

**Matters of Taste: The Politics of Food and Hunger in Divided Germany 1945-1971**

by

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## **Acknowledgements**

The fact that I would become a German historian had never crossed my mind ten years ago – that the past decade has made me one is entirely due to the remarkable number of people who have helped me in ways that even now I cannot fully grasp. Nonetheless, I suppose that these acknowledgements are as good a place as any to start a lifetime's worth of thanking.

It all began at Columbia, where Professor Lisa Tiersten suggested that I go abroad, a suggestion that sent me for the first time to Germany. Five years later, when I first considered going to graduate school, she was the person I turned to for advice; her advice, as always, was excellent – and resulted in my becoming a German historian. During my first chaotic and bizarre years in Berlin, Professors Christina von Braun and Renate Brosch went out of their way to help a confused and hapless young American integrate herself into Humboldt University and get a job to pay the admittedly ridiculously low rent of my coal-heated Kreuzberg apartment. Looking back, it still amazes me how their generosity and willingness to help completely transformed my future.

It was my years living in Berlin, of course, that made me decide to become a German historian, and especially one interested in the history of the GDR. Certainly the city itself – in all its glory and insanity – deserves mention. It is hard to spend time in

Berlin and not become some sort of historian; this was especially true when I moved there in 1999. Most of all, however, it was the people there who inspired and interested me, my friends from what were once East and West Germany, from Slovakia, France, Spain, Poland and so many other places. Slavo Szabo kept me going at my most miserable moments, and his wife Ines Koeltzsch has made everything better for both of us. René and Mandy Krüpfanz, and indeed the entire Krüpfanz family, are some of my greatest friends in Germany (and Spain and Switzerland!), and talked patiently with me about the GDR while feeding me delicious meals. Florence Vittu got me to fall in love with Paris on a steady diet of croissants and chocolate. Victoria, die *kleine Berliner*, is one of my very favorite people, and the only German I have ever met who is as loud as I am. Carla not only has an amazing six-pack, but is an all-around amazing person. Sasha was my best friend growing up in Berkeley, and then moved to Berlin and became my best friend there.

If the people and space of Berlin made me think about German history for the first time, it was the University of Michigan, and especially my advisors Kathleen Canning, Scott Spector and Geoff Eley, who made me a German historian. Kathleen and Scott convinced me to go to Michigan, something that I have increasingly realized was one of the best decisions that I have made. Geoff told me that I was a German historian long before I believed I was one myself. When I arrived at Michigan, I made many wonderful friends who kept me going during the traumatic transition from Berlin to Ann Arbor, and continued to keep me together afterwards: Justyna, Angie, Ross, Anne, Ema, Josh, Kisha, Susanne, Lenny, Mia, and Roberta. Meeting Latha Reddy on an insane trip to South Africa was one of the best things that happened to me during graduate school.

Researching and writing this dissertation was inappropriately pleasurable, and not only because my topic allowed me to eat a great number of delicious meals 'from East and West' all in the name of research. Thanks to the generosity of the DAAD, the Berlin Program of Advanced German and European Studies, and the Social Science Research Council's IDRF program, my research time was incredibly well funded and well organized, something that greatly simplified completing this comparative project.

If anyone is looking for a way to have a truly fantastic German archival experience, I can suggest where to begin. Dagmar Kollhof, the librarian of the Deutsches Institut für Ernährungsforschung, began helping me even before I officially began working on my dissertation, and throughout the process kept me supplied with primary and secondary sources, anecdotes, friendly smiles and queries, interviews with current and former nutritionists, and, above all, sincere interest in my project. I must also mention the incredible generosity of the East German nutritionists who met with me at the Institute and answered my questions openly and enthusiastically; in particular I would like to thank Dr. Martin Zobel, with whom I enjoyed several wonderful lunches, and whose fascinating life could itself be the subject of a dissertation. Last but not least, the Institute is home to a fantastic canteen with truly affordable prices, ensuring that I sincerely looked forward to lunch every day.

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like to specially acknowledge the generosity of archivist Klaus Dettmar, who, not once but twice, gifted me with the remarkable two-volume edited collection of Berlin's Magistratsprotokolle (a wonderful source for anyone interested in postwar German history.) In addition, the archivists at the Bundesarchiv in Koblenz and Berlin, and at the city archives of Cologne, Düsseldorf, Dresden and Leipzig, all went out of their way to answer my vague questions about 'food and politics,' teaching me as much about my topic with their thoughts and memories as with the materials that they gathered for me.

The fact that writing this dissertation was almost as much fun as researching it was due entirely to the support of my advisors, colleagues and friends. As all of her advisees have noted in their own acknowledgements, Kathleen is a remarkable teacher and reader, simultaneously critical and supportive. Scott pushed me in all the right ways and on all hard questions (ideology . . . identity . . . agency . . .). Geoff has mastered the art of letting you do what you want to do while at the same time ensuring that it is at least half-way right. Looking back at where I was when I first came to Ann Arbor in 2003 and where I am now (a German historian!), I can honestly say that it is largely due to the three of them. My studies at Michigan went so smoothly thanks to the work of the History Department staff, in particular Sheila, Lorna, Diana and Kathleen.

Many other people provided invaluable feedback and support along the way. In particular, Atina Grossmann, James Vernon and Ulrike Weckel read my scattered chapters and discussed unfocused ideas with enthusiasm and great intellectual generosity. Their thoughts and suggestions were tremendously helpful and personally inspiring. A Rackham Predoctoral Fellowship allowed me to move to the Big City and dedicate

myself to writing. During my year in Chicago, it was Michele, Tara, Aaron, Leah and my orange cat Macaw who kept me from being too lonely to write.

Above all, I am thankful for my family. My father died when I was nine, but gave me enough love in those nine years to last a lifetime. David brought me into his heart and made me part of a new and wonderful family. Maddy is about the coolest little sister a person could hope for. And at the very beginning, of course, was my mother – who raised me with a never-ending supply of stories of injustice, wonder, suffering and possibility that have taught me the power of history since the day I was born. This dissertation is dedicated to her.

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## **Abstract**

"Matters of Taste: The Politics of Food and Hunger in Divided Germany 1945-1971" traces the political and cultural economy of food in East and West Germany during the first two postwar decades. By using food as its primary lens of analysis, the dissertation develops a new analytical and methodological approach to modern German and Cold War history. It does so by exploring the ways in which food concerns and hunger fantasies determined the trajectory of the two postwar German states. This approach reveals the interconnectedness of the GDR and the FRG and challenges many of the chronological and geographic divisions that have defined twentieth century German historiography. It also highlights the ways in which ideas of gender, nation and race, particularly the categories of Slavs and of Jews, were implicated in the everyday food practices of the populations of the two German states.

The postwar era followed a war whose scale and impact were measured in terms of food lost and people starved. This was a time when the recognition of the global ramifications of hunger ensured that postwar reconstruction efforts centered on nutrition and food distribution. Allied attempts to resolve the food crisis in occupied Germany was one of the opening acts of the Cold War, and made the divided country a crucial stage for the development of an international food economy that incorporated issues as diverse as agricultural policy, global food aid and societal models of gender relations.

"Matters of Taste" shows how ideas of cooking, shopping, eating and feeding others were central to postwar definitions of modernity, communism, capitalism, and democracy. The study offers the first in-depth comparative analysis of mass feeding programs in the GDR and the FRG, focusing on school lunches and workplace canteens. It shows how economic, family and social structures were constructed literally and figuratively through public and private eating patterns. In addition, this dissertation argues that hunger defined German memory of the past – of the two World Wars, the Third Reich and the Holocaust, and the postwar occupation – as well as determining the contours of the Cold War division of the country.

## **Chapter 1**

### **Introduction: Food, Hunger and German History**

Not since the breadlines of the 1930s, the horrors of Nazi concentration camps and ghettos, and the massive food shortages of the immediate postwar years through much of Europe, Asia and Africa have questions of food supply, nutrition and the global food economy seemed as public and as pressing as they are today. Crises in the health care programs of industrialized nations have been linked to the unprecedented societal costs of a poor diet, most dramatically the enormous costs of widespread obesity, stress and heart disease. Even in wealthy countries, childhood malnutrition as well as food stamp dependency have been steadily increasing, and have reached record highs in the United States. Such domestic concerns exist alongside the violent food riots that have been exploding in regions as disparate as West Africa and Egypt, Mexico and Haiti, responses to up to 80% increases in global food prices over the past year. The threat of famine is no longer restricted to the far-off peoples of drought-ridden Africa, but something that hangs over huge sections of the globe. International financial organizations are warning of drastic consequences for global security should these food shortages continue. What people eat, and the ways in which they acquire their food, have suddenly become issues of public interest and governmental intervention, rather than simply ascribed to personal predilection or individual economic status.

"Matters of Taste: The Politics of Food and Hunger in Divided Germany 1945-1971" offers historical origins for the current crisis. The dissertation, a comparative study of food and hunger in postwar Germany, has two interrelated yet distinct goals: to explore the development of the Cold War and the postwar food economy by using occupied and divided Germany as a case study, and to offer a new narrative of the history of the two postwar German states through the lens of food and hunger. My interest in this topic emerged out of four years spent living in Germany. A post-college move to Berlin in 1999, ten years after the Fall of the Wall, placed me in uncharted territory. Living with West German roommates in what was formerly East Berlin, I was astonished at the very real lived tensions between *Ossis* and *Wessis* even within my own depoliticized life. Sexual relationships, political affiliations, bodily appearance, mannerisms and accents were inevitably read through the lens of the German division, by West Germans as much as by East Germans. Nowhere were these acts of distinction as unselfconscious, intuitive and absolute as in the realm of food; ingredients, recipes, ways of presenting and consuming dishes, and even cooking techniques themselves were embedded in assumptions of difference between the two former German states.<sup>1</sup>

This was nothing new, of course. Sameness and difference are categories that humans have always constructed with reference to diet – and few populations were confronted with as dramatic an obligation to establish both sameness and difference as were Germans during the decades of division. The importance of food for German-German relations was nowhere more public than during the Fall of the Wall in November

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<sup>1</sup> Charlotte Brinkmann, "Bananen mit Ketchup. Esskultur: Beobachtungen in einer Markt- und einer planwirtschaftlich orientierten Gesellschaft" in Wolfgang Kaschuba (ed.), *Blick-Wechsel Ost-West: Beobachtungen zur Alltagskultur in Ost- und Westdeutschland* (Tübingen: Tübinger Vereinigung für Volkskunde, 1992).

of 1989 and the subsequent processes of unification, when references to culturally over-determined foods ranging from bananas to pickles, chocolate to sausages, dominated media representations and collective memory of the time. It was against this backdrop that I began my research for this dissertation, driven by the desire to find out if and how East German food was 'different from' or 'the same as' its West German equivalent. My questions were implicitly comparative – how did a German socialist state create a distinct food world? And especially: Why were both East and West Germans so fixated on food, be it for the lost foods of the now-gone German Democratic Republic or the romanticized delicacies of the victorious Federal Republic? These questions were inspired by the substantial body of literature on the history of modern consumer culture, a field that in the United States has recently begun to focus particular attention on the former German Democratic Republic.<sup>2</sup>

When I began my research, I relied heavily on the assistance of archivists and librarians. I typically posed my query as generally as possible: I was looking, I said, for information on the relationship between politics and food, between nutrition and the German state. After several successful visits to archives located in the former GDR, I made my first trip to a West German source base, a regional archive located in Rheinland-Pfalz. There, for the first time I heard the sentence that was to accompany my research on food in the postwar Federal Republic: “Oh, you will want material from the Occupation Years: that was when food was political.” These archival conversations were

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<sup>2</sup> David F. Crew, *Consuming Germany in the Cold War* (Oxford: Berg, 2003); Katherine Pence and Paul Betts eds, *Socialist Modern: East German Everyday Culture and Politics* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2008); Eli Rubin, *Synthetic Socialism: Plastics & Dictatorship in the German Democratic Republic* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2008); Ina Merkel, *Wunderwirtschaft: DDR-Konsumkultur in den 60er Jahren* (Köln: Bohlau, 1996); Konrad Jarausch, ed., *Dictatorship as Experience: Towards a Socio-Cultural History of the GDR* (New York: Berghahn Books, 1999).

my first confrontation with the well-established myth that the so-called Hunger Years – 1945 to 1949 – were the (only) time in the West when food was politics, when the 'stomach-question' was the central concern of both the population and the German and Allied governing bodies.<sup>3</sup> This should not have surprised me. Scholars have long noted the significance of the postwar food crisis for Germans. However, the majority of this scholarship, particularly that focusing on the Western zones and in many ways shaped by the biases of the archival materials, focuses on private food consumption, and the mythic scale of the battles of women and children to gather food stuffs for familial consumption. These were precisely the daily struggles that were immortalized in both national and individual West German memory, symbolic of the German people's scale of suffering and the will to survive. This was, in a sense, a deliberately depoliticized interpretation of the politics of food.

As these archival experiences made abundantly clear, in contemporary Federal Republic, food was not seen as lacking, and as a result it seemed uninteresting from a political perspective, something taken for granted and unproblematic. This dismissal of food as a topic of wide-scale cultural or political significance was the expression of a powerful and culturally condoned sense of entitlement, one that, as the philosopher Deane Curtin has pointed out, has allowed food concerns to be assigned to society's marginal figures, above all women, the poor, and ethnic minorities. As Curtin explains:

While everyone eats, some are enabled by the conceptual scheme of a dominant philosophical culture to bracket off those food-related aspects of their

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<sup>3</sup> This idea has shaped postwar German historiography; historians writing about the years 1945 to 1949 pay considerable attention to concerns over food acquisition and preparation, an interest that dwindles and then disappears by the mid-fifties. See Footnote 20 for several such monographs.

experiences, to leave them unspoken and unacknowledged. Thus they literally do not experience themselves in these roles.<sup>4</sup>

The ability not to 'think' about food, or to assign it peripheral importance, is a mark of privilege that was, for historical and cultural reasons, particularly important for West Germans. My project traces the ways in which the craved-for freedom to no longer 'need' to think about food was central to West Germans' conceptualizations of itself as a postwar, post-Nazi and anti-Communist society.

In contrast, the socialist GDR thought a great deal about food; in casual discussions with former citizens of East Germany, the topic of the political history of food seemed both obvious and relevant, inevitably inspiring the recitation of personal dietary anecdotes or the proffering of a prized recipe or baked good. The staff at institutions ranging from the National Archive to health museums and regional libraries all had an overwhelming array of suggestions of topics to pursue, files to request, and books to read. This contrast with the archives of the Federal Republic was historically and structurally determined. The Marxism that shaped the East German educational system formally ensured that 'materialism,' including the material of the human body, was part of every East German citizen's education and political training. East German politicians frequently focused on the self-proclaimed 'ordinary and adequate' food culture of their country as a way of countering popular complaints over inadequate consumer products as well as international accusations of poverty and underdevelopment. Ironically, in fact, in the eyes of the West, the GDR's very attention to food was proof of the country's poverty and underdevelopment.

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<sup>4</sup> Deane Curtin, "Food/Body/Person" in Deane W. Curtin and Lisa M. Heldke, *Cooking, Eating, Thinking: Transformative Philosophies of Food* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992), 4.

This tension proved fruitful in my own thinking about the political potential of food. My own research is driven by the conviction that food and hunger are inseparable from one another, both being political, cultural and individual experiences that were as important in the West as in the East, for the wealthy and the poor, and for men as well as women and children. In general, both scholarly and popular attention to food concerns and hunger have focused on these conceptually marginal populations, as a result not only marginalizing these concerns themselves but also misrepresenting the history of the mainstream or the conceptual majority.

The case of divided Germany is a paradigmatic example of these biases; because of the GDR's relative poverty (in comparison with the FRG), its society was associated with hunger, and food was accorded a particular significance. At the same time in the West, hunger was relegated to times of crisis and poverty (the war and immediate postwar years.) These normalized assumptions erase an inevitable multiplicity of stories (the permanent existence of an undernourished poor minority in the FRG, and the actual nutritional over-consumption of East Germans for most of the duration of the division.) They also create lines between the hungry and not-hungry that erase the interdependence of these categories. Again, this is echoed in the evolution of postwar German historiography, by which the GDR cannot be understood without reference to the FRG (a status of dependence parallel to that of the hungry people of the world, whose history cannot be understood without reference to the well-fed and wealthy), whereas the FRG's history is generally cast as a self-contained narrative within which the GDR possesses at best symbolic significance.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Dorethee Wierling recently summarized the state of the field in a review essay on postwar German history: "while it is inarguable that the history of the GDR cannot be plausibly written with its 'Other,' the

Since the fall of the Wall, there has been an explosion of interest in the history of the GDR, and a resultant shift in studies of the pre-unification Federal Republic. This work has generally focused on questions of everyday life, lived experience and its fraught relationship to official ideology, global and transnational relationships, and consumption and consumer history.<sup>6</sup> Many historians of postwar Germany have used the GDR as a productive counter-example to highlight the development of the Federal Republic of Germany. Cultural historians working on postwar West Germany's social development, in particular gender and family relations, have often emphasized the seemingly more positive or progressive aspects of life in the GDR, most notably in the realms of sexual expression and gender equality.<sup>7</sup> Unfortunately, there are still relatively few projects that are conceptualized as comparative German-German studies, and those that do exist frequently focus on the immediate postwar years, with the assumption that only the fragility and permeability of the German-German border – something that ended with the construction of the Wall in 1961 – renders such a comparison productive.<sup>8</sup>

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Federal Republic, it seems that the reverse is far less true." Dorothee Wierling: Rezension zu: Möller, Frank; Mählert, Ulrich (Hrsg.): *Abgrenzung und Verflechtung. Das geteilte Deutschland in der zeithistorischen Debatte*. Berlin 2008 und Wengst, Udo; Wentker, Hermann (Hrsg.): *Das doppelte Deutschland. 40 Jahre Systemkonkurrenz*. Berlin 2008, in: H-Soz-u-Kult, 27.05.2009, <<http://hsozkult.geschichte.hu-berlin.de/rezensionen/2009-2-143>>.

<sup>6</sup> Mark Landsman, *Dictatorship and demand: the politics of consumerism in East Germany*. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2005); Jonathan Zatin, *The Currency of Socialism: Money and Political Culture in East Germany*. (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 2007); Konrad Jarausch, *Dictatorship as experience: towards a socio-cultural history of the GDR*. (New York: Berghahn Books, 1999); Katherine Pence and Paul Betts, *Socialist modern: East German everyday culture and politics*. (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2008); Katherine Helena Pence, "From Rations to Fashions: The Gendered Politics of East and West German Consumption, 1945-1961". (Dissertation: University of Michigan, 1999.)

<sup>7</sup> Dagmar Herzog, *Sex After Fascism: Memory and Morality in Twentieth-Century Germany* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2005); Erica Carter, *How German is She?: Postwar West German Reconstruction and the Consuming Woman* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1997); Elizabeth D. Heineman, *What Difference does a Husband make?: Women and Marital Status in Nazi and Postwar Germany* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999).

<sup>8</sup> The first and most influential of such studies is Uta G. Poiger, *Jazz, Rock, and Rebels: Cold War Politics and American Culture in a Divided Germany* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000). More recently, Kathy Pence completed her dissertation from the University of Michigan on gender and consumer culture in the two Germanys through the 1950s. (Pence, "From Rations to Fashions.") The topic that has

This study extends such comparative projects by reaching from the Nazi years through to 1971.<sup>9</sup> This wide chronological scope allows me to trace longer-term institutional developments as well as cultural discourse. By comparing the violence of the war years, the scarcity of the Occupation Years, the austerity of the 1950s and the abundance of the 1960s, this dissertation offers a new perspective on the history of the two postwar German states as they developed in relationship to their own pasts and their other half. The scope of the project allows continuities and ruptures to emerge over both space and time, connections which are contextualized by both World War II and the Cold War. In addition, I pay careful attention to the role of food and hunger in the worldviews of both the Axis and the Allied forces as well as in American consumer capitalism and Soviet state socialism in order to highlight the ways in which Germans aligned themselves with and distinguished themselves from related international trends.

Along with this broad chronological and geographic frame, "Matters of Taste" distinguishes itself methodologically from other studies of the postwar German states due to its origins in East German rather than West German archives. As a result, the

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generated the best comparative studies is divided Berlin. The standard and still one of the best comparative studies of the city was written, interestingly, not by a historian but by the anthropologist John Borneman. John Borneman, *Belonging in the Two Berlins: Kin, State, Nation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992). There are also several important edited volumes that contain essays on consumer culture in both East and West Germany, but generally they lack a methodologically comparative framework and require the reader to draw his or her own comparisons. Such collections, how. André Steiner, *Preispolitik und Lebensstandard: Nationalsozialismus, DDR und Bundesrepublik im Vergleich* (Köln: Böhlau, 2006); Gunilla-Friederike Budde, *Frauen Arbeiten: Weibliche Erwerbstätigkeit in Ost- und Westdeutschland nach 1945* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1997); Konrad Hugo Jarausch and Hannes Siegrist (eds), *Amerikanisierung und Sowjetisierung in Deutschland 1945-1970* (Campus, 1997); Peter Alheit and Dietrich Mühlberg, *Arbeiterleben in den 1950er Jahren: Konzeption einer "Mentalitätsgeschichtlichen" Vergleichsstudie biographischer Verläufe in Arbeitermilieus der Bundesrepublik Deutschland und der DDR* (Bremen: Universität Bremen, 1990).

<sup>9</sup> This was the year that marks the only shift in leadership of the GDR, the transition from Walter Ulbricht to Erich Honecker, and provides a convenient dividing mark for East German history. 1972 ushered in not only a new political leadership in the GDR, but also the beginning of the second global food crisis (after the postwar crisis.) Christian Gerlach claims that this 1972 crisis marked the beginning of a "globalization crisis in the capitalist international economy that remains to today." Christian Gerlach, "Die Welternährungskrise 1972-1975," *Geschichte und Gesellschaft*. 31, no. 4 (2005), 548.

structures and society of the GDR determined the overall shape of my project and the questions that I asked of my materials. My definition of a postwar food economy was shaped by the work of the East German Society for Nutritional Research rather than the West German Society for Nutrition. The consequences of such an approach are factual as well as theoretical. On the one hand, collective feeding programs became an important focus of this project; had I begun in the West German archives, canteens would have been peripheral and school lunches literally non-existent in the postwar narrative. Instead, I dedicated a chapter to each of these programs, which together constituted the heart of the East German nutritional system. The country's interest in collective feeding was in line with developments on both sides of the Iron Curtain in the aftermath of the war and postwar food crisis. It was, in fact, the Federal Republic that made a break with the trends of modernization in its rejection of collective feeding programs. While West German historians have frequently questioned the significance of canteens and school lunches for their country's development, I argue that both the cancellation of school lunches and the remaking of workers' canteens were vital to the Federal Republic's construction of a postwar identity, its defining of gender roles, and the crafting of specifically West German boundaries of consumption and production.

This research also sheds new light on one of the most important historiographic developments in recent German history: the question of German victimization.<sup>10</sup> While much has been made within Germany over a sudden 'lifting of a taboo,' when it comes to voicing German suffering, historians within Germany and internationally have repeatedly

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<sup>10</sup> Two important recent works on the topic are Helmut Schmitz, *A Nation of victims?: representations of German wartime suffering from 1945 to the present*. (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2007) and William Niven, *Germans as victims: remembering the past in contemporary Germany*. (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006). In addition, *Central European History* published an important issue (Volume 38, No. 1) in 2005 dedicated to these debates.

documented a tremendous fascination with and assertion of German suffering in both German states from the end of the war up through unification.<sup>11</sup> Nonetheless, the past several years have seen an explosion in interest in the memory and reality of German suffering during and immediately after the war, as for the first time "German suffering, rather than German guilt, has become the principal theme in discourses about the past."<sup>12</sup> The topic has inspired a remarkable array of cultural products, including films, television shows, articles, novels, poems and of course historical studies. The vast majority of this work on the nature, function and history of German memory focuses on one of three events: the Allied bombing attacks on German cities; the suffering experienced during and immediately expelled ethnic Germans in the East, and the experiences of German POWs held in Soviet camps well into the 1950s.

Surprisingly, amid the many critical and empathetic voices that participate in these debates today, however, there is one form of German suffering that has remained absent from these discussions: German hunger, and specifically the hunger of the postwar 'Hunger Years.' The absence of hunger from the current passionate arguments over the scale, significance and meaning of German suffering thus oddly skips over what was understood as the only universal form of suffering experienced by the German people during and after the war. It also encourages a lack of a sustained critical interest in this hunger, and in so doing erases its historical and cultural significance and specificity. By exploring the shifting meanings of hunger in Germany before, during and after the

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<sup>11</sup> Helmut Schmitz, "Introduction: the Return of Wartime Suffering in Contemporary German Memory Culture, Literature and Film." In Helmut Schmitz, *A Nation of victims?: representations of German wartime suffering from 1945 to the present*. (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2007), 9.

<sup>12</sup> Mary Nolan, "Air Wars, Memory Wars," *Central European History*, Vol. 38, No. 1 (2005), 7.

Hunger Years, "Matters of Taste" suggests a wider scope and more expansive approach toward these debates over German suffering and the memory of that suffering.

My interest in socialist and Communist theories of food and hunger also opens up new perspectives on postwar Germany. Most obviously, a similar study that began with primary sources and historiographic questions from the West and the FRG would have certainly focused upon issues of consumption. One of the most important agendas of the Cold War and the reconstruction of the FRG was to move food and food concerns to the realm of consumption and consumer culture. This shift was cast as definitional to the postwar establishment of wide-scale prosperity and a flourishing consumer-based economy. This ideological move decided policy as well as materially shaped archives, in turn determining the shape of postwar historiography that emerged out of the West. Because I began my research on food in postwar Germany in sources from the former GDR, these were the archives that initially defined the category of food that shaped my project – and it was one that focused predominantly on the relationship between food and production, rather than consumption. My emphasis on collective feeding programs, specifically school lunches and factory canteens, is a direct result of the emphases of the GDR's conceptualization of the national food economy, which prioritized collective meal programs over individual-based consumption. Ultimately, one aim of my project is to show the ways in which these different methodological approaches to food are not mutually exclusive, but simply alternate and equally relevant perspectives. In other words, the history of collective feeding programs in the FRG is in fact as significant as the story of the growth of private consumption – even, as in the case of school lunches, in its absence.

