorate was a delicate subject, which had hardened the attitude of the Czechs towards the Nazi occupation. However, the Germans remained unwilling to relieve shortages in the Protectorate by providing food from Germany. Thus, German reactions were rather pointless. In July 1942, Secretary of State Karl Hermann Frank, one of the most ardent Nazis within the administration of the Protectorate,<sup>37</sup> issued a harsh decree against alleged *Essereien* (‘eating feasts’) at official meetings and celebrations, which enraged hard-working Czech labourers. Frank ruled that in the future only stew was to be served at such occasions.<sup>38</sup> However, reactions like these remained strictly within the symbolic political sphere, and were mere window dressing. They did not even still the hunger of a single Czech worker.

In spite of all the problems caused, or rather not solved, by the canteens and factory kitchens, German propaganda apparently fell on fertile ground with the Czech labour force. In the autumn of 1941, workers from other branches and enterprises not considered immediately important to the war effort began to complain about (pretended or actual) neglect concerning their food supply.<sup>39</sup> It seems they were afraid that colleagues working in factories with canteens might be better off. These protests finally prompted the Germans in July 1942 to order the establishment of works kitchens across the entire industry.

The introduction of canteens and soup kitchens, however, did not alter the fact that the food supply in the Protectorate—seen as a whole—continued to deteriorate over the course of the war.<sup>40</sup> The lack of food

soon became the most criticised issue within the Czech labour force, second only to the question of wages. Moreover, the distribution of food in occupied Bohemia and Moravia had a national or—as the Nazis saw it—a ‘racial’ bias, as rations in Germany were slightly larger than in the Protectorate and the provisions for German workers were larger than those allocated to their Czech counterparts, despite the equal demand placed on both groups in terms of work output. The blatant injustice of this double standard probably enraged Czech workers more than anything else. Together with growing despair in the face of a precarious supply situation and ever longer working hours, this sense of injustice led to tensions in the factories, often erupting in the form of spontaneous strikes, which were then brutally suppressed by the Gestapo.<sup>41</sup>

### CONCLUSION

Did factory canteens really improve the food supply of Czech workers in the Protectorate? The question is hard to answer on a general level. Probably they did, but it remains unclear to what extent exactly, because there are no sources available to answer this question other than at the level of individual workers. Canteens, generally speaking, made everyday life under Nazi occupation, which was hard enough during World War II, a little bit easier. But, canteens alone could not solve the problem of the Czech labour force’s meagre rations, mainly because the Germans were unwilling to improve the supply situation within the Protectorate by a significant transfer of food from the Reich. Thus, the longer the war went on the shorter the rations of Czech workers became and, while the supply situation in the Protectorate continuously deteriorated, working hours got ever longer. In the autumn and winter of 1944, malnutrition among the Czech labour force was widespread, and when more and more workers fell sick and failed to turn up at the factories, it was neither because of a lack of working spirit nor a sign of resistance, as the German authorities would have it, but much rather due to a lack of vitamins and proteins.<sup>42</sup>

Nevertheless, the Germans widely used the introduction of factory canteens for their propaganda. They were said to be part of their ‘New Order’ the Czech workers would now be benefitting from. But, the reality in the Protectorate was completely different: canteens were merely a tool to improve output statistics of arms and ammunition. In that sense, Czechs were treated and looked upon by German authorities and their

bosses, whether Czech or German, as though they were machines that needed fuel, oil and a little mending every now and then—and which had to be replaced every once in a while.<sup>43</sup> No one else put it as bluntly as Reinhard Heydrich in an address to the upper echelons of the occupation authorities on 10 October 1941. Speaking about the goals of Nazi politics in the Protectorate, Heydrich declared the running of the arms industry to be of paramount importance in the short term. To this end the Germans had ‘to give the Czech worker his grub (...) in order that he can fulfill his job’.<sup>44</sup> Ruthless as he was, Heydrich’s blunt phrase perfectly describes the general attitude of the occupation authorities towards Czech workers in the Protectorate—and the role factory canteens had to play in the process of arms production in the ‘Reich’s armoury’.

Although factory canteens only brought meagre improvements for the mainly Czech workers, they triggered considerable long-term consequences. Their installation in Bohemia and Moravia set the course for years to come and was not revised even after the end of the war. There was no change, either, in the instrumental character of the gastronomic institutions. Under state Socialism, they even advanced to a place of ideological indoctrination, where the workers were exposed to a constant stream of propaganda by Czechoslovakia’s Communist party. But, that is yet another story.

## NOTES

1. “Minutes of a Table Talk of Hitler on the Treatment of the Czechs, 10.10.1941,” in Miroslav Kárný, Jaroslava Milotová, and Margita Kárná, eds, *Deutsche Politik im ‘Protektorat Böhmen und Mähren’ unter Reinhard Heydrich 1941–1942. Eine Dokumentation* (Berlin: Metropol, 1997), Document 25, 129–131.
2. BA/MA, RW 22/8, War Diary of the Armament Inspection Prague, 10.8.1941.
3. “Gemeinschaftsverpflegung im Protektorat. Fast 80 v.H. aller Werktätigen in Böhmen und Mähren erfaßt,” *Der Angriff* 187 (3 August 1943).
4. Dana Ševcová, “Sociální politika nacistů v takzvaném protektorátu v letech 1939–1945 a její vliv na postavení českých pracujících,” *Dějiny socialistického Československa* 7 (1985), 167–201, here 186. Slightly different figures given in “Erfolg der Gemeinschaftsverpflegung. 1180 Werkstätten in Böhmen-Mähren,” *Die Wirtschaft* (14 August 1943).
5. See Jaromír Balcar, *Panzer für Hitler – Traktoren für Stalin. Großunternehmen in Böhmen und Mähren 1938–1950* (Munich: Oldenbourg, 2014), 263, with more details.

6. (1) Prague-located ČKD (Českomoravská Kolben-Daněk), second in the field of engineering and vehicle construction only to the famous Škoda Works; (2) Association for Chemical and Metallurgical Production (Spolek pro chemickou a hutní výrobu), Czechoslovakia's largest chemical producer; and (3) Prague Iron Industry Corporation (Pražská železářská společnost), the oldest mining and foundry company in the country.
7. For an overview on the German occupation policy in the Protectorate and the Czech reactions to it see Chad Bryant, *Prague in Black: Nazi Rule and Czech Nationalism* (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 2007).
8. For the exceptional economic position of Czechoslovakia in East Central Europe during the Interwar period see Alice Teichová, *Kleinststaaten im Spannungsfeld der Großmächte. Wirtschaft und Politik in Mittel- und Südosteuropa in der Zwischenkriegszeit* (Munich: Oldenbourg, 1988).
9. Bohemia and Moravia were frequently described as 'Rüstkammer des Reiches', an image that attested to their important role in the Nazi war economy. For contemporary references see, e.g., *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, 29 January 1943, and *Brüsseler Zeitung*, 14 March 1943.
10. Therefore, the hardships the Czech population had to face in everyday life under German occupation seem rather small compared to what Poles, Ukrainians or Russians had to bear. See, e.g., Sergei Kudryashov, "Living Conditions in the Occupied Territories of the USSR, 1941–1944," in Christoph Buchheim and Marcel Boldorf, eds, *Europäische Volkswirtschaften unter deutscher Hegemonie 1938–1945* (Munich: Oldenbourg, 2012), 53–65.
11. See John Connelly, "Nazis and Slavs: From Racial Theory to Racist Practice," *Central European History* 32 (1999), 1–33.
12. See Ulrike Thoms, "Physical Reproduction, Eating Culture and Communication at the Workplace. The Case of Industrial Canteens in Germany 1850–1950," *Food & History* 2 (2009), 119–154.
13. See, e.g., Ulrike Thoms, "Industrial Canteens in Germany, 1850–1950," in Marc Jacobs and Peter Scholliers, eds, *Eating Out in Europe. Picnics, Gourmet Dining and Snacks Since the Late Eighteenth Century* (Oxford and New York: Berg, 2003), 351–372.
14. See Peter Heumos, "Die Arbeiterschaft in der Ersten Tschechoslowakischen Republik. Elemente der Sozialstruktur, organisatorischen Verfassung und politischen Kultur," *Bohemia* 29 (1988), 50–72.
15. See Jaromír Balcar and Jaroslav Kučera, *Von der Rüstkammer des Reiches zum Maschinenwerk des Sozialismus. Wirtschaftslenkung in Böhmen und Mähren 1938 bis 1953* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2013), 344–345.

16. For the trade unions in the Protectorate see Jaromír Balcar and Jaroslav Kučera, “Les syndicats tchèques sous l’occupation allemande (1939–1945). Entre intérêts nationaux et sociaux,” in Christian Chevandier and Jean-Claude Dumas, eds, *Travailler dans les entreprises sous l’occupation* (Besançon: Presses universitaires de Franche-Comté, 2007), 485–501.
17. “Erfolg der Gemeinschaftsverpflegung. 1180 Werksküchen in Böhmen-Mähren,” *Die Wirtschaft* (14 August 1943); Ševcová, “Sociální politika,” 186.
18. BAB, R 8128/3628, 6–7, Report of the Economic Division of IG Farbenindustrie AG: Foreign Trade Problems Caused by the Integration of the Czechoslovakian Economic Territory, 21.3.1939; *Das Protektorat Böhmen und Mähren im deutschen Wirtschaftsraum*, ed. Deutsche Bank (Berlin: Author’s Edition, n.d., 1939), 25.
19. RGVA-1323-2-391, 1–54, Monthly Report of SD Prague: The Political Development of the Protectorate Bohemia and Moravia in May 1941, 1.6.1941.
20. For the following argument in detail see Balcar, *Panzer für Hitler*, 178–209, especially 183–184; Balcar and Kučera, *Rüstammer*, 336–352.
21. Miroslav Kárný, “Der ‘Reichsausgleich’ in der deutschen Protektoratspolitik,” in Ulrich Herbert, ed., *Europa und der ‘Reichseinsatz’. Ausländische Zivilarbeiter, Kriegsgefangene und KZ-Häftlinge in Deutschland 1938–1945* (Essen: Klartext, 1991), 26–50, here 44. For a thorough analysis of the ‘Reichseinsatz’ see Steffen Becker, *Von der Werbung zum ‘Totaleinsatz’. Die Politik der Rekrutierung von Arbeitskräften im ‘Protektorat Böhmen und Mähren’ für die deutsche Kriegswirtschaft und der Aufenthalt tschechischer Zwangsarbeiter und -arbeiterinnen im Dritten Reich 1939–1945* (Berlin: dissertation.de, 2005).
22. Jonas Scherner, “Europas Beitrag zu Hitlers Krieg. Die Verlagerung von Industrieaufträgen der Wehrmacht in die besetzten Gebiete und ihre Bedeutung für die deutsche Rüstung im Zweiten Weltkrieg,” in Christoph Buchheim and Marcel Boldorf, eds, *Europäische Volkswirtschaften unter deutscher Hegemonie 1938–1945* (Munich: Oldenbourg, 2012), 69–92; Jonas Scherner, “Der deutsche Importboom während des Zweiten Weltkriegs. Neue Ergebnisse zur Struktur der Ausbeutung des besetzten Europas auf der Grundlage der Neueinschätzung der deutschen Handelsbilanz,” *Historische Zeitschrift* 294 (2012), 79–113.
23. See Balcar, *Panzer für Hitler*, 179–193; Balcar and Kučera, *Rüstammer*, 330–339.
24. See Balcar, *Panzer für Hitler*, 303–309.
25. “Neurath to Lammers, 31.8.1940, Appendix 2: Memorandum of Karl Hermann Frank on the Treatment of the Czech Problem (‘Tschechen-Problem’),” in Karel Fremund and Václav Král, eds, *Die Vergangenheit*

- warnt. *Dokumente über die Germanisierungs- und Austilgungspolitik der Naziokkupanten in der Tschechoslowakei* (Prague: 1962), document 6, 69. See also Detlef Brandes, ‘Umvolkung, Umsiedlung, rassische Bestandsaufnahme.’ *NS-‘Volkstumspolitik’ in den böhmischen Ländern* (Munich: Oldenbourg Verlag, 2012), 22; Robert Gerwarth, *Reinhard Heydrich. Biographie* (Munich: Siedler, 2011), 292.
26. See Balcar and Kučera, *Rüstkammer*, 367–388.
  27. See Balcar and Kučera, *Rüstkammer*, 271–278.
  28. See Balcar, *Panzer für Hitler*, 264–267.
  29. See Balcar, *Panzer für Hitler*, 246–252.
  30. See Balcar and Kučera, “Les syndicats tchèques sous l’occupation allemande”; Balcar, *Panzer für Hitler*, 274–281.
  31. SOA Prague, PŽS, carton 181, Management of the Nučice Mine to General Management of Prague Iron Industry Company, 16.9.1939 and 21.9.1939.
  32. SOA Prague, PŽS, carton 181, General Management of Prague Iron Industry Company to the Management of the Nučice Mine, 22.9.1939.
  33. Gerwarth, *Reinhard Heydrich*, 292–293.
  34. See Detlef Brandes, *Die Tschechen unter deutschem Protektorat. Vol. 1: Besatzungspolitik, Kollaboration und Widerstand im Protektorat Böhmen und Mähren bis Heydrichs Tod 1939–1942* (Munich and Vienna: Oldenbourg, 1969), 229–231.
  35. See Balcar, *Panzer für Hitler*, 260–262.
  36. “Report by the Kladno Police on the Conduct of the Labour Force Towards the So-called Soup Action of the Reich Protector, 16.1.1942,” in Miroslav Kárný, Jaroslava Milotová, and Margita Kárná, eds, *Protektorátní politika Reinharda Heydricha* (Prague: TEPS, 1991), document 53, 204. For more information on Heydrich’s ‘soup action’ see Brandes, *Die Tschechen unter deutschem Protektorat*, vol. 1, 227–228.
  37. See René Küpper, *Karl Hermann Frank (1898–1946). Politische Biographie eines sudetendeutschen Nationalsozialisten* (Munich: Oldenbourg, 2010).
  38. NA, ÚŘP, carton 45, Decree issued by State Secretary Karl Hermann Frank, 20.7.1942.
  39. NA, ÚŘP-ST, carton 26, signature 109-4-165, monthly Report of the Liaison Office of the Reich Protector to the Trade Unions in the Protectorate for September/October 1941, n.d.
  40. See Miroslav Kárný, “Reinhard Heydrich als Stellvertretender Reichsprotector in Prag,” in Miroslav Kárný, Jaroslava Milotová and Margita Kárná, eds, *Deutsche Politik im ‘Protektorat Böhmen und Mähren’ unter Reinhard Heydrich 1941/42. Eine Dokumentation* (Berlin: Metropol, 1997), 9–75, here 56. For more details on food supply in the Protectorate between September 1941 and May 1942 see

Miroslav Kárný, ‘Die materiellen Grundlagen der Sozialdemagogie in der Protektoratspolitik Heydrichs’, *Historica* 29 (1989), 123–159.

41. See Balcar, *Panzer für Hitler*, 281–331.
42. See Balcar, *Panzer für Hitler*, 303–310.
43. NA, ChS, carton 1933, the Social Department of Spolek openly criticised this attitude, but was unable to change it. See Report of the Social Department of Spolek, 9.11.1944.
44. ‘Dazu gehört, dass man den tschechischen Arbeitern natürlich das an Fressen geben muss ..., dass er seine Arbeit (sic!) erfüllen kann’. “Heydrich’s Address to the Leading Personnel of the Occupation Authorities on the Goals of the Nazi Politics in the Protectorate, 2.10.1941,” in Miroslav Kárný, Jaroslava Milotová, and Margita Kárná, eds, *Protektorátní politika Reinharda Heydricha* (Prague: TEPS, 1991), document 9, 98–113, here 106.



# ‘In the Hope of a Piece of Sausage or a Mug of Beer’: Writing a History of Survival Sex in Occupied Europe

*Maren Röger*

Interviewed in 1995, a former member of the Wehrmacht denied that German soldiers committed *sexual violence* in World War II. His explanation why not was simple: ‘In the place where I was, I don’t believe there was ever a rape. Given the hunger in the population, that wasn’t even necessary. Understand me: if the women wanted to continue living, they had in fact to prostitute themselves’.<sup>1</sup> Here, he explicitly indicated that, in the face of shortages, local women offered sex in exchange for material necessities. This specific soldier was describing his experiences in the Crimea. From nearby Odessa, Heinrich Böll, the well-known German writer, reported in a letter to his wife dating from the year 1944 ‘that at the market you can buy everything, from a beautiful woman from southern Russia to a merrily sizzling sausage’.<sup>2</sup> Hunger in these regions was caused both by the general situation of war, and by the systematic exploitation policies

---

M. Röger (✉)  
University of Augsburg, Augsburg, Germany  
e-mail: maren.roeger@phil.uni-augsburg.de

© The Author(s) 2018  
T. Tönsmeier et al. (eds.), *Coping with Hunger and Shortage under German Occupation in World War II*,  
[https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-77467-1\\_10](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-77467-1_10)

of the German occupiers. Furthermore, however, food restrictions were part of a specific strategy targetting civilians in these regions, well known as the *hunger plan* for the Soviet Union.<sup>3</sup> While the territories of Eastern Europe suffered particularly severely in this and many other regards during World War II, German occupation policies caused shortages in every occupied country. These had a drastic impact on civilians, especially children, the elderly and women—the men being most often elsewhere, whether fighting, detained in POW camps or working as forced labourers.<sup>4</sup> In struggling to make ends meet, many women throughout occupied Europe (and in Germany itself) had to find new strategies to earn money or to gain access to food. As numerous studies have shown, women were often very active on the black markets,<sup>5</sup> while another and sometimes related strategy seems to have been what may be called *survival sex*.<sup>6</sup> In this chapter I will first introduce the concept of *survival sex* and describe the underdeveloped state of research into this topic for the World War II period. Second, I will present some findings regarding survival sex in the occupied Polish territories, drawing on results from an ongoing long-term research project. Third, I will suggest some possible directions for further research.

### SURVIVAL SEX: DEFINITIONS AND METHODOLOGICAL CHALLENGES

The term survival sex is mostly used in sociological studies of (contemporary) groups of girls and women classified as vulnerable, be they homeless young women, women living in refugee camps, etc.<sup>7</sup> The term is typically defined in this work along the lines of ‘the exchange of sex for material support’,<sup>8</sup> or the trading of sex acts ‘to meet the basic needs of survival’, these needs being specified as ‘food, shelter, etc.’,<sup>9</sup> a list to which some texts add clothing.<sup>10</sup> Aligning these definitions with Maslow’s well-known *hierarchy of needs*, one sees that sex acts are traded to secure the two most basic categories of human needs namely, physiological needs and the need for security. Some definitions further attempt to clarify the roles of force and necessity in compelling survival sex, differentiating between ‘overt force, fraud or coercion of a trafficker’ and the feeling that ‘circumstances left little or no other option’.<sup>11</sup>

Compared to their sociological colleagues, historians who refer to survival sex or the *bartering of sex* in the context of World War II tend not to offer precise definitions of these terms. Indeed, it is often the case that the historiography mentions survival sex, *poverty prostitution* or *hunger*

*prostitution* as coping strategies in World War II without much further discussion at all.<sup>12</sup> These terms are not often discussed, nor are the implications problematised—for example, a potential judgemental reading of the term prostitution.<sup>13</sup> These terms do, however, already point at the fact that food is one of the things bartered for in survival sex, and imply that trading sex is often caused by hunger. Both hunger and shortage are the focus of this chapter, so my discussion of survival sex and sexual bartering will pay special attention to this.

Only in recent decades, due to an increased interest in building a historiography sensitive to gender-specific power relations during the Third Reich, the Holocaust and World War II,<sup>14</sup> have these questions become more often discussed (although still rather insufficiently researched). The existing research provides insights into sexuality inside ghettos and concentration camps, including the interactions between German personnel and Jewish inmates as well as interactions among prisoners. In this context the phenomenon of the so-called *Piepel* ('penis') is quite well known<sup>15</sup>—these were boys or young men who traded sex for food or protection by persons in power positions in the barracks or were directly forced by the *Lagerälteste* ('prisoner appointed by Nazi guards as trustworthy') into such an exchange—highlighting the fact that sexual bartering and sexual violence is not a phenomenon that can be reduced to male–female relations. Other recent studies have shown that sexual encounters between occupiers and Jewish and non-Jewish locals cover a broad spectrum, ranging from occupier-organised prostitution to direct acts of sexual violence up to more or less consensual relations.<sup>16</sup> In most occupied countries, but with regional variations, the German authorities established and ran their own bordello system.<sup>17</sup> It was mainly local women who worked in these bordellos and had, in many cases, been sex workers before the war. But it was the need to survive that made women register as sex workers or pushed them into irregular *sex work*, which could also lead to their being registered with the authorities as prostitutes.<sup>18</sup> The pressures of hunger are a factor mentioned in the existing literature on sexual encounters between German occupiers and locals, although the literature also reveals that care should be taken to differentiate the situations in different countries. In Denmark, Lulu Anne Hansen argues, sexual involvement with German soldiers was generally not primarily motivated by economic needs: 'The economic advantages of going with soldiers were relatively limited. Denmark was throughout the occupation well provided for when it came to food,

so engaging with the occupying forces was not necessary to secure provisions'.<sup>19</sup> Similarly, Gerlinda Swillens' work on Belgium does not highlight food shortages as an important motive for local women's involvement with Germans.<sup>20</sup> But in France, although Fabrice Virgili points to significant differences between regions, he does attest to hunger as a motivation for sexual barter there. He also shows how, in many cases, the suffering experienced by many among the population led people to treat those women who (allegedly) profited by receiving material goods, including food, harshly.<sup>21</sup> Meanwhile in eastern regions, hunger as a motivation for sexual encounters seems to have played a much bigger role. For example, Regina Mühlhäuser discusses material motivations, including food, for sexual barter in her study of German sexual encounters in the Soviet Union—although it must be said that her discussion of this specific topic is surprisingly brief given the catastrophic nutritional situation in the Soviet Union.<sup>22</sup>

Those historians who do attempt to define the term survival sex tend to characterise it in terms of what it is not. In particular, survival sex is often described as neither voluntary, nor as compelled through direct violence: 'Sex for survival is not consensual sex, but one can argue that it is technically also not violent'.<sup>23</sup> Although direct violence is excluded by sociologists and historians, all definitions point at an underlying force compelling persons to offer sexual services as a kind of *structural violence*. This idea of structural violence is often more an underlying assumption than a phenomenon that is explicitly referred to. The concept of structural violence was introduced into academic debate by Johan Galtung, the most important founding figure in the sociological discipline of peace and conflict studies. In deploying this concept, Galtung pointed to the fact that poverty, exploitation and social marginalisation can all be classified as harms, not only in the sense that they can have very serious negative effects on individuals' lives, but also because they are potentially avoidable (and so the damage caused by poverty, say, may be regarded as active harming). Galtung thus broadened the concept of violence, arguing that violence was not only harm caused by individuals or groups who could be identified as perpetrators but that violence could also have a non-personal and structural dimension.<sup>24</sup>

More recently, historians have developed the notion of sexual bartering, which already highlights that exchange processes between occupiers and locals<sup>25</sup> were quite complicated. Such analyses refrain from declaring sexual bartering to be violent: as Anna Hájková puts it in an compelling

article on the sexual economy in the ghetto of Theresienstadt: ‘Barter always has an element of choice; rape, even if the rapist (such as a prisoner-functionary, or *kapo*) chose to “reward” the victim after the assault with food, does not have the element of choice and hence is not barter’.<sup>26</sup> In delimiting rape from bartered sex, Hájková underlines the element of choice, and she and others who have studied sexual encounters in the age of extremes plausibly point to the agency of women (and men) in such bartering processes. However, and although I utilise the idea of bartering myself, I would urge great caution in overstretching the idea of agency in constellations where basic human needs were not fulfilled. In this latter regard the impact of ongoing and often severe hunger, as was experienced in many occupied European countries, cannot be underestimated. Hunger can have very severe effects on human behaviour, as nutritionists and neurologists show, so much so that the very ability of those suffering from hunger to make choices must be classified as greatly limited. That is, not only does the experience of hunger create an economic compulsion to trade more urgently for food—a structural limitation on choice—but the physiological and neurological consequences of malnourishment over longer periods can include the loss of personal boundaries. Thus, the suggestion that survival sex and sexual bartering, as actions of free choice, are not compelled through violence is arguably untenable when considered both against the structural situation of food shortages and in light of the physioneurological consequences of hunger.<sup>27</sup>

Even granting the relevance of choice in understanding survival sex raises for historians the severe challenge of evaluating individual decision making. Among the criteria of survival sex canvassed above was how much somebody might have *felt* that ‘circumstances left little or no other option’. But, how somebody might have felt can be supremely difficult to trace historically, and all the more so for an issue such as sexual barter in wartime. For example, after the end of World War II, most European societies stigmatised women who had had sexual contact with wartime enemies and occupiers, and rarely did such stigmatisation differentiate the various motives women might have had. The women themselves tended to internalise this societal shaming, and so seldom spoke frankly about their experiences. Equally, historiographies of World War II seem to have long omitted these specific survival strategies that challenged concepts of female and patriotic honour, but this omission can also be seen as part and parcel of a wider neglect of coping strategies. While historians have studied German exploitation policies, tracing exactly how

official food supplies were constrained to the extent of informing us of exact calorie deficits,<sup>28</sup> the ways in which individuals coped with shortage and hunger remained unresearched until very recently, certainly on a systematic level, as Tatjana Tönsmeier has demonstrated. Of course, individual testimonies often allude to the problem of nutrition, the longing for and the struggle for food, but even developing approaches to a systematising *Erfahrungsgeschichte* ('experience history') is still methodologically challenging.<sup>29</sup>

In the following, I will discuss survival sex and sexual bartering as one coping strategy in the occupied Polish territories drawing on results from an ongoing long-term research project.<sup>30</sup>

### SURVIVAL SEX AND SEXUAL BARTERING IN OCCUPIED POLAND

By the end of September 1939, a conquered Poland was divided between Germany and the Soviet Union. Subsequent to the breakdown of the German-Soviet Non-Aggression Pact, the German Wehrmacht would first press farther eastward to be later driven back again by the Soviet armies, but Poland would remain an occupied country, and one of the most harshly affected territories of World War II. Of 35 million pre-war citizens, between five and six million perished, including 90% of the pre-war Jewish population. In addition, forced labour and mass deportations affected large parts of Polish society and, overall, tens of millions of people were physically and psychologically harmed by the German and then also the Soviet occupiers. During the German occupation the western parts of Poland (with about ten million inhabitants) were directly annexed by the German Reich, although not granted the same legal status as other 'German' regions. The remaining parts of Poland conquered by Germany became the *Generalgouvernement* (GG) ('General Government') for the Occupied Polish Territories. German occupation policies were brutal in both parts of Poland, although there were differences.

In both parts of Poland, the German occupiers sought to enforce strict segregation according to racial categories: the German occupiers were the rulers, supported by a newly created intermediate layer of *Volksdeutsche* ('ethnic Germans') alongside Ukrainians. Below these, the German ideal placed the Poles, who would serve mainly as a labour force, and then below the Poles, at the bottom of this hierarchy, the Polish Jews. This National Socialist hierarchy classified the Poles as

'subhumans' and posited that Germans should have no further contact with Polish locals during occupation, other than unavoidable administrative interactions. This *Umgangsverbot* ('prohibition of contact') especially targetted sexual intercourse because National Socialist ideology made it essential that the *Volkskörper* ('German national body') be kept free of foreign influences.<sup>31</sup> But there was a huge difference between the ideal and the reality in the everyday life of the occupation<sup>32</sup>—a difference the occupying authorities were well aware of. That is, everyday life during German occupation of Poland included the whole spectrum of sexual encounters between German men and Polish women, ranging from sexual violence through prostitution to more or less consensual relations. (Something similar may be true for same-gender interactions, but this is less clear from the sources. There is also very scarce evidence for sexual contact between female occupiers and male locals due to gendered and racial hierarchies.)

In all territories the Germans occupied the exploitation of resources—both natural and human—was an integral part of occupation policies. As physically able men (and women too) were deported to provide forced labour, or suffered imprisonment, injury or death, this economic exploitation assaulted the traditional bread-winners in society. Urban populations were particularly affected by the limited food supply. In occupied Polish regions, economic exploitation on top of the 'normal' constraints of a wartime economy meant that official food provisioning in Poland was especially bad. In 1941 the average consumer's ration was 845 calories per day, in 1942 it increased to 1070, in 1943 it even dropped to 853, before recovering somewhat in 1944 to 1200.<sup>33</sup> To increase their chances of surviving these food shortages, many Polish people who lived in the cities engaged in smuggling foodstuffs from the countryside, where food was somewhat more plentiful.<sup>34</sup> But smuggling food was not the only survival tactic. Another that was available, to women in particular, was sexual barter with the occupiers.

In this section, I will argue that sexual bartering and sex work became quite widespread female survival strategies—a fact that was remarked on both by Polish patriots and by German authorities. Prostitution is here understood as regular sex work, sexual acts with different customers—not an ongoing relation—in exchange for money or in other cases for food. Sexual bartering is rather connected with one person, be it a one-time exchange or an ongoing relation. Although both strategies are more or less consensual, one has to keep in mind that every form of sexual

encounter in occupied Poland (and in other occupied territories, of course) took place in a situation where power was distributed very asymmetrically—German men were multiply privileged: because of their status as occupiers, because of the racial system and because of their traditional gender role. Second, sources that can tell us as historians something about the feelings and motivations for sexual encounters are rare and have, of course, to be contextualised. Statements made during a police or court interrogation during the occupation have to be contextualised differently than those given after 1945, when a particular focus on the betrayal of the Polish nation would be a subject negotiated in court.

I will now first show how occupation influenced the field of sex work. In occupied Poland the German authorities established their own bordello system under their own control, a tactic used later in other occupied territories as well. Occupying troops were only permitted to engage in sexual intercourse in these bordellos. However, the actual reality was different and prostitution thrived beyond the walls of the bordellos. In Warsaw, one of the cities that served as a hub for traffic to and from the front, there were 1482 women registered as prostitutes in 1940; one year later, there were 1781.<sup>35</sup> These figures would have to be expanded to include the hidden numbers of unregistered regular sex workers as well as occasional prostitutes. The numbers of registered prostitutes in Warsaw was already in the thousands, so it seems safe to assume that tens of thousands of women engaged in trading sex in all of occupied Poland. It is also highly likely that men also engaged in prostitution but the sources do not allow this to be reconstructed.

Basic life necessities became so enormously expensive during the occupation period that average workers had to multiply their earnings 15 times in order to feed a family of four.<sup>36</sup> In view of such figures the pressure everyone or anyone would have felt to earn additional money is quite clear. The most important option here was the black market, something which the women dominated. For women who were left to their own resources the situation was even more dire. In this situation, many women prostituted themselves for the first time. Predominantly, it was material reasons that forced them to take this step. Just to give one example, a woman in Suwałki complained that her husband was in Germany working as a forced labourer, yet hardly ever sent her money from there; she was consequently forced to do something about it.<sup>37</sup> Many women who were officially divorced or whose husbands were in prison occasionally sold sex in order to see themselves or their family through. Hence, prostitution could be a survival strategy. If one takes as a basis the

earnings of the woman from Suwałki—there was a police interrogation about this case—who had sexual intercourse with various soldiers in the flat of one of the parties involved three to four times a week and up to three times in one night—one could calculate her earnings (at two marks per act) to have approached 96 Reichsmark per month. That was admittedly more than just extra income. By comparison a cleaning lady in a German army camp on Polish territory earned 35 Reichsmark in a month; and yet the income possibilities when working for the German occupation administrators were generally somewhat higher.<sup>38</sup>

Some street prostitution was immediately recognisable as hunger prostitution, and this even generated sympathy in individual occupiers. Konrad Jarausch, a German soldier, related to his wife what a shaken comrade had told him about Warsaw in 1939. Women who had nothing to eat would offer themselves directly to soldiers by approaching them in public.<sup>39</sup> And, in his diary, the Swiss Franz Blättler described with obvious disgust a scene from 1942 in which German soldiers examined the women as if they were merchandise, insulting one woman who was a bit older, but who still continued to beg the men for at least some bread. He evaluated the dilemma of the women clearly: ‘For many there was no other choice except either to die of hunger or be a prostitute’.<sup>40</sup> Vulnerable in a special way were the Jewish women of Poland who lived *na powierzchni* (‘above the surface’). This latter term is used by Emanuel Ringelblum in his chronicles of the ghetto to describe those Jews who attempted to battle their way over to the so-called ‘Aryan’ side by presenting themselves as non-Jewish, Christian Poles.<sup>41</sup> For women who disguised themselves like this but failed to find some other kind of work, sex work remained as an opportunity to earn money and so to survive.<sup>42</sup> Officially, Jewish women were forbidden to sell their sexual services to the German occupiers in Poland. That notwithstanding, Jewish women did sell sex, also to Germans.

As ever more social strata fell into ever deeper poverty during the course of the occupation the phenomenon of public sex work increased overall. While among the street prostitutes there were indeed numerous women who pursued sex work long term and as a quasi-profession, nevertheless the most frequent form of occasional sex work and survival sex was street prostitution. Just as in peacetime, street prostitution was the toughest form of sex work. Not only were the women in contravention of the occupation regulations, especially because they would stay out past the set curfew,<sup>43</sup> but they were also exposed to the weather without any protection, heat in the summer and, especially, cold in the winter.

For example, in Graudenz a woman working as a prostitute approached another woman to ask: ‘whether in view of the deep cold in the winter of 1939/1940 she could engage in sexual intercourse with her male companions in the flat’<sup>44</sup> as, prior to that, the woman had offered her services to the German military out in the open, in doorways or stairwells. All in all, a large number of Polish street sex workers were homeless. Beyond these repeated one-time jobs for one-off payments, relationships did exist during the war as well. They showed themselves as complicated interactive systems to which the German and Polish partner brought different goods for barter. For the occupier, it was not always just the purely carnal, for they might also have sought human warmth and integration into the social network of a woman in order to gain a slice of normalcy during the war. For local women it was protection, material advantages and food—sometimes combined with affection. The story of Emilia H., a Jew from Warsaw, shows how intertwined the motives could be. She rebuffed the advances of a junior officer in early 1940, but then ran into him later that same year. When their relationship came to the notice of the authorities who investigated it for impropriety, she explained under interrogation that:

In the interim my furniture had been taken away from me and I had to sell my valuables. I had suddenly become poor. I told that to B ... and he felt sympathy for me. From that moment on a love relationship developed that lasted for just eight more months. We engaged repeatedly in sexual intercourse. Our intention was to get married after the end of the war. B. does not know that I am Jewish.<sup>45</sup>

With her testimony, H. protected her partner in that she assured the authorities that she had kept from him her Jewish background hoping that he would be punished, not under the charge of racial defilement, but merely for an offence against the prohibition of contact. What also shows itself quite clearly, however, is that it was material hardship that had made the relationship with the German palatable. In her story, we can see how the boundaries between survival prostitution, consensual relationship and sexual coercion were fluid. All transactions took place in a clearly structured power matrix that assured material superiority and juridical privileges to the male occupier.

German authorities and Polish society both condemned all forms of sexual interaction, including bartering for food and sex for survival. In February 1943 the *Biuletyn Informacyjny*, the central organ of the most important Polish underground organisation, *Armia Krajowa* (‘Home Army’)

published a panegyric to Polish women who were sacrificing themselves for their nation and families. But, at the end of this encomium of ‘good’ Polish women a passage is included damning ‘bad’ Polish women:

Yet in honouring the noble posture of the Polish woman who conducts herself so virtuously and in such a dignified way toward the enemy, we cannot close our eyes to another spectacle that casts a shadow over the uplifting image of Polish women. We see among us disgusting, despicable amphibians; we see mistresses and tarts of the German robbers and murderers of the Polish nation. And not infrequently it is women from what were previously upright families who now flirt and flash a toothy smile in the direction of a soldier in the hope of a piece of sausage or a mug of beer. The reverence for Polish women demands from us at the same time the contempt and persecution of these traitorous women – shameless women who have entered into the service of the deadly enemy of the Fatherland.<sup>46</sup>

The piece is unattributed so the writer (or writers) of these lines is unknown but, regardless of who wrote the passage, given its publication in *Biuletyn Informacyjny*, its closing lines clearly reflect a significant strain of opinion among the patriotically minded parts of Polish society (also, given the structure of the Polish underground movement, it is quite likely that women were involved in the publication of this magazine). Notably, these words not only generally condemn all intimate relations between Polish women and the German men of the occupying forces, they are specifically harsh in concretely condemning such contacts when motivated by sheer hunger.

#### OUTLOOK: PATHWAYS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

The sexual behaviour of women was connected in wartime Poland, as in other countries and other times, to concepts of national honour.<sup>47</sup> Patriotic opinion classified sexual barter as national treachery. These patriotic conceptions of female sexuality then continued beyond the war period into the post-war period. In the immediate post-war years especially, several countries witnessed the outbreak of anti-female violence, most prominently enacted in the shaving of heads, against those women alleged to have consorted with the enemy. Furthermore, such concepts of ‘misbehaviour’ seem to have influenced subsequent historical research, the topic of survival sex remaining for a long time, if not utterly omitted,

then strikingly understudied. Only recently have researchers approached the everyday history of World War II with more understanding, greater sensibility to the gendered dimensions of history and to the dilemmas faced by women (and men). Although I have described above some of the methodological challenges and source problems in regard to survival sex, I am convinced nonetheless that a re-examination of the vast number of memoirs and interviews can still offer a more precise picture of sex bartering as a survival strategy.<sup>48</sup> Furthermore, a closer look at the post-war interpretations of sexual barter in literature, films and historiography could give us a better understanding of the interplay between sexuality, memory and taboo.

This chapter has looked at the case of sexual interactions between Polish women and German occupiers; I also mentioned some research progress on sexual encounters between occupiers and locals in other German-occupied territories. There is, however, a greater dearth of information about similar interactions in the Soviet-occupied territories or, for example, in the Romanian-governed territory of Transnistria.<sup>49</sup> Also, even where research on sexual encounters during the war exists, a blind spot that often remains—rather interestingly—is the *sexual economies* within the local (gentile) communities in occupied societies. Especially with many men absent from their communities, societal relations changed and new networks of protection and food had to be established. What role sexuality played in the negotiation of these networks is still to be established. We also know very little about the overall topic of prostitution not related to the occupiers, be this the activities of professional sex workers or of women who sold sex to survive (i.e., survival sex among locals). Also, other than some (unsystematic) work on sexual services compelled through blackmail, we also know rather little about the sexual interactions of Jews and non-Jews outside the ghettos and camps.

## NOTES

1. Interview with an unnamed soldier, here cited from Regina Mühlhäuser, *Eroberungen. Sexuelle Gewalttaten und intime Beziehungen deutscher Soldaten in der Sowjetunion, 1941–1945* [*Conquests: Sexual Violence and Intimate Relationships of German Soldiers in the Soviet Union*] (Hamburg: Hamburger Edition, 2010), 156–157. All translations by the author.
2. Heinrich Böll, *Briefe aus dem Krieg* [*Letters from the War*], vol. 2, ed. Jochen Schubert (Köln: Kiepenheuer & Witsch, 2001), 978. ('Eine schöne Südrussin oder eine lustig brutzelnde Wurst').

3. For the most comprehensive study in English see Alex J. Kay, *Exploitation, Resettlement, Mass Murder. Political and Economic Planning for German Occupation Policy in the Soviet Union, 1940–1941*, vol. 10 of *Studies on War and Genocide*, ed. Omer Bartov and A. Dirk Moses (New York and Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2006).
4. Of course, women often performed forced labour as well. Indeed, according to German regulations, at least half of the forced labourers brought from Poland and the Soviet Union to Nazi Germany were to be women. Ulrich Herbert, *Geschichte der Ausländerpolitik in Deutschland. Saisonarbeiter, Zwangsarbeiter, Gastarbeiter, Flüchtlinge* [*History of Foreign Policy in Germany: Seasonal Workers, Forced Labourers, Guest Workers, Refugees*] (Munich: C.H. Beck, 2001), 160.
5. For example: Malte Zierenberg, *Stadt der Schieber. Der Berliner Schwarzmarkt 1939–1950* [*City of Racketeers: The Berlin Black Market 1939–1950*], vol. 179 of *Kritische Studien zur Geschichtswissenschaft*, ed. Hans-Peter Ullmann et al. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2008); Jerzy Kochanowski, *Jenseits der Planwirtschaft. Der Schwarzmarkt in Polen. 1944–1989* [*Beyond the Planned Economy: The Black Market in Poland, 1944–1989*], trans. Pierre-Frédéric Weber, vol. 7 of *Moderne Europäische Geschichte*, ed. Hannes Siegrist and Stefan Troebst (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2003).
6. As will be discussed later, not only women engaged in survival sex.
7. Covenant House, ed., *Homelessness, Survival Sex and Human Trafficking: As Experienced by the Youth of Covenant House*, vol. 7 (New York: n.p. 2013); N. Eugene Walls and Stephanie Bell, “Correlates of Engaging in Survival Sex among Homeless Youth and Young Adults,” *Journal of Sex Research* 48, no. 5 (2011): 423–436; Juliet Watson, “Understanding Survival Sex: Young Women, Homelessness and Intimate Relationships,” *The Journal of Youth Studies* 14, no. 6 (2011): 639–655; Jill Chettiar et al., “Survival Sex Work Involvement Among Street-Involved Youth Who Use Drugs in a Canadian Setting,” *Journal of Public Health* 32, no. 3 (2010): 322–327; Les B. Whitbeck et al., “Mental Disorder, Subsistence Strategies, and Victimization among Gay, Lesbian, and Bisexual Homeless and Runaway Adolescents,” *Journal of Sex Research* 41, no. 4 (2001): 329–342. The term *survival sex* was only introduced into academic debate in the 1980s, but has since grown in importance, as may be illustrated by the results of the Google Ngram Viewer for ‘survival sex’—allowing for the constraints of this tool, of course, accessed June 2, 2017, [https://books.google.com/ngrams/graph?content=survival+sex&year\\_start=1800&year\\_end=2017&corpus=15&smoothing=3&share=&direct\\_url=t1%3B%2Csurvival%20sex%3B%2Cc0](https://books.google.com/ngrams/graph?content=survival+sex&year_start=1800&year_end=2017&corpus=15&smoothing=3&share=&direct_url=t1%3B%2Csurvival%20sex%3B%2Cc0). A similar picture is apparent

- in the results for ‘sex for survival’ but beginning earlier, in the 1970s, accessed June 2, 2017, [https://books.google.com/ngrams/graph?content=sex+for+survival&year\\_start=1800&year\\_end=2008&corpus=15&smoothing=3&share=&direct\\_url=t1%3B%2Csex%20for%20survival%3B%2Cc0](https://books.google.com/ngrams/graph?content=sex+for+survival&year_start=1800&year_end=2008&corpus=15&smoothing=3&share=&direct_url=t1%3B%2Csex%20for%20survival%3B%2Cc0).
8. Watson, “Survival Sex,” 639.
  9. Covenant House, *Homelessness*, 7.
  10. Accessed June 2, 2017, <http://medical-dictionary.thefreedictionary.com/survival+sex>.
  11. Covenant House, *Homelessness*, 7.
  12. See Tatjana Tönsmeier’s recent attempt to systematise *Hungerökonomien* (‘economies of hunger’), wherein she only mentions such phenomena, here labelled as *poverty prostitution*: Tatjana Tönsmeier, “Hungerökonomien. Vom Umgang mit der Mangelversorgung im besetzten Europa des Zweiten Weltkrieges” [Famine Economies. On Coping with Shortage in Occupied Europe During Second World War], *Historische Zeitschrift* 301, no. 3 (2015), 662–704; Kerstin Muth, *Die Wehrmacht in Griechenland—und ihre Kinder* (Leipzig: Eudora-Verlag, 2008), 73, also mentions survival prostitution as a widespread phenomenon in Greece, especially during the severe famine experienced under German occupation during 1941/1942.
  13. I will use the term prostitution neutrally and as a synonymic to sex work. For a detailed discussion of terms see Maren Röger, “Introduction,” *Kriegsbeziehungen. Intimität, Gewalt und Prostitution im besetzten Polen. 1939 bis 1945* (Frankfurt: Fischer, 2015, to be published by Oxford University Press in 2019).
  14. Elisabeth Heinemann, “Sexuality and Nazism. The Doubly Unspeakable?” *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 11, no. 1/2, (2002): 22–66; Maren Röger and Ruth Leiserowitz, “Introduction: Gender and World War II in Central and Eastern Europe,” in *Women and Men at War. A Gender Perspective on World War II and Its Aftermath in Central and Eastern Europe*, ed. Maren Röger and Ruth Leiserowitz (Osnabrück: Fibre-Verlag, 2012), 9–32.
  15. See Ka-Tzetnik, *Piepel* (London: New English Library, 1962); Verena Buser, *Überleben von Kindern und Jugendlichen in den Konzentrationslagern Sachsenhausen, Auschwitz und Bergen Belsen* [*Survival of Children and Teenagers in the Concentration Camps of Sachsenhausen, Auschwitz and Bergen Belsen*], vol. 13 of *Geschichte der Konzentrationslager 1933–1945* (Berlin: Metropol, 2011), 192–197.
  16. Mühlhäuser, *Eroberungen*; Röger, *Kriegsbeziehungen*; Gerlinda Swillen, *Koekoekskind. Door de vijand verwekt (1940–1945)* [*Milkman’s Child. Gone with the Wind (1940–1945)*] (Amsterdam: Meulenhoff, 2009).

17. For an overview see Maren Röger and Emmanuel Debruyne, "From Control to Terror: German Prostitution Policies in Eastern and Western Occupied Territories of Both World Wars," *Gender & History* 28, no. 3 (2016): 687–708.
18. For all those mechanisms see Röger, and Debruyne, "From Control to Terror".
19. See Lulu Anne Hansen (2009): "Youth Off the Rails': Teenage Girls and German Soldiers—A Case Study in Occupied Denmark, 1940–1945," in *Brutality and Desire. War and Sexuality in Europe's Twentieth Century*, ed. Dagmar Herzog (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 135–167, here 151.
20. See Swillen, *Koekoekskind*.
21. Virgili, *Shown Women*, 33–34.
22. See Mühlhäuser, *Eroberungen*, 160–164.
23. Myrna Goldenberg, *Sex, Rape, and Survival: Jewish Women and the Holocaust* (n.d.), accessed February 4, 2010, <http://www.theverylong-view.com/WATH/essays/sexrapesurvival.htm>.
24. Galtung first introduced these ideas in 1969: Johan Galtung, "Violence, Peace, and Peace Research" *Journal of Peace Research* 6, no. 3 (1969): 167–191. He then elaborated on these concepts in his later work.
25. In the context of survival sex or sexual bartering, trades between locals and occupiers is the most broadly studied area. At the end of this chapter I will consider some of the other groups and relationships in which sexual bartering should be researched.
26. Anna Hájková, "Sexual Barter in Times of Genocide: Negotiating the Sexual Economy of the Theresienstadt Ghetto," *Signs* 38, no. 3 (2013): 506.
27. See John R. Butterly, and Jack Shepherd, *Hunger: The Biology and Politics of Starvation* (Hannover and New Hampshire: Dartmouth College Press, 2010); Ancel Keys, *The Biology of Human Starvation* (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press and Oxford University Press, 1950).
28. For example, we know that in 1941 the average consumer's ration in Germany was 1990 calories, in Poland 845 and in France 1365; and that in 1944 the average consumer's ration in Germany was 1930 calories, in Poland 1200 and in France 1115. Schneider, *Kriegsgesellschaft*, 703; Bernhard R. Kroener, Rolf Dieter Müller, and Hans Umbreit, *Organisation und Mobilisierung des deutschen Machtbereichs. Kriegsverwaltung, Wirtschaft und personelle Ressourcen. 1942–1944/45* [Organisation and Mobilisation of the German Sphere of Control. War Administration, Economy and Personal Resources. 1942–1944/45], vol. 5, 2 of *Das Deutsche Reich und der Zweite Weltkrieg* [The German Reich and the Second World War], ed. Militärgeschichtliches Forschungsamt (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlagsanstalt, 1999), 226.

29. See Tatjana Tönsmeier, “Hungerökonomien”.
30. See Röger, *Kriegsbeziehungen*.
31. For the most substantial discussion of the prohibition of contact see Silke Schneider, *Verbotener Umgang: Ausländer und Deutsche im Nationalsozialismus; Diskurse um Sexualität, Moral, Wissen und Strafe* [*Forbidden Contact. Foreigners and Germans in National Socialism; Discourses on Sexuality, Morality, Knowledge and Punishment*] (Baden-Baden: Nomos, 2010).
32. See Röger, *Kriegsbeziehungen*; Röger and Debruyne, “From Control to Terror”; Maren Röger, “The Sexual Policies and Sexual Realities of the German Occupiers in Poland in the Second World War,” *Contemporary European History* 23, no. 1 (2014): 1–21.
33. Kroener, Müller and Umbreit, *Organisation und Mobilisierung*, 226.
34. See Chapter 2 by Jerzy Kochanowski in this book.
35. Information according to Tomasz Szarota, *Okupowanej Warszawy dzień powszedni. Studium historyczne* [*Everyday Life of Occupied Warsaw. A Historical Study*] (Warsaw: Czytelnik, 2010 [1978]), 156.
36. Anna Czocher, *W Okupowanym Krakowie: Codziennosc Polских Mieszkańców Miasta 1939–1945* [*In Occupied Krakow. Everyday Life of the Polish Inhabitants of the City*] (Gdańsk: Wydawn. Oskar, 2011), 81.
37. APW, Department of Pułtusk: 1205/67, 5, Vernehmung der Jadwiga W. vom 26.11.40 [Examination of Jadwiga W., 11/26/40].
38. APW, Department of Pułtusk: 1207/4148, 57, Urteil des Deutschen Gerichts in Warschau vom 24. April 1942 [Judgement of the German Court in Warsaw, 04/24/1942].
39. Konrad Jarausch to his wife: Konrad H. Jarausch, “1. Dezember 1939,” in “Das stille Sterben...” *Feldpostbriefe von Konrad Jarausch aus Polen und Russland 1939–1942* [*The Silent Dying... Field Post Letters of Konrad Jarausch from Poland and Russia*], ed. Konrad H. Jarausch and Klaus Jochen Arnold (Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh, 2008), 143–144.
40. See Franz Blättler, *Warschau 1942. Tatsachenbericht eines Motorfahrers der zweiten schweizerischen Aerztemission 1942 in Polen (Report of a Driver of the Second Swiss Doctor’s Mission 1942 in Poland)* (Zürich: Micha, 1945), 42.
41. Term use according to Joanna Beata Michlic, *Jewish Children in Nazi-Occupied Poland: Survival and Polish-Jewish Relations during the Holocaust as Reflected in Early Post-war Recollections*, vol. 14 of *Search and Research* (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 2008), 45.
42. For the *Altreich* see Alexandra Przyrembel, *Rassenschande: Reinheitsmythos und Vernichtungslegitimation im Nationalsozialismus* [*Racial Defilement: The Myth of Purity and Legitimation of Extermination in National Socialism*], vol. 190 of *Veröffentlichungen des Max-Planck-Instituts für Geschichte* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2003), 290.

43. See APP: 281/39, Gefangenenbuch des Polizeigefängnis Posen, 98ff. [Prisoners' Books of the Police Prison in Poznań] where whole groups of women were consistently arrested at the same time of day but released shortly afterwards.
44. See APB: 90/412, 16–17, Urteil des Amtsgerichts Graudenz vom 29.03.1940 [Judgement of the Local Court in Graudenz].
45. APW: 482/92, 3–4, here 4, Reichssicherheitshauptamt, IV C 4 b, z.Zt. Warschau, den 6. Juni 1941, Vernehmungsprotokoll der Emilie H. [Interrogation Protocol of Emily H.].
46. “Dodatek do Biuletyn Informacyjny, 2.07.1943”, in *Przegląd Historyczno-Wojskowy [Historical-Military Review]*, Rok IV (LV), no. specjalny 3 (200) (Warszawa: Czasopisma Wojskowe, 2003); Przedruk Biuletyn Informacyjny, 1654. In the original: ‘Ale ta część dla szlachetnej postaci zacnej, pełnej godności wobec wroga, Polki, nie pozwala nam zamykać oczu na inny obraz, plamiący i rzucający cień na jasną i wzniosłą jej postać. Widzimy wśród nas wstrętne, obrzydliwe plaży, widzimy nałożnice i kochanice szwabskich opryszków i morderców narodu polskiego. Spotykamy nieraz kobiety z porządnych dawniej rodzin, które się mizdrzą i szczerza żeby do byle żołdaka, licząc na kawałek kiełbasy czy kufelek piwa. Część dla kobiety Polki nakazuje nam jednoczesna pogardę i czynne piętnowanie kobiet zdraczyń, kobiet bezwstydných, które przeszli na służbę śmiertelnego wroga naszej Ojczyzny?’
47. See Ruth Seifert, “Der weibliche Körper als Symbol und Zeichen: Geschlechtsspezifische Gewalt und die kulturelle Konstruktion des Krieges” [The Female Body as Symbol and Sign: Gender-Related Violence and the Construction of War], in *Gewalt im Krieg: Ausübung, Erfahrung und Verweigerung von Gewalt in Kriegen des 20. Jahrhunderts [Violence in War: Exercise, Experience and Refusal of Violence in the Wars of the 20th Century]*, ed. Andreas Gestrich, vol. 4 of *Jahrbuch für historische Friedensforschung*, ed. Gottfried Niedhart, Detlef Bald, and Andreas Gestrich (Münster: Lit, 1996), 13–33.
48. See also the argument by Alana Fangrad, *Wartime Rape and Sexual Violence: An Examination of the Perpetrators, Motivations, and Functions of Sexual Violence against Jewish Women During the Holocaust* (Bloomington: AuthorHouse, 2013), 24.
49. For a first introduction sexual violence in the Romanian Holocaust see Simon Geissbühler, “The Rape of Jewish Women and Girls During the First Phase of the Romanian Offensive in the East, July 1941: A Research Agenda and Preliminary Findings,” *Holocaust Studies* 19, no. 1 (2013): 59–80.

## Vulnerabilities: At the Bottom of the Supply Pyramid

Certain groups suffered particularly badly under the shortages. Prominent among these were, above all, the Jewish population, but also children, the elderly and the infirm, since they were seen as unfit for work in the eyes of the occupiers, and accordingly were categorised as so-called useless eaters.



# ‘Choosing’ Between Children and the Elderly in the Greek Famine (1941–1944)

*Violetta Hionidou*

## INTRODUCTION

During World War II, and while occupied, Greece suffered a severe famine with an estimated 5% of its population dying as a consequence.<sup>1</sup> The country was occupied by Germany, Italy and Bulgaria and was divided into three occupation zones. All three suffered famine, though we still know little about the Bulgarian occupied zone. While the Allies imposed a blockade the German army requisitioned foodstuffs and other materials.<sup>2</sup> At the same time, the agricultural production of the country could not be transferred to where it was needed because food and population movement were prohibited and because most modes of transport had been either destroyed or confiscated by the German army. As the occupation government tried to control prices and the economy, food was becoming scarce and the black market dominated all transactions. The worst mortality rates occurred in the winter of 1941/1942, though the country continued to suffer famine or food scarcity at least until

---

V. Hionidou (✉)

Newcastle University, Newcastle upon Tyne, UK  
e-mail: violetta.hionidou@newcastle.ac.uk

© The Author(s) 2018

T. Tönsmeier et al. (eds.), *Coping with Hunger and Shortage under German Occupation in World War II*,  
[https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-77467-1\\_11](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-77467-1_11)

203

the end of the occupation. It affected different areas at different times and to varying degrees, and even within well-defined geographic areas the effects were very uneven. For example, the town of Chios on the German occupied island of Chios experienced a 4.5-fold increase in mortality during the period from October 1941 to January 1943, when famine was at its worst on the island. Athens/Piraeus experienced a 3.3-fold increase in the period from October 1941 to December 1942.<sup>3</sup> The situation was significantly alleviated from the spring of 1942 by the lifting of the Allied blockade and the arrival of substantial relief from abroad, relief that was handled exclusively by the Swedish–Swiss Joint Relief Commission (JRC).<sup>4</sup> The JRC distribution favoured towns and cities, among them Athens/Piraeus. Previously, the meagre quantities of relief arriving from Turkey were distributed among hospitals, orphanages and soup kitchens. The food collected as tax by government organisations was distributed among the indigent, war victims, the disabled, refugees and employee unions.<sup>5</sup> Because food in this period was extremely scarce, major decisions regarding distribution had to be made at the highest level. While the JRC was, as noted, made up of Swedes and Swiss, such decisions in the German-occupied areas during the first period—that of the highest mortality—were made mainly by Greeks.

This chapter will address the perceptions—public and private—and actions surrounding those who were deemed the most ‘deserving’ of relief. First, I will examine the public rhetoric, both prior to and during the occupation, focussing on both social and demographic engineering and nationalist and racial ideologies as developed in the inter-war period. Second, the choices made within families during the famine will be investigated. In this chapter, oral histories conducted by the author in 1999 and 2000 on the islands of Chios and Syros, respectively, are employed, enabling a glimpse into an otherwise intractable topic: how individuals or families made choices during the famine.

In investigating the Greek famine of the early 1940s there is a dearth of sources concerning the daily lives, thoughts and decision-making processes of those affected outside Athens. Thus, in the late 1990s, oral histories were conducted with many of the famine survivors who were still alive in search of an understanding of what life was like during the famine. Oral history is uniquely placed in allowing us access, not only to events that occurred in the past and individual experiences of such events, but also emotions related to those events and experiences. These are rare opportunities, where an interviewer, as was the case for some of

the Greek famine interviews, is able to pick up on uncomfortable silences and ask pertinent and difficult questions. These, in turn, can reveal issues or thoughts and feelings that could have otherwise gone unnoticed and unrecorded.<sup>6</sup> Thus, the use of oral histories offers a rare opportunity to explore such difficult topics and largely hidden processes of thought, decision making and regret.

### BEFORE THE OCCUPATION

Eugenics and the differential reception of its principles in inter-war Europe determined what came to be seen as the desirable fertility course in each country. In Germany and Sweden, for example, sterilisation laws aimed to curb the fertility of the 'undesirables' while measures were taken to augment that of the 'desirables', ultimately aiming to preserve the purity of the 'race'. France was exceptional in that pronatalism and the desire for increased fertility dominated with little attention paid to the racial origins of the parents.<sup>7</sup> Similarly in Greece the concept of *fyliē* ('nation') allowed for the acculturation of non-Greeks and thus focussed discussions on the nation and its future.<sup>8</sup>

In the first half of the 1930s, public discussion took place for the first time among experts on the subject of fertility and the future of the Greek population and nation. Arguments ranged from the possibility that Greece was facing overpopulation to the potential for long-term population decline and even degeneration, owing to the high proportion of births among the 'inferior' rural population.<sup>9</sup> These debates were reproductions of the European eugenics discussions, with some commentators reaching the conclusion that in the long run the degeneration and collapse of the Greek *fyliē* was unavoidable unless action was taken.<sup>10</sup> However, no action was ever taken to prevent the perceived long-term degeneration of the Greek population. The dictatorship of Ioannis Metaxas, who came to power in 1936, did not allow for open dialogue. Instead, select nationalist authors researched the 'population problem' and strongly articulated their argument that even those areas of Greece with the highest fertility were 'under imminent danger' and facing declines.<sup>11</sup> Evangelos Averof was given privileged access to the data collected on the age at birth of mothers since 1936 and he was the first to use such sources in order to calculate net reproduction rates.<sup>12</sup> His findings challenged earlier assertions that there was no short-term fear of depopulation, arguing that population growth was much lower than

was previously thought. His message was that ‘every effort’ should be made ‘in order to safeguard our fertility’.<sup>13</sup> His views were very much in line with those of Metaxas, and the fact that his book received the 1939 Academy of Athens award is an indication of the state’s support for his work. Other works advocating similar ideas came to the fore during the immediate pre-war years. These saw the rural population as pure and healthy, rather than degenerate.<sup>14</sup>

‘CHILDREN CONSTITUTE THE UPCOMING GENERATION’<sup>15</sup>:  
PUBLIC DISCOURSE DURING THE FAMINE

Occupation in April 1941 saw a rapid decline in the supply of food, especially for Athens, which seems to have been very well provisioned during the preceding period of warfare.<sup>16</sup> By September 1941 deaths due to famine were being reported. During the winter months of the same year physicians had begun to discuss famine, raising the question of who should have prioritised access to the available food supplies, which were not sufficient for all.

Right from the start, the physicians argued that ‘the growing child, the pregnant woman and the heavily working manual labourer will become undernourished and be vulnerable to infections’ and thus should be given priority in terms of food provisioning.<sup>17</sup> Later on, the discussion focussed on what should happen when the point of a complete lack of food was reached ‘with exterminating consequences for the *fylē*’.<sup>18</sup> Krikos, a vocal physician, raised the question of whether the issue of distribution would be addressed appropriately by giving priority to children and producing individuals.<sup>19</sup> But, already there were voices articulating the importance of focussing primarily on children: ‘The care of the state for the better nourishment of workers and the safeguarding of breastfeeding mothers and infants in terms of food is fully justified. But certainly we should not endanger the health of the child. Children constitute the upcoming generation’.<sup>20</sup>

Essentially this was the view of the intelligentsia, and articulated accurately what was to happen. The German occupiers intervened in the process of resource allocation at a very early point, dictating that those—primarily men—working in productive activities (mostly manufacturing), all of which were invariably serving Germany’s needs, would be entitled to food rations that would sustain them and allow them to

survive.<sup>21</sup> As a result, such sought-after jobs allowed significant numbers of adult men to survive.<sup>22</sup> Beyond this blanket imposition, German occupying forces seem to have rarely intervened in food distribution except to resolve local disagreements.<sup>23</sup> Until the JRC took over food allocation in the capital it was the perceptions, priorities and preferences of the Greek intelligentsia that determined how the meagre resources would be shared. These were allocated to children, primarily through school soup kitchens, as well as hospitals, orphanages and other charitable institutions.<sup>24</sup> One reason for this may well have been that school soup kitchens had been operating since the beginning of the war and thus it was natural to continue providing food through the existing infrastructure. A similar argument could be made for hospitals and charitable organisations—that is, the provision of food to them did not necessitate additional infrastructure. But this was certainly not the only reason: school soup kitchens were seen from early on, in August 1941, as the ‘safeguard of the health and life of destitute children’.<sup>25</sup>

Throughout this first period there seems to have been little public questioning of these decisions. In contrast, there was growing support, boldly articulated by public figures and private individuals through newspapers, diaries and public pronouncements, on the unquestionable significance of children’s survival for the Greek *fylē*. The Greek Red Cross’s pleas for help abroad were exclusively focussed on the plight of children.<sup>26</sup> At the peak of the famine the message was clear:

We all have rights to life but this, more than any of us, has the child ....  
First and foremost, let our children be saved. First them and then us. Let us be drained, let us become exhausted, let us die at the end of the day ....  
But the child needs to live. It is upon [the child] that the survival of our *fylē* depends, and thus the future of our beloved fatherland.<sup>27</sup>

Beyond the responsibilities of the state, there were pleas to the well-off members of society to offer support to the poorest children.<sup>28</sup> In Athens, for example, well-off families would ‘adopt’ children in order to feed them on a daily basis.<sup>29</sup>

It is significant that there is no reference to the needs of the elderly or women nor to how these could be accommodated. Women were referred to as candidates for additional help only when pregnant or as indigent mothers aged 20–40 (i.e., mothers of young children).<sup>30</sup> As the letter of

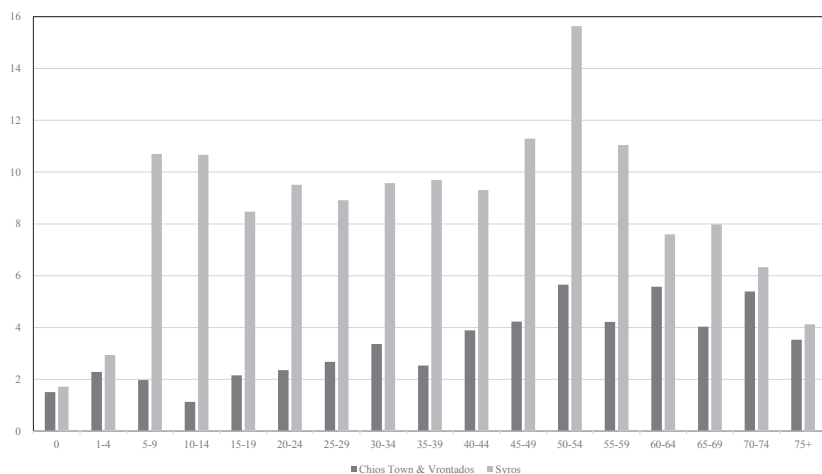
an emboldened woman articulated in March 1942 ‘[t]he woman-wife and the woman-mother have been officially ignored by all soup-kitchens’, something that she interpreted as state ‘misogyny.’<sup>31</sup>

It was at this point in time that the food situation was to radically change, as in March 1942 it was generally known that the Allied embargo had been lifted and significant quantities of food were to arrive shortly. This knowledge created a rush of registrations in the existing soup kitchens, as people hurried to secure individual claims to the resources that were to arrive. In addition, in the previous month the Church organisation EOHA (Ethnikos Organismos Christianikēs Allēleggyēs; ‘National Organisation of Christian Solidarity’) had set up a network of soup kitchens for pre-school children which gradually also included older children and pregnant women.<sup>32</sup> Thus, by the time the JRC was established in the summer of 1942 a quarter of the Athenian population—essentially the city’s whole child population—were registered in the children’s soup kitchens.<sup>33</sup> The commission decided to substitute the soup kitchens with a rationing scheme that would enable family life and cooking to resume. Despite an objection to the new system among Greek politicians and others—who argued that this would disadvantage children because parents would consume the children’s rations—the system was implemented. Extra portions were provided for those age groups that the JRC perceived as having higher nutritional needs.<sup>34</sup> Still, dedicated soup kitchens continued to cater exclusively for children with additional needs, especially those with medical requirements. In late 1942 these catered for 26,000 children, but the numbers gradually increased to 100,000 by June 1945.<sup>35</sup> Registered children received extra fresh milk and eggs, and had regular access to an on-site physician as well as medicines when necessary.<sup>36</sup> That children were well fed and looked after during this time can be seen in photographs from the period, which showcased the achievements of the JRC while providing a stark contrast to photographs from the famine period. While the above describes the situation in the area around the capital, children were also privileged in the provinces, though within the constraints of available foodstuffs in each case.

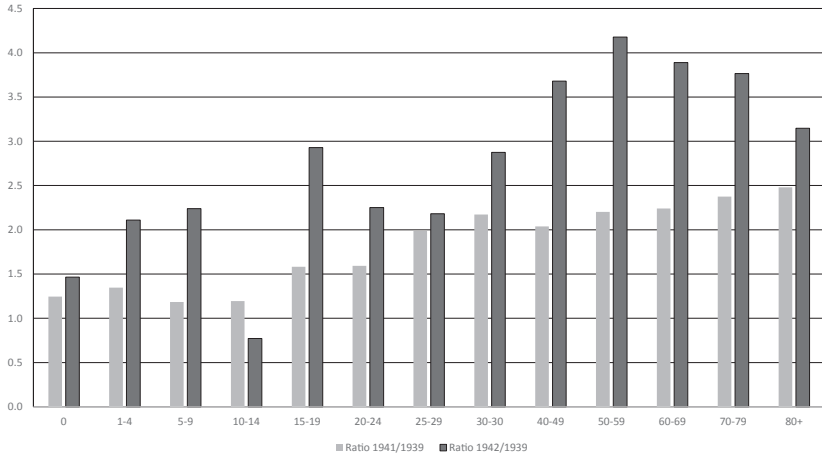
During the early period of occupation, food was primarily directed to adult men involved in production—as dictated by the Germans—and to children—as dictated by the nation’s desire to ensure its own survival. While in one case a woman can be seen accusing the state of misogyny, there is not a single voice in defence of the elderly.

## INDIVIDUAL ACTIONS DURING THE FAMINE

The position of the elderly in traditional Greek society is and has been presented as one of authority over the young. Parents sustained such authority partly via the retention of property ownership for as long as possible.<sup>37</sup> Famine, however, challenged this system to the core. As it was the children who were prioritised by the state, what were the effects of the indifference displayed towards the elderly? The available quantitative sources suggest a variation in mortality rates between places, with the populations of Athens/Piraeus and towns on Chios (Chios and Vrontados) showing clearly that there was higher mortality among groups older than 45 years of age (Figs. 1 and 2). In contrast, Syros and Mykonos show a high increase in mortality among those aged 45–59, but for those 60 and over the excess is not pronounced.<sup>38</sup> Here the different choices available to individuals depending on geography and patterns of occupation should be mentioned. Thus Italian-occupied Syros had a disproportionately large presence of soldiers on the island, one that had to



**Fig. 1** Ratio of famine deaths to deaths between 1936 and 1939 by age group in Syros and the towns Chios and Vrontados (*Sources* Civil Registration Certificates for the years 1936–1944. Unpublished data available in the Local Municipal Offices)



**Fig. 2** Ratios of deaths in 1941 and 1942 to deaths in 1939 by age group in Athens and Piraeus (*Source* Author's calculations based on data available in Magkriōtēs, *Thysiai*, 76)

be partly fed by local resources. In addition, Syros is situated too far from Turkey for significant numbers of individuals to have attempted an escape there. In contrast, German-occupied Chios was very near the Turkish coast allowing the possibility to escape the famine, something that very many did. For example, it is estimated that a third of the population of the town of Chios left the island. The very small German presence on the island and their somewhat indifference to the islanders' escape allowed movement to Turkey to become significant. This was not necessarily the case on other islands, such as that of nearby Lesbos, for example.

That increased mortality rates among the elderly was significantly pronounced on Chios did not escape the notice of the local people. Madias, a local teacher writing during the famine, included the elderly among those 'social/occupational' groups that were 'annihilated',<sup>39</sup> and the Chios informants clearly articulated that 'many old people died', whereas very few children did.<sup>40</sup> In contrast, the responses from Syros varied, emphasising that age-specific mortality differences were not so straightforward.<sup>41</sup>

But, while it was easy to make such judgements at the societal level, at the individual level decisions—conscious or not—that had to be made were difficult to discuss. In the following extract the informant from

Ano Syros, a small town on Syros, discusses the death of his grandmother during the famine and her relationship with her daughter, his own mother. The grandmother and daughter lived in separate but adjacent households. The informant was 10 years old at the time. During the interview the informant's cousin was also present:

A. Well, Grandma, [she was] too weak, the poor woman. Anna Halkia dressed her up [when dead and in preparation for the funeral]. Is it not enough [that we discussed] my father?

Q. No, tell me about your grandma. Did she die during the famine?

A. My grandma was going to ... she was going to the field for [to gather] grass/wild greens. And she was saying to my mother, [because] the soup kitchens were giving food to us children. 'Give me something (more)'.<sup>42</sup> 'I don't have [anything], it is for my children. I don't have anything'. And the old woman died and her tummy, she did not have a tummy. And when she died and they put her in the crate [coffin], the lice came out. Do you remember? The lice?

COUSIN. Oh, don't say too much about those things.

A. Should I not say ...?

Q. Do say.

A. Well, the lice were released [left the body] and it was like a mat. So there was the crate [with the body] and Maria came [into the house] and she had a little rug, a dirty one, or a sack, and she stuck it under the dress to make up for her [grandmother's] hollow tummy.

...

A. One day I was going to the soup kitchen to get the rations ...

Q. Your grandma? Wasn't your grandma getting a ration from the soup-kitchen?

A. She did, she did but it was not enough. A spoonful—what could it do? They were giving more to us children because they were looking after the children more at that time. As they always do during wars. The adult, they think, is an adult; they will go here and there to... [fend for themselves], you understand. No, it does not mean that because I was getting [the ration] from the soup-kitchen that I was satiated and grandma was hungry.

Q. No.

A. One day I went across and gathered some caper leaves and I boiled them but I could not eat them. Are we moving on?<sup>43</sup>

The informant was very reluctant to discuss the topic, even though he was one of my most outspoken and willing informants, as he had already talked about the death of his father from hunger. After my encouragement he continued, though at the very end of the passage here he decisively moved the discussion on to other issues. He revealed that his mother was focussed exclusively on her children's survival and was not prepared to respond to the pleas of her mother; earlier he had tentatively disclosed that his mother had also prioritised the children over his father. Despite the informant's sadness at the loss of his grandmother, expressed in another part of the interview, he looked back on his mother's actions with understanding and acceptance. At the end of the extract above he responded to my question slightly irritably when explaining that he was not 'satiated' himself, emphasising that he too had to gather and cook inedible caper leaves, just as his grandmother had to gather grass. The same informant, in a different part of the interview, recounted how he gathered discarded food from other people's rubbish, cooked it and refused to share it with his brother, noting with sadness the extremeness of the famine experiences and the incomprehensible nature—to today's society—of the actions that felt justifiable at the time.

Other informants, although not directly addressing such issues, discussed their own behaviour and thoughts about the young and the old in their own families. The middle-class informant from Hermoupolis, who we will call Vasileios, had a child born in 1943 and proudly recounted his efforts to find food for the child during those difficult times.<sup>44</sup> He recounted how he employed the black market and bartered extensively, just as others did, although this was more significant to him because of his obligation to feed his young child. In contrast, he recounted his father's death in 1944 without much sentimentality: 'Did he get hungry? He did not have ... he was starving. My father died because he ate bran. He was so hungry and he was a gourmand and so on, and he was hungry. He eventually ate bran'.<sup>45</sup> Thus, while providing for his newborn child made him proactively seek appropriate food—cans of *farine lactée* ('baby cereal') provided by Italian soldiers through the black market—his father was reported as being at least partly responsible for his own death as he was accustomed to eating good quality and plentiful food and could not withstand hunger.

While family experiences were discussed by informants on Syros, where statistics suggest that the elderly did not experience distinctly higher rates of mortality compared to other age groups, on Chios it is easier to discern both the qualms and the guilt that individuals felt at the time. So, one of Giannes Makridakes’ informants who escaped from Chios on his own regretted his decision as soon as he reached Turkey and questioned his own actions, wondering ‘Why did I leave? Why did I leave my parents behind to die of hunger?’<sup>46</sup>

Two of my own informants articulated such sentiments most eloquently. The first, who, like Vasileios, also had a child in 1943, reveals the special efforts he made to adequately feed the child and claims responsibility in ensuring the child’s survival. At the same time he noted his tacit disapproval of his neighbours’ sons, who left their elderly parents behind to their deaths. My persistence, however, led him to reveal that he himself had advocated that he and his wife leave the island, abandoning his wife’s mother and grandmother and his own mother. It was only his wife’s stern refusal to do so that prevented them from leaving:

- Q. Those neighbours of yours who suffered from swelling, did they die eventually?
- A. They all died. All of them. They were old.
- Q. On their own? Were they two old people? What was [the situation]? Two old people on their own? Did they not have children?<sup>47</sup>
- A. All their three children went [escaped] to the Middle East.
- Q. Oh, so their children had gone.
- A. They went across [to Turkey]. And they left the people on their own. Whatever they had in the house they consumed. What could they do afterwards?
- Q. Did they not have any fields?
- A. In our village, few had [land], many were poor. Whoever had land, had a lot [of it]. The rest were wage earners.
- ...
- Q. Who left? Who were those who left from here [the village to go to the Middle East]?
- A. The very poor ... And the young men. I had two brothers, they went across, [became] soldiers. I kept [looked after] my mother here. Because my sister was [here] and we kept her, we both did, my sister and I. We kept my mother because she was a widow, an old woman ...

- Q. Can I ask you, why did your brothers leave? Why did they go to the Middle East?
- A. They were afraid of being conscripted by the Germans.
- ...
- Q. So all those who left, they left for that reason? For the resistance?
- A. The young men all left for that reason.
- Q. How come you did not leave? You were young too.
- A. I had ... my wife had her mother, she had her grandmother and our houses were adjacent. And I was telling my wife that we should go to the Middle East too. She said 'Where [how] am I to leave my grandma, where can I leave my mother?' Afterwards her mother died at the end of 1942, her grandmother died in 1943. There. That's why we stayed. Then ... my child was born, Giannes. We fed [nourished] him during the occupation [famine]. I was cooking broad beans for him in the coffee pot<sup>48</sup> and he was eating, yes. I would give [barter] an [amount] of oil, and get 100 dramia [320 g] of dark sugar to feed the child, yes.
- Q. Well done. Did you say that your wife's mother, your mother-in-law, died in late 1942? Did she die of hunger?
- A. No, she was old.
- Q. Oh she was old!
- A. The [wife's] grandmother ... was even older than the daughter [the wife's mother]. She died a year later.
- Q. So they did not go hungry then.
- A. Yes. Our houses were next to each other. Now then, she [the wife] was saying to me, 'How can I leave? They fed me [brought me up], they did everything for me'. She did not have a father, you see.<sup>49</sup>

While the informant claims responsibility and takes pride in the fact that his child was fed and survived the famine, he refutes the possibility that his mother-in-law and her mother might have died of hunger. Rather, he asserts, they died of old age. He does not present as reprehensible or even morally questionable his wish to leave three elderly relatives behind on the island; rather, he feels he needs to justify why he remained, even though his answers suggest that he disapproved of the decision to leave taken by his neighbours' children.

Both in this and the next case, engaging the informants in a conversation about such difficult, complex issues was neither easy nor straightforward, necessitating close questioning and engagement with details

revealed in earlier parts of the interview. The following dialogue reveals the struggle that informants experienced in articulating some of the most traumatic events and their effects. The informant was happy to talk about the journey to Turkey and Cyprus during the Chios famine, but became reticent as soon as her parents were mentioned. For much of the dialogue she repeated my own words and used short sentences. She elaborated only when she explained to me that the situation was not that serious for her father, who was left behind, since her brother, who also stayed behind, could purchase corn, contradicting what she had said earlier when explaining why she and her family left:

- A. We left in 1941.  
 Q. Did you go with your husband and the children?  
 A. With the children.  
 Q. Did your husband stay with you? Did he stay in Cyprus?  
 A. Together, together.  
 ...  
 Q. Did you pay to be taken there? Did you pay the boatmen?  
 A. Of course we did, we paid.  
 Q. Was it expensive?  
 A. Expensive. One hundred thousand, even I don't know how much.  
 Q. Where did you get all that money? Couldn't you buy food to eat, with all that money?  
 A. You couldn't find any, my child. You could not find anything to eat.  
 ...  
 Q. Were your parents alive then? Your mother, your father, were they alive during the occupation [famine]?  
 A. They were alive. They were alive.  
 Q. What did they do? Did they come with you to Turkey?  
 A. No, they did not come.  
 Q. They did not.  
 A. They did not.  
 Q. Did they stay behind?  
 A. They stayed behind.  
 Q. Did they survive or ...?  
 A. Anyway. My brother did not come either. But there were small boats coming to Lagkada, Kardamyla [localities on Chios] and they said, 'Do you want us to bring you corn?' And they brought it,

they [the people] gave money and they [the boatmen] brought corn for them [on Chios].

- Q. So your brother stayed with your parents [to look after them].
- A. My brother was married and he stayed with the parents. My mother was dead.
- Q. Oh, your mother was dead. Your father?
- A. My father was still alive. And during the famine he was with my brother.
- Q. Did he remain alive until the Germans left? Did he survive? Did your father survive?
- A. He did not survive.
- Q. Did he die during the occupation, during the famine?
- A. Where we were on Cyprus, other people had arrived from the area we came from and one of our co-villagers asked [the newly arrived] ‘Did you go to our village? Are people dying [there]?’ ‘You know, the day we went, an old man, near the school’, he replied to our friend, ‘near the school there was a funeral’. Our friend [the co-villager] understood that it was my father [who had died]. Near the school is my brother’s house. And he [the co-villager] sent me a message, because he lived in a different place [on Cyprus]. ‘Come tomorrow to tell you news from our village’. I had a dream before I went. I had a dream that a ship was stranded on land, outside my house [on Chios] and the ship had grapes inside it. Next day I went to our friend and he told me this and that he [the dead man] was my father. Near the school an old man with a walking stick had died that day.<sup>50</sup>

Rather than answering my question about whether her father died during the famine in a short sentence, as she did for much of the earlier part of the interview, the informant recounted the story of how she finally found out that her father died. Here she recreated the dialogue between Chian refugees newly arrived on Cyprus and those already there, showing the hunger for information concerning Chios and the fate of their relatives there. In Greece, according to Charles Stewart, dreams that have an ‘interpretative significance’, are usually accepted as predictions of the future.<sup>51</sup> The informant therefore interpreted the dream she had the day before meeting her co-villager: it revealed to her that she would receive sad news—as signified by the stranded boat—related to her family on Chios (where the boat was stranded).

Thus the informant articulated, via her recollection of a dream, her anxiety about the situation at home on Chios. As her own family was with her on Cyprus, her father would have been one of the prime sources of her concern. At the same time she avoided directly linking the death of her father with the famine.

It is the interviews and the responsive questioning of informants rather than any other sources that make it clear that difficult choices had to be made, and were made, by the people who endured the famine. Such choices were easier to make in relation to those outside the immediate family, but were more difficult within the family. The interviews as well as the public rhetoric reveal that children were the clear priority, especially compared to the elderly, whether such a priority meant abandoning the elderly entirely, as on Chios, or simply choosing whether or not to help them, as on Syros.

The elderly who survived were either able to ensure their own survival or were supported by relatives, while there are virtually no first-hand accounts from those who were not supported. However, it is interesting to note the observation made by two psychiatrists who served in Athenian hospitals during the famine, and observed those most affected by starvation. According to Skouras and Papademetriou, many hospitalised elderly expressed paranoid ideas, believing that their own family members had carried out 'systematic deprivation and concealment of foodstuffs'. Though the authors explained that at times the patients were confused and recounted imagined or illusory examples, at times the 'paranoid ideas' were born from 'actual and specific events that had occurred among the family members'.<sup>52</sup>

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

During the famine children were prioritised by those in positions of power because their survival was deemed necessary for the survival of the nation. At the family level there is evidence to suggest that this was also the case, though not necessarily for the same reason. The absence of the elderly from the discourse underlines their lack of significance, certainly at the state level and occasionally at the family level too.

Post-war public discussions of the famine and its effects are as interesting as those during the occupation. The majority of authors in post-war Greece emphasised that the young did not suffer as much as other age groups, although there is less agreement about whether the older or the

middle-aged suffered the most.<sup>53</sup> In 1946 K.B. Choremēs, professor of paediatrics in Athens, praised the ‘family man’ who sacrificed himself ‘in order to save his family and fell first, true father of the family’.<sup>54</sup> A similar sentiment, suggesting that the ‘Greek family’ was protecting the housewife, was expressed by Vasilios Valaoras in the same year, and was echoed many years later in the writing of historians.<sup>55</sup> Similarly, others attributed increased mortality of the elderly and/or the middle-aged to their deliberate self-sacrifice, arguing essentially that they surrendered life for the benefit of those who were seen as more valuable than themselves.<sup>56</sup>

Thus, the focussed support of children during the famine was presented as a united effort by the whole nation, whether by those in positions of power (such as the Greek Red Cross) or the parents themselves or even the elderly. All united in their desire to save the children and ultimately the nation. While it is not difficult to trace references to testimonies of those who were children during the famine and who attest to the sacrifices their parents made for them, invariably these are cases in which both parents and children survived, and thus they should be seen as cases of families who perhaps suffered less than others during the famine.<sup>57</sup> Moreover, there are testimonies and sources showing that some parents prioritised themselves rather than their children or simply that their ‘sentiments of interest and affection’ towards their children became ‘blunted’ during the famine.<sup>58</sup>

Whatever the public discourse of the post-war years the widespread dying of the elderly during the famine, at least in some places, must have shaken local societies and changed the patterns of life significantly in terms of customs around inheritance, marriage timing and inter-generational relationships. Such issues have not been highlighted before and further research is needed on their long-term effects. While the effects of such issues are not directly linked to actions of the occupying forces, they nevertheless are a by-product of Greece’s occupation.

## NOTES

1. Violetta Hionidou, *Famine and Death in Occupied Greece, 1941–1944* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).
2. Hionidou, *Famine*, chapter 4.
3. Hionidou, *Famine*, 159–160.
4. Violetta Hionidou, “Relief and Politics in Occupied Greece, 1941–4,” *Journal of Contemporary History* 48, no. 4 (2013): 761–783.

5. Athens General State Archives, Archeio Ypourgeiou Episitismou (1941–44), K67a, folder 91, subfolder 3.4. For the transliteration of Greek characters a web address was used: <http://www.loc.gov/catdir/cpso/romanization/greek.pdf>, accessed 14 March 2017.
6. Katie Holmes, “Does It Matter If She Cried? Recording Emotion and the Australian Generations Oral History Project,” *Oral History Review* 44, no. 11 (2017): 75; Lynn Abrams, *Oral History Theory* (London: Routledge, 2010), chapter 3.
7. Frank Dikötter, “Race Culture: Recent Perspectives on the History of Eugenics,” *American Historical Review* 103, no. 2 (1998): 467–478.
8. Sevasti Trubeta, *Physical Anthropology, Race and Eugenics in Greece (1880s–1970s)* (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 163, 166–167, 185.
9. Dēmōsthenēs Eleutheriadēs, “Koinōnika Zētēmata. Liga paidia, kalē trofē (Social Issues. Few children, good food),” *Peitharchia* 1 (10 August 1930): 7–9; Trubeta, *Physical Anthropology*, 212.
10. Trubeta, *Physical Anthropology*, 220.
11. Evaggelos Averof, *Symvolē eis tēn ereunan tou plythēsmiakou problēmatos tēs Ellados (Contribution to the investigation of the population problem of Greece)* (Athens: n.p., 1939), 81. All translations by the author.
12. Averof, *Symvolē*, 89–98.
13. Averof, *Symvolē*, 97.
14. Georgios I. Vlavianos, “Tina peri ethnikēs ygeias apo psychoeigionologikēs, eygonikēs kai koinōnikēs aposeōs (On national health from a psychological, eugenic and social point of view),” *Akadēmaikē Iatrikē* (February 1939): 6. Metaxas fashioned himself as the ‘First Peasant’ and presented peasants as the ‘backbone’ of the nation: Marina Petrakis, *Metaxas Myth: Dictatorship and Propaganda in Greece* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2005), 56–57.
15. Anon., “As merimnēsōmen dia tēn nea genean (Let us take care of the new generation),” *Proodos* (26 August 1941), 3742.
16. The warfare lasted from October 1940 to April 1941.
17. M. Moyseides, “Oligai lexeis peri tēs semeiologias tes ypositiseōs (A few words about the semiology of malnutrition),” *Klinikē* 18 (1941): 257–258; Krikos as reported in a newspaper article in August 1941: Anon., “To problēma tes diatrofēs mas (The problem of our sustenance),” *Proodos* (11 August 1941), 3730.
18. Alex. Krikos, “To epististikon problēma kai to mellon tēs fylēs (The food problem and the future of our fylē/nation),” *Praktika Anthrōpologikēs Etaireias Athēnōn* (1941): 11, 14.
19. Krikos, “To epististikon problēma,” 15.
20. Anon., “As merimnēsōmen.”
21. Vasileios G. Manousakēs, “Oikonomia kai Politikē stēn Ellada tou B. Pagkosmiou polemou (1940–1944) (Economy and Politics in World

- War II Greece (1940–1944))” (PhD diss., Aristoteleio Panepistēmio Thessalonikēs, 2014), 434.
22. For example, no. 1 Athens; no. 17 Syros; no. 11 Syros.
  23. Hionidou, “Relief,” 782.
  24. Anon., “Euoiōnos aparchē. Komizontai 60 tonoi ospriōn (Good start. 60 tons of legumes are transferred),” *Proodos* (15 November 1941), 3778. In this case foodstuffs were also distributed to the popular soup kitchens. The soup kitchen ration was meagre and distributed only a couple of times per week, if at all.
  25. Anon., “To provlēma.”
  26. National Archives (NA), FO837/1232, Economic Blockade vol. 2, 29 August 1941 to 30 November 1941, “Memo from S.J. Warner to D.B. McClean Esq, General Department commenting on a telegram received from the Hellenic Red Cross,” 16 September 1941.
  27. G. V. 1–1 1942, “Epistolai pros Proodon (Letters to Proodos),” *Proodos* (9 January 1942), 3800; Anon., “O nomarchēs sta mathētika sysitia (The prefect at the pupils’ soup kitchens),” *Proodos* (3 February 1942), 3809.
  28. K. Papantonakēs, “Sōsate ta paidia mas. Epistolē ypografomenē apo ton proedro syllogou goneōn (Save our children. Letter signed by the chair of the parents association),” *Proodos* (19 January 1942), 3804.
  29. Ioanna Tsatsou, *Fylla Katoches (Leaves of the Occupation)* (Athens: Estia, 1987), 5th edition, 39.
  30. Anon., “Apofaseis,” *Proodos* (14 July 1942), 3870.
  31. Giōrgos Zevelakēs, ed., *Kostas Varnalis, Feig volan tēs katochēs. Chronografēmata (Kostas Varnalis, Leaflets of the occupation. Short stories)* (Athens: Kastaniotē, 2007), 2nd edition, 255–256. The article was first published on 17 March 1942.
  32. Ēlias Venezēs, *Archiepiskopos Damaskēnos. Oi Chronoi tēs douleias (Archbishop Damaskēnos. The slavery years)* (Athens: Estia, 2008), 167–168.
  33. Paul Mohn, *Ē Apostolē mou sten Katechomenē Ellada (My mission in Occupied Greece)* (Athens: Metron, 2005), 2nd edition, 77.
  34. Mohn, *Ē Apostolē mou*, 80.
  35. Croix-Rouge Suisse, *Rapport sur l’activité de la mission de la Croix-Rouge Suisse en Grèce, Juillet 1943–Juin 1945* (Athens: Sociétē Hellēnikē d’Éditions, 1948), 19. Athens was liberated in October 1944.
  36. Croix-Rouge Suisse, *Rapport*, 20–21.
  37. Violetta Hionidou, “The Position of the Elderly in Greece Prior to World War Two. Evidence from Three Island Populations,” in *Ageing Without Children: European and Asian Perspectives on Elderly Access to Support Networks*, ed. P. Kreager and E. Schroeder-Butterfill (Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2004), 244–267.
  38. Hionidou, *Famine*, 172.

39. Chios General State Archives, Manuscript Diary of Yeorgios Ēlia Madias, ABE 1365, chapter 6. He also mentions beggars, street sweepers and the hospitalised mentally ill.
40. No. 3 Chios. Similar response by no. 20 Chios.
41. No. 7 Syros; no. 8 Syros.
42. This is a mildly offensive word.
43. No. 3 Syros.
44. For Hermoupolis, the major town on the island of Syros, the whole period of occupation was one of food crisis, unlike in Athens, for example. On Syros the famine lasted for 24 months. In Athens/Piraeus it lasted for 15 months (Hionidou, *Famine*, 160).
45. No. 10 Syros. His father died in 1944.
46. Giannēs Makridakēs, *Syrmatenioi, xesyrmatenioi, oloi. Chiotēs prosfygēs kai stratiōtēs stē Mesē Anatolē. Afēgēseis 1941–1946 (Those behind the barbed wire, those not behind the barbed wire, all. Chian refugees and soldiers in the Middle East. Narrations 1941–1946)* (Chios: Pelinnaio, 2006), 75.
47. I had to repeat and modify the question as there was no answer forthcoming.
48. Using a coffee pot instead of a pan indicates that they were cooking very small amounts of food that would be given only to the child. Broad beans were too valuable and expensive to be consumed by everyone in the household.
49. No. 3 Chios.
50. No. 10 Chios.
51. Charles Stewart, “Dreams of Treasure: Temporality, Historisation and the Unconscious,” *Anthropological Theory* 3, no. 4 (2003): 494.
52. Fotis Skouras et al., *Ē psychologia tes peinas, tou fovou kai tou aghous. Neuroseis kai psychoneuroseis (The psychology of hunger, fear and stress. Neurosis and psychoneurosis)* (Athens: Odysseas, 1991), 1st edition 1947, 356.
53. K.B. Choremēs, “E semerinē katastasis tēs ygeias tou paidiou (The current situation of the child’s health),” *Klinikē* 1 (1946): 21–36; G.D. Giannakē, *Polemos (War)* (Athens: Papazese, 1995), 60; Vasilios Valaoras, “Some Effects of Famine on the Population of Greece,” *The Milbank Memorial Fund Quarterly* 24, no. 3 (1946): 215–234.
54. Choremēs, “E semerinē katastasis,” 27. Similarly, see Giannakē, *Polemos*, 60; Mohn, *Ē Apostolē mou*, 20, 76.
55. Valaoras, ‘Some Effects’, 220.
56. Giannakē, *Polemos*, 60–61. Some expressed similar ideas of parental self-sacrifice even during the famine: G. Madias, “Eikones apo tē Zōē (Pictures of every-day life),” *Proodos* (3 November 1941), 3772.
57. Maria Manolakou, *Apo to ēmerologio enos paidiou tēs katochēs* (From the diary of a child of the occupation) (Athens: Estia, 1985), 2nd edition,

- 178; no. 9 Chios; no. 11 Chios; Giōrgos I. Christogiannēs, “O Filos mou Pantiōras (My friend Pantioras),” in *Martyries 40–44 (Testimonies 40–44)*, ed. Kōstas N. Chatzēpateras and Maria S. Fafaliou (Athens: Kedros, 1988), 2nd edition, 325.
58. NA, FO837/1237, Relief for Greece, Comité International de Croix Rouge, Geneva, Report, Appendix 6, a report from Carl J. Burchardt to Lord Drogheda, “Extract of a Report on the Effects of the Famine on Greek Children,” 24 August 1942. See also, no. 7 Syros; Skouras et al., *Ē Psychologia*, 348, 350, 358.



# Food, Money and Barter in the Lvov Ghetto, Eastern Galicia

*Natalia Aleksium*

Food and hunger are an ever present theme in many Jewish accounts from Nazi-occupied Eastern Europe, from descriptions of securing, preparing and sharing food to consuming it, contemplating it and suffering when it was scarce. As a result, we tend to associate the images of starved bodies with Jewish experiences in the ghettos of Nazi-occupied Eastern Europe. Photographs of emaciated corpses and of children begging for food on the streets of the Warsaw Ghetto remain among the most harrowing images of the Holocaust. Food shortage and hunger figure

---

This chapter comes from my study of Jewish daily life in hiding in Eastern Galicia during the German occupation. Research for it was partially carried out during a Pearl Resnick Postdoctoral Fellowship at the USHMM in Washington D.C. The author would like to thank Eliyana R. Adler, Winson Chu, Marion Kaplan, Anna Novikov, Katarzyna Person, Helene Sinnreich, Joanna Śliwa, Agnieszka Wierzycholska and Anna Wylegała for their comments on this chapter.

---

N. Aleksium (✉)  
Touro College, New York, USA  
e-mail: natalia.aleksium@touro.edu

© The Author(s) 2018  
T. Tönsmeier et al. (eds.), *Coping with Hunger and Shortage under German Occupation in World War II*,  
[https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-77467-1\\_12](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-77467-1_12)

prominently in Jewish diaries, memoirs and testimonies about life and death in the ghetto. Jewish men, women and children described vividly the scarcity of food, how they experienced the physical and psychological effects of malnutrition, as well as the strategies family members devised to acquire and divide the meagre foodstuffs, and the communal efforts undertaken to ward off hunger in the Warsaw Ghetto. With their limited resources, Jewish institutions struggled to feed the growing numbers of hungry people, both young and old, while Jewish physicians studied the effects of hunger on the ghetto population to document it for future generations and for the benefit of the medical community.<sup>1</sup>

This chapter examines a variety of Jewish accounts: early post-war testimonies, diaries, memoirs and oral interviews to discuss how survivors remember and describe the food crisis in the Lvov Ghetto—the third largest ghetto in Nazi-occupied Poland. It discusses the crisis itself, and Jewish responses to hunger, but also how food came to have meaning in the ghetto and the ways in which gender and class shaped the relationship to food. What did people eat in Nazi-occupied Lvov (*Lwów* in the Second Polish Republic is today *Lviv* in Ukraine), in the ghetto, in the Janowska camp and in hiding? How did access to food shape the Jewish stories of survival or their relationships with non-Jews? How did Jewish men, women and children organise food supplies and divide their resources? A close reading of Jewish accounts reveals the multiple meanings food had for Jewish men, women and children. Their testimonies reflected the dramatic difference in the fate of the Jewish and non-Jewish inhabitants of Lvov shaped by the German policies with regard to food provisions for the various populations in the *Generalgouvernement* (GG) ('General Government'). While methodical food deprivation became a tool in the Final Solution, it continued to connect Jews and non-Jews through the networks of black market supply, smuggling and assistance.

In this broader social context the chapter examines the role of age, class and gender in access to food and investigates how these factors influenced discussions about food in survivors' testimonies. Age, class and gender shape the accounts as they delve into the subject of food, increasingly limited access to it and food deprivation. Focussing on these questions allows us to explore the role of food networks and inter-ethnic dynamics of food supplies for thousands of Jews in Lvov. To examine the questions of hunger, food distribution and communal self-reliance, and to compare survival strategies employed by Jews and Jewish institutions in the ghettos, scholars have focussed on the two largest ghettos, Warsaw

(in the GG of German-occupied Poland) and Łódź (Litzmannstadt, in western Poland, which was annexed to the German Reich).<sup>2</sup> The story of the Lvov Ghetto provides a very different context, both because of the ethnic make-up of the city and the relatively short period of the ghetto's existence. While Jews were first forced to move to the Zamarstynów and Kleparów districts in November 1941, the area was closed only in November 1942. Moreover, until the ghetto was liquidated in June 1943, it coexisted with the Janowska camp located on the outskirts of the city. Last but not least, Lvov—the largest Jewish community in the region before the war and a densely populated city—became a place where Jewish men, women and children from Lvov and beyond sought rescue by surviving on the so-called Aryan side. Therefore, while I will focus on access to food in the Lvov ghetto, this phenomenon was hardly an isolated case, but rather part of the wider reality throughout Eastern Galicia.

### LVOV—AN OVERVIEW

In the autumn of 1939 the Polish city of Lvov came under Soviet occupation, and this period created food insecurity that preceded the Nazi invasion. Many Jewish families were dispossessed due to the confiscation of their businesses and property, and the Soviets deported thousands to Siberia. Those who arrived in Lvov from the part of Poland occupied by the Germans often came penniless, and thus struggled to meet their basic needs.<sup>3</sup> In the summer of 1941, at the beginning of the German occupation, the Jewish population of Lvov numbered about 150,000–160,000 men, women and children as only a minority had managed to escape the Nazis when Soviet forces withdrew from the area.<sup>4</sup> The mood was sombre and in the words of Ben Zion Redner (1908–1996), a lawyer and a Holocaust survivor, ‘All Jews, even the children, knew and felt that with this German advance, the curtain was going up for the first act in the tragedy of Lwów and Galician Jewry’.<sup>5</sup> A wave of anti-Jewish violence in Eastern Galicia followed the German invasion, while Jewish property and personal possessions were plundered with the active participation of Jews’ non-Jewish neighbours. In Lvov thousands of Jews were assaulted, brutalised and murdered in two pogroms in early July 1941 and during the so-called Petlura Days in late July 1941.<sup>6</sup>

Already in October 1941 the German authorities had announced the creation of the ghetto in Lvov, for which they allocated the poorest section of the city, but which remained open for another year.

Following mass executions and deportations from the ghetto in the summer of 1942, many surviving Jews struggled to come up with rescue plans for their families. Faced with the murderous German campaign, they sought rescue by hiding locally, posing as non-Jews in large cities with the help of so-called Aryan papers (false documents identifying the bearer as a non-Jew), or escaping across the borders. During the first days of June 1943 the Germans liquidated the Lvov ghetto. Several months later, on 19 November 1943, they also closed down the Janowska labour camp on the outskirts of Lvov where thousands of Jews were murdered. Several thousand Jews hid in Lvov, but the Nazis and their collaborators hunted down and murdered most of them. By the time the Red Army entered Lvov in August 1944 around 2000 Jews remained in the city.<sup>7</sup>

### THE FIRST WAVE OF FAMINE

Lvov's Jewish population faced food scarcity right from the early weeks of the German occupation of the city. While the prices of food increased drastically, purchasing it on the free market put Jews in harm's way as they were targets for physical attacks and abuse. To make ends meet and to buy food, Jews sold their belongings cheaply.<sup>8</sup> Born in Lvov in 1932, Leszek Allerhand recalled that in the first months of the German occupation, his affluent family still had resources to purchase white bread from the Germans for his parents and grandparents, as it struggled to adapt to a diet consisting of black bread and marmalade.<sup>9</sup> In her memoir *Behind the Secret Window* Nelly S. Toll—born to a middle-class family in Lvov in 1935—noted 'All the adults looked sad most of the time now. Food was becoming hard to get'.<sup>10</sup> From the onset of the occupation the Germans imposed the conversion rate for the rubel, effectively depleting the financial resources that Jewish families may still have had.<sup>11</sup> Desperate, more and more Jews had to sell their belongings, or exchange them for food. A Jewish survivor, Rózia Besseches-Wagnerowa, remembered:

We were not allowed to get provisions of vegetables et cetera at markets, only during the two hours between 12:00 [pm] and 2:00 [pm]. Provisional Ukrainian militia, or any youngster who put on a yellow armband [the Ukrainian national color; N.A.], stalked all the city markets at these times because if they caught a Jewish woman buying [food] from a peasant woman for a black-market price they could get a big bribe from her or hand her over to the Gestapo.<sup>12</sup>

But Jews were exploited in other ways too, and deprived of their livelihoods, which led to their rapid impoverishment.<sup>13</sup> This made it even more difficult for them to pay bribes or participate in the black market economy. A survivor historian Philip Friedman called it an ‘economic war’ waged against the Jewish population in the form of official as well as private plunder. German soldiers entered Jewish apartments at random to plunder. Moreover, German authorities imposed a heavy fine of some 20 million rubles on the Jewish community. Organised looting continued through the activities of the *Judenrat* (‘Jewish Council’), which had already been formed by the German authorities in July 1941. Its Supply Department was tasked with providing Germans with a variety of goods.<sup>14</sup> Some non-Jewish neighbours joined in on the off chance to steal with impunity. A Ukrainian building manager of a house occupied by many Jewish families robbed them, including Ben Zion Redner and his brother Marek. He offered to protect the tenants from random robberies and assaults but took ample payment in kind for this protection. ‘Our building was saved by the Ukrainian janitor, Jan Pelikan, who also wore a blue-and-yellow ribbon’. Pelikan looted the possessions of Jewish inhabitants but stopped other looters from entering the building. Ben Zion Redner explained that ‘he turned out to be the savior of our small Jewish group. Not that he did it for free; rather, Pelikan made a small fortune for himself in one day. Over the next few days and months, he made systematic rounds of all the apartments to collect the promised fees, and he would have become very rich were it not for his unfortunate habit of getting drunk’.<sup>15</sup>

In this time of crisis, as hinted at in Rózia Besseches-Wagnerowa’s quote, familiar gender roles persevered, as barter and securing food-stuffs for the families was primarily the task of women in family frameworks. Following traditional gender roles, and in response to physical attacks directed against Jewish males on the streets of Lvov—who were targeted in random violent assaults and kidnapped for forced labour—the women searched for ways to feed their families.<sup>16</sup> According to Rubin Furgang’s oral testimony, his teenage sister became ‘the whole manager of our life’ after their mother had perished in the early months of the Nazi occupation. With her ‘non-Jewish’ looks, she took items of clothing and exchanged them for potatoes with peasants coming to the city from the surrounding villages.<sup>17</sup> Mina Deutsch described in her memoir how her husband Leon and brother Levi ‘hid indoors whenever

people from the Jewish Council came to take men to work in the camps. I spent most of my time trying to find food to keep us alive. I was down to 95 pounds; I do not know where I got the strength or the energy to look after my child and sick brother'.<sup>18</sup> Nevertheless, Jewish women faced danger as well and they tried to minimize their movement around the city.

Families depended on 'contact with the Aryan population' or 'considerable food stocks'.<sup>19</sup> The need for additional food supplies inevitably led to instances of exploitation in business dealings with non-Jews. Banned from travelling, Jews could not barter for food with peasants in the villages and 'therefore, they depended on Poles to act as intermediaries. Possessions were exchanged for food, with Polish traders like hyenas exploiting their tragic situation'.<sup>20</sup> Some Jews turned to their non-Jewish friends and acquaintances, relying on pre-war social networks for help. Grateful for Ajzik Eisen's help during the Soviet occupation, Łucja Nowicka provided her Jewish neighbour with food. 'We Jews were afraid to go out on the street because the Hitlerite killers and the Ukrainian militia were beating and killing Jews. Our good Gentile neighbour did the purchases for us, so we had enough food'.<sup>21</sup>

As a result of German economic policies of exploitation the Jewish population in the city showed the first signs of famine as early as August 1941. This inevitably affected the poorer and more vulnerable Jews. As Philip Friedman noted in his early testimony of January 1946, the famine affected especially 'a part of the Jewish population having nothing. Children were swollen with hunger'. Hunger had an impact on human relations. 'The antagonism among the Jewish population ... got worse', Friedman recalled. Not all Jews were affected in the same way. 'The Jewish professionals were all at work and so they had something to live on somehow, whereas a large part of the Jewish population who were unable to work, women and children, were left with nothing. They suffered terribly. There was no help available to them', Friedman wrote in his testimony.<sup>22</sup> These may have been women whose husbands were drafted into the Red Army ahead of the German invasion, killed or kidnapped for forced labour. Drastic changes in the professional and social structure occurred in Lvov. The occupation 'turned things topsy-turvy. The new class distinctions were far more bitter, for they jeopardised not just a person's income but his life as well'. Class stratification became a matter of life and death.<sup>23</sup>

## LVOV AND BEYOND

In the fall and winter of 1941, in the wake of random violence and persistent food shortages in Lvov, Jews tried to leave the city for smaller towns in Galicia, despite a ban on travel. According to Philip Friedman, by November 1941 between 4000 and 5000 people had left for the countryside, but ‘this option was only available to well off people’.<sup>24</sup> Indeed, Rózia Wagnerowa remembered that following the round-ups in December 1941 many of her acquaintances left Lvov because provincial towns appeared still relatively quiet at that time. ‘My family dreamt of returning to our hometown of Przeworsk from which it was expelled in 1939’, Wagnerowa recalled.<sup>25</sup> Thus family networks and financial means played a key role in these first months, not only enabling some to supplement food rations but also allowing them to plan their exit from Lvov. Mina Deutsch ‘ran into friends from the area where my parents lived. They told me about plans to rent a truck to return home where conditions were supposedly better and where it was easier to get food and fuel. It was late in the year by this time, and we were worried about heat for the winter’.<sup>26</sup> Jakub Weinloss, a physician who lived with his family in Lvov on the eve of the Nazi invasion of June 1941 and narrowly escaped death during the first days of the occupation, received a message from his mother in Thuste who ‘dispatched a Jewish woman dressed as a peasant with food for us – as terrible hunger reigned in Lvov at the time’.<sup>27</sup> Weinloss managed to leave the city with the help of his school classmates who arranged a truck for him and advised him to leave the city. He left on 14 September 1941 and joined his mother, sisters and a brother-in-law in Thuste.<sup>28</sup> Others considered leaving the city as part of work assignments in order to ease the situation at home. Kurt Lewin, whose father rabbi Jecheskiel Lewin (1897–1941) perished in the initial wave of violence in Lvov, noted his mother Rachel’s efforts to support her three young sons: ‘My mother was doing her best to take care of the three of us without ever complaining. We were starving, and at any time I could be caught on the street and sent to one of these dreaded camps. This prompted me to get out of the city in order not to be a burden to my mother’.<sup>29</sup> Deutsch, Weinloss and Lewin’s accounts suggest food shortages encouraged Lvov Jews to leave the city, and point to the role of family networks in arranging and paying for the transports in the first weeks and months of the German occupation.<sup>30</sup> But Jewish men, women

and children also continued to arrive in Lvov from provincial towns across Eastern Galicia to be united with family members and to search for ways to survive.

### FOOD AND FORCED LABOUR IN LVOV

While all Lvov inhabitants were affected by Nazi food policies, Jews received only half the amount of food allocated to Ukrainians and Poles, and even that official ration decreased over time.<sup>31</sup> Directly affected by meagre food supplies were Jewish forced labourers as they needed nourishment to carry out their work under extremely harsh conditions. Rózia Besseches-Wagnerowa saw Jewish men in labour detachments in the city 'collecting food leftovers and cigarette stubs from the garbage'. She continued, 'Stories filled with horror circulated about the life in the camp [probably Janowska]. Nobody lasted long on the camp provisions. Whoever did not have help from the outside, perished'.<sup>32</sup> She brought soup cooked in her workplace to feed the camp inmates who worked near Rzeźnia Street, close to where she took up work in the spring of 1942.<sup>33</sup> Her testimony suggests that she was not helping on behalf of any Jewish organisation, rather she acted spontaneously.<sup>34</sup> In the first weeks of the German occupation, access to food in the workplace was a key factor that made certain places of employment more desirable. Wagnerowa mentioned young men who reported for work at sites run by the SS and Gestapo, 'where they did not fare so badly as they received food every day,' though they were handed over to Janowska camp a few weeks later.<sup>35</sup>

Workshops were set up at the site where the notorious Janowska camp would later be established. In the early weeks, Jews employed there could rely on assistance from Polish co-workers. Helene S. Kaplan who came there in the early autumn of 1941 as an office help remembered her room as:

quite large with a kitchen stove in the center. The entire apartment block had no indoor plumbing; the only toilets were in small green outhouses. We lived on the second floor. Below us was Mrs. Nadel, my boss, with her husband who shared the same feeling that this was probably the safest place in town. Shortly after, some of the foremen moved there too. The Polish families near us, ordinary workers, were kind to us. One of the women would cook piergo [pierogi] for us for thirty zlotys which we could sometimes afford.<sup>36</sup>

Beginning in October 1941, Jews working there could no longer return home for the night but ‘for several days people from the town [Lvov] came near the camp, families of inmates, usually women and handed over food and other things’.<sup>37</sup> Only additional food from the outside offered a chance of survival. Relatives smuggled parcels into the camp so ‘One could buy bread from colleagues. But its price was so horrendous that only very few could afford such luxury, and therefore a horrible hunger prevailed in the camp. People began to swell from hunger’.<sup>38</sup> This put refugees who had arrived in Lvov after the outbreak of the war in 1939 in a particularly difficult position with their limited access to resources. When contact with the outside world was cut off almost completely, and families no longer allowed to bring parcels to the camp, the inmates ‘became sure that we are also condemned to a certain death’.<sup>39</sup> Only around Christmas 1941, they heard rumors about a committee that had formed in Lvov that would task itself with sending packages. When the parcels arrived at the beginning of 1942, it was—in the words of one survivor—‘an incredible experience for us. Not only because we no longer faced death from starvation, but we were not completely cut off from the world’.<sup>40</sup>

Aside from individual attempts to buy a daily supply of food, the newly formed *Judenrat* chaired initially by the lawyer Józef Parnas (1870–1941), created a department charged with provisioning. It attempted to assist the Jews’ immediate needs, which included food distribution. With its divisions—economic and social welfare—the *Judenrat* opened inexpensive restaurants and soup kitchens to alleviate the situation of those Jews who lacked resources to purchase additional foodstuffs on the black market. It also purchased raw foodstuffs, established bakeries, supervised food stores and distributed ration cards among the Jews.<sup>41</sup> To alleviate the situation of Jews in the city, the Jewish Council organised a branch of the *Jüdische Soziale Selbsthilfe* (‘Jewish Social Self-Help’) which was independent of the *Judenrat* and worked in Lvov under the leadership of Max Schaff. It ‘served lunches for the constantly growing number of people who were starving’.<sup>42</sup> In her memoir, Wagnerowa stressed that the *Judenrat* which she called still by the pre-war term *gmina* (‘Jewish communal organisation’):

took care to some extent of the camp inmates, functioned as a go-between by sending them packages with food and clothes, and took care of the unfortunate ones who lacked family members. This help was, however,

insufficient in the face of the limitless destitution of inmates. One can blame neither the members of the *Judenrat* nor the Jewish society.<sup>43</sup>

Wagnerowa charged the ‘harassment of the [Nazi] vampires who ruled the camp’ with paralysing any effective help.<sup>44</sup>

Thousands of Jewish prisoners sent to Janowska camp suffered from malnutrition which, together with hard labour and daily physical abuse, led to their demise. Kaplan described them as ‘a mass of dirty, ghost-like starving men’.<sup>45</sup> While working at camp offices, registering the names of incoming inmates, she also suffered from severe malnutrition. Food was so scarce that she could only think of food and dreamt of food at night: ‘I fell asleep dreaming about my rolls, over and over again. In my fantasy I could see the rolls that looked crisp, with shiny crusts, and pink slices of ham and other meats along with deep red jam. But I could not eat any of this even in my dreams. They were just there in front and all around me’.<sup>46</sup> Ajzik Eisen was taken to the camp in May 1942 and worked in a cement factory ‘hauling heavy stones until the end of November 1942, and I lost my strength’, he recalled. ‘I had been very healthy and strong, but what with the heavy work and the food which consisted of a few spoonfuls of soup and one sixteenth of a kilo of bread, I became weak’. When he was taken off the list of workers, he knew he would be killed and decided to run away.<sup>47</sup>

### FOOD DISTRIBUTION AND FOOD SHORTAGE IN THE GHETTO

Between November 1941 and March 1942, there were no major raids in the ghetto. People hoped that life would return to normal; however, the robbing of Jews and forced labour continued.<sup>48</sup> With the establishment of the ghetto, food became harder and harder to obtain. Remaining communal institutions had limited means to extend assistance to the starving Jewish population. The Jewish Hospital tried to treat the effects of malnutrition. Swollen due to hunger, Rozalia Landesberg’s younger sister was treated and released only to be deported ‘healthy’.<sup>49</sup> Jews’ restricted access to goods meant they had to use connections on the so-called Aryan side and rely on inter-ethnic networks to provide supplies.<sup>50</sup> These were bought outside the ghetto and smuggled in at great risk. ‘We heard that, sometimes risking terrible beatings, the Jewish men and women who were working outside of the ghetto would try to exchange their jewelry or huge amounts of money for meat, butter, or

cheese from the Polish people', Nelly Toll explained.<sup>51</sup> Kristine Karen, who was born Krystyna Chiger in 1935 in Lvov, remembered eating bread:

It was the dark bread, a round loaf of bread. Sometimes my father gets some milk for my younger brother. Some soup that my mother cook when she came home from work. Not – I don't remember eating any ... meat ... sometimes eggs. We had somebody from ... outside of the ghetto, you know, people were smuggling things for money. [T]hey bought things from Christians who ... live[d] around the ghetto, and you can smuggle sometimes. And this is what we ate. I think that we probably were so scared that we didn't feel that we are hungry. I don't remember feeling hungry there in [the] ghetto [or] that I felt I didn't have food, but I was so scared [and] that probably, you know, suppressed the hunger.<sup>52</sup>

She was raised in Kopernika Street, an elegant area, in an upper middle-class family. Her parents continued to sell their belongings in the ghetto to purchase food. The family's situation worsened in terms of material possessions as they kept having to move, following the constantly shrinking size of the ghetto, and 'each time you have to take less things with you, only what you have on you, and move to a different place'.<sup>53</sup> This affected their situation in various ways because the less the family had, the less they could use for barter.

As the situation in the ghetto deteriorated, relationships with non-Jews outside the ghetto played an even more crucial role in supplying Jews with additional food than before. While these were often limited to business transactions, relations before the war created an incentive to feed former neighbours and friends. Rubin Furgang remembered that he did not suffer hunger in the ghetto because his working-class father, who had run a small moving company before the war, was well liked by his former neighbours who gave him extra food.<sup>54</sup> Similar was the case of Łucja Nowicka. She continued to visit her former neighbour Eisen in the ghetto, bringing food for him and his children, and refusing to take money. When the ghetto was closed off, she 'arranged with my children to meet at a spot near the fence. She would approach it from the outside and bring food. She remembered well what I had done for her while the Russians were in Lwow. ... they [Eisens's children] said she often refused to accept money. It was difficult to give her money since she was on the other side of the fence, but my children brought to the fence objects

which she could sell and thus have money to buy food. She would refuse to take the things, telling my children to keep the things so that they could enjoy them after Hitler's collapse'.<sup>55</sup>

Providing food and maintaining certain practices around food during times of extreme hardship allowed some families to stay together. But starvation also led people to abandon family members in hope of survival. Lusia Grossman made the heartbreaking decision to escape and to live with her relatives in Stryj, where better conditions still prevailed. Having lost her mother and brother, she left behind a grandmother and a deaf-mute aunt 'but at sixteen and with legs swollen due to hunger, I did not want to die'.<sup>56</sup>

The food situation began to change, especially following German raids. After the mass deportations of August 1942 the relationship to food changed as some people were losing hope and the will to survive. One Lvov Ghetto survivor, Fryderyka Bratspiel, recalled that 'a golden period began almost for everyone. We ate in excess. We thought about food and ... about Aryan papers'. But alongside planning an escape from the ghetto, there was also a sense of despair which found expression in fatalistic attitudes toward food: 'Everybody agreed that there was no future for us and we wanted at least to eat to our heart's content before death'. She described the go-to place in the ghetto: 'The centre of the reduced ghetto was situated around Łokietka and Kresowa Street, where there was a promenade for walking. One could buy anything there, from pancakes made of grits to the best flour, from primitive cookies to the most elaborate cakes'.<sup>57</sup> As in other ghettos in Eastern Europe children seem to have taken on the role of providers, smuggling food into the ghetto. At about fifteen years old, Salomon Liberman moved to the ghetto in the fall of 1942. With his non-Jewish looks he took a risk and sneaked to the Aryan side to buy food. What he smuggled into the ghetto he sold in order to support himself and his brother.<sup>58</sup> At the same age Ludwika Barb supported herself, her father and younger brother by sneaking into the Aryan side through the sewer at Kleparowska Street. She bought cookies and sold them in the ghetto stores.<sup>59</sup> Moreover, after August 1942 many Jews stopped registering with the *Judenrat* to receive food stamps and instead went into hiding. As Philip Friedman observed, 'It became clear by then that the Germans intended to eliminate the Jews, and therefore the food cards office was not showing the exact number of Jews'.<sup>60</sup> Indeed, he estimated that

about 6000 Jews went into hiding while the Food Cards Office had 36,000 Jews on its register. In his January 1945 testimony, Friedman mentioned the abuses by the Food Cards Office as well: '[The] office could use additional cards for itself and to assist people who needed higher rations due to [their] being unable to buy on the black market. The rations were very small'.<sup>61</sup> In November 1942 the Provisioning Department was liquidated and the Jews began receiving food at their places of work.<sup>62</sup>

Focussing on access to food and thinking about food offered a respite from the terror of the round-ups. Jews who survived them by hiding often craved food in anticipation of inevitable death. Some Jewish memoirs also recorded daydreams about life before the war, in which the writers described memories of those who had already been murdered and with whom they had once shared family meals. Reaching back to positive memories associated with food and family brought emotional comfort to Jews in extreme situations. In the spring of 1943, Nelly Toll survived another round-up in the ghetto. She remembered how:

We emerged from the cellar.... Now beautiful images blossomed behind my closed eyelids. We were all sitting together in the living room. Janek, Papa and I quietly listened to Mama playing a Schubert sonata as Magda walked in, carrying a silver tray filled with pastries and bonbons. Comforted, I fell asleep.<sup>63</sup>

This retrospective dream about her serene family life before the war reflected a sense of loss, not only with regard to family members who had disappeared, but also material security in which food scarcity played a crucial role. It comforted the child right after a traumatic experience.

Throughout life in the ghetto and the round-ups, food preparation remained the responsibility of women who cared for family members. Food also sometimes played a role in strange encounters with Germans, such as that of Paulina Chiger who cooked eggs and onions for a German who had found her and her children in a bunker built by her husband. He threatened to kill them or beat them up and then having received a wristwatch from Ignacy Chiger agreed to let them live. He took them upstairs to their apartment and asked for eggs with onion which Paulina Chiger served him on the spot.<sup>64</sup>

## FOOD AND INTER-ETHNIC RELATIONS IN HIDING

During the final days of the liquidation of the Lvov Ghetto in June 1943 the Chigers and their two small children managed to escape into the sewers where they spent fourteen months relying on Polish sewer workers and, in particular, on Leopold Socha who provided them with food, of which Krystyna remembered black bread and margarine.<sup>65</sup> At first, Socha received money and jewellery which he sold to buy food for the Jews hiding in the sewers, keeping the difference for himself.<sup>66</sup> However, when Ignacy Chiger ran out of money, Socha continued to bring the food, which included eggs when the children got sick.<sup>67</sup> For Socha and Chigers the meaning of food went beyond sustenance. It built a sense of trust and reflected Socha's commitment to rescuing 'his Jews'.

Food provided to Jewish children helped to ease the transition into hiding, which often meant also separation from their parents. Ruta Salpeter who was just a toddler when the Germans occupied Lvov, remembered treats she received in the factory where her mother worked as a seamstress while hiding her child under the desk.<sup>68</sup> After her father Naftali was taken to Janowska camp a Ukrainian man came to take her to a Ukrainian orphanage in Brzuchowice near Lvov: 'On the second day this Ukrainian Szaweł came and took me away. He used to bring us milk, apples so I knew him and I didn't go with him eagerly, because I did not want to leave mommy behind'.<sup>69</sup> While Chigers did not know Socha before the war—their was a chance encounter—Szaweł might have been familiar with the Salpeters before he stepped into help their daughter. But, many personal accounts suggest that starving Jews on the Aryan side turned to non-Jewish acquaintances and family friends for immediate help.<sup>70</sup>

Other Jewish men, women and children who survived the deportations in the summer and fall of 1942 desperately tried to find hiding places outside the ghetto. Some went into hiding while others tried to pass as non-Jews. The staple food provisions taken to the bunkers by Jews who went into hiding in Lvov varied depending on their resources and their relationship with the caretakers. Those who managed to escape from the ghetto relied on barter. Their food came from their caretakers.<sup>71</sup> Nelly Toll discussed food with the Polish family who hid her together with her mother:

According to him, it [market] was a sort of grown-up-playground filled with gossipy, cheating vendors, spies, police, informers, and farmers.

Here he bought rhubarb, wild strawberries, fresh vegetables, yellow butter, and delicious pot cheese wrapped in large green leaves that always smelled of the country to me. Only meat and chicken were hard to get, though as Pan Wojtek said many times, 'For enough money, you can get anything'. Dog and horse meat were easily available, but we never ate it – at least – I don't think we did, unless someone fooled Pan Wojtek into thinking he was buying beef. There were even rumors that there was liverwurst made from Jewish flesh on the market.<sup>72</sup>

Other Jews who went into hiding in Lvov also relied on the ingenuity of the non-Jews who had sheltered them to provide food without raising suspicion. While the ability to pay for food played a crucial role, at times it was the emotional relationship with the caretaker that seems to have provided the primary basis for assistance. Following his escape, Rudolf Reder, who was born in 1881 and ran a soap factory in Lvov before the war, hid with Joanna Borkowska—a woman who had worked and who had a job cleaning for the Gestapo during the Nazi occupation. She found food for him and additional provisions came from an unusual source—from the Gestapo men who gave her meat for her dog. Reder took a degree of satisfaction in knowing that, since his caretaker passed the meat to him, the Nazis unknowingly contributed to his survival.<sup>73</sup>

For those trying to survive in Lvov by passing as non-Jews, food signified the difference between lives lived outside the ghetto and life on the inside. During the bloodiest round-up in Lvov, in August 1942, Lena Orlean hid with her Polish acquaintances but, fearful of exposing them to danger, she left and desperately looked for shelter. She spent a night in an uninhabited house that was being renovated for the employees of the Deutsche Post Osten, but was discovered, together with other desperate Jews. She decided to leave the place and prepared to appear as unsuspecting as possible on the streets of Lvov. Interestingly, that disguise included her attitude to food: 'I put lipstick on, assumed a careless face and began to eat a roll in a nonchalant manner'.<sup>74</sup> Apparently, for those in pursuit of Jews, no Jewish woman would appear careless or casually consume a roll on the street. When Maria Rosenbloom arrived in Lvov from Kołomyja, where she had suffered from hunger, she found herself at a Christmas party: 'Exactly what I needed at that point, but I came there, I was introduced as their friend from Kolomyja and it was a lot of festivity going on, there was food on the table. I tried to join and then in the evening I left'.<sup>75</sup> Born in 1924 in Lvov, Lidia Eichenholz,

who escaped from the Janowska camp to the Aryan side of Lvov, managed to pass as a non-Jew. She found lodgings with several other people—with whom she also shared food: ‘I had to eat whatever they gave to me’.<sup>76</sup> For those Jews who were able to secure papers, accessing food became similar to the challenges faced by other non-Jewish inhabitants of Lvov. They relied on food rations supplemented with food bought on the black market.<sup>77</sup>

However, the situation for those Jewish men, women and children who had to go underground and who relied on food being brought to them was particularly dire. In the autumn of 1943, Leszek Allerhand spent several weeks in hiding on Łyczakowska Street, receiving a plate with food only once every three days.<sup>78</sup> Rubin Furgang hid for about a year until the liberation along with his sister, four other Jewish men and a Jewish baby. He received food provisions from Ochremowicz—a Jew from Nowy Sącz—who came to Lvov and was able to pass as a non-Jew. The whole group almost starved as provisions, consisting of bread, rice and potatoes, had to be purchased on the black market.<sup>79</sup> Beyond black market prices and fear of attracting the attention of suspicious neighbours, dependence on those who delivered food to hiding places could put Jews in grave danger. Edward Ganza—a child survivor from Lvov—described the dread of abandonment by his caretaker and the realization he would starve to death on the eve of the liberation. In May 1944, together with his parents, the boy hid in a shed. For a month a man delivered food to them. But, fearing the coming siege of Lvov, he decided to leave the city, forsaking the Jewish family locked inside the shack. Before disappearing, he brought bread and water which lasted for two weeks. Facing death from starvation, his parents decided to run the risk of venturing outside, first bringing gooseberries from the garden and then asking neighbours for bread. When Edward’s mother returned with bread and water, they were ‘happy. We immediately took to eating the bread with which we drank the water’.<sup>80</sup>

### FOOD AFTER LIBERATION

Jewish survivors who emerged from hiding in Lvov and its surroundings showed signs of malnutrition. Therefore, food played a key role in the process of regaining health and resuming life after liberation. Gina Mahr (1896–1966), a survivor whose family owned a mill in Gródek Jagielloński (today Horodok in Ukraine) before the war, described her

return to Lvov from the small town of Zimna Woda on the outskirts of the city, where she and her husband had survived in hiding. Not only had they lost their only daughter, but the years of malnourishment had taken a toll on Gina's health. She was physically and emotionally exhausted, felt sick, broke into sweats and had to hold onto the walls to stop herself from collapsing. Given their situation, survivors from Zimna Woda made food and shelter a top priority. When a small group of them arrived in Lvov the men found an empty apartment in Bernardyński Square. While they cleared the space of rubble and found some beds and pallets in the basements, Gina cooked some cabbage and potatoes, the only products available to her at the time, but had to do so without any salt. 'This first feast will be forever carved in my memory; everyone ate greedily, and everyone praised the remarkable taste of the dish', Mahr recalled.<sup>81</sup> This first festive meal after liberation was a celebration of life, togetherness and the shared humanity of the survivors.

Although their daily diet consisted only of dried bread that Gina and her husband had prepared in Zimna Woda and despite their own dire situation, the Mahrs readily shared what they had with those in need. When Gina's husband brought a girl home who had survived by hiding in a forest near Lvov and who was looking in vain for surviving family members at the Jewish Committee, the couple shared their meagre food with her. Furthermore, food was a catalyst for social gatherings amongst survivors. Gina and her husband sold the last remaining pieces of clothing they had recovered after liberation to collect money for a tea-house the men had decided to set up, as there was no Jewish establishment at this time. Having received permission from the authorities, they cleaned the place themselves and set it up with the few chipped plates they owned. She recalled that 'One day I cooked lunch for ten people and one of our partners went out into the city and brought back ten people'.<sup>82</sup> Gina served the food; however, she and her husband could not afford the luxury of the meat dish themselves. The clientele grew steadily: on the next day twenty Jews arrived, and on the third fifty. They came eagerly, 'happy that they could eat among themselves', and 'after a few days our establishment became a meeting point for remaining Jews; here they took their first steps in establishing themselves again'.<sup>83</sup> Food became a source of mutual aid and moral strength as the idea of a family expanded to include other Jewish survivors. In the evenings, this group of survivors sat together by an oil lamp, Gina reminisced: 'We constituted one family; whatever we cooked we ate together.

Despite the poverty, there was no envy or arguments. We helped one another, we enjoyed the company of one another, united by our shared misfortune'.<sup>84</sup>

As their financial conditions improved, Gina and her husband began to eat better too. 'I will not forget the first scene when the first egg was to be eaten. Arke insisted I eat it, as I was instructed [by a physician] to eat well, but I could not swallow it quietly knowing how much he could use it as well'. Her husband could hardly walk and appeared disabled. After liberation, food became a source of livelihood, financial and then physical. But, first, this family wanted to feed others and earn a living, and only then were they ready to eat better themselves. In the aftermath of the Soviet arrival in Lvov, inter-ethnic relations played a much less explicit role in discussing food. It became again a sign of rebuilding not only physical strength but also rekindling of Jewish familial and communal ties.

## CONCLUSIONS

Few Jews survived the Holocaust in Lvov. They were either deported to the extermination camp of Bełżec (some to Sobibór), or murdered in the vicinity. For the majority of those who tried to find shelter on the Aryan side or build hiding places there, their survival depended on their familiarity with the area and their ability to identify Gentiles willing to provide assistance, and to avoid those who were willing to turn in Jews. Most Jews did not succeed in navigating these dire circumstances for long. Living conditions in hiding were in most cases extremely difficult. A close analysis of the situation in Lvov offers a unique perspective of the efforts of Jews struggling to survive in a city where the majority of city-dwellers were Polish and Jewish, but which also had a Ukrainian population. Chronology and geography make Lvov different from the other large and better known ghettos, and access to food depended here more directly on ties with non-Jews than in other large ghettos in eastern Europe. As long as the ghetto endured, it provided the prisoners at Janowska camp with some limited assistance.

The shorter time span of the ghetto's existence did not slow down the process of drastic pauperisation of Lvov Jews nor the effect of hunger on the community. Relations with non-Jews in Lvov proved crucial in supplying Jews in the ghetto and in hiding with food. The ability to use these pre-existing networks depended on class or the availability of financial resources that the families used to purchase food.

Ultimately, developing and cultivating relationships with Polish and Ukrainian benefactors proved essential for procuring food and clothes, and overcoming hunger. While most Jews who went into hiding experienced some degree of starvation, those with money were able to receive better food, although this was not a guarantee of survival. Locating networks with access to food also played a role. Having access to food or experiencing hunger signified one's chances for survival, depending on one's economic status and the ability to adapt to 'organising' food, and then preparing and distributing it.

Food was scarce, and in the testimonies of the elite one finds also accounts of hunger. Starvation was most often observed and feared rather than experienced. In their accounts, Jews often reflected on the fate of those who starved. In contrast, the gendered relationship with food supplies and preparation seldom became a subject of critical contemplation. Gender roles continued in the ghetto with women being responsible for preparing and serving food to their families. Similarly, gender roles also affected the ability of non-Jewish benefactors to provide food and, by extension, the ability to link to such providers.

In Jewish testimonies, food and starvation are recurrent categories for discussing heroic efforts of individuals, survival strategies of families, communal solidarity and ultimately Jewish helplessness in the face of the Holocaust. Through the lens of food and hunger, Jewish testimonies from Lvov tell of suffering, vulnerability and a struggle for physical survival. They show how access to food became salient in the context of Jewish family networks and how it tested family bonds and forced taking on new roles. While class, gender and age shaped access to food, these categories also changed over time as Jewish men, women and children bartered for food, smuggled it, cared for family members or decided to abandon them.

## NOTES

1. Barbara Engelking and Jacek Leociak, *The Warsaw Ghetto: A Guide to the Perished City* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009); Miriam Offer, *Ḥaluk̄ lavan ba-geṭo: mabat 'al korot ha-refu'ah ha-Yehudit be-Polin bi-tekufat ha-sho'ah* (White Coats Inside the Ghetto. Jewish Medicine in Poland During the Holocaust) (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 2015).
2. Ruta Sakowska, "Komitety domowe w getcie warszawskim," (House committees in the Warsaw ghetto) *Biuletyn Żydowskiego Instytutu Historycznego* (BŻIH) 61 (1967): 59–86; Ruta Sakowska, "Opieka nad

- uchodźcami w getcie warszawskim,” (Care for refugees in the Warsaw ghetto) *BŻIH* 65/66 (1968): 73–104; Wila Orbach, “Zdrowotność w getcie łódzkim,” (Sanitary conditions in the Łódź ghetto) *BŻIH* 65/66 (1968): 141–171; Aviv Livnat, “‘Non Omnis Moriar’: die Forschung zur Hunger von jüdischen Ärzten im Ghetto Warschau,” (Non Omnis Moriar: The hunger research by Jewish physicians in the Warsaw ghetto) *Nurinst* (2012): 81–92; Andrea Löw, *Das Getto Litzmannstadt. Lebensbedingungen, Selbstwahrnehmung, Verhalten* (Litzmannstadt ghetto: living conditions, self-perception, agency) (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2006), 354–362; Adam Sitarek, “*Otoczone drutem miasto*”. *Struktura i funkcjonowanie administracji żydowskiej getta łódzkiego* (A city surrounded by wire. Structure and functioning of the Jewish administration in the Łódź ghetto) (Łódź: IPN, 2015); Helene Sinnreich, “Hunger in the Ghettos,” in *The Ghetto in Global History, 1500 to the Present*, ed. Wendy Z. Goldman and Joe W. Trotter (London: Routledge, forthcoming); Helene Sinnreich, “Introduction,” in *Inside the Walls*, ed. Eddie Klein (Toronto: Azrieli Foundation, 2016).
3. Ben Z. Redner, *A Jewish Policeman in Lwów: An Early Account 1941–1943* (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 2015), 30.
  4. See Philip Friedman, “The Destruction of the Jews of Lwów, 1941–1944,” in *Roads to Extinction: Essays on the Holocaust*, ed. Ada June Friedman (New York and Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1980), 244.
  5. Redner, *A Jewish Policeman in Lwów*, 30.
  6. See Friedman, “The Destruction of the Jews of Lwów, 1941–1944,” 245–249; Dieter Pohl, *Nationalsozialistische Judenverfolgung in Ostgalizien 1941–1944: Organisation und Durchführung eines staatlichen Massenverbrechens* (Munich: De Gruyter Oldenbourg, 1997).
  7. See Philip Friedman’s testimony dated 22 January 1946 in Lvov. The document, its transcription and translation are available through the EHRI Online Course in Holocaust Studies. For further citations from the translation into English see Philip Friedman, “Philip Friedman Recalls the Pogrom in Lviv,” 89, accessed June 10, 2017, [https://training.ehri-project.eu/sites/training.ehri-project.eu/files/Ukraine%20A10%20translation\\_0.pdf](https://training.ehri-project.eu/sites/training.ehri-project.eu/files/Ukraine%20A10%20translation_0.pdf).
  8. Archiwum Żydowskiego Instytutu Historycznego w Warszawie (Archive of the Jewish Historical Institute in Warsaw, AŻIH), 301/98, 4, a testimony of Maksymilian Boruchowicz (Michał Borwicz), son of Adolf and Anna, born in Krakow 11 November 1909, testimony recorded on 18 April 1945.
  9. USC Shoah Foundation, 27779, interview with Leszek Allerhand by Irena Garwacka-Kowalik, 1 February 1997, tape 3, 9:25–10:30 min.

10. Nelly S. Toll, *Behind the Secret Window: A Memoir of a Hidden Childhood during World War Two* (New York: Puffin Books, 2000), 29.
11. Redner, *A Jewish Policeman in Lwów*, 30.
12. Yad Vashem Archive (YVA), 0.33/1144, 12, a memoir of Rózia Wagner. According to Friedman the time slot for Jews to purchase food was 2–4 p.m. See Friedman, “The Destruction of the Jews of Lwów, 1941–1944,” 258.
13. See Kessler, *The Wartime Diary of Edmund Kessler*, 45.
14. Friedman, “The Destruction of the Jews of Lwów, 1941–1944,” 249–251, 255. For collection of the contribution see AŽIH, 302/442, 8–9.
15. Redner, *A Jewish Policeman in Lwów*, 34–35.
16. See Marion A. Kaplan, *Between Dignity and Despair: Jewish Life in Nazi Germany* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998); Natalia Aleksium, “Gender and Daily Lives of Jews in Hiding in Eastern Galicia,” *Nashim* (2014): 38–61.
17. See the interview with Rubin Furgang whose younger sister born in 1926 began selling items and purchasing food after their mother was taken. USHMM, RG-50.583\*0144, oral history with Rubin Furgang, born 22 September 1923 in Lvov, Poland (Lviv, Ukraine), 6 April 1989 by Caroline Haski, part 1, min. 13:19–14:00.
18. Dr. Mina Deutsch, *Mina’s Story: A Doctor’s Memoir of the Holocaust* (Toronto: ECW Press, 1994), 34.
19. See Renata Kessler, ed., *The Wartime Diary of Edmund Kessler, Lwow, Poland, 1942–1944* (Boston: Academic Studies Press, 2010), 43.
20. Lewin, *A Journey through Illusions*, 41.
21. USHMM, Julie Kiefer Collection, 2012.151.1, 31; Ajzik Eisen, *The Grandfather and the Two Grandchildren in the Time of the Murderer Hitler 1941–1945*. The warm relationship between the two families before the war found expression in eating and drinking together. Eisen recounted that he ‘used to enjoy a drink of schnapps, not enough to get drunk but to take a bit on Friday or for kiddush on Saturday. I used to invite her husband to my house and have ... a drink and a bite of food [with him], as befits good neighbours. Although he was a Gentile and I was a Jew we lived on friendly terms’: *ibid.*, 32.
22. Friedman, “Philip Friedman Recalls the Pogrom in Lviv,” 85.
23. Friedman, “The Destruction of the Jews of Lwów, 1941–1944,” 256–257. See Kessler, *The Wartime Diary of Edmund Kessler*, 45–46.
24. Friedman, “Philip Friedman Recalls the Pogrom in Lviv,” 85.
25. YVA, 0.33/1144, 23–24, a memoir of Rózia Wagner.
26. Deutsch, *Mina’s Story*, 34.
27. YVA, 0.3/3207, 2–3. The interview with Jakub Weinlos was carried out in December 1967 by Ida Fink.

28. YVA, 0.3/3207, 3.
29. Kurt Lewin, *A Journey through Illusions* (Santa Barbara: Fintian Press, 1993), 41. He moved to Rawa Ruska, where he had close family and where he worked collecting rugs, paper and metal scraps for the Germans.
30. See Tim Cole, *Geographies of the Holocaust* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2014).
31. According to Friedman's 1946 testimony: 'Germans received a generous amount of food; the Ukrainian and Polish population received 1400 grams of bread per week, and the Jewish population 700 grams per week and 200 grams of sugar per month. In general, Jews received half of the amounts Ukrainians and Poles received. Later, the bread norms for Jews were lowered to 500 grams per week, and sugar rations decreased to 100 grams'. Friedman, "Friedman Recalls the Pogrom in Lviv," 84–85. See also YVA, 0.33/1144, 10, a memoir of Rózia Wagner; Friedman, "The Destruction of the Jews of Lwów, 1941–1944," 251–252.
32. YVA, 0.33/1144, 13, a memoir of Rózia Wagner.
33. *Ibid.*
34. YVA, 0.33/1144, 14, a memoir of Rózia Wagner.
35. YVA, 0.33/1144, 15, a memoir of Rózia Wagner.
36. Helene S. Kaplan, *I Never Left Janowska* (New York: Holocaust Library, 1989), 43.
37. AŻIH, 301/2299, 2, Herman Kac born 20 April 1919 in Lublin, testimony recorded in Lublin 15 March 1947. As his family lived in Lublin and he was a refugee in Lvov since the outbreak of the war, he notified his hosts who sent him things and promised to notify his parents in Lublin. *Ibid.*, 2–3. While women brought food for their husbands, brothers and sons, male relatives also tried to assist family members with additional food. For example, Zygmunt Tune handed bread to his brother in Janowska: AŻIH, 301/2242, 10, testimony of Zygmunt Tune, born 22 September in Lvov, testimony recorded in Wałbrzych.
38. AŻIH, 301/2299, 3.
39. AŻIH, 301/2299, 3–4.
40. AŻIH, 301/2316, 2, testimony of Maksymilian Frank, recorded by P. Jakubowska, ul. Aleja Słowackiego 62 m 7.
41. Friedman, "The Destruction of the Jews of Lwów, 1941–1944," 252–253.
42. YVA, 0.33/1144, 25, a memoir of Rózia Wagner.
43. *Ibid.*
44. *Ibid.*, YVA, 0.33/1144, 20, a memoir of Rózia Wagner. Many survivors offered a more critical characteristic of the *Judenrat* and its role. Kessler wrote about it as a 'motley group': Kessler, *The Wartime Diary*

- of Edmund Kessler, 46. Philip Friedman wrote that the activities of the *Judenrat* ‘developed in a direction more harmful than beneficial. The strategy of the Germans was to create in the *Judenrat* a body which would deceive the Jews into cooperating in the Nazi scheme for their destruction. The Germans succeeded in concealing this strategy from the Jews, or at least from the great majority of them, until a much later period of the Nazi conquest. The council served the Germans as a means by which to extort money and valuables and obtain a labour force’: Friedman, “The Destruction of the Jews of Lwów, 1941–1944,” 255.
45. Kaplan, *I never left Janowska*, 46. For the early days of Janowska concentration camp see Kaplan, *I Never Left Janowska*, 45–46; Kessler, *The Wartime Diary of Edmund Kessler*, 58–61.
  46. Kaplan, *I Never Left Janowska*, 50. See *ibid.*, 50.
  47. Ajzik Eisen, *The Grandfather and the Two Grandchildren in the Time of the Murderer Hitler 1941–1945*, USHMM, Julie Kiefer Collection, 2012.151.1, 11.
  48. Friedman, “Philip Friedman Recalls the Pogrom in Lviv,” 86.
  49. AŻIH, 301/2224, 2, a testimony of Rozalia Landesberg, born 12 March 1912 in Złoczów, recorded in Wrocław 10 February 1947.
  50. Toll, *Behind the Secret Window*, 74; Joanna Śliwa, “A Link Between the Inside and the Outside Worlds: Child Smugglers in the Kraków Ghetto,” *Zeitschrift für Genozidforschung* 13, no. 1/2 (2012): 53–81.
  51. Toll, *Behind the Secret Window*, 30.
  52. USHMM, RG-50.030\*0520, interview with Dr. Kristine Keren, by Amy Rubin, 25 October 2007, 30.
  53. USHMM, RG-50.030\*0520, interview with Dr. Kristine Keren, p. 18. See *ibid.*, 17–19.
  54. USHMM, RG-50.583\*0144, oral history with Rubin Furgang, 6 April 1989 conducted by Caroline Haski. Furgang was born in Lvov in 1923.
  55. Ajzik Eisen, *The Grandfather and the Two Grandchildren in the Time of the Murderer Hitler 1941–1945*, USHMM, Julie Kiefer Collection, 2012.151.1, 31–32.
  56. AŻIH, 301/2194, 1, testimony of Lusia Grossman, born 2 June 1927 in Lvov. Testimony was given in Wałbrzych 17 February 1947, recorded by Dr. Wetrzchajzer.
  57. AŻIH, 301/452, 4, testimony of Fryderyka Bratspiel, born 2 March 1929 in Lvov, recorded in 1945 in Cracow.
  58. AŻIH, 301/2752, 1, testimony of Salomon Liberman, born 12 December 1929 in Lvov, the son of Leon and Mina Jubeler, recorded in the Orphanage in Chorzów.
  59. AŻIH, 301/2496, 3, testimony of Ludwika Barb (Ludwika Buczyńska), Wrocław 11 June 1947. Barb was born 8 November 1927 in Lvov.

60. Friedman, "Philip Friedman Recalls the Pogrom in Lviv," 79–80.
61. *Ibid.*, 79.
62. *Ibid.*, 80.
63. Toll, *Behind the Secret Window*, 76. Nelly escaped from the ghetto with her mother: *ibid.*, 77. For an in-depth analysis of dreams as a source in studying the Holocaust see Barbara Engelking, "Sny jako źródło do badań nad Zagładą," *Zagłada Żydów. Studia i Materiały* 9 (2013): 19–47.
64. USHMM, RG-50.030\*0520, interview with Dr. Kristine Keren, 26.
65. AŻIH, 301/2352, 1, testimony of Krystyna and Paweł Chiger, Jewish Historical Commission in Cracow, 6 February 1947, recorded by Maria Holender.
66. USHMM, RG-50.030\*0520, interview with Dr. Kristine Keren, 40.
67. AŻIH, 301/2352, 4.
68. AŻIH, 301/2400. 2, testimony of Ruta Salpeter (Halina Barbacka), Wrocław 13 May 1947. She was a daughter of Naftali and Estera, born 29 January 1937. Her father was a chemical engineer in a factory in Lvov before the war.
69. AŻIH, 301/2400, 3.
70. See AŻIH, 301/2496, 4, testimony of Ludwika Barb.
71. Nelly Toll recalled in her memoir: 'I could see the hate in their eyes and hear the curses muttered under their breath as they exchanged their goods with us. They sold us still-warm cow's milk, goat cheese, sweet butter wrapped in brown leaves, cabbage, eggs, potatoes, beans, and red beets. In return they took our money, or our gold and jewellery, which they liked even better': Toll, *Behind the Secret Window*, 50.
72. Toll, *Behind the Secret Window*, 89.
73. Staatsarchiv München, STAANW 33033/4, 6, testimony of Roman Robak, 8 August 1960. After the war, Reder changed his name to Roman Robak and married Borkowska. The couple emigrated to Canada.
74. AŻIH, 301/1041, 3, testimony of Lina Orlean, born in 1895 in Lvov.
75. USHMM, interview with Maria Rosenbloom, 23 September 1996, RG-50.030\*0379, 46.
76. USC Shoah Foundation, 5248, interview with Lidia Gilburd-Eichenholz by E. Scott Bryce, tape 4, Section 3, min. 28:45, 2 November 1995, Minneapolis, MN.
77. Eisen received food ration cards from Łucja Nowicka because she presented him as her husband returning from a POW camp: Eisen, *The Grandfather and the Two Grandchildren in the Time of the Murderer Hitler 1941–1945*, 37–38.
78. USC Shoah Foundation, 27779, interview with Leszek Allerhand, tape 6, min. 11:50.

79. USHMM, RG-50.583\*0144, oral history with Rubin Furgang, born 22 September 1923 in Lvov, interviewed by Caroline Haski on 6 April 1989, part 1, min. 42:00–42:30.
80. AŽIH, 301/2083, 1, testimony of Edward Ganza, pupil titled “My experiences during the German occupation”.
81. YVA, O.3/3381, 116.
82. *Ibid.*, 117.
83. *Ibid.*, 118.
84. *Ibid.*, 119.



# The North Caucasus and German Exploitation Policies in World War II: Everyday Life Experience of Children Under the Occupation

*Irina Rebrova and Elena Strekalova*

A large number of literary works written by Soviet writers about World War II often refer to the topic of military childhood. One of the set literary texts in Russian/Soviet schools is *Syn Polka* ('Son of the Regiment') by Valentin Kataev. Written in 1944 the story takes place in Nazi-occupied Soviet territory and describes the events witnessed by an orphan boy: 'Arms firmly clenched, grimy bare feet pulled up to his chest as tightly as possible, the boy was lying fast asleep... His wan, exhausted face seemed to reflect all the nightmares pursuing him in his sleep. The boy's expression changed every minute. First it was frozen in

---

I. Rebrova (✉)  
Technische Universität Berlin, Berlin, Germany  
e-mail: info@rebrova.com

E. Strekalova  
North-Caucasian Federal University, Stavropol, Russia  
e-mail: strekalova-lena@yandex.ru

© The Author(s) 2018  
T. Tönsmeier et al. (eds.), *Coping with Hunger and  
Shortage under German Occupation in World War II*,  
[https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-77467-1\\_13](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-77467-1_13)

249

horror; then some non-human desperation distorted it; then sharp lines of irredeemable sorrow cut deep lines around his mouth, his eyebrows arched and pure teardrops fell from his eyelashes. Then all of a sudden it was gone – the face winced with rage and the boy began to violently grind his teeth, making gruff, husky sounds with his throat and clenching tiny fists so fiercely that his nails, pressed against the palms, became white...<sup>1</sup> The image of this boy includes many important aspects of the problem concerning the scientific understanding of military childhood: the loss of family, orphanhood, famine, constant oppressive fear, life under the occupation. According to the newest demographic studies the war cost the lives of more than 8.5 million civilians in the occupied USSR territories alone. About 4 million of these victims were children. During the war period, 1.3 million newborns died soon after birth due to severe conditions, famine and lack of proper medical care.<sup>2</sup>

In Russian historiography, scholarly interest on the problems of children's everyday life experience under the occupation has focussed mainly on the problems of historical and collective memory relating to the tragic events of World War II<sup>3</sup> and on childhood history as an independent research area.<sup>4</sup> Childhoods ruined and traumatised by military actions, life experiences, the death of family members, cold and famine, backbreaking labour and the war itself found reflection in Soviet historiography, works of local historians and published memoir collections.<sup>5</sup> Extensive research has been done on the heroism of children and teenagers at, and behind, the front, state social policy regarding children, the development of Soviet schools during the war years, children's help on all fronts of the war and state social policy regarding orphans.<sup>6</sup> Needless to say, until the collapse of the Soviet Union, certain historical research was influenced by state political ideology and a great many facts were simply not discussed. For instance, life of children in the occupied regions of the North Caucasus only became a subject of scholarly analysis in the post-Soviet era.<sup>7</sup> Nevertheless, a historiographical survey shows that many facets of Soviet childhood under Nazi rule still remain insufficiently explored, such as issues of daily life and children's survival strategies under extreme military conditions.

The North Caucasus<sup>8</sup> is interesting in a number of aspects. A territory of the former USSR, today's Russia, it is home to a very diverse population in terms of ethnic, religious and confessional structures. With its access to the Black Sea coast to the west and large oil reserves to the east, the Wehrmacht considered the North Caucasus to be a strategically

important region. Battles for the Caucasus took place between the River Don and the foothills of the North Caucasus from July 1942 to October 1943. By mid-autumn 1942 the majority of the North Caucasus<sup>9</sup> found itself in a military-led zone under a regime, known as a *Militärverwaltung* ('Military Administration'), where officers of the Third Reich headed regional and municipal commands.<sup>10</sup> Occupation is a difficult and controversial period in the history of World War II. Civilians were forced to live together with the occupiers, to work for the enemy and to survive the dangers of both the front line and partisan warfare. The occupation of different regions of the North Caucasus lasted from several weeks up to a year. The Wehrmacht established local commands in regional centres throughout the Caucasus, including in the regions of Stavropol, Krasnodar, Rostov-on-Don, Karachaevsk, Circassia, Adygea, Kabardino-Balkaria, and North-Ossetia. The New Order regime in the North Caucasus differed from the aggressive policy of the Wehrmacht in other regions of the Soviet Union. The fact that occupied territories were close to the front line, the later start of the occupation, its relatively short duration<sup>11</sup> and the Nazi policy aimed at inflaming ethnic discord affected the nature of the interaction between occupiers and the local population. Analysis of regional specificity in the context of Russian history allows us to reconsider many of the established historiographical stereotypes of World War II, using a modern approach and new sources including declassified wartime sources and oral interviews. Such evidence has given rise to a few projects, initiated by the chapter's authors and supported by the Russian Humanitarian Scientific Foundation. Using oral history method, these projects investigate the transformation of the collective memory of World War II through the reminiscences of children who witnessed the war in the North Caucasus. Our most important task in the period from 2007 to 2010 was the creation of an archive of oral interviews with people who had experienced war in the North Caucasus' occupied localities as children and teenagers.

We have conducted oral interviews with the former 'children of war' who currently reside in the Krasnodar region and the Republic of Adygea (interviewer—Irina Rebrova) as well as the Stavropol region (interviewer—Elena Strelalova). The results of this work were partly documented in the book *Vtoraya mirovaya vojna v detskikh 'ramkakh pamyati'* ('World War II in the 'Memory Frameworks' of Children'), edited by the leader of the project, researcher of the history of youth Aleksandr Rozhkov.<sup>12</sup> Our argument is that a complete picture of the war and

the military occupation can only be possible by analysing the complex childhood impressions of those who actually experienced it first-hand. In the course of our work we have put together a collection of (more than 50) oral interviews with people born before the war, who lived predominantly in rural areas of the Krasnodar and Stavropol regions. These are 'the voices of the past',<sup>13</sup> roots of the past in the present, since child eye-witnesses of war tend to judge their whole life from the point of view of their military childhoods. Many of the narrators suffered incurable psychological trauma as children, which affected them for the rest of their lives. Social life and everyday military life in the temporary occupation zones determined the so-called social frameworks of memory,<sup>14</sup> the analysis of which we present in this chapter.

Let us note that individual memory about the past does not exist as such, it is always influenced by politics, propaganda, mass media, fiction, literature and art. Oral interviews—like stories about war, 'coaxed memoirs',<sup>15</sup> are significant evidence of the past. Interviewing the eye-witnesses helps us to hear 'the voices of the silent majority' that are an indispensable part of anthropological insight into the war. As a social historian Tamara Hareven argues, oral history allows us, not only to establish the sequence of events in people's lives, but also to see how various pieces of these lives can be assembled to form a certain picture, or can be broken and folded back together; they can lose their meaning, change meaning, come and go in new configurations at different moments of the person's life.<sup>16</sup> The impression of the war formed directly in childhood will differ greatly from the impression formed in the minds of ordinary people among the older generation, who were influenced by state propaganda and state ideology about the war. The events fixed in children's memories significantly influence both the fate of the witnesses themselves and become part of the mechanism of collective memory, an image of the war shared, and contributed to, by members of the wider social group.

Our main criterion in selecting interviewees was age: we chose people who were aged from 5 to 14 when the war began (born in 1928–1937). At the time the interviews were conducted, these were rather elderly people, the youngest being 71. The majority of our interviews were conducted in a free narrative form, which allowed the narrator to speak naturally about the moments of life that he or she considered most significant. Questions for clarification came right after the narration (a questionnaire was compiled),<sup>17</sup> the purposes of which were to point out the details and clarify obscurities. The stories of our narrators show synthesising and

generalising memory functions. The subject of survival in extreme military and occupation situations became the main theme of all the narrators' reminiscences, which were closely connected with the loss of family members, pain, fear, famine, deprivation and labour beyond their strength. Also reflected in the interviews were the topics of everyday life behind the front, before and at the time of the occupation, as well as attitudes towards 'friends' and 'hostiles', images of the enemy, and a combination of collective and individual memories about war in general.

A characteristic of 'childhood memories' about World War II is their highly emotional tone. According to German sociologist Harald Welzer, 'neurological research shows that elderly people's memories of the distant past are stable and rich and with the course of time they become even more static and complete. They are also not prone to any transformations and reflection, unlike memories that are comparatively new'.<sup>18</sup> The majority of the collected testimonies are filled with vivid narratives about family life under the occupation, about childish fears and expectations, and of course about the enemy.<sup>19</sup> The depiction of war through childhood recollection is rather obscure and patchy due to the narrators' age—it consists mostly of separate, fragmentary memories. For this reason, we have used official sources to create a better idea and understanding of what the everyday life of child witnesses of the war looked like under Nazi rule in the North Caucasus.

### 'THE TIME OF LOSS': MEMORIES ABOUT THE START OF WAR

The beginning of the war in the USSR (22 June 1941) is a crucial event echoing in the interviews as the start of 'the time of loss'. Memories of losing loved ones at times of war are typical for millions of people but for children they are especially painful and lead to destruction of the whole idea of childhood. The quiet calm of family life was lost in that moment when fathers and even mothers left for the front and never returned. Almost all the narrators (with the exception of those who were brought up in incomplete or repressed Soviet families<sup>20</sup>) recalled these particular moments emotionally and in detail:

I was the youngest in our family; there were five of us... I remember when my dad was leaving he picked me up and put me back down so quickly, turned away, and we had that towel hanging in the kitchen, he wiped his tears with it... Father died in 1943 [weeps].<sup>21</sup>

Vladimir Movzalevskiy found himself an orphan at 13 and, reminiscing with tears in his eyes, he recalled the following:

As mother was leaving, imagine mother leaving for the front... she caressed, hugged, and kissed me so much, then said: 'Son, I'm off to the front, you are staying here with granny. Everything depends on you'. But I didn't understand what depended on me. 'You'll be a happy man when the war ends. Just manage to stay alive'. She surely had that feeling, you know, that mother's premonition, the feeling of never coming back again. She never returned. Father died and so did she. He died in [19]42, and mother in [19]43. I only found out that my parents were dead in 1944 in Krasnodar Suvorov school...<sup>22</sup>

For the children who experienced war first-hand, the main frames around which a special reality formed in their memories was obviously the subject of family history and the war itself. If memories of front-line soldiers are more reflected with the concept of 'I', memories of younger witnesses of the war have a lot more 'we' in them. At the same time, during the process of transferring their life experiences, they also tend to transfer the main cultural reference points and social practices of society and the epoch in general. We can observe integration and interaction between the experience of an individual and society's collective memory about historical events. Proof of this can be found in Vladimir Movzalevskiy's final inference. He says that, having lost his parents, he had lost everything, and then switches to memories regarding the collapse of the country, and the downfall of everything people had grown accustomed to. His grandmother died and he had to panhandle and exchange his belongings at the market in order to survive. Weak and dying, he was later carried to the hospital by a soldier. After the war, he graduated from Suvorov's orphan school, had a family, founded the Society of Young Defenders of the Motherland in the city of Stavropol and yet, reminiscing about childhood, he still says he 'lost everything'. This is exactly what we consider the tragedy of war: a single man's experience intertwined with historical memory of the whole society. The national interpretation of the term The Great Victory<sup>23</sup> is different to the way society sees it. For the nation, it is rather the time of heart-breaking loss. The famous words, which have become part of an iconic song *There Is Gladness but with Sadness in Our Eyes* by the poet Vladimir Kharitonov, perfectly reflect the collective memory of the nation.

At the beginning of 1941 the war seemed a long distance away from the North Caucasus. People were only reminded of its presence via mobilisation, food stamps and the voice of Juri Levitan reporting the latest news from the front line. Alongside the more or less organised evacuation process controlled by the State Defence Committee (GKO),<sup>24</sup> founded on 24 June 1941, a large number of refugees were rushing in a steady but disorderly flow away from near the frontline towards the south of Russia.<sup>25</sup> Soviet authorities considered the North Caucasus as a relatively safe shelter for evacuees from the other regions,<sup>26</sup> so streams of people continued to arrive in the area until the summer of 1942. They came from the Ukrainian, Byelorussian and Moldavian Soviet Socialist Republics (SSR) as well as the Crimean Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic (ASSR), and, more latterly, from the northwestern regions of the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic (RSFSR). In particular, thousands of inhabitants from the besieged Leningrad, including a few whole orphanages, were relocated to the Krasnodar and Stavropol regions in the spring of 1942.<sup>27</sup> Orphanages from other western parts of the country were evacuated as well—about 976 during the first period of the war (in the second half of 1941) affecting more than 107,000 orphans.<sup>28</sup> Tens of thousands of impoverished, abandoned children had been taken away from the front and resettled in the North Caucasus by the summer of 1942.

Memories of defensive anti-tank ditches being constructed were another feature of that time. Rostov-on-Don was first seized by the Nazis and then a fight to claim it back took place on 21 November 1941. It was called the Gate of the North Caucasus for good reason, and the Soviet government considered it important to build fortifying lines around it. During the autumn and winter of 1941/1942, many women and older school children were drawn into defensive labour. They were working together and under the guidance of the sapper army<sup>29</sup>:

I had just finished my eighth school year when the war began... it was a very hard time for us, we were often sent to dig trenches near Rostov. A German came up to us and took our horses away, so we had to walk in snow towards home for a whole week. When we got back we started going to school again and studying. Then they [Soviet local authorities] said trenches had to be dug near the station. Our station was called Ryzdvyanaya, so those who were old enough had to go. We were sent there as well...<sup>30</sup>

Both girls and boys lived through the difficulties of hard labour in the field with shovels and pickaxes. However, they embraced it, took it for granted, considered it a mutual burden. Alongside that, memories of their contemporaries and schoolmates being taken away to the front seem more painful:

My brother was the oldest. He and the whole tenth grade of our school were taken away... And, basically, we never saw any of those children return. Imagine, not a single person came back...<sup>31</sup>

As the war moved closer to the North Caucasus, ‘the time of losses’ and the time of destruction become more and more prevalent in the memories of our narrators. This is what Nadezhda Nefedova recollected about one of the bombings in the town of Georgievsk in the Stavropol region. The events took place in 1942 and she was 14 years old:

All those railways were packed with carriages. Trains were full... Our wounded soldiers... This is exactly where the bombing took place. Just as we came in and ran between the carriages. We had to get to the other side to reach the steppe. And that’s when the bombing started, it was absolutely insane... We immediately ran to the ditch, I covered myself with a sack and mother had a firm grip on me. She held me very tight. People from the wagons were running right towards us, trying to hide from the bombing. Everything was on fire – the wagons, wounded soldiers in them... everyone screaming... The planes flew past a few times as we were lying there hiding. What we saw in the morning when we got out was terrible... an absolute mess... injured people everywhere, a woman crawling like this, her face ripped off... horrible... the hair and skin were ripped away and blocked her vision. All covered in blood, she was crawling and screaming among the injured, wounded and dying around her. Dear God, it was dreadful.<sup>32</sup>

Teenagers understood terrors of war. Years later, their narrations became full of anxiety and fears for family members and themselves. Children, on the contrary, never knew what a war was and didn’t have the slightest clue what consequences could follow. They had no idea what a bombing was and why people around were screaming while looking for a place to hide. It is the parents’ behaviour and mood that mattered most to children. This is what Galina Olenskaya recalled about her experience of discovering the terrors of war:

Irina Vladimirovna, our teacher, came into the classroom and said: 'Children, pack your things, there will be no lessons. Go home'. Of course we were very happy to hear that. Shouting something like 'Hoorah! We're free to go home!' we rushed outside laughing. Then she [the teacher] shouted after us, 'You're not going home, you're going to the bomb shelter'. None of us had a clue what a bomb shelter was and why we would have to go there. As we were laughing and skipping down the street I saw *my mother running* towards me. *I didn't recognise her* at first [our emphasis, I.R., E.S.]. Her hair was uncombed, her face pale and frightened, and those eyes... she saw me, and grabbed me like this, hands shaking. 'Oh goodness, quick, quick, quick'. Then we rushed to the shelter and I asked, 'What's wrong, mummy? Why are you so scared?' She replied: 'Bombing attack'. I went on: 'What is it?' Mother said: 'Nazi are attacking Krasnodar and dropping bombs'. And what are bombs? I always knew about chocolate bombs so I exclaimed: 'But mummy, they are chocolate bombs, let's go there'. She replied with: 'Chocolate! No, these are the bombs that kill people!' and again I questioned: 'What do you mean kill?' You see, I didn't even understand anything at that time.<sup>33</sup>

Gradually children began to learn more about the terrors of war personally as they grew older and more responsible. They had long months of occupation ahead of them.

#### 'COLD, HUNGRY, BAREFOOT ... BUT WORKING': THE SUBJECT OF LABOUR AND HARDSHIP

Labour was an extremely vital survival strategy during the war years and as a result became an integral part of the narrators' memories. Very often the work allocated to a person suited neither their physical abilities nor their age. Obligatory and regular, it was a normal phenomenon for the overwhelming majority of young citizens of the USSR. It particularly applied to children living in rural areas. The war was a 'boosting tool' that made them grow up faster in order to work harder. It is a well-known fact that, in traditional peasant families, children helped their parents from early childhood on. Memories of people whose early childhood coincided with collectivisation include recollections about work on collective farm fields as well. Bringing children to such work was a strategy of survival, one of the ways of socialisation, the foundations of which were laid inside the family.

During the war, fields of activity involving child labour were developed extensively, and the work very often exceeded a child's physical limits. The majority of our narrators were teenagers when the war broke out and, from the very beginning, they were drawn into construction of defensive frontiers (from the autumn of 1941 until the spring of 1942). Such labour was usually combined with hardship and caused children to grow up fast. Senior students were taken away from home and sent to far-off locations (considering the fact they had neither money nor any means of transport) with minimal rations and hard duties. Some children had to leave school after their seventh year in order to work on collective farms, or help their mothers maintain families since the fathers and brothers had been mobilised. The whole area of memory around labour is transported through a sense of self-esteem in the children who were growing up and helping their families survive. Such memories are common to people from all over the country, who experienced the military era as children. Nina Kazantzeva (born in 1928 in the Tambov region) and Efrosin'ya Kulikova (born in 1936 in the Stavropol region) have similar images of military childhood:

I went to work on a collective farm... we rolled and untied bundles of hay... I even took part in haymaking once. The rake was this big [shows it]. We gathered and bundled the hay while others were scything it. I was such a little girl at the time, yet I managed to do it all. My mother was ill once so I had to take care of her and work at the same time.<sup>34</sup>

Mother once collapsed with camp fever so her brigadier took us instead of her. We tied up sheaves of hay and sunflowers... we had to do everything.<sup>35</sup>

Young girls were obliged to do all kinds of work during the military time, and very often they had no choice but to take up men's work as well, from grazing animals to driving a tractor. Such military situations, together with the shortage of men, led to the so-called forced feminisation in the 1940s. Women performed men's work and acquired the traditionally patriarchal skills of independence and leadership, though this often meant that they remained single in their post-war private lives. In general, the forms of speech used by narrators included such expressions as 'we worked', 'we helped', 'we were attracted to work' and so on, which shows that they perceived this work as something common, something that unified their generation:

Cold and hungry... walking barefoot, working for 12 hours, we were the only ones to rely on at the front. It was we who supported everything during the war. If we didn't work, we wouldn't win. We were just as young [referring to the interviewer] as you are and we had to work for twelve hours...<sup>36</sup>

The matter of hunger or starvation comes up in almost every interview. This problem relates not only to the memory of this generation. During the war, many people were starving even far behind the front lines.<sup>37</sup> However, this way of living—constantly starving and affected by war—is a lot more painful and severe when experienced in childhood:

I always wanted to sleep and eat, and I still do, you see. My wife always says: 'Oh, when are you going to have enough food?' I say, I still can't eat enough. I was absolutely starving in my youth, you know, I was hungry for long enough...<sup>38</sup>

In comparison to the adult survivors of the war, 'children of war' describe in detail what they ate during the war. Unlike the front-line soldiers, who often had to be deliberately asked about their wartime nutrition during the interview, the 'children of war' generation normally started speaking without being prompted about this essential human need:

We had absolutely nothing to eat when Vitya was born. I was 11 years old at the time, moving from one town to another. Mum bought tobacco and I used to take it to Tikhoretsk and Kropotkin [towns in the Krasnodar region] by train. You'd ask what means of transport we used? Well, we used to cling on to a train and just hang on till the controllers took us off in, let's say, Kropotkin. They sent us to a police station and the latter took the tobacco away. I used to say that my father was at the front and that my mother and little brothers were dying of starvation. These words made them let me go. This was pretty much how we made our way through the war.<sup>39</sup>

The occupation survivors emphasised how their mothers used to bury corn seeds in the backyard so that they could grind the grain early at dawn in order to make crumpets for the children. It was the only thing they had and apart from the morning crumpets there was no food in the house whatsoever. The next time mothers could feed their children was only after nightfall, so that the Nazis who stayed at their farmstead did not take away their pitiful food supplies.<sup>40</sup> There are some stories about how they saved cows, baked flat cakes out of orache and nettle, and how potato peels were the main source of daily nutrition. Children tried to

help adults get food, sometimes they managed to do it better since they could find food in places where adults could not go:

I went to that kindergarten and there was a German division nearby. They obviously had a kitchen and at the gate of this division stood massive containers. They threw out everything they didn't need there. You know, they cleaned up and threw scraps into those containers. So we, being such tiny kids, chose what we thought was okay and put it into our little buckets. The Germans did not have to take out their rubbish and food waste. And so, I remember, one day we came, and there was a whole lot of cans of lentils. Interestingly, some of them were open while others were completely sealed. They were probably rotten or just past their use-by date. We immediately grabbed the cans and dragged them home. No one really got poisoned or anything, you know, it was fine.<sup>41</sup>

The period of starvation lasted until after the occupation too, when everything was exported to the front from the bread-making districts of Stavropol and Krasnodar. For some young men, hunger was the reason that prompted voluntary departure to the front before they were old enough to go. The soldiers had enough food, and this 'salvation from starvation' was considered significant. 'Get killed? Let it be so, it's better than starving'.<sup>42</sup>

Despite the lack of food that was rich in vitamins and proteins under the occupation, many narrators, especially those evacuated to the North Caucasus, emphasise the natural wealth of the region and its favourable climatic conditions:

I sometimes reminisce with my wife, she is a Siberian, you see, and they starved a lot more than we did. Of course, the feeling of hunger haunted us all the time – well, hungry is hungry – but still, we didn't starve to death or anything.<sup>43</sup>

Unlike in other regions of the country, people could feed themselves on a plant-based diet in the south of Russia, thus it was easier to survive the occupation there and not die from exhaustion and hunger.

#### 'FRIENDS' AND 'HOSTILES': OCCUPATION OF THE NORTH CAUCASUS THROUGH THE EYES OF CHILDREN

Memories about the occupation become a special semantic block of all the interviews. Recollections deal with the nearness of real war, the visual presence of military actions, enemy soldiers, and local policemen (*Polizei*).

In the narratives, images of soldiers from both sides stand out clearly both at the beginning and the end of this period. The soldiers of the retreating Red Army evoked sympathy, compassion and pain before the occupation began. The retreat of the Red Army units in the North Caucasus in July of 1942 was swift, bloody and painful both for the army and the civilians. A heavy sense of impending disaster and fear was preserved in the memory of the ‘children of war’ in relation to captured the Red Army soldiers:

I remember how they drove captive sailors [Soviet] away and, even though they were wounded, they still supported each other. They were probably captured in Novorossiysk [a port city in the Krasnodar region], on the outskirts; there was an ongoing defence operation at the time. There were submachine gunners all the way round [surrounding the prisoners], and behind them was a car with a quad-machine gun aimed at the column.<sup>44</sup>

In contrast, the ‘children of war’ remembered ‘hostiles’—soldiers of the Wehrmacht army (in the North Caucasus there were German, Romanian, and Italian units)—as being well armed, and unconditionally confident in their victory army of looters, murderers and robbers:

The entrance [to the shelter] was blocked by a pillow. As we quickly glanced at it we saw the pillow being pulled away and an armed German directing a pistol at us... My grandmother sat on the very edge, a little further away was mum with my brother in her arms, next to her sat my sister and then it was me... We went out and saw that a group of Germans was already walking around the rooms, giggling, laughing, chewing something, digging into things and looking for something...<sup>45</sup>

The looting of the Nazi army is a common phenomenon that pervades the memory of the occupation period:

They took away piglets, chickens, eggs... All the bread and pigs from our collective farms were taken away. And who could say ‘no’ when a gun was pointed right at your face? There were about two hundred pigs in the pigsty; they took each and every one of them. Not all sheep, horses, and wheat were taken. Just between the villages of Izobil’noe and Donskoe [villages in the Stavropol region] the road is good, so they transported the stolen goods to Izobil’noe, loaded the carriages and sent them away.<sup>46</sup>

In the context of the narrators' memories about the occupation, the image of 'foreign' soldiers subtly transforms into an image of 'hostile' soldiers and later becomes 'the enemy'.<sup>47</sup> There are numerous memories regarding atrocities, collective shootings and mobile gas vans:

The Germans came in 1942. It was summer, and they went through our village to Svetlograd [a city in the Stavropol region]... We had a lot of Jews. And when the Germans came in... they sent dispatches to every village with the order to gather all Jews from our region in Svetlograd. There's a mountain called Baranich'ya in Svetlograd, so the Germans gathered the Jews there, huddled, and then shot them down in a pit...<sup>48</sup>

The layer of memories about robberies, executions, atrocities and *Gaswagen* ('mobile gas vans') is confirmed by archival sources. For example, the decree of the commandant's office no. 12 on the resettlement of Jews from the city to sparsely populated regions of Ukraine was pasted in Kislovodsk on 7 September 1942.<sup>49</sup> However, they were shot near the glass factory close to the city of Mineralnye Vody.<sup>50</sup>

Eyewitnesses recall the memory of the shootings with bitterness after many years:

The Germans drove men and teenagers to the camp, where they dug trenches behind the village [of Raevskaya in the Krasnodar region]. The front had already been established in Novorossiysk and didn't spread further. Well, as I recall it was the early spring of 1943, and the youth started preparing to escape. Someone betrayed them and passed all the information on. So, the Germans shot the kids down, twenty of them. I knew almost everyone. And their mothers ran along the gardens and cried. It was behind the village, near one of the springs, where they were shot down... I have remembered this forever, this is my Raevskaya tragedy.<sup>51</sup>

The 'children of war' felt great fear and terror towards the 'hostiles'. They often talked about this in the interviews years later:

Well, we did walk around of course, but were rather afraid. We were only teenagers, we loved ice-skating in winter and Karasun was nearby [Karasun River is now a chain of lakes in Krasnodar]. We larked about, girls came out to play, but it was terrible, there were unexpected bombings and shells falling. We were afraid to walk around because of this war. And once, when

we were walking on the ice, we heard the Germans running. There were a few houses alongside the ice so we ran there to hide. I remember a friend of mine lived in one of them. We ran there, but the Germans caught one of us and started beating him up. But we managed to run away and to one of the houses, and there was a large barrel so we climbed underneath. The girl who lived in that area knew where to hide; she somehow ran behind the barbed wire fence and stopped there. The Germans were absolutely furious about not being able to reach her. They chased us. We were beaten up occasionally, but not to death... There was the prospect of being beaten and even raped if they caught us, but we always ran away.<sup>52</sup>

Women who survived the war as adolescents often mentioned the fact that invaders could abuse and sexually assault them. Young girls were very often locked up at home or hidden in cellars. Dressed up in rags and shredded clothes, they had their faces purposely smeared with soot. The feeling of fear has always remained in the memory of female narrators.

'Hostile' is always a pejorative term denoting a rival who threatens danger. Therefore, the assessment of everything alien and foreign is only negative. It is noteworthy that in the memoirs of the 'children of war', 'hostiles' were associated not only with the abstract category of invaders, but very often with the Romanian units in the Wehrmacht. The fact that narrators articulated the particular nationality of occupiers, which left a prominent mark in their memory for many years, leads us to assume that the Germans and soldiers of other nations (primarily Romanians) had different methods of treatment and occupation policy:

When the Romanians were coming, everyone was scared. When the Romanian soldiers sang, everyone ran behind their house gate. They would look out for a second and hide again because the Romanians were wild. The Germans were not as brutal as the Romanians. I never heard of a German shooting someone outside, it was usually the Romanians who did so.<sup>53</sup>

Another narrator states:

When the offensive began, the Romanians came. They had black overcoats and black helmets with skulls on them. As they passed by, they would throw children into the wells and shoot down elderly people and everyone in their way... Those were the Romanians. Yeah, but they somehow left us quite quickly.<sup>54</sup>

The existence of ‘hostiles’ in itself stands as a threat to an individual’s or group’s perception of ‘friends’ or ‘ours’. For this reason, the only possible and justified reaction to the ‘hostile’ within this kind of binary opposition is rejection and aggression. A ‘hostile’ must necessarily be defeated, humiliated, and destroyed morally, symbolically and in an ideal situation physically as well.<sup>55</sup> The ‘hostile’ marks the external boundaries of the ‘friend’, the limits of understanding and identity of the group. One can defend oneself from the enemy, take shelter, escape or defeat him. But in all cases the enemy is an appellate factor, which mobilises all members of the community to solidarity and rallying around a power or group authority that guarantees security and riddance of the threat of destruction.<sup>56</sup> Much attention in the memoirs of the ‘children of war’ is given to the liberation of their city or village from the invaders. Joy of meeting the liberators, ‘friends’ and the banishment of ‘hostiles’ becomes a kind of theme of the victory of good over evil in the oral interviews.

Sometimes the image of the ‘hostile’ in the interviews does not correspond to traditional images and differs from archival sources. In individual memories the enemy sometimes acquires personal traits and is endowed with ‘human qualities’. Russian historian Elena Senyavskaya emphasises that the enemy was rarely seen as another human being, his image was shaped by mental stereotypes, the work of political propaganda and the realities of the war.<sup>57</sup> However, in oral stories the ‘enemy image’ does not only have the features of a ‘Nazi monster’, but is sometimes endowed with ‘human qualities’. From the category of the ‘hostile’ the Germans sometimes turned into the category of the ‘other’. The ‘other’ causes the subject to feel less of a sense of estrangement and aggression as with the ‘hostile’, and instead rather a kind of interested attention.<sup>58</sup> The ‘hostile’ is never perceived as a human being in the full sense of the word, but as a non-human who is not subject to the normal laws of human community, while the ‘other’ is clearly a man, despite the fact that he differs very strongly from the ‘friends’.<sup>59</sup> The ‘other’ has a name; he is not impersonal, as the ‘hostile’ is. In oral interviews with the ‘children of war’ there are stories about invaders who helped their families survive. They call such people by name; there are notes of gratitude towards them in the rhetoric of the interviewees’ narratives:

There are good people, and the Germans were sometimes good too... when mother gave birth to my brother... and wanted to bathe him once, she didn’t find any soap – so she gathered up some sunflower ash

and percolated it with water so that it became somewhat soapy. And this is how she bathed him, yes. Then a German came in. 'Mamma', he said, 'there is a war raging outside, with bombs, it's not good. Stalin and Hitler are two leaders who are angry at each other, but we have to suffer'. And he brought me a piece of soap. That was a good German, the others only slapped me on the head.<sup>60</sup>

The narrator does not name the German, but she portrays him in opposition to the rest of the 'hostiles' who slapped her on the head. Expecting help from the invaders seemed unnatural for a child. The episode with soap remained in the memory of the narrator because of its non-standard nature. Attention to the 'other' generated a sense of gratitude. In the memoirs of eyewitnesses of the occupation period from the summer of 1942 until the winter of 1943, some German soldiers acquired the image of a doctor who provided help, or sometimes the image of a soldier who treated children to chocolate.

#### (SELF)-REFLECTION ON THE ACQUIRED EXPERIENCE OF 'CHILDREN OF WAR' UNDER MILITARY OCCUPATION

Reflection on the loss of loved ones as well as the psychological effects of war is often present at the end of each oral interview, or else it makes up a significant semantic block within the narrative. According to the theory of utterance, introduced by the Russian literary critic and philosopher Mikhail Bakhtin, this kind of spoken communication can be explained as the narrator's chance to appeal to the listener in order that he or she find understanding in the story.<sup>61</sup> With these evaluative statements, narrators explained their attitude to the war, to their almost lost childhood:

- Q. Ivan Dmitrievich, how did you find out about the end of the war, in particular the Victory Day, do you remember?
- A. I do... I hid in a corner and bitterly cried that I had not avenged myself...
- Q. You wanted to avenge your father? I mean you wanted to kill the German?
- A. No, not just one, but all of them... I cried. And for many years on that day... I cried... for the first time on that day... I found out about the end of war when they announced it. That's it! I did not make it in time. And why [referring to crying], I do not know. For life taken away, I believe...

Q. Your father's life?

A. Well, not really... our life, the life of all the people...<sup>62</sup>

The family remained a support pillar during the war years, although often it was rather ghostly. This is especially evident in the memories of the North Caucasus occupation period. During the war, two and even three generations of relatives lived together in families. Partly this was a consequence of the traditionally preserved patriarchal way of life but, at the same time, it became an important survival strategy during the war years. Grown-up daughters-in-law, whose husbands went to the front, often moved in with their mothers-in-law along with their children. Together they kept the household, worked on the collective farm and raised children. Most of the oral interviews of the 'children of war' show people's grateful attitude towards their grandmothers, which survived in their memory. In many families the grandmothers stood in for those who had gone to the front or died.

Our grandmother saved us, basically. She went about collecting ears of wheat in the field. She was the one who brought us up. She left early in the morning and came back late in the evening. She was like a gypsy: black, tanned... She had a tiny garden where we planted pumpkins, or various greens. We ate all sorts of things really... If I start reminiscing, oh dear Lord! Winter cress, mallow [kinds of herbal plants], and acacia, we ate everything. We were brought up by my mother too, but mostly by my grandmother during that time. She'd pick up ears of wheat in the field, then bring them in, grind or do something else to them, or bake crumpets.<sup>63</sup>

Content analysis of the texts of oral interviews reveals one more logical narrative line, which can be conditionally called 'the invisible presence of war'. In other words, these are stories about what remained military in the lives of children and adolescents after the 'actual war' (the occupation) had ended. For our narrators, most of whom spent their childhood in the regions of Stavropol and Krasnodar, this is the time of the war after the occupation, spanning from the spring of 1943 until 1945. This was a time of economic recovery in the region. It is well known that women and children replaced men, and that their labour enabled the revival of agriculture. They ploughed with the use of cows and sowed crops almost by hand, as the machinery had been destroyed

and horses mobilised to the front. Because of this, many 'children of war' remember this era within the frameworks of the previously mentioned narratives—namely, as a time of half-starved survival and heavy, compulsory labour for the benefit of the front.

Oral stories of the 'children of war' clearly demonstrate that the family, close friends and fellow adolescents were of massive help in the struggle to survive. Mutual assistance was not only economic but also spiritual. War and extreme living conditions strengthened the family as a social institution. Sometimes the Soviet people are associated with a large family, each member of which plays a part in protecting the Motherland. At the local level the best features of patriarchal family life manifested in simple relationships, which remained in the children's memory and carried through the years. In the circle of 'friends' the children's image of the war has a place for friends, people close to the family and neighbours, with whom children and adolescents spent most of the time. The young people helped the adults, worked and played, believed that 'friends' would protect and help them to survive, to withstand the 'hostiles' during wartime.

Oral history reflects the individuality of the narrators, their cultural values and those specific historical circumstances that shaped their view of the world. Oral history has the advantage that makes it possible to reconstruct past events in a broader historical perspective and to comprehend earlier events in the context of their subsequent development. Allowing a unique perspective through the prism of time, oral history offers other criteria for assessing the significance of events, correlating these events with changes in the views of a person.<sup>64</sup> This observation is especially important for the analysis of stories about military childhoods. By the time the interviews were conducted, our narrators had accumulated a vast wealth of life experience behind them. As a rule, they had kept quiet about the theme of their wartime childhoods, not only in public, but also among the closer circles of acquaintances and relatives. Many of them claimed that their experiences in the war could not be compared to those of the real heroes, the defenders of the Motherland. Often, they were uncertain about the relevance of their personal narratives and experiences of the war, and they replaced them with stories about what they know from literature and history. Nevertheless, the part of the interviews where questions were asked for clarification provoked them to talk about their personal experience. Details describing their welfare as children and

how they spent their free time let the researcher understand a lot more and actually see beyond the limits of a standard perception of the war; they allowed a close look into daily life during the war.

## NOTES

1. Valentin Kataev, *Syn Polka* (Moscow: AST, 2014), 6.
2. Yuriy Polyakov, ed., *Naselenie Rossii v XX veke. Istoricheskie ocherki* in 3 volumes, vol. 2: 1940–1959 (Moscow: ROSSPEN, 2001), 164; Valentina Zhiromskaya, ed., *Narod i Voyna: ocherki istorii Velikoy Otechestvennoy voyny 1941–1945* (Moscow: Grif i K, 2010), 648.
3. Igor' Narsky, ed., *Vek pamyati, pamyat' veka. Opyt obrasheniya s proshlym v XX stoletii* (Chelyabinsk: Kamennyy Poyas, 2004); Mikhail Gabovich, ed., *Pamyat' o voynе 60 let spustya. Rossiya, Germaniya, Evropa* (Moscow: NLO, 2005); Marina Loskutova, ed., *Pamyat' o blockade. Svidetel'stva ochevidtsev i istoricheskoe soznanie obshchestva* (Moscow: Novoe izdatel'stvo, 2006); Elena Strekalova, ed., *Pamyat' o Velikoy Otechestvennoy voynе v sotsiokul'turnom prostranstve sovremennoy Rossii* (Sankt Petersburg: Evropeiskiy Dom, 2008); Irina Rebrova, ed., *Vtoraya mirovaya voyna v pamyati pokoleniy* (Krasnodar: EdArt Print, 2009); Gennadiy Matishov, ed., *Velikaya Otechestvennaya voyna v prostranstve istoricheskoy pamyati rossiyskogo obshchestva* (Rostov-on-Don: Southern Scientific Centre of the Russian Academy of Science, 2010).
4. Yuliya Salova, *Politicheskoe vospitanie detei v Sovetskoj Rossii v 1920-e gody* (Yaroslavl: Yaroslavl State University, 2001); Alla Sal'nikova, *Rossiyskoe detstvo v XX veke: Istoriya, teoriya i praktika issledovaniya* (Kazan': Kazan Federal University, 2007); Elena Sapogova, *Kul'turniy sotsiogenез i mir detstva. Lectures on Historiography and Cultural History of Childhood* (Moscow: Akademicheskii Proekt, 2004).
5. Vladimir Movzalevskiy, *Malen'kie soldaty Otechestvennoy 1941–1945* (Stavropol: Yurkit, 1995); Vladimir Movzalevskiy, *Deti Otechestva* (Stavropol: Yurkit, 2001); *Nedopisannye stranitsy...: O detyah-voinakh, detyah-zhertvakh i prosto detyah, zhivshih v gody Vtoroy mirovoy voyny* (Moscow: Press solo, 1996); Olga Lepilkina, ed., *Nikto iz nas voiny zabyt' ne smozhet* (Stavropol': Stavropol State University Press, 2005).
6. Comp. Anatoly Koval, *Yunost' muzhala v boyah* (Moscow: Voenizdat, 1966); Sergey Chernik, *Sovetskaya obsheobrazovatel'naya shkola v gody Velikoy Otechestvennoy voyny* (Moscow: Pedagogika, 1984); Comp. Anna Osipova and Olga Tyuleva, *Stoyali so vzroslymi ryadom* (Leningrad: Lenizdat, 1985); Comp. Elena Maksimova, *Deti voennoy pory* (Moscow: Politizdat, 1988); Vadim Eryomin, *Molodezh' v gody Velikoy Otechestvennoy voyny* (Moscow: Mysl', 1984), etc.

7. Zoya Bochkareva, "Okkupatsionnaya politika fashistskoy Germanii na Severnom Kavkaze" (PhD diss., Kuban State University, 1992); Evgeniy Krinko, "Okkupatsionnyy rezhim na Kubani. 1942–1943" (PhD diss., Russian Academy of Science, 1997); Vitaliy Bondarev, "Rossiyskoe krestyanstvo v gody Velikoy Otechestvennoy voiny" [Materials of the Rostov, Krasnodar and Stavropol regions] (PhD diss., Rostov-on-Don State University, 2001); Sergey Linets, *Severniy Kavkaz nakanune i v period nemetsko-fashistskoy okkupatsii: sostoyanie i osobennosti razvitiya* (July 1942–October 1943) (Rostov-on-Don: North Caucasian Publishing House of the Scientific Centre of Higher Education, 2003); Natal'ya Selyunina, "Sotsial'naya politika na Yuge Rossii v 1941–1945," *Nauchnaya Mysl' Kavkaza* 1 (2004): 40–48; Maksim Andrienko, "Naselenie Stavropol'skogo kraya v gody Velikoy Otechestvennoy Voyny: otsenka poveden'cheskikh motivov" (PhD diss., Pyatigorsk State Linguistic University, 2005); Evgeniy Krinko, "Voennoe detstvo (1941–1945) (Basic Research Directions)," in *Materinstvo i detstvo v Rossii (XVIII–XXI)*, ed. Yuriy Polyakov (Moscow: 'MGUS', 2006), vol. II, 155–169; Ilona Yurchuk, "Bor'ba s detskoj besprizornost'yu v Krasnodarskom krae v period Velikoy Otechestvennoy voiny," *Vestnik Armavirskogo instituta sotsial'nogo obrazovaniya RGSU: nauchno i uchebno-metodicheskiy ezhegodnik* 5 (2007): 202–205, etc.
8. The North Caucasus or the European South is the most southern region of the Russian Federation, bounded by natural borders from three sides (the Black and Azov Seas in the northwest, the Caspian Sea in the southeast and the Caucasus Mountains in the south). It consists of the Krasnodar, Stavropol and Rostov regions, the Republics of Adygea, Dagestan, Ingushetia, Chechnya, Kabardino-Balkaria, Karachaevo-Cherkessia and North Ossetia-Alania.
9. 'It should be noted, that Rostov-on-Don was occupied twice: for a week in the autumn of 1941 and then for more than six months; the city of Taganrog and the Anastasiyevskiy, Fedorovskiy regions were occupied for almost two years – from October 1941 until August 1943': *Tsentr dokumentatsii noveyshey istorii Rostovskoy oblasti (TsDNIRO) f. R-1886, op. 1, d. 22, l. 7–9*.
10. For more about the occupation period in the North Caucasus see Bochkareva, *Okkupatsionnaya politika*; Evgeniy Krinko, *Zhizn' za liniy fronta: Kuban' v okkupatsii (1942–1943)* (Maykop/Adygea, n.p., 2000); Evgeniy Zhuravlev, "Okkupatsionnaya politika fashistskoy Germanii na Yuge Rossii (1941–1943): tseli, sodержanie, prichiny krakha," *Nauchnaya Mysl' Kavkaza* 1 (2001): 36–43; Andrej Angrick, *Besatzungspolitik und Massenmord. Die Einsatzgruppe D in der südlichen Sowjetunion 1941–1943* (Hamburg: Hamburger Edition, 2003), 545–669.

11. A significant part of the North Caucasus was reclaimed by March of 1943; however, the Taman Peninsula territory along the so-called ‘blue line’ was occupied by Nazi troops until 9 October 1943. The military operation concerning ‘the blue line’ breakthrough took place from 9 September to 9 October 1943 and finished with the liberation of Novorossiysk and the Taman Peninsula, which marked the end of the battle for the Caucasus. Linets, *Severniy Kavkaz nakanune*, 139.
12. Aleksandr Rozhkov, ed., *Vtoraya mirovaya vojna v detskikh ‘ramkah pamyati’* (Krasnodar: Ekoinvest, 2010).
13. The term ‘voices of the past’ is from Paul Thompson, *The Voice of the Past: Oral History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982).
14. The term ‘social frameworks of memory’ is from Maurice Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992).
15. The term is from Strekalova, *Pamyat’ o Velikoy Otechesvennoy voyne*, 275.
16. Tamara Hareven, *Family Time and Industrial Time: The Relationship Between the Family and Work in a New England Industrial Community* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 171–178.
17. Steinar Kvale, *InterViews: An Introduction to Qualitative Research Interviewing* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 1996), 189.
18. Harald Welzer, “Die Gegenwart der Vergangenheit Geschichte als Arena der Politik,” *Osteuropa* 4, no. 6 (2005): 14.
19. Irina Rebrova, “Individual’noe i kollektivnoe v pamyati ‘detey voyny,’” in *Obraz voyn i revoryutsiy v istoricheskoy pamyati*, ed. Natal’ya Kryuchkova (Stavropol’/Pyatigorsk: Pyatigorsk State Linguistic University, 2009), 389.
20. Pre-war 1930s—the time of Stalin’s political regime in the Soviet Union and repression affected all social groups of Soviet society. The dekulakisation and accusations of ‘sabotage’ led to court proceedings and exiles. This is why children often remained without their repressed parents.
21. Archive of Oral History, Stavropol State University/North Caucasus Federal University [Archive of Oral History SSU/SCFU], Nina Nicheporuk, born in 1933, interview by Elena Strekalova, 20 July 2008, interview 00418, transcript.
22. Archive of Oral History SSU/SKFU, Vladimir Movzalevskiy, born in 1931, interview by Elena Strekalova, 4 July 2008, interview 00412, transcript.
23. For contemporary Russian society, World War II is related primarily to the fate of Russia, not so much to the danger of Nazism in Europe and the whole world. That is why it is still not the ‘world’, but the ‘great patriotic’ war; the start of the war was not considered 1 September 1939, but 22 June 1941; and the end of the war, Victory Day, is celebrated in Russia on 9 May: Boris Dubin, “‘Krovavaja’ vojna i ‘velikaja’ pobeda,” *Otechestvennyj zapiski* 5 (2004), accessed July 27, 2013, <http://strana-oz.ru/2004/5/krovavaya-vojna-i-velikaya-pobeda>.

24. Georgiy Kumanev, "Vojna i evakuaciya v SSSR. 1941–1942 gody," *Novaya i noveyshaya istoriya* 6 (2006): 38.
25. For example, on 15 August 1941 about 218 refugees came from the front line to Kuban, saving themselves from the German attack. There were 160,000 Jews, who made up 73% of all the evacuated: Tsentr dokumentatsii noveishey istorii Krasnodaarskogo kraya (TsDNIKK), f. 1774-A, op. 2, d. 271, l. 7–18.
26. For more about the evacuation history of Jews see Ivan Belonosov, "Evakuatsiya naseleniya iz prifrontovoy polosy v 1941–1942 gg.," in *Eshelony idut na Vostok: iz istorii perebazirovaniya proizvoditel'nyh sil SSSR v 1941–1942 gg.: sbornik statey i vospominaniy*, ed. Yuriy Polyakov (Moscow: Nauka, 1966), 15–30; Mordechai Altshuler, "Escape and Evacuation of Soviet Jews at the Time of the Nazi Invasion," in *Holocaust in the Soviet Union: Studies and Sources on the Destruction of the Jews in the Nazi-Occupied USSR, 1941–1945*, ed. Lucjan Dobroszyski (Armonk, New York: Sharpe, 1993), 77–105; Mordechai Altshuler, "Evacuation and Escape During the Course of the Soviet-German War," *Dapim: Studies on the Holocaust* 28, no. 2 (2014): 57–73. For more about the Jewish refugees and evacuees in the North Caucasus see Kiril Feferman, "A Soviet Humanitarian Action?: Centre, Periphery and the Evacuation of Refugees to the North Caucasus, 1941–1942," *Europe-Asia Studies* 61, no. 5 (2009): 813–831; Irina Rebrova, "Evakuatsiya evreev na Severniy Kavkaz: motivatsiya i puti sledovaniya," in *Trudy po evreyskoy istorii i kul'ture: paper presented at the XXII Annual International Conference on Judaica*, vol. 52, ed. Viktoriya Mochalova (Moscow: Sefer, 2016), 108–122.
27. According to the order of the Council of People's Commissars SSSR in February 1942, 23,000 evacuated civilians were sent to the Stavropol region from occupied Leningrad: Gosudarstvenniy arkhiv noveishey istorii Stavropol'skogo kraya [GANISK], f. 1, op. 2, d. 251, l. 22; d. 210. l. 25–28. In total, more than 36,000 evacuated civilians were located in the Krasnodar region, including more than 10,000 children: TsDNIKK, f. 1774-A, op. 2, d. 495, l. 7; d. 626, l. 11–18; Gosudarstvenniy arkhiv Krasnodarskogo kraya [GAKK], f. P-687, op. 1, d. 22, l. 14–18.
28. Nina Kondakova, *Voyna, gosudarstvo, obshestvo. 1941–1945* (Moscow: "Veteran Moskvy," 2002), 253.
29. GANISK, f. 1, op. 2, d. 249, l. 31–32.
30. Archive of Oral History SSU/SKFU, Natal'ya Demkina, born in 1923, interview by Elena Strekalova, 10 August 2007, interview 0038, transcript.
31. Archive of Oral History SSU/SKFU, Nina Belokopyt, born in 1932, interview by Elena Strekalova, 5 August 2008, interview 00416, transcript.

32. Archive of Oral History SSU/SKFU, Nadezhda Nefedova, born in 1928, interview by Elena Strekalova, 7 July 2008, interview 00414, transcript.
33. Personal archive of Irina Rebrova, Galina Olenskaya, born in 1934, interview by Irina Rebrova, 13 June 2006, interview DV-08-IR-06, transcript.
34. Archive of Oral History SSU/SKFU, Nina Kazantseva, born in 1928, interview by Elena Strekalova, 21 July 2008, interview 00419, transcript.
35. Archive of Oral History SKFU, Yefrosin'ya Kulikova, born in 1932, interview by Elena Srekalova, 21 July 2008, interview 004110, transcript.
36. Archive of Oral History SSU/SKFU, Raisa Dvortsova, born in 1927, interview by Elena Strekalova, 4 April 2007, interview 00419, transcript.
37. Tatyana Tcheglova, *Derevnya i krest'yanstvo Altayskogo kraya v XX veke. Ustnaya istoriya* (Barnaul: Barnaul State Pedagogical University, 2008), 87.
38. Vladimir Movzalevskiy, interview.
39. Personal archive of Irina Rebrova, Galina Strokun, born in 1928, interview by Irina Rebrova, 8 May 2008, interview DV-08-IR-01, transcript.
40. Archive of Oral History SKFU, Sergey Zhmyrko, born in 1930, interview by Elena Strekalova, 1 July 2007, interview 0035, transcript.
41. Galina Olenskaya, interview.
42. Archive of Oral History SSU/SKFU, Anatoliy Goncharov, born 1930, interview by Elena Strekalova, 9 July 2007, interview 0032, transcript.
43. Viktor Kovalenko, born 1937, interview by Irina Rebrova, 21 May 2008, interview DV-08-IR-02, transcript, Personal archive of Irina Rebrova.
44. Sergey Zhmyrko, interview.
45. Ibid.
46. Raisa Dvortsova, interview.
47. Irina Rebrova, "V krugu 'Svoih', 'Chuzhikh' i 'Drugikh': analiz ustnykh vospominaniy detey Velikoy Otechestvennoy voyny," in *Gulyay tam, gde vse: Istoriya sovetskogo detstva: opyt i perspektivy issledovaniya*, ed. Vitaliy Bezrogov (Moscow: RGGU, 2013), 237–258.
48. Anatoliy Goncharov, interview.
49. Commandant's order no. 12 on the resettlement of Jews from Kislovodsk to sparsely populated regions of Ukraine, 7 September 1942: Tamara Bulygina, ed., *Stavropol'ye: Pravda voennykh let. Velikaya Otechestvennaya voyna v dokumentakh i issledovaniyakh* (Stavropol: Stavropol State University Press, 2005), 112.
50. In the context of the Holocaust tragedy Mineralnye Vody was the place of execution of the Jews of the Yessentuki, Pyatigorsk, Kislovodsk and Zheleznovodsk regions. At the beginning of September 1942 in the anti-tank ditches at a distance of 1 km from the glass factory in Anjievskaya vilage, on the northwestern edge of Mineralnye Vody, Einsatzkommando 12 Einsatzgruppe D under the command of the local police shot down more than 6500 Jews: Akt Chrezvichaynoy gosudarstvennoy komissii po gorodu

- Mineralnye vody, 10 July 1943, Gosudarstvenniy arkhiv Stavropol'skogo kraia (GASK), f. R-1368, op. 1, d. 97a, l. 57–58; Gosudarstvenniy arkhiv Rossiyskoy Federatsii [GARF], f. 7021, op. 17, d. 2, l. 1–8.
51. Sergey Zhmyrko, interview.
  52. Galina Strokun, interview.
  53. Personal archive of Irina Rebrova, Irina Manokhina, born in 1938, interview by Irina Rebrova, 14 August 2009, interview DV-09-IR-11, transcript.
  54. Personal archive of Irina Rebrova, Yefrosin'ya Sviderskaya, born in 1933, interview by Irina Rebrova, 11 April 2009, interview DV-09-IR-09, transcript.
  55. Maya Dubossarskaya, "Svoy-Chuzhoy-Drugoy: k postanovke problem," *Vestnik Stavropol'skogo Gosudarstvennogo Universiteta* 54 (2008): 168.
  56. Lev Gudkov, "Ideologema 'vrage': 'Vragi' kak massoviy sindrom i mekhanizm sotsiokul'turnoy integratsii," in *Obraz vrage*, ed. Lev Gudkov (Moscow: Novoye Literaturnoye Obozreniye, 2005), 15.
  57. Elena Senyavskaya, *Protivniki Rossii v voynakh XX veka: Evolyutsiya 'obraza vrage' v soznanii armii i obshestva* (Moscow: ROSSPEN, 2006), 80–97.
  58. Dubossarskaya, "Svoy-Chuzhoy-Drugoy," 170.
  59. *Ibid.*, 171.
  60. Galina Strokun, interview.
  61. Mikhail Bakhtin, "Problema rechevykh zhanrov," in *Estetika slovesnogo tvorchestva*, ed., Mikhail Bakhtin (Moscow: Iskusstvo, 1979), 276.
  62. Archive of Oral History SSU/SKFU, Ivan Lapin, born in 1930, interview by Elena Strekalova, 10 August 2008, interview 00415, transcript.
  63. Archive of Oral History SSU/SKFU, Lyudmila Lapina, born in 1936, interview by Elena Strekalova, 10 August 2008, interview 00415, transcript.
  64. Hareven, *Family Time*, 172.



# ‘... Have Not Received Any Deliveries of Potatoes for Quite Some Time ...’: Food Supply and Acquisition in the Ghettos of Vilnius and Kaunas

*Joachim Tauber*

The food supply of the ghettos in Lithuania is a topic that offers a promising perspective of the realities of ghetto society. The following examples of the ghettos in Vilnius and Kaunas will demonstrate how it was possible to organise a basic supply for the people living there—albeit a precarious one at best. In spite of all the shortages, neither the sources

---

LCVA R-973, ap. 2, b. 40, 70, report of the activities of the Council of Elders in July 1942. The complete quotation reads: *Die Kartoffelverteilungsstelle ist vollständig geschlossen, weil das Ghetto schon seit längerer Zeit mit Kartoffeln nicht mehr beliefert wird* (‘The distribution point for potatoes has been closed because the ghetto has not received any deliveries of potatoes for some time’).

---

J. Tauber (✉)

Institut für Kultur und Geschichte der Deutschen in Nordosteuropa e.V.,  
University of Hamburg, Hamburg, Germany  
e-mail: J.Tauber@ikgn.de

© The Author(s) 2018

T. Tönsmeier et al. (eds.), *Coping with Hunger and Shortage under German Occupation in World War II*,  
[https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-77467-1\\_14](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-77467-1_14)

275

from Kaunas nor the ones from Vilnius speak of people starving to death. First, I will describe the system of food supply as well as the roles of the respective institutions involved both inside and outside the ghetto. Second, I will provide an overview of people's everyday lives that were fundamentally characterised by the continuous struggle to provide as much food as possible for themselves as well as for their families.

Even before being forced to relocate to a ghetto, insufficient nutrition was part of many Jews' everyday lives. They had been subjected to a restricted food supply since the very first days of the occupation by German forces. Immediately after the occupied country was taken over by the civic administration of the Lithuanian *Generalbezirk* ('occupied district under rule of the Generalkommissar'), who replaced the commanding German officers in the towns and counties, Jews were only allowed restricted access to grocery stores and markets. In Vilnius, food supply was restricted to ten distribution points where Jews, who in the summer of 1941 were only allowed the lowest rations assigned to the local non-working population, had access if they could provide ration cards. Consequently, the supply situation deteriorated dramatically and the Jewish Council was forced to ask the Lithuanian administration to establish more supply points as well as to provide the amount of supplies that had been promised.<sup>1</sup> In Kaunas, approximately 30,000 Jews were only allowed to shop in specific stores. In addition, access to food at markets was only allowed after 10 a.m. when they had already been more or less emptied by other customers.<sup>2</sup> This resulted in the majority of the Jewish population being, in fact, excluded from access to a sufficient and organised supply of food and provisions.

Following ghettoisation, it became possible to completely separate supplies to the Jewish population from supplies to the 'Aryan' population in the city. Let us begin by establishing the official food supply for the ghettos. In the context of the ghettoisation, Franz Murer, the infamous advisor on Jewish issues and aide to the regional commissioner Wilna, informed the Jewish Council that the preservation of order in the ghetto was the exclusive responsibility of the Jewish administration. In this regard the advisor on Jewish issues felt the need to point out two crucial points: the Jews were expected to work and would receive payment for their work; in addition, the ghetto would receive food that was to be distributed by the Jewish Council. If people kept calm and fulfilled their tasks, they would be secure within the ghetto.<sup>3</sup> Murer's explanation leaves no doubt that the Jewish 'self-administration' was responsible

for taking over all tasks and duties related to supplying food for tens of thousands of people. The Lithuanians (respectively, Germans) would only take care of providing food supplies for the ghetto.<sup>4</sup>

The ghettos were expected to inform the Lithuanian authorities of the food rations required. This already points up one of the central problems that continuously forced the ghettos' administration to deal with a very difficult situation: in trying to acquire food, they were completely dependent on the local and German officials, a topic this chapter will investigate more closely.<sup>5</sup> The local city administration calculated the amount of food required based on the number of people registered as living in the ghetto, as well as the size of their respective rations.<sup>6</sup> This calculation was particularly problematic because there were always more people living in the ghetto than the Jewish Council dared to inform the occupational forces or the local administration about. On the one hand, there were always people living illegally in the Jewish quarters; on the other hand, the Jewish Council also tried to obscure the number of children and elderly in the ghetto since they were considered to be 'unproductive' and thus lived under the constant threat of an *Aktion* ('operation involving mass assembly, deportation or murder of Jews'). In Vilnius alone the number of people living in the ghetto increased by several thousand during November 1941 and April 1942.<sup>7</sup>

Different forms of acquiring food supplies developed within the ghettos. The ghetto administration itself oversaw the establishment of a relatively large food division responsible for securing supplies for the people. In January 1942, 75 people worked for this division in Vilnius, only the health division (142 employees) and the ghetto police (137 employees) had more staff.<sup>8</sup> The division was in charge of food transportation into the ghetto as well as its distribution among the inhabitants. Transportation outside of the ghetto was organised by specific transport departments and mostly included carts drawn by horses that were used to pick up food at different locations such as slaughterhouses, potato storage facilities and industrial bakeries. The horses used for transportation (the Kaunas Ghetto had 17 horses in May 1942) were in a haggard and gaunt condition.<sup>9</sup> Within the ghetto the administration organised a number of 'points of sale'. However, these were simply points where food was distributed since the ghetto population was not allowed to purchase or sell any goods freely.<sup>10</sup>

Receiving food depended on cards that were allocated and distributed by the *Judenrat* ('Jewish Council'). It was impossible to have access

to food allocations without registering with the ghetto administration beforehand. The disputed introduction of the ghetto passport (featuring first and last names, patronyms, dates of birth and addresses) in addition to the work ID during summer 1942 in Kaunas was only possible because food allocations were only allowed to ghetto inhabitants with proper identification documents.<sup>11</sup> In Vilnius a monthly account reported at the end of 1941: *Die Verteilung der Lebensmittel ist zentralisiert. Der Judenrat hat im Ghetto 3 Läden für Brotverkauf, 2 Läden für Butter u. sonstige Lebensmittel und 1 Laden für Gemüse* ('The distribution of food has been centralised. The Jewish council runs three stores selling bread, two stores selling butter and other foodstuffs and one store selling vegetables').<sup>12</sup> Hermann Kruk, chronicler of the Vilnius Ghetto, reported in January 1942 that a three-person family had a monthly income of 300 roubles at their disposal of which nine roubles had to be paid for bread cards.<sup>13</sup>

This relatively low price, however, turns out to be an illusion when looking at the precise amounts of food supplied to the ghetto. In September 1942, little more than 60,000 kg of bread, 9000 kg of meat and 22,000 eggs arrived in Vilnius for distribution. When comparing these numbers to the 17,509 allocation cards allowing the inhabitants to claim these supplies, one can imagine the meagre rations that people were provided with.<sup>14</sup> This issue was further complicated by discrepancies between the food supplies that were allocated to the ghetto and the real amount of food that was delivered eventually. A report by the Jewish Council in Kaunas written in June 1942 describes this problem in detail<sup>15</sup>: *Die Verpflegung der Ghetto-Einwohner hat im Monat Juni fast keine Änderung aufzuweisen. Die Zuckerration ist bereits seit dem 7. des Monats nicht mehr verabfolgt worden. Auch die Ration an Graupen ist dem Ältestenrat bereits seit dem 17. v. Mts. bis Ende ds. Mts. nicht zugegangen. Anstelle der zu liefernden ca. 3300 kg. Graupen sind im Ganzen nur 300 kg. Roggenmehl von den Behörden zugestanden worden. Diese Schwierigkeiten der Lebensmittelbelieferung bedeuten eine schwere Belastung unter Berücksichtigung des Umstandes, daß auch ohnehin die Lebensmittelrationen als völlig unzureichend anzusehen sind* ('There has been no change in the supply for the people living in the ghetto. The allocated sugar rations have not been provided since the 7th of this month. The allocated rations of pearl barley were not delivered to the Jewish council between the 17th and the end of the month. Instead of around 3300 kg of pearl barley allocated to the ghetto, only 300 kg of

rye flour has been allowed by the authorities. The difficulties with the food distribution are a great burden, particularly because the promised allocations of food supplies are completely insufficient as it is’).<sup>16</sup> In Vilnius the situation appears to be similar: *Im September wurde dem Ghetto von der Butter bloß 25% der festgesetzten Normen... verabreicht. Bedeutend schlimmer geht es mit der Mehl- und Grützeversorgung. Im September wurde dem Ghetto vom Mehl nicht volle 10%, im Oktober etwa 15% der festgelegten Normen verabreicht... Für Gemüse/Kohl, Mohrrübe und rote Rübe [sic] gibt es keine festgesetzten Normen. Indem man aber mit dem bescheidensten Minimum von 100 gr pro Person täglich rechnet, wurde den Ghettoeinwohnern im September nur 20% und im Oktober ja [sic] 15% dieses Minimums verabreicht. Viel schlimmer aber ist es mit der Kartoffelversorgung. Im September und Oktober wurden dem Ghetto überhaupt gar keine Kartoffeln geliefert... Die Ghettobevölkerung bekommt gar kein Fleisch, Fett und Zucker... (‘In September, the ghetto received only 25% of the allocated amount of butter. The supply of flour and porridge is worse. In September, the ghetto received less than 10%, in October about 15% of the amount allocated. There are no allocated amounts for vegetables, cabbage, carrots and red beets. Even though the most meagre minimum allowance of 100 g per day per person is allocated, only 20% of this amount was delivered in September, yes [sic] and only 15% of this minimum in October. The supply of potatoes, however, is much worse still. There was no delivery of potatoes at all to the ghetto throughout September or October... the population of the ghetto is not provided with any meat, fat or sugar at all’).*<sup>17</sup> The Lithuanian administration, however, coldly dismissed these complaints: *Da jedoch die Versorgung der arischen Bevölkerung im November auch nicht ganz regelmäßig durchgeführt werden konnte, so ist die oben geschilderte Lage der Versorgung der Ghettoeinwohner vergleichsmäßig als normal zu betrachten (‘When compared to the supply of the Aryan population, which has also been impossible to allocate regularly during November, the aforementioned situation of the ghetto population can be considered to be comparably normal’).*<sup>18</sup>

The food that reached the ghetto was often spoiled; there were frequent deliveries of rotten potatoes and inedible meat.<sup>19</sup> The Kaunas Ghetto experienced particularly severe conditions in December 1942: *Ab 14.12.1942 ist das Ghetto statt mit Butter wieder mit Pferdefleisch beliefert worden. Die erste Partie Pferdefleisch bzw. Pferdeinneres ist von so schlechter Beschaffenheit gewesen, daß ein Teil derselben, u. zw. 3054 kg. vergraben*

*werden musste, weil derselbe [sic – JT] fuer menschliche Nabrung nicht verwendet werden durfte* ('Since 14 December 1942 the ghetto has received instead of butter again horse meat. The first delivery of horse meat and horse giblets was in such a bad condition that a part of it, around 3054 kg, had to be buried since it was impossible to be used for human consumption').<sup>20</sup> In most cases, Lithuanian bakeries were responsible for the supply of the ghetto.<sup>21</sup> In spite of the difficult conditions, once in a while, there was a surprise: in April 1943, there were not only reports of a regular delivery of food to the ghetto, an additional 47 tonnes of peas and 30 tonnes of potatoes were allocated to the ghetto as well.<sup>22</sup> It was also in Vilnius where orthodox Jews succeeded in adding *matzah* ('unleavened flatbread') to the food cards (10 roubles for 250 g).<sup>23</sup>

Since Jews living in the ghetto were only allocated half the rations the non-working local population received,<sup>24</sup> official supplies were in many ways insufficient to prevent hunger and slow physical emaciation.<sup>25</sup> However, there were other possibilities to acquire food legally. First, there was the option of Jewish work assignments: people working in the brigades were allowed additional rations from June 1942 onwards. Thus, workers were able to access rations equivalent to those of the non-working Lithuanian population.<sup>26</sup> Such goodwill by the German administration of course came with ideological reprimands, as is evidenced in the words of the SS-Standortführer in Vilnius: *Die bei Ihnen beschäftigten Juden erhalten ab heute als Schwerarbeiter die vollen Lebensmittelrationen, wie sie für die einheimische Zivilbevölkerung vorgesehen sind, im Ghetto zugeteilt. Mit Recht kann daher auch eine entsprechende Arbeitsleistung von den Juden verlangt werden* ('The Jews from the ghetto working in your service as hard labourers will receive the full rations allocated to the civilian population from today onwards. Of course, the Jews can be expected to provide an appropriate amount of work for these rations').<sup>27</sup> In Kaunas, additional work as a labourer allowed for an additional weekly supply of 700 g of bread, 125 g of meat and 20 g of fat.<sup>28</sup> In some cases, Jews were allowed to join in so-called work catering at their workplaces, which was of varying quality depending on where one was employed. Although the food received was deducted from the workers' payment, work catering offered many Jewish labourers an important additional source of food.<sup>29</sup>

In addition, some brigades were allowed to take food with them into the ghetto. This allowed further access to considerable amounts of food. On 8 and 9 November 1942 alone the Jewish work brigade assigned to army constructions in Vilnius transported 800 kg of potatoes on a

horse-drawn cart into the ghetto. The brigade assigned to work for the *Schutzpolizei* (‘protection police’) even received a truck to transport 2500 kg of potatoes.<sup>30</sup> This initiated a new specific form of food supply within the ghetto—the cooperative: *Die Brigaden, die in der Stadt selbst arbeiten, bilden [jeweils] ein eigenes Kollektiv. D.h. sie kaufen in der Stadt ein und dort kocht man auch. In der Fabrik “Metalas” arbeiten ungefähr 40 Juden. Jetzt arbeiten dort auch 4 Frauen, die extra zum Kochen eingestellt worden sind. Und nach und nach wird es auch in den anderen Brigaden so eingerichtet* (‘The brigades working in the city formed a collective. This means they purchased goods in the city and also cooked there. About 40 Jews are working in the Metalas factory. Now there are also four women working there who were hired specifically to cook. Step by step, the other brigades will be set up in a similar fashion’).<sup>31</sup> It was obvious that the additional opportunities now open to the brigades or to divisions of the Jewish Council could be used for some kind of cooperative system. Within this system the ghetto’s buyers were able to acquire larger amounts of food en bloc, and prices ‘outside’ were lower than those that had to be paid for smaller quantities when purchased by individual customers. The largest of these cooperatives developed legendary reputations—for example, the police cooperative in Vilnius whose products were available for all Jewish Council members.<sup>32</sup>

It thus becomes apparent that this system provided people working for the larger brigades or their organisational units with further possibilities to access food supplies than the non-working population in the ghetto. But, how did people without such possibilities get by?

The microcosm of the ghetto saw the development of small groups, similar to traditional families, although the people in these groups were often not related to each other. Here, traditional family hierarchies of care were also turned around: adolescents working in the ghettos’ workshops or in the brigades often became the breadwinners and the increased allocations on the food cards helped the entire group. In the aftermath of the verification of Eida Beiličienė’s family status, the ghetto police in Kaunas reported: *Wie wir erfahren haben, führt die Mutter die ganze Zeit die Wirtschaft zu Hause im Ghetto, während ihre drei Töchter dauernd regelmäßig zur Arbeit gehen* (‘We were informed that the mother is organising the household in the ghetto while her three daughters pursue regular work’).<sup>33</sup>

Aside from such ghetto-specific approaches to secure additional food supplies, the Jewish Council tried to establish basic forms of social

welfare. Both ghettos saw the introduction of local food banks. There, meals were handed out for low prices, or even for free, which was possible through subsidies from the ghetto administrations.<sup>34</sup> This included rather impressive amounts of food, as the list of the *Baschpeisungs-Abteilung* ('Feeding-department') of the Vilnius Ghetto indicates for June 1942: 1145 kg of bread, 236 kg of wheat flour and 103 kg of fat were delivered to the local food banks that distributed 9800 meals.<sup>35</sup> Vilnius had a drop-off location for dairy products that offered food particularly for children: aside from milk, it also offered jams, cookies and sweets and, during the autumn of 1942, it is said to have distributed 900 boxes of these per day.<sup>36</sup> Specific soup kitchens offered people a watery but warm meal. In February 1942, they distributed more than 73,000 cans of soup, more than 64% (47,133) of which were given out for free.<sup>37</sup> During the autumn of 1942, there were also seven tearooms and six soup kitchens in the Vilnius Ghetto; more than one million meals had been handed out since October 1941 and the kitchens were preparing approximately 3500 meals per day.<sup>38</sup> In spite of this success, the distribution of food by the ghetto administration continued to raise discontent and, often most likely justified, complaints and accusations of nepotism and corruption.<sup>39</sup>

Both ghettos also had vegetable gardens that were lovingly taken care of. At harvest time, fruits and vegetables significantly improved people's diet. In Kaunas there were even some cows whose milk was much sought after and helped especially to feed small children.<sup>40</sup> The monthly report of the Jewish Council in Kaunas from July 1942 reveals the sowing of about 8718 rutabaga seeds and 9000 white turnip seeds on a 5000-m<sup>2</sup> large field; it also details the constant weeding of the carrot and red turnip fields.<sup>41</sup> The importance of this singular possibility to autonomously grow and harvest food<sup>42</sup> is evidenced by the existence of specific gardening divisions in the administration of both ghettos<sup>43</sup> as well as by the fact that—at least in Kaunas—the ghetto police took charge of securing of the fields.<sup>44</sup> Surveillance of the fields was a serious endeavour: the theft of cucumbers on one occasion meant the loss of both offenders' jobs, a severe verdict considering the living conditions in the ghetto, and one that was intended to deter further thefts.<sup>45</sup>

Alongside this more or less official acquisition and distribution of food supplies was the illegal acquisition of food, a phenomenon deserving of the term *Schattenwirtschaft* ('shadow economy').<sup>46</sup> Both in Kaunas and in Vilnius, it constituted a significant part of all regional economic relations: Jews were a popular workforce in local businesses

as well as appreciated customers when buying food: *Frühmorgens, nach der Nachtschicht, trieb man uns zu Fuß ins Getto zurück... Bäuerinnen verkauften dort [sc. auf dem ehemaligen jüdischen Fischmarkt, der außerhalb des Ghettos lag – JT] selbstgezogenes Gemüse. Wann immer sich die Gelegenheit bot, stahlen wir uns aus den Kolonnen, verschwanden schnell zwischen den Marktständen und packten im Austausch gegen ein Geldstück einen Kohlkopf oder ein anderes Gemüse und eilten wieder zurück zur Kolonne* (‘Early in the morning, after the night shift had ended, we were led back into the ghetto ... there [i.e., at the former Jewish fish market located outside the ghetto – JT] peasant women sold home-grown vegetables. Whenever the opportunity came up, we sneaked out of the convoy, quickly disappeared between the market stalls and exchanged money for cabbages or other vegetables before hurrying back into the convoy’).<sup>47</sup> Trading with Jews turned out to be a profitable business for the local rural population. Exchanging goods was particularly popular among the Lithuanian population since there were only few consumer products available in the cities.<sup>48</sup> If the guards were sympathetic or inattentive, it was also possible to use lunch breaks to pursue business with the local population. This lax attitude among German and Lithuanian employers, however, was not at all appreciated by the German occupation force, as is evidenced by a circular written by the German *Stadtkommissar* (‘City Commissioner’), in Kaunas: *Während der Arbeitszeit sind die Juden unter Bewachung zu halten, damit sie sich nicht von der Arbeitsstelle entfernen, um Handels- oder Tauschgeschäfte zu machen. Es ist unzulässig, den Juden Erlaubnis zum Einkauf von Waren zu erteilen. Es ist verboten, mit den Juden selbst Tausch- und Handelsgeschäfte abzuschließen oder den Juden etwaige Wertsachen und Gegenstände abzunehmen. Es ist grundsätzlich verboten, Bescheinigungen für Juden auszustellen, damit sich diese ohne Bewachung von der Arbeitsstelle entfernen können* (‘Jews are to be kept under supervision during their working hours in order to prevent them from leaving their workplaces to pursue business of trade and exchange. It is illegal to authorise Jews to buy any products. It is also illegal to pursue any form of business with Jews or to take any valuables or goods from them. It is absolutely forbidden to issue documents to Jews allowing them to leave their workplace without guards’).<sup>49</sup>

Although acquiring food outside the ghetto ran many risks (e.g., covering up or taking off the yellow star of David, which was absolutely forbidden<sup>50</sup>), it nevertheless remained a mass phenomenon that

the German administration, itself more or less responsible for the insufficient supply situation in the ghetto and consequently also for illegal trading, never got it under control. The men responsible for organising the food deliveries also made use of their opportunities to buy food for themselves. This appears to have happened regularly in the courtyard of the Lithuanian meat cooperative Maistas in Kaunas.<sup>51</sup> Another option to obtain additional food supplies was to ask someone within the brigade to acquire food. During the summer months, working in the brigades that were sent to help on the farms was particularly popular since the people there of course had the best access to food. In addition, goods were cheaper and the risks of getting caught and arrested were lower too.<sup>52</sup> People who were unable to leave the ghetto often asked a person they trusted or a middleman to purchase goods for them or to sell their valuables. The sources mainly describe cases where the participants of such deals began to fight over conditions or where buyers were cheated, denounced or detained by Lithuanians or Germans.<sup>53</sup> In June 1942, for example, this happened to 15-year-old Abel Jasvain, who explained during his interrogation: *Ich bin heute durch einen litauischen Polizeibeamten in der Jakšto Str. verhaftet worden, weil ich mich von einer Flugplatz-Arbeiterkolonne entfernt... habe. In einem Hause, wo ich vom litauischen Polizisten angetroffen wurde, wollte ich Kartoffeln kaufen. Durch das Ghettoer gelangte ich... mit einer Flugplatzkolonne* ('I was arrested today by a Lithuanian police officer for leaving a group of workers assigned to work at the airport. I was discovered by a Lithuanian police officer in a house where I wanted to buy potatoes. I had been able to leave through the ghetto gate together with the airport workers').<sup>54</sup>

Many workers made use of the opportunity to sell portions of their acquired food after they had returned to the ghetto.<sup>55</sup> 'Even here in the ghetto, a caricature of life emerges. Trade in the streets is increasing and is becoming more and more widespread. The gates ... are full of buyers and sellers. You hear: "Who wants butter?" or "Who's buying butter?"'<sup>56</sup> Such individual transactions, however, were only the beginning: soon afterwards, there were whole gangs of smugglers, organised within and outside the ghettos and with close connections to the respective black markets in Kaunas and Vilnius.<sup>57</sup> The ghetto administration itself was significantly involved in the smuggling which enabled at least a partly sufficient supply of food.<sup>58</sup> When the guards in Kaunas performed their duties less eagerly during the summer of 1942, this had an immediate influence on the ghetto economy: 'The prices of various goods have

gone down and—the main thing—the people in the ghetto have something to eat. There are no hungry people in the ghetto anymore.’<sup>59</sup> Such situations, however, were frequently subject to prompt change, often due to a change of personnel among the guards—like in February 1943, when the entire ghetto suffered from the pedantic supervision of an overeager Lithuanian officer.<sup>60</sup> In some instances, this also led to surprising arrangements. The Jewish Council in Vilnius subsidised the smuggling of bread by paying the smugglers 65 roubles per loaf of bread as well as allowing them, in addition, to trade 2 kg of bread on the black market on their own account.<sup>61</sup> Seen in this context, it is hardly surprising that the first prize for winning a running competition through the Vilnius Ghetto was, for all three age groups of participants, one kilogram of sugar.<sup>62</sup> The peculiar situation was also taken into consideration by the ghetto judiciary. People accused of crimes were often not sentenced to pay fines but rather to hand over natural produce.<sup>63</sup>

The corruption of German and Lithuanian authorities also contributed to the unofficial food supply in both ghettos. Trade along the ghetto fences, which should be mentioned as a last alternative for acquiring food for people living in the ghetto, was mostly able to take place because the Lithuanian guards were compensated for looking the other way. The particular risks of such dealings are evidenced by the fate of Jankelis Balkindas, who was shot on 27 January 1942 outside the ghetto fence *während er einen kleinen Schlitten mit Lebensmitteln zog* (‘while pulling a small sled with food’).<sup>64</sup> Trading along the ghetto fences not only ranked among the most dangerous forms of exchange but was, due to the hectic and frightening nature of such exchanges, often subject to fraud and deception by those who were residing on the safe and ‘Aryan’ side of the fence.<sup>65</sup>

When learning about these conditions, it is not surprising that the most common crimes within the ghettos were related to theft of food or to fraud.<sup>66</sup> On 26 May 1942, Manas Chaimas filed a complaint against Gitė Etkinienė at the criminal investigation department in the Kaunas Ghetto. During a sale on commission, she had promised him 70 RM (Reichsmark) or 3.5 kg of bacon for a pair of shoes. However, he had only received one kilogram of bacon. During the ensuing interview the accused defended herself by claiming that the shoes had been taken from her outside the ghetto and she had given Chaimas one kilogram of bacon simply out of courtesy. The exchange had left her with a significant loss. The ghetto police, however, did not believe the story since it was the

standard version of numerous fraudsters. Although many honest ghetto inhabitants fell victim to such activities the police saw no legal means to open a case.<sup>67</sup> Smaller instances of thievery of food were often committed by children and adolescents in the area around the ghetto gates or in rear courtyards.<sup>68</sup>

Supplying people living in the ghetto with sufficient amounts of food thus often turned out to be a difficult if not impossible task; hunger and insufficient nutrition was a daily experience for the people<sup>69</sup> and a change in behaviour among the ghetto's guards<sup>70</sup> or the failure to deliver promised amounts of food often led to precarious situations. Members of ghetto society were classified according to how their jobs were indirectly connected to access to food. A report about a house search undertaken by the ghetto police in the house of Beirach Rutenberg in March 1942 gives us a glimpse of these everyday realities. The officers reported the results meticulously: *In der von Fraeulein MATHAS und Fraeulein FAIVELSON und der Familie Rutenberg [Ehepaar mit zwei Kindern – JT] gemeinschaftlich genutzten Küche wurden ausser 2 Kuechenschraenken, 2 Kuechentischen und einem Regal mit diversen allen Einwohnern gehoerigen Koch- und Essgeschirr folgende Lebensmittel gefunden: ca. 100 g. Bohnen, ca. 500 g. Graupen, ca. 150 g. Kornmehl, ¼ Paeckchen Persil, 2 kg. Brot zur Verteilung an die berechtigten [sic]* 'In the kitchen used by Miss Mathas and Miss Faivelson and the Rutenberg family [husband, wife and two children – JT] we discovered the following food supplies aside from two kitchen cabinets, two kitchen tables and one rack containing a variety of cooking and eating utensils used by all inhabitants: about 100 g of beans, about 500 g of pearl barley, about 150 g of corn flour, a quarter packet of Persil and 2 kg of bread to distribute to the authorised [sic]'.<sup>71</sup> The food supplies allocated to the citizens of the German Reich in Lithuania are particularly informative in this context: in August 1943, they received weekly rations inter alia of 2425 g of bread, 500 g of meat, 280 g of fat and 330 g of sugar.<sup>72</sup> People living in the ghettos of Kaunas and Vilnius could only dream of such rations.

## NOTES

1. Joachim Tauber, *Arbeit als Hoffnung. Jüdische Ghettos in Litauen 1941–1944* [*Work as Hope: Jewish Ghettos in Lithuania 1941–1944*] (Berlin and Boston: de Gruyter, 2015), 43f.

2. Avraham Tory, *Surviving the Holocaust: The Kovno Ghetto Diary* (Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Press, 1990), 25, 30.
3. Mendel Balberiškis, *Shtarker fun eish* [*Stronger Than Iron*] (Tel Aviv: Hamenora Publishing House, 1967), 300.
4. In some cases the Lithuanian authorities acted more harshly than the German authorities. The Vilnius distribution authorities emphasised that it was Jewish discontent about the distribution system that led to the Jews buying products from Lithuanian farmers outside the city, which consequently led to an increase of prices for the local population: Tauber, *Arbeit*, 44. Further examples see Tauber, *Arbeit*, 340. The supply of burning materials is, in many regards, comparable to the problems encountered with the food supply. See, e.g., Christoph Dieckmann, *Deutsche Besatzungspolitik in Litauen 1941–1944* (*German Occupation Policy in Lithuania 1941–1944*) (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2011), vols I and II, 1113 (Vilnius Ghetto).
5. See also Balberyszski, *Shtarker*, 313.
6. Ibid.
7. Tauber, *Arbeit*, 168. This number is indirectly based on the increasing number of distributed food cards that rose from more than 6000 to 18,500. The massive increase was skilfully explained to the Lithuanian and German authorities by the Jewish Council claiming that the new inhabitants of the ghetto were young men, fit for work, who had escaped from the provinces to Vilnius.
8. Tauber, *Arbeit*, 154. In addition, there was also the hospital staff with 147 people. A similar situation can be found in Kaunas: Tauber, *Arbeit*, 155.
9. On the keeping of horses in the Kaunas Ghetto see Tory, *Surviving*, 173–175.
10. Tauber, *Arbeit*, 165.
11. Tory, *Surviving*, 120–122.
12. LCVA R-643, ap. 3, b. 194, 152f, city administration of Wilna, advisor on Jewish issues addressed to the Gebietskommissar of the city of Wilna, Subject: Monthly Report for November 1941, dated 28 November 1941.
13. Hermann Kruk, *The Last Days of the Jerusalem of Lithuania: Chronicles from the Vilna Ghetto and the Camps* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2002), 160–161. The author estimated 90 roubles for renting out the accommodation as well as 9 roubles to cover the cost of electricity. The ghetto’s black market price for one kilogram was 40 roubles during this time.
14. Numbers taken from Tauber, *Arbeit*, 166. The single rations became even smaller when the approximately 7000 additional cards were handed out to the workers in the brigades as well as to the employees of the Jewish council.

15. Avraham Tory reports a conversation with Eberhard Obst, head of the nutrition and economy department in the commissioner's office of the Kaunas municipality, during which he reported that, instead of 150 tonnes of potatoes, only 100 tonnes had been delivered to the ghetto. Obst accused the Jewish council of lying: 'We sent you 150 tonnes. That's what the master sergeant of the ghetto command told me. You are cheating me. The workers stole the potatoes. The weights and the scales in the ghetto are rigged. You, the Jews, are always cheating me. Where did the 50 tonnes disappear to?': Tory, *Surviving*, 234.
16. LCVA R-973, ap. 2, b. 40, 77, report of the activities of the Council of Elders in June 1942.
17. LCVA R-626, ap. 1, b. 298, 3f, report of the activities of the ghetto administration (n.d.) during the autumn of 1941.
18. LCVA R-614, ap. 1, b. 286, 192, city administration of Wilna, advisor on Jewish issues addressed to the Gebietskommissar of the city of Wilna, subject: Monthly report for November 1941, dated 29 November 1941.
19. LCVA R-972, ap. 2, b. 40, 27, on spoiled meat, see, Tory, *Surviving*, 266. Further inquiry with Steiner, the German trader who had handled the exchange of the Lithuanian meat cooperative Maistas, provided the response that: 'he told us that the meat was edible, especially if Jews were meant to eat it': *ibid.*
20. LCVA R-972, ap. 2, b. 40, 27, 'report of the activities by the Council of Elders in December 1942,' located in the archives of the Kaunas Ghetto police, features a particularity because it indicates corrections as well as deletions. Based on the document, the passage quoted in the text referring to the quality of the horse meat was supposed to be deleted; apparently one wanted to avoid upsetting the German administration. It remains unknown if these changes were made in the document since other copies of these reports have been lost. Instead of bread, the ghetto received sauerkraut for six weeks during the summer of 1942. Tory, *Surviving*, 120.
21. This can be seen in, e.g., LCVA R-973, ap. 2, b. 40, 77, report of the activities of the Council of Elders in June 1942: *Die privaten Bäckereien, welche das Ghetto mit Brot zu beliefern haben, sind damit in der letzten Woche im Rückstande gewesen. Die Beschaffenheit des Brotes ist als durchaus mangelhaft zu bezeichnen.* ('The private bakeries delivering bread to the ghetto have fallen behind with their deliveries during the last weeks. The bread quality can justifiably be described as wholly inadequate'.) This is referring to three bakeries owned by Lithuanian-Germans. Tory, *Surviving*, 263.
22. LCVA R-973, ap. 2, b. 40, 5, back page, report of the activities of the Council of Elders in April 1943.

23. Kruk, *Last Days*, 238: ‘In short, as we said, the world is not lawless. There will be Matzo, and Jews will be able to say “We were slaves of the Pharaoh of Egypt”’.
24. Adequate norms of supply were in use in Kaunas: Tory, *Surviving*, 78. Weekly rations for the non-working Lithuanian civil population included, between September 1941 and April 1942: 1700 g bread, 300 g of flour, 350 g of meat, 200 g of fat, 100 g of processed foodstuffs, 50 g of ersatz coffee, 50 g of salt and 100 g of sugar: Dieckmann, *Besatzungspolitik*, I, 610.
25. An overview of the food supplies arriving in the ghetto in Vilnius, based on Balberyszski, *Shtarker*, can be found in Dieckmann, *Besatzungspolitik*, II, 1116–1117.
26. People working in the ghettos’ workshops or for the ghetto administration received full bread rations: Tauber, *Arbeit*, 242.
27. LCVA R-659, ap. 1, b. 1, 179, the regional commissioner of the City of Wilna to the SS- und Polizeistandortführer Wilna, subject: Supplies for the Jews, from 27 May 1942.
28. Tauber, *Arbeit*, 245. Balberyszski, *Shtarker*, 319, reports the number of ghetto inhabitants in Vilnius to amount to 14,273 people in 1942, including 5730 persons who received extra pay for hard labour as well as 1516 workers who received full bread rations. All in all, 24,500 so-called bread cards had been issued. These cards not only allowed acquisition of bread but also other food supplies. The difference between the numbers described above and the number of bread cards results from Jewish workers who had been sent to work in the unpopular forest camps but, being detainees of the ghetto, fell under ghetto administration.
29. Tauber, *Arbeit*, 239–241.
30. Balberyszski, *Shtarker*, 322. Similarly, Kruk, *Last Days*, 185, who reports that the brigades succeeded in bringing 5 kg of potatoes, 3 kg of bread and a bottle of milk into the ghetto every day in January 1942.
31. LCVA 1390, ap. 1, b. 144, 186ff. (Gerber diary, entry on 26 August 1942). See also Balberyszski, *Shtarker*, 329 on the kitchens and bakeries of larger cooperatives.
32. See Tauber, *Arbeit*, 287–288.
33. LCVA R-973, ap. 2, b. 70, 103, Jewish ghetto police Viliampolė addressed to the security police. Mrs. Beiličienė was 56 years old. Nothing is known about the context of the investigation ordered by the German security police.
34. Balberyszski, *Shtarker*, 328, reports that food costs amounted to 4.50 roubles and later 5 roubles which was converted into 45 resp. 50 pfennig based on enforced exchange rates.

35. Numbers cf. Balberyszski, *Shtarker*, 327. In addition, there were 6000 meals for the ghetto police and for the workers in the ghetto workshops. Kruk, *Last Days*, 172–173, reports that the Office of Social Welfare handed out 26,950 meals for free in December 1941.
36. See Kruk, *Last Days*, 351 on 5 September 1942.
37. Kruk, *Last Days*, 244–245, with further numbers for December 1941 and January 1942. Kruk associates increasing poverty in the ghetto with the increasing number of cans of soup that were distributed for free during this time period.
38. Kruk, *Last Days*, 373 on the tearooms (September 1942) and 376 on the soup kitchens (October 1942).
39. See, e.g., Kruk, *Last Days*, 472. People mocked the proclamation of new guidelines for food distribution that were based on the income of a family and the number of family members: ‘... rations are distributed: (1) according to whom you know...; (2) according to... salaries; (3) according to the size of the family. The first point is dominant’.
40. Tory, *Surviving*, 150, 153. In November 1942, however, cows had to be handed over. The German authorities had already demanded milk be handed over to the ghetto guards at the beginning of the month.
41. LCVA R-973, ap. 2, b. 40, 1, back page, report of the activities of the Council of Elders in July 1943.
42. Apart from the fact that occupational forces had to be asked for permission and, in some instances, were also asked to import certain seeds for planting. See, e.g., Tory, *Surviving*, 232.
43. Especially adolescents were used for these tasks. In March 1943, a gardening class for 14 to 16-year-old youths was set up in Kaunas. Cf. LCVA R-973, ap. 2, b. 40, 77, report of the activities of the Council of Elders in March 1943.
44. On the importance of gardens see, e.g., Tory, *Surviving*, 115–116: ‘The results are pleasing, particularly in view of the accusation that the Jews are strangers to agriculture. The German local authorities and the Gestapo have had to acknowledge that the vegetable gardens in the Ghetto are better cultivated than those in the city’.
45. Tory, *Surviving*, 132 (September 1942).
46. See Tauber, *Arbeit*, 248.
47. Alex Fایتelson, *Im jüdischen Widerstand [In the Jewish Resistance]* (Zürich: Elster-Verlag, 1998), 53.
48. Samuel Schalkowsky, ed., *The Clandestine History of the Kovno Jewish Ghetto Police* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2014), 173: ‘The gentiles learned how to trade from the Jews. They would take the clothing that they had traded from the Jews to the villages, where food was in abundance but not accessible to the Jews’.

49. LCVA R-616, ap. 1, b. 11, 25, the city commissioner of Kauen, Ref. II: To all divisions employing Jews, dated 30 July 1942.
50. As described in Gar, *Umkum*, 117.
51. LCVA R-973, ap. 2, b. 69, 39–42. Interrogation record by the ghetto police. The office of social care ordered the three ghetto inhabitants to attend a meeting at Maistas, the order was confirmed by German ghetto guards. There, the three seized the opportunity and bought meat from Lithuanian carriage drivers. This common trade turned into a scandal after denunciation and the claim that the meat had been stolen from ‘Maistas’. Cf. the detailed report of this incident in Joachim Tauber, “‘Purchasing and bringing food into the ghetto is forbidden’. Ways of Survival as Revealed in the Files of the Ghetto Courts and Police in Lithuania (1941–1944)”, *Remembrance and Solidarity. Studies in 20th Century European History* 5 (2016), 79–93, here 88–89.
52. Yozif Gar, *Umkum fun der jidische Kovne [Destruction of the Jewish Kovno]* (Munich: Central Committee of the Liberated Jews of US Zone 1948), 118.
53. For examples see Tauber, *Purchasing*, 83–90.
54. LCVA R-973, ap. 2, b. 69, 15, the Jewish ghetto police reporting to the security police on 6 July 1942; *ibid.*, 21.
55. It is not without good reason that Gar, *Umkum*, 119–120 emphasises the, in more than one way, privileged situation of these workers who were also often trusted with objects (mainly clothes, but also valuable tableware, glass or jewellery) in order to sell them for their owners in the city. A vivid example of such endeavours can be found in an anonymous report to the Jewish ghetto police in Kaunas: Schalkowsky, *Clandestine History*, 170–177.
56. Kruk, *Last Days*, 194 (February 1942). *Ibid.*, 243 (March 1942): ‘Little shops are opened in the ghetto. In the shops are a few kilos of flour, potatoes, candy. The whole shop is on a little table’. *Ibid.*, 275 (April 1942): ‘Recently many shops have opened in the ghetto, reminiscent of the former wretched little suburban shops... Thus we see that trade is flourishing, especially when we observe the courtyard gates’.
57. About Kaunas, see Gar, *Umkum*, 118, who referred to the Lithuanian partners as speculators. Since there were a few such organisations the price for food regulated itself through their business rivalry. The Jewish dealers were among the wealthiest inhabitants in the ghetto. Their business, however, would cost many of them their lives.
58. Tauber, *Arbeit*, 257; Dieckmann, *Besatzungspolitik*, II, 1115.
59. Tory, *Surviving*, 115.
60. Tory, *Surviving*, 187: ‘Ever since Ratnikas’s arrival, the bakery owners tremble with fear; flour mill owners are afraid; pharmacy workers are

- worried; fear and dread have fallen on the food distribution stations. Not everything here is absolutely 'kosher'. In the Ghetto every-thing is 'kosher' until policemen come and start snooping around'.
61. Kruk, *Last Days*, 287. This was intended to stop or at least slow down the rise in bread prices.
  62. Cf. Kruk, *Last Days*, 342 (August 1942).
  63. One of numerous examples found in Kruk, *Last Days*, 384.
  64. LCVA R-973, ap. 2, b. 33, 300, Jewish ghetto police *Seniūnų Tarybos Pirmininkui Raportas* [report to the head of the Council of Elders], dated 28 February 1942.
  65. Schalkowsky, *Clandestine History*, 104–105. Apparently, it was common to push a stone into the butter.
  66. Tauber, *Arbeit*, 272–273. There were also regular incidents of fraud to obtain increased food rations.
  67. LCVA R-973, ap. 2, b. 145, 144, *Nutarimas* [decision] dated 25 May 1942. Etkiniene's statements were confirmed by a niece and a neighbour.
  68. For examples see Tauber, *Arbeit*, 272–273.
  69. Gar, *Umkum*, 117, reports legitimately that the food supply problem was one of the 'existential questions for the ghetto' [sei eine der 'Existenzfragen fun geto gewen.']. Kruk, *Last Days*, 278 speaks about a massive rise of the food prices in the ghetto in May 1942: 'People are walking around hungry and often tell of cases of fainting at work'. *Ibid.*, 293.
  70. See, e.g., Kruk, *Last Days*, 308.
  71. LCVA R-973, ap. 2, b. 69, 130, report about the search of ghetto inhabitant Beirach Rutenberg's house at Juratės Str. 18. In addition, the police also discovered the following supplies in the family's room: '10 kg of rye flour, 1 packet of chicory, 100 g of rice. [10 kg. Roggenmehl, 1 Paeckchen Chichorie, 100 gr. Reis.]' Nothing is known about the context of this house search. However, another report about a body search of Mr. Rutenberg (that turned up nothing aside from 450 roubles) has also survived (*ibid.*, 131), indicating that this was a case of food smuggling. During another house search in Judelis Cržečovskis' home, the police discovered numerous food items (including 5 packs of coffee, cocoa and 100 g of honey). The search also turned up items that, in the context of ghetto life, can be seen as luxury goods including perfume and leather gloves: LCVA R-973, ap. 2, b. 69, 216–217, report of the search dated 17 January 1942.
  72. Tauber, *Arbeit*, 247. For a detailed comparison of German, Lithuanian and Jewish rations in 1943, see Dieckmann, *Besatzungspolitik*, I, 619.



# Fighting Vulnerability: Child-Feeding Initiatives During the Dutch Hunger Winter

*Ingrid J. J. de Zwart*

In times of hunger and war, children form a notoriously vulnerable group. During World War II children throughout occupied Europe suffered severely from Nazi Germany's exploitation policies and hunger politics, especially in those areas where the circumstances eventually produced famine.<sup>1</sup> Yet during the 'Hunger Winter' of 1944/1945, children in the occupied Western Netherlands proved remarkably resilient to famine conditions. This was noted by health authorities at the time, but is also reflected in the relatively low rates of child mortality.<sup>2</sup> Studies on the Dutch Hunger Winter have generally focussed on the role of the state (e.g. official rations, soup kitchens, state relief) and the grassroots (e.g. black markets, crime, food expeditions) when investigating responses to the famine.<sup>3</sup> Paying little attention to civil society, this orthodox view

---

This chapter is based on my PhD thesis "The Hunger Winter: Fighting Famine in the Occupied Netherlands, 1944–1945," completed at the University of Amsterdam and the NIOD Institute for War, Holocaust and Genocide Studies.

---

I. J. J. de Zwart (✉)  
NIOD Institute for War, Holocaust and Genocide Studies,  
Amsterdam, The Netherlands  
e-mail: i.de.zwarte@niod.knaw.nl

© The Author(s) 2018  
T. Tönsmeier et al. (eds.), *Coping with Hunger and Shortage under German Occupation in World War II*,  
[https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-77467-1\\_15](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-77467-1_15)

on food provisioning fails to explain children's resilience to the deplorable food situation. This chapter innovatively investigates the role of civil society during the Dutch Hunger Winter, showing that community efforts devoted to child nutrition likely mitigated the famine's detrimental effects on this particular group.

By examining child-feeding initiatives in the large conurbations, this chapter argues that civil society networks operating between state and household levels effectively took over food provisioning from official authorities during the crisis. These civil society efforts also comprised of the evacuation of 40,000 malnourished children out of the famine-affected areas, a topic about which I have written elsewhere.<sup>4</sup> For the urban children who remained, it will be demonstrated that non-governmental emergency food assistance was key to survival during the final months of war and occupation. In order to reveal the non-market mechanisms that ensured food relief to children, I draw on a wide variety of official and personal source materials from international, national and local archives. The aim is to advance a deeper understanding of how civil society during the famine in the occupied Western Netherlands functioned as a third distribution system in addition to those governed by the state and those operating at a grassroots level.

The chapter begins by examining the broader political contexts that provided the conditions under which child-feeding initiatives could emerge. This first section includes a brief outline of the food supply in the German-occupied Netherlands, the causes of the famine that lasted from late November 1944 until mid-May 1945 and the principal state responses to the crisis situation. The chapter then moves to the emergence of local self-help entities in the food-deprived Western Netherlands, followed by the constitution of the main NGO that began to serve as an umbrella institute for local relief efforts, the Interdenominational Bureau for Emergency Nutrition. The final section considers the overall results and impact of the child-feeding efforts, concluding with a discussion about the interaction between social processes, physiological vulnerability and resilience to famine.

## FAMINE BETWEEN OCCUPATION AND LIBERATION

Although the general attitude of Nazi Germany towards occupied countries was to treat them as a source of pillage, the Netherlands managed to maintain a relatively privileged position with regard to food when

compared to other European countries. This position had already been attained at the beginning of the German occupation. After the invasion in May 1940, Hitler appointed a German civil administration in the occupied Netherlands, led by Reichskommissar Arthur Seyss-Inquart. In addition to the implementation of racial politics, Hitler's main priority in the occupied Netherlands was to exploit the country's economy, technology and colonies.<sup>5</sup> Starving the Dutch, however, was never part of these plans. Seyss-Inquart received two specific instructions: to not let the standard of living in the Netherlands drop below German levels, and to merge Dutch industry with the German war economy. According to Hitler, the Dutch needed to be won over by National Socialism and voluntarily restructure society along ideological lines, which is illustrative of the relatively 'privileged' position the 'Aryan' Dutch were given among the occupied people of Europe.<sup>6</sup>

As part of these more sophisticated exploitation strategies, it was in Nazi Germany's economic interests to retain those Dutch experts who knew how to maximise agricultural production and set up an efficient wartime rationing system. It was for this reason that throughout the occupation responsibility for the food supply remained in the hands of two Dutch senior bureaucrats who had been playing a leading role in the country's agricultural affairs since the 1930s—Secretary-General of Economic Affairs Hans Max Hirschfeld and Director-General of Food Supply Stephanus Louwe Louwes. The new rationing apparatus in the occupied Netherlands was largely a continuation of pre-war organisations, with the main exception that all regulations became subordinate to the German *Hauptabteilung Ernährung und Landwirtschaft* (Department of Food and Agriculture).<sup>7</sup>

Adequate pre-war preparations ensured that the transition in the Netherlands to agricultural self-sufficiency was achieved in a relatively orderly manner after the country became occupied. By working closely with agricultural producers, the Dutch food administration's policies and expertise contributed to developing advanced rationing institutions, limiting black market trade and negotiating low export demands with Berlin. Most importantly, food governance during the occupation prevented a serious shortage of food in the Netherlands until September 1944, with official rations only slightly lower than those in Germany.<sup>8</sup> By then the Allied advance had seriously begun to affect the Dutch food system. In the first half of 1944, in response to Allied military progress, the German Wehrmacht had inundated considerable areas of cultivated

land and confiscated transportation means, fuel and foodstuffs to prepare for the decisive battle. Combined with the adverse consequences of the *Arbeitseinsatz* ('work effort'), the central rationing system was thus already severely disrupted before the Allies set foot on Dutch soil.

After Operation Market Garden (17–25 September 1944), threats to the food supply evolved into severe damage. Led by Field Marshal Bernard Montgomery, Market Garden intended a quick liberation of the Netherlands while simultaneously establishing a bridgehead into the industrial heart of Germany, the Ruhr. At first, all worked according to plan, as the Allies managed to secure Dutch bridges across the rivers Waal and Maas. But, the offensive over the Rhine, near the city of Arnhem, proved to be the proverbial 'bridge too far'. A German counterattack forced the last Allied troops to retreat from Arnhem by 25 September 1944.<sup>9</sup> Operation Market Garden had failed, and the Northern provinces would remain occupied until the spring of 1945. In the months following the operation, inhabitants of the still occupied part of the country not only experienced intensifying German repression, but also suffered the consequences of losing three major food-producing provinces as well as the only domestic mining area.

Similar to Dutch popular belief, international studies still commonly assume that the German occupying forces played a malevolent role in creating and maintaining famine in the occupied Western Netherlands.<sup>10</sup> However, the famine actually resulted from the culmination of several transportation and allocation problems—both intentional and unintentional. In support of the Allied advance, on 17 September 1944 the Dutch government-in-exile instigated a national railway strike that resulted in cessation of all food transports by train until May 1945. After Dutch authorities refused to call off the strike, Reichskommissar Seyss-Inquart retaliated by cutting off all shipping transports from the agricultural northeast to the western provinces, which were inhabited by 4.3 million people, with 2.6 million residing in conurbations. Realising that deprivation of all basic necessities would lead to social chaos the German occupier soon yielded its extreme retaliation measures. More specifically, it was Wehrmachtbefehlshaber Friedrich Christiansen who anticipated that widespread hunger in the urbanised west would lead to disorder and riots, which the German army dreaded while fighting the Allies in the south.<sup>11</sup> When German civil authorities first partially lifted the shipping embargo after three weeks and fully lifted it mid-November 1944, the circumstances had not yet produced full-blown famine.

Whereas from December 1944 onwards the German civil authorities for military and political reasons began actively collaborating with the Dutch food administration to avoid the worst,<sup>12</sup> other factors further exacerbated the food situation. The most important was the fuel shortage that followed after the liberation of coal-producing Limburg, preventing people from heating their houses and cooking food, but also restraining transportation possibilities. Another contributing issue was that a growing lack of trust in the food system contributed to considerable growth in clandestine production and trade, reaching over 40% of total production.<sup>13</sup> Weather conditions further aggravated the situation, with a period of heavy frosts lasting from 23 December 1944 until 30 January 1945 that prohibited water transportation. Combined with the fuel shortages, German requisitioning of transportation and the railway strike, the period of frosts accelerated famine conditions in the west. At the international level the postponement of emergency food aid played a crucial role. Throughout the war the British government's approach to relief was characterized by its determination to stick to the blockade policy ('economic warfare'), deferring all relief to civil populations until after the ultimate defeat of Nazi Germany.<sup>14</sup> After three precious months of negotiating the Allies and the Germans agreed to allow limited relief supplies from neutral sources. But the severe restrictions imposed on these Red Cross shipments in the months February–April 1945 ultimately prevented a regular relief scheme.<sup>15</sup> Allied food relief would not reach the starving Dutch in large quantities until ten days after German surrender.<sup>16</sup>

The Dutch food authorities responded to this crisis situation from the autumn of 1944 onward along two distinct lines. On the one hand, they aimed at regaining centralised control of food production and transportation in order to raise official rations. The most successful example of this strategy was the establishment of the Central Shipping Company in early December 1944.<sup>17</sup> But these centralising measures could not prevent official rations from dwindling fast. After 26 November 1944, rations dropped below a mere 750 kcal for adults as well as children over four years of age and the period of winter frost caused a first low point at 500 kcal in January 1945. The absolute low point was reached in May, just before German surrender, when rations reached 364 kcal.<sup>18</sup> The desperate situation caused Dutch and German authorities to act antagonistically to their regular policies by decentralising and delegating responsibilities to local levels. Full use of local transportation and

supplies had to ensure maximum consumption levels, which, in light of the crisis, was favoured over maximum official rations. Subsidiarity was an important principle in these decentralisation measures. The food authorities allowed local relief entities to emerge as part of a ‘secondary rationing system’, which developed from farmers’ surpluses in addition to their mandatory supply to the central rationing system. The food authorities’ emergency policies were mainly determined by their inability to identify at individual levels those in need of extra rations and emergency relief.<sup>19</sup>

### INDIVIDUAL VERSUS COLLECTIVE COPING STRATEGIES

The severe food and fuel deprivation during the final months of the war prompted urban dwellers in the occupied west to take matters into their own hands. As living solely off official rations had become impossible, people needed to obtain food supplies from extra-legal sources in order to survive. This caused black market prices to skyrocket, which only the wealthiest could afford. For example, during the winter of 1944/1945 products that determined the quantity of a meal such as bread, wheat and potatoes sold for up to 200 times the retail price.<sup>20</sup> Since most families did not have the means to purchase or barter on the black market regularly, anyone capable ventured out into the countryside to obtain foodstuffs at lower prices. More than half of urban households participated in these *hongertochten* (‘food expeditions’), especially working-class and lower middle-class families.<sup>21</sup> As such, these food expeditions were an indispensable factor in mitigating famine conditions at household levels. Yet, they also left a particularly vulnerable group behind that was unable to embark on food expeditions or buy regularly on the black market: the poor, the sick and elderly, people in hiding and housebound single parents with young children.

Fortunately for these people, the food crisis did not solely produce self-serving, individual and household responses to the food shortage. The state’s shrinking role in providing food was replaced by expanded public participation and communal efforts to relieve the famine. Local self-help entities and relief committees emerged in all towns in the Western Netherlands, mostly comprising of people living in the same street or neighbourhood or belonging to the same religious denomination. According to Air Raid Protection, communal relief was much better organised within working-class neighbourhoods than in upper-class

areas due to the former's larger involvement in the black market, more awareness of the situation of neighbours, as well as less self-centredness and more willingness to help one another.<sup>22</sup>

The examples of successful relief efforts in working-class quarters are plentiful. For example, one neighbourhood committee in Amsterdam arranged the distribution of 55,385 litres of cooked food, for an equal number of meals, between early January and mid-May 1945. Under the guidance of a local physician, 500 of the 6200 neighbours volunteered in the quarter's private food supply, emergency hospital, technical service team, security system and even a veterinarian service. Their initial focus was feeding all children between the ages of 6 and 16, but they soon extended this to 19 years, in order to prevent adolescents from working for the Germans in return for extra rations. Eventually, children between the ages of 4 and 6 were included as well. The committee also managed to occasionally intercept food that was intended for the black market with the help of local Resistance groups and policemen, after which it was equally divided among all neighbours, thereby creating new networks of trust and food coalitions at the local level.<sup>23</sup>

Churches played an important role in organising relief as well, albeit mostly for their own religious communities. An example of this is the Reformed Relief Committee *Hulp voor ons Allen* ('Help for Us All') established in Rotterdam in December 1944. Despite what its name suggests, the committee only aided the Reformed community in the city centre of Rotterdam. From its creation until liberation, the all-male board of Help for Us All provided relief to all 2061 families in its parish with the help of about 100 volunteers and support from a local abattoir. The foodstuffs they reallocated came from sister communities in the rural northeast of the country, as was usually the case with denominational relief committees. In total, Help for Us All distributed over 40,000 meals, placed 36 of their children in host families to share home-cooked meals and evacuated another 200 children to the countryside.<sup>24</sup>

The common denominator of all communal relief efforts in the Western Netherlands was their aim to aid children first. The focus on school age children can be explained by the fact that this vulnerable group was allocated the same meagre rations as adults, while infants and toddlers were entitled to higher rations and occasionally obtained extra meals from state soup kitchens.<sup>25</sup> When in September 1944 the Directorate of Food Supply decided that all coupon-free meals had to be stopped in favour of equal rationing, this included school meals. The

Dutch food authorities officially argued that school kitchens had to close in favour of central control, but sources reveal that the main reason was to exclude National Socialist involvement from the rationing system.<sup>26</sup> When state relief to school children was de facto terminated, the Dutch authorities knew very well that this left a vulnerable group exposed to food deprivation—and it was for this reason that they allowed and encouraged grassroots initiatives to fill this gap.

### THE INTERDENOMINATIONAL BUREAU FOR EMERGENCY NUTRITION

While local authorities had allowed the emergence of relief entities, the Dutch and German national authorities grew concerned about the wide variety of these organisations. As Director of Food Supply, Louwes aspired to coordinate local efforts in order to retain some level of control, but also to receive official approval from Seyss-Inquart for non-governmental emergency aid. In early December 1944, meetings were held between Louwes and representatives of the *Inter Kerkelijk Overleg* (IKO: ‘Interdenominational Counsel of the Churches’). Louwes acknowledged that the IKO was in a strong position to take on relief responsibilities, as city-dwellers trusted the churches because of their critical stance towards the occupier and the organisation also provided a link to food-producing communities in the northeast of the country. Moreover, the IKO could embody the ‘apolitical’ organisation the occupier would require for this job. Louwes arranged a meeting between an IKO representative and Seyss-Inquart, who agreed with the initiative on the condition that there would be just one body for both emergency relief and the evacuation of children. His approval led to the establishment of the *Inter Kerkelijk Bureau voor Noodvoedselvoorziening* (IKB: ‘Interdenominational Bureau for Emergency Nutrition’), which became the only official organisation allowed to gather food alongside the rationing system.<sup>27</sup>

On 14 December 1944 the IKB put together a board with representatives from the Reformed and Roman Catholic denominations as well as from the public school system in order ‘to serve the emergency nourishment of ALL sections of society—even the non-religious ones [*sic*]’.<sup>28</sup> Officials from the public sector and industrial leaders joined the IKB in a special advisory committee. The Central IKB was established in The Hague, where an earlier interdenominational relief committee

had already taken on child-feeding tasks. The Central IKB's main task was to establish local departments throughout the occupied areas and to divide foodstuffs accordingly.<sup>29</sup> The churches raised the required funds while families would pay for individual nourishment. In December 1944 and January 1945, two representatives of the IKO made trips to the northeastern provinces to talk about these plans with religious leaders, local relief committees and Seyss-Inquart's provincial representatives. According to a post-war report by the IKB, it was 'due to the spontaneous collaboration of many good citizens among the authorities and private individuals that a smooth-running operation was launched'.<sup>30</sup> All large towns established district offices and hundreds of distribution points were opened. The IKB even set up a separate postal service for internal correspondence. Within a month the IKB had managed to achieve the full and active cooperation of both German and Dutch officials and attracted thousands of volunteers.<sup>31</sup>

The basic principle of the IKB was 'By the churches, for all', which meant that the allocation of supplies was determined by medical or social priority, and not according to religious or political affiliation as before. In addition to organising emergency nutrition, its second task was to evacuate malnourished children from the urban west to rural areas.<sup>32</sup> For both tasks, it was imperative that the IKB established its own medical department to screen all those eligible for emergency feeding or evacuation, for which it cooperated with local general practitioners, paediatricians, internists, Municipal Health Services and the Public Health Inspection. To ensure that the selection would be as fair as possible the IKB even wrote down and distributed guidelines in which the Chief of the Medical Department had meticulously explained the proper procedures and weight-for-height requirements that determined to which urgency class the examined patient belonged.<sup>33</sup>

The IKB emergency nutrition department focussed on three vulnerable groups that showed physical signs of malnourishment: toddlers (3–5 years), children (6–15 years) and adults, of which children formed the largest group. As the number of needy children increased so quickly, it was not possible to accept them into the feeding programmes based on doctors' notes alone. Independent medical screening ultimately determined whether children could participate in meals six times a week (more than 20% below average weight for sex, height and age) or three times a week (15–20% underweight). In The Hague, where the Central IKB was located, almost thirty per cent of examined children fell into the

highest ‘urgently necessary’ category.<sup>34</sup> Similar criteria were applied to the other two groups, with the one for adults being particularly strict. The IKB only distributed food to people over 16 years old whose lives were directly at stake due to malnourishment, such as patients suffering from oedema, cachexia (>30% underweight), TB, or those who had already become bedridden. In addition to these official categories, the IKB clandestinely cooked and delivered food to local hospitals, elderly homes, staff members of municipal emergency homes, political prisoners and even people in hiding.<sup>35</sup> In total approximately half a million people—out of an urban population of 2.6 million—received IKB food relief for short or prolonged periods of time.<sup>36</sup>

### FEEDING THE FUTURE

Since the IKB was essentially an overarching institution for already existing efforts, the nature and modus operandi of child-feeding programmes differed in each region. For instance, in Amsterdam a child-feeding organisation called *Onderlinge Hulp Noodtoestand Schooljeugd* (OHNS: ‘Mutual Aid Emergency Situation Schoolchildren’) was established by the former head of the Municipal Department of Child Clothing and Feeding to aid Protestant and public schoolchildren, while Catholics retained their own organisation. These relief committees coexisted until the extreme fuel shortage around mid-February 1945 forced them to merge, with the local IKB only supplying the OHNS soup kitchens and not interfering in the allocation of meals.<sup>37</sup> In Rotterdam, many child-feeding initiatives declined to merge or cooperate with the IKB, and a citywide relief committee such as in Amsterdam or The Hague was never achieved. Their local IKB focussed on feeding children from the poorest quarters.<sup>38</sup> In Utrecht, a local department of the Dutch Red Cross started child feeding in early October 1944, which was later taken over by the cooperating churches, even though they never formally operated under the name of the IKB.<sup>39</sup> Similar developments took place in smaller towns throughout the occupied west, which confirms that these were indeed uncoordinated bottom-up initiatives.<sup>40</sup>

The results of the child-feeding programmes were nothing short of impressive. The OHNS in Amsterdam grew enormously after its mandatory merger. Whereas during its start-up week in mid-February 1945 it could only provide 6000 extra meals per day for a total of 120,000 school children, by March this number had grown to 38,000—feeding

nearly a third of all school children.<sup>41</sup> When on 10 January 1945 the Central IKB in The Hague took over from the cooperating churches, these had already been feeding some 6000 children. Two weeks later, this number had risen to 12,000, and between February and April 1945 it was fixed around 28,000, more than half of the children in the city.<sup>42</sup> In Utrecht the Committee for Child Nutrition rejected the general stance that only children who were diagnosed with malnourishment should benefit from the meals. Instead, all school children aged 6–14 years became entitled to one meal a week and those diagnosed with malnourishment could have multiple meals a week.<sup>43</sup> In all towns, relief efforts resulted in the extra feeding of approximately a third to half of the neediest urban children. The meals typically consisted of half a litre of a nutritional, yet watery mix of potatoes, vegetables, sugar beets and sometimes even tulip bulbs. The IKB Rotterdam calculated that the average meal comprised of 200 kcal, which was not much but still an indispensable supplement to the famine rations.<sup>44</sup>

An additional reason why local relief efforts prioritised school age children specifically was that younger children could not easily be fed in a school setting. But when relief organisations discovered that toddlers were suffering from malnourishment just as severely, by the end of February 1945 most began to include young children aged 4–5, followed by the age group of 1–3 years shortly after.<sup>45</sup> Although most child-feeding initiatives also made efforts to place children in better situated host families for home-cooked meals, communal eating was generally a precondition for relief provisioning. The food was always consumed collectively, mostly in classrooms, but certainly never in a household setting, which was to ensure that the extra rations would not be redistributed to other household members or, specifically, would not be eaten by the male head of the household.<sup>46</sup>

By feeding the children, civil society organisations took over care responsibilities from households in order to protect the future of Dutch society. But in doing so, they usually established boundaries of who did or did not belong, as is exemplified by the exclusiveness of the independently operating neighbourhood and denominational committees. The Nutrition Council in Leiden considered this shift in responsibility necessary for the future of society: ‘The Committee is deeply convinced that, if this plan succeeds, it will prevent a catastrophic breakdown of the health of Leiden’s youth as well as a limitless demoralisation’.<sup>47</sup> This demoralisation was especially an issue when it came to religious beliefs.

In Utrecht, school children were divided into three separate religious groups, ensuring that ‘the children were situated in the spiritual sphere that they belonged to’. For toddlers, separate eating was considered less important, as they were supposedly too young to be influenced by alternative religious persuasions.<sup>48</sup> The rigid Catholic relief politics in Amsterdam even resulted in all Catholic school children receiving extra meals, against only 20% of Protestant and public school children.<sup>49</sup> Child relief during the Dutch famine thus had its limits when it came to solidarity and community.

Because the problems with food supply were by no means solved by the time of liberation in May 1945, many relief committees remained active until the summer of 1945. In most towns, between May and June the number of children participating in IKB relief grew larger as they enjoyed more opportunities of supply and transport.<sup>50</sup> In mid-June 1945, municipalities took over school feeding once again and participation rapidly declined, which can be explained both by official rations increasing to pre-war levels and the desire to normalise family life as quickly as possible. Following declining trust in the household’s authority over children’s health during the famine period, collective feeding had taken away responsibility from the parents and placed it at community levels. After the food crisis parents reclaimed their traditional role as caregivers, making municipal school feeding just as unpopular as it had been before the war.

### VULNERABILITY AND RESILIENCE

The importance of the child-feeding programs during the famine was recognised early on by post-war relief organisations as well as military authorities. In July 1945, Major Miller from the Allied Relief Department in Utrecht wrote a letter stating that it had been anticipated that there would be little or no relief organisation available for children, but that they found an excellent organisation, the Committee for Child Nutrition, that was already operating and capable of immediate expansion.<sup>51</sup> In the summer of 1945 a child-feeding committee in Gouda even concluded that, because of local efforts in their town, no single child had died from starvation. The municipality of Amsterdam similarly concluded that ‘experts have assured that the distribution of food by the OHNS had saved hundreds of children from starving to death. It is due to the OHNS that the Amsterdam schoolchildren have surmounted the hunger period without major drawbacks’.<sup>52</sup>

Qualitative evidence on the impact of the child-feeding initiatives upon children's health seems supported by mortality data. During the Dutch famine the overall lowest death rates were seen among children and young adults, especially within the age group of 1–14 years. At the height of the famine in March 1945, death rates reached 0.7 per population of 1000 boys and 0.6 for girls, compared to roughly 0.4 in normal times.<sup>53</sup> The pattern is even more distinct in the age group 5–14 years. New research shows that mortality patterns of school age children in the urban west were hardly affected during the famine, and even remained below those in non-affected parts of the country.<sup>54</sup> In Amsterdam, for example, school age children were the only age group to show a mortality peak in the summer of 1943, instead of during the famine in 1944/1945.<sup>55</sup> These patterns contradict findings on other modern famines, including those that occurred during World War II, in which school age children often suffered a large proportionate rise in deaths.<sup>56</sup>

The Dutch case suggests that, while children may be physically vulnerable to food deprivation and infectious diseases, their strong social position in Dutch mid-twentieth-century society may also have made them particularly resilient to famine conditions.<sup>57</sup> Increased death rates are only famine traits insofar as families or society is not able to sustain a child at the expense of others. In other words, physiological vulnerability to malnutrition can be modified by social factors and processes that minimise the expected effects.<sup>58</sup> In addition to the evacuation of 40,000 malnourished children, extensive food provisioning to Dutch children certainly positively affected their survival chances.<sup>59</sup> Most importantly, by targeting those children who suffered most from malnutrition during the Dutch famine, non-governmental relief entities were able to compensate when the state and the family could no longer protect their children.

## CONCLUSION

For the occupied Western Netherlands the final months of war presented a period of declining state food provision to children, which led to the rise of a new type of relief organisation: local child relief entities. Emerging from existing networks and traditional Dutch practices, these civil society organisations occupied a central position between the household and state levels and, as such, effectively took over care and relief responsibilities. The collective decision to help school age children first was supported by both the German and the Dutch authorities,

and resulted in the extra feeding of approximately a third to half of the children in famine-affected areas. As supported by qualitative and quantitative evidence on child health and mortality, the impact of these child-feeding efforts should not be underestimated. Therefore, this chapter has argued for a better understanding of the relationship between physiological vulnerability to food deprivation and social processes fostering resilience—an understanding that entails abandoning the dualistic focus on the state and the individual with regard to food distributions systems, and instead including the civil society networks operating between these levels.

## NOTES

1. Violetta Hionidou, *Famine and Death in Occupied Greece, 1941–1944* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 68–172; Nadezhda Cherepenina, “Assessing the Scale of Famine and Death in Besieged Leningrad,” in *Life and Death in Besieged Leningrad, 1941–1944*, ed. John Barber and Andrei Dzeniskevich (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 60–61.
2. Cornelis Banning, “De Gezondheidstoestand in Nederland: De Algemeene Sterfte en Sterfte door Verhongering,” *Nederlandsch Tijdschrift voor Geneeskunde* XXVII (1945): 311–315; Peter Ekamper et al., “War-Related Excess Mortality in The Netherlands, 1944–45: New Estimates of Famine- and Non-Famine-Related Deaths from National Death Records,” *Historical Methods: A Journal of Quantitative and Interdisciplinary History* (2017): 1–16.
3. See, e.g., Gerardus J. Kruijer, *Sociale Desorganisatie. Amsterdam tijdens de Hongerwinter* (Meppel: J.A. Boom & Zoon, 1951); Gerard M.T. Trienekens, *Tussen ons Volk en de Honger: De Voedselvoorziening, 1940–1945* (Utrecht: Stichting Matrijs, 1985); Hein A.M. Klemann, *Nederland 1938–1948: Economie en Samenleving in Jaren van Oorlog en Bezetting* (Amsterdam: Boom, 2002); Ralf D. Futselaar, *Lard, Lice and Longevity: A Comparative Study on the Standard of Living in Occupied Denmark and the Netherlands, 1940–1945* (Amsterdam: NIOD, 2008).
4. Ingrid J.J. Zwarte, “Coordinating Hunger: Child Evacuations During the Dutch Food Crisis, 1945,” *War & Society* 35, no. 2 (2016): 132–149.
5. Johan C.H. Blom, “Nazificatie en Exploitatie,” in *De Organisatie van de Bezetting*, ed. Henk Flap and Wil Arts (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 1997), 17–30.

6. Loe de Jong, *Het Koninkrijk der Nederlanden in de Tweede Wereldoorlog* 4 (The Hague: Staatsuitgeverij, 1972), 46–64; Johannes Kroll, *Arthur Seyss-Inquart und die deutsche Besatzungspolitik in den Niederlanden 1940–1945* (Vienna: Böhlau Verlag, 2015).
7. Trienekens, *Tussen ons Volk en de Honger*, 43–44.
8. John Lindberg, *Food, Famine and Relief 1940–1946* (Genève: United Nations, 1946), 21.
9. J.J. Gulmans, “Operatie Market Garden,” in *De Bevrijding van Nederland, 1944–1945: Oorlog op de Flank*, ed. Christ Klep and Ben Schoenmaker (The Hague: Sdu Koninginnegracht Publishers, 1995), 118–124, 137–149.
10. See, e.g., Stephen Devereux, *Theories of Famine* (New York: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1993), 160; Polymeris Voglis, “Surviving Hunger: Life in the Cities and Countryside During the Occupation,” in *Surviving Hitler and Mussolini: Daily Life in Occupied Europe*, ed. Robert Gildea, Olivier Wieviorka, and Annette Warring (Oxford and New York: Berg, 2006), 22; Lizzie Collingham, *The Taste of War: World War Two and the Battle for Food* (London: Allen Lane, 2011), 176; Ian Buruma, *Year Zero: A History of 1945* (New York: Penguin Press, 2013), 54.
11. “Final Report of the Central IKB, 1945,” Transcript: P.V.J. van Rossem, *Het Ontstaan van het Inter Kerkelijk Bureau en zijn Organisatie* (Amsterdam: n.p., 1984), 52–61; secret telegram to C.L.W. Fock in London, 17 November 194: *Nieuwe Rotterdamsche Courant*, 23 April 1955; Transcript: *ibid.*, 2; J. Ravesloot, *De Houding van de Kerk in de Bezettingstijd, 1940–1945* (n.p.: n.p., 1946), 30.
12. NIOD Institute for War, Holocaust and Genocide Studies [NIOD], 212a, inv. no. 167, diary of H.M. Hirschfeld, 15 December 1944; NIOD, 458, inv. no. 27, hearing Hirschfeld at Nuremberg Trial of Seyss-Inquart, 14 June 1946, 11686, 11696; De Zwarte, “Coordinating Hunger”.
13. Klemann, *Nederland 1938–1948*, 212; Klemann, “Die Koren Onthoudt, Wordt Gevloekt Onder het Volk: De Zwarte Markt in Voedingswaren 1940–1948,” *BMGN—Low Countries Historical Review* 115 (2000): 546–549.
14. Joan Beaumont, “Starving for Democracy: Britain’s Blockade of and Relief for Occupied Europe, 1939–1945,” *War & Society* 8, no. 2 (1990): 57–82.
15. National Archives and Records Administration Washington [NARA], 331, Entry 2, Box 117, 118; Public Record Office Kew [PRO], PREM 3/221/11, PREM 3/221/12, WO 219/1325, WO 220/668, FO 238/303, CAB 119/140, CAB 122/993. See also: Bob Moore, “The Western Allies and Food Relief to the Occupied Netherlands, 1944–1945,” *War & Society* 10, no. 2 (1992): 91–118.

16. NARA, 331, Entry 2, Box 118; Frank S.V. Donnison, *Civil Affairs and Military Government North-West Europe 1944–1946* (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1961), 148–149.
17. NIOD, 212a, inv. no. 114, 118, 167; *ibid.*, 216 h, inv. no. 77, 89, 98, 100, 284, 312, 313, 325; Hans M. Hirschfeld, “De Centrale Reederij voor de Voedselvoorziening,” *Maandschrift Economie* 10 (1946).
18. Directorate of Food Supply, overview of weekly rations in Western Netherlands, 1 October 1944–45, January 1946.
19. National Archives, The Hague [NA], 2.11.30.05, inv. no. 68, meeting between Louwes and Von der Wense, 22 March 1945.
20. NA, 2.06.082, inv. no. 2, report November–December 1944; NIOD, 932a Zwarte handel; Klemann, “Die Koren”.
21. NIOD, 0332, File C, D; inv. no. 44, 45; Kruijer, *Sociale Desorganisatie*, *passim*.
22. NIOD, 249-0332, inv. no. E, letter from H.C. Determeijer (Air Protection) to RvO, 18 July 1946.
23. J.H. Wagenaar, *Een Jaar Noodcomité* (Amsterdam: n.p., 1946), 4–6; De Zwarte, “Save the Children: Social Self-Organisation and Relief in Amsterdam During the Dutch Hunger Winter,” *Food & History* 14, no. 2–3 (2016): 83–108. See also NIOD, 249-0332, inv. no. B1, J.L.H. van de Griek, “De Voedselhulp aan de Amsterdamse Schooljeugd in de Hongerwinter van 1944–45”; Stadsarchief Rotterdam [SR], 728, inv. no. 104, circular letters ‘Comité Het Kralingsche Kind 1945’, December 1944–February 1945; *ibid.*, weekly report IKB, 29 January 1945; Haags Gemeente Archief [HGA], 0610-01, inv. no. 999, letter from Municipal Services to Mayor, 15 January 1945.
24. W.A. van Dongen, *Oorlogswinter 1944–1945: Commissie van de Gereformeerde Kerk van Rotterdam-C, ‘Hulp voor ons Allen’* (Rotterdam: Meinema, 1945).
25. NA, 2.11.30.06, inv. no. 148, documentation on food distribution to infants, 1944–1945.
26. *Ibid.*, inv. no. 3, report October 1943–July 1946. See also NA, 2.19.070.01, inv. no. 199, report NVD office Utrecht on September 1944–February 1945.
27. NIOD, 249-1076, inv. no. 23, report on meeting between IKO and Louwes, n.p.; Ravesloot, *De Houding van de Kerk*; Van Rossem, *Interkerkelijk Bureau*, 10.
28. *Charity in Wartime: Final Report of the Local Interclerical Office: The Hague and Its Environments* (The Hague: Interkerkelijk Bureau, 1946), 5.
29. NIOD, 182F, inv. no. 144, report of the local IKB in The Hague ‘How it all started’, April 1945.

30. *Charity*, 6; NIOD, 249-1076, inv. no. 22, report on journeys to northern provinces, n.p.
31. Seyss-Inquart and other high German officials did raise objections to the IKB's position later on in the crisis. NIOD, 212a, inv. no. 106, letter from Wimmer and Schwebel to Hirschfeld, 12 February 1945; NA, 2.11.30.05, inv. no. 68, meeting between Louwes and Von der Wense, 22 March 1945.
32. De Zwarte, "Coordinating Hunger".
33. Herman J. Köster, *Inter Kerkelijk Bureau voor Noodvoedselvoorziening's-Gravenhage en Omstreken: Toelichting der Verstrekkingen op Medische Basis* (The Hague: IKB, 1945).
34. NIOD, 182F, inv. no. 132, overview of IKB work by Dr Berkhout, 1 October 1945; Köster, *Inter Kerkelijk Bureau*, 7-8.
35. *Charity*.
36. Van Rossem, *Inter Kerkelijk Bureau*, 60
37. NIOD, 249-0332, inv. no. B1: Van de Griek, 'De Voedselhulp...'; *Jaarverslag van Amsterdam 1945: Het Jaar der Bevrijding II* (Amsterdam: Stadsdrukkerij, 1946), 2-3.
38. GAR, 728, inv. no. 104, weekly reports and minutes of IKB, January-April 1945.
39. Henri W. Julius, *Kinderen in Nood: De Kindervoeding in de Stad Utrecht in de Nood-Winter 1944-1945* (Utrecht: Commissie Kindervoeding voor de Stad Utrecht, 1946).
40. See, e.g., NIOD, 249-0332, inv. no. C3; Archief Delft [AD], 8, inv. no. 17; Erfgoed Leiden en Omstreken [ELO], 0257, inv. no. 1, 8; D.P. Kalkman, *Een Lichtpunt in een Donkeren Tijd: De Geschiedenis van het Noodcomité Moordrecht* (Moordrecht: Noodcomité Moordrecht, 1945).
41. NIOD, 249-0332, inv. no. B1: Van de Griek, 'De Voedselhulp...'
42. *Charity*, 22.
43. Julius, *Kinderen*.
44. GAR, 728, inv. no. 104, report IKB, 28 March 1945.
45. NIOD, 182F, inv. no. 132, minutes of meeting between IKB and paediatricians, 18 April 1945; Julius, *Kinderen*, 17-18.
46. NIOD, 249-0332, inv. no. B1, Van de Griek, 'De Voedselhulp...'
47. ELO, 0257, inv. no. 27, report of Committee School Feeding, 1944.
48. Julius, *Kinderen*, 44.
49. NIOD, 249-0332, inv. no. B1, Van de Griek, 'De Voedselhulp...'
50. *Charity*, 22.
51. Letter of Major Millen, Allied Relief Province of Utrecht, 3 July 1945, in Julius, *Kinderen*, 18.
52. *Jaarverslag Amsterdam 1945*, 4.
53. Ekamper et al., "War-Related Excess Mortality".

54. Calculations by NIDI using non-public microdata from Statistics Netherlands: De Zwarte, "The Hunger Winter" (unpublished PhD thesis).
55. *Maandberichten van het Bureau van Statistiek der Gemeente Amsterdam, 1944–1945*; De Zwarte, "Save the Children".
56. See, e.g., Cormac Ó Grádá, *Famine: A Short History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press), 101–102; Alex de Waal, "Famine Mortality: A Case Study of Darfur, Sudan, in 1984–1985," *Population Studies* 43 (1989): 5–24; Serguei Adamets, "Famine in Nineteenth- and Twentieth-Century Russia: Mortality by Age, Cause, and Gender," in *Famine Demography: Perspectives from the Past and Present*, ed. Tim Dyson and Ó Grádá, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 158–180; Hionidou, *Occupied Greece*, 168–172; Cherepenina, "Besieged Leningrad," 60–61.
57. This not only applies to the Netherlands. After the Great War the conviction grew that children had a key role to play in protecting the modern post-war society and preventing new social catastrophes. Twentieth-century relief practices consequently began focussing on children more than on any other group. Dominique Marshall, "Humanitarian Sympathy for Children in Times of War and the History of Children's Rights, 1919–1959," in *Children and War: An Historical Anthology*, ed. James Marten (New York: New York University Press, 2002), 184–186.
58. Joan P.W. Rivers, "The Nutritional Biology of Famine," in *Famine*, ed. G. Ainsworth Harrison (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), 92–93; George Kent, *The Politics of Children's Survival* (New York: Praeger, 1991), 2–3.
59. The same has been argued by Robert W. Davies and Stephen G. Wheatcroft, *The Years of Hunger: Soviet Agriculture, 1931–1933* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, rev. ed. 2009), 221–222, 418–419, 425; Hionidou, *Occupied Greece*, 169.

# INDEX

## A

- Above the surface (*na powierzchni*),  
191
- Administration, 5, 20, 38, 50, 52–54,  
83, 86, 88, 90, 91, 93, 94, 96,  
97, 101, 103, 107, 128, 134,  
136, 137, 146, 147, 149, 151,  
155, 157, 163, 171, 173, 175,  
197, 251, 276–280, 282, 284,  
287–289, 295, 297, 307
- Agriculture, 5, 8, 29, 32, 75, 85, 101,  
144, 146, 147, 153, 154, 156,  
157, 170, 171, 266
- Alcohol, 13, 30, 34, 39–41, 75
- Allies, 62, 100–102, 105, 110, 203,  
296, 297, 307
- Altmaterialverwertung*, 123, 124,  
134–136
- Altstoffkunde*, 125
- Altstofflehrer*, 125
- Animals, 38, 69, 130, 147, 258
- Argentina, 121
- Armia Krajowa* (‘Home Army’), 192,  
193
- Assets, 28, 33, 36

- Athenian. *See* Athens
- Athens, 7, 10, 204, 206, 207, 209,  
210, 218–222
- Autarchy, 123
- Autarky, 7
- Authority, 62, 78, 88, 91, 106, 111,  
153, 156, 168, 209, 264, 304
- Averof, Evangelos, 205, 219

## B

- Backe, Herbert, 5, 101, 102, 107
- Badoglio, Pietro, 100, 111
- Balkans, 169
- Barter, 11, 13, 16, 17, 69, 75, 93,  
186, 187, 189, 192–194, 197,  
214, 227, 228, 233, 236, 298
- Belarus  
country, 49–54, 56, 57
- Belgium, 7, 12, 143–145, 147, 148,  
151–154, 169, 186
- Berlin, 17, 18, 27, 42, 44, 46, 103,  
124, 125, 134–136, 170, 177,  
179, 180, 195, 196, 286, 295
- Besaçon, 133

- Black market, 11, 13, 14, 16, 27, 28, 31, 32, 35, 37–39, 41–43, 73, 75, 77, 83–97, 99, 100, 102–110, 130, 147–149, 151, 156–162, 190, 195, 203, 212, 224, 227, 231, 235, 238, 285, 287, 295, 298, 299
- Black Sea, 29, 250
- Bohemia and Moravia, 7, 20, 167–169, 171–173, 176–179. *See also* Protectorate
- Bohemian lands, 168–170, 172
- Bohemian provinces, 169, 171
- Bombings, 102, 256, 262
- Bone meal, 121, 122, 132
- Bone(s), 119–135
- Bone-soap exchange, 131–133
- Bordeaux, 119, 131, 132, 134, 138, 139
- Bordello, 185, 190
- Brandl, Otto, 87
- Bread, 8, 9, 11, 14, 15, 31, 37, 50, 54–56, 62, 66, 67, 70, 71, 73, 144, 145, 153, 189, 191, 226, 231–233, 236, 238, 239, 244, 260, 261, 278, 280, 282, 285, 286, 288, 289, 292, 298
- Bribery, 38
- Brittany, 14
- Brno, 175
- Butter, 11, 12, 20, 30, 33, 40, 67, 70, 72, 93, 145, 232, 237, 246, 278–280, 284, 292
- Byelorussian SSR, 255
- C**
- Caloric value, 29
- Camp, 23, 29, 35, 39, 92, 121, 191, 224–226, 230–232, 236, 238, 240, 245, 246, 258, 262
- Candles, 69, 129
- Caucasus, 5, 6, 250, 251, 253, 255, 256, 260, 261, 266, 269–271
- Chian. *See* Chios
- Chiffoniers*, 121
- Children, 8–10, 15, 16, 36, 38, 40, 44, 51, 52, 54, 55, 57, 63, 64, 66–70, 72, 77, 78, 84, 86, 120, 123, 125, 129, 130, 153, 155, 184, 196, 198, 206–215, 217, 218, 220, 222–225, 228, 230, 233–236, 238, 241, 250–267, 270, 271, 277, 282, 286, 293, 294, 297–306, 308, 310
- Chios, 204, 209, 210, 213, 215–217, 221, 222
- Chocolate, 67, 68, 85, 257, 265
- Christiansen, Friedrich, 296
- Churches, 299–303
- Interdenominational Bureau for Emergency Nutrition (IKB), 300–302
- Circassia, 251
- City, 15, 21, 34, 35, 38, 39, 43, 44, 54, 55, 65, 69, 78, 93, 105, 108, 116, 128, 131, 137, 147, 149, 195, 198, 208, 225–231, 238–241, 254, 261, 262, 264, 269, 276, 277, 281, 283, 287–291, 296, 299, 300, 303
- Civil society, 293, 294, 303, 305, 306
- Coalmine, 161
- Cod liver oil, 72, 73
- Coffee, 34, 35, 40, 41, 66–69, 71, 74, 81, 85, 214, 221, 289, 292
- Coignet, 128, 137
- Collaboration, 133
- Communist, 42, 51, 159, 160, 177
- Communist Party of Czechoslovakia, 177
- Consumers, 66, 67, 86, 88, 94, 95, 127, 144, 148, 161

- Control, 6, 27, 30, 32, 36, 39, 53, 62, 64, 65, 67, 86, 87, 90, 100, 101, 105, 108–110, 120, 122, 125, 127, 151, 171, 173, 190, 197, 198, 203, 284, 297, 300
- Corruption, 30, 33, 34, 38, 39, 89, 105, 107, 110, 282, 285
- Countryside, 11, 12, 29, 31–34, 36, 39, 73, 77, 78, 87, 88, 93, 94, 116, 147, 153, 189, 229, 298, 299, 307
- Crete, 11
- Crimea, 183
- Currency, 12, 28, 33–35, 39, 103, 171
- Cyprus, 215–217
- Czechoslovakia, 168, 177, 178
- Czech Republic, 168
- D**
- Delegate, 127, 131, 132, 137–139, 154, 157
- Demarcation line, 87, 96, 127
- Denmark, 185, 197
- Department, 12, 22, 96, 97, 101, 131, 157, 158, 168, 181, 198, 220, 227, 231, 235, 285, 288, 301, 302, 304
- Departmental action committee, 129–131, 134
- Depoliticisation, 173
- Detergent, 123, 132
- Diet, 65, 73, 77, 226, 239, 260, 282
- Dijon, 133, 137
- Distribution, 3, 7, 8, 10, 29, 30, 33, 34, 41, 86, 100, 102–108, 110, 132, 144, 148, 155, 157, 158, 170, 176, 204, 206, 207, 224, 231, 232, 275–279, 282, 287, 290, 292, 294, 299, 301, 304, 308
- Don, 183, 211, 233, 251, 255, 268, 269
- Dutourd, Jean, 95
- E**
- Economic control, 83, 88, 90–94, 96, 97, 120
- Emergency food assistance. *See* Relief
- Employers, 37, 74, 96, 144, 145, 149, 151, 153, 155–162, 283
- employers organisation, 149, 151, 155
- Enterprise, 168
- Essen, 18, 162, 170, 179
- Ethnic Germans, 9, 188
- Evacuation, 255, 271, 294, 300, 301, 305
- Exchange, 12, 16, 28, 33–35, 39, 40, 54, 66–68, 75, 85, 86, 131, 132, 134, 163, 183–186, 189, 226, 232, 254, 283, 285, 288, 289
- Execution, 272
- Exploitation, 3, 4, 6, 7, 9, 12, 17, 29, 62, 85, 100–104, 107, 108, 110, 113, 120, 135, 144, 146, 183, 186, 187, 189, 195, 228, 293, 295
- exploitation policies, 3–5, 102, 183, 187, 293
- F**
- Factory canteens, 167–171, 173, 175–177
- familiar, 227
- families, 227
- Family, 12, 15, 16, 34–36, 40, 50, 52, 54, 62, 68, 70, 94, 114, 129, 146, 148, 149, 152, 154, 190, 208, 213, 215–218, 224, 226, 227, 229–231, 233–236, 238–241, 244, 250, 253, 254, 256, 257, 266, 267, 270, 273, 278, 281, 286, 290, 292, 304, 305

- Famine, 10, 18, 52, 77, 196,  
203–212, 214–218, 220–222,  
226, 228, 250, 253, 293, 294,  
296–298, 303–307, 310  
malnourishment, 303  
oedema, 302  
resilience, 294, 304, 306  
vulnerability, 294, 304–306
- Farmers. *See* Peasants
- Fascists, 107, 109
- Fat, 12–14, 30, 64, 66, 67, 72, 102,  
106, 121–123, 128, 129, 132,  
145, 279, 280, 282, 286, 289
- Feedstock, 122, 123
- Fertilizer, 32, 103, 121–123, 135, 149
- Fish, 14, 29, 63, 64, 70, 73, 81, 149,  
283
- Florence, 112
- Flour, 8, 9, 11, 12, 30–32, 40, 66, 67,  
69, 71, 234, 279, 282, 286, 289,  
291, 292
- Food committees, 170
- Food import, 62, 145, 154, 171
- Food production, 147, 297
- Food supply  
research topics, 50–54, 56, 57
- France, 3, 4, 7, 11, 12, 14, 40, 83–93,  
95, 119–121, 127, 129–135,  
169, 186, 197, 205  
occupied zone, 85  
unoccupied zone, 85
- Frank, Hans, 29
- Frank, Karl Hermann, 175, 179, 180
- Fuel, 30, 37, 41, 103, 106, 132, 161,  
177, 229, 296–298, 302
- G**
- Gardening, 78, 147, 149, 282, 290
- Gdansk, 125
- Gelatine, 120–122, 127, 129, 132, 138
- Generalgouvernement* (GG), 188, 224.  
*See also* Poland
- German Labour Front (DAF), 174
- German troops of occupation, 49, 85
- Germany, 4, 5, 18, 28, 39, 61, 63, 64,  
72, 73, 77, 85, 89, 95, 104, 108,  
110, 119–123, 125, 128, 129,  
133, 135, 144, 147, 151, 154,  
160–162, 169, 170, 172, 175,  
176, 178, 184, 188, 190, 195,  
197, 203, 205, 206, 243, 293–297
- Gestapo, 176, 226, 230, 237, 290
- Ghetto, 36, 43, 44, 187, 191, 197,  
223–226, 232–237, 240–242,  
245, 246, 275–292
- Glass, 120, 128, 148, 262
- Glue, 120–123, 127, 129, 132, 138
- Glycerine, 121, 122, 127, 129
- Gold, 28, 33–35, 121, 246
- Göring, Hermann, 5, 123
- Graudenz (Grudziądz), 192, 199
- Greece, 3, 4, 7, 11, 15, 18, 21, 22,  
84, 196, 203, 205, 216–219,  
221, 222, 306, 310
- H**
- Hair, 119, 121, 128, 256, 257
- Health, 21, 72, 75–77, 125, 155, 195,  
206, 207, 238, 239, 277, 293,  
301, 303–306
- Heck, 123, 126, 129–131, 133, 136,  
137
- Hermoupolis, 212, 221
- Heydrich, Reinhard, 174, 175, 177,  
180, 181
- Hiding, 16, 23, 35, 56, 66, 94, 104,  
223, 224, 226, 234–241, 243,  
256, 298, 302
- Hierarchy of needs, 184
- Holocaust, 21–23, 43, 57, 82,  
135, 185, 197–199, 223, 225,  
240–244, 246, 271, 272, 287,  
293, 307. *See also* Shoah
- Home Army. *See* *Armia Krajowa*

Horn, 119, 124  
*Hunger plan*, 184  
 Hunger Winter. *See* The Netherlands  
 Hygiene, 125, 129  
 Hyperinflation, 28

## I

Illegal production, 34, 37  
 Industry, 7, 8, 37, 44, 62, 63, 76,  
 112, 120–123, 125, 127, 128,  
 135, 144, 145, 148, 151–154,  
 164, 168–170, 172–175, 177,  
 178, 180, 295  
 Intelligentsia, 5, 33–36, 206, 207

## J

Jews, 9, 11, 12, 16, 17, 20, 21, 23,  
 29, 34, 43, 90, 124, 188, 191,  
 194, 224–245, 262, 271, 272,  
 276, 277, 280–283, 287–291  
 Joanovici, Joseph, 87, 94

## K

Kataev, Valentin, 249, 268  
 Kattowitz, 125  
 Kesselring, Albert, 102, 112, 116  
*Knochenlehrkarte*, 125, 126, 136  
 Kraków, 40, 45, 245  
 Krasnodar (region), 251, 255,  
 259–262, 266  
 Krupp, 170

## L

Labour, 4, 7–10, 13, 15, 28, 70, 88,  
 120, 125, 145–147, 151, 153,  
 157–161, 163–165, 168–176,  
 180, 188, 189, 195, 227, 228,  
 230, 232, 245, 250, 253,  
 255–258, 266, 267, 289

Landowners, 103, 106, 107, 111  
 Liberec, 125  
 Liger, 127, 128, 131, 133, 134  
 Lille, 132  
 Lorraine, 7, 127  
 Louwes, Stephanus Louwe, 295, 300,  
 308, 309  
 Lubricants, 120–122, 127  
*Lumpensammler*, 121, 134, 135  
 Luxembourg, 125  
 Lvov (*Lwów*, *Lviv*), 224  
 Lyon, 128, 131, 132, 137, 138

## M

Macon, 133  
 Margarine, 67, 71, 72, 236  
 Market, 8, 12, 13, 17, 29–34, 36, 37,  
 39–41, 50, 66, 75, 76, 88, 91,  
 93, 94, 102, 106, 109, 149, 151,  
 160, 161, 171, 183, 226, 236,  
 237, 254, 283, 294, 296, 307  
 Marseille, 96  
 Meat, 8, 12–14, 29, 30, 32, 33, 55, 66,  
 68, 73, 78, 81, 93, 97, 103, 122,  
 125, 127, 129, 130, 144, 145,  
 148, 232, 233, 237, 239, 278–  
 280, 284, 286, 288, 289, 291  
 Medical care, 3, 4, 250  
 Memories  
   research topics, 51–55, 57  
 Merchants, 30, 86, 94  
 Metals, 63, 87, 120, 121, 125, 128,  
 155, 244  
 Metaxas, Ioannis, 205  
 Milan, 103, 105, 108, 112, 113, 115,  
 116  
 Milk, 12, 30, 66–68, 70–72, 78, 208,  
 233, 236, 246, 282, 289, 290  
 Miner, 145, 146, 149  
 Moldavian SSR, 255  
 Money, 13, 14, 33, 34, 36, 75,  
 76, 85–88, 92, 94, 97, 104,

- 143, 148–151, 153, 155, 184,  
189–191, 215, 216, 232–234,  
236, 237, 239, 241, 245, 246,  
258, 283
- Montpellier, 132
- Mortality, 4, 7, 22, 203, 204, 209,  
210, 213, 218, 293, 305, 306,  
309, 310
- Mykonos, 209
- N**
- The Netherlands, 7, 13, 22, 144, 149,  
162, 169, 294–296, 306, 310  
Hunger Winter, 293, 294
- Network, 102, 192, 208
- Niessner, 128, 130, 132, 133,  
136–138
- Nizhyn, 12, 22
- North-Ossetia, 251
- Norway, 3, 7, 61–64, 66, 71, 73–80,  
82, 135
- O**
- Odessa, 183
- Oils, 106, 121, 123, 132
- Oral history, 11, 51, 57–59, 80, 204,  
219, 243, 245, 247, 251, 252,  
267, 270–273
- Oral memoirs  
method, 51
- Orphans, 250, 255
- Oslo, 63, 68, 72, 77–82
- P**
- Panneck, 132
- Paper, 36, 53, 63, 120–123, 125, 128,  
154, 226, 238, 244, 271
- Paris, 119, 120, 127–130, 132
- Parisian, 128
- Parma, 105
- Partisans, 32, 54–57, 106–108, 115,  
116
- Peasants, 6, 11, 15, 16, 29, 33, 53,  
219, 227, 228
- Penalties, 29, 30, 39, 78, 91, 92
- Pétain, Philippe, 86, 95, 127, 128
- Phosphorus, 121, 127
- Pilsen, 169, 170
- Pioteurs* ('bone-pickers'), 128
- Piraeus, 7, 204, 209, 210, 221
- Poland, 9, 16, 22, 23, 27, 28, 31, 33,  
43–47, 84, 102, 169, 188–191,  
193, 195, 197, 198, 224, 225,  
243. *See also* *Generalgouvernement*  
(GG)
- Police, 28, 31, 33, 36, 38, 39, 46, 56,  
62, 83, 87, 90, 91, 96, 105, 110,  
114, 116, 175, 180, 190, 191,  
199, 236, 259, 272, 277, 281,  
282, 284–286, 288–292
- Portugal, 34
- Potatoes, 11, 12, 14, 30, 36, 50,  
53–56, 65, 66, 69–71, 73, 78,  
81, 93, 147, 154, 157, 227, 238,  
239, 246, 275, 279–281, 284,  
288, 289, 291, 298, 303
- Poverty prostitution*, 196
- Poznan, 125
- Prague, 21, 168–170, 174, 175,  
177–181
- Price control, 86, 96
- Prices, 13, 15, 16, 23, 28, 29, 31, 33,  
37–42, 72, 73, 75, 86, 87, 90,  
93, 94, 102, 103, 105, 109, 148,  
151, 152, 156, 157, 161, 162,  
170, 203, 238, 281, 282, 284,  
287, 292, 298
- Prisoners of war, 6, 9, 76, 85
- Propaganda, 42, 55, 84, 90, 107, 116,  
120, 122–124, 129, 130, 133,

- 137, 152, 168, 173–177, 219, 252, 264
- Prostitution, 11, 184, 185, 189–192, 194, 196, 197
- Protectorate, 7, 11, 20, 21, 167–181.  
*See also* Bohemia and Moravia
- Q**
- Quisling, Vidkun, 62
- R**
- Radom, 8, 9, 20, 39, 44
- Rag-and-bone, 121, 123, 124, 128, 130
- Rahn, Rudolph, 101, 103, 113
- Ration cards/coupons, 8, 13, 14, 17, 22, 64, 66–68, 70, 86, 125, 175, 231, 246, 276
- Rationing, 4, 8, 9, 66, 68, 70, 72, 73, 77, 83, 85–87, 95, 100, 102, 107, 110, 130, 144–146, 150–152, 154, 157–159, 162, 208, 295, 296, 298–300
- Raw materials, 28, 37, 40, 41, 62, 86–88, 120, 127, 169, 171
- Recycling, 120–123, 125, 126, 128, 133, 134
- Red Army, 226, 228, 261
- Reich Ministry of Education, 122
- Reichsfrauenausschuss*, 122
- Reichskommissariat für Altmaterialverwertung* (RfA), 123–125
- Relief, 145, 172, 204, 222, 293, 294, 297–305, 307–310
- Red Cross, 297, 302
- Secours National, 130
- Swedish–Swiss Joint Relief Commission (JRC), 204
- Rennes, 132, 137
- Repression, 33, 90–92, 97, 107, 270, 296
- Requisitions, 10, 19, 50, 55, 73, 81, 93, 111, 120
- Resistance, 6, 15, 43, 50, 62, 63, 88–92, 106, 107, 109, 110, 133, 176, 214, 290, 299
- Rist, Charles, 7, 19, 84
- Robstofflehrkarten*, 125
- Rome, 103, 108, 112, 114–117
- Rostov-on-Don (region), 255
- Russia, 3, 5, 19, 151, 183, 198, 255, 260, 270, 310. *See also* Soviet Union (UDSSR)
- S**
- Saint-Etienne, 133
- Saint-Quentin, 132, 138
- Salvage. *See* Scrap
- Salzburg, 125
- Schools, 52, 121, 124–126, 129–131, 133, 249, 250
- Schutzstaffe (SS), 39, 62, 101, 106, 108, 114, 171, 230, 280
- Sicherheitsdienst des Reichsführers SS* (SD), 108, 171
- Scorched earth policy, 6
- Scrap, 123–125, 128, 129, 134
- Scrap Salvage, 123
- Secours National, 130, 134, 137
- Separate, 120, 123, 129, 130
- Service for the Salvage and Use of Waste and Old Materials, 119
- Sexual barter, 184–189, 193, 194, 197
- Sexual violence, 183, 185, 187, 189, 199
- Sex work, 185, 189–191, 196
- Shoah, 242, 246. *See also* Holocaust
- Shop, 12, 14, 33, 34, 69, 92, 146, 148, 159, 161, 276, 291

- Shopkeepers, 11, 86, 94  
 Skouras, 217, 221, 222  
 Slaughterhouses, 119, 121, 122, 277  
 Smolensk, 11, 19, 21  
 Smuggling, 11, 12, 28, 33, 36, 43, 45, 189, 224, 233, 234, 284, 285, 292  
 Soap, 10, 69, 102, 121, 123, 126, 129, 131–135, 237, 264, 265  
 Social order, 5, 13, 17  
 Social policy, 149, 153, 160, 173, 174, 250  
 Soldiers, 6, 7, 11–13, 38–40, 42, 54, 71, 89, 101, 104, 109, 124, 183, 185, 191, 194, 197, 209, 212, 213, 227, 254, 256, 259–263, 265  
*Sonderbeauftragter für Knochen- und Hornerfassung*, 124  
 Soup kitchens, 167, 175, 204, 207, 208, 211, 220, 231, 282, 290, 293, 299, 302  
 Soviet Union (USSR), 4, 5, 8, 12, 15–17, 19, 27, 28, 40, 84, 169, 184, 186, 188, 194, 195, 250, 251, 253, 257  
 Starvation, 4, 9, 10, 21, 33, 35, 36, 64, 110, 197, 217, 231, 234, 238, 241, 259, 260, 304  
 Starvation policies, 4, 6, 7  
 Stavropol (region), 251, 252, 254–256, 258, 261, 266  
 Stearin, 121  
 Stöcker, 123, 136  
*Stossaktionen*, 123  
 Strike, 72, 150, 151, 158–160, 296, 297  
 Structural violence, 186  
 SUDOS, 119, 120, 127, 131, 132, 134, 138  
 Supply, 4, 6–13, 30, 34, 38, 41, 50–54, 56, 57, 67, 73, 84–86, 88–90, 93–96, 108, 110, 120, 122, 125–127, 144–148, 151–155, 157–159, 162, 169, 171, 173–176, 180, 189, 206, 224, 227, 231, 275, 276, 278–281, 284, 285, 287, 289, 292, 294–296, 298–300, 304, 308  
 Survival, 4, 6, 8, 9, 11, 12, 17, 23, 30, 33, 35, 42, 45, 47, 49, 51, 56, 78, 88, 92, 93, 104, 110, 163, 184–198, 207, 208, 212, 213, 217, 224, 231, 234, 237, 240, 241, 250, 253, 257, 266, 267, 291, 294, 305, 310  
 Survival sex, 184–188, 191–197  
   Hunger prostitution, 185, 191  
   Poverty prostitution, 184  
 Survival strategies, 185, 187–190, 194  
 Suwałki, 190  
 Sweden, 34, 62, 64, 77, 205  
 Switzerland, 34  
 Syros, 204, 209–211, 213, 217, 220–222  
 Szkolnikoff, Michel, 87
- T**  
 Tallow, 121, 127  
 Tatsiana Kasataya, 49  
 Tea, 34, 40, 67–69, 74  
 Terboven, Josef, 62  
 Textiles, 30, 37, 38, 153, 164  
 Theft, 282, 285  
 Third Reich. *See* Germany  
 Tobacco, 13, 30, 32, 34, 37, 64, 65, 69, 71, 81, 148, 150, 259  
 Toulouse, 132  
 Toussaint, Rudolph, 101  
 Trade, 3, 12, 13, 27, 33–36, 38, 39, 41, 56, 62–64, 75, 85–87, 94, 121–125, 129, 130, 134, 149, 151, 156, 160, 169, 170, 174,

- 179, 180, 187, 283–285, 290,  
291, 295, 297
- Traders, 86, 94, 109, 133, 228
- Trade union, 152, 155–159
- Traffickers, 84, 87, 88, 90–92, 94
- Turkey, 35, 204, 210, 213, 215
- U**
- Überwachungsstelle für industrielle  
Fette*, 123
- Ukraine, 5, 6, 9, 12, 15, 19, 21, 85,  
224, 238, 243, 262, 272
- United Kingdom (UK), 34, 61–63
- United States of America (USA), 34
- V**
- Vegetables, 8, 11, 54, 66, 73, 74, 97,  
106, 147, 169, 226, 237, 278,  
279, 282, 283, 303
- Vichy, 84, 88–92, 119, 127, 128, 133
- Vienna, 125
- Vierjahresplan*, 134–136
- Vierjahresplanbehörde*, 123
- Villages  
location, 49–55, 57
- Violence, 55, 56, 110, 183, 185–187,  
189, 193, 194, 197, 199, 225, 229
- W**
- Warsaw, 27, 31–42, 50, 190–192, 198
- Waste, 120–122, 124, 125, 127–129,  
131
- Waste services, 120, 123, 124
- Wehrmacht. *See* German troops of  
occupation
- Wholesalers, 33, 36, 40, 67, 94
- Women, 8, 10, 11, 14–16, 22, 23,  
36, 40, 52, 55, 63, 64, 66, 67,  
69–72, 78, 84, 92, 120, 122,  
135, 144, 148, 172, 183–187,  
189–197, 199, 207, 208, 224,  
225, 227–232, 235, 236, 238,  
241, 244, 255, 258, 263, 266,  
281, 283
- Workers, 11, 33, 36, 37, 40, 54, 72,  
77, 86, 104–108, 111, 115, 116,  
144, 145, 147–162, 167, 168,  
170, 172–177, 185, 190, 192,  
194, 195, 206, 230, 232, 236,  
280, 284, 287–291
- female workers, 172
- Working class, 14, 36, 147, 152, 155,  
157
- Works councils, 174
- Workshops (illegal), 33, 34, 37, 38,  
230, 281
- World War I, 5, 14, 111, 121, 144,  
145, 154, 161
- World War II  
event, 49, 51, 57
- Z**
- Ziegler, 123