THE FOOD SITUATION IN GERMANY WITH
THE ACcompanyING AGRICULTURAL
BACKGROUND

(2)

APPROVED:

E L. KINGSBURY
Major Professor

[Signature]

Minor Professor

[Signature]

acting - C. A. BRIDGES
Director of the Department of History

[Signature]

L. A. SHARP
Chairman of the Graduate Council
THE FOOD SITUATION IN GERMANY WITH
THE ACCOMPANYING AGRICULTURAL
BACKGROUND

THESIS

Presented to the Graduate Council of the North
Texas State Teachers College in Partial
Fulfillment of the Requirements

For the Degree of

MASTER OF SCIENCE

By

Chas. R. Jones, B. S.

Frost, Texas
August, 1940

88335
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES .................................................................................. V

Chapter

I. AGRICULTURAL BACKGROUND OF FOOD PROBLEMS, 1870-1933 .............................................................................. 1

   Introduction: German Agriculture from 1870 to 1910; Agricultural Divisions and Cooperatives
   The World War Period from 1914-1922
   Period of Recovery and Prosperity from 1923-1929
   Agricultural Depression, 1930-1932; Demands for Tariff Protection; Support of Nazism

II. THE FIRST FOUR YEARS OF NAZISM, 1933-1936 ................. 15

   Outline of Agricultural Legislation from 1918-1934
   German Farm Income for 1932, 1933, and 1934
   General Conditions and Outlook for 1934
   Food Situation in 1935; First Evidences of Shortage
   The Four Year Plan Set-up in 1936; Agricultural Production in 1936; Serious Food Shortage and Rationing at Christmas, 1936
   Summary of Food Situation by End of 1936

III. THE TIGHTENING OF THE BELT, 1937 .................................... 33

   Conditions in Early Months of 1937; Variations in Per Capita Consumption
   Harvests for 1937; Grain Crops Requisitioned; Strict Supervision of Farming by Food Estate; Incompatibility of Grain-Tariff Policy

IV. CONTROLLED ECONOMY, 1938 .................................................. 45

   All Classes Bearing Burden of Reduced Consumption
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agricultural Output for 1938; Outlook for 1938-1939</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Possibilities of Replacing Imports Subject to Blockade; Extent of Russian Aid</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effect of Austrian and Sudeten Conquests on Self-Sufficiency Drive</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Per Capita Consumption in 1938; Compared with 1937; Substitute Foods</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rigid Price Control; Continuous Rationing of Supplies</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summation for 1938</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V. SHORTER RATIONS, 1939</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conditions in Early Months of 1939</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chronic Shortages More General Mid-Summer, 1939</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spread of Fear Psychosis and Discontent; Government Attempts to Reassure People</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government Ration System Extended to Entire Population; Changes in Ration System; Juggling of Quotas</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malnutrition</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conditions at Close of 1939</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VI. BEHIND THE BLOCKADE, 1940</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction; Late 1939 and Early 1940; Ability of People to Continue on Curtained Rations</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food Rations for Spring of 1940; Economy in the Home</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Situation in Summer of 1940; Replacement of Imports Cut-off by Blockade; Achievements toward Self-Sufficiency</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effect of Conquests of Norway, Denmark, Belgium and Holland on Food Conditions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outlook for the Winter of 1940</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

BIBLIOGRAPHY                                                            104
LIST OF TABLES

Table                                                      Page

1. Consumption of Foodstuffs in Germany, 1928-1932          13

2. Per Capita Food Consumption in 1937 Compared with 1929 and 1932 37

3. Recent Yields of Staple Crops, 1928-1938                 48

4. German Imports Compared with Available Exports of Coveted Neighboring Countries 50

5. German Cereal Supplies and Imports, Showing the Percentage of Imports and Total Supplies 94

6. German Fat Supplies, Imports, and Exportable Surplus of Neutrals 96
CHAPTER I

AGRICULTURAL BACKGROUND OF FOOD PROBLEMS

(1870-1933)

Compared with Italy, France, and Great Britain, Germany possesses a poor soil, an unfavorable geographical position and structure, and an uncertain climate with long, severe winters. Transportation facilities were formerly insufficient for moving agricultural products; her peasantry were poor and backward; all these factors combined to make Germany lag agriculturally when her neighbors were highly successful and prosperous.

By the early 1870's, railroads and improved waterways had knit the country together and reduced local self-dependence. After 1870 industrial expansion and foreign agricultural competition exerted a powerful influence on German agriculture. The first offered growing markets, as the towns expanded and the population grew even more rapidly than before 1870. The same industrial expansion drew labor from the countryside, raised rural wages, attracted peasants' children, and thus reduced the supply of unpaid labor, on which family farming so largely depends. Foreign competition came largely from Russian rye and American, Russian, and Hungarian wheat. "Junker and peasant alike saw their
market invaded, the price of their produce falling, and the burden of their costs becoming heavier. \(^1\) They called for protection and received it, as the manufacturers were also seeking protection for their products. In 1879 a duty of six and one-half cents a bushel was levied on imported wheat and rye; this was raised to twenty cents in 1885, and by 1905 was thirty-six cents a bushel. \(^2\) German agrarian policy sought to retain and strengthen the peasantry, protect the Junkers (big landowners), and keep the country as nearly self-sufficient in foodstuffs as possible.

In an effort to make agriculture more productive and profitable, the Agrarian League was formed in 1893. Through representatives in the Reichstag and various pressure groups, the imposition of higher import duties on agricultural products was brought about. Agricultural societies were formed in great numbers to aid the small farmers; purchasing and selling agencies were set up, and credit banks established. As a result, the area under cultivation was expanded steadily, for drains and fertilizers brought sand bogs and heaths into cultivation. “During the next forty years [1870-1910] the output per acre of rye and potatoes nearly doubled and that of wheat, oats, and barley rose three-fourths.” \(^3\) Hogs and cattle increased three hundred per cent and twenty-eight per

---

\(^1\) Herbert Heaton, *Economic History of Europe*, p. 465.
\(^2\) Ibid., p. 466.  \(^3\) Ibid.
cent, respectively, during the same period. This great advance in productive efficiency was largely due to cooperation, science, and education of the farmer. All the technical science that could be employed was applied to agriculture.

The total agricultural area of Germany rose from seventy-nine million acres to eighty-one million in the period 1890-1910. In 1907 forty-eight and one-half per cent of the area was in farms of from five to fifty acres (owned by ninety-five per cent of all landowners); farms from fifty to two hundred and fifty acres constituted twenty-nine per cent of the area; those of two hundred and fifty acres and over made up twenty-two per cent of the total. The average size of farms was about twenty acres, while eighty-four per cent of the total area was in farms larger than twelve and one-half acres. (A farm of ten acres was considered capable of producing a sufficient income to make the farmer no longer a small peasant, but well-to-do and independent).

Germany was divided into two agricultural spheres, the eastern part and the central and western part. The East (principally East Prussia) was flat and sandy, thinly populated, with the land chiefly in the hands of aristocratic owners in the form of large estates up to two thousand acres; transportation facilities and waterways were insufficient.

---

4J. E. Barker, Modern Germany, p. 494.
5Ibid., 496.
and markets not very near at hand.

In Middle and Western Germany the country was more broken, soil more fruitful, and the population more dense. Manufacturing establishments and markets were near at hand, and waterways and railways provided cheap, plentiful means of transportation. The land was held chiefly by small farmers and peasants, who as a rule worked their own land. These small agriculturalists produced, on the whole, better harvests per acre than the large landowners, who had their fields cultivated by hired gang labor. Largely owing to this difference, the Middle and West were devoted to dairying and raising of fruits and vegetables, while in the East, smaller yield per acre, grain crops, poor fields, and insufficient cultivation was the rule. The small landowners were also more efficient in stock raising, owning a high percentage of all stock except sheep.

East of the Elbe River were these poverty-stricken large landowners, subsisting largely on government donations and complaining of the agricultural depression, while the small farmers of Middle and Western Germany were prosperous, contented, and apparently bettering their situation. The percentage of indebtedness was high on the large estates, while the small farms of West Germany and medium-sized ones of Middle Germany had a comparatively low debt load. Hence, the prosperity of German agriculture was variable and worked in inverse ratio to the size of the holdings (down to twelve acre farms).
On the farms of less than twelve and one-half acres, most of the work was done by the landlord and his immediate family. Women and children did much of the heavy work in fields in addition to their lighter housework. On the medium-sized farms (12½ - 100 acres) the well-to-do peasant, thrifty, robust, and contented, worked with the aid of one or two outside laborers, while the women tended the cattle, and the children helped harvest the grain, potatoes, and fruits.

The large estates presented a different condition. They were mostly worked by gang labor (often Poles and Austrians) under the management of paid supervisors, who were lazy, did little supervision, and, hence, got only a minimum of work of the poorest quality from the laborers. Very few of these laborers owned any land at all, while more than half of the workers on small farms owned some property themselves. The gang laborers were looked upon as mere cattle by the overseers and were treated as such. Naturally, the interest of these men was only in their daily wages; so they did not hesitate to abandon the farm for the town in an effort to better themselves.

In 1882, forty-two and one-half per cent of the population of 40,000,000 was engaged in agriculture, and by 1896 this had fallen to thirty-six percent of about 50,000,000 people; 6

6R. S. Baker, Seen in Germany, p. 117.
by 1907 the number of agrarians was only twenty-eight per cent of an estimated 60,000,000 people. In East Germany loud cries of lack of laborers were heard from the large farmers. The rural wages of Austria and Russia were so low at that time, however, that from 200,000 to 500,000 migratory workers supplied needed labor at harvest time.

Powerful factors in German economic life were the agricultural cooperatives. The movement developed easily because of friendly interest of neighboring farmers, free talk and observation, and establishment of community interest. State and local bodies (communes) assisted in forming the associations and often furnished funds. Societies developed rapidly; there were only 3,000 in 1890, while by 1911 there were 25,000. Associations were of various types, credit ones being the most numerous, but there were others for dyke-building, development of irrigation, draining of fields and swamps, milling and storing of grain, effecting insurance, providing machinery for small farms by cooperative buying and use. The cooperatives were organized into powerful political groups which brought pressure to bear on and influenced legislation to obtain protective tariffs on agricultural products, eliminated the middleman, bought and sold products directly through the association, provided huge

---

8 Heaton, *op. cit.*., p. 466.
markets in towns for peasant use, and, in short, did more for the small farmer than all laws put together.

On the eve of the war, Germany was supplying about two-thirds of its wheat, all its rye, half its barley, one-third of its oats, and one-third of the world's potatoes. It had not relaxed its grip on any form of agricultural produce as had Britain and others, and behind the tariff wall a vigorous effort to attain efficiency had been made on both large and small farms. War put the country to a severe test. The seas and Russian plains were cut off, and the supplies of food, raw materials, and the all-important fertilizers—Peruvian and Chilean guano and Chile's nitrates—were thereby reduced. The withdrawal of man and horse power hurt peasant cultivators; the soil could not be adequately dressed; productivity fell, and livestock declined in number. By 1916 the pinch had become very severe; rationing was instituted, substitute foods invented, and meatless days decreed. "Three decades of agrarian protection had kept the rural machine in a condition to deliver nearly, but not quite, enough goods."  

Suffering did not end with the armistice. The loss of labor and important food producing areas, the demands for large delivery of animals to restock Belgium and French farms, the reparations conflict, the inflation and the collapse of the currency, all conspired to send Germany through four or five years of misery.

9Ibid. 10Ibid., p. 469.
The Treaty of Versailles had cut off nearly one-fifth of the rye lands, from one-sixth to one-tenth of the wheat, barley, and oat fields;\textsuperscript{11} the potash and phosphoric fertilizers of Alsace-Lorraine were no longer Germany's, and there was no money for use in importing them. On the other hand, the collapse in the value of the mark wiped out a large part of the mortgage debts of landowners. There was no serious raid on the large estates to provide land for disbanded soldiers, and if Germany lost twelve to fifteen per cent of her rural productive capacity, she also lost about twelve per cent of her population.

After 1923, a measure of stability was restored and production began to revive. This stimulation was based on economic "rationalization," which meant for agriculture more use of machinery, implements, and power, more fertilizers and seeds, the study of marketing methods, and more careful keeping of farm accounts.

How were the German peasants faring under this new rationalization?

The German peasant has at last come into his own, largely because of his canny money sense. When the bottom dropped out of the currency of his country, the first thing he did was to pay off his mortgage with cheap money and clear his little farm. He then might buy another acre or two of land, if this was possible, or another farm animal, wagon, farm tool, or repair his

\textsuperscript{11}\textit{Ibid.}
house and install conveniences and comforts, or build a new and larger dwelling. No matter what the worth of the mark--high or low--the peasant farmer buys productive property and a bigger chance at life; he knows enduring value lies in substantial capital wealth of productive elements and not in paper marks. The peasant farmers of Germany are not putting money in their purses; they are making more productive farms... The farmer is even more strongly entrenched than the mine owner or manufacturer in Germany.\footnote{Branson, \textit{Farm Life Abroad}, pp. 35-36.}

This period of prosperity for the German small farmer reached its peak in the period from 1926 to 1929. At the same time many of the large estates in Eastern Germany were ceasing to be profitable because of higher wages, taxes, high interest (double pre-war rates), new debts, lower grain prices; many estates were heavily mortgaged, rents fell, land prices fell, but the small farmer still enjoyed prosperity.\footnote{Karl Brandt, "The Crisis in German Agriculture," \textit{Foreign Affairs}, X (July, 1932), 637.} The collapse of the world grain market further heightened the crisis for the large estate.

The Junkers, or large landholders, through their position as heavy debtors, cooperated in 1930 to put pressure on the government for tariff protection of grain. Wheat and rye were protected by raising the tariff and then by fixing prices. Meat imports were limited and the entry of margarine was curtailed to encourage the consumption of butter, of
which there was plenty, but at a higher price than margarine. The advance in grain prices was affected at the expense of the German mass of consumers to save the large estates, but at the same time it inflicted huge losses on the formerly economically independent small farmers who bought grain for feeding to hogs and cattle. The small farmers were unable to force the industrially-minded agrarian bloc to back them in their demand for a protective tariff on their finished dairy products; so in 1931 their eggs and milk products were still unprotected against foreign competition.

The distribution of German farms underwent little change from 1908 to 1931. There were three million farms of from five to two hundred fifty acres of tillable soil; two million farms of less than two acres; large concerns, over two hundred fifty acres and averaging 1250 to 1500 acres, numbered only 17,000, of which 12,000 were in East Germany and the remainder in Prussian Saxony. A number of large estates in the west and south were scattered among the small farms.

Although agriculture was undoubtedly in a period of depression, how did this deep-seated discontent materially aid in weakening the old regime and in bringing the National Socialist triumph?

Every effort had been made to conciliate the rural population: (1) the total indebtedness of German agriculture was

---

\(^{14}\textit{Ibid.}, 633.\)
less by one-third in 1931 than in 1913; (2) the total interest burden had been reduced by the government's compulsory cut in rates [eight to four and one-half per cent]; (3) national income derived from agriculture declined much less from 1913 to 1932 than did that of industry and trade.\textsuperscript{15} What causes, then, led to the intense dissatisfaction manifested by both the large and small landholders? (1) The annual tax burden of agricultural products doubled from 1913 to 1932; (2) the movement of agricultural prices was unfavorable in comparison with other prices.\textsuperscript{16}

There is little doubt that conditions were not as bad as the farmers, who were crying for legislation to save agriculture, were trying to make the government believe. Of course, the situation of German agriculture had changed materially for the worse in 1931 and 1932. "Meat, dairy, and poultry price declines [added to the high protective tariffs on grains] hurt the small peasant producers."\textsuperscript{17}

Agricultural associations were agitating for high protective tariffs on agricultural produce and wanted to exclude foreign competition, thereby gaining control of the internal German market for their own benefit. This made the industrialists indignant, as high tariffs hurt their trade abroad. The government, in an effort to help the Junkers,

\textsuperscript{15}Calvin G. Hoover, \textit{Germany Enters the 3rd Reich}, p. 15.
\textsuperscript{16}\textit{Ibid.}, p. 16. \textsuperscript{17}\textit{Ibid.}, p. 17.
granted large sums to the East German estates, which were hopelessly bankrupt.

The peasants producing secondary agricultural products demanded protection equally with the grain producers. The industrialists could not bear this, as countries exporting dairy and poultry products to Germany were those with which Germany had a favorable balance of trade. To cut off these imports would bring active retaliation against German exports. The industrialists felt compelled to make a determined stand against the proposed enlargement of the protective tariff. The result of this opposition, aided by skilful propaganda, was to complete the conquest of peasant opinion by the National Socialists, who quickly fostered the ideas and seized the opportunity of getting new strength. The Junkers feared to separate themselves from the peasants because it might lead to peasant demand for division of their property; so they, already opposed to the economic set-up under the capitalistic system, were ready to support the Nazis in overthrowing the Republic.

By the end of 1932, German agriculture was producing seventy-five per cent of the total foodstuffs consumed. The production of bread-grains became sufficient to meet German needs in 1932, when grain imports were ceased.

---

18Germanicus, Germany: The Last Four Years, p. 106.
Table 1 shows the available foodstuffs in 1932 as compared with 1928.

**TABLE 1**

**CONSUMPTION OF FOODSTUFFS IN GERMANY**

**KILOGRAMS (2.2 LBS.) PER CAPITA**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1928</th>
<th>1932</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rye flour</td>
<td>51.7</td>
<td>52.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wheat flour</td>
<td>59.3</td>
<td>46.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Potatoes</td>
<td>173.0</td>
<td>190.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sugar</td>
<td>23.3</td>
<td>20.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cocoa</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>1.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fruit</td>
<td>32.7</td>
<td>32.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tropical fruits</td>
<td>6.4</td>
<td>6.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vegetables</td>
<td>37.5</td>
<td>40.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fats (Margarine, butter, lard, tallow, bacon)</td>
<td>23.7</td>
<td>25.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Milk</td>
<td>118.0</td>
<td>103.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cheese</td>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>6.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meat</td>
<td>48.7</td>
<td>44.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fish</td>
<td>9.9</td>
<td>9.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eggs</td>
<td>7.9</td>
<td>7.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Honey</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>0.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coffee</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>2.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Important variations were evident only in the lessening of wheat flour, meat, sugar, and milk consumption per person, as shown by the table. To offset these losses, there was a substantial increase in potato consumption, with slight rises in fats and vegetables consumed. Despite the severe depression, food availability and consumption were reasonably stable.
CHAPTER II

THE FIRST FOUR YEARS OF NAZISM

(1933-1936)

Since 1890 the movement for protection of agriculture in Germany may be attributed to the realization of the need of an assured, rather than a cheap, food supply. As a result, by 1914, the country was almost completely self-sufficient in grain production through intensive cultivation. Germany learned from the World War, during which her people went through suffering seldom paralleled in the annals of history, that agriculture had to be fostered even more.

Agricultural legislation since the World War might be briefly analysed as follows:¹ (1918-1934) (a) a period of emergency food control immediately following the revolution of 1918, emerging in a period of increasing demand for gradual release of the agricultural market from government control; (b) the period from 1921 to 1924, during which an inflation break-down in the food administration scheme forced a division of policy between either a ruthless requisition of all grain supplies or a "free market" in which the government food administration was eventually relinquished; (c) the decade from

1923 upwards, which saw the rise of industrial influences at first cooperating with agricultural parties; but later opposed, resulting in the formation of a national agricultural "bloc" on agrarian questions; (d) the early legislation of the present regime.

The general outlook for the early months of 1934, prior to harvest time, was good in comparison with previous years. A bumper grain harvest in 1933 had assured an adequate supply of food, as had an equally good feed-grain harvest provided sufficient fodder for a normal cattle and hog production.

The German production of industrial goods rose over one-third from 1932 to 1934, but production of foodstuffs altered hardly at all; however, the income of the German farmer rose to seven and one-fourth billion marks for 1933-1934, seventy per cent of the 1928-1929 high, and a three-fourths billion marks gain over 1932-1933, because of an increase in wholesale prices for foodstuffs. The wholesale prices of butter, eggs, meat, and fresh vegetables rose an average of twelve per cent, and hence influenced retail prices to approximately the same extent.

The steady rise of prices since March, 1933, may be attributed to the German government's policy of favoring the

---

2G. M. Katona, "How Real is German Recovery?," Foreign Affairs, XIII (October, 1934), 31.

3Ibid., p. 32.
farmer and fixing agricultural prices for his benefit. In August, 1934, rye sold for sixty-five marks a ton wholesale in Amsterdam, whereas the German price was one hundred fifty-nine marks; wheat in Liverpool was listed at sixty-nine marks, as compared with one hundred ninety-nine marks in Germany; pork was sold at twelve marks per hundred-weight in Chicago compared with forty-seven marks in the German home market; the price of Danish butter was less than one-third of that fixed for German consumers.  

The August outlook for the 1934 harvest was greatly improved by late "August rains which had dissipated virtually all fears of a basic food shortage during the coming winter." Foreign agricultural observers, after a tour of the provinces, predicted whatever rationing occurred would be in specially imported foods, including fresh vegetables. The supplies of bread, meat, and potatoes were expected to be sufficient for all needs. The German fruit crop was the best in years, but in feed grains, as barley and oats, [which fell off around ten and sixteen per cent respectively from the 1933 crop,] they faced serious agricultural trouble.  

Although it was probably six months before the average

---

4S. B. Fay, "German Economic Conditions," Current History, XLI (December, 1934), 363.

5"Germany in Training for a Lean Winter," Literary Digest, CXVIII (September 8, 1934), 16.

6Ibid.
family would feel the pinch, Paul Joseph Goebbels put in motion in September the machinery to make Nazi Germany ready for winter hardships. The "Winter Help Work" campaign for the relief of German poor was instituted in early September. In 1933 the drive netted four hundred million marks and aid was given in the form of coal, clothing, potatoes, and other food to eighteen million poor during the winter of 1933-1934. The forms of collection for the fund were of three types: (1) compulsory one-dish meals were to begin the first Sunday in October and continue through every first Sunday up to April. The difference in the cost of the one-dish meal and the regular Sunday meal was turned over to the fund; (2) "voluntary" contributions of industrial and commercial firms; (3) solicitation on the streets from every person, some contribution being expected from each one, who in return received a button showing he had contributed.

In October, 1934, Germany had its first export surplus since March, 1934, this being due to a new export high and a new import low for the months of 1934. The importation of raw materials was greatly curtailed, but "drought caused food imports to rise twenty-five per cent above the September

---


8Ibid.
The October drought changed the picture of evident food sufficiency for the winter, and coupled with the claims of Dutch shippers of fruits and vegetables that they could not get prompt payment under their clearance agreement with Germany, which resulted in a sharp export drop, fears of a shortage in food supplies led to some hoarding. Hitler appointed Hans Goerdeler, former food dictator under Bruening, as special commissar for the supervision of food prices.

The German economic situation at the end of 1934 was better than most critics had predicted and better than many Germans had expected. The national income from wages and salaries had continued to increase (greatest in rural regions), but the increase in total income was less in proportion than the increase in the number of earning persons. In addition to higher total income, taxes and costs of living went up at a probably more rapid rate than salary and wages; so workers had no more to spend, although the funds were more equitably distributed.

A review of German food prices at the end of 1934 in

---


10S. B. Fay, "German Economic Conditions," Current History, XLI (December, 1934), 363.

eleven basic commodities showed a price range of from one
hundred per cent to four hundred per cent higher than the
world market, with all eleven articles averaging two hundred
sixty per cent higher than the world market prices.  
Goerdeler, Reich commissar for prices, was attempting with
dictatorial power to fix prices at levels fair to both
producers and consumers. The high cost of food produce and
the government's rigid rules against price-raising put re-
tailers in a difficult situation, while some were even
forced to close their shops. "The most important fact
about German economic life at the close of 1934 was its
strict regimentation--prices were controlled, profits limit-
ed, supplies regulated, and output largely determined by
government authority under Schacht, President of the Reichs-
bank, and Goerdeler, Food Commissar."

The winter of 1934-1935 passed with no basic food
shortages of a serious nature. The government's refusal to
buy feed in 1934-1935 led farmers to slaughter livestock in
unprecedented numbers, causing a shortage of butter, milk,
and other dairy products. The German press claimed that
there was enough exchange on hand to guarantee a supply of
Scandinavian eggs and butter to offset any shortage in

\[12\text{Ibid.}\]
\[13\text{Ibid.}\]
domestic production. The exchange might have been on hand, but it was not made available for food imports, even in the face of the somewhat poor harvests of 1934, since industry had first call on available foreign exchange.

The farmer, the early beneficiary of Hitler's plans, was becoming slightly restive in the summer of 1935. The government's refusal to import needed foodstuffs angered the farmer, since it caused him to have to slaughter many of his cattle and hogs. To make matters worse, "in spite of price regulation, there was still a wide difference between what the peasant received for his eggs and other farm produce and what the city consumer had to pay. There was, therefore, a tendency on the part of the peasant not to bring his produce to market and thus cause a shortage in the cities."

German imports for 1935 were less than half of the 1913 level and less than one-third of the 1929 total. The curtailment of imported foodstuffs was a long step toward making the country able to feed the people, but it also caused a food shortage in the fall of 1935. "Meatless and butterless days were decreed, hoarders were arrested, un-

14 Cortez Enloe, "Germany Tightens Her Belt," Current History, XLV (December, 1936), 71.

official ration cards were issued, and purchasers were forced to stand in queues for their allotments.\textsuperscript{16}

According to the official explanation, the fodder crop in 1934 had been so poor that many animals had to be slaughtered, causing a shortage in dairy products and pork. Increased purchasing power had raised the demand for foodstuffs, while the government's import restrictions had reduced the normal supply. An unusual amount of hoarding aggravated the situation, in spite of prosecution of hoarders. The shortage was a source of irritation; and, together with increasing food prices, led to absence from work, minor strikes, and small anti-Nazi demonstrations. "To relieve this shortage, increased food importations were allowed in October—9,200,000 marks more in fruit; 2,900,000 marks in eggs; 1,300,000 in butter; 1,700,000 marks in lard; 2,900,000 in meat."\textsuperscript{17} (Value of mark at that time 40c). The government also forbade peasants to hold back products in hope of higher prices or to sell for other than stated prices. These measures appeared to relieve the food situation but caused some unrest among the East Prussian peasants.

The campaign to provide for the needy during the winter began on October 13 through the organization of the "Winter


\textsuperscript{17}S. B. Fay, "German Economic Plight," \textit{Current History}, XLIII (January, 1936), 425.
Help Work Fund." All charity organizations, such as the Red Cross and the Inner Mission, were organized with the "Winter Help Work" drive as one unit. Hitler and high government officials made speeches urging contributions. The Labor Front and German Railway Employees gave one million marks each, while various banking and commercial concerns "voluntarily" contributed one hundred thousand marks.

"The shortage in butter, eggs, fat, and pork products in certain German cities during the fall of 1935 was further alleviated in the early weeks of 1936 by the release of foreign exchange to buy foodstuffs from abroad."18 Several shiploads of frozen meat were brought in from South America. The food supply of a country is based, not upon individual demand for meat, or bread, or vegetables, or poultry products, but upon the demand for all these foods together. When the supply of one staple is decreased, it follows that the demand upon the others will show a corresponding increase. This is one law of economics the German Government has not been able to repeal, although it has tried.

German scientists were still unable in 1936 to arrange adequate barriers against a food shortage under the Four Year Plan. Goebbels pointed out that first, "the raw material for industry must be imported; then if any foreign exchange or

gold is left, it may be used for the import of foodstuffs made necessary by the surplus of home consumption over home production. Honor and freedom come before butter and bread. Germany must tighten its belt to build up the army and reestablish German sovereignty.¹⁹ The problem of feeding sixty-six million people solely on the products of German soil proved difficult. There were one hundred persons to be fed for every forty-five hectares [112½ acres] of arable land. The cool, damp climate and the overworked land hindered the farmer from meeting the needs, despite government subsidies and threats. In 1936 Germany was forced to import from fifteen to twenty per cent of her foodstuffs. The greatest deficit was in fats, of which fifty per cent had to be imported.

The harvest and crop production was better in 1936 than it had been in 1935, which was extremely low. Wheat production fell to four million tons (only two-thirds of the 1933 yield) because of bad weather during harvest time; rye, oats, potatoes, and sugar beets showed a fair yield and a substantial increase over 1935. The vegetable supply for the winter was considered sufficient, based on contracts made under the new bilateral trade agreements with neighboring countries and a good yield at home. As usual, the German press claimed there was enough foreign exchange on hand to guarantee a

¹⁹Paul Joseph Goebbels cited by Cortez Enloe, "Germany Tightens Her Belt," Current History, XLV (December, 1936), 70.
supply of Scandinavian eggs and butter for the winter; but similar claims were made for the winter of 1935 when the most serious food shortage in fats, meat, butter, etc. was experienced since 1917.

Even when he set up the Four Year Plan (summer of 1936), Hitler was forced to admit that if one hundred per cent efficiency were reached, he would still have to buy some raw materials and foodstuffs from abroad. In an effort to bring order out of chaos and strengthen the weakening morale of his people, Hitler established the Reich Food Estate and regulations on the collections of foodstuffs were set up. "The Reich Food Estate was appointed with the power to organize production, fix prices, supervise the work of the peasants, and compel them to deliver certain quantities in fixed periods at set prices."20 Under the Food Reich, the nation's food supply was controlled right up to the consumer, as under a full wartime system. A farmer or poultry-fancier did not dare sell a half-dozen eggs to his neighbor (and the neighbor dared not accept them for fear of informers); beyond his own needs, the farmer was required to deliver to government egg stations all his flocks produced; one-half his grain had to be delivered by a fixed date, usually mid-October, and the rest by spring; prices for everything were fixed at about

20Ludwig Lore, "Will Europe Go to War?," Nation, CXLV (July 24, 1937), 92.
twenty per cent above the 1932 level. Following the short wheat crop of 1936 and a deficit in available bread grains, the quotas for wheat and other bread grains were increased. These quotas had to be met under all conditions, and failure to deliver subjected delinquents to dire punishment. Part of the deficiency was met by increased use of rye and potato meal in breads. A flourishing illicit trade in farm products—eggs, milk, butter—sprang up as a result of Food Reich restrictions. Although the farmer grumbled at restrictions and tried to get around them, his income increased in 1936, and he and his family were at least assured of enough to eat. The city and town populations were the ones that felt the food shortage and the rise of prices.

As early as November, 1936, the Reich Food Control Board admitted that it would be impossible to meet winter demands of consumers for pork and beef, and recommended that the people "enjoy meatless days . . . and eat more fish."21 The meat deficiency was explained by the press and journals as caused by a lowering of the number of pigs ready for slaughter, although there was an increase in the total number of swine. The bad harvests of 1934 and 1935 caused a lack of fodder for the proper development of livestock, while the condition of German foreign exchange precluded the importation of fodder as well as meat.

21 Reich Food Control Board as cited by Cortez Enloe, op. cit., p. 72.
The most serious food shortage since the World War cast a pall over Christmas, 1936. The average German, who had already been forced to forego many of the demands of his appetite, had to tighten his belt another notch and be satisfied.

German housewives were ordered to specify their favorite dairy store and to patronize it exclusively. Those not registering on the official customer's list at their store had to brave the winter without fats. By prohibiting shopping around, officials claimed it was possible to limit the distribution of butter and other fats. Housewives were ordered to limit their fat purchases to eighty per cent of their October buying (which was all the fats available). The Reich women's leader, Frau Schlotz-Klink, demanded that every housewife become a food minister and conserve the food she purchased and discarded.\(^{22}\) Orders were given during Christmas Week for bread crusts to be saved. The German housekeeper no longer made out her menu before going to market, but first visited the market to find what meat she could buy, and then tried to purchase vegetables to go with it. All housewives were admonished to realize their duties to the people and buy no more at the grocery store than was absolutely necessary to feed their families, regardless of how much money they might have.

---

\(^{22}\)Emlos, op. cit., 73.
Butter, margarine, and lard went on ration the week before Christmas, but fats were not the only foods the Germans lacked. Beef, veal, bacon and vegetables fell short. Joseph Goebbels announced that one million tons of wheat would have to be purchased the next year. Bread-grains faced no acute shortage for the winter, but feed-grains were excessively short. Ration cards were needed to get butter and other fats. Around Christmas time, the usual daily amount of butter available for a housewife was one-eighth of a pound, while eggs could hardly be found, and a customer was limited to one or two even when they could be purchased. The scarcity of vegetables was somewhat unexpected, as the crop had been good, but imported vegetables were curtailed through lack of necessary foreign exchange to fulfill trade agreements. The production of cheese of a higher fat content than twenty per cent was forbidden, and cream production was cut seventy-five per cent, the idea being to preclude a basic fat shortage at the expense of the fancier foods. Only hotels and coffee houses could buy whipping cream. Coffee was so scarce that it came under the head of a luxury, although beet sugar was plentiful, even if thirty per cent higher than the world sugar price.  


24Ludwig Lore, "Will Europe Go to War?," Nation, CXLV (July 24, 1937), 92.
At an anti-Nazi rally, a poem that described the situation rather well was the theme song.

Der Hitler hat keine Frau,
Der Bauer hat keine Sau,
Der Fleischer hat kein Fleisch,
Das ist Dritte Reich. 25

Translated, the poem reads: Hitler has no spouse, the farmer has no sows, the butcher has no meat; that's the Third Reich. There was an equal amount of truth and poetry in the short ditty. The people were urged at the time to eat less beef, veal, bacon, and imported vegetables, and concentrate on potatoes, sugar, jam, cabbage, fish, and limburger cheese.

The front which Germany presented to the world in 1936 was undeniably impressive. Numerous tourists reported food plentiful, stores well-stocked, prices low (in tourists' marks). Undoubtedly, the evident hopelessness, chaos, insecurity of 1932 was gone, but behind the brave front a startlingly different scene presented itself.

The facts of the German food situation at the end of 1936 were briefly these: "her soil is poor and despite the benefit of science, improved cultivation, and extensive fertilization, it has not been able to grow more than seventy per cent of the nation's food and fodder needs." 26

---


26 William Woodside, "Germany's Hidden Crisis," Harper's, CLXXIV (February, 1937), 316.
Republic, with the lesson of the war in mind, had tried with might and main to increase the country's food supply, and at the end of eight years could point to a forty-three per cent increase in wheat production, to a three per cent acreage increase, a considerably greater supply of oil-rich fodder, ten per cent more cattle, and forty-one per cent more hogs.  

Now let us examine the record of Herr Darre' and his Reich Food Estate, who professed the same policy of self-sufficiency in foodstuffs. The farmers had a record harvest in 1933; the following three years ranged from very poor in 1934 and 1935 to fair in 1936. Unable or unwilling to import the necessary fodder, Darre and his ministry caused the slaughter of a million more than the normal number of cattle in each of the preceding three years, cutting herds down twenty per cent.  

Beef naturally was scarce; veal was not to be had; the remaining cattle, being ill-fed, yielded about ten per cent less meat, according to official statistics. Market supplies of pork, which formed seventy per cent of the German meat diet, were restricted to one-half of the normal amount in an attempt to rehabilitate the hog stock; meat per capita consumption had dropped thirty-five per cent since 1934.  

Even with plenty of eggs and cheese, the nation could manage until herds were rebuilt, but eggs were scarce because

---

27 Ibid.  
28 Ibid.  
29 Ibid.
more poultry had been eaten, since other meat was scarce. There was less cheese (and no fatty cheese at all) because there was less milk from fewer cows on less feed. If there had been plenty of fish, people might have made it more easily, but the cheaper kinds of fish bought by the laborers had doubled in price.

With bad harvests and reduced imports, the "army" grain reserve was depleted. Once more grain supplies for man and beast needed to be imported and again the money was not to be diverted from other purposes. This was the food situation which caused Darre' to admit that he could only guarantee a workaday diet of bread, potatoes, milk, and sugar; all else would be short to a greater or lesser degree. 30

In the face of mounting prices and scarcity of food, five per cent of the country's grain acreage was taken out of cultivation for various rearmament and industrial purposes. The food supply could have been balanced only by cutting off one-half of raw material imports, which would not be done. Under these circumstances it seemed only a matter of time until the dreaded food-rationing cards would have to be introduced to insure equitable distribution of the available food. For political reasons the government had postponed this step, as it would have had the worst psychological effect on the people.

30 Ibid.
In spite of the government's attempt to hold prices down, they still rose. Potatoes cost seventy-five per cent more; margarine up to three hundred fifty per cent more; beef thirty-five to one hundred per cent more and pork twenty-five to fifty per cent more, dependent on the choice-ness of the meat; eggs fifty per cent more; wheat flour sixteen per cent more.\textsuperscript{31} This was the situation as Germany entered on her new Four Year Plan and new trade policy of "we buy only as much as we sell, and we buy only from those who buy from us."\textsuperscript{32}

\textsuperscript{31}\textit{Ibid.}, p. 317. \hspace{1cm} \textsuperscript{32}\textit{Ibid.}, p. 319.
CHAPTER III

THE TIGHTENING OF THE BELT

(1937)

Since the "masses of the German people paid for . . . Hitler's first four year plan, essentially in terms of a lowered standard of living, the classes will pay for the second plan. Already import restrictions have made butter 64¢ a pound in Berlin, coffee $1 a pound, and pork and beef cost about twice as much as in the United States. The masses fear that the government will revive the hated war-time rationing system."¹

To a certain extent the question of nutrition, the secondary point of Germany's Second Four Year Plan, is a corollary to rearmament. Since to gain independence from abroad for the essential foodstuffs, such as grain, meat, fat, oil-seeds, etc., was the aim of the agricultural policy, it seemed necessary to import sufficient grain for the raising and feeding of cattle, poultry, and hogs. Frequent clashes between agricultural and industrial interests often including armament manufacturers over importations were the cause of General Goering being made

¹"Foreign Comment," Literary Digest, CXXII (October 31, 1936), 13.
arbitrator with dictatorial powers to settle these disputes.  

The acute meat shortage in the winter of 1936 was alleviated by an increase in the number of pigs, but pork prices remained inordinately high. The feed shortage caused over a million more than the usual number of hogs to be slaughtered in the last months of 1936 and early 1937. Most of this increased supply, however, was withdrawn by the government for storage. Bacon was still almost unobtainable in early spring.

Food conditions in early 1937 were still not as bad as World War conditions of malnutrition. Although no government food cards had been issued, various foods were apportioned by means of a locally-centered system under which each person received a ration card from his dealer. In many cases, however, the German could not buy foodstuffs and other goods in the variety, quantity, and quality desired, because domestic production was so largely concentrated on armament, public building and road construction, and priority was given to imports of raw materials for those purposes. People bought more of those things which could be produced at home or easily imported from certain neighboring countries, and had to limit their purchases of those articles or foods in which domestic production was inadequate and where the deficit could not be covered by imports. Shortages in certain foodstuffs developed, at times, because the supply did not keep pace with

---

a growing demand, or at other times because the supply itself was actually smaller.3

During the early months of 1937 there was still a shortage of butter and fats throughout Germany.

Butter costs 1.60 marks [64¢] for 500 grams [slightly more than 1 pound]. The butter available is divided up equally. Everyone has to put down his name on a list at the shop where he usually buys his butter; the amount supplied to the shop is then equally divided, but on some days there is none.4

Three qualities of margarine were made available at varying prices to fit all classes of purchasers. Coffee, almost the national drink, varied from cheap mixtures of roasted barley and other cereals to real imported coffee at 3.6 marks [§1.44] a pound. Fears of a coffee shortage were rife. The price of bread was increased, while its quality deteriorated. Much rye bread was consumed; and after March it was illegal to make bread out of pure wheat, as it had to be mixed with seven per cent maize.

In all the cities long lines of women could be seen before the stores. The German housewife no longer shopped as she pleased, but stood in line for hours to get a coveted piece of meat or a pound of fat or butter. The housewife

---

3J. C. de Wilde, "Germany's Controlled Economy," Foreign Policy Reports, (March 1, 1939), p. 292.

had to be satisfied, both in respect to quality and quantity, with what the storekeeper gave her, as there were others willing to accept it if she did not.

According to official statistics for 1937 (shown in the following table) per capita consumption of cigars, cigarettes, beer, coffee, fish, sugar, and wheat rose substantially, while that of meat, milk, and cheese increased moderately. On the other hand, the consumption of tropical and semi-tropical fruits fell sharply, while that of eggs, fats, and cocoa declined more moderately. "Although figures are lacking, the quantity, quality, and variety of all available fruits and vegetables has markedly declined, owing to the general reduction of imports from such countries as Norway, Sweden, and the Netherlands."\(^5\)

The figures in Table 2 are in some respects deceiving. The statistics do not in reality show consumption, but only amounts available from domestic production and imports. They thus fail to take into account certain reserves of meat, grain, and fish which admittedly were accumulated for war at the expense of current consumption. In a number of instances the accuracy of the figures is doubtful. For example,

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Commodity</th>
<th>Compared 1932</th>
<th>Compared 1929</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Meat</td>
<td>-9.0</td>
<td>-2.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fish</td>
<td>-39.0</td>
<td>-32.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Milk</td>
<td>-5.7</td>
<td>-5.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cheese</td>
<td>-9.6</td>
<td>(not available)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eggs</td>
<td>-8.0</td>
<td>-13.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wheat Flour</td>
<td>-25.0</td>
<td>-3.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rye Flour</td>
<td>-2.0</td>
<td>-4.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Potatoes</td>
<td>-9.0</td>
<td>-1.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tropical Fruits</td>
<td>-27.5</td>
<td>-25.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sugar</td>
<td>-11.0</td>
<td>-2.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cocoa</td>
<td>-5.6</td>
<td>-5.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coffee</td>
<td>-22.0</td>
<td>-10.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fats</td>
<td>-8.5</td>
<td>-6.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beer</td>
<td>-22.0</td>
<td>-18.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cigars</td>
<td>-52.0</td>
<td>-20.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cigarettes</td>
<td>-24.0</td>
<td>-17.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*de Wilde, "Germany's Controlled Economy," Foreign Policy Reports, (March 1, 1939), p. 293.*
the figures on fat supply were based on the rather
dubious assumption that production of butter has
risen from 419,000 tons in 1932 to 516,000 tons in
1937. Although butter output was probably raised
at the expense of cream and fatty cheese, the in-
crease was apparently not as large as indicated,
especially since milk production rose less than
6%.6

The figure on cheese consumption failed to take into account
the marked shift which took place from fatty cheese of sixty
per cent fat content to the much less nutritious lean cheese
of less than twenty per cent fat content. Nor should it be
forgotten that the rise in flour consumption was at least
partially obtained by raising the extraction rate of flour
from grain, giving a somewhat poorer quality product.

After the harvest of 1937 was completed, agriculture was
found to be in poor condition in spite of all efforts to make
the country self-sufficient. The area of 28,631,000 hectares
did not compare favorably with the pre-war area of 29,700,000
hectares. Crops had not materially increased since 1937.
Although in 1937, production of potatoes, sugar beets, roots
and vegetables was better, cereal production was below that
of 1933.

The 1937 rye crop was 6,760,000 metric tons against
8,700,000 in 1933. Wheat was 4,490,000 metric tons against
4,600,000 in 1933; barley and oats combined were 9,700,000
metric tons as compared to 10,500,000 in 1933; this deficiency

6de Wilde, op. cit., 293.
was not made up by imports. Food imports had declined materially since 1929; so, with reduction of the food supply, both domestic and imported, the curtailment of food consumption is considerable, especially in the light of population gains during the nine-year period.

The average amount of food consumed per capita for the year 1937-1938 was: 50.4 kilograms of meat; 30.7 kilograms of fish; 26 kilograms of sugar; 8.6 kilograms of butter; 8.4 kilograms of margarine; 32 eggs; and 121 liters of milk a year.³

To improve German food consumption without increasing dependence on foreign markets would have required an additional 1,200,000 hectares of land according to official estimates. To make the situation worse, there was the lower index rise of wages in comparison with food prices and manufactured goods, which cut down consumer buying power.

By this time, German agriculture was literally one vast organization, the National Food Corporation, headed by the Minister of Agriculture, R. Walther Darre, with absolute powers over all that concerned farming. The German farmer long ago had lost his economic independence and received in return for it compulsory delivery of quotas at fixed prices.

---

⁸Ibid.
Under this system, the large estates in Eastern Germany prospered from their monopoly of grain and potato production, while the profits of the small farmer were greatly cut by the fixed wholesale and retail prices. The increased raw material and food deficit of the Reich made it more imperative than ever to increase domestic production; so the second Four Year Plan was inaugurated in 1936.

The volume of agricultural production, under the increased intensification of effort at self-sufficiency, for the five-year period 1933-34 to 1937-38 was fifteen per cent above the level of the preceding five years. This increase, however, was merely a part of a long term trend, as agricultural output increased sixteen per cent from 1924 to 1929.9

Large sums of money had been spent in an effort to reclaim and improve lands, but the area of 536,000 hectares affected was smaller than the 650,000 hectares of productive land retired for roads, airports, buildings, and other re-armament purposes. The increased use of fertilizer was encouraged by a drastic price slash in an attempt to raise the production of feeds, particularly those rich in protein content, in which Germany had always been greatly deficient. New feeds, such as sugar beet tops, were developed and the acreage in sugar beets was almost doubled. The construction

9de Wilde, op. cit., p. 295.
of feed silos was subsidized to make possible the preservation of fodder crops and potatoes for feeding. In this way the Reich was able, despite the limitation of feed imports, to maintain and even slightly increase the production of meat, milk, and butter.

Under the Darre ministry the farmer was strictly supervised by government agents. "Darre's supervisors stalk the fields, squinting, estimating, directing new planting and new catch crops. If the supervisor is displeased with the farmer's work, he may take over the farm himself and operate it,"

U Giving orders to the now laborer-farmer.

In July, 1937, the entire wheat and rye crops were requisitioned to safeguard the nation's bread supply; the farmers retained only what they needed for their families. This was done as a result of the threatened bread shortage in the winter of 1936-1937, when the use of rye as feed was prohibited, and the admixture of corn and potato flour to bread made compulsory. After a 1,000,000 ton rye shortage was caused by feeding to livestock, it was made punishable by heavy fine to feed bread-grains to livestock. Many farmers, however, evaded the rigid quota and delivery system. Syndicates operating strings of high-powered cars sold coveted foodstuffs (eggs, dairy products, etc.) widely, and individual

---

bootleggers were numerous. Minister Darre estimated that one-third of all food produced was sold surreptitiously, in spite of severe penalties when the bootleggers were caught. In 1937 the country was considered eighty-one per cent self-sufficient in food and feed-stuff production.

The Nazi government from the beginning had the avowed intention of preventing an increase in the cost of living for the small man. Accordingly, most of the increase in prices of foodstuffs was borne by the higher class articles. Fruit and early vegetables rose two hundred to three hundred per cent over the prices in 1932; eggs, butter, veal, and fats increased by fifty to one hundred per cent in price; on the other hand, the staples—bread, sugar, potatoes—were kept as stable as possible under rigid government control. The increase or decrease of prices was entirely in the hands of the government.

The tendency to shift most of the necessary decrease in the standard of nutrition to the wealthier classes, by limiting supplies of butter, milk, eggs, meat, etc., to the retailer and rationing their distribution, was, therefore, quite intentional and likely to be continued until the standard of nutrition of the wealthier classes had sunk to that of

11 Ibid., p. 60.

12 Germanicus, Germany: The Last Four Years, p. 46.
the lower classes if it became necessary. All efforts were made to maintain the standard of living of the working class and to even increase it by better facilities of distribution. Nevertheless, it was an established fact that Nazi food experts regarded a reduction of twenty per cent to twenty-five per cent in the 1937 standard of nutrition of the working class as permissible from the point of military fitness. At the rate of decrease in consumption of foodstuffs in the first four years of attempted self-sufficiency, the minimum standard would be reached within the following two years.

The incompatibility of the Nazi grain-tariff policy with an increase in livestock population caused the fat shortage to be equally as evident in the winter of 1937 as in the severe winter shortage of 1936. The government claimed these shortages to be purely seasonal and not an indication of lowered supply or even lowered livestock productivity. In spite of their confident explanations that poultry, hogs, and cattle were more numerous than in any previous year after 1932 (figures are also available for the same years showing the 1937 level of livestock and poultry to be anywhere from twelve to twenty-five per cent lower than in 1932 and almost to the all-time low of 1916), the government spent much money perfecting a process to develop grease and oils from waste; for each 100,000 people the government expected to salvage 180 to 365 tons of fat from sludge or garbage.13 German

experts estimated that 25,000 tons of the 80,000 tons of grease flowing through sewers each year could be processed into crude fat.\textsuperscript{14} This venture was found to be profitable only in regions of numerous hotels or slaughter houses and did not relieve the fat situation materially.

\textsuperscript{14}Ibid.
CHAPTER IV

CONTROLLED ECONOMY

(1938)

Since the winter of 1936, when their idle reserves of labor, capital, and capacity were no longer available, reduction of consumption had become the main basis of the Nazi economic policy. Whereas almost two-thirds of the German national income went into consumption in 1929, sixty per cent of a smaller national income was reinvested in 1938 to produce capital goods, armaments, etc.

It is seemingly a common belief (much fostered by helpful British press and journals) that sacrifices in consumption imposed by the Nazi Government to build up capital goods and armaments were mainly borne by the working class. The truth of the matter was that the point had been reached where the sacrifices of the working class were no longer sufficient.

The compulsory reduction in the consumption of the upper and middle classes (especially middle) surpassed that of the working class. It was the foodstuffs of the upper classes—fresh vegetables, butter, eggs, meat, fruit—that became scarce and expensive; whereas that of the lower classes—bread, potatoes, cheese, beer—were still plentiful and fairly cheap (because of rigorous price levels set by the government),

45
though far reduced in quality.\textsuperscript{1}

Goods for export, which were the only means of paying for import goods, had to come out of that part of the productive capacity that would otherwise have been devoted to the production of goods for home consumption. The imports formerly largely used for consumption were almost completely devoted to armaments by the spring of 1936, so that the supplies available for consumption were further reduced.

Another difficulty was the danger of a rapid reduction of consumption to a physical minimum. The food supply (taken on basis of amount available per capita for the year 1937 and early winter and spring of 1938) for human consumption was still large enough to permit further contraction, but the feed supply, especially for cattle, was far below minimum requirements, being almost as low as in the last war years.

For several years weather conditions had threatened the "production battle" of agriculture with disaster by causing a series of below normal grain harvests. The record crops of 1932 and 1933 had tided the country over for some time, but poor harvests of grain (both food-grains and feed-grains) in 1934 and 1935, with only a fair crop in 1936, led to heavy imports of grains. In 1937-1938 grain imports entailed expenditure of 402,000,000 Reichsmarks in foreign exchange,

\textsuperscript{1}F. F. Drucker, "How Nazi Economy Works," \textit{New Republic}, XC VIII (March 29, 1939), 211.
which was a heavy drain on the trade balance.²

In 1938 relief came in the form of an excellent harvest. The wheat and rye crops yielded 13,965,000 tons, compared with a consumption of only 10,566,000 tons in 1937-1938, although the average grain consumption for the previous five-year period was 12,900,000 tons. The yield in feed grains (oats, barley, etc.) amounted to 11,886,000 tons, almost equal to the 12,031,000 tons consumed in 1937-1938.³ Together with the carry over, which increased to 3.2 million tons owing to large imports, the total grain tonnage available for the year 1938-1939 exceeded the combined needs of Germany and Austria. In addition, the Reich continued to buy heavily abroad, evidently in anticipation of war.

The prospect for a continued increase in agricultural production or output was not encouraging. Through increased use of fertilizer and an improvement of farming methods in Austria (which were far below the intensified German methods), there was a possibility of raising production to some degree. In the Reich itself the outlook was far less favorable. The area of cultivable land, though somewhat less than pre-Nazi acreage, could hardly be extended, while intensification of production was approaching the natural limit of a soil far

²J. C. de Wilde, "German Controlled Economy," Foreign Policy Reports, (March 1, 1939), p. 295.

³Ibid.
from productive in its natural state. A serious shortage of labor was also handicapping the productive efforts, for between 1933 and 1938 over 700,000 workers deserted agriculture in favor of industry and trade. The small size of holdings and limited cash resources generally militated against a possible solution of the labor problem through mechanization. The farmers' net cash income had been stable for the previous four years but had not increased, as he had had to work harder and spend more for wages, equipment, and fertilizer.

The following table gives the yield of German grains and staple crops in 1938 in comparison with preceding years to show the unusual productive gain of agriculture in 1938.

**TABLE 3**

**RECENT YIELDS OF STAPLE CROPS*  
(YIELD IN QUINTALS PER HECTARE)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Commodity</th>
<th>1928-1932</th>
<th>1934</th>
<th>1936</th>
<th>1938</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wheat</td>
<td>21.1</td>
<td>20.6</td>
<td>21.2</td>
<td>27.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barley</td>
<td>20.1</td>
<td>19.6</td>
<td>20.8</td>
<td>23.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oats</td>
<td>19.2</td>
<td>17.3</td>
<td>20.2</td>
<td>23.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Potatoes</td>
<td>154.7</td>
<td>161.0</td>
<td>165.9</td>
<td>175.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sugar beets</td>
<td>273.6</td>
<td>291.6</td>
<td>311.2</td>
<td>303.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


4Ibid., p. 296.
The figures in the table substantiate the German claims of a bumper crop in staples for 1938. The remarkable gain in wheat production, virtually thirty per cent on the same acreage, relieved any pinch on bread grains that previously might have been and made a substantial addition to the "army" grain reserve. The bumper crop in barley and oats relieved the feed-grain situation somewhat, although it did not cover all of Germany's feed needs even up to the curtailed 1937 consumption rate. The sugar beet and potato crops were large enough to relieve the feed shortage to some extent by providing more beet leaves and a greater excess of potatoes to be diverted to feed uses without detracting from human consumption needs. The outlook for the 1938-1939 fiscal year was far brighter than had been the outlook for 1937-1938.

Germany was straining every possible trade agreement and point of economic domination to augment her shortened food and feed supplies. German meat imports amounted to 137,507 tons, one-half of which came from South America; the Scandinavian countries and Great Britain furnished Germany with 229, 206 tons of fish susceptible to immediate stoppage by blockade. The following table gives German imports for 1937-1938 and the available export surplus of surrounding countries subject to German economic domination. The table

provides a basis for an answer to the question of possible German supplies behind a blockade (exclusive of help from Russia, whose potential ability to aid will be discussed later). Figures compiled by the League of Nations have been accepted in preference to German Government figures covering the same period, as German figures have proved false and have been questioned in some quarters.

**TABLE 4**

**GERMAN IMPORTS COMPARED WITH AVAILABLE EXPORTS OF COVETED NEIGHBORING COUNTRIES**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>German Imports (Metric Tons)</th>
<th>Total Exports of Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Rumania, Bulgaria and Yugoslavia</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wheat</td>
<td>940,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corn</td>
<td>1,020,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rye</td>
<td>95,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fruits and Nuts</td>
<td>1,080,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oilseeds and Vegetable oils</td>
<td>2,240,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lard</td>
<td>480,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eggs</td>
<td>830,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Butter</td>
<td>92,291</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**"Behind the Crisis in Europe," Business Week, (September 24, 1938), p. 42.**

The above table is a comparison of German imports with
the total export surplus of six coveted neighboring countries (subject to German economic domination), in the corresponding products. Before attempting to establish a definite conclusion concerning Germany's ability to remedy her chronic food and feed shortages, we must note some possible hindrances. The export figures for the six countries constituted their entire export surplus. Would they ever be willing of their own accord to break off foreign market connections and ship only to Germany, thereby putting themselves open to economic domination? Could Germany supply them with the necessary articles they needed in return for their export products, as they no longer would have foreign exchange to bring in imports, and as German ability to pay in cash for the exports was very doubtful? Conceding that trade agreements, forceful economic domination, or even conquest might bring these supplies under German control, how much would it help?

German imports could be covered by the available exports in wheat, corn, and rye, but supplies of wheat and rye (bread-grains) were considered sufficient after the 1938 harvest. True enough, the corn needs would be covered, but the available amount would not be enough above the import figure to lessen the feed shortage appreciably. Germany's greatest weak points were, and had been for three years, in fats, meat, butter, fruits, eggs, and fresh vegetables. The table shows that in case of blockade Germany would be hard pressed
to maintain even her 1938 import level and food consumption basis. The export surplus in fruits and nuts was only sixteen per cent of the imports; oilseeds and vegetable oils available were practically negligible in the face of Germany's greatest need; lard available was only one-third of the 1938 imports, which were still far too short to supply all needs; eggs, (chronically short already), could not be fully replaced even up to the basis of the chronic shortage. Thus we must conclude that German needs could not be materially covered and foreign imports replaced to any great extent from her six neighbors who would be in no way affected by a blockade.

What of Russia; could she help by augmenting the Balkan supplies of food and feed? Russia could not supply either fish, meat, eggs, or butter; so, four of the chronically short foods could not be replenished from that quarter. Germany had been relying on vegetable oils for the main portion of her fat needs ever since 1929. The fat deficiency (based on the 1937 import figures of 470,380 tons of vegetable oil from peanuts, copra, soya beans, linseed and oil cake) could be partially met by importing through Russia about two and one-half million tons of soya beans from Manchuria which contained 19.8 per cent crude fat and 48.9 per cent crude albumen. The 1937 oil import figure was

---

6 Hopper, op. cit., 230.
far short of the 1938 imports, and yet there continued a
deficiency in oils; so the Manchurian soya bean could hardly
furnish the needed supply. Russia, given a year's notice
to allow for increased area sown, could possibly meet German
feed needs of rye and barley, although she (Russia) was ex-
porting none of her 100,000,000 ton grain production prior
to 1938. Germany, however, was faced with the problem of
finding feed to replace the ninety per cent of her corn im-
ports that came from the United States and Argentina which
would be cut off by an economic blockade.

Throughout 1938, representatives tried to conclude a
deal in which German goods on the United States tariff free
list (wines and non-dutiable farm equipment) would be bar-
tered for shipments of American cottonseed and lard.7 About
$15,000,000 was involved on each side in the transaction, but
the deal fell through when Washington refused to give it
official sanction.

Some sources have mistakenly concluded that Germany
battered her internal situation by taking Austria, but such
was not the case. Far from profiting by taking Austria, she
found herself worse off than before as far as food and feed
were concerned. In recent years Austria has been unable to
meet more than seventy-six per cent of her food requirements,
whereas the Reich was meeting from eighty-one to eighty-four

per cent of its needs. In 1936-1937 Austria raised 66.7 per cent of its bread-grains\(^8\) wheat and rye, importing 678,000 tons of wheat;\(^9\) feed-grain production was 68.2 per cent of the needed supply in 1936-1937. Austria also imported a considerable portion of its meat (750,000 live hogs in 1936\(^{10}\)), fruit, vegetables, and fats other than butter; it was self-sufficient in sugar and potatoes, and had a small export surplus in milk (11,000 tons), butter (3,500 tons), and cheese. The milk, cheese, and butter surplus, however, was achieved only through the aid of imported feed; so it was doubtful if future yield would aid Germany materially.

The statistical picture for the Sudetenland was also discouraging, as it was never able to supply over one-half of its entire needs.

The Sudeten territory can supply less than one-half of its consumption of fats, only two-thirds of its milk requirements, and needs to import meat as well as a substantial quantity (150,000 tons) of wheat. Its small deficit in sugar and potatoes can probably be covered out of the Reich's surplus production.\(^{11}\)

The Sudeten territory then could help Germany none in the food

---

\(^8\)de Wilde, op. cit., 294.

\(^9\)"German Food Shortage," New York Times, June 10, 1939, p. 16.

\(^{10}\)Ibid.

\(^{11}\)de Wilde, op. cit., 294.
situation, but could only aggravate the lack of balance in the country's economic structure by bringing a proportionally greater deficit of raw materials and foodstuffs (wheat, potatoes, beet sugar, milk, beef, pork, and lard) to the old Reich.

Limited data for 1938 indicated some further increase in the consumption of meat, sugar, and tobacco. As a result of the failure of the domestic fruit harvest in 1938, the supply of fruit became shorter, while a fifteen per cent reduction in butter rations in the fall indicated a further reduction in the consumption of fats. Symptomatic of the general situation was the sudden shortage of coffee which developed toward the end of 1938 because of disturbed trade relations with Brazil. Following the chronic shortage of butter, lard, and eggs, and a sudden deficiency in the coffee supply, Germany was faced with a scarcity of coal and potatoes, of which she actually had plenty, because of the growing inadequacy of the State Railways.\textsuperscript{12} The railways faced excessive traffic demands without being able to obtain capital for necessary maintenance, much less for needed expansion.

Despite the fact that it was well known that German fat supplies were around forty per cent short of actual needs,\textsuperscript{13}


(in contrast to this, Goering, at the Nuremberg Party Congress in September, 1938, boasted that Germany had fats stored adequate for seven and one-half months and possessed large stocks of meat and fish conserves¹⁴), the Frankfurter-Zeitung reported official figures for 1938 that seemed to indicate a higher German consumption of fats, meat, and sugar than ever before under the Nazi controlled economy system.

In 1938 the consumption of meat was 57.7 kilograms (approximately 126 pounds), against 48.9 kilograms in 1932; the consumption of sugar was 24.3 kilograms as compared with 19.1 kilograms in 1931; the butter consumption was 8.8 kilograms as compared with 7.5 kilograms in 1931.¹⁵

Although we cannot tell to what extent the figures were falsified, we do know that their (the government's) interpretation was incorrect. The figures given for the consumption of sugar did not refer to human consumption only, but referred to the amount produced minus the amount exported and included the industrial use of sugar, as in the production of glycerine used in explosives.¹⁶ As regards meat and butter, both were used for the production of margarine and were thus made to count double in German statistics--once as meat and butter and once as margarine. To get a true picture of the situation perhaps a consideration of symptoms, rather

¹⁴de Wilde, op. cit., 293.
¹⁵Vaseau, op. cit., 42.
¹⁶Ibid.
than German Government figures, would be more helpful. A comparison of authentic food consumption figures for 1937 with those of 1938 (government figures) shows no such great increase as claimed by the government. Meat was around 7 kilograms higher (per person per year); sugar almost two kilograms less; butter only .2 kilogram higher, but dropped to about 1.3 kilograms lower with the fall reduction of fifteen per cent in butter allowances. The claim of giving the average German more to eat than in pre-Nazi days (compared with the black depression years of 1931 and 1932) was based on the government's own figures, which were made to tell exactly what it desired and did not necessarily present a true picture of conditions.

In what way, then, could the word-pictures of tourists "that everything was in the best of order," be accounted for? Those tourists that brought back such contradictory reports did not know that they were allowed to notice only what authorities wished them to see. The people whom they contacted were watched; boarding houses in which they stayed were selected; telephones were tapped, and restaurants in which they had meals received extra rations. 17 When a government goes to such precautions to cover up actual conditions, we are prone to believe that everything must not be in such a satisfactory state as claimed.

17 Ibid., p. 43.
Scientists were working continually to produce substitutes for foods that were chronically short. A new egg called "lilei" was concocted; it was made of butter-milk and various chemicals mixed into a yellow powder, and was claimed to be more nourishing than real eggs.\(^{18}\) It was hoped that this discovery would reduce consumption of natural eggs by fifty per cent; nothing was said of the vitamin content of this egg, and possibly nothing could be said, as it had none. The scientists likewise produced various substitutes for tea, but a new order was passed prohibiting misleading names for tea "made in Germany." The name "German House Tea" was to be used only for tea that was of agreeable taste and not detrimental to health.\(^{19}\) This was undoubtedly to curb production of tea substitutes from chemicals that had been sold to the public, even though they were detrimental to health and not even of agreeable taste.

"To every urban worker in Germany above the stratum of the lowest paid workers and the unemployed of 1932, it is no longer a matter of dispute what has happened to the standard of living."\(^{20}\) All was suffered for a cause well-clarified by propaganda, and all hardships were laid at the doors of "gorged, encircling, and implacable foreign powers."\(^{21}\)

---

\(^{18}\) Ibid.

\(^{19}\) Ibid.

\(^{20}\) Graham Hutton, "German Economic Tension," *Foreign Affairs*, XVII (April, 1939), 534.

\(^{21}\) Ibid.
Retail prices tended to jump in 1938, but more rigid price controls were brought into play, rationing was clamped down harder, and a greater consumer purchasing power was still unable to buy more of the needed commodities (meat, butter, eggs, fruit, and milk). Official government ration cards for individuals had not been printed, but the use of locally issued cards and dealer registration of customers was considerably broadened. "Continuous limitation and rationing of supplies, continuous narrowing down of all consumers' choices, continuous paring down of the qualities of consumable goods"22 was sufficiently evident to cause Hitler to admit on January 30, 1939, the existence of a grave economic crisis, and also to make a plea to the German people to give their all; "more guns and less butter" in a deliberate curtailment of food consumption to raise military output to its highest level and put consumable goods to its lowest for the honor of the Fatherland.

In spite of all this evidence we still cannot prophesy immediate economic disaster for the Nazi party state. To begin with, most of us who live here would count it an economic disaster to live as the Germans have the last five years. Secondly, we have learned that men and women will quietly put up with continuance of conditions against which cattle would probably kick. Thirdly, Adam Smith said one hundred fifty years ago, 'there is a lot of ruin in a nation.' Fourthly, the belt can be remorselessly pulled in as long as there is still a little stomach left within it and the notches are closely spaced. Fifthly, no outbreak or open opposition of any kind against the Nazi party-state

22Ibid.
in peacetime is thinkable. On the other hand, though the Reich may keep its hand-to-mouth, Peter and Paul economy going for some years, it cannot further expand its current armament program, its productive capital equipment, maintain itself, and provide for 80,000,000 people. 23

23 Ibid., p. 536.
CHAPTER V

SHORT RATIONS
(1939)

The people of Germany faced even greater hardships in 1939 than in any of the preceding years of Hitler's regime. The opening of the new year found 80,000,000 people still inhabiting Germany, still stolidly following the orders of Hitler, and quietly submitting to an ever falling standard of living.

During the early months of 1939 the food situation was much as it had been in the fall and winter of 1938. The same shortage of eggs, meat, fats of all kinds, and fruits still prevailed. There was enough of the remaining foodstuffs to prevent hunger, but the diet of the average person was not well-balanced. The inadequacy of food supplies was most evident in the cities, where it gave rise to demands for more equitable distribution of the available commodities. This shortage was caused both by an insufficient supply of some articles and difficulties in distribution of others.

The chronic lack of the previously mentioned commodities had become even more general by mid-summer, and for the first time there were comparisons of prevailing conditions with those of World War days. The older people noticed similarities
in the scarcity and poor quality of foods, and familiar substitute products of questionable origin; the former attitude of calm acceptance of conditions was replaced by a genuine fear psychosis. The German was already the worst fed person in Europe, as a result of the Four Year Plan, and was afraid of having even less to eat than that.

Despite all attempts to cope with the shortage, through conserving available supplies, sectional release of special foodstuffs for limited periods, and increased production of substitute articles, discontent continued to spread. Hoarding and speculation grew apace. The government, realizing the danger, released figures designed to reassure the populace. These figures purported to show that sufficient quantities of bread-grains, potatoes, meat, sugar, root crops, and vegetables were available. Eggs and feed-grains were admitted to be weak, but could be supplemented by imports from neighboring countries. A deficiency in fats was acknowledged, but was said to be caused by the increased purchasing power of the masses and official hoarding for an emergency. The government controlled press worked over-time spreading propaganda phrased in terms designed to raise the morale of the people and convince them that their position was not so bad; any hardship they had to undergo was for the sake of the "Fatherland's" rosy future; hence, the burden must be borne loyally.

The premonition of the average German that the worst was
yet to come was substantiated in August, when a decree rationing foods put the country on a virtual war-time basis. Definite quotas of foodstuffs were allowed each person per week. Bread, potatoes, eggs, and fruits were at first unrationed, but subsequent decrees left potatoes and fruits the only major foods unrestricted. The rations introduced in August meant a reduction of thirty per cent as compared with average per capita consumption in 1938; this was curtailed even further by new allowables introduced on September 25th.

The remaining months of 1939 witnessed few major changes as the government was engaged in perfecting the rationing system and juggling food quotas to combat the fear psychosis and strengthen public morale. The food cards undoubtedly brought about malnutrition for many of the people, particularly children, who suffered much from lack of milk and fats.

The Christmas of 1939 was compared with that of 1916. Although basic food allowances were still far higher than the all-time low of 1916, there was the ever present fear, how soon would the quotas again drop to that level.

True enough, the German's diet had already lost much of its variety, but likewise, there was still room for further reduction if necessity demanded. A report of a foreign editor for the Business Week gives us a compact picture of general conditions in the early months of 1939.

Germany is not on the verge of collapse as so many wish-thinking people abroad claim. The standard of living is unquestionably falling. Cream is
practically unobtainable; butter and eggs are on a ration basis. There is a pork shortage; there is not a great deal of fruit, and it is of poor quality. But no one is hungry. Many complain, but the complaints do not bear the seed of open revolt. Workers in the lower income brackets accept the restrictions and slowly rising living costs because they prefer these conditions to the misery and uncertain relief payments of the depression.\(^1\)

Hitler in his speech before the Reichstag on January 30, however, finally admitted the existence of a grave economic crisis.

We are all sure of one thing, gentlemen: that an increase in our production cannot take place in respect of our food supply. What the German farmer manages to produce from the German soil is astounding. He deserves our highest thanks. At one point, however, nature sets the limit to any further intensification of effort. That means if some change does not take place, German consumptive power would find its natural limitation in the maximum of production of food supplies. This may be overcome in two ways: (1) additional imports of foodstuffs and increased exports of German products; (2) extension of our nation's living space so that in our domestic economy the problem of German food supplies can be solved.\(^2\)

Thus the situation had reached such a point that even the government, previously the last to admit any critical shortcomings, acknowledged that it had reached the peak in the drive for agricultural self-sufficiency. Hitler also bemoaned the fact that the outlook for 1939 would be still more gloomy.

---

\(^1\)What Has Germany Done to the United States?" *Business Week*, (March 25, 1939), p. 62.

unless a way could be found to keep young workers on the farm. 3

A government decree of February 16, 1939, provided for the issuance of cards rationing fat, butter, margarine, fish, and meat at reduced prices to the needy populace. The cards for the different commodities were of various colors, and, in addition, that for fats was distinguished by the letter "A", and for margarine by the letter "B". The fats card consisted of six coupons, anyone of which could be given in payment for a quarter of kilogram of butter, cheese, lard, sausage, meat, bacon, tallow, table oil, margarine, synthetic table fat, vegetable or animal fat, fish, smoked fish products, at a lower price than the then current rate by one-fourth Reichsmark. 4 (The exchange rate of the Reichsmark was forty cents). The margarine card consisted of four separate coupons, each entitling the holder to buy one-half kilogram of margarine at the price fixed by the government. 5 There was also a supplementary card permitting purchase of margarine at the normal government price. The cards were issued by the local public labor and relief offices, and not by private organizations or individuals.

By the middle of April, 1939, food rationing on a larger

3"Export or Die," Business Week, (February 4, 1939), p. 15.


5Ibid.
scale was being urged. The Deutsche Volkswirt (April 14, 1939, issue) demanded that food dealers be obliged to furnish commodities at fixed prices and in definite quantities for each consumer.

The nation's position was reviewed in an article about June 1, 1939, by the German Institute of Business Research. The Institute gave German home production of food as eighty-one per cent of her needs; animal fat production was nineteen per cent below home needs; the shortage of fats and butter amounted to fifty per cent; the supply of fodder essential to the production of fats was short twenty-six per cent. 6 Lands suitable for cultivation had been used for new roads, airports, and parade grounds, so that it was becoming difficult to maintain even the eighty-one per cent self-sufficient need. There were acute shortages in various staple dietary articles, although wheat reserves for bread increased by 4,000,000 tons from March, 1938, to March, 1939. 7 Potato and sugar production was pronounced satisfactory, but the 1938 failure of the fruit crop created deficiencies which were being sorely felt.

In July, 1939, one could hear rumors of the same scarcity and bad quality of foodstuffs and other commodities as


in 1917. There was the same lack of raw materials, the same ingenious substitute products that kept people wondering what they were eating, fearing that it was meat of dogs or sick animals; the fear psychosis was genuine.

Responsibility for the situation must be borne by the Four Year Plan, which placed Germany on a war-economy basis, concentrating on the production of munitions, limiting imports to raw materials, and shipping home-products of quality abroad to obtain foreign currency to buy more raw materials. While the population hungered, vast reserves of foreign oil, cotton, and wheat were being stored for military use.

The Four Year Plan was intended in part to change the food habits of the nation from bread to potatoes, from meat to fish, from fats to sugar. The shortage has made the German the most poorly fed person in Europe. A typical meal for wage-earners was a dish of lentils and cabbage; students leaned heavily on Backobst, a dish of dried prunes, apricots, and raisins, which also formed the universal dessert; soldiers fared better with sausages, fish, and even tomatoes. However, not only the lower classes suffered. Diseases due to this faulty diet were found in all classes. Scurvy, pellagra, rickets, and anemia were more prevalent in 1939 than in any combined ten-year period prior to Hitler's regime.

---

8L. F. Giltler, "No Food for War," Nation, CXLIX (July 8, 1939), 38.
L. F. Gittler gives the following description of the stores in mid-summer of 1939:

The stores are a picture of scarcity. Butter can only be seen during early morning hours two or three times a week. Bakeries cannot sell bread less than twenty-four hours old, so that housewives are not tempted to throw away old to buy new. The bread is loaded with potato and other inferior flour, making it heavy and grainy. Vegetables available only occasionally are celery roots, turnips, beet tops, cabbage, parsnips. The milk is thin and condensed milk is used as cream. Beer halls do not sell the beloved "Bockbier." It is being produced only for shipment abroad in barter for war materials.

The increasing shortage of goods had resulted in the trades people dictating to the customer. The customer had to take what he could get and do it quickly. If he did not buy it there were ten others who eagerly would. "Beef? There isn't any today. You want a cut of pork from this piece? No? Then don't take it! We have nothing else." The customer was made to feel a concession had been made to let him have food.

Lest the food shortage result in widespread discontent, the government released certain foods in different parts of the country for limited periods. This accounts for conflicting reports that were brought back by travelers. While one section was given butter, another had something else. For weeks there was cabbage, then tomatoes, then dried

---

9Ibid.
carrots. Sometimes the much-loved whipped cream was put on sale for a week.

In an attempt to cope with the shortage, the people conserved every scrap of food and material. In households a big poster shaped like a pig was inscribed "I eat" and "I don't eat," telling that pigs would eat peelings, skins, salads, bones, bread pulp, vegetables, potatoes, and egg shells, all of which had to be saved for the pigs, as farmers were forbidden to feed them any grain, alfalfa, rye, or hay.\textsuperscript{12} Garbage that pigs did not eat was saved for other purposes. Big trucks made the rounds weekly and collected the leftovers. Housewives saved all water used in cooking vegetables and potatoes as a soup base.

The potato had come to be something very important to the Germans. It appeared in various forms—in dumplings, bread, pancakes, stews, etc. Since the government's avowed purpose was to supplant bread with potatoes, research scientists explored the potato for hidden vitamins and devised new recipes. The East Prussian Junkers (large land owners) were prohibited from extracting their strong liquor from potatoes. Films with scientists testifying to the great value of potatoes to Germany and humanity were shown all over the country. The Fight Against Waste was also shown through films comparing model, saving housewives with

\textsuperscript{12}\textit{Ibid.}
wasteful, unobservant ones. The slogan was "save for the German people and for German cattle the things they need to eat and cannot get because of the sanctions of foreign nations."\(^{13}\)

Neither elimination of waste nor stringent rations, however, solved the food and commodity problem. Much research had been devoted to "Ersatz" (substitute) products fashioned from material available within the Reich. These were being tried out in army and concentration camps before they were put on the open market. The general quality of these substitutes was poor, even inadequate for peace-time needs, and could not possibly replace the supplies that formerly had come from other countries. Yeast was made from wood pulp, coffee from burned oats; fish albumen instead of eggs was used for baking, for sweets, and for mayonnaise; much progress, however, had been made in the production of synthetic honey and marmalade, and in extracting certain oils from grape seed.\(^{14}\) Germany formerly produced almost one-half of the world's whale-oil (the principal ingredient in German margarine) but exhaustion of the whaling grounds was endangering the supply.

The scarcity of foodstuffs and the failure of the "Ersatz" products to provide acceptable substitutes, led to some hoarding and a little speculation. The extremity

\(^{13}\text{Ibid.}\) \(^{14}\text{Ibid., p. 40.}\)
of the shortage, however, made it difficult for even seasonal speculators to ply their nefarious trade. Smuggling was sporadic and chiefly limited to cheeses, fats, butter, meats, and margarines in small towns along the border. Under new decrees, hoarding was made a treasonable act; nevertheless, housewives continued to hoard condensed milk, canned foods (when obtainable), and sugar for preserves; likewise, storekeepers hoarded canned goods, textiles, and metals, but were hard put to circumvent and outwit the authorities, who made regular inventories of all stocks and would not let merchants order more goods unless their shelves were practically empty.\textsuperscript{15}

Restaurants were regulated just as were storekeepers. The availability of choice meats was so uncertain that restaurant menus featured the internal organs of various animals—giblets, kidneys, lung hash, rabbit spine, etc; meats were always hidden under mounds of flour sauce, potatoes, or dumplings to disguise their meagerness.\textsuperscript{16}

In contrast to the reports of foreign correspondents and attaches, the German economists claimed that the country's position in foodstuffs was far better than in 1916, and that it could hold out against a blockade for four or five years. The shortages, they claimed, were in non-basic commodities, or were in articles whose scarcity was occasioned by difficulties in distribution or government efforts to build up

\textsuperscript{15}\textit{Ibid.} \hspace{1cm} \textsuperscript{16}\textit{Ibid.}, p. 38.
reserves. Existing deficiencies could be eliminated, it was claimed, by imports from the Danube Valley under German domination. The prospects for harvests were good in wheat, beets, potatoes, and root crops; so the government estimates of food potentialities took that fact into account. Bread and grains were believed sufficient for Greater German consumption with a carry over adequate for from five to ten months; feed-grains were weaker, but could be supplemented by imports from countries not affected by the blockade; potatoes were plentiful; sugar was strong with a six to seven months carry-over; meat--two-thirds of the meat consumption was pork and one-third beef, with only five per cent of the meat requirements imported; the shortage was evident in large cities because of difficulties in transportation and diversion of large quantities for storage; fats--appeared to be the weakest point, but authorities said the supply was sufficient, the increased shortage being caused by rising purchasing power of the masses and official hoarding for an emergency; the available supply of fats was only fifty-six per cent of needs; fruits--position strong; vegetables--almost adequate as a result of the development of the canning industry, which made possible the storage of reserves; eggs--eighty per cent of current needs

---

were produced within the Reich, with ten per cent of the imports coming from countries subject to war-time domination.\textsuperscript{18} The position of fish was likewise very weak, as two-thirds of the supply came from the North Sea and would be cut off by blockade.

We have previously noted that German Government figures must not be taken too seriously, as they have been proved inaccurate and often deliberately misleading. These figures do provide us, however, with a basis for comparison and a realization that conditions must in actuality be bad if the government will admit even the deficiencies which they do.

The press was working overtime to head off discontent by publishing propaganda based on four main points of contention dictated by the government. The propaganda laid stress on the following points:

(1) "Germans are not so badly off"—American depression era pictures of shanty towns, bread lines, bums, garbage eaters, etc., most of them fictitious, were run in theaters as true portrayals of American depression conditions. (2) The hardships and privations of Germany were "due to the fact that Germany was clubbed into poverty by unfair treaties and reparations. Germany had no cannon to back her conference room demands; hence, Germany is temporarily producing cannon instead of butter, importing iron ore instead of eggs and fruit, and

\textsuperscript{18}Ibid.
with rearmament accomplished, the army will assure a rosy future." (3) Blazing newspaper headlines announced that world Jewry had "cornered the international market in onions, sugar, lettuce, and, knowing how much German Aryans love these foods, had refused to sell to the Reich." (4) Radical Nazis spoke with ridicule of "Bourgeois stomachs"; called white bread "a concoction of liberalism," and the eating of good food "the democratic decadence of gourmands." ¹⁹

Conditions changed suddenly when the event took place the Germans feared, yet were expecting. On August 26th the Economic General Staff put Germany on a virtual war basis when it issued a decree, effective immediately, rationing foods, etc. ²⁰ The Staff was very careful to reassure the people that the ration cards were by no means an emergency measure caused by any shortage, but merely a precautionary measure to assure just distribution of food among rich and poor. To back up their statement that the rationing was not an emergency measure caused by shortage, the government issued some figures substantiating, in part, their claims. They asserted the 1939 grain crop of 26,900,000 tons was sufficient to cover needs and increase national reserves to 8,600,000 tons; despite hoof and mouth disease Germany had 800,000 more

¹⁹Gittler, op. cit., p. 40-41.

cattle than in 1932 and 1,400,000 more than in 1914.\textsuperscript{21} In addition to these reserves the Reich imported 1,000,000 bushels of surplus American grain at bargain prices. This importation of grain was necessary, since such bumper crops as those of 1938 and 1939 made Germany only eighty-five to eighty-seven per cent self-sufficient in foodstuffs;\textsuperscript{22} Yugoslavia, Rumania, and Hungary furnished the bulk of the necessary imports.

The new ration cards allowed German housewives provisions in the following amounts:\textsuperscript{23} meat, 700 grams a week; milk products, oils or fats, 60 grams a day; sugar, 280 grams a week; marmalade, 110 grams a week or 55 grains (about 3\textfrac{1}{2} grams) of sugar; barley, grits, sago, farina, and other pudding products, 150 grams per week; coffee or coffee substitutes 1/8 pound each week; tea, 20 grams per month; milk, 1/5 liter per day. In addition to these basic quantities the following persons received special commodities: children under six years of age received $\frac{1}{6}$ liter of milk per day, or 7/10 liter additional daily with special permission; expectant or nursing mothers received 3/10 of a liter of milk daily; or with special permission $\frac{1}{4}$ liter of milk daily; laborers in heavy industries were granted 490 grams of milk

\textsuperscript{21}\textit{New York Times}, August 28, 1939, p. 3.

\textsuperscript{22}“Hitler's Cache,” \textit{Newsweek} (July 10, 1939), p. 19.

\textsuperscript{23}453.5 grams = 1 lb.; 1 liter = 1.067 qts.; 1 kilogram = 2.2046 lbs.
products, oil, or fats per week.  

The first pinch of rationing was felt when stores opened Monday, August 28th. Merchants selling products on the restricted list and those handling items not limited (bread, meal, potatoes, eggs, cocoa, fruits, and vegetables), both did a rushing business. Customers were anxious to get the whole quantities of special products allowed by the already distributed ration cards. Many people bought for storage other commodities not yet restricted.

Rice was added to the restricted list; sugar in excess of the weekly stipulated amount could be secured for preserving, milk products, oils, and fats could be purchased only twice a week by individuals in set quantities; coffee, sugar, and marmalade could be purchased only once a week, and meat thrice weekly. In case weekly allotments of any commodities could not be supplied when due, they could be purchased at any time within the month.

In addition to individuals having to use ration cards for the purchase of most staples, restaurants also had to use

---


26 One person’s approximate allowable of rationed food-stuffs expressed in pounds and ounces was: 3 1/2 ounces of meat, 2-1/10 ounces of dairy products, 1-2/5 ounces of sugar, 6/10 ounce of marmalade, 8/10 ounce of cereal, 1/2 pint of milk, and 2 ounces of coffee. *New York Times*, September 1, 1939, p. 4.
them. Restaurants could buy only sixty per cent of their meat requirements for the month of September, 1938; sixty per cent of their fat requirements, of which only one-third could be butter; seventy-five percent of their sugar requirements.

The rationing system introduced many complications. The use of the cards involved difficulties for both the purchasers and shopkeepers; however, government pronouncements to clarify quantity allowables and ways of purchase were daily being made. 27 All members of the National Socialist Party were ordered not to form or join queues (lines) before shops. Some shops were closed for violation of price regulations set by the government.

The war rations introduced under the new ration cards for civilians on August 28-29th revealed a reduction of thirty per cent as compared with average per capita consumption in 1938. 28 To make matters worse, fresh meats were difficult to obtain even in permitted ration quantities; the weekly meat allotment usually had to be taken in meat products, as sausage. Fish was much in demand, with the supply evidently sufficient, although the price was high. Grain products were still plentiful, but butter and fats were most scarce and were becoming increasingly difficult to obtain in the amounts


allowed. In an endeavor to alleviate the shortage, fifteen per cent of the fats and tallow gained from the slaughter of cattle and hogs was diverted to the government and distributed as nutritive fats and oils.\textsuperscript{29} The use of these fats and tallow in the manufacture of meat products was forbidden.

Rye and wheat flour were added to rationing system on September 8th. It was stated that although the grain supply was assured for years to come, it was necessary to take measures to insure that flour was not wasted. Rye and wheat flour, therefore, could only be purchased on presentation of ration cards calling for 250 grams of flour per person per week.\textsuperscript{30} Coffee substitutes were included in the coffee rationing system and the allowable raised from 63 grams to 100 grams per person per week.

New ration cards covering every category of food with the exception of skimmed milk, fruit, fresh vegetables, and fish and further reducing rations were issued September 22nd, effective on Monday, September 25th. Every person was given a special card for each group of foodstuffs instead of a single ration card covering all foodstuffs. The announced purpose of the new cards was to defeat British efforts to starve out Germany and to keep intact the grain reserve as a protection against poor harvests in future years.

\textsuperscript{29}\textit{New York Times}, September 8, 1939, p. 6.

Separate cards were provided for bread, flour, meat, fats, sugar, marmalade, and other general provisions, while one card also provided for produce, as eggs, rice, and grain, the amounts sold to be determined by the food dealer; children up to six were given special bread, meat, and fat cards, as were children from six to fourteen years of age.³¹ Workers in heavy industry were allowed up to twice as much as an average individual, depending upon the type of their work.

Starting on September 25th the average German would approximately receive per week: 5 pounds of bread and no flour, or 5 pounds of bread and 3/4 pound of flour; about 1 pound of meat (500 grams actually); 80 grams of butter, ½ pound of margarine or vegetable fat, 65 grams of pork fat, bacon or tallow; ½ pound of white cheese or 62½ grams of other cheese; 250 grams of sugar.³² These rations showed reductions in meat, fat, cheese, and sugar from the August 28th rations. Skimmed milk could be purchased without ration cards, as well as skimmed milk products and buttermilk. Unskimmed milk was rationed only to children, pregnant or nursing mothers, invalids, and workers in heavy industry.

The ration cards for food were stoically accepted by the Germans along with fixed prices, for they "made comparatively little difference in the life of the average German,  

³¹New York Times, September 13, 1939, p. 3.
who has grown accustomed in the last turbulent years to doing without luxuries, such as butter, fat, coffee, or meat. 33

Immediately following the decree putting the new ration cards into effect, Agricultural Minister Darre announced a bumper harvest of 27,400,000 tons of combined bread and feed grains for Greater Germany. The annual grain consumption amounted to between 25,000,000 and 26,000,000 tons; thus, at least 1,000,000 tons could be added to the grain reserve. Minister Darre said the rationing system was to insure equitable distribution and prevent hoarding; that there was plenty of food for everyone for years to come, but a nation at war had to prevent and prohibit any emergency or crisis; the situation regarding meat, eggs, and fats was acknowledged to be less favorable than the grain situation, but rations beginning September 25th would be "sufficient". 34

There was some question of Darre's statement that rations beginning September 25th would be "sufficient".

Germany's new brightly colored food cards limiting rations of meat and other staples are likely to spell malnutrition. The new tightening of the belt imposed on the civil population, the second since the war started, means that the Germans will have a diet less adequate in milk and fats than the subsistence diet worked out in America. Nutritionists here emphasize that the subsistence level of diet is for emergency only and may not maintain

34 New York Times, September 24, 1939, p. 36.
health over a protracted time. Some experts believed that the Germans had already been affected by changes in their diet dictated by the state and by general food shortage.\textsuperscript{35}

Germany now restricts its milk ration to children, allowing those under six a full pint and a half a day. Older 'teen age boys and girls, whose bone formation is in rapid progress, get no milk allowance. Like adults, they have a cheese allowance, two ounces a week.\textsuperscript{36}

Eggs were not limited, but housewives could obtain only about one per person each week (the same as recommended by the American subsistence plan). The protective foods, milk, green vegetables, oranges, tomatoes, are important for warding off malnutrition, but German garden crops were something of a question, though it was unlikely that German farms and freight trains were supplying suitable civilian markets with adequate amounts of green produce.

The government-controlled Berlin radio recommended the following menus for patriotic Germans for four days, starting October 13th.

FRIDAY

Morning--Substitute coffee, whole wheat bread, marmalade.
Noon--Stuffed celery, parsley, potatoes.
Evening--Baked potatoes with kummel, vegetable salad.

\textsuperscript{35}"Is Germany Self-Sufficient?" \textit{New Republic}, XCVI (September 28, 1938), p. 197.

SATURDAY

Morning--Crushed oats, butter milk, egg yolk.
Noon--Thick potato-vegetable soup, sausage, apple sauce.
Evening--Bread souffle, fruit.

SUNDAY

Morning--Apple tart baked with yeast.
Noon--Baked cabbage in casserole, carrots, potatoes, elderberry pudding.
Evening--Warm fruit soup, bread with caraway seeds, carrots, junket, buttered herbs.

MONDAY

Morning--Coffee substitute, rolls, fat.
Noon--Carrot soup, dumplings, cabbage.
Evening--Potatoes in butter milk, sausage, "German tea".

Food rations between October 13th and November 19th were altered but not substantially increased; the weekly butter allotment was slightly increased; the weekly butter allotment was slightly increased, but at the same time margarine and bacon were reduced. The amounts of butter and marmalade for children under fourteen were increased. These changes were made principally for the psychological effect of a slight rise in butter rations, even at the expense of other fats.

By mid-October there was an almost complete disappearance from shops of the few non-rationed products, which had previously helped fill the gap in the daily diet created by the severe rationing of all essential foodstuffs with the exception

37 New York Times, October 14, 1939, p. 5.
of potatoes.\textsuperscript{38} Fish was still unrationed, but was virtually unobtainable, as British and German mine operations in the North Sea had cut off the usual supply of limited fishing to the Baltic, which was unable to meet the brisk consumer demand for a supplement to the week's one pound meat ration.

An American commercial attache in Berlin said of the German rationing system: "Under the German war-time food rationing system, consumption of meat and butter has been reduced nearly one-half, while other edible fats and oils have been reduced about one-fourth as compared with peacetime consumption."\textsuperscript{39}

In direct opposition to the attache's statement, the entire German press continued to concentrate on articles intended to persuade the German people that the Third Reich was invulnerable in the face of the British blockade. Authorities insisted that the Reich had sufficient food to make the British blockade absolutely ineffective. The government claimed to have 8,600,000 tons of wheat and rye stored, and to be increasing the reserve by 800,000 tons of wheat and rye each year by home production and Balkan imports via the Danube River; Germany's annual human consumption of wheat and rye was listed as slightly over 7,000,000

\textsuperscript{38}Ibid., October 16, 1939, p. 27.

\textsuperscript{39}Department of Commerce figures cited by New York Times, October 22, 1939, p. 30.
tons; so the reserve was good for over a year in case of im-
port and harvest failures. The potato territory of Poland
was expected to help some, but government figures on the
meat, fat, butter, and egg deficiencies were noticeably
absent.

On November 7th the Reich Food Ministry announced in-
creases in rations per person for December of meat, butter,
eggs, and rice. For four months beginning on November 20th
the purchasable meat ration was to be increased 60 grams a
person each week; the butter rations were likewise to be in-
creased 125 grams per person for a four month period, but
rations of margarine, whale oil, and tallow were slightly
decreased. From December 18th to January 11th an extra
ration of rice would be available; from January 15th to
March 10th Germans would be able to buy beans and peas for
the first time. Children's butter and fat rations were
to be increased at the expense of milk rations. Chocolate
was available for the first time since the war started in
tablets of chocolate or candy. Christmas cookies were also
made available.

The German press hailed the new food rations effective

40 *New York Times*, November 5, 1939, p. 34.
41 *New York Times*, November 7, 1939, p. 16.  42 Ibid.
43 Ibid.
November 20th with high praise and drew parallels with the "desperate" food situation of blockaded Britain. The food changes were really insignificant, the meat increase being only about six per cent per week, while children's fat rations were being increased at the expense of whole milk rations. "Children are undoubtedly suffering from insufficiency of present rations." 44

The big potato crop of 1939 proved a boon to German hopes and stomachs. The 1939 yield was 54,540,000 tons, even higher than the 1938 bumper crop and far above the five year average. 45 Less than one-fourth of the total production was needed for human consumption, the remainder being used as feed for hogs and some distilled into alcohol, with the residue fed to cattle.

A man's ability to buy in Germany was measured by the class of his ration card as average, heavy, or heaviest worker. One could still buy a good heavy meal, but at the expense of eating lightly the remainder of the week.

For an average German family of three, the ration system restricts any form of meat dishes to three each week. The larger families fare much better than the single persons, who can barely make both ends meet. Supper in Germany is usually a light meal of bread and butter, sausage, cheese, and salad; all except the salad are strictly rationed. Game meat is given in double ration amounts, but it is difficult to get. Eggs, rice, artificial honey, pod vegetables

and dried vegetables, spices, and cocoa are issued at lengthy intervals in small amounts. Coffee is entirely off the menu and roasted malt and corn are substitutes.46

The Christmas of 1939 was compared to that of the Germans in 1916, although basic rations were still far higher than in 1916 and 1917.47 The shortage of essentials and luxuries, too, made the German Christmas a gloomy one. The people were assailed with the fear of ever-lessening food and wondered when the minimum would be reached.


CHAPTER VI

BEHIND THE BLOCKADE

(1940)

As we have seen, Germany's food consumption was rationed a few days before the army invaded Poland. The psychological effect of this measure was different in Germany from what it might have been in countries with a free economy. There such a step created confidence rather than panic, because it assured the masses of at least equitable distribution. The public assumed that these rations could be maintained, but still vivid was the recollection of the last war, when the promised quotas were rarely filled. The rations were changed on September 25th, some increased and others reduced. Among civilians, some categories—miners, steel workers, etc.—received larger quotas than the average, while on the other hand, children received less.

If we check the quotas set up in September, 1939, (which remained practically stable except for minor changes) against the average food consumption of working families as ascertained by a survey of the German Labor Front for 1937 (whatever it is worth), it would appear that such rations meant comparatively no appreciable restriction. There was less meat and fat available per person throughout the winter of 1939, but more bread
and sugar, than in 1937. A diet of this sort was, of course, far below North American standards and even about fifteen per cent less than the average German consumption for 1927.

Those who are familiar with German dietary habits and who remember the World War situation, will not indulge in the self-delusion that the German people can be starved out on these rations. They certainly inflict hardships and make the lives of housewives no easier. But as long as bread, potatoes, sugar, cabbage, and legumes are available in the quantities said to be at present, the masses will not seriously feel the pinch of the blockade.

The German masses long have lived on a singularly unchanged diet of bread, meat, potatoes, cheese, cabbage, and a few other vegetables. Of these dietary staples, only meat, cheese and other fats were short, but the picture changes when we realize that pork was the principal basis of this workingman's diet. Take the base away from the structure, or even weaken that base, and the structure immediately becomes an unknown quantity whose lasting power cannot be definitely determined. Thus, we are led to conclude that these masses may continue under the strain indefinitely or may break at any moment, the final result being dependent upon future conditions.

The question of Germany's ability to maintain the standards of late 1939 and early 1940 can be answered only in part. There was scarcely any doubt about the answer with

---

respect to bread-grains in 1940. She had excellent crops in 1938 and 1939 and entered the present year (1940) with a stored supply sufficient for several months. Whatever the expectations for the 1940 harvest, the grain supply would be sufficient for at least nine to ten months. This was also true of sugar and potatoes. With Czechoslovakia and Western Poland included, Germany controlled by far the greater part of the best sugar area of Europe.

The shortage of labor and fertilizer, which was so great a problem in the World War, was not such a serious threat, as a powerful fertilizer industry had been built up since 1915, while "subject" races—Jews, Poles, Czecks—were being used as forced labor and shifted from region to region.

Potatoes were used for three purposes: food for men, feed for hogs, and for the production of alcohol; with Poland's contributions, they were even more plentiful than before. Hogs were still the most important source of the fat supply. In the four years preceding the war, Germany imported about forty-five per cent of her fat supplies; so naturally she was short. Whether or not the rations allowed from September to January were sufficient, even as a minimum, was not considered an acute question by the government.

I do not mean to minimize the seriousness of the German food problem. It is bad enough when we think of its effect on the future of the race. Malnutrition, which has been rife for years in certain strata of the people, may work havoc on the next generation. Even without war the German people would have to pay dearly for the extravagances of
the Nazi regime. But the food problem would seem
to have no immediate bearing on the war.²

In order to avoid confusion, we must remember that these
evidences of self-sufficiency were not based on fulfillment
of the wants of the people, but merely figures to show the
possibility that the strict rations allowed could be fulfilled;
the government did not claim to have plenty, but merely enough
to meet the quotas it had set up.

The quality of the diet in the Reich was revealed in a
letter received by a foreign diplomat in Washington from a
friend in Germany. The letter said: "Please don't worry
about us. We are getting along very well indeed. Our food
is fully as good as you get at the Hotel St. Antoine in
Geneva."³ The only drawback to this apparently true picture
of the food situation was that there was no Hotel St. Antoine
in Geneva, the only structure bearing that name being an
apalling looking prison dating from many centuries back.
The censor evidently was not aware that no Hotel St. Antoine
existed, or that it was a prison, thereby missing the true
meaning of the letter as it revealed food conditions.

Some further light was cast upon the manner in which
rationing was being accepted by a copy of a leaflet lampoon-
ing the Reich's food rationing system (brought to America by
an Austrian refugee).

"Cooking Recipes of the Great German Folk Unity"
Reich Nutrition Guild
Blood and Soil

Luncheon—Take the egg coupon, dip the meat coupon in it, and broil with the fat coupon. Boil potato coupons and serve together.

Dessert—Rebilk the coffee coupons and add the milk coupon. Sweeten with sugar coupon and dunk bread coupon in it. Then wash your hands with the soap coupon and dry them with the clothing ration card.4

Otto D. Toliischus, a foreign correspondent working in Berlin, gave a first hand account of conditions inside Germany by a wireless message to his employers in America.

Never in recent history were Germans able to buy as little with their income as now, even in the face of 1939's income being the largest in history. This is true of rich and poor alike. For the rationing system is no respector of classes or persons and its standard is the standard of the average worker's family, reduced to the subsistence level and based mainly on substitute products. In fact, except in so far as the well-to-do are able to live on past purchases and possibly have special opportunities for 'gifts' from foreign connections, manual laborers are better off in respect to food than the rich.

The normal food rations, while sufficient to avert actual hunger, nevertheless are admittedly so scant, according to official medical adjustment, that they are certain to produce deleterious effects on the national health.

The normal rations which may be bought per head per week are, approximately: 11 oz. of meat, and meat products, as sausage, 7 oz.; butter 4 oz.; lard 2 oz.; margarine 3 oz.; sugar 9 oz.; cheese 2 oz.; coffee substitute 5 oz.; eggs, one. Milk is supplied only to children up to 10 years of age and to prospective mothers. Only vegetables and fruits are still unrationed, but they are getting scarce, and tropical products, as oranges, tomatoes, tea and coffee are something to dream of.5

Inevitably, the rationing system imposed heavy additional burdens on both shopkeepers and housewives. Every housewife had to take her turn waiting until the butcher or grocer painstakingly collected the ration coupons and weighed the allowed quantities equally as carefully. Each customer jealously watched to see that she received no less than the exact amount due her.

Most Germans were developing a sort of psychological hunger that induced them to eat whenever and wherever they could. Cakes, still unrationed, were one form of satisfaction for this hunger. "As a paradoxical result of this, plus increased consumption of potatoes and starches, the Germans, especially women, are getting stouter rather than the reverse." 6

A special Reich board, organized by the Nazi women's organization for economy in the home, the General Headquarters for housewives, gave advice on what to cook and how to economize in an effort to further consolidate the women behind the drive for less waste of usable materials and food.

With this preceding background of potential supplies and actual ration allowances for the early months of 1940, in conclusion it behooves us to answer the question, "What is the German situation now, in the early summer of 1940?"

Making due allowances for difficulties experienced in drawing

6 Ibid., 63.
a true picture in the light of contradictory reports, and
the difficulty of clear perspective on a question so histori-
cally fresh, let us consider the evident state of German food
affairs.

There has been, and presumably still is, an opinion
widespread in this country that all the Allies need to do
to secure victory is to retain a strictly defensive policy
and wait for the blockade to starve Germany into final sub-
mission. The actual fact is that the blockade is not likely
to work this way at all.

Naturally, Germany's rise from an agrarian country to
England's chief industrial competitor was not achieved without
incursing a deficit in foodstuffs. That is why there has been
drive after drive to increase domestic food supplies; the
World War taught them a sound lesson in food preparedness.
"Pampered by the Government, German farmers today are pro-
ducing more grain and grass, more sugar beets and potatoes,
more milk and pork than ever before."7 Under peace time
conditions about eighty-seven per cent of all the food con-
sumed in Germany is now home grown, compared with seventy-five
per cent in 1914. Under war time conditions it is impossible
to forecast consumption rates and continuance of present pro-
duction rates; this is one of the great question marks hanging
over the future food supply.

7Karl Brandt, "Germany behind the Blockade," Foreign
Affairs. (April, 1940), p. 508.
There is very little reason to believe, however, that the food shortage will become any more acute than it is under the strict rationing now in effect. To show this, it is convenient to divide commodities into three classes: cereals, fats, and higher class foodstuffs.

**Table 5**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Commodity</th>
<th>Total Supplies (Gr., Germany)</th>
<th>Imports</th>
<th>Imports as per cent of supplies</th>
<th>Exportable Surpluses of Neutrals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bread Grains</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wheat</td>
<td>7,521</td>
<td>906</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>1,640</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rye</td>
<td>9,983</td>
<td>332</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>291</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feed Stuffs</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barley</td>
<td>6,363</td>
<td>173</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>628</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oats</td>
<td>7,784</td>
<td>118</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>116</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maize</td>
<td>2,029</td>
<td>1,500</td>
<td>73.6</td>
<td>1,265</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Table 5 shows that in 1939 Germany was virtually self-sufficient in bread grains, only twelve per cent of her wheat and 3.5 per cent of her rye being imported. These small deficiencies can easily be made up from the Balkan countries, whose peace time exports more than cover them. In addition,
large stocks of bread grains were accumulated before the war broke out. The government claims that these stocks have not been depleted; the British claim, however, that this is all Germany is now living on; so outside both countries we must go to get unbiased reports.

In feedstuffs, the greatest source of danger is maize, importing as she does 73.6 per cent. There is likewise a deficiency in cattle-cake made from vegetable oils. Yet, the greater part of this deficit could be covered by imports from Russian and the Balkans if transports were available. The problem of supplying German livestock with feed has been relieved to some extent by production in the huge "Leuna Works" of a mixture of natural products and synthetic components of protein, as urea and amino acids, which are derived from the air.\(^8\) Strenuous attempts are being made to persuade the Balkan countries to increase their exports to Germany. If feedstuffs are short next winter (1940-1941), the rate of livestock slaughter may have to be increased, but those disposed need not be an unnecessarily high proportion of the number possessed.\(^9\) The present bread ration is sufficient for the ordinary German's need, and seemingly will be maintained.

---

\(^8\)Brandt, op. cit., p. 511.

The Hungarian corn crop was not up to standard and Germany could raise her Hungarian imports of hogs and cattle and feed by only seven per cent, which is about fifty per cent of her needs from Hungary.10

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Commodity</th>
<th>Total Supply (Old Reich)</th>
<th>Imports</th>
<th>Imports as per cent of supply</th>
<th>Exportable Surplus of Neutrals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Butter</td>
<td>574</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>14.0</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lard and Tallow</td>
<td>576</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>7.0</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vegetable Oil</td>
<td>635</td>
<td>603</td>
<td>95.0</td>
<td>256</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whale Oil</td>
<td>185</td>
<td>156</td>
<td>83.0</td>
<td>193</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>1,972</strong></td>
<td><strong>880</strong></td>
<td><strong>44.7</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Littmann, op. cit., p. 289.*

It is generally believed that the crux of the food situation is to be found in the shortage of fats, although, of course, the fats are used both as edibles and for industry, as in making explosives and lubricants. As seen from Table 6, Germany normally imports slightly under 1,000,000 tons of fats, or 44.7 per cent of her requirements. These requirements

were obtained from Manchuria, the Phillipines, Africa, and the Dutch East Indies, principally in the form of seeds to make vegetable oil. "She can obtain, at the most, about forty-three per cent of her normal imports, mostly from neutrals overseas and subject to British contraband control."11 The new whaling fleet secured 80,000 tons of whale oil before it was bottled up in home ports; possible imports were also greatly curtailed when Britain purchased the whole of this season's Norwegian catch. This caused margarine distribution to be completely stopped on July 1st, as whale oil is the principal ingredient of much of the margarine.

The seriousness of the total fat deficiency of about twenty per cent to twenty-five per cent depends upon the size of the demand for war purposes; if no major military operations take place, most of the fats can be used for human consumption in the form of butter, margarine, suet, and lard for cooking purposes.

What is Food Dictator Darre's recipe for meeting this shortage? Coal by-products have been substituted for soap and soap consumption throttled to a fraction of peacetime use by strict rationing. These two measures together will save some 300,000 to 400,000 tons of fats and oils per year.12 Milk consumption, even of children, has been decreased by

11Littmann, op. cit., p. 289.
12Brandt, op. cit., p. 510.
stricter rationing; hence, more milk is churned to butter.
To supplement the domestic output of butter, lard, and bacon, these commodities are purchased in the Netherlands, Switzerland, neutral countries around the Baltic, and in the Balkans. The Polish grain and potato surplus is to be used in fattening hogs. Contracts asking for growing rapeseed and soybeans for German account are being offered Balkan farmers to increase the vegetable oil supply. All available import sources and domestic agriculture's maximum are being stretched to cover the deficit.

The fat shortage will be an acute question in case of a major offensive, as fats used for human consumption will be diverted to use in explosives and lubricants.

Higher class foodstuffs. — "The deficit in meat supplies need not exceed 10 per cent of recent peace-time consumption." This statement sounds rather good until we remember that the "recent peace-time consumption" was only slightly over one-half of the average consumption in preceding years. A decrease of ten per cent of this one-half ration would undermine still more the working man's diet. Today, however, the cattle situation is better than ever before, having recovered from the depletion of the World War, but a high rate of slaughter is necessitated by the shortage of fodder. It is estimated

13 Ibid., p. 511.
14 Littmann, op. cit., p. 290.
that the herds can stand the high slaughter rate for three years without being depleted to the World War level.

According to a report of the United States Foreign Agricultural Bureau, Germany entered the present war with a large proportion of her people already inadequately nourished. The diet of the working family was lowered fifteen per cent during the 1927-1937 period, and we know that it has even further decreased since then. The report asserts that the present nourishment situation is not likely to result in serious maladjustments during the first year of the war, but that "the staying power and probable health of those not in a preferred ration category will be endangered unless it is possible to augment the normal-consumer ration."16

Germany has achieved complete or nearly complete self-sufficiency in sugar, potatoes, bread grains, cabbage, carrots, plums, and cherries;17 so there is no question of starvation (albeit there is no doubt of inadequate nutrition) as long as these supplies are available. The shortage of meat, eggs, fish, fruits other than plums and cherries, and the poor quality of the coffee substitutes, make the diet extremely dull, but there is food to fill German stomachs


in quantities sufficient to avoid actual hunger, although the vitamin content and nutritive balance of these foods is an entirely different story forecasting a decline in health of present and future generations.

Germany improved her position in foods somewhat with the conquest of Denmark, from which country she formerly imported twenty per cent of Denmark's total exports in the form of cattle meat. Under normal conditions, Danish agriculture was able to feed twelve million people in addition to the three million, eight hundred thousand people in Denmark.\(^{18}\) The yield, of course, would go down if imports of forage and artificial manure were cut off by the blockade. Denmark's store of food aided Germany greatly as far as immediate conditions were concerned, but there is some question whether the immediate compensation will offset the ultimate dislocation in Danish products inevitably created by German occupation.

Superficially, the Germans have improved their food position a great deal by the attacks on the Low Countries, but this is somewhat of an illusion. As in Denmark and Norway, they seized large quantities of fats in the Netherlands that were badly needed. They also improved, temporarily, their situation as regards livestock and dairy produce, but 280,000 of the Netherlands' cows were drowned when the land

was flooded to impede the German advance. In 1938 Holland furnished Germany with thirteen per cent of her butter, fifty per cent of her cheese, and twenty-three per cent of her eggs. The government hopes that these shares can be substantially augmented at the expense of the shipments cut off from England. Holland possesses a dairy industry supported by over 2,000,000 cattle and an annual export surplus which includes approximately 220,000 tons of milk and cream; 60,000 tons of butter; 60,000 tons of cheese; 30,000 tons of meat; 80,000 tons of eggs and egg products. She also grows maize, barley, rye, wheat, oats and pulse in addition to large quantities of potatoes and green vegetables. Another potential source of food is the Dutch fishing industry, both sea and river.

As usual, such a pleasing account cannot be true in its entirety. The fact overlooked was that both Belgium and Holland depend on their ability to import feed for their stock to build up this food surplus. Belgium depends upon imports for sixty-six per cent of her products. To increase home food production, the Belgians imported 1,231,000 metric tons of fertilizers and 2,338,000 tons of cereal in 1938.


20"What Germany Gets," Business Week, (May 18, 1940), 62.


22J. B. Reston, op. cit., p. 5.
Holland is less dependent on imports, but she and Belgium together account for 6.5 per cent of the world's imports and 5.8 per cent of its exports.

In spite of temporary alleviation of the food shortage in fats and dairy products, the food problem is still acute. Holland and Belgium, now also under the blockade, will, of necessity, have to get a share of Germany's grain reserves to keep from starving this winter.

Despite claims (June 7th) in all leading newspapers that Germany will enter the second year of the war with a grain reserve at least equal to the supplies in storage at the outbreak of hostilities last September, the Germans are now responsible for feeding huge additional conquered populations. "To the million Polish prisoners who are now being forced to meet the labor shortage on the farms, are being added now another million prisoners from the Western Front." All efforts will not be able to meet the heavy demands of the coming winter, because of all the countries under her domination, no one has a normal food surplus in the products Germany so badly needs: fats, meat, butter, eggs, etc.

The partial failure of the grain crops in the Balkans has not improved the outlook for the coming winter. Heavy early rains followed by severely hot weather limited the Balkan harvests, while the grain fields of France were ruined.

---

23 "Hitler Try to Reverse Blockade," *Business Week*, (June 8, 1940), p. 59.
by the war. Germany's grain supply is not sufficient to meet the deficits of Belgium, Holland, Austria, and Czechoslovakia, and still supply her own peoples' needs. Thus she can and will do little to help the invaded countries; they must largely depend on their own efforts and abilities in readjusting production and consumption of essential foodstuffs. Conditions are blackest in such countries as Belgium, Norway, and Holland, which depend on imports for much of their food supply. The deficit of fats and feedstuffs throughout the entire German dominated territory is a matter of gravest concern to them.

If the people continue on a severely pinched war diet, Hitler can turn the full productivity of his arms factories to the task of gaining control of world markets, using manufactured goods to get raw materials to make even more manufactured goods with which to foster German trade. If the German people demand a higher standard of living, based on the exhilaration resulting from the crushing victory over France, then Hitler will have to use his industrial plant to produce comfort goods for home consumption, or exchange manufactured goods for them, to appease the demands of a hungry populace.

Whether the Germans, much less the conquered peoples, will be content to let the grim specter of famine stalk among them, and yet maintain their stolid passivity on an ever lessening diet is a question only the future can answer.
BIBLIOGRAPHY

Books


Articles


"Behind the Crisis in Europe," *Business Week*, September 24, 1938, p. 42.

Brandt, Karl, "The Crisis in German Agriculture," *Foreign Affairs*, X (July, 1932), 632-645.

Brandt, Karl, "Germany behind the Blockade," *Foreign Affairs*, April, 1940, pp. 507-516.

de Wilde, J. C., "Germany's Controlled Economy," *Foreign Policy Reports*, March 1, 1939, pp. 290-304.

Enloe, Cortez, "Germany Tightens Her Belt," *Current History*, XLIV (December, 1936), 69-73.


Fay, S. B., "German Economic Conditions," *Current History*, XL (December, 1934), 363.

Fay, S. B., "German Economic Outlook," *Current History*, XLIII (February, 1935), 613-616.


"Germany in Training for a Lean Winter," *Literary Digest*, CXVIII (September 8, 1934), 16.

Gittler, L. F., "No Food for War," *Nation*, CXLIX (July 8, 1939), 38-41.


Hopper, Bruce C., "How Much Can Russia Aid Germany?" *Foreign Affairs*, January, 1940, pp. 229-243.

Hutton, Graham, "German Economic Tension," *Foreign Affairs*, XVII (April, 1939), 524-537.

Katona, G. K., "How Real Is German Recovery?" Foreign Affairs, XIII (October, 1934), 26-44.

Kent, George, "Farm as You're Told," Readers Digest, January, 1938, pp. 59-60.


Lore, Ludwig, "Will Europe Go to War?" Nation, CXLV (July 14, 1937), 91-93.


"Reich Tries for Barter Deal," Business Week, August 12, 1939, p. 39.


Tolischus, O. D., "Inside Germany: The Mark of War," Readers Digest, February, 1940, pp. 61-64.