At the same time, while no one has ever questioned the significance of private consumption for understanding life in the GDR, the overwhelming emphasis on this aspect of daily life has often seemed to come at the expense of attention to the productive and public sphere, for example, collective feeding programs. In my research, I have consistently tried to take socialism seriously as a social and economic model. Like capitalism, it has a history – and one that is, particularly in Germany, related to concerns over hunger and satiety. East German nutritionists and politicians frequently cited a specifically socialist interest in food, and offered a strong theoretical explanation of what that was, and how it was to effect nutritional policy. As a result, I have paid special attention to the words of German socialists and Communists during the Third Reich and the Allied occupation. Long before the founding of the GDR, the German left had been making controversial and often disturbingly prescient claims about the role of food and hunger in modern warfare and the shaping of the modern world. This dissertation is, as far as I know, one of the first to contextualize East German social and cultural history within the specific historical legacy of wartime and occupation socialist discourse.<sup>13</sup> Such a context additionally illuminates the history of the early FRG, which was at least as preoccupied with socialism as the GDR's own citizens.

At the same time, however, that I pay close attention to the importance of both socialism and capitalism as ideologies that shaped social structures, lived experiences and

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<sup>13</sup> Eric Weitz has produced the most important long-term history of German communism, tracing the history of the KPD from its origins in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century through to the collapse of the GDR. The primary focus, however, remains on the first half of the twentieth century, and Weitz's work is really a political history of the movement and the party. *Creating German communism, 1890-1990: from popular protests to socialist state*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997.) In addition, Catherine Epstein's *The Last Revolutionaries* is an excellent study of German Communism that stretches through the twentieth century. However, it is a political and biographical work that talks little about social and cultural developments within prewar Germany or the GDR. Catherine Epstein, *The Last Revolutionaries: German Communists and their Century* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003).

state policy, the GDR and the FRG cannot be simply explained through reference to these ideologies. Neither the shape of school lunches and canteens, nor the complexities of hunger discourses after the war, are simply socialist or capitalist – they are also always, and sometimes more importantly, German as well. For example, the populations of both East and West Germany after the war expressed a traditionally German aversion to collective meals. This aversion coincided with and was strengthened by the West German state's ideological opposition to such meals. However, the aversion itself was not created by ideology, but rather was a legacy of German history. On the other hand, in East Germany this aversion clashed with the state's ideological embrace of collective meals, resulting in a specifically German and socialist compromise on the meaning and shape of both school meals and workplace canteens.

In order to gain access to such a wide variety of perspectives, "Matters of Taste" relies upon a wide array of sources. The topic of food itself, both mundane and potentially limitless, offers historians rich materials with which to work. Both the medical and the nutritional sciences play an important role in this dissertation; in addition to examining scientific journals and reports, I also worked extensively in the institutional archives of the nutritional and health sciences, examining internal memos, reports and case studies relating to both malnutrition and changing dietary trends. I turned to cookbooks, women's magazines, guides to domestic living, popular advertisements, and even agricultural and economic journals, in order to understand different food discourses as well as changing dietary experiences and desires. Although most of my sources came from experts in the field, state officials, or public discourse, I have tried wherever possible to broaden the array of voices that speak in these pages. Food was one of the

most complained-about and polemical aspects of life in both postwar German states. As a result, there are large numbers of queries and complaint-letters written by citizens to relevant branches of the government as well as nutritional organizations. These letters were particularly helpful for understanding the history of collective feeding programs in both East and West Germany.

### **Food and the Postwar**

The outbreak of the Second World War meant that concern over hunger suddenly shifted from the Third World to Europe, where food and nutrition were understood as central to the war itself, and in turn to the postwar world.<sup>14</sup> The war, with its origins in global depression and its resolution characterized by promised prosperity and the division of the world into socialist and capitalist halves, has long been mythologized as the decisive turning point of the twentieth century. This was a war whose scale and impact were measured in terms of food lost and people starved. It was a time when the recognition of the global ramifications of hunger meant that postwar reconstruction centered on nutrition and food distribution, ensuring that nutritional science was "critical to an internationalist vision for the reconstruction of postwar Europe."<sup>15</sup> The postwar era revealed a commitment to the "vast enterprise of providing food for health for all people," an undertaking "beset with difficulties" and "requiring international collaboration" in

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<sup>14</sup> The original reports on starvation in Africa incorporated a critical stance to ward British colonial rule, and implied that there were external causes for this widespread hunger. However, with the sudden declaration of war, "colonial malnutrition was rapidly and readily reconstructed from being seen as an epidemic problem to an endemic one, for which colonialism had little responsibility and over which it could exercise little control." Michael Worboys, "The discovery of colonial malnutrition between the wars," in David Arnold, *Imperial Medicine and Indigenous Societies* (Manchester University Press: 1988).

<sup>15</sup> James Vernon, *Hunger: A Modern History* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007), 151.

order to succeed.<sup>16</sup> Both the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) were responses to the hunger generated by the war, underscoring the fact that "the construction of a postwar international order began with food."<sup>17</sup>

The centrality of the idea of the 'postwar' for the shaping of the world after 1945 is undeniable. Tony Judt's recent book, titled simply *Postwar*, is one of the most ambitious and lucid discussions of this era in European history, while Veejay Prashad's *The Darker Nations* offers a brilliant counterpoint, exploring the history of the same era by focusing on the emergence of the Third World as one of the most important consequences of the divisions of the Cold War.<sup>18</sup> The postwar was a time when hunger seemed the greatest enemy of civilization at the same time that global food production was skyrocketing. Although the official 'global food crisis' was considered over by the beginning of the 1950s, it ensured that the postwar era was shadowed by concerns over food shortages. The war, despite its incredible loss of life, ushered in an era of unparalleled population growth, an increasing population that brought with it increasing appetites. As Matthew Connelly has explained in his book on modern population policy *Fatal Misconception*, Western analysis relied upon a Malthusian model of global

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<sup>16</sup> D. John Shaw, *World Food Security: A History since 1945* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 21.

<sup>17</sup> Nick Cullather, "The Foreign Policy of the Calorie," *The American Historical Review*. 112, no. 2 (April, 2007), 337-364.

<sup>18</sup> Tony Judt, *Postwar: A History of Europe since 1945* (New York: Penguin Press, 2005); Vijay Prashad, *The Darker Nations: A People's History of the Third World* (New York: New Press: 2007). Prashad argues that the Third World emerged out of the tension of the divided Cold War, occupying a third space between the USSR and the USA which "enabled the powerless to hold a dialogue with the powerful, and to try to hold them accountable." (Prashad, *The Darker Nations*, xviii.) This era of political aspirations and activism came to an end, according to Prashad, in the 1970s.

development, which left advisors and economists dangerously confident in their ability to predict and control mass hunger.<sup>19</sup>

At the same time that the transition to the 21<sup>st</sup> century has inspired a more pointed and critical exploration of the 'postwar' as an era with a specific history and impact, the current crises in global health and international stability have led to a series of articles and books seeking to historicize the modern food economy.<sup>20</sup> While the bulk of these works tend to focus on the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, examining the effects of late colonialism and imperialism on the development of current systems of food production and distribution, there are several recent articles that have addressed the particular history of postwar global food politics.<sup>21</sup> In particular, this turn to the postwar

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<sup>19</sup> Matthew James Connelly, *Fatal Misconception: The Struggle to Control World Population* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2008), 190. East German and other socialist food experts had long rejected Malthusian analysis, claiming that the size of the earth's population was in no way the cause of hunger, which was systemic rather than demographic in nature. They promised instead that "in proportion to the speed with which power relations on earth shift toward socialism, the food products of the world will be distributed fairly, so that the malnourishment that afflicts up to two thirds of the population in the colonies and former colonies as well as people living in capitalist lands can be overcome." (Lore Semmler, "Gesunde Ernährung. Informations- und Argumentationsmaterial zur Gesundheitserziehung," (1974) no page numbers).

<sup>20</sup> In many ways, this new trend is an example of the field of history 'catching up' to work that has been going on in other disciplines for years. Area Studies, Cultural Studies and Gender Studies have been interested in food and body discourse since their inception as academic disciplines. Sociology, economics and geography as well have been producing excellent works on food within their fields. Most influential for my own work is the long legacy of anthropology's interest in food and human culture. Claude Lévi-Strauss explored the ways in which techniques of food preparation established culturally specific categories of 'civilization.' (Claude Lévi-Strauss, *The Raw and the Cooked*. (New York: Harper & Row, 1969).) Marcel Mauss explored, among other things, the ways in which the sociability of food consumption, in particular the exchange of foods, was a crucial way of establishing relationships between individuals and communities. (Marcel Mauss, *The Gift: Forms and Functions of Exchange in Archaic Societies* (New York: Norton, 1967).) Mary Douglas' work has focused on the ways in which ideas of purity and pollution are crucial to ideas of the boundaries of the individual and collective bodies, boundaries which are created and breached by acts of cooking and eating. (Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of the Concepts of Pollution and Taboo* (London: Ark, 1984).). More recently, there has been increased interest in the ways in which the longer history of colonialism and imperialism impacted global patterns of food consumption and production. The pivotal work of Sidney Mintz, focusing on the sugar trade, has been particularly influential in this regard. (Sidney Mintz, *Sweetness and Power: The Place of Sugar in Modern History* (New York: Viking, 1985))

<sup>21</sup> Perhaps the two most important recent works exploring this earlier period are James Vernon's *Hunger* and Mike Davis' *Late Victorian Holocausts*. Nick Cullather's recent article, "The Foreign Policy of the Calorie," and Christian Gerlach's 2005 article "Die Welternährungskrise 1972-1975" are examples of a new interest in this more recent history.

period has encouraged a new interest in the history of human rights, as well as in the creation of the First and Third World as spaces defined respectively through food excess and food lack.

This comparative study of the two postwar German states hopes to both complicate and specify these newly emerging historical narratives. Divided Germany has long seemed the paradigmatic representation of the Cold War. At the same time, in particular the Federal Republic has been one of the most celebrated and powerful icons of the postwar era. The country's development out of an utterly devastated enemy nation into the wealthiest and most powerful European country seemed to prove the power of consumer capitalism to heal all wounds and provide 'prosperity for all.' In addition, West Germany's economic success confirmed the power of the United States, which had almost single-handedly provided the massive funding necessary to rebuild the country's shattered economy, primarily under the auspices of the Marshall Program. The fact that occupied Germany was an important site of negotiation for postwar global power relations is one of the most interesting and under-explored aspects of postwar German history. This is most obvious in the context of the developing Cold War; indeed, the competition and increased hostility between the Soviets and the Western Allies in occupied Germany has been the subject of several studies.<sup>22</sup> My focus on hunger as a theoretical, cultural and political category opens up other ways in which the defeated, occupied and divided country inspired debates of global significance.

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<sup>22</sup> Arthur David Kahn, *Experiment in Occupation: Witness to the Turnabout, Anti-Nazi War to Cold War, 1944-1946* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2004). Thomas G. Paterson, *Soviet-American Confrontation: Postwar Reconstruction and the Origins of the Cold War* (Baltimore,: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1973).

For historians of hunger in twentieth century Europe, Germany, and especially occupied Germany, has been a crucial object of research since the postwar years themselves. While both Allied visitors to occupied Germany and later historians have noted with a mixture of skepticism and sympathy that "Germans were traumatized less by war than by postwar privations,"<sup>23</sup> only recently has scholarship begun to engage more critically with the Hunger Years and their impact on East and West Germany. There have been several studies of the food culture and various rationing systems of these years, much of which has concentrated on documenting the scale of (German) suffering.<sup>24</sup> More recently, some authors, most notably Rainer Gries and Dagmar Ellerbrock, have explored the political and cultural ramifications of a German civilian population that seemed "exclusively focused on the acquisition of food stuffs."<sup>25</sup> Both Gries and Ellerbrock have shown how the daily experiences of hunger, food acquisition, and sickness were not simply bodily experiences, but important ways for the population to engage in a dialogue with, and even to challenge, the Allied forces.<sup>26</sup> Building upon these arguments, Paul Steege has focused on occupied Berlin to illustrate the complexity

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<sup>23</sup> Sabine Behrenbeck, "Remembering the Victims of Violence in Germany" in Richard Bessel and Dirk Schumann, *Life After Death: Approaches to a Cultural and Social History of Europe during the 1940s and 1950s* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 40.

<sup>24</sup> Rainer Gries, *Die Rationen-Gesellschaft: Versorgungskampf und Vergleichsmentalität: Leipzig, München und Köln nach dem Kriege* (Münster: Westfälisches Dampfboot, 1991); Karl-Heinz Rothenberger, *Die Hungerjahre nach dem Zweiten Weltkrieg: Ernährungs- u. Landwirtschaft in Rheinland-Pfalz 1945-1950* (Boppard am Rhein: Boldt, 1980); Gabriele Stüber, *Der Kampf gegen den Hunger 1945-1950: Die Ernährungslage in der Britischen Zone Deutschlands, insbesondere in Schleswig-Holstein und Hamburg* (Neumünster: K. Wachholtz, 1984); Jutta Heibel, *Vom Hungertuch zum Wohlstandsspeck: die Ernährungslage in Frankfurt am Main 1939-1955* (Frankfurt am Main: Verlag Waldemar Kramer, 2002); Günter J. Trittel, *Hunger und Politik: die Ernährungskrise in der Bizone (1945-1949)* (Frankfurt: Campus Verlag, 1990).

<sup>25</sup> Paul Erker, *Ernährungskrise und Nachkriegsgesellschaft: Bauern und Arbeiterschaft in Bayern 1943-1953* (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1990), 141.

<sup>26</sup> Dagmar Ellerbrock, *"Healing Democracy" Demokratie als Heilmittel: Gesundheit, Krankheit und Politik in der amerikanischen Besatzungszone 1945-1949* (Bonn: Dietz, 2004); Gries, *Die Rationen-Gesellschaft*.

of Berliners' claims of helplessness and victimization.<sup>27</sup> This work, along with cognate work on the history of displaced persons (DPs) and especially Jews in occupied Germany, suggests a new and more layered approach to the oft-told story of the Hunger Years.<sup>28</sup>

My focus on the historical shifts in the meaning of hunger before, during and after these years reveals the fluidity of the category of hunger, thus challenging many assumptions that undergird the historiography of both the Occupation Years and divided Germany. Hunger, as James Vernon has recently reminded us, always has a history.<sup>29</sup> In the case of defeated and divided Germany, moreover, this history was uniquely contested, consequential and public. Peoples' experiences of their own hunger are always mediated through political, cultural and individual states of being.<sup>30</sup> In the aftermath of the Third

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<sup>27</sup> By drawing attention to their daily lives, their use of the black market, their assorted 'survival strategies,' Steege reminds us that "restricting Berliners' experiences in the second postwar winter merely to passive suffering (freezing, starving) at the hands of brutal forces of nature reduces them to objects dependent on municipal or occupation benevolence and . . . refuses to admit how their multifaceted actions coped with and indeed shaped the difficult material conditions in which they found themselves." Paul Steege, *Black Market, Cold War*, 109.

<sup>28</sup> Angelika Eder, *Flüchtige Heimat: jüdische displaced Persons in Landsberg am Lech 1945 bis 1950* (München: Kommissionsverlag UNI-Druck, 1998); Stefan Schröder, *Displaced Persons im Landkreis und in der Stadt Münster 1945-1951* (Münster: Aschendorff, 2005); Atina Grossmann *Jews, Germans, and Allies: close encounters in occupied Germany* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007).

<sup>29</sup> Literary criticism, psychoanalysis, feminist studies, and anthropology have all fruitfully explored the relationship between hunger and collective and individual identity. Most recently, the British historian James Vernon has written a path breaking book on the relationship between hunger and modernity itself. Vernon's book, which focuses on the importance of the colonial holdings of Ireland and India for forcing Britain to confront the relationship between hunger and modernity, was a crucial referent for my own work. Most of the best recent work on hunger, including that of Mike Davis and Diana Wylie, has focused on questions of empire and colonialism, and on the integration of certain kinds of hunger into a modern global economy. In addition, environmental, economic and demographic historians have all paid attention to the importance of hunger as a force that has shaped history. Mike Davis, *Late Victorian Holocausts: El Niño Famines and the Making of the Third World* (London; New York: Verso, 2001); Diana Wylie, *Starving on a full stomach: hunger and the triumph of cultural racism in modern South Africa*. (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 2001); Alfred W. Crosby, *The Columbian Exchange; Biological and Cultural Consequences of 1492* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Pub. Co., 1972); Adam Tooze, *The Wages of Destruction: The Making and Breaking of the Nazi Economy* (New York: Viking, 2007).

<sup>30</sup> The dilemma posed by a hunger that is not recognized by its sufferers as hunger was the subject of the anthropologist Nancy Scheper-Hughes' work on poor communities in Brazil. Placed in a state of chronic malnourishment by the workings of global capitalism, these communities of hungry women and children are instead diagnosed with 'nerves,' and treated with 'medicine' provided by global pharmaceutical

Reich and the Holocaust, ruled by the conflicting powers of the Americans, Soviets, British and French, dependent upon foreign food aid while convinced of their own imminent starvation, the people of Germany were unsurprisingly obsessed with their hunger. Critically engaging with and historicizing this obsession challenges widely held assumptions that hunger is a category worthy of historical analysis only when it is obviously present. I argue that both the Cold War and the postwar relied upon the intertwined categories of hunger and satiety in order to define the years between 1945 and 1971, shaping them in reference to a time of hunger (the past of the War and the Depression) and a space of hunger (the Socialist East, the exploitative West, and the Third World).

### **Rethinking Production and Consumption in German History**

Until recently, social and political historians have generally shown little interest in food history.<sup>31</sup> With the exception of economic and demographic historians, food issues were relegated to obscure and often ghettoized projects within what was disparagingly thought of as 'women's history' or 'everyday history.' Happily, the recent explosion of interdisciplinary and cultural history has encouraged a more sustained interest in food, and even the emergence of the sub-discipline of food studies.<sup>32</sup> For historians of modern

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companies. The patients thus did not understand their problem as a lack of food, but a lack of medication. Nancy Scheper-Hughes, *Death without Weeping: The Violence of Everyday Life in Brazil* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992.)

<sup>31</sup> Although movements like the Annales School of history, (Fernand Braudel, *The Structures of Everyday Life: the Limits of the Possible*. New York: Harper & Row, 1982) with its desire to study all aspects of human life, as well as Marxist scholarship (E. P. Thompson, *The making of the English working class*. London: Gollancz, 1963) produced excellent historical works dealing with food concerns in a multitude of ways, food generally remained outside the purview of standard historical study.

<sup>32</sup> P J Atkins' *Food in Society* offers a very useful summary of the development of food studies as an topic of study across the academic disciplines. P. J. Atkins and Ian R. Bowler, *Food in Society: Economy, Culture, Geography* (London; Oxford University Press, 2001).

Europe, food has primarily entered the canon in a single context: consumption. While scholars in other disciplines, and even historians of earlier eras, have looked to food to explore a myriad of issues ranging from health and life habits to gender relations to ethnic and national identity,<sup>33</sup> for contemporary European historians food has generally attracted interest insofar as it is part of a consumer economy – from the perspective of something that is purchased. Considering hunger along with food and eating habits can open up new ways of approaching the history of the body, of daily life, and production as well as consumption.

Because the end of the war brought with it the complete breakdown of the German economy, ushering in a time of grim shortages and widespread hunger, the immediate postwar era focused an inordinate amount of attention on the regulation of consumption and the increase of productivity. Cultural historians of the Federal Republic explored the particular significance of the transition from the scarcity of the Occupation Years to the abundance of the 'economic miracle' of the 1950s and 1960s.<sup>34</sup> Such scholarship has highlighted the ways in which the consumer culture that emerged in the FRG after the war was tied to specific raced and gendered categories of society, and was thus an expression of West Germany's troubled relationship to its Nazi past.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Among the many historians who have explored food are the medievalist Caroline Walker Bynum, the classicist John D'Arms, and the early modernist Ferdinand Braudel.

<sup>34</sup> An important anthology that gathered together many of the historians working on these themes was Hanna Schissler, ed., *The Miracle Years: A Cultural History of West Germany, 1949-1968* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001).

<sup>35</sup> Works that highlight the gendered nature of West German consumer culture include the classic text by Erica Carter, *How German is She?: Postwar West German Reconstruction and the Consuming Woman*, as well as Jennifer Ann Loehlin, *From Rugs to Riches: Housework, Consumption and Modernity in Germany* (Oxford; New York: Berg, 1999). There has also been recent interest in Americanization as part of the emergence of postwar consumer cultures in Europe more generally (here Victoria de Grazia's recent book *Irresistible Empire* is crucial) and in West Germany specifically. Such works have focused on the early postwar years, when the presence of American soldiers in West Germans' daily lives made 'Americanization' a particularly visceral experience. These projects have also then tended to highlight the ways in which a racial imaginary undercut ways in which West Germans understood 'America,' and, in

Interestingly, this work on West Germany's consumer culture is generally not analyzed in relationship to the country's adoption of capitalism, nor is this consumer culture evaluated in terms of categories of 'success' or 'failure.' In these ways it differs from related studies of the GDR. Here, the question of why the GDR failed seems to have an obvious answer: socialism. Hence, any exploration of life in the GDR is seen through the lens of the country's economic and political structure. One problem with this approach to the GDR is its implicit and unavoidable framing of the FRG as successful. 'Success,' here defined as 'winning' the Cold War, seems to have exempted the country from having its economic and political identity critically analyzed.<sup>36</sup>

The impact of the Cold War on German historiography is particularly striking in the body of recent work on East Germany, which has increasingly focused on consumption and consumer culture. This research has been productive and provocative,<sup>37</sup> and it inspired this study in many ways. However, as Ina Merkel has argued in her own work on East German consumer culture, the very terms of these studies have been predetermined by a Western and capitalist assumption of the normalcy and desirability of

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turn, shaped the emergent German consumer culture. The book that began this trend in scholarship was Ute Poiger's *Jazz, Rock and Rebels*, which is also noteworthy for being one of very few truly comparative studies of East and West Germany. Michael Wildt's work on consumption during the West German economic miracle, focusing particular attention on food, has emphasized the importance of specific rituals of consumption as part of a ritualistic 'remembering' and moving on from the Third Reich. Robert Moeller's work on the family and released POWs in the Federal Republic, while not focusing primarily on consumer culture, is useful for understanding the development of the patterns of everyday life, family structure and collective identity that underscore modern consumption.

<sup>36</sup> There are also instances when this approach to the GDR can be deceptive. Udo Grashoff began his recent monograph on suicide in the GDR, for example, to prove the long-held claim that the high suicide rates of East Germany were a particularly chilling expression of the miseries of life in a totalitarian state. However, his research revealed that high suicide rates had been a constant in the regions that made up the GDR for centuries. These suicides were a historical continuity rather than a response to the political system. Udo Grashoff, *In einem Anfall von Depression . . . Selbsttötungen in der DDR* (Berlin: Links, 2006).

<sup>37</sup> Judd Stitzel, *Fashioning Socialism: Clothing, Politics, and Consumer Culture in East Germany* (Oxford: Berg, 2007); Pence and Betts, *Socialist Modern: East German Everyday Culture and Politics*; Crew, *Consuming Germany in the Cold War*

over-abundance. The idea that scarcity determined East German life relies upon a politically instrumentalized definition of scarcity: not simply not having enough, but not having enough to satisfy popular desires and continually increasing demands.<sup>38</sup>

In a historiography largely predetermined by the Fall of the Wall, the collapse of the Soviet bloc, and the continued economic and social 'maladjustment' of former East Germans in a united Germany, historians of the GDR have felt driven to explain why the nation failed; an inadequate consumer culture has often seemed the most logical answer. For example, in his study of East German consumption during the 1950s, historian Mark Landsman develops a widely accepted model of the GDR-state as a regime that was doomed to fail because it was "caught between competing pressures:" the Soviet-sanctioned, socialist drive to prioritize production and heavy industry, and the insatiable and ultimately uncontrollable demands of the population for consumer goods, demands that were shaped by "the increasingly tantalizing allure of consumer abundance in West Germany."<sup>39</sup> Landsman's work makes a powerful case for the importance of consumer culture in the development of the GDR. His work shows that the GDR's government, controlled by the Socialist Unity Party or the SED, was never able to adequately address consumer demands, which led to ever increasing popular discontent. Specifying this argument by focusing on female consumers, the work of Donna Harsch and Katherine Pence has highlighted the specific consequences of the GDR's unsatisfactory consumer culture for East German women.<sup>40</sup> Despite omnipresent rhetoric of gender equality, and steadily increasing rates of female employment, women in the GDR continued to bear

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<sup>38</sup> Ina Merkel, *Utopie und Bedürfnis: die Geschichte der Konsumkultur in der DDR* (Köln: Böhlau, 1999), 11.

<sup>39</sup> Landsman, *Dictatorship and Demand: The Politics of Consumerism in East Germany*, 2

<sup>40</sup> Donna Harsch, *Revenge of the Domestic: Women, the Family, and Communism in the German Democratic Republic* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007); Pence, "From Rations to Fashions."

responsibility for the domestic sphere and private food production, responsibilities that, as Pence's work has emphasized, meant that it was primarily women who bore the burden not only of cooking but of shopping, which entailed negotiating long lines, inadequate supplies, and unpleasant store environments.<sup>41</sup>

These studies are highly nuanced and offer insight into the lived experiences of citizens of East Germany. Nonetheless, such teleological approaches to the history of the GDR, and indeed socialist countries more generally, were predetermined by the terms of the Cold War and the ultimate 'victory' of the West, which had long claimed consumer culture as its most powerful weapon against the East.<sup>42</sup> Rather than adding to the well developed scholarship on the East German state's "relative neglect of private consumption wants,"<sup>43</sup> by focusing on food culture and food politics my work rethinks the seemingly clear borders between consumption and production. The assumption that consumption and production were distinct and potentially isolatable aspects of social life provided the fundament for both the East's productivist ideology and the West's valorization of consumer culture.<sup>44</sup> This binary logic echoed and reinforced the other

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<sup>41</sup> Katherine Pence, "Labours of Consumption: Gendered Consumers in Postwar East and West German Reconstruction" in *Gender Relations in German History: Power, Agency and Experience from the Sixteenth to the Twentieth Century*, eds. Lynn Abrams and Elizabeth Harvey (London: University College of London Press, 1996), 211-238.

<sup>42</sup> Kathy Pence and Paul Betts' recent edited volume *Socialist Modern* highlights the ways in which the GDR has been evaluated in terms of its development on a historically contingent scale of modernity that "equate modernity with triumphant liberal capitalism." ("Introduction" in Pence and Betts, *Socialist Modern*, 7) On this scale, the GDR inevitably seems un- or even anti-modern. However, as Pence and Betts' volume illustrates, changing the parameters of what modernity means can reveal fascinating and otherwise ignored aspects of East German society, as well as opening up new ways of conceptualizing modernity in general. In its attempt to explicitly engage with the terms of analysis of GDR history, *Socialist Modern*, is an exception.

<sup>43</sup> Landsman, *Dictatorship and Demand: The Politics of Consumerism in East Germany*, 6

<sup>44</sup> See Ina Merkel's introduction in *Utopie und Bedürfnis* for an excellent summary of the development of modern economic models of consumption and production. Merkel contrasts Adam Smith's model wherein consumption was the goal of, and ultimately more important than, production with Marx's interpretation. Marx transforms production and consumption into a perpetual cycle by arguing that consumption created the need and drive for new production. Both of these modern Western economic models, however, were predicated upon a clear distinction between production and consumption.

binaries that shaped the development of modern Western culture. As many gender historians have explored, for example, oppositions between male and female, and their associations with, respectively, the public and private spheres, were both realized and justified through an imagined separation of consumption and production.<sup>45</sup>

This process of boundary-making was itself a reformulation of the opposition of production and consumption, a tension that in turn shaped the Cold War. In the words of Mark Landsman, "in the bipolar world that emerged after the Second World War the issue of consumption came to delineate a crucial arena of Cold War competition. Nowhere was this competition more keenly felt than in divided Germany."<sup>46</sup> In my study of food politics during the early decades of division, I use food to blur and complicate this distinction. Food possesses this ability because it is by definition a boundary-crosser, as it both creates and breaks down the limits of the individual body as it is eaten and then excreted.<sup>47</sup> Feminist and psychoanalytic theorists have posited that it is precisely because of this power of food that it has been so resolutely ignored or marginalized in modern industrial society: "taking the category 'food' seriously leads to a suspicion that the absolute border between self and other which seems so obvious in the western tradition is nothing more than an arbitrary philosophical construction."<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> Lisa Tiersten, *Marianne in the Market: Envisioning Consumer Society in Fin-De-Siècle France* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001); Ellen Gruber Garvey, *The Adman in the Parlor: Magazines and the Gendering of Consumer Culture, 1880s to 1910s* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996); Roger Horowitz and Arwen Mohun, *His and Hers: Gender, Consumption, and Technology* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1998), vi, 240. Margaret R. Andrews and Mary M. Talbot, *All the World and Her Husband: Women in Twentieth-Century Consumer Culture* (London; New York: Cassell, 2000); Jennifer Scanlon, *The Gender and Consumer Culture Reader* (New York: New York University Press, 2000); John Brewer and Roy Porter, *Consumption and the World of Goods* (London ; New York: Routledge, 1993).

<sup>46</sup> Landsman, *Dictatorship and Demand: The Politics of Consumerism in East Germany*, 13

<sup>47</sup> See especially Mary Douglas's *Purity and Danger* for the most famous delineation of this model. For a modern, feminist psychoanalytic approach to the topic of food consumption and identity construction, see Julia Kristeva, *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982).

<sup>48</sup> Curtin, "Food/Body/Person", 9

I originally conceptualized this project – a comparative analysis of food in East and West Germany – as part of larger developments in studies of consumer culture, one that would focus on popular resistance to and support of state nutritional policy. In contrast, I also planned on exploring the private aspects of food as a site of individual expression and creativity. However, time spent in the East German archives made clear that these were not the categories with which East German nutritionists conceptualized their work. Instead these experts focused on production rather than consumption, and collective meals rather than individual or family-based consumer activities. The 'productivist' leanings of the East German government, of course, are standard tropes of East German historiography. The GDR's food research program openly (and catastrophically) de-emphasized issues of private shopping and individual food preparation; this was countered by a commitment to expanding school meals and factory canteens. In these collective meal programs, food seemed to increase productivity rather than strengthen the consumer economy or bring individuals into the market of consumer goods. In other words, East Germany's failure to conceptualize food as an object of consumption was only part of its integration of food into the process of production. This definition of food's role in the national economy also opened up a new way of approaching the history of food in the West. While historiography on the early FRG has documented an embrace of consumption and a modern, choice-based capitalist economy, the aspects of food that were so important in the GDR were strikingly neglected in the West.

## **Chapter Summaries**

"Matters of Taste" opens with a contextualization of the postwar food crisis, looking back chronologically as well as examining the global situation within which Germany was embedded in order to get a more nuanced understanding of the postwar world. All too frequently, historians of postwar Germany and Europe have paid little attention to larger international developments. In the case of hunger, food aid, and the end of World War II, this is misleading. By examining the larger framework of the global food crisis, the second chapter argues that developments within Germany cannot be understood without looking at the world outside of it. It also illustrates that the hunger suffered by Germans after the war was connected to the (non-German) hunger caused by Germans during the war. This international context is contrasted with an analysis of a specifically German imaginary of hunger. Both the rhetorical evocation and concrete application of hunger were central to Nazi propaganda and military strategy, ranging from domestic rationing programs to genocidal camp policies.<sup>49</sup> The hunger of the war and the postwar periods was linked with the German nation in various and contradictory ways, both in the minds of Germans themselves and in the minds of the occupation forces.

The third chapter explores the consequences of the omnipresence of hunger, which had been incorporated into almost every aspect of life in Germany during the Nazi and war years. As a defining metaphor of German-ness, hunger became an experience,

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<sup>49</sup> Historical analyses of the role of food in modern German history are largely confined to the war years. Wartime rationing, the successes of the Nazi food economy, and Third Reich agricultural and economic politics, in particular the role of farmers for the Nazi state, have all received careful analysis from historians. More recently, debates over Christian Gerlach's argument, most fully developed in his collection of essays *Krieg, Ernährung, Völkermord* about the centrality of explicit starvation politics for the development of the Holocaust have focused attention on the role that hunger played in Nazi policy. *Krieg, Ernährung, Völkermord: deutsche Vernichtungspolitik im Zweiten Weltkrieg*, (Zürich: Pendo-Verlag, 2001). Unfortunately, there seems to have been little interest in exploring how Hitler's policy toward concentration camp rations, housewives' recipes, farmers' machinery distribution and soldiers' plundering were related to one another.

memory and expectation that shaped political and cultural life.<sup>50</sup> Their familiarity with hunger meant that the German civilian population was able to engage in international debates over human rights and mass suffering in remarkably sophisticated ways, adapting a language originally created for the victims of Nazi oppression to fit their own situation. Hunger as a culturally constructed category was neither self-evident nor ahistorical. Rather, it provided a way for Germans to define their defeated and divided nation, providing stabilizing continuity within an ethically acceptable framework.

The centrality of the Hunger Years for the development of the two postwar German states has long been acknowledged. Germans in all four zones experienced their collective and individual experiences of hunger as inseparable from military defeat, state collapse, reconstruction, denazification, *Vergangenheitsbewältigung*, and all the other conceptual framings that marked the Occupation Years as the 'transition' between Nazi dictatorship and a capitalist or state socialist German society. In the fourth chapter, I trace the ways in which memories and fears of hunger shaped the trajectory of the German Cold War. Differences in occupation experience under the Soviets and Western Allies, as well as ideologically contrasting models of the place of hunger within their respective economic structures, meant that East and West Germans defined and remembered hunger differently. Beginning with the famous Berlin Air-Lift, this chapter examines the West German obsession with hunger and the East German denial of it in order to show the ways in which hunger remained central to the collective identities of both German states. I argue that the specific postwar development of the two German

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<sup>50</sup> A useful source is the February 1985 issue of *Beiträge für Sozialgeschichte*, which was dedicated to the theme of hunger. See in particular the articles by Carola Lipp, Alf Lütke and Ulrich Kluge on German hunger through the end of the Second World War.

states was one of the most enduring and direct legacies of the Hunger Years.<sup>51</sup> Hunger served both a negative and a positive function during the postwar years, a mark of German redemption as well as a perceived mark of rupture, a caesura that signified the end of what had come before, and the beginning of something new.

In the three chapters that make up the second half of the dissertation, I move from experiences and fears of hunger to state-mandated and individual attempts to resolve it through rationing systems, collective meals and domestic cooking. While rationing was conceptualized as a temporary response to an emergency situation (it lasted in the West until 1949, and in the East until 1958), mass feeding programs were integrated into daily life in both the FRG and the GDR, albeit in quite different forms. The fifth and sixth chapters develop comparative histories of respectively workplace canteens and school lunches in the two German states. In occupied Germany, restoring the health of Germany's children and workers were the first and primary goals of the occupation authorities; international humanitarian interest in the symbolic and cultural value of children demanded the one, and pressing pragmatic concerns over the postwar military and economic order demanded the other. However, Germany's historical hostility to collective meals, differences between the various Allies' plans for the country's future food economy, and the increasing pressures of reconstruction and the Cold War all meant

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<sup>51</sup> It is useful to remember that simply experiencing severe hunger by no means ensures that it shapes individual or collective memory. Concentration camp survivors are a classic example; for most inmates, hunger was the definitional trope of camp life. However, many survivors argue that hunger was the least significant part of their experiences during the Holocaust, instead emphasizing cultural destruction and individual degradation, among other things. The historian Violetta Hionidou, who works on the famine in Nazi-occupied Greece has pointed out "the complete absence of references to the food crisis of the occupation years in the collective memory of the Greek people . . . There is a curious lack of a collective or even an official memory of the famine, let alone a collective trauma such as that associated with the Irish famine." Violetta Hionidou, "Famine in occupied Greece" in Richard Clogg, *Bearing Gifts to Greeks: Humanitarian Aid to Greece in the 1940s* (Basingstoke; New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 16. Austria and Poland also have very different relationships to their own postwar hunger experiences than Germans.

that canteens and school lunches experienced dramatically different fates in the two German states.

In the GDR, school and canteen meals were envisioned as the two primary and interrelated branches of the national food economy; they were fused in the minds of nutritionists and economists, who saw in them similar means to similar ends: controlling consumption in order to increase production. Despite this ideological unity, comparing the historical development of these two feeding programs reveals striking differences in popular support, practical execution and ideological justification for these feeding programs. The situation in the Federal Republic was conflict-ridden and paradoxical; collective meals sometimes evoked poverty and underdevelopment, and other times the unstoppable forces of modernity. As chapter six shows, the Federal government's cancellation of school meals in 1950 officially mandated mothers' sole responsibility for the diet of their children, and for the family and domestic sphere at large. At the same time that school canteens were being eliminated, nutritionists in the West predicted the spread of workers' canteens as inseparable from modern economic growth, worried over these meals' negative impacts on masculinity and the German public sphere. Chapter Five shows the ways in which West German nutritionists and labor experts attempted to define the parameters of a capitalist, bourgeois and individualistic canteen while simultaneously condemning collective meals as one of the most pernicious aspects of Communism. Comparing East and West German school lunch and factory canteen programs reveals changing models of the home and the public sphere, of work and leisure, and of the relationship between nutrition and gender relations.

In the seventh chapter, I turn to the form of feeding that acquired iconic status as the paradigmatically 'ideal,' 'healthy' and 'normal' way to eat: the home-cooked and family-consumed hot meal. Despite their dramatically different attitudes toward collective meals, both the Federal Republic and the German Democratic Republic advocated the maintenance and improvement of the home-cooked meal. For both German states, the shaping of their respective new economies and social orders after the war relied upon a revolution in the kitchen and a remaking of the German housewife. Above all, the housewife in the kitchen emerged as one of the most important and controversial figures with which to express specifically postwar boundaries of production and consumption. These struggles to delineate the meaning and nature of female kitchen work were both typically German and typically postwar. Germany had a long tradition of focusing on the kitchen as the site of social reform. After the war and occupation, attention quickly turned to the housewife, as both the FRG and the GDR saw her as the paradigmatic figure of modernity. This chapter explores the ways in which the socialist East and the capitalist West negotiated their complex and often paradoxical relationships to modernity, the German family, and the nature of production and consumption through debates over the home-cooked meal. Questions of how this meal should be prepared and consumed, who should make it, and what its ultimate function was for individuals as well as for society were central to the shaping of the postwar social order.

Finally, in the conclusion I briefly explore the long legacy of these food concerns in Germany, focusing on the moment of unification. This brief leap forward in time suggests some of the ways in which the lines and the postwar and Cold War eras relied upon both food and hunger to define Germany's tumultuous twentieth century. This

dissertation offers a new way of approaching the history of modern Germany, and in so doing opens up the narrative of the postwar world. As a comparative project exploring both the two German states' relations to each other, and their respective relationships to the Allied powers and the rest of the world, "Matters of Taste" illuminates the interdependence of East and West Germany during the 1950s and 1960s, as well as their importance for the shaping of the global Cold War. Equally as important, this exploration of the politics of food and hunger in postwar Europe suggest new questions about global and transnational history, the relationship between individual bodies and the state, and the development of a modern (food) economy. Global concern over food supplies, debates over the connections between economic systems and individual diets and the constant fear of famine, resulted in new culinary habits, welfare programs, familial structures, consumer cultures, and strategies of regulating and improving productivity. This study of divided Germany frames these developments within a comparison of state socialism and capitalism, collective fantasies of the 'East' and the 'West,' and the lasting consequences of the War and the Holocaust.

## Chapter 2

### The Origins of Postwar Hunger: Food, Life and Death in the Age of Hitler

In the winter of 1935, German Chancellor Adolf Hitler gave a speech promoting his extraordinarily successful charity drive, the *Winterhilfswerk*. In this speech, Hitler focused particular attention on one of the oldest and most popular of the drive's programs: the *Eintopfsonntag*. This program, created in October of 1933 just months after the Nazi rise to power, called for every German man, woman and child to replace their traditional Sunday cut of meat with a cheaper *Eintopf*, or one-pot meal. The money thus saved was to be donated to the *Winterhilfswerk* organization, where it would be used to feed and care for hungry and impoverished war veterans. Originally a once-monthly activity that became more frequent as food supplies worsened and charity needs increased, the Sunday *Eintopf* quickly established itself in households and public dining facilities throughout Germany. Restaurants were legally required to offer an *Eintopf* at a reduced rate every Sunday, and these cheap and filling meals were favorites in the menus of factory canteens. A new genre of '*Eintopf*-cookbooks' flourished, and newspapers and women's magazines popularized an variety of regionally specific and particularly economical recipes.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> Countless such cookbooks and pamphlets were published during the Third Reich, usually focusing on cheapness, indigenous products, simplicity of preparation, and cultural identity. See for example *Eintopf-Gerichte: 70 Vorschläge u. Rezepte f. gute Eintopf-Gerichte von 10 bis 50 Pfennig mit genauer Preis-Angabe*. (Berlin: Ullstein, 1933); Erna Horn, *Der Eintopf – Das deutsche Spargericht* (München: Siegmund & Volkening, 1933); Herma Weichardt, *101 Eintopf-Gerichte* (München: Einhorn-Verl.,

Until the rise to power of the NSDAP, the term *Eintopf* was not a standard part of the German culinary repertoire; the dish itself, usually an assortment of vegetables and cheap cuts of meat cooked together in a single pot, was associated with poverty cooking and found primarily in North Germany.<sup>53</sup> While of course stews and casseroles were common throughout central Europe, they were not necessarily known as *Eintöpfe*. The Nazi appropriation of this culinary genre was rooted in both ideology and practicality, as both preparation and consumption of the meal were cast as metaphors of the *Volksgemeinschaft* or racial community. The dish could be based on indigenous German food products, primarily root vegetables, dried fruits, beans and pork products. These 'native' foods were cooked together, without hierarchy or individual preparation, in a single pot. As a result, the *Ein-Topf* became a mini-version of a Germanic *Ein-Volk*; through this dish, the Nazi party promised to unite the various native German peoples into a single and self-sustaining whole. More practically, the dish promised to eliminate Germany's enervating dependency on unhealthy and expensive imported foods, creating a healthier and more vital population while strengthening the domestic economy.

How one ate this meal was just as important as the meal itself. The *Eintopf* was always assumed to be a communal feast: a family gathered together at the Sunday table, a group of factory workers sitting at their canteen benches, or Hitler and his staff smiling as they were served equitable portions out of that one large pot. Designated for a single day

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1933); Julie Lutz, *Eintopf-Gerichte von Julie Lutz: eine leicht fassliche Schilderung aller Kochvorgänge, die es jeden, auch dem gänzlich Unerfahrenen ermöglicht, ohne weitere Anleitung gute und billige Eintopf-Gerichte herzustellen* (Bramenburg a.J: Lutz, 1933); Annie Juliane Richert, *Bereite dein Eintopf-Gericht aus deutschem Gemüse und Obst, dann hilfst Du doppelt:* (Berlin: Büchereien d. dt. Gartenbaus, 1935); Alwine Schubuth, *Schmackhafter Eintopf, frohe Esser: 30 bekömm. Eintopfgerichte d. süddt. u. sudetend. Küche* (Reichenberg: Sollors, 1939).

<sup>53</sup> Konrad Köstlin, "Der Eintopf der Deutschen. Das Zusammengekochte als Kultessen" in Utz Jeggle and Hermann Bausinger, *Tübinger Beiträge zur Volkskultur* (Tübingen: Tübinger Vereinigung für Volkskunde, 1986), 223.

and time that was deliberately evocative of church service (Sunday afternoon), the *Eintopfsonntag* acquired a quasi-sacredness. Propaganda routinely reminded the population that at this moment in time, all Germans throughout the vast reaches of the Reich, from the colonial settlers of Africa to the troops on the Front, came together to eat the *Eintopf*.

The most important aspect of the *Eintopfsonntag*, that which made it so important to Hitler, Goebbels and the party at large, and that ensured its remarkable success among the population, was the way in which the *Eintopf* allowed the NSDAP to frame eating in terms of abstinence and sacrifice.<sup>54</sup> It was this sacrificial aspect of the *Eintopf*, its intimate relationship with self-deprivation and, ultimately, with hunger that inspired Hitler's 1935 speech, which described the complex relationship between hunger and satiety that was crucial to Nazi ideology.<sup>55</sup> Admonishing men and women who were reluctant to participate, the Führer explained passionately:

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<sup>54</sup> Other scholars have long noted the ideological impetus of the program. Unlike many other appeals to lifestyle and health, this program "appealed directly and with substantial pressure on the readiness of self-sacrifice of the Germans." (Sonja Kinzler, *Kanonnen statt Butter. Ernährung und Propaganda im "Dritten Reich"* (Kiel: Ludwig, 2006), 16-17.) However, there has been little attention paid to the specific importance of hunger both for the *Eintopfsonntag* specifically and for Nazism more generally.

<sup>55</sup> This absolute control over German as well as non-German hunger did not go without comment. The Communist underground saw this aspect of Nazi propaganda as emblematic of the harms of Nazism for German workers, insisting that "the working class of Germany is not willing to let itself be dragged into hunger-misery in the fascist quest for food-autarchy." (Hans Burger, *Hitler, Hunger, Krieg: Die Ernährungspolitik des dritten Reiches im Zeichen der Kriegsvorbereitung* (Moskau: Verlagsgenossenschaft ausländischer Arbeiter in der UdSSR, 1936), 31.) Communists attacked Nazi food policy and hunger-discourse more consistently than any other aspect of Party politics. Years before the war broke out, German Communists had dubbed Hitler's manipulation of food fears 'Hunger as the motor of war.' Horrified by the success of this rhetoric, Communist propaganda warned that "through the creation of a chauvinistic mass mindset, the National Socialist leaders try to persuade the people to accept inadequate food supplies. And more! The Hitler government tries to use the lack of food and the resultant increasing dissatisfaction of the population caused by their own policies to serve their military goals and to maintain their positions of power." (Ibid., 45) Rejecting Nazi idealizations of hungering for the collective good, a model radically different from the Communist ideal of equal, adequate food for all proletariats ("bread on every table), the Left found was outraged rather than spiritually moved by the fact that "the German worker must hunger . . . [the housewife] is told to avoid buying good butter and must satisfy herself with margarine, she buys the cheapest bread-spreads and she often goes without a warm lunch," her income "not even enough for the celebrated *Eintopf*-dishes!" (Ibid., 11)

Don't tell me: 'yes, but it will be a hassle' . . . you have never known hunger yourself or you would know what a burden hunger is. You have never experienced having nothing to eat, or, even worse, having nothing to give your loved ones to eat. And when someone says to me: 'but don't you know, this *Eintopfsonntag*, I'd like to give something, but my belly, my belly is already giving me constant trouble' . . . Oh no, no, my dear friend . . . this *Eintopfsonntag* brought in approximately thirty million marks, and you cannot believe how many people have received a warm lunch from this money . . . we are certain that this day is a day of glory for the German nation, and that whoever does not participate is a characterless parasite of the German people.<sup>56</sup>

Hitler's speech continually evoked both past and present hunger, using them as both threat and promise, mythologizing them by means of this institutionalized 'Casserole-Sunday.' Self-imposed deprivation was causally linked with nourishing the collective at the same time that individual hunger should in fact inspire personal sacrifice.

In 1934, the *Winterhilfswerk* of the city of Hamburg published descriptions of its many regional activities. They dedicated particular attention to an explanation of the sacrificial nature of the *Eintopf*:

Just as it has long been a custom on every Friday, in memory of the crucifixion of Christ, to fast or at least to only eat fish, so too has the casserole dish in the shortest of time become a popular German custom . . . the monthly casserole-eating bring us together to form a community that knows no hierarchy of class or birth . . . the casserole is the fast-meal [*Fastmahl*] of the German nation. Just as faithful Christians unite in the holy sacrament of the last supper in service of their lord and master, so too does the National Socialist Germany celebrate this sacrificial meal [*Opfermahl*] as a solemn vow to the unshakeable people's community.<sup>57</sup>

By consuming this meal, German eaters created a community of shared and deliberate hunger. Propaganda for the *Eintopfsonntag* did not deny the hunger created by replacing

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<sup>56</sup> Adolf Hitler, "Das Winterhilfswerk ist für uns Nationalsozialisten eine stolze Herzensangelegenheit" 1935/36. As this speech suggests, there was a great deal of resistance to this sort of enforced charity; many housewives were terrified not to donate their *Eintopf-Geld* when the monthly collector knocked on the door. Peter Zolling, *Zwischen Integration und Segregation Sozialpolitik im "Dritten Reich" am Beispiel der "Nationalsozialistischen Volkswohlfahrt" (NSV) in Hamburg* (Frankfurt am Main; New York: P. Lang, 1986), 172-173.

<sup>57</sup> Cited in Zolling, *Zwischen Integration und Segregation Sozialpolitik im "Dritten Reich" am Beispiel der "Nationalsozialistischen Volkswohlfahrt" (NSV) in Hamburg.*, 170-171

a roast with potatoes and turnips. Instead, it celebrated this hunger as a sacrifice to the greater good: the German Volk.

The *Eintopfsonntag* is a paradigmatic example of the ways in which food and hunger were at the heart of Nazi ideology. During the Third Reich, hunger was simultaneously constructive and destructive, embraced and feared. When German housewives agreed to go 'a little hungry' in order to feed even hungrier veterans, the German *Volk* was strengthened and fed. When, however, individuals chose to eat more than was their share, they were 'stealing' food from the collective, as leeches, ticks, or 'characterless parasites' sucking resources from the *Volk*. Hitler manipulated deep-seated German fears of hunger in complex ways. By pulling upon Christian imagery of self-abnegation and the purifying force of hunger,<sup>58</sup> as well as German traditions of fasting and dietary restriction as methods of countering the harms of modernity,<sup>59</sup> Nazi rhetoric argued that eating together and hungering together nourished the *Gemeinschaft*. This strategy allowed personal suffering to be cast in a positive light, adding racialized glory to the unpleasant grumblings of empty bellies.

Of course Hitler was not alone in his celebration of individual sacrifice for the collective good. The NSDAP came to power during the hungry thirties, when much of the world was suffering from food shortages and economic depression. All participants in the war hoped that its resolution would somehow bring about an 'end to hunger,' at the same time that they recognized that it threatened mass starvation. Inevitably, with the

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<sup>58</sup> See Caroline Walker Bynum, *Holy Feast and Holy Fast: The Religious Significance of Food to Medieval Women* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987) for a brilliant discussion of the food and hunger in medieval European Christianity.

<sup>59</sup> See Jörg Melzer, *Vollwerternährung. Diätetik, Naturheilkunde, Nationalsozialismus, sozialer Anspruch* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner, 2003) for a careful history of food reform in 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century Germany. Corinna Treitel is currently working on a history of 'natural' diets in modern Germany.

onset of war all of the Allied forces promoted personal denial, especially in the realm of foodstuffs, as a crucial economic and psychological support for the war effort. Even the United States, the wealthiest of the war's participants, instituted food coupons, while Britain developed an extensive and enormously successful rationing program that continued into the mid-fifties.<sup>60</sup> In the USSR, Stalin perfected the art of promoting short-term sacrifice for long-term glory, and Japan's famous kamikaze fighters epitomized self-sacrifice for the common good. Nonetheless, Nazi Germany was alone in extracting such meaning and power from the physiological experience of hunger; nowhere else did hunger become a necessary category of belonging; and nowhere else did hunger seem both the most feared enemy and most intimate friend of the state.

During the years of his rule, Hitler displayed a remarkably sophisticated grasp of the political power of food and hunger.<sup>61</sup> The centrality of the production and distribution of food for Nazi policy and rhetoric has inspired several recent monographs which examine the role that food control and deliberate starvation played in Nazi military policy and in the Final Solution.<sup>62</sup> Unfortunately this focus on military and economic

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<sup>60</sup> Ina Zweiniger-Bargielowska's *Austerity in Britain: Rationing, Controls, and Consumption, 1939-1955* offers a fascinating analysis of the experiences of scarcity and abundance in Great Britain during these years, including extensive discussion of the food rationing programs.

<sup>61</sup> For more on the importance of World War One and hunger fantasies for the Nazi Party, see Ludolf Herbst, *Der totale Krieg und die Ordnung der Wirtschaft: D. Kriegswirtschaft im Spannungsfeld von Politik, Ideologie u. Propaganda, 1939 - 1945* (Stuttgart: Dt. Verl.-Anst., 1982).

<sup>62</sup> An excellent overview of food and nutrition policy during the Third Reich is Gustavo Corni, *Brot, Butter, Kanonen: die Ernährungswirtschaft in Deutschland unter der Diktatur Hitlers*. Christian Gerlach's *Krieg, Ernährung, Völkermord. Deutsche Vernichtungspolitik im Zweiten Weltkrieg* contains a number of provocative theses on the Nazis' use of hunger in the East. There has also been increased attention to the importance of food for popular support of Nazism, including Götz Aly, *Hitler's Beneficiaries: Plunder, Race War, and the Nazi Welfare State* and Adam Tooze, *The Wages of Destruction: The Making and Breaking of the Nazi Economy*. In addition to this scholarship, Austrian historian Maureen Healy has pointed out that "World War I historians have been particularly drawn to food because of the ways that food figured in the rhetoric of sacrifice in total war in the different belligerent countries." Maureen Healy, *Vienna and the Fall of the Habsburg Empire: Total War and Everyday Life in World War I* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 32. Belinda Davis' *Home Fires Burning: Food, Politics, and Everyday Life in World War I Berlin* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000), is a

policy has detracted attention from the ways in which food and hunger-based fantasies were central to the Nazi model of the *Volksgemeinschaft* and to racial constructions of the Aryan body. Nowhere were these linkages more explicit than in the Nazi cry for *Blut und Boden* (blood and soil). This phrase was a rallying cry for racial purity, the justification for the brutal military invasion of the East, and served as shorthand for the existential crisis of the Aryan race. *Blut und Boden* assumed that Aryan hunger was incommensurately different from Jewish or Soviet hunger, defensive as opposed to offensive. In fact, the Nazis blamed "the Soviet export monopoly . . . with the help of the international Jewish grain trade" for "dictating the price of German bread."<sup>63</sup> At the same time, by linking (Aryan) blood with a natural claim to specific tracts of land in Central and Eastern Europe, racial and cultural survival became synonymous with having 'enough to eat,' something that was only possible with access to the rich black soil of the East, and especially the Ukraine.

Fixated on the fantasy of controlling the 'bread basket' of central Europe, and convinced of the righteousness of simply taking foods from the Ukrainians, Poles, and other peoples who lived there, the NSDAP obsessively interrelated hunger with satiety; someone must starve so that the Germans could have enough to eat. In *Mein Kampf*, Hitler had declared that "if one wants space and soil in Europe [*Grund und Boden*], this can really only be achieved at the cost of Russia . . . to obtain soil for the German plow and daily bread for the nation by means of the German sword."<sup>64</sup> Nutritionists, agriculturalists and food reformers avidly supported the NSDAP, a party that accorded

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study of the importance that food concerns played in Berlin women's political activity and daily life during and immediately the First World War.

<sup>63</sup> Wolfgang Clauß, *Der Kampf ums Brot* (Berlin: Reichsnährstand Verl.-Ges., 1938), 30.

<sup>64</sup> Cited in Hans-Erich Volkmann, "Landwirtschaft und Ernährung in Hitlers Europa, 1939-45," *Militärgeschichtliche Mitteilungen* 35, no. 1 (1984), 15.

enormous symbolic power to individual and collective diets. The Austrian journalist Anton Zischka, member of the NSDAP and internationally best-selling author, claimed in his 1938 book *Brot für Zwei Milliarden Menschen* [Bread for Two Billion People] that

No *Volk* can endure as long as it does not recognize that only one thing is eternal: blood and soil . . . he who produces food is thus as earthshaking [*weltbewegend*] as hunger itself; even those people who have the willpower to move mountains must eat in order to compose and to dream.<sup>65</sup>

A food trade journal in 1943 proudly asserted that "practical labor in the service of our food situation and the biological assurance of the future of our people are inseparable from one another,"<sup>66</sup> while dietary reformer Hugo Hertwig explained that "every *Volk* must connect with its own biologically specific characteristics, characteristics that are not external, but which go deep into blood and soil, into that which we call food."<sup>67</sup> Farmers made up some of the Party's most passionate supporters, seeing in *Blut and Boden* a way out of their social and material crisis and a restoration of a perceived loss of prestige.<sup>68</sup>

This chapter explores how the Nazi party used hunger and food discourse to construct the *Volksgemeinschaft* by identifying a specifically Germanic sort of hunger that was intrinsically different from the hungers suffered by other races. Of the countless small and large political movements that flourished during the Weimar Republic, it was the National Socialists who most successfully harnessed German memory of hunger as a means of gathering political support and a base for policy decisions. The chapter also includes an overview of parallel international concerns. As the war dragged on, and

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<sup>65</sup> Anton Zischka, *Brot für Zwei Milliarden Menschen* (Leipzig: W. Goldmann, 1938), 6-7.

<sup>66</sup> S. Eberhard von der Decken, "Die Front gegen den Hunger: Ernährungskrieg 1939/43," (review) *Gemeinschaftsverflebung mit Volksernährung*, no. 15 (August, 1944).

<sup>67</sup> Hugo Hertwig, *Richtige Ernährung. Eine Lebensfrage Altes u. Neues Wissen von d. Nahrung, aus der Alle Wesen Hervorgehen u. zu der Alle Wesen Werden, damit ewiges Leben aus ständigem Tausche wächst* (Berlin: Gersbach & Sohn, 1938), XIV.

<sup>68</sup> Corni, *Brot, Butter, Kanonen: die Ernährungswirtschaft in Deutschland unter der Diktatur Hitlers*, (Berlin: Akademie, 1997), 644.

casualties grew to previously unimaginable numbers, all sides of the battle agreed that control over food supplies would determine victory and defeat. I conclude with a discussion of the initial moment of contact between the different models and expectations of hunger, as Allied soldiers and medical personnel flooded defeated Germany. Faced with apathetic and animalistic concentration camp inmates and sullen German civilians clamoring for more rations, the Allies struggled to cope with these two different sides of the Nazi hunger-worldview. These struggles determined the eventual division of postwar Germany, and had a powerful impact on the shape of the Cold War.

### **The Making of a German Hunger: Food and Nazi Ideology**

While the historian Adam Tooze perhaps overstated the case when he claimed that "one way or another, virtually everyone alive in Germany in the 1930s had an acute personal experience of prolonged and insatiable hunger,"<sup>69</sup> it is certainly true that hunger played a central role in twentieth century Germany.<sup>70</sup> Nazi Germany developed a specific discourse of hunger, one that was woven into society at almost every level from military strategy to international relations to domestic economic policy. Propagating a narrative of the German past in which military defeat and civilian misery were both the cause and result of mass hunger, the Nazis measured military success and economic development through control over food; in other words, German national survival was cast as a battle against hunger. At the same time, Nazi ideology regularly invoked the

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<sup>69</sup> Tooze, *The Wages of Destruction: The Making and Breaking of the Nazi Economy* (New York: Viking, 2007), 168

<sup>70</sup> German historians have long claimed a uniquely German affinity to hunger, as the only European country to experience four major periods of hunger and declining public health within the three decades between World War I and the end of the Occupation Years: 1916-1919, 1922/23, 1929/30 and 1945-1949. Peter Hübner. *Konsens, Konflikt und Kompromiss. Soziale Arbeiterinteressen und Sozialpolitik in der SBZ/DDR 1945-1970* (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1995), 134

Volk's historic relationship to hunger. Such rhetoric saw hunger as both a racial category and an individual and collective experience; being hungry could represent a betrayal of the race by exposing individual self-absorption and excessive appetites. It could also, however, be a sign of redemptive purity and constructive self-sacrifice for the sake of the *Volk*.

During the interwar years, not only the Nazis, but the rest of the world as well believed that the primary cause of Germany's defeat in the First World War was Britain's infamous 'Hunger Blockade.' Throughout the war and, most controversially, after its end, Great Britain used its naval power to block overseas imports of food into the enemy country. Resultant domestic food shortages primarily affected the German civilian population, leading to tremendous distress and eventually eroding popular support for the war.<sup>71</sup> Not only Germans but also the Allied forces believed that the blockade had had a devastating impact on civilian health, and many worried about the long-term dangers of this sort of food-warfare. British Minister Robert Baden-Powell warned in 1918 that "one day . . . reason will again be knocking at the peoples' doors, asking what is the good of supplying the immense cemetery of the Hunger Blockade with an unending succession of further tens of thousands of victims."<sup>72</sup> While such dramatic language was typical of the interwar years, in fact the medical impact of the blockade upon civilian health has

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<sup>71</sup> Belinda Davis' *Home Fires Burning* offers a discussion of the importance of food concerns for popular German attitudes toward the state. Maureen Healy has pointed out in her excellent study of World War I Vienna that Germany was not the only victim of Britain's hunger blockade, nor was it alone in using this experience as "a strategy for mobilizing civilians . . . every woman and child in Vienna could imagine herself or himself targeted by the external enemy in a very immediate way, via the aches and pains of hunger." Healy, *Vienna and the Fall of the Habsburg Empire*, 37. She goes on to argue that "the German word *Opfer* – which means both sacrifice and victim—provides the semantic underpinning for . . . the story of how chronic food shortage destroyed assumptions about the role of the civilian in war . . . when the state failed to provide food to the capital city [of Vienna], civilians abandoned the assigned role of heroic helpers of their even more heroic soldiers, and began to see themselves as war victims." *Ibid.*, 34

<sup>72</sup> Berliner Medizinische Gesellschaft., *The Starving of Germany: Papers Read at Extraordinary Meeting of United Medical Societies Held at Headquarters of Berlin Medical Society, Berlin, December 18th, 1918*. (1919), 6.

proven more difficult to reconstruct than such unanimity suggests; the contemporaneous global influenza epidemic, for example, had much higher mortality rates in a hungry population, but it would be inaccurate to attribute such deaths directly to the blockade. Certainly however the elderly and infants showed marked increases in mortality rates, and the height and weights of German schoolchildren during the blockade stagnated, in some regions even decreasing.<sup>73</sup>

During the war itself, despite considerable domestic opposition, the British government remained convinced that the blockade was morally permissible and militarily effective. In its eyes, "food is as essential to the [military] forces as bullets and therefore equally seizeable; there is really no difference with regard to the consideration of food as contraband of war."<sup>74</sup> Predictably, Germans across the entire political spectrum condemned the blockade, seeing it as an expression of absolute sadism. Medical expert Max Rubmann declared that the blockade had "the explicit goal of forcing the entire civilian population of Germany, men, women and children to their knees through the nameless tortuous misery of general starvation."<sup>75</sup> Particularly disturbing was the fact that Britain continued a modified version of the blockade even after German surrender in 1918. Indeed the worst hunger was to hit Germans during the months following the end of the war. The Berlin Medical Association sponsored a convention in 1919 to protest the suffering imposed by the Blockade, carefully documenting the harm done to the

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<sup>73</sup> Georg Wolff, *Die Nachwirkung der Kriegshungerperiode auf das Schulkinderwachstum. Eine schulärztl.-anthropometr. Wachstumsstudie nach Einschulgsuntersuchg in Berlin nebst Anleitg zur Statist. Behandlg biol. Reihenmerkmale* (Leipzig: L. Voss, 1932); Deutschen Zentrallausschuss für die Auslandshilfe E. V., *Größe und Gewicht der Schulkinder und andere Grundlagen für die Ernährungsfürsorge, Neubearbeitung der "Praktischen Winke für den musternden Arzt", für den Gebrauch der bei der amerikanisch -deutschen Kinderspeisung (Quakerspeisung) beschäftigten Arzt (1. August 1921) mit Sechs graphischen Darstellungen und einer Übersichtskarte*, (Berlin: Otto Stollberg & co., 1924).

<sup>74</sup> Margaret Jourdain, "Air Raid Reprisals and Starvation by Blockade," *International Journal of Ethics* 28, no. 4 (July, 1918), 551.

<sup>75</sup> Max Rubmann, *Hunger! Wirkungen moderner Kriegsmethoden*. (Berlin: Reimer, 1919), 10.

Germanic race and claiming that "we have already spent of our bodies as much as is possible; no other nation has ever quietly and patiently stood such privations."<sup>76</sup> Long after the blockade had been replaced by the more general deprivations of the global depression of the interwar years, Germans continued to evoke the Hunger Blockade as an explanation for the chaos of the Weimar years. The blockade explained the physical and moral degeneration of the population as well as the general atmosphere of defeat and dissatisfaction.

For politicians, and especially for the aspiring demagogue Adolf Hitler, the blockade's main lesson was not the biological dangers of hunger but the link between domestic food supplies and popular support for the government and for war. Thanks to these early lessons, the NSDAP promoted the popular view that the First World War was lost not by military defeat but due to a hunger-based collapse of the home-front: "In the [First] World War, our weapons remained unvanquished; it was hunger that made the Volk cave in."<sup>77</sup> In response, Hitler promised the populace that they would never suffer from hunger again, identifying himself as a safeguard against that most nefarious of threats. In the reassuring words of Eberhard von der Decken's patriotic *Die Front gegen den Hunger*: "as paralyzed as the Germans were in the face of the threat of hunger before 1933, just as thorough were the defensive measures that Adolf Hitler established when he came to power. Today the front stands firm against hunger."<sup>78</sup>

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<sup>76</sup> Berliner Medizinische Gesellschaft., *The Starving of Germany: Papers Read at Extraordinary Meeting of United Medical Societies Held at Headquarters of Berlin Medical Society, Berlin, December 18th, 1918,* 7

<sup>77</sup> Cited in Volkmann, "Landwirtschaft und Ernährung in Hitlers Europa, 1939-45," 9

<sup>78</sup> S. Eberhard von der Decken, "Die Front gegen den Hunger: Ernährungskrieg 1939/43," (review) *Gemeinschaftsverflegung mit Volksernährung*, no. 15 (August, 1944)

By establishing this identity as guarantor of the Volk's satiety, Nazi ideology granted food an almost mythic significance, as it cut "across the contradiction between economics and ideology, between the need for labor and the imperative for genocide. It provided the Third Reich with a starkly economic incentive for murder on a scale larger even than the Holocaust."<sup>79</sup> In the Third Reich, nutritionists became military strategists: "the battle for existence is the battle for fertile soil, for food, it is the battle against hunger, it is the source of all war and revolution."<sup>80</sup> During the first five years of Hitler's rule, the largest and most impressive Nazi celebration was the massive annual harvest festival *Erntedankfest*, which celebrated both the spiritual and biological advantages of eating indigenous traditional food products.<sup>81</sup> The 'battle for nutritional autarchy,' the complete elimination of food imports, dominated nutritional discourse.<sup>82</sup> Recipes published in women's journals reduced references to foods that could not be grown in Germany, disparaging them as effete, unhealthy, and damaging to Aryan bodies. Max Winckel, one of the nation's leading nutritionists, vowed that exclusively using grains grown in German soil to produce bread would "counter hunger [and] eliminate

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<sup>79</sup> Tooze, *The Wages of Destruction: The Making and Breaking of the Nazi Economy*, 539

<sup>80</sup> Max Winckel, "Hunger und Politik" *Zeitschrift für Volksernährung*, no. 10 (May 20, 1937). Hitler's obsession with making his nation independent from food imports was shared with many contemporary political leaders, not least the fascist leader Mussolini, who was convinced that "access to alimentary resources would constitute a decisive factor in the struggle for hegemony and power in Europe." Alexander Nützenadel, "Dictating Food: Autarchy, Food Provision, and Consumer Politics in Fascist Italy 1922-1943" in *Food and Conflict in Europe in the Age of the Two World Wars*, eds. Frank Trentmann and Flemming Just (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 92. As was the case with the Nazis, Italian experiences with food scarcity were formative in the development of fascist policies, and an inability to address food concerns were, according to historian Alexander Nützenadel, key factors in the eventual collapse of popular support for the Fascists during the war. However, Mussolini did not use hunger in order to define his nation or his people; he did not rely on its invocation to motivate and terrify the populace; and it was not one of the primary aspects of his military and expansionist goals.

<sup>81</sup> For more on the Nazi use of food in its propaganda, see Kinzler, *Kanon statt Butter. Ernährung und Propaganda im "Dritten Reich"*, 7.

<sup>82</sup> In fact, what Germans claimed as 'nutritional freedom' and autarchy was simply a shifting of import strategy; rather than paying for imports from the West and the Third World, NSDAP agricultural policy called for both the seizure and purchase of large amounts of food stuffs from the occupied and Allied territories.

scarcity."<sup>83</sup> Hitler's vegetarianism and Spartan eating habits were the subject of substantial media coverage, as families were encouraged to eat less meat, more local vegetables and brown bread 'like the Führer.'

The Nazis pulled heavily upon German food reform traditions, which emphasized the cultural and spiritual connection between individual bodies and food. Such movements, which were widespread in the nineteenth and early twentieth century, promoted a remarkable variety of diets and styles of eating in order to optimize health and productivity and ensure the appropriately 'harmonic' individual and collective energies.<sup>84</sup> Hitler's vegetarianism, credited with his "wonderful freshness and liveliness," was significant both because it represented abstinence, self-sacrifice and modesty and because it reflected his belief in the mystical power of diet over the human body.<sup>85</sup> Goebbels wrote admiringly that "to us it seems a wonder, the way that he overcomes all physical and mental stress . . . he neither smokes nor drinks, and eats only vegetarian food."<sup>86</sup> Reform nutritionists had long relied on archeological and anthropological research to develop racial models of national diets. The rise to power of an overtly racial state provided both confirmation and support for such theories: "in the development of the [Nazi] New Man, food reform has no small significance."<sup>87</sup> These reform traditions always promoted moderation, and usually strict self-denial in the interests of physical and spiritual health. The alternative healer and dietary expert Hugo Hedwig, a leading figure

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<sup>83</sup> Winckel, "Hunger und Politik."

<sup>84</sup> Weimar cookbooks and nutritional exhibits, like the Dresden Hygiene Museum's many touring guides to good nutrition, emphasized 'harmonious' eating and achieving the proper balance of diet, health and lifestyle. One of the many such Third Reich nutritional guides that was re-released after the war was Margarethe Nothnagel's *Harmonische Ernährung für wenig Geld durch gesunde Kost* (Dresden: Müllersche Verlagsh., 1939).

<sup>85</sup> Cited in Heinrich Nelson, *ABC des langen Lebens* (Dresden: Dt. Verl. für Volkswohlfahrt, 1936), 13.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*, 13.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*, 13

in *Naturheilkunde* before, during and after the War, advised all peoples to eat only the foods that were historically consumed by their race. In so doing, they ensured their continued awareness of the suffering of their forefathers, experiencing daily the fact that food was "originally and by necessity always associated with self-sacrifice."<sup>88</sup>

Unsurprisingly, Nazi propaganda perfected the art of justifying restrictions in food intake, arguing that shortages were not really shortages and hunger not really hunger. The Führer, rather than individual stomachs, told Germans whether or not they were hungry; massive propaganda efforts in the fields of nutrition, childcare and consumer education all advocated a disjuncture between bodily experience, and health and well-being. What seemed like poor tasting foods or decreased caloric allotments were associated with the strengthening of the German collective and a well-nourished *Volkskörper*. The German population was trained to rescind individual autonomy over their own 'gut feelings,' and housewives learned to cook not with their tongues or stomachs but with their 'German hearts and souls.' The Nazi Food Administration released regular warnings to housewives to discipline their hunger in the service of the war effort. Food shortages were both minimized and transformed into tests of will:

should, atypically, temporary difficulties [with food supply] emerge, the most important issue is to maintain discipline when shopping, rather than allowing a lack of discipline, fear-based hoarding, or the spreading of rumors make this unpleasantness even worse.<sup>89</sup>

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<sup>88</sup> Hertwig, *Richtige Ernährung, eine Lebensfrage*.

<sup>89</sup> "Unnötige Angstkäufe bei Kartoffeln! Sonderbericht der Preisberichtsstelle Beim Reichsnährstand," *Zeitschrift für Volksernährung* 14 (1934).

Within the *Volksgemeinschaft*, hunger became not an individual experience but a collective fate: true 'Aryans' should be hungry when they were told they were, and otherwise replete.

With the onset of war, a rhetoric of future satiety as something that was dependent on current hunger shifted. The state increased pressures upon the population to make do with increasingly scarce food supplies while at the same time insisting that German hunger had been eliminated. Over the course of the Third Reich, hunger was continually re-defined and renegotiated in the attempt to convince the population that it was well-fed, and, simultaneously, that the Nazis were their only defense against a global plot for mass German starvation.

Despite vocal promises of abundance, the 1933 Nazi takeover actually decreased general food supplies, both by diverting food to industrial and military segments of the population, and by reducing food imports and therefore radically reducing grocery selection. Almost immediately then rhetorics of sacrifice and abstinence provided a vital ideological framework for the economic downturns and decreases in quality of life in Germany caused by the NSDAP. In a simultaneously defensive and aggressive tone, an article published in a women's consumer journal from 1935 insisted that:

our food situation is ensured. There is absolutely no reason to be uneasy in the slightest that our supply of food will not be enough. There is no German comrade [*Volksgenosse*] and no German housewife who is not able to acquire on the market what is necessary to feed the family.<sup>90</sup>

Two years later, readers were informed that "we certainly do not need, at this time, to go hungry; however, we should expect to have to tighten our belts in the upcoming months, and realize that everything will no longer be available in the accustomed quantity and

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<sup>90</sup> "Unsere Ernährungslage," *Die Ernährungsdienst*, no. 7 (September, 1935).

quality."<sup>91</sup> In 1939, the year Germany began the war, the cookbook *Gut gekocht* (Well Cooked) paradoxically linked self-sacrifice and self-imposed hunger with satiety, assuring its readers that "we will all be full, no one needs to be hungry . . . after all, our sacrifices are in the service of a glorious aim, which is worth all such sacrifices."<sup>92</sup> Hans Glatzel, one of the leading nutritionist of the Third Reich, warned in his widely referenced dietary guide *Nahrung und Ernährung* (Diet and Nutrition) that "all those who today moan about the various discomforts that come with the four-year plan and the agricultural campaigns should for once recall the dreadful data from the [First] World War."<sup>93</sup> In 1942, as the German food situation began to worsen dramatically, a Nazi speech in honor of the Harvest Day proclaimed that "hunger, which our enemies have constantly invoked for us, has suffered another defeat."<sup>94</sup> Farmers became soldiers battling Germany's historic foe with every bushel of apples and bale of wheat that they produced. As late as 1944, when rations had dropped radically and the food distribution system was in complete disarray, an optimistic nutritionist reported that "simple statistics do not adequately convey the degree to which the current food situation is better than that of the First World War."<sup>95</sup>

While malnutrition amongst the poor remained endemic in Germany during the prewar years, the beginning of war did improve the food situation of Germans,

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<sup>91</sup> Winckel, "Hunger und Politik."

<sup>92</sup> Cited in Rainer Horbelt and Sonja Spindler, *Tante Linas Kriegskochbuch. Erlebnisse, Kochrezepte, Dokumente: Rezepte einer ungewöhnlichen Frau, in schlechten Zeiten zu überleben* (Frankfurt am Main: Eichborn-Verlag, 1982), 25. Despite, or perhaps because of, such assurances, public morale took a nosedive with the introduction of strict war-time rationing. A 1939 underground report on public morale warned that people "speak far more about provisioning than about politics. Each person is taken up with how to get his ration." Nicholas Stargardt, *Witnesses of War: Children's Lives under the Nazis* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2006), 27.

<sup>93</sup> Hans Glatzel, *Nahrung und Ernährung; Altbekanntes und Neuerforschtes vom Essen*, (Berlin: J. Springer, 1939), 253.

<sup>94</sup> "Zum Erntedanktag am 4 Oktober" *Zeitschrift für Volksernährung*, no. 19 (1942).

<sup>95</sup> "Kriegsernährung einst und heute," *Gemeinschaftsverflegung mit Volksernährung* July, no. 13 (1944).

particularly in contrast to other European countries. As the German military invaded and occupied nation after nation, civilian quality of life throughout Central and Western Europe plummeted. Even in relatively prosperous regions, civilian diets worsened dramatically, as strict rationing and food restrictions meant that within Europe only the British maintained diets comparable to the Germans. While Nazi propaganda trumpeted the success of their policy of 'food autarchy,' the Nazis never actually planned on, or achieved, an end to food imports. Instead, they shifted the bulk of German trade away from overseas partners and to neighboring, later occupied countries. While Germany did substantially increase its production of grains and many vegetables during the Third Reich, meats and especially fats remained tremendously under-produced, forcing continued dependence on imports. Direct food seizure and enforced favorable trade relations during the first years of Nazi rule, rather than food autarchy, made Germans the "best-fed civilians in the war."<sup>96</sup> In any case the relative abundance of German larders proved short-lived. 1941 saw the beginning of a domestic food crisis within Germany. Ironically, the more non-Germans starved as part of the Führer's grand plan for nourishing his people, the hungrier Germans themselves became.

Contrary to both contemporary perception and long cherished memories, Hitler's reign actually resulted in a decline in quality of life for the average German, particularly in regard to food supply.<sup>97</sup> In fact, although severe hunger did not become part of daily

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<sup>96</sup> Stargardt, *Witnesses of War: Children's Lives under the Nazis*, 47

<sup>97</sup> In an interesting contrast, while the British rationing plan was massively unpopular, it had an unexpectedly positive impact on public health. Equitable food distribution along with huge government investments in various mass feeding programs, meant that especially the British working class, traditionally associated with industrial hunger, profited enormously from the war. Infant mortality dropped, schoolchildren were larger and healthier, and the incidence of 'poverty diseases,' including tuberculosis, dropped. Zweiniger-Bargielowska, *Austerity in Britain: Rationing, Controls, and Consumption, 1939-1955*; David F. Smith, *Nutrition in Britain: Science, Scientists, and Politics in the Twentieth Century* (London;

life for German civilians until the later phases of the war, mortality rates stagnated during the Nazi years, and in fact increased for children and the ill. In particular, diphtheria claimed ever higher numbers of victims.<sup>98</sup> Although employment levels rose dramatically thanks to the massive expansion of industry and the military, wage value actually decreased; the removal of Jews and other 'undesirables' from the medical profession meant that health services worsened; increased spending on the military was balanced by decreased public welfare spending; and the insistence upon food autarchy ultimately resulted in low-level malnutrition among broad sections of the population, particularly due to inadequate fat supplies.<sup>99</sup> As the economic historian Jörg Baten has pointed out, "if biological aspects are taken into consideration," the economic success of domestic Nazi policy did not improve the welfare of the majority of the German population but produced instead a "major crisis in health and mortality."<sup>100</sup> The fact that

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New York: Routledge, 1997). The rationing of the Occupation Years in postwar Germany has also been associated with some improvements in popular health.

<sup>98</sup> Jörg Baten, *Autarchy, Market Disintegration, and Health: The Mortality and Nutritional Crisis in Nazi Germany, 1933-1937* (Munich: Center for Economic Studies & IFO Institute for Economic Research, 2002), 6. In addition of course, the NDSAP killed tens of thousands of German citizens, not only those declared racial and political enemies, but also those tellingly termed 'unnütze oder überzählige Esser' [useless or excessive eaters]: the morbidly ill, 'asocial,' and the mentally handicapped. Especially children were institutionalized and then deliberately starved to death by their doctors.

<sup>99</sup> Soldiers were the main segment of the German population that enjoyed a dramatically improved diet under the Nazis. Nazi rationing policy prioritized feeding its military forces above all else. In the words of Oswald Pohl, General of the *Waffen-SS*, "for his battle of man against man, the SS-fighter should receive not only the best weapons but the best food. In the final battle, he who is better nourished will be the victor." (Ernst Klee, *Deutsche Medizin im Dritten Reich: Karrieren vor und nach 1945* (Frankfurt: S. Fischer, 2001), 181.) The best rations were reserved for the armed forces, and many soldiers' nutritional intake was dramatically better than their peacetime diet. Their food supplies, of course, were largely provided by the policy of feeding themselves off of the land. Nowhere within the Nazi food economy was the equating of German satiety with foreign hunger as explicit as with military feeding policies, as food was simply seized from local populations in order to feed their occupiers. The general good nutrition of German soldiers was in striking contrast to that of their Allies, the Japanese; over half of the Japanese troops who died between 1937 and 1945 died from starvation or malnutrition-related disease. Katarzyna Joanna Cwiertka, *Modern Japanese Cuisine: Food, Power and National Identity* (London: Reaktion, 2006), 132.

<sup>100</sup> Jörg Baten, *Autarchy, Market Disintegration, and Health: The Mortality and Nutritional Crisis in Nazi Germany, 1933-1937*, 22. For more on the health crisis in Nazi Germany, see Winfried Süß, *Der "Volkskörper" im Krieg: Gesundheitspolitik, Gesundheitsverhältnisse und Krankenmord im nationalsozialistischen Deutschland: 1939 - 1945* (München: Oldenbourg, 2003). Even German doctors

this hunger was neither perceived at the time nor remembered after the fact is in large part due to the Nazis' dual-pronged hunger propaganda.<sup>101</sup> Since Hitler's appointment as Chancellor in 1933, the German population had been bombarded with reminders of the pleasures and rewards of nutritional self-abnegation, along with evocations of the misery of externally imposed hunger.

Despite calls to voluntary self-sacrifice, steadily worsening rations and plummeting food quality that had been part of daily life since the mid-1930s finally reached a crisis point. 1942 saw the first major drop in rations, with daily rations averaging 1700 calories. According to contemporary surveys of public opinion, the consequences were "devastating to a degree unequalled by any other event during the war."<sup>102</sup> Concerned officials reported an atmosphere "that is strikingly reminiscent of the year 1918."<sup>103</sup> Popular acceptance of constantly changing consumer offerings and recommended eating culture suffered a dramatic decline. By 1943, "struggles over food determined all familial and workplace relations, as well as the mood of the general

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agreed (albeit in secret) that as of 1941, the civilian population experienced regular crises in health that were directly tied to food shortages and nutritional inadequacies.

<sup>101</sup> As early as the 1980s, West German historians began questioning the widespread belief that Nazism's two great successes were ending unemployment and ensuring an adequate diet. In 1984, Martin Kutz, for example, called for a more critical approach to Nazi agricultural and nutritional policy while at the same time pointing out that Germans did not actually eat as well as they remembered eating. Kutz also noted that, in contrast to the FRG, GDR historians were highly critical of Nazi agricultural policy, focusing attention on its militarism. Martin Kutz, "Kriegserfahrung und Kriegsvorbereitung. Die agrarwirtschaftliche Vorbereitung des Zweiten Weltkrieges in Deutschland vor dem Hintergrund der Weltkrieg-I-Erfahrung." *Zeitschrift für Agrargeschichte und Agrarsoziologie* 32, no. 1 (1984), 59-82. Interestingly, while after the war Germans remembered Nazi rationing plan with affection, during the Third Reich civilians were quite vocal about food shortages. For one such case study, see Cornelia Renner, "Nicht einmal Brot hat man genug!" Ernährung und Stimmung im Gau Tirol-Vorarlberg 1942/43," *Zeitgeschichte*, no. 2 (1999).

<sup>102</sup> Cited in Wolfgang Franz Werner, "*Bleib übrig!*" *Deutsche Arbeiter in der nationalsozialistischen Kriegswirtschaft* (Düsseldorf: Schwann, 1983), 195.

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*, 196

public."<sup>104</sup> As the war slowly drew to a close, Germans were not only hungry, but they were increasingly unwilling to translate their own hunger into a vision of racial supremacy. As the agricultural historian Gustavo Corni succinctly put it:

The nutritional fate of the German people was ultimately so tightly intertwined with their military situation that the entire food economy collapsed like a house of cards as military circumstances took on ever more catastrophic dimensions. The Nazi propaganda construction of a so-called utopia of a master race dominating the peoples of Europe, a race for whom the best foods would be reserved, collapsed entirely in the ruins of the conquered, hungry and demoralized Germany.<sup>105</sup>

The final months of war had elevated hunger to a position of unprecedented public prominence. Since the beginning of the war, the Allies had recognized the centrality of food for Nazism's allure, attempting to weaken German allegiance to their government with the promise of food. The British, Americans and Soviets all flooded the civilian population with pamphlets promising them abundant food should they abandon the war effort. Illicitly broadcast Allied radio reports reported German malnutrition on a vast scale. At the same time, long-restricted luxury food items like chocolate and coffee were promised as a reward for supporting the Allied war effort. As the food situation in Germany worsened, such promises grew in appeal; in response, the NSDAP published articles and delivered speeches casting this propaganda as deliberate and malicious lies, a "gleaming façade . . . out of which ring constant false promises to feed the entire world after the war," but which actually "conceals only a single massive expanse of ruins."<sup>106</sup>

Presciently, Nazi rhetoric claimed that Allied promises of gustatory abundance were

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<sup>104</sup> Paul Erker, "Hunger und sozialer Konflikt in der Nachkriegszeit" in Manfred Gailus and Heinrich Volkmann, eds., *Der Kampf um das tägliche Brot: Nahrungsmangel, Versorgungspolitik und Protest, 1770-1990* (Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1994), 392.

<sup>105</sup> Corni, *Brot, Butter, Kanonen: die Ernährungswirtschaft in Deutschland unter der Diktatur Hitlers*, 584

<sup>106</sup> "Hinter Glänzender Fassade: Hunger!" *Gemeinschaftsverflegung mit Volksernährung*, no. 4 (February, 1944).

irreconcilable with a world that was in the depths of starvation. Nazi media was full of descriptions of international famines and mass hunger that were attributable to deliberate policies of the British, Americans, and Soviets.

Indeed, the Nazi press seemed to cover the many wartime famines more than either the British or American media, which favored coverage of military battles over international hunger. In a jarring display of solidarity with the peoples of the Third World, Nazi nutritionists condemned the

seizure of grain and cattle by the Anglo-Americans in Algeria and Morocco, which placed the entire population in a state of emergency. Not to mention the starvation and inflation in Tschungking China . . . or the new famine in Tanganijka, the former German East Africa.<sup>107</sup>

Popular and scientific journals condemned the fact that "India has starved since England has ruled. Since [the beginning of British rule in] 1770, despite widespread hunger, grain has been exported in unlimited quantities."<sup>108</sup> Empathy with these victims of Allied exploitation relied upon long-standing memories of Britain's Hunger Blockade of the First World War. Not only had the blockade confirmed Germany's nutritional vulnerability; it had also established the Allies, rather than the Axis powers, as wielders of the devastating 'hunger-weapon:' "it was first the English who deliberately transformed hunger into a primary weapon of modern warfare, one that is primarily directed against the women and children of the enemy," and which resulted in more than a million "Germans [who] had starved to death . . . and many other consequences [that] are simply

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<sup>107</sup> "Hinter glänzender Fassade: Hunger!" *Gemeinschaftsverflegung mit Volksernährung*, no. 4 (February, 1944).

<sup>108</sup> "Hungersnot: Wie Gewöhnlich," *Gemeinschaftsverflegung mit Volksernährung*, no. 3 (February, 1944). Hitler cynically looked to British policy in India as a model for his policy toward the Soviet Union. Manfred Weißbecker, "Wenn hier Deutschen wohnen . . . Beharrung und Veränderung im Rußlandbild Hitlers und der NSDAP" in Hans Erich Volkmann, *Das Russlandbild im Dritten Reich* (Köln: Böhlau, 1994), 35.

impossible to estimate or even to express in numbers."<sup>109</sup> These past and foreign hungers provided Nazi Germany with examples of deadly hunger far from its own concentration camps and death fields. In fact, Hitler battled German hunger-memories with non-German hunger on a vast scale, 'protecting' against a repeat of the blockade by invading first Poland and then the USSR. Under the leadership of Minister of Food and Agriculture Herbert Backe, the Nazi military developed what Christian Gerlach has termed the 'Hunger Plan,' which involved the intertwined goals of seizing food for German consumption, and ensuring that the 'surplus population' starve to death.<sup>110</sup> This deliberately induced mass starvation became defensive rather than offensive through the invocation of the blockade and the racial threat posed by 'voracious' Slavs and Jews.

Along with being a potential victim of hunger, Nazi Germany was remade as a land of satiety and abundance, battling hunger throughout the world, as a giver rather than taker of food. In a bold retelling of Nazi food policy, a 1944 article in a Nazi food trade journal titled "Germany gave Europe more to eat: UNRAA means starvation" reported that "in the parts of Europe that were occupied by Germany there was admittedly no excess of food, but there was enough so that everyone could live. The black market was inhibited, and a relatively equitable distribution was ensured."<sup>111</sup> In another article from the same year, the same journal cited Nazi food plans in Greece, Finland, Norway, Italy, France, Belgium, Holland and others (Central Europe is noticeably absent from the list) as "examples of German selflessness against which our

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<sup>109</sup> Decken, *Die Front gegen den Hunger: Ernährungskrieg 1939/43*. In fact, according to von Decken the first murderous of hunger was in Southwest Africa, by the British and against Boer women and children. This claim is particularly shocking in light of the hunger-based genocide that was enacted by Germany during these same years against the Herero peoples.

<sup>110</sup> Gerlach, *Krieg, Ernährung, Völkermord. Deutsche Vernichtungspolitik im zweiten Weltkrieg*, 17

<sup>111</sup> "Deutschland gab Europa mehr zu essen. Unrra bedeutet Hungersnot." *Gemeinschaftsverfleugung mit Volksernährung*, no. 20 (1944).

enemies have nothing equivalent to show." Indeed, it was food supplies "approved and largely provided by Germany that protected the Greeks from starving to death."<sup>112</sup> A soldier just returned from the invasion of the Ukraine reported in a Gelsenkirchner newspaper that "the population can scarcely believe its luck that the Germans are there. [An old man said] 'from now on we will have bread; in 1933 [under Stalin], then we were hungry.'"<sup>113</sup> As the Allied forces gradually liberated lands previously under German occupation, nutritionists reported that "the past two years have proven that only Germany selflessly ensured just and adequate food distribution in those areas which stood under its influence and rule."<sup>114</sup> This rhetorical transformation of Nazi Germany into a magnanimous and bountiful power was intended to contradict domestic German experiences of scarcity or deprivation. By expounding on the much greater hunger of peoples under Allied power, such reportage confirmed the gustatory supremacy of the NSDAP while at the same time increasing German fears of the consequences of defeat.

The main nutritional journal of the Nazi years, *Volksernährung und Kochwissenschaft* (People's Nutrition and Cooking Science), ran a regular series on the dietary status of dozens of countries, reviewing changes in rationing and food production as well as predicted crop yields for Europe and much of North Africa and the Americas. Unsurprisingly, the results mapped almost exactly onto Allied-Axis lines, with Allied countries consistently suffering from poor crops, steadily decreased rationing allotments, and rising malnutrition, while the opposite was true for the Axis powers and their allies.

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<sup>112</sup> "Drüben und hüben. Anglo-amerikanische und deutsche Nahrungsversorgung" *Gemeinschaftsverflegung mit Volksernährung*, no. 16 (August, 1944). This is a complete falsity; Greece suffered from a horrific famine largely due to Nazi occupation policy. Violetta Hionidou, *Famine and Death in Occupied Greece, 1941-1944* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 261.

<sup>113</sup> Cited in Horbelt and Spindler, *Tante Linas Kriegskochbuch*. 66

<sup>114</sup> "Deutschland gab Europa mehr zu essen. Unrra bedeutet Hungersnot." *Gemeinschaftsverflegung mit Volksernährung*, no. 20 (1944).

There were frequent reports on starving workers in Britain and the USA, and exposés countered the "supposed inexhaustible food reserves of the United States"<sup>115</sup> by announcing that "a third of all Americans are without adequate food supplies."<sup>116</sup> The Nazi canteen sciences journal ran an article in 1944 titled "England battles its porridge," explaining that the "general democratic personal and racial mush, the inevitable result of the political ignorance of the Brits and Americans swimming in the Jewish channel" had resulted in a national culinary dependence on "flavorless mushes," creating a sickly and weak population.<sup>117</sup> Omnipresent rhetoric informed the population that the central goal of the Allied forces was to starve the German people:

all the promises of the British, Americans and Bolsheviks, all supposed stores of foods set aside, have proven to be empty words . . . not only has none of the promised food aid materialized [in the liberated countries], but the Allies insist on feeding their troops off of the occupied territories, and they have opened the door to the black market, usury, inflation, in short to the exploitation of the masses.<sup>118</sup>

Just months before Germany was forced into unconditional surrender, newspapers reported that "the provisioning of the Axis lands has improved more than expected while that of the enemy has gotten worse."<sup>119</sup> In a frantic attempt to convince the population to fight to the bitter end, Fritz Wachter, the Gauleiter of Bayreuth, warned that

if coal, gas, and electricity are in short supply now, what is all that compared to our enemies' sadistic Jewish plans for our destruction? And even if our food rations were cut still further, we would look back at these reduced living conditions as a paradise if the Bolshevik and his plutocratic helpers become masters of the Reich.<sup>120</sup>

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<sup>115</sup> "Vorboten der Lebensmittelrationierung in den USA," *Gemeinschaftsverflegung mit Volksernährung*, no. 3 (November, 1942).

<sup>116</sup> "Hinter Glänzender Fassade: Hunger!" *Gemeinschaftsverflegung mit Volksernährung*, no. 4 (February, 1944).

<sup>117</sup> "England bekämpft den Brei," *Gemeinschaftsverflegung mit Volksernährung* 9 (May, 1943).

<sup>118</sup> "Deutschland gab Europa mehr zu essen. Unrra bedeutet Hungersnot."

<sup>119</sup> Ibid.

<sup>120</sup> Cited in Thomas Childers, "Facilis descensus averni est": The Allied Bombing of Germany and the Issue of German Suffering." *Central European History*, Vol. 38, No. 1 (2005), 102

Recently liberated countries, including Italy and France, were portrayed as longing for the better feeding program of the Nazis, as they learned first-hand that "the lowering of the German-set level of food rationing is one of the first policies of the Soviets."<sup>121</sup>

Nazi hunger-discourse reserved particular attention for the Soviets, the most frequently evoked signifier of the threat of starvation.<sup>122</sup> This was because Russia, and indeed the 'East' itself, embodied the paradox of Nazi food discourse. The NSDAP's image of Russia was shaped by the tension between a "beautiful, wealthy and desirable land" and its inferior, threatening and hungry inhabitants.<sup>123</sup> Since the late nineteenth century, German anthropologists and nutritionists had asserted an innate Russian invulnerability to hunger because it was their 'natural' state of existence.<sup>124</sup> Russia was often referenced by the Nazi state as a way of highlighting the good nutritional situation of Germany. In 1935, Goebbels insisted that "a temporary restriction of a few groceries is nothing compared to the chronic starvation of the entire Russian people, who receive even the worst and most simple of foods in totally inadequate amounts."<sup>125</sup> The Nazi-authored non-fictional text "Sermon of Hunger: German Pleas from the Soviet Union"

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<sup>121</sup> Ibid.

<sup>122</sup> For more on Nazi attitudes toward Russians, see Volkmann, *Das Russlandbild im dritten Reich*. For a general overview of Russian-German relations, see *Unsere Russen, Unsere Deutschen: Bilder vom Anderen 1800 bis 2000*, (Berlin: Ch. Links, 2007).

<sup>123</sup> Manfred Weißbecker, "Wenn hier Deutschen wohnen . . . Beharrung und Veränderung im Rußlandbild Hitlers und der NSDAP" in Volkmann, *Das Russlandbild im Dritten Reich*, 10

<sup>124</sup> Indeed, the fields of nutrition and anthropology were closely intertwined over the twentieth century. It was anthropologists who first took an interest in the foodways of 'primitive peoples' as definitional to understanding the development of human society; similarly, nutritionists relied upon anthropology's access to 'natives' to develop models of the ideal or 'natural' diet. The British, early leaders in nutritional research, oversaw a vast empire that "boasted a number of races with wonderfully diverse natural diets uncontaminated by modern commercialized foods. This heterogeneity and primitive purity offered a natural laboratory for discovering the key to nutritional efficiency and health." (Vernon, *Hunger: A Modern History*, 106.) However, the Germans also relied upon racial anthropology to develop their eugenics-based model of nutrition. While early German nutritionists relied largely upon studies done in Africa, during the war years research turned to the occupied areas, in particular the various 'races' of Central and Eastern Europe.

<sup>125</sup> Cited in Weißbecker, "Wenn hier Deutschen wohnen . . . Beharrung und Veränderung im Rußlandbild Hitlers und der NSDAP," 26.

expounded on the desperate plight of the ethnic German communities (the Volga-Germans) in the East, reporting mass starvation and the unending deaths of German comrades due to the Soviet Five Year Plan.<sup>126</sup> Newspapers regularly reported cases of starvation-induced cannibalism in the USSR, stories that were intended to inspire German readers not to empathize but to "assist in the destruction of this Soviet pestilence."<sup>127</sup>

In letters written home from the Eastern Front, German soldiers described Russians as both ravenous and greedy – condemned for being too hungry, despised for eating in a bestial and inhuman manner. German farmers who were allotted Russian forced laborers to work their fields were warned against feeding them too well: "the Russian has lived with poverty, hunger and submission for centuries. His belly is elastic, so no false sympathy."<sup>128</sup> In the summer of 1942, a General Reinhardt compared the 'resilience' of his Russian slave laborers favorably to that of the French:

only one has died so far; the rest are continuing their work in the fields. Their provisions cost us nothing, and we don't have to suffer under the fact that these animals, whose children are killing our soldiers, are eating German bread. Yesterday I was forced to kill two of these Russian beasts, as they had secretly eaten up the milk that had been reserved for the mother sow.<sup>129</sup>

Not only were Russians prohibited from eating any 'German bread,' they were prohibited from eating anything at all: the 'bestial' nature of Russian hunger eliminated German responsibility for it. In a letter to his lieutenant, the German soldier Otto Essmann

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<sup>126</sup> Kurt Ihlenfeld, *Hungerpredigt: deutsche Notbriefe aus der Sowjet-Union* (Berlin-Steglitz: Eckart-Verlag, 1933), 143.

<sup>127</sup> Cited in Horbelt and Spindler, *Tante Linas Kriegskochbuch*, 66

<sup>128</sup> Cited in Corni, *Brot, Butter, Kanonen: die Ernährungswirtschaft in Deutschland unter der Diktatur Hitlers*, 534. The Nazis were tremendously concerned about the dangers of German farmers, especially female farmers, eating meals with the forced laborers sent to their farms to replace their missing sons and husbands. There was a substantial propaganda warning German women against sharing food with, or even be witness to the eating, of Italians, Poles, Russians and others, evoking the racial dangers of such 'table-communities' (*Tischgemeinschaften*). *Ibid.*, 465

<sup>129</sup> Cited in Dieter Bach and Jochen Leyendecker, *Ich habe geweint vor Hunger: deutsche und russische Gefangene in Lagern des zweiten Weltkriegs* (Wuppertal: P. Hammer, 1993), 94.

described Russian POWs who "gobble up earthworms, and throw themselves at the dirty dishwater. I watched as they ate dirty grass. It is hardly believable that they are human."<sup>130</sup> Such images were formally institutionalized within the Nazi state; memoirs by former Hitler Youth members recall organized tours of Russian POW camps to show children the inhuman nature of these prisoners as they devoured worms and chewed soil in a desperate attempt to stay alive.<sup>131</sup>

Russians were described as the most terrifying and cruel of enemies, possessing a barbarity only matched by their insatiable hunger. At the same time, however, their land was represented as the most fertile of Europe, if not the world. Goebbels had paradigmatically explained the invasion of the USSR as the drive "for grain and bread, for an overflowing breakfast, lunch and dinner table . . . we finally want to be able to claim what is ours."<sup>132</sup> Indeed, the more certain became German defeat at the hands of the Soviet soldiers, the more insistently the Nazi state reminded its populace of the desirability of "the East: the Bread Basket of Europe."<sup>133</sup> During the final years of the war, the government designed a touring exhibit titled "The Soviet Paradise," which illustrated the richness of this fertile land while explaining that nineteen million inhabitants had thus far starved to death due to 'Jewish-Bolshevik' machinations. Descriptions of the gustatory abundance of the Eastern regions cemented allegiance to the Reich. Hitler had long claimed that the German people required extra territories in order to be self-sufficient, implying that Germans would starve without the lands of the East.

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<sup>130</sup> Ibid., 94

<sup>131</sup> Horbelt and Spindler, *Tante Linas Kriegskochbuch*, 124

<sup>132</sup> Cited in Corni, *Brot, Butter, Kanonen: die Ernährungswirtschaft in Deutschland unter der Diktatur Hitlers*, 451

<sup>133</sup> "Der Ostraum – die Kornkammer Europas," *Gemeinschaftsverflegung mit Volksernährung*, no. 5 (December, 1942).

The better that the German diet could be with the products of the Ukraine, the worse it threatened to be without them. The constant evocation of the rich black soil of 'Middle Europe' evoked the specter of starvation as much as that of satiety. This combined fear and desire motivated the population to support a war that was, in this most primal sense, a battle of survival.

Such propaganda proved remarkably successful. Despite severe food shortages, the Allied forces noted with dismay that German morale remained strong despite worsening nutritional conditions.<sup>134</sup> Dr. Howard Fishburn, an American doctor living in Germany during the Third Reich, reported in 1943 that, although food and medical care were scarce, public morale was "surprisingly high." He predicted that "Germany might expect to keep her civilian population above the starvation level until the autumn of 1943," noting that "although the German authorities have tried to assure the people that their wartime diet is adequate, there has been a steady and gradual loss of weight and of the sense of well-being among the entire population." In the face of all this, he admitted to being "at a loss to explain the apparent efficiency of the German workers and the high level of public morale."<sup>135</sup>

When viewed against the hunger ideology of the Nazi party, such seeming paradoxes are less confusing; German willingness to support the war was not in spite of food shortages but because of them. The population of the Third Reich had been trained for years to associate hunger with moral and racial hierarchies. Hungering together as a German nation was understood as hungering toward future abundance, and it was

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<sup>134</sup> Howard D. Fishburn, "Won't Starve Until Fall," *The Science News-Letter* 43, no. 3 (Jan. 16, 1943), 38. Fishburn also noted that, bad as the situation was in Germany, it was still substantially better than that of all other occupied countries except for Denmark.

<sup>135</sup> *Ibid.*, 38

countered by vivid fears of the deadly hunger that was their inevitable fate should they lose the war.

### **A War for Food and a World of Hunger**

Nazi Germany invaded Poland and began the Second World War in large part due to a voracious appetite for food and a manipulated fear of starvation. Germany was not alone in either these aspirations or these fears. Every nation involved in the war believed that future satiety or hunger rested in its outcome. In 1940, the British nutritionist and future director-general of the United Nation's Food and Agriculture Organization Sir John Boyd Orr warned that "we are only at the beginning of what looks like being a long grim struggle, in which food may be, as it was in the last war, the decisive factor for victory."<sup>136</sup> A 1942 poll showed that 71% of Americans believed that if Germans won the war "they would take a lot of our food away and they would starve most of us."<sup>137</sup> Australian economist and humanitarian Frank Lidgett McDougall axiomatically declared that

the exigencies of war and of the relief period will in the next few years render almost all men everywhere in the world highly food-conscious. This will be no new experience for the bulk of the world's population, whose daily bread has always been a source of some anxiety, but it will be one of some novelty to those who determine the policies of the more advanced nations, and in so doing consciously or unconsciously fix the patterns of the world economic system.<sup>138</sup>

In response to this prediction, the UNRAA (the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration) was founded in 1943 to aid the hungry populations of war-ravaged

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<sup>136</sup> John Boyd-Orr, *Nutrition in War, Based on an Address Delivered to a Fabian Society Conference on Food Policy*, (London: The Fabian society, 1940), 14.

<sup>137</sup> Cited in Amy Bentley, *Eating for Victory: Food Rationing and the Politics of Domesticity* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1998), 13.

<sup>138</sup> F. L. McDougall, "International Aspects of Postwar Food and Agriculture," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 225 (January, 1943), 122.

countries. The same year, the UN scheduled its Hot Springs conference to consider "the world problems of food and agriculture," officially declaring "its belief that the goal of freedom from want of food, suitable and adequate for the health and strength of all peoples, can be achieved."<sup>139</sup> Announcing that both Europe and Asia had been transformed into places where "hunger is the general rule, starvation is commonplace, and . . . the area enslaved by the Axis is a breeding place for all the diseases of the body and of the spirit that are born of starvation, suffering and death,"<sup>140</sup> the conference formalized Allied interest in international food distribution and the management of global hunger. During the conference, plans were drawn for what was to become the FAO, which officially held its first session in October, 1945.

Much like the situation twenty-five years earlier, Allied concern over the hunger caused by the war mingled with complex feelings of guilt over a British-imposed blockade that explicitly prohibited the importation of foodstuffs into occupied lands, even in the face of documented starvation. These concerns led not to the end of the blockade, but to the formation of the Famine Relief Committee in May 1942.<sup>141</sup> However, concern over the British blockade was caused by more than a guilty conscience; interest in the victims of wartime hunger emerged out of pragmatic military and political concerns about the potential consequences of increasing the hunger that was already so prevalent in mainland Europe. A medical advisor to the British government warned in 1943:

It seems to have been forgotten that one of the conditions for future resistance against the conquerors and also for supporting the Allied war aims in a broad

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<sup>139</sup> "United Nations Conference on Food and Agriculture: Conference Proceedings" (Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, Division of Intercourse and Education: New York, 1943).

<sup>140</sup> Ibid.

<sup>141</sup> Joan Beaumont, "Starving for Democracy: Britain's Blockade of and Relief for Occupied Europe, 1939-1945" *War and Society* 8, no. 2 (October 1990). The wartime famine in Greece was particularly horrific, killing approximately 5% of the population and skewing the nation's demographic balance for decades. Richard Clogg, *Bearing Gifts to Greeks: Humanitarian Aid to Greece in the 1940s*, 2.

sense, is mental and physical elasticity, a power of resistance that can be gained only through fair nutrition. A famished human being never revolts.<sup>142</sup>

England's Earl of Drogheda, who served as joint director of the Ministry of Economic Warfare, evoked the threat of a

nightmare continent in which our friends and late allies would suffer as much as, and earlier than our enemies; a continent where pestilence would be bred by famine; a continent that would soon be consumed by hatred of England; and a situation in which the Germans might say that the first to starve must be the British prisoner of war.<sup>143</sup>

In response to these fears, the Allies originally hoped not to eliminate the hunger of occupied Europe but to exploit it for the war effort. However, they gradually realized that the starvation that the Nazis were spreading through Europe was not encouraging resistance but divisiveness, collaboration, and defeatism. Thanks to rations as low as 400 calories a day (the amount allotted to the Jews of Poland's ghettos), "the peoples of occupied Europe have of necessity developed a 'food mindedness' hitherto unknown;" however, in the words of an international convention of European nutritionists, regrettably "circumstances do not permit us to utilize this fact to a greater extent."<sup>144</sup> The Allies lacked a clear strategy for harnessing hunger to their own advantage, something that the Nazis had been perfecting for years before the war began.

During the war it was above all the major and widely publicized famines of Bengal (1943), Greece (1942-43), and the Netherlands (1944-45) that made the international political significance of hunger and food aid clear to the Allies. In the face of the hunger that reached throughout so much of the world, hierarchies of food aid and

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<sup>142</sup> Dr. K. Evang, "Post-War Nutritional Relief" *British Journal of Nutrition* (1943).

<sup>143</sup> Cited in Beaumont, "Starving for Democracy: Britain's Blockade of and Relief for Occupied Europe 1939-1945," 59. Although the British maintained the blockade despite extensive public pressure, historian Joan Beaumont claims that "if nothing else, by its very existence, the movement against the food blockade vindicated the Allies claim to be fighting for a better and more tolerant political order than that imposed so ruthlessly on Europe by their enemies." *Ibid.*, 78

<sup>144</sup> Evang, "Post-War Nutritional Relief."

international concern quickly emerged.<sup>145</sup> Though by far the worst famine to take place during the war was the Bengal famine of 1943, it was the short but severe famine in the Netherlands, as well as the impacts of the British food blockade in the occupied lands, that drew the most media attention.<sup>146</sup> Despite growing international criticism, the British government, referencing its blockade of Germany of the First World War, continued to insist on the efficacy of this weapon. Nonetheless, especially in the United States, the public argued that the blockade "imposed a slow lingering death on civilians [and was] a particularly iniquitous form of warfare."<sup>147</sup>

Due to both racial hierarchies and military strategy, it was the suffering of Europeans that attracted the most interest and concern in the West. The tremendous rhetorical concern over the Greek famine was rooted in the small country's symbolic importance as the heart of Western civilization and the 'Cradle of Christianity.' In contrast, the great Bengal famine, which claimed hundreds of times more victims than the Greek, "received remarkably little attention in Britain, where . . . attention was focused on famine in occupied Europe."<sup>148</sup> While there were ample reports on the unbearable condition of Jews in concentration camps and ghettos, the American government was reluctant to allot them extra foods, terrified of being accused of discriminating "in favor

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<sup>145</sup> Jewish communities outside of occupied Europe criticized American reluctance to increase food aid to Jews in concentration camps out of fear of the charge of favoritism. For more on these struggles see Ronald W. Zweig, "Feeding the Camps: Allied Blockade Policy and the Relief of Concentration Camps in Germany, 1944-1945," *The Historical Journal* 41, no. 3 (Sep., 1998) and Beaumont, "Starving for Democracy: Britain's Blockade of and Relief for Occupied Europe, 1939-1945."

<sup>146</sup> This selective acknowledgement and memory of mass famine echoes Mike Davis' analysis of the nineteenth- and early twentieth-century famines that he terms 'Late Victorian Holocausts.' Davis notes that "while the dickensian slum remains in the world history curriculum, the famine children of 1876 and 1899 have disappeared. . . the great famines are the missing pages – the absent defining moments, if you prefer – in virtually every overview of the Victorian era." Davis, *Late Victorian Holocausts*, 8-9.

<sup>147</sup> Cited in Beaumont, *Starving for Democracy*, 58

<sup>148</sup> Vernon, *Hunger*, 148. Indian historian Indivar Kamtekar reports that "in sheer scale, the tragedy of the Bengal famine bears comparison with any other of the Second World War, and dwarfs other incidents in India." I. Kamtekar, "A Different War Dance: State and Class in India 1939–1945," *Past and Present* 176, no. 1 (August, 2002), 212.

of the Jews."<sup>149</sup> It was not until late 1943 that public pressure finally convinced Allied governments to ease up the blockade in the interest of aiding starving concentration camp inmates.<sup>150</sup> The reluctance to aid especially Jewish and Slavic prisoners was rooted in concerns that food sent to the occupied territories would be seized by the Germans. In addition, military advisors worried that strengthening peoples under Nazi rule would literally strengthen the German military machine; starved slave laborers would produce more weapons for Hitler if they were better fed.<sup>151</sup> The Germans, Japanese, Soviets, Americans and British all actively created, encouraged and tolerated some hungers while desperately trying to eliminate others, prioritizing ending the war over ending the hunger.

The deliberate-ness with which the wartime powers negotiated the starvation of entire populations, and the medical profession's general awareness of the nutritional catastrophe of war torn Europe encouraged tremendous concern over postwar health. Although the First World War's blockade had caused massive malnourishment in Central Europe after the war, doctors warned that

the conditions of food shortages in Europe when the present fighting ceases will be different from those obtained in Germany and Austria after the previous war. The food deprivation will have been more widespread, more severe and not confined mainly to certain types of food.<sup>152</sup>

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<sup>149</sup> Zweig, "Feeding the Camps," 840

<sup>150</sup> Ibid., 827

<sup>151</sup> In the words of Frank McDougall, "since food is the source of human energy, it is the most important of the munitions of war." (McDougall, "International Aspects of Postwar Food and Agriculture," 122.) Indeed, it was only during the last months of the war that a new phase in Allied relief policy was ushered in, as the "blockade policy and the unwillingness to focus on the harsher fate of the Jews in the camps was now replaced by an urgent concern to do what was possible to avoid the death by starvation and disease of all internees within reach." Ibid., 847

<sup>152</sup> Dr H. Chick, "Nutritional Research in Vienna After the First World War," *Proceedings of the Nutrition Society* 3, no. 19 (1945).

Reports from "secret sources in prison camps in Europe"<sup>153</sup> described concentration camps and ghettos with entire populations dying of starvation, causing Churchill to warn long before war's end that

when we get into Germany, there will be displaced persons, not by the thousands but by the millions, who will look to the armies for food. The combined resources of the Allies may be strained to the utmost to prevent hunger and indeed starvation, especially if our victory comes before the new harvest is gathered.<sup>154</sup>

In the expectation of a confrontation with millions of hungry Europeans, British and American doctors called for an "attitude . . . of alert expectancy,"<sup>155</sup> avidly designing studies and treatment plans for dealing with the predicted effects of long-term and severe under-nourishment. At an Oxford gathering of the British Nutritional Society dedicated to medical research and food relief, Dr. Chick warned that "it is likely that the grim opportunity will present itself for a study of the processes of slow starvation in the human subject."<sup>156</sup> This proved all to true; in the words of cultural historian Sharman Russell: "World War II turned out to be a cornucopia of starvation research – a wealth of hunger."<sup>157</sup>

Sincere concern over the suffering of starvation victims was augmented by excitement over the medical opportunities posed by these countless hungry bodies.

Doctors tried as best they could to prepare for the expected hunger catastrophe,

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<sup>153</sup> Ibid.

<sup>154</sup> "Partial Starvation and its Treatment" *The Lancet* (March 23, 1945). For a discussion of Allied knowledge of concentration camps and the Nazi policy of genocide toward the Jews, see the work of Martin Gilbert and David Wyman.

<sup>155</sup> Miss M. Hume, "Opportunities for Nutritional Research in the Work of Relief," *Proceedings of the Nutrition Society* 2, no. 16 (1944).

<sup>156</sup> Chick, "Nutritional Research in Vienna After the First World War."

<sup>157</sup> Sharman Apt Russell, *Hunger: An Unnatural History* (New York: Basic Books, 2005), 115. In 1947 the British Nutrition Society published a summary of the nutritional research performed during the war years, reporting on major work done in Great Britain, Denmark, Finland, Norway, Poland, Java, Belgium, France, Holland, Switzerland, the USA and Sweden. Dr H. Magee, "Activities in Nutrition of the Ministry of Health in England during the War," *Proceedings of the Nutritional Society* 5, no. 4 (1947); Dr A. Szczygiel, "Nutrition in Poland under the German Occupation." *Proceedings of the Nutritional Society* 5, no. 4 (1947).

feverishly reviewing data gathered by earlier encounters with mass hunger during World War I and the interwar years. The British humanitarian Ms. Hume, who had worked with hungry Viennese children after World War I, explained that

at first it seems rather shocking to contemplate such a thing as research in famine stricken countries, but, after the first instinctive recoil, the truly humane individual makes the necessary readjustment, and prepares to consider how, from this boundless loss, some gain may be made.<sup>158</sup>

In 1944, the American nutritionist Ancel Keyes organized what was known as the 'great starvation experiment' in Minnesota, studying conscientious objectors who volunteered to suffer semi-starvation for several months and then be 'reanimated.'<sup>159</sup> In most European countries as well as throughout much of Asia unprecedented energy was focused on studying the impact and solution of malnutrition.

The war not only caused much of this hunger but also dictated the shape of this research. A 1943 British report bemoaned that fact that, although there "is reason to believe that during this war a great deal more research work is being done on the effect of malnutrition, hunger and starvation on a mass scale among people living under war conditions . . . most of the results will only be available after the war."<sup>160</sup> This prediction proved ominously accurate, for reasons the author could scarcely have known at the time. The war created the two most extended medical studies of death by starvation ever produced, written by the Russian and Jewish doctors of the besieged city of Leningrad and the starved Warsaw Ghetto.<sup>161</sup> In both sites, doctors were walled in with their

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<sup>158</sup> Hume, "Opportunities for Nutritional Research in the Work of Relief."

<sup>159</sup> Todd Tucker, *The Great Starvation Experiment: The Heroic Men Who Starved so that Millions could Live* (New York: Free Press, 2006).

<sup>160</sup> Evang, "Post-War Nutritional Relief."

<sup>161</sup> Myron Winick, *Hunger Disease: Studies* (New York: Wiley, 1979); Charles G. Roland, *Courage under Siege: Starvation, Disease, and Death in the Warsaw Ghetto* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992); John Barber and Andrei Rostislavovich Dzenishevich, *Life and Death in Besieged Leningrad, 1941-44* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005); Cynthia Simmons and Nina Perlina, *Writing the Siege of*

patients, and the overwhelming presence of hunger on a hitherto unknown scale inspired "a scientific study by physicians condemned to die of the same disease they were studying – hunger and subsequent starvation."<sup>162</sup> These doctors, despite working in frightful conditions, were committed to their research, recognizing its importance not for their own doomed communities but for the world at large. The Warsaw project was led by Dr. Israel Milejkowski, the physician responsible for public health in the ghetto. As Milejkowski wrote in an introductory essay to the research project, his study was only natural as "hunger was the most important factor of everyday life within the walls of the Warsaw ghetto. Its symptoms consisted of crowds of beggars and corpses often lying in the streets covered with newspapers."<sup>163</sup> Several of the doctors, including Milejkowski, died before the war was over. Similar research under similar conditions was carried out in Leningrad, where doctors produced what remains to this day the most comprehensive study ever completed of "blood and the nutritional regime of the donor under wartime siege conditions."<sup>164</sup> Here too, the data gathered by Soviet physicians remains unique, as never before or after have such conditions of mass starvation existed alongside a functioning medical infrastructure.

In addition to such deliberate acts of starvation policy, most Allied analysts blamed belligerent Germany for the general crisis in European nutrition, citing institutionalized looting, unjust rationing plans, the seizure of agricultural workers for forced labor, and the physical destruction of farmland and food stocks. Some critics went

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*Leningrad: Women's Diaries, Memoirs, and Documentary Prose* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2002).

<sup>162</sup> Winick, *Hunger Disease: Studies*, vii

<sup>163</sup> *Ibid.*, 4

<sup>164</sup> Andrei Dzeniskevich, "Medical Research Institutes During the Siege" in Barber and Dzeniskevich, *Life and Death in Besieged Leningrad, 1941-44*, 88

even further by insisting that the Nazis used 'planned starvation' as a military strategy. In the words of the well-respected American anthropologist Geoffrey Bourne, "starvation and the herrenvolk walk hand in hand."<sup>165</sup> Hunger seemed the Nazis' most powerful and frightening weapon, "so deadly that even Nazi scientists of death employ it with caution lest it prove a boomerang."<sup>166</sup> Jews were especially attuned to the link between Nazi food policies and Nazi racial policies. Under the auspices of the World Jewish Council, the American Jew Boris Shub authored the short but information-packed booklet *Starvation in Europe (Made in Germany.)* In it, Shub reminded his readers that "slow starvation, if continued for long, spells a semi-barren generation and a changed ratio between the Teuton and the Slav." He recognized with remarkable prescience that "in the hands of the German state, the science of feeding has become, as never before, a powerful bludgeon for governing and dominating friend and foe alike . . . it is the race theory in action."<sup>167</sup>

Allied outrage and fear was balanced by an almost obsessive admiration of Nazi domestic food policy. British experts lauded the NSDAP's rationing scheme as effective and decisive to its military success. Within a hungry Europe, Germany was seen as a land of ample food: "the diet is adequate and any idea that the Germans are starving or are likely to starve in the near future must be dismissed as foolish."<sup>168</sup> For American Jews, outraged over the inadequate response of their government to the plight of relatives in Europe, the fact that

Germany is not hungry . . . is the most striking fact in the whole continental food picture. Projected against the European background of privation,

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<sup>165</sup> Geoffrey H. Bourne, *Starvation in Europe*, (London: G. Allen & Unwin limited, 1943), 17

<sup>166</sup> Shub, *Starvation over Europe (made in Germany)*, 59

<sup>167</sup> *Ibid.*, 9

<sup>168</sup> Bourne, *Starvation in Europe*, 123.

undernourishment and slow starvation, all the irritations that the average German endures because he cannot get his sausages, beer and cigarettes are of little lasting consequence.<sup>169</sup>

Throughout most of the war, nutritional reports confirmed that Denmark and Germany remained the best-fed countries in continental Europe; in contrast, Western and most of Central Europe experienced widespread malnourishment, while Greece, Croatia, Poland and occupied Russia had large sections of the population "suffering from severe starvation."<sup>170</sup>

As a result, neither military nor medical strategists planning for the hunger of postwar Europe expected to aid Germans. While there were occasional passing references to food aid to the defeated Axis powers, the first priority was assumed to be the civilian populations of the occupied territories. The hungry people of Africa and Asia were a dim second, and Germans were generally mentioned as the cause rather than the victims of hunger. Indeed, the Allies were explicit in their desire that the German population not be 'too well fed' after the war. In 1941 Churchill warned that "the Germans cannot starve the peoples of Europe during the war and immediately afterwards expect to live in luxury."<sup>171</sup> As the war drew on, and awareness of Nazi starvation policies increased, the Allies developed a plan for postwar Germany that was based both on a relative lack of concern for German hunger and the conviction that Germany had a well-functioning and intact food economy.

The infamous Morgenthau Plan, proposed by Roosevelt's Jewish Secretary of Treasury Henry Morgenthau Jr. and agreed upon by Churchill and FDR in the fall of

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<sup>169</sup> Shub, *Starvation over Europe (made in Germany)*, 22

<sup>170</sup> Bourne, *Starvation in Europe*, 149

<sup>171</sup> Cited in Johannes-Dieter Steinert, *Nach Holocaust und Zwangsarbeit. Britische Humanitäre Hilfe in Deutschland: die Helfer, die Befreiten und die Deutschen* (Osnabruck: Secolo, 2007), 18.

1944, proposed deliberately deindustrializing Germany and transforming the defeated country into an nation of farmers. While critics then and now have focused on the controversial goal of dismantling industry, they have largely ignored the constructive aspects of the plan: transforming previously militaristic Germans into farmers. Faced with global famine and an ethical discomfort with providing food aid to Germany, Morgenthau's plan converted Germans from food consumers to food producers. While hostile Germans interpreted this plan as a deliberate attempt at mass murder, the plan's supporters argued that "hardworking farmers would never starve."<sup>172</sup> As Morgenthau himself explained, "Germany's road to peace leads to the farm. The men and women in the German labor force can best serve themselves and the world by cultivating the German soil."<sup>173</sup> This was a plan to punish the German population, but it was more importantly intended to transform the former Nazi power's role in the global economy from that of a military and industrial power to an agricultural center. This response to global food scarcity and the threat of German appetites was rejected however almost as soon as the war was over.

Immediately after the German surrender, the first meeting of the Food and Agricultural Organization was held in Quebec in October of 1945, "at a time in which hunger persisted even in the heart of Europe, governments destroyed surplus foodstuffs, and farmers were paid to leave their fields fallow."<sup>174</sup> During the war, economists had predicted that since "food supply is an issue of great international importance in the war, it must be the central factor in postwar relief, and it may be given first place in the plans

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<sup>172</sup> Warren F. Kimball, *Swords or Ploughshares?: The Morgenthau Plan for Defeated Nazi Germany, 1943-1946* (Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1976), 25-26.

<sup>173</sup> Henry Morgenthau, *Germany is our Problem*, (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1945), 48.

<sup>174</sup> Connelly, *Fatal Misconception: The Struggle to Control World Population*, 127.

of the United Nations to establish a better world."<sup>175</sup> In fact, the centrality of food for the development of the postwar world meant not necessarily the establishment of a better world, or a less hungry one, but one dominated by American economic and political interests. Already by the end of 1946, international aid organizations organized by the United Nations including UNRAA were collapsing under the weight of unexpected demand. To fill this void, the United States took over from the ostensibly impartial UN as the global distributor of food aid, ushering in a "specific global food order, with the USA as the global controller of food trade and distribution."<sup>176</sup> This shift meant an increasing focus on German civilian hunger and a turning away from famines in non-European countries, "perhaps the earliest known precedent for the use of food aid as a means of political influence and leverage by the U.S..<sup>177</sup>

Thanks to its ambitious program for the reconstruction of Europe, the United States quickly emerged as the dominant Western power. The United States established itself as the most important producer and distributor of surplus foodstuffs; its food aid and food distribution programs established patterns of interdependency, abundance and hunger that continue to this day.<sup>178</sup> 39% of Marshall Aid distributed during the program's first year,<sup>179</sup> and more than a quarter of the total 13.5 billion dollars allotted to

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<sup>175</sup> Ibid., 122

<sup>176</sup> Harriet Friedmann, "The Political Economy of Food: The Rise and Fall of the Postwar International Food Order," *The American Journal of Sociology* 88 (1982), 250-251.

<sup>177</sup> Bentley, *Eating for Victory: Food Rationing and the Politics of Domesticity*, 170

<sup>178</sup> For more on food, globalization and the development of Western power in the Twentieth Century, see Davis, *Late Victorian Holocausts: El Niño Famines and the Making of the Third World*; Connelly, *Fatal Misconception: The Struggle to Control World Population*; Arturo Escobar, *Encountering Development: The Making and Unmaking of the Third World* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995); Christian Gerlach, "Die Welternährungskrise 1972-1975," *Geschichte und Gesellschaft*. 31, no. 4 (2005); Mitchel B. Wallerstein, *Food for War-Food for Peace: United States Food Aid in a Global Context* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1980).

<sup>179</sup> Bentley, *Eating for Victory: Food Rationing and the Politics of Domesticity*, 170

rebuilding Europe was used for food, feed and fertilizer.<sup>180</sup> Aid to Germany particularly focused on developing the country's agricultural basis, while restoring general health by donating massive quantities of food directly to the population. By supplying cattle feed to farmers, it radically improved meat and especially dairy production; by strengthening the domestic economy, the Marshall Plan also encouraged food imports as well as the improved processing of raw materials to produce fertilizer.<sup>181</sup> Most importantly for American economists, the plan created a guaranteed export market for U.S. agricultural products at a moment when agricultural productivity was exploding.<sup>182</sup> Flush with postwar prosperity, "American farmers were eager for European prosperity, as was American agricultural business."<sup>183</sup> The Marshall Plan secured American farmers access to a wide-open market, free of competition, that promised to consume their excess production for years to come.<sup>184</sup>

### **Confronting Hunger in Postwar Germany: Allies, Germans and Other Victims**

Allied expectations of hunger in occupied Europe were completely overwhelmed by the situation that greeted military and medical personnel as the war came to a close.

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<sup>180</sup> Tony Judt, *Postwar: A History of Europe since 1945* (New York: Penguin Press, 2005).

<sup>181</sup> Dr G. Thiede, "Die Ernährungshilfe für Westdeutschland von 1945/46 bis 1952/53," *Berichte Über Landwirtschaft* 32 (1954), 251.

<sup>182</sup> Shaw, *World Food Security: A History since 1945*, 34.

<sup>183</sup> Victoria De Grazia, *Irresistible Empire: America's Advance through Twentieth-Century Europe* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2005), 381.

<sup>184</sup> The United States instituted its Food for Peace policy, modeled on the Marshall plan, in 1954, as a new method of creating markets abroad for American wheat. Such programs, propped up by the global food shortages of the postwar years, transformed the USA into world's breadbasket, successfully turning Third World countries from food producers into food importers. (Harriet Friedman, "Remaking Traditions. How We Eat, What We Eat and the Changing Political Economy of Food" in Deborah Barndt, *Women Working the NAFTA Food Chain: Women, Food & Globalization* (Toronto: Second Story Press, 1999)) By 1960, "food had become a staple in Cold War diplomatic strategy. Shipments of wheat, corn, and other commodities served as symbols of American democracy and prosperity, shoring up regimes threatened by internal revolutionary movements and external Soviet support." Susan Levine, *School Lunch Politics: The Surprising History of America's Favorite Welfare Program* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 2008), 107.

Despite frequent warnings by the World Jewish Council that "the real objective [of Nazi food policy] has been nothing less than planned starvation," and that "European Jews will need special rations and the problem of feeding them will be partly medical,"<sup>185</sup> Allied staff were completely unprepared for the extremity of camp survivors' needs. Brazilian doctor and human rights activist Josuè de Castro, in his monumental postwar study of global famine *Geography of Hunger*, condemned the tremendous medical failures of the Western medical profession after the Second World War,

Western science and technique, brilliantly victorious over the forces of nature, failed almost entirely to do battle with hunger . . . the social reality of hunger stayed outside their laboratory walls. Science, then, was catastrophically unprepared for the Allied liberation of the Nazi concentration camps.<sup>186</sup>

For most of the British and American doctors rushing to work in the newly liberated camps, previous experience rehabilitating malnourished civilians had been limited to interwar work with hungry children in postwar Austria. Based on these fondly remembered relief projects, doctors expected that hungry patients would tell them that they "had come in answer to prayer . . . scientific workers will . . . be depriving themselves of one of the deepest pleasures if they miss the surprised gratitude of the unexpectedly relieved sufferers."<sup>187</sup> In contrast to the thankful, smiling children of these doctor's memories, the starved, filthy, and profoundly traumatized camp inmates of post-World War II Europe were often neither grateful nor even treatable. The primary camp in the British Zone, Bergen-Belsen, was a typically demoralizing example; Belsen inmates continued to die by the thousands long after medical aid began pouring in. The 13,000 corpses found at liberation more than doubled over the course of the next month,

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<sup>185</sup> Cited in Steinert, *Nach Holocaust und Zwangsarbeit*, 25

<sup>186</sup> Josue de Castro, *Geography of Hunger* (London: Gollancz, 1953), 17.

<sup>187</sup> Hume, "Opportunities for Nutritional Research in the Work of Relief."

as 14,000 more former inmates died of starvation, disease, and hopelessness. Particularly traumatic was the fact that initial attempts to feed these starved bodies was often itself deadly; "the first distribution of food did not bring relief but further deaths. The survivor's bodies were in such appalling condition that their weakened digestive systems could not handle the sudden intake of food."<sup>188</sup> A British doctor remembered with shame and frustration that "only a fraction of the men and women who lived and died in these camps were seen by Allied personnel, and most of them were seen at a time when scientific observation was difficult."<sup>189</sup> As one doctor ominously reminded his readers, "the figures [for medical treatment statistics] do not on the whole represent the most severe cases. The thinnest patients died earlier and had been too ill to be weighed."<sup>190</sup>

Expecting to address issues of avitaminosis rather than incapacitating starvation, doctor after doctor confirmed that "the first impression that these patients made on us was simply devastating."<sup>191</sup> Allied reports on camp liberations are full of grotesque and disturbing scenes that challenged rather than encouraged empathy. One of the first British Press articles about Belsen, published in May of 1945, described a world where starvation had completely destroyed all humanity and individuality: "when they began to carry round the bowls of soup a horrible animal-like clamor broke out. Skinny arms were held out, blankets fell back, and naked, scarecrow figures flung themselves forward in

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<sup>188</sup> Sarah Kavanaugh, *ORT, the Second World War and the Rehabilitation of Holocaust Survivors* (London; Portland: Vallentine Mitchell, 2008), 61.

<sup>189</sup> University of Cambridge, *Studies of Undernutrition, Wuppertal, 1946-9*, (London: H. M. Stationery Off., 1951), 44.

<sup>190</sup> P. L. Mollison, "Observations of Cases of Starvation at Belsen " *British Medical Journal*. (January 5, 1946).

<sup>191</sup> Adolf Hottinger, *Hungerkrankheit, Hungerödem, Hungertuberkulose; historische, klinische, pathophysiologische und pathologisch-anatomische Studien und Beobachtungen an ehemaligen Insassen aus Konzentrationslagern*, (Basel: B. Schwabe, 1948), 32.

their beds."<sup>192</sup> In Mauthausen, Auschwitz, Dachau, and Buchenwald, doctors were haunted by "skeleton[s] that talked back . . . these skeletons that the Germans left behind them."<sup>193</sup>

Initially Doctors nurtured great hopes for the research possibilities presented by liberated Nazi camps. In particular, the early liberation of Bergen-Belsen seemed to offer British nutritionists an unexpected opportunity to apply new famine-treatment techniques developed during their limited research on the Bengal famine, specifically the 'F-Treatment,' an emergency concentrated food substitute. In central Europe, however, these treatments proved a complete failure. Patients refused the F-treatment, finding it too sweet for their ravaged taste buds.<sup>194</sup> An angry and overburdened staff could not force former inmates to eat the sweet paste-like substance, and could only watch as they continued to starve to death.<sup>195</sup> Feeding programs within former concentration camps, where most survivors remained due to the difficulties of transporting thousands of starving men and women, were impaired by massive technical and organizational restrictions as well as the very severity of inmates' hunger. British Dr. Lipscomb described his work in Bergen-Belsen immediately after liberation, sadly recollecting that it was

one thing to plan diet scales and another to ensure that the right food actually reached the internees. In addition to difficulties in obtaining supplies and cooking them, distribution was hampered by the morale of many of the internees having been so lowered by captivity that they would steal the food for themselves or their

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<sup>192</sup> Cited in Steinert, *Nach Holocaust und Zwangsarbeit*, 61

<sup>193</sup> *Ibid.*, 59

<sup>194</sup> Vernon, *Hunger: A Modern History*, 152

<sup>195</sup> Doctors were angered by the fact that starving patients remained "very particular about their diet," with culturally specific ideas of 'taste.' Eastern Europeans, accustomed to pickled foods, found the Indian-specific flavors of the F-ration foreign and unpalatable. Mollison, "Observations of Cases of Starvation at Belsen," *British Medical Journal*. (January 5, 1946). At Bergen-Belsen, mortality increased in those patients given the F-ration.

compatriots outside the hospital, and by the lack of conscience among the enemy personnel who had to be employed.<sup>196</sup>

Such unexpected psychological and medical difficulties with treating concentration camp survivors discouraged medical research. Eventually, frustrated and demoralized, the Allied doctors and nutritionists who had flocked to Germany to study the mass starvation of inmates turned their attention to the more tractable and medically controllable bodies of German civilians. A group of Cambridge doctors in the Department of Experimental Medicine chose German children "to make investigations into the effects which the undernutrition was having on the health and physique of the people."<sup>197</sup> Working with orphans, nutritionists placed these scrawny children on a high-bread diet to test the nutritional impacts of white and wheat breads.<sup>198</sup> An even larger group of British doctors had arrived in occupied Germany planning to study the rehabilitation of former inmates of Bergen-Belsen. They realized almost immediately upon arrival that 'experimentation' on their planned subjects was neither feasible nor ethical. In search of a different group of people on whom to apply their hunger theories and treatments, they turned to the local Wuppertal civilian population. This became the single largest Allied study of German civilian nutrition during occupation.<sup>199</sup>

The success of such studies encouraged their proliferation. Germany's reviled status as the cause of mass hunger and the war meant that there were fewer restrictions and less international oversight on nutritional research done on the civilian population. The willingness of the local populations to participate in such studies met an international

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<sup>196</sup> F. Lipscomb, "Medical Aspects of Belsen Concentration Camp." *The Lancet* (August 9, 1945).

<sup>197</sup> R. A. McCance and Elsie M. Widdowson, *Breads, White and Brown: Their Place in Thought and Social History*, (Philadelphia,: Lippincott, 1956), 120.

<sup>198</sup> Ibid. Unfortunately, the children responded equally well to the diet regardless of the sort of bread, leaving scientists to turn to baby rats as better experimental subjects.

<sup>199</sup> University of Cambridge, *Studies of Undernutrition, Wuppertal, 1946-9*

medical community primed to study hunger to make postwar Germany a favored testing-ground for theories of diet and nutrition. This ironically meant that German civilians received more medical attention, and ultimately more Western aid, than any other hungry European population. This almost accidental medical attention toward the German civilian population encouraged American and British concern with the hunger of postwar Germans.

This shift in medical interest was also tied to a growing political recognition of the importance of occupied Germany for postwar reconstruction. Hoyt Price and Carl Schorske, hired by the U.S. Council of Foreign Relations to author a report on postwar Germany, claimed that "there will not be economic or political health in Europe until we have faced and dealt with the German problem."<sup>200</sup> Ironically, the very barbarity and scale of Nazi crimes increased desire to care for the Germans; fear bred a desire to feed. Early Allied advocates for increasing food rations in Germany assumed that the damage inflicted by a well-fed population paled against the potential threat of a hungry one. U.S. government reports on the state of occupied Germany warned that "hunger stupefies minds of people, and only animal urges remain," leaving postwar Germans in "a generally psychopathological state."<sup>201</sup> In August of 1946, the British Zone Review warned its readers that "not only have twelve years of Nazi propoganda retracted the Germans' thinking capacity but they are now hungry, and hungry men cannot think normally."<sup>202</sup> Allied occupation officials admitted that

it would probably be too much to say that an adequate food supply will guarantee the establishment of democratic system of government in Germany. Contrarily, it is not likely that the seed of democracy will take root and thrive amid hunger,

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<sup>200</sup> Hoyt Price and Carl E. Schorske, *The Problem of Germany*, (New York, 1947), xi.

<sup>201</sup> William Langer, *The Famine in Germany*; (Washington: U.S. Govt. print. off., 1946), 23.

<sup>202</sup> Cited in Steinert, *Nach Holocaust und Zwangsarbeit*, 152

flagging energy and failing health. . . the importance to the peace of the world of adequate food now [in occupied Germany] is tremendous.<sup>203</sup>

Similarly, the occupation military officials, after originally promoting a harsh food policy in defeated Germany, quickly realized that their lives would be easier if the former enemy population was well-fed. Organizations working to improve the care of Jews in Germany complained that "if the military have some food at their disposal, they will naturally be prejudiced in favor of sending it into Germany, even if this is not absolutely necessary, because they will suppose that this will tend to simplify their own administrative problems."<sup>204</sup>

The very proximity of Germans to the Holocaust and the horrors of their concentration camps gave their hunger particular political resonance. American and British philanthropists deliberately used the language of Nazi Germany's genocidal policies against Europe's Jews to plea for increased rations for the German civilian population. OSS analyst Representative William Langer declared that "America has become an accomplice in one of the most staggering crimes ever committed against humanity."<sup>205</sup> Speaking before congress in 1946, he reminded his listeners of

the grim pictures of the piled-up bodies uncovered by the American and British armies, and [how] our hearts have rung with pity at the sight of such emaciation . . . yet now, to our utter horror, we discover that our own policies have merely spread these same conditions even more widely.<sup>206</sup>

Eisenhower demanded an improvement in the feeding of German civilians, warning of the consequences of having "the American flag flying over nation-wide Buchenwalds,"<sup>207</sup>

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<sup>203</sup> U.S.-British Bipartite Food and Agriculture Panel, "Food and Agriculture: U.S. - U.K. Zones of Germany," 1947.

<sup>204</sup> Cited in Steinert, *Nach Holocaust und Zwangsarbeit*, 19

<sup>205</sup> Langer, *The Famine in Germany*, 9

<sup>206</sup> *Ibid.*, 10

<sup>207</sup> Cited in Bentley, *Eating for Victory: Food Rationing and the Politics of Domesticity*, 150.

while the British media, in an article titled 'Feed the Brutes,' demanded aid for "those pitiful ambling Belsens which move along the highways of eastern Germany."<sup>208</sup> Dwight McDonald claimed with disturbing hyperbole that "the Nazis were less hypocritical. When they decided to kill the Jews of Europe, they organized mass executions by gas chambers."<sup>209</sup> He went on to assert that German civilian deaths, blamed on the barbarity of the Russians, were "already on a scale comparable to Maidenenk, Oswiecim [Auschwitz], and Belsen."<sup>210</sup> As historian Matthew Frank has argued in an article on the emergence of what he terms a 'new morality' after the war, during the postwar years, British journalists

took an already all-too familiar set of images connected with post-war suffering – the cattle truck, the wizened monkey-like faces of the starving and the hopelessness of humanity cast adrift in central Europe – and placed them in a German context. The former enemy became . . . a victim in its own right.<sup>211</sup>

Even amongst those who had been previously unsympathetic toward German civilians, the tide eventually turned in favor of the former enemy. Occupation soldiers, who had been particularly hostile to Germans, gradually began reporting a different country from the one they had seen upon first arriving. Initial descriptions of the population focused on the disturbing plumpness of civilian bodies and the abundance of private food stores. With the exception of destroyed major cities, German villages and towns seemed to be in strikingly good repair. For those soldiers who had participated in the liberation of camps often just miles from these well-kept towns, the contrast was particularly horrifying. In their eyes, German fatness became equated with being a

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<sup>208</sup> Cited in Matthew Frank, "The New Morality-Victor Gollancz, 'Save Europe Now' and the German Refugee Crisis, 1945-46," *Twentieth Century British History* 17, no. 2 (2006), 243.

<sup>209</sup> Dwight Macdonald, *Shall Europe Starve?* (New York: Politics, 1945), 10.

<sup>210</sup> *Ibid.*, 8

<sup>211</sup> Frank, "The New Morality-Victor Gollancz, 'Save Europe Now' and the German Refugee Crisis, 1945-46," 235

perpetrator, and it was opposed to the skinniness of victimhood. This hostile attitude toward Germans and general denial of their hunger was replaced by sympathetic descriptions of hungry blond children and pretty young women begging for chocolate. American newspapers ran ads exhorting their readers to donate especially to German civilians:

only food will save them. Your relatives and friends in the starving countries of the Far East, Europe, British Isles and the American Occupied Zone of Germany (exclusive of Berlin) need food NOW more than ever before. Send them help with these nourishing food parcels. Do it today!<sup>212</sup>

Indeed, almost all food packages that Americans sent to Europe went to Germany. Pro-German propaganda in the United States and Britain and an increasingly positive relationship between occupation forces and German civilians, often described as more courteous, attractive and civilized than former camp inmates, created a crucial shift in Allied attitude. British news coverage, prompted by the high-profile Victor Gollancz, pushed for a change in food policy that would increase rations to all German civilians regardless of previous political activity.<sup>213</sup> Western Allies ceased seeing Germans as a diseased people infected with the guilt of murdering millions, and instead as suffering from a hunger that linked them to those same millions.<sup>214</sup>

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<sup>212</sup> "Die Brücke der Menschlichkeit: ausländische Liebesgabensendungen für US-Zone" BArch R 86/3585

<sup>213</sup> Steinert, *Nach Holocaust und Zwangsarbeit*, 148 The eccentric and controversial British Jewish philanthropist Victor Gollancz was one of the first voices to publicly demand food aid for postwar Germans, trumpeting in countless books, pamphlets and speeches that "the plain fact is that . . . we are starving the German people. (Gollancz, *Leaving them to their Fate: The Ethics of Starvation*, 4.) For more on the importance of Gollancz for policy in the British zone, see John Farquharson, "'Emotional but Influential': Victor Gollancz, Richard Stokes and the British Zone of Germany, 1945-9," *Journal of Contemporary History* 22, no. 3 (Jul., 1987), 501-519.

<sup>214</sup> Ivo Geikie-Cobb, *Germany: Disease and Treatment*, (London: Hutchinson, 1945), 132. This focus on German hunger after the war is repeated in the historiography. As the historian Johannes Steinert has noted, the few historical studies of foreign aid to postwar Europe focus almost exclusively on aid provided to Germans rather than to camp survivors. Interestingly, selective memory goes in both directions; among the German population, American and Swiss aid is remembered, whereas British aid, though it began far earlier than its American counterpart, has been largely forgotten. Steinert, *Nach Holocaust und Zwangsarbeit*, 199.

In the face of this generosity by the United States and Great Britain, it is important to remember that the two occupying powers who had suffered the most at the hands of Nazi Germany, France and the Soviet Union, were not only financially strapped but had populations filled with personal animosity toward the Germans. This animosity was returned by a German population who feared revenge from the French and Russians in a way they did not from the British and Americans. In turn, France was little involved in the waves of international aid directed at hungry postwar Germans, while the Soviets developed different symbolic and economic meanings for the category of German hunger.<sup>215</sup>

The French Zone, the most historically understudied of the zones, was more similar in popular perception and in policy to the Soviet Zone than the other Western Zones. Quality of life here was the worst and rations the lowest of the four zones, and mutual distrust and animosity marked local governance.<sup>216</sup> However, the French Zone was, along with the British, quickly absorbed into the American-dominated Western Zone or Bizone, and its legacy in the development of West Germany minimized. In contrast, Soviet attitudes toward the German population, particularly the inhabitants of their zone (the Soviet Occupation Zone or SBZ), have been the subject of a substantial amount of study.<sup>217</sup> Unfortunately, this scholarship has treated Soviet policy in occupied

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<sup>215</sup> For an excellent general discussion of the shift in Allied perceptions of Germans from perpetrators to victims, see Atina Grossmann's *Jews, Germans, and Allies: Close Encounters in Occupied Germany* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007), especially pages 15-47.

<sup>216</sup> Edgar Wolfrum, *Französische Besatzungspolitik und deutsche Sozialdemokratie: Politische Neuansätze in der "Vergessenen Zone" bis zur Bildung des Südweststaates 1945-1952* (Düsseldorf: Droste, 1991); F. Roy Willis, *The French in Germany, 1945-1949* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1962); Karl-Heinz Rothenberger, *Die Hungerjahre nach dem Zweiten Weltkrieg*.

<sup>217</sup> See Dirk Spilker, *East German Leadership and the Division of Germany: Patriotism and Propaganda 1945-1953* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006); Albert Lisse, *Handlungsspielräume deutscher Verwaltungsstellen bei den Konfiskationen in der SBZ 1945-1949: zum Verhältnis zwischen deutschen Verwaltungsstellen und der sowjetischen Militäradministration in Deutschland (SMAD)* (Stuttgart: Steiner,

Germany as something largely unconnected to the larger context of the war and postwar Soviet development. The disappointing lack of scholarship on the postwar reconstruction of the USSR and on late Stalinism more generally is a substantial hindrance for scholars of the early GDR and of postwar Germany more generally.<sup>218</sup> Nonetheless, several general observations can help contextualize Soviet food policies and general attitudes toward Germans after the war.

Unlike Britain and especially the United States, the postwar USSR was a physically and economically devastated country, having suffered more civilian and military deaths than any other participant in the war.<sup>219</sup> The population of the western regions of the country had suffered rape and mass murder at the hands of German soldiers, as well as the willful destruction of entire villages and huge swathes of agricultural land by retreating armies. The Soviet war against Germany had involved a drastic curtailing of agricultural production on a scale incomparable with that of the other Allies. With men and horses recruited to the front, women made up 82% of farm workers by 1944 and food production had sunk to less than 50% of its prewar levels.<sup>220</sup> While the

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2003); Bernd Bonwetsch, *Sowjetische Politik in der SBZ 1945-1949: Dokumente zur Tätigkeit der Propagandaverwaltung (Informationsverwaltung) der SMAD unter Sergej Tjul'Panow* (Bonn: J.H.W. Dietz Nachf., 1998); Wilfried Loth, *Die Sowjetunion und die Deutsche Frage: Studien zur Sowjetischen Deutschlandpolitik von Stalin bis Chruschtschow* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2007).

<sup>218</sup> Donald Filtzer is one of the few historians working on the Late Stalinism and the Soviet postwar period. His work has highlighted the centrality of hunger and food supplies for the USSR during the German 'hunger years.' See his book *Soviet Workers and Late Stalinism: Labour and the Restoration of the Stalinist System after World War II*.

<sup>219</sup> Britain was slower to adopt the reconciliatory, sympathetic attitude toward Germany than the United States. Not only had Britain suffered more at the hands of the Germans than had the Americans, but the postwar British Labor-led government actually expanded the war-time rationing system partially to fund aid to occupied Germany. This was controversial within Britain, as people complained that they were going hungry to feed the Nazis. British dock workers regularly protested the food shipments to Germans, before Victor Gollancz' propaganda on German children won British laborers to their cause. In the USSR as well, Stalin's decision to send shipments of grain to occupied Germany caused anger and scattered protests amongst hungry workers. Filtzer, *Soviet Workers and Late Stalinism: Labour and the Restoration of the Stalinist System after World War II*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 47-48.

<sup>220</sup> Gregory L. Freeze, *Russia: A History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 330.

siege of Leningrad with its more than a million victims along with the millions of Soviet POWs deliberately starved to death in German camps are the most dramatic examples of Soviet starvation deaths at the hands of the Germans, the civilian population at large suffered tremendously from widespread scarcity and hunger both during and immediately after the war.

While the victory of the Soviet army over the Nazis resulted in an impressive upsurge in morale, this positive spirit rapidly began to crumble as the catastrophic harvest of 1946 ushered in the beginning of a two-year food crisis, a food shortage that "affected workers in all industries, regions and income groups, so much so that some not only went hungry, they did not survive."<sup>221</sup> This postwar famine cost the lives of between 1 and 1.5 million Russians and caused sickness, societal disintegration and mass displacement.<sup>222</sup> The extremity of the postwar food crisis ultimately forced Stalin to delay the elimination of rationing, something he had planned to accomplish as early as 1946. Nonetheless, in 1948 the war-ravaged USSR became the first large European country to abolish rationing. Contrary to popular expectations, the end of rationing did not mean the end of food shortages; it was not until 1951 that food sales finally exceeded their prewar quantity, and periodic localized food shortages continued to haunt the vast country for decades.<sup>223</sup> None of these developments encouraged a special Soviet concern over or empathy with German hunger.

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<sup>221</sup> Filtzer, *Soviet Workers and Late Stalinism: Labour and the Restoration of the Stalinist System after World War II*, 45.

<sup>222</sup> Filtzer argues that the famine was not caused by natural calamity but state policy, which addressed food shortages by curtailing consumption rather than releasing stores of foodstuffs.

<sup>223</sup> Julie Hessler, *A Social History of Soviet Trade: Trade Policy, Retail Practices, and Consumption, 1917-1953* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004), 309.

The Soviet government was tremendously concerned about the political consequences of widespread hunger and the global food shortage, but these concerns were framed within a larger Soviet history of frequent and devastating famines and food scarcity. Like the other Western Allies and the Axis powers, Stalin had relied on hunger propaganda to rally his population and to contextualize wartime scarcity and hardship. However, after the war, the hunger that he chose to emphasize was that of starving Eastern Europeans rather than of the recent enemy. When the Soviet military leadership did turn to the problem of German hunger, it was couched in a pragmatic, rather than moralistic, terms: Germans must be better fed in order to improve their productivity, as well as to ensure their allegiance to Socialism.

These early tensions between the Allied nations, and between the Allied powers and occupied Germans, established the framework for the Cold War. The indomitable former president Herbert Hoover, meeting with the French immediately after the end of the war, wrote in his diary: "I am confident that if we wish to save western civilization it must come from stopping famine in western Europe first . . . this area west of the iron curtain must have preference."<sup>224</sup> An increasing economic and emotional receptiveness to German suffering among Americans and the British contrasted with the French and Soviets, who were pragmatically more preoccupied with addressing scarcity within their own borders than their respective occupation zones. These different attitudes toward German hunger underlay early differences in the occupying forces' policies in their respective zones. In the aftermath of the Second World War and the Holocaust, German hunger was neither preordained nor apolitical. A larger international focus on the emerging global food crisis, as well as a Western shift in interest from the hunger of the

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<sup>224</sup> Bentley, *Eating for Victory: Food Rationing and the Politics of Domesticity*, 168

victims of Nazism to that of the German civilian population, validated, echoed and confirmed a widespread and pre-existing German narrative of victimization and redemption through hunger.

### Chapter 3

#### **Realizing Their Fate: Hunger and the Creation of a Postwar Identity in Occupied Germany**

On February 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1947, Dr. Heinrich Wulf was called to the bedside of 49-year-old Henriette Michel by her worried sister. Henriette lay huddled in her cot; according to the doctor's report, "she was completely, literally, only skin and bones; she could no longer speak from weakness, she could only gasp." Her sister explained to the doctor that Henriette, although previously healthy, had taken to bed three weeks ago, begun rejecting the food that her sister brought to her, and refusing to see a doctor,

instead wanting only to die, so that the hunger would finally cease. When I told Ms. M that she had to be taken immediately to the hospital she sat up and coughed out with her last bit of strength: 'that is precisely what I want to avoid, in order that the hunger cease. Let me die here!' She had repeatedly said to her sister 'if only one morning I would not open my eyes [i.e. die]. We are simply starving here!'<sup>225</sup>

The doctor's diagnosis of 'hunger-disease'<sup>226</sup> resulted in the immediate application of heart strengtheners and the assigning of emergency rations. However, by the time the ambulance had arrived to take her forcibly to a hospital, Henriette was already dead. The disturbing story of Henriette Michel's death was meticulously recorded by her Cologne doctor in order to file it with the Allied forces; her death was to become part of the

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<sup>225</sup> "betr: Meldung über Hungerkrankheit" Historisches Archiv der Stadt Köln 646 # 6

<sup>226</sup> *Hungerkrankheit*, or 'hunger-disease,' was medically equivalent to the more formal category of Dystrophy. Because hunger, even starvation, is not a disease but an affliction, such diagnoses were in fact descriptions of groups of symptoms rather than an actual sickness.

endless battle on the part of the German medical profession to improve the rations of the civilian population.

The two unmarried Michel sisters shared an unheated room in the basement of Cologne's Leostrasse 31, where they had both been employed in the strenuous physical labor of rebuilding the destroyed city. Single, and apparently only with one another to care for, they seemed paradigmatic examples of the *Trümmerfrau*, or rubble-woman, who was so iconic for Germany's reconstruction. The misery, poverty and above all the hopelessness that defined the daily lives of these women frame the scene of Henriette coughing out her life on a thin mattress in her chilly basement apartment. The provisions that her sister brought her were surely meager, bad-tasting and monotonous, her life dreary, and the prospects for a bright future small – or, as she described their situation, 'we are simply starving.' The role of choice in Henriette's death is difficult to determine: hunger was part of her daily life, as it was for many Germans at this time. However, the distinction between hunger and starvation blurred at the moment when, weakened and desperate, she took to bed and refused the food of her sister and the care of the medical profession. The winter of 1946-47 was one of the coldest in years, and food supplies were of a particularly poor quality. Henriette cannot be blamed for losing hope as she huddled in the darkness of her room. The misery of her existence, and the suffering of her last weeks, is not lessened by the deliberation with which she chose to meet what she was convinced was her unavoidable fate – death by starvation.<sup>227</sup>

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<sup>227</sup> The belief that hunger inevitably led to death was common amongst Germans in all four zones, particularly during times of extreme cold and restricted food supplies. Countless civilians wrote letters to local and zonal authorities complaining about their rations and claiming that their lives were at risk. For several such letters see Landesarchiv Berlin B Rep 012 # 131.

Henriette Michel was one of the hundreds of thousands of widowed and single German women whose lives were dictated by cycles of hunger, exhausting physical labor, and hopelessness. What set Henriette apart was not her life, but her death. Rather than becoming one of the many anonymous dead of these years, Henriette Michel's story was set down in careful and sympathetic prose by a local doctor, who narrated her final hours with empathetic horror. These notes were taken in such detail not because her biography or the level of her suffering was exceptional; rather, she was one of the extremely rare cases of otherwise healthy adult Germans who starved to death during the Occupation. (Hers is one of only two cases in the file labeled 'Hunger-Deaths' for the district of Cologne, 1945-1949.)<sup>228</sup> There was a particular political import in finding deaths by starvation during this time; such cases were at the heart of an ongoing struggle between the population and the occupying forces over the quantity and quality of German hunger after the war. The military agencies that controlled German daily life, restricted by political and material limitations, were unable to meet the demands of the civilian population. German doctors thus dedicated themselves to establishing the scale of civilian hunger, as the better documented and more dramatic the hunger, the more aid and foodstuffs would be allotted.

The impact of diet on general health, and particularly mortality, is difficult to pinpoint, particularly in cases where there is a steady but inadequate food supply (in medical terms, malnourishment rather than starvation.) Many diseases, including

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<sup>228</sup> The other case was of a returned POW who was unable to find his family. He wandered through the region for days without anyone offering him assistance. Finally, he simply curled up next to the train tracks and died. His corpse was found the next day. These two deaths – a single middle-aged woman who died by hunger-strike, and a man lost, depressed and without family and friends – are ‘typical’ for German ‘hunger-deaths.’ In a food economy largely dependent upon networks, connections, and semi-legal or illegal exchange, non-locals, the isolated and the lonely were most at risk.

tuberculosis and influenza, are more deadly if the patient is poorly fed. Accidental injuries and deaths, often at the workplace, increase due to weakness caused by hunger. And pregnancy, childbirth, and infancy all are far more dangerous when paired with inadequate diets. Most civilian deaths that took place in occupied Germany could be attributed to such indirect causes. However, occupation authorities did not accept such secondary 'hunger-deaths' as evidence that hunger existed on the massive scale claimed by German doctors. Instead, they demanded statistical evidence of starvation. Despite frequent assertions to the contrary, this evidence proved remarkably difficult for the German medical profession to provide. This is the reason that Dr. Wulf took such an interest in the life and death of Henriette Michel. Both her death and its documentation expose the centrality and complexity of hunger for Germans during the Hunger Years.

The centrality of hunger for the postwar era meant that almost as soon as the war was over, Germans began describing this time as the 'Hunger Years.' Men and women in all four zones experienced their collective and individual hunger as inseparable from military defeat, reconstruction, denazification, and all the other conceptual framings that marked these years as the transition between a Nazi dictatorship and a capitalist or socialist society. In postwar Germany, hunger functioned as a visual, medical and experiential sign, marking Germans variously as victims, non-Nazis, as innocent and morally righteous, as racially and culturally German, and (in the West) as anti-Communists. Following the British historian James Vernon, this chapter explores "the very slipperiness of hunger as a category, for the modern proliferation of terms signifying its various states – ranging from starvation to malnourishment and dieting – bear witness

to its changing forms and meanings."<sup>229</sup> As an experiential category, hunger is present in every society, for every individual, every day, but its scope and its meaning have an infinite range of interpretations. Occupied Germany was a time and place that was discursively defined through its intimate relationship to hunger.

Neither absolute nor self-evident, German hunger had different meanings and served different purposes for German civilians, former victims of Nazism, and for the Allied forces, both Western and Soviet. It had specific and historically contingent meanings, causes, and solutions; and it was integrated in radically different ways into the national consciousness of East and West Germany. By fixating on their hunger at the expense of all other medical, political, and ethical concerns, Germans actively inserted themselves into larger transnational debates over human rights, development theory and modernity. Cast as definitional to German-ness, hunger provided a way for Germans to create a community out of a defeated and divided nation, forging continuity with a common German past within an ethically appropriate and internationally acceptable framework.<sup>230</sup> In their own scrawny bodies, Germans saw an expression of their own

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<sup>229</sup> Vernon, *Hunger: A Modern History*, 8.

<sup>230</sup> Within Germany, the general consensus that the best solution to German hunger was increased Western food aid had strong historical precedent, confirming a long narrative whereby Germans were hungry, and Americans fed them. The pivotal figure in this collective memory of hunger was former U.S. president Hoover, who had provided food aid to European children, especially German, Belgian and Austrian ones, after World War I. Now, twenty years later, in the face of new and equally as severe food shortages, when hunger seemed almost too much to bear, "the hopes of the unified [Western] zone populations cling to the sheet anchor that is called Herbert Hoover." "Umwertung aller Kalorien-Werte: ein Mann kam aus Amerika" *Der Spiegel* (February 1947), 2. The importance of child feeding programs to Herbert Hoover's vision of American global power and foreign aid provision has long been recognized by political historians. See for example Leo Chavez, *Herbert Hoover and Food Relief: an Application of American Ideology*, 1976); Suda Lorena Bane and Ralph Haswell Lutz, *Organization of American Relief in Europe, 1948-1949, Including Negotiations Leading Up to the Establishment of the Office of Director General of Relief at Paris by the Allied and Associated Powers*; (Stanford University, Calif., London: Stanford University Press, 1943); Frank M. Surface and Raymond L. Bland, *American Food in the World War and Reconstruction Period; Operations of the Organizations Under the Direction of Herbert Hoover, 1914 to 1924*, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1931).

suffering, as their connection to Nazism and the horrors of the war melted away with their excess flesh.

### **Claiming Victimhood: German Bodies as Hungry Bodies**

The end of the war is remembered in Germany as the *Zusammenbruch*, a total and devastating collapse. In the aftermath of the war and the Holocaust, the German past had been officially gutted of all positive force, leaving a population without a center, and with empty bellies. At the same time, this emptiness offered Germans a remarkable opportunity.<sup>231</sup> As I explored in the previous chapter, the end of Europe's Second World War was a moment and a place primed to recognize, fear, and empathize with starvation. The use of hunger as a weapon by both Axis and Allied forces during the war, the unprecedented scale of wartime hunger and civilian famine, drops in agricultural productivity and a shift away from colonial and toward globalized trade relations, along with global food shortages, all meant that the Allied forces had been predicting postwar hunger since the early days of the war. At the same time, a widespread belief that hunger resulted in political unrest and revolution, and that it was the cause of the rise of Nazism, meant that German hunger was particularly important in international postwar discourse.

The liberation of Nazi concentration camps created a new scale for measuring hunger, which came to be associated with the most grotesque crimes of the Third Reich, particularly the mass starvation of Jews and Soviet POWs. The Holocaust's new vocabulary and images of hunger shaped the development of the postwar food economy

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<sup>231</sup> The centrality of postwar hunger for the German civilian population repeated the pattern of the First World War. There as well the end of the war had not been the decisive break with hunger, which instead continued and even worsened in peacetime. Hunger, rather than military engagement or political activity, defined German chronologies.

and global food aid programs.<sup>232</sup> In response, the 'guilty collective' of Germany's civilian population seized upon hunger's ability to transform its wearer's body into, in the words of literary scholar Maud Ellmann, a "living dossier of its discontents" where the "injustices of power are encoded in the savage hieroglyphics of its sufferings."<sup>233</sup> This chapter focuses on the emergence of a collective narrative of German hunger, one rooted in the various German traumas of the twentieth century, and one which made German-ness itself synonymous with the constant threat, and paradoxical embracing, of hunger. Henriette Michel chose to go hungry not only because she was miserable, but also because she believed that being a postwar German meant, by definition, to starve. The death throes of the Nazi state, calling to arms children, the handicapped and the elderly to resist invading forces, had invoked the threatening specter of future hunger as its final act. The Allies, Nazi propaganda had assured the population over and over again, had only one plan upon victory: to starve the Germans. Better, Hitler assured his listeners, to die the noble death of a patriotic soldier than an ignoble and squalid death by hunger. With the final collapse of the Third Reich, hunger emerged just as the Nazis had predicted, but on a scale and within a context even Hitler could not have predicted. A fearful population recognized sensations that they had never been allowed to forget, that

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<sup>232</sup> Photos and film footage taken during the liberation of concentration camps formed public conception of Hitler's crimes. Such images, showing heaps of emaciated corpses and inmates with vacant eyes and no flesh on their bones were graphic illustrations of the Nazi use of hunger as a weapon of mass murder and destruction. However, they were in a sense misleading. Such piles of starved bodies scattered through half-abandoned camps were not typical for the perpetration of Holocaust on the whole, but rather a product of the rapid collapse of the Third Reich in its final months. Cornelia Brink, *Ikonen der Vernichtung: öffentlicher Gebrauch von Fotografien aus nationalsozialistischen Konzentrationslagern nach 1945* (Berlin: Akademie, 1998); Habbo Knoch, *Die Tat als Bild: Fotografien des Holocaust in der deutschen Erinnerungskultur* (Hamburg: Hamburger Edition, 2001.)

<sup>233</sup> Maud Ellmann, *The Hunger Artists: Starving, Writing, and imprisonment* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993), 17.

they had been called upon to embrace, and against which they had been waging a 'Total War.'

The emotional valence of hunger made it particularly appealing in post-Nazi Germany. German hunger was an answer to early accusation of collective guilt, a form of internalized denazification, and an embodied process of 'coming to terms with the past.' Cast as the great equalizer, hunger promised to wipe the slate clean at the same time that it provided a language of communality both familiar and powerful.<sup>234</sup> An affliction of too little, rather than too much, it is impossible to blame the hungry for their condition; indeed, the very existence of hungry bodies implies an external source of responsibility and therefore of blame.<sup>235</sup> The classic symptoms of hunger – skinny body, deep-set eyes, protruding joints, weakness, apathy, and depression – are non-threatening and passive, making their bearer the opposite of the powerful, aggressive and expansive Aryan bodies of Nazi ideology. In the postwar era, obsessed with fears of food shortages and demographic collapse, both Allies and Germans agreed that hunger was Germany's 'fate.'<sup>236</sup> Allied government officials saw German hunger as an unavoidable consequence of the economic and physical destruction of Central Europe; military occupation forces, former victims of Nazism and German Communists saw hunger as a just punishment and an unavoidable reality; German civilians, doctors and politicians, on the other hand, cast their own hunger as a redemptive and constructive expression of collective identity.

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<sup>234</sup> See Jenny Edkins, *Whose Hunger? Concepts of Famine, Practices of Aid* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000) for an excellent discussion of the ways in which modern discourse on hunger and famine have hinged upon its depoliticization and its absolute moral valence. (To be hungry is bad, and to give food to the hungry is good.)

<sup>235</sup> Vernon traces the development of societal attitudes toward the hungry, changing from accusations of laziness to a Malthusian celebration of the weeding out of the weak to a consensus that hunger is an unnecessary and undesirable evil. Vernon, *Hunger: A Modern History*, 369

<sup>236</sup> See Matthew Connelly's recent book *Fatal Misconception* for an excellent discussion of the politics of twentieth century demographic fears.

Hunger was something that transcended individual bodily experience, becoming an attribute of simply living through the Hunger Years. It served, in its universality and fluidity, as a sort of communal glue, linking Germans together and distinguishing them from an external and hostile world. Hunger separated Germans from the Allies, Displaced Persons, and former forced laborers who lived alongside them in the ravaged postwar landscape, and whom many Germans accused of having more to eat than they did. Hunger at the same time linked German civilians with the victims of Nazi barbarism. These assertions of hunger provided a way for large segments of the German population to engage with the language of the Allied condemnation of their nation's past, enabling them to accuse their own accusers.

Adeptly applying a new postwar language of 'human rights' and 'crimes against humanity,' Germans asserted their right to have adequate food, not as Germans, certainly not as Aryans or even Europeans, but rather as humans and 'citizens of the world.'<sup>237</sup> Speaking to the 'conscience of the world' and the 'hearts of our fellow human beings,' such appeals illustrated the level of German suffering and displayed German mastery over concepts of human rights and international norms. According to this logic, as long as German hunger existed, it exposed the mockery of Allied assertions of a common and equal humanity, claims that the Allies used to distinguish themselves from the Nazis. According to the leaders of postwar Germany, topping the list of 'laws of humanity' was the right to satiety. These Germans claimed that the very core of European civilization rested on the West's ability to adequately feed this defeated population. Taking up the

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<sup>237</sup> See Atina Grossmann's unpublished article manuscript "Grams, Calories, and Food: Languages of Victimization, Entitlement, and Human Rights in Occupied Germany 1945-1949" for a complementary discussion of the human rights claims made by Displaced Persons, particularly non-German Jews, during the Hunger Years.

language of the new hunger relief programs of the postwar era, an amateur economist living in Dresden wrote to his zonal authorities claiming that eating to the point of being full (*das Sattessen*) was "the most basic, natural and self-evident right that any human being can demand; it comes before even that most democratic of rights, the right for personal freedom."<sup>238</sup> A public resolution from the German medical profession from mid-1947 informed the world that "the majority of the German population lives currently from rations that are only equivalent to a third of the internationally recognized minimal requirements,"<sup>239</sup> while a Düsseldorf article from a year later applied the language of the Nuremberg trials to claim that "what the German *Volk* has been forced to endure for the past several years is, in the truest sense of the word, a crime against humanity."<sup>240</sup> Turning their accusatory gaze upon a world they felt was standing by and letting them starve, men and women wrote letters to the occupation forces convinced that Germans had been deliberately "condemned to die out."<sup>241</sup>

The postwar publication *Zur Versorgung des europäischen Kontinents 1945* (On the Provisioning of the European Continent in 1945) by the industrialist and humanitarian Robert Boehringer described German streets full of starving children, reduced to "skeletons, barely covered by paper-thin skin stretched tightly . . . faces hollowed out by hunger . . . a picture of boundless suffering . . . a heart wrenching accusation against

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<sup>238</sup> "Denkschrift für die deutsche Wirtschaftskommission f.d. sowj. Besatzungszone zu Ernährungsfragen und zum Kartensystem," Stadtarchiv Dresden 11393 #321

<sup>239</sup> "Resolution der deutschen Ärzte zur deutschen Ernährungslage" Landesarchiv Berlin B Rep 012 # 131

<sup>240</sup> Günter J. Trittel, *Hunger und Politik: die Ernährungskrise in der Bizone (1945-1949)*.

<sup>241</sup> "an die Wirtschaftskommission" BArch DQ 1 / 1386. Civilian letters complained of being held responsible for actions which they however refused to detail. In other words, no letter ever directly mentioned the fact that Nazism, and by extension the German nation, was itself responsible for tremendous mass starvation – that the hunger-symptoms that German civilians complained about were the same symptoms that their government had inflicted upon millions of innocent civilians.

humanity."<sup>242</sup> Vowing to ensure that "nobody will be able to say: I did not know," the book insisted that "we are not allowed to wait until the hunger-skeletons are pictured yet again in the newspapers . . . after all, infants . . . have no past and belong to no political party."<sup>243</sup> An insistence on the uniqueness of their hunger, on the suffering of the innocent and apolitical, and on the moral imperative of the global community to not 'stand by and watch' as millions of Germans starve to death, all worked to construct an analogy in scope and horror, if not in cause, between the Holocaust and the German Hunger Years. The experience of hunger was equivalent to being 'victims of totalitarianism,' as not Hitler but "simply the hunger, nothing more than hunger" was, in the words of a Cologne newspaper, the "very worst dictator."<sup>244</sup> At the same time, German hunger became equivalent to rejecting Nazism – a bodily state became an ideology.

German hunger discourse frequently relied on Allied denazification strategies, including the publication of reports of conditions in Nazi concentration camps, the display of photos of emaciated camp victims, and the forced viewing of film footage from concentrated camp liberations, to confirm their own starvation. In an early postwar novel documenting the suffering of Germans in Allied POW camps, the author mocked the common procedure of hanging 'shock photos' in barracks by describing an elderly German inmate who

had practically no flesh left on his bones or under his skin. He was really only a skeleton. I said to him that he should pose next to the photos from Mauthausen which the camp commander had nailed on the barrack wall . . . in regards to the

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<sup>242</sup> Robert Böhringer, *Zur Versorgungslage des europäischen Kontinents im Herbst 1945*, (Zürich: Rascher, 1945) 46-47.

<sup>243</sup> *ibid.*, 71

<sup>244</sup> Cited in Rainer Gries, *Die Rationen-Gesellschaft*, 11. See also Hans Schulten, *Die Hungerkrankheit*, (Berlin: K.F. Haug Verlag, 1946), 9-10.

art of starvation he could match the victims of the Mauthausen concentration camp.<sup>245</sup>

A housewife could watch a film clip from Auschwitz and recognize her own scrawny children in those bodies in striped suits, or a retired teacher would read of the rationing program in the occupied territories and realize the depths of his own malnourishment through indignant comparison.

Fritz Baade, later to become a leading economist of the Federal Republic, wrote a passionate condemnation of the Allied response to German hunger, *Amerika und der deutsche Hunger* (America and the German Hunger). In it, he pointed out that "the Nazis have been harshly criticized for reducing fat rations in Poland to 13.5 grams a day, although the United Nations determined that an adult needs 68 grams a day."<sup>246</sup> In contrast, he claimed that Allied policy allotted Germans only 2 grams daily. Just months after the end of the war, a report from the city of Görlitz unfavorably compared the population's weekly ration of 250 grams of bread to the daily rations of prisoners at Auschwitz's work-camp Monowitz, "as it was reported in the *Deutsche Volkszeitung* from August 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1945."<sup>247</sup> Three years later, an article published in the Rhineland compared rations in Buchenwald to those of the French Zone (purportedly 1675 calories versus 805), leading a local politician to claim that Germans have "for three years been forced to bear a level of hunger such as that known in no concentration camp in the world."<sup>248</sup> When Germans chose to cite the facts of life and death in concentration camps and ghettos, they displayed how well they had listened to, and learned from, the occupiers.

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<sup>245</sup> Cited in Gregor Streim "Germans in the Lager" in Helmut Schmitz, *A Nation of Victims?*, 38.

<sup>246</sup> Fritz Baade, *Amerika und der deutsche Hunger. Dokumente aus USA vom Morgenthau- zum Marshall-Plan*, (Braunschweig: Limbach, 1948) 34.

<sup>247</sup> "Grenzstadt Elend in Görlitz" Stadtarchiv Dresden 11391 # 1758

<sup>248</sup> Cited in Karl-Heinz Rothenberger, *Die Hungerjahre nach dem zweiten Weltkrieg*, 196.

No longer did they claim that 'we didn't know anything;' instead, they memorized individual rationing plans of specific concentration camps in order to compare them to the last calorie and gram of flour of their own food supplies.

These comparisons between concentration camps and the civilian rationing program had little basis in physiological fact. The living conditions of postwar Germans and camp inmates were hardly comparable. While the official 'Reich' caloric allotment for inmates was set at around 1600 calories, this number remained a laughable fiction for the majority of inmates, who were caught in "the devilish circle of scarcity and starvation created by the SS in the camps."<sup>249</sup> The comparison of Allied food provisions with Nazi food policy in ghettos and concentration camps assumed that the provisions themselves were equivalent; in fact, much of the 'food' that Nazis provided to inmates was rotten, inedible, or deliberately contaminated.<sup>250</sup> In addition to the health impacts of atrocious housing, clothing, and medical care in NS camps, not to mention the psychological torment of persecution and internment, Nazi policies of slave labor and 'death through labor' placed impossible physical demands on the bodies of their subjects. Most important in terms of basic nutrition was the fact that German civilians were free – free to move and therefore free to acquire food. The remarkable scale of bartering, stealing, and gathering food stuffs throughout all four zones, and especially the almost universal

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<sup>249</sup> Herbert Obenaus, "Hunger und Überleben in den nationalsozialistischen Konzentrationslagern" in Gailus and Volkmann, *Der Kampf um das tägliche Brot*, 365

<sup>250</sup> At many concentration camps, German nutritionists performed experiments on camp inmates by means of food supplies, offering, for example, sausages made of paper mill waste. The infamous recipe for *Russenbrot*, the bread set aside for Soviet POWs, included more sawdust and grass than grain. See Ernst Klee, *Deutsche Medizin im dritten Reich: Karrieren vor und nach 1945* and Michael Kater, *Doctors under Hitler*.

participation in the black market, make clear that the rationing calories allotted German civilians were not the population's only source of sustenance.<sup>251</sup>

Nonetheless, transformed through hunger from a Nazified people's community [Volksgemeinschaft] to a pitiable "community of need" [Notgemeinschaft], the entire population, regardless of class, gender or political allegiance, had access to, and claimed, hunger as his or her own.<sup>252</sup> The German *Volk* was remade as a community not joined by links of blood and soil or a shared experience of war and defeat but rather by the common experience of hunger: "the hunger disease today has attacked our entire Volk and knows no social distinctions."<sup>253</sup> The voices of German civilians, politicians, doctors and public figures all agreed that "we hunger all together" [*wir hungern doch alle gemeinsam*].<sup>254</sup> Grafted onto every individual body, whether young or old, male or female, loyal Nazi or resistance fighter, hunger served as a basis for a new form of community.<sup>255</sup> By asserting this politicized and internationally relevant form of suffering, these German voices documented in painful detail the degeneration of their individual and collective bodies in order to display their innocence and powerlessness, at the same time that these performances of suffering forged new bonds of shared victimization.

Despite this common discourse, far from being a universal and shared experience, hunger existed in a multitude of forms and degrees in occupied Germany. In fact, at the

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<sup>251</sup> There are many studies on the black market in Germany after the war. The best recent work is Paul Steege, *Black Market, Cold War: Everyday Life in Berlin, 1946-1949*. An older study that focuses specifically on food is Michael Wildt's *Der Traum vom Sattwerden. Hunger und Protest, Schwarzmarkt und Selbsthilfe*.

<sup>252</sup> Trittel, *Hunger und Politik*, 74

<sup>253</sup> Ferdinand Bertram "Über Ernährungsschäden vom Standpunkt der zentralen Regulationen Teil II," *Deutsche Medizinische Wochenschrift* (Nr. 5/8, February 1948)

<sup>254</sup> Cited in Trittel, *Hunger und Politik*, 110

<sup>255</sup> This conception of the formative power of hunger eerily echoes what James Vernon has described in the cases of India and Ireland, where "the nationalist use of famine to critique colonial rule became a claim to sovereignty: they willed a new nation into existence by documenting its collective suffering." Vernon, *Hunger: A Modern History*, 43

same time that official discourse, particularly those reports and speeches aimed at an international audience, emphasized the commonality and equality of this *Notgemeinschaft*, German civilians and local authorities described a society divided into "the two classes of the well-fed and those suffering from hunger."<sup>256</sup> Major caloric deficits and under-nutrition were most frequently found in urban populations, usually among the elderly, ill and unemployed, while farmers had more than adequate food supplies. Rural areas often had a monotonous diet that fulfilled basic needs but left the population miserable and afflicted with various vitamin deficiencies.

Even more disturbing than these health problems were the perceived social and cultural harms of hunger. All too often, in their continuous struggles to acquire food, Germans turned against one another rather than expressing a sense of community or commonality. Local politicians bemoaned the upsurge in tensions between rural and urban populations, as city-dwellers became madly jealous of the abundant food controlled by farmers, and farmers were outraged over the constant demands of urbanites. Social workers noted that food shortages destroyed families; returning soldiers claimed the food of their wives and children for themselves, causing countless relationships to end in violence, flight or divorce. Food concerns over also stood in the way of the integration of the millions of ethnic German expellees who fled to the new, smaller German territory, people referred to as 'useless mouths to feed' in memoirs of the time.<sup>257</sup> Most damning are the police reports that document in detail the ubiquity of hunger-related crimes committed by German civilians, not only theft and vandalism, but violence and murder, as people broke into food storage areas, attacked the wealthy, and robbed the weak and

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<sup>256</sup> Paul Erker "Hunger und sozialer Konflikt in der Nachkriegszeit," 395.

<sup>257</sup> See the collection of often quite disturbing interviews conducted during Occupation that are gathered in Rainer Schulze's *Unruhige Zeiten: Erlebnisberichte aus dem Landkreis Celle 1945-1949*.

defenseless. This fragmentary, destructive aspect of hunger was depicted as a paradoxical confirmation of the commonality and universality of German hunger; for example reports of a hungry youth robbing a well-fed farmer depicted a world of shared deprivation, rather than of unequally distributed resources. In other words, the lack of hunger on the part of many Germans, a lack implied by these descriptions of division and diversity, remained unnoted by most Germans. These were not, however, the only voices speaking about German hunger.

### **Dissenting Voices: Rejections of the German Hunger Narrative**

German Communists offered a radically different, and radically unpopular, interpretation of the dietary state of the population.<sup>258</sup> Due to ideological conviction, the need to gain support from the Soviets, and personal experiences with hunger and suffering during the war, German Communists remained the one consistently dissenting voice among the well-nigh universal pleas for extra food that dominated the German public sphere during the Occupation Years. Many of the German Communists who were active in postwar food policy in the Soviet Zone, and who went on to have posts in the government of the GDR, had themselves been in concentration camps or otherwise persecuted during the Third Reich; many had found safety in the USSR during the war; many were sincerely grateful for the Soviet invasion of Germany and outraged at the self-pitying behavior of their fellow Germans. The debates between these Communists and

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<sup>258</sup> The dissenting role played by both Communists and Jews within the postwar Hunger narrative continued in postwar West Germany, where, in contrast to popular German opinion, communists and Jews "were not inclined to equate the suffering of all the war's victims." However, as Moeller points out, "such critical voices were in a distinct minority, not silenced but certainly heard infrequently in a political environment in which victims who were neither communists nor Jews receive the most attention." Robert Moeller, "The Politics of the Past in the 1950s" in William John Niven, *Germans as victims: remembering the past in contemporary Germany*. (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 35

the larger population, which was generally anti-Communist and terrified of the Soviets, revolved around the question of German hunger.

Hunger has been a key metaphor and political platform for Communists since Marx. In the revolutionary USSR, "issues of food distribution figured prominently in the evolving moral economy by which the ruled judged their rulers," as well as being central to utopic models of a future socialist society.<sup>259</sup> During the hungry Weimar years, German Communists had evoked proletarian hunger "as the most immediately comprehensible expression of exploitation, capitalism and fascism."<sup>260</sup> Later, during the Third Reich, underground Communist propaganda had insisted not only that Nazism was starving and killing millions of non-Germans, but that it was orchestrating the starvation of the German working class.<sup>261</sup> As a political party that relied on the promise of bread as a primary recruiting strategy, they were particularly critical of NSDAP food policy and condemned promises of full bellies as a 'Nazi-Swindle;' instead of diagnosing an Aryan hunger, they reported a global, class-based one, where "millions of workers go hungry"<sup>262</sup> due to capitalist and fascist oppression. First in public and later in clandestine propaganda, Communists had unsuccessfully struggled to radicalize rather than racialize the hunger of the German working class.<sup>263</sup> Horrified by the remarkable rise to power of the Party, German Communists had hoped against hope that "the working class of

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<sup>259</sup> Mauricio Borrero, "Food and the Politics of Scarcity in Urban Soviet Russia, 1917-1941" in *Food Nations*, eds. Warren James Belasco and Philip Scranton (New York: Routledge, 2002), 258.

<sup>260</sup> Alf Lüdtkke, "Hunger in der grossen Depression. Hungererfahrungen und Hungerpolitik am Ende der Weimarer Republik" *Archiv für Sozialgeschichte*, (vol. 27, 1987) 170.

<sup>261</sup> Burger, *Hitler, Hunger, Krieg: die Ernährungspolitik des dritten Reiches im Zeichen der Kriegsvorbereitung*.

<sup>262</sup> *Freiheit und Brot!?: Ein Entlarvter Nazi-Schwindel!* (Berlin: Overhagen, 1931), 1.

<sup>263</sup> During the hunger years of the First World War, different understandings of the political nature of hunger caused one of the decisive splits between the KPD and the SPD. At that time, the Communists "sensed only that the food crisis would force the workers to undertake radical action. They did not fear, like the SPD did, that hunger would boomerang on the revolution and drive the workers into the arms of the reaction." William Carl Mathews, *The German Social Democrats and the Inflation: Food, Foreign Trade, and the Politics of Stabilization 1914-1920*, (1992), 372.

Germany is not willing to fall into the misery of hunger in the fascist quest for 'nutritional freedom' [*Nahrungsfreiheit*]."264 Their hopes proved tragically ill-founded.

With the end of the war, Communists were the only major group of Germans who could lay claim to the title of resistance fighters. This fact, along with the socialist government of the Soviet Zone as well as a strong, if short-lived, Communist party in all four occupation zones, meant that German Communists were important voices in debates over the cause, meaning and remedy of the 'belly question.' While German doctors struggled to quantify the scale of German malnutrition, German civilians wrote letters of complaint detailing their victimization at the hands of ravenous Soviets, and the German media detailed the moral dangers of German hunger, German Communists had an entirely different agenda: to establish that Hitler, and in turn Nazism, was the true cause of the hunger plaguing Germany. The hunger of the postwar years, they claimed, was caused not by Germany's defeat, but by its desire to go to war. Condemning a "century-long German tradition to craft weapons for the conquest of foreign soil rather than to till the native fertile ground," socialists linked hunger with militarism rather than with oppression at the hands of the Allies.

Communists were particularly outraged by the countless sullen assertions that 'we ate better under Hitler,'265 arguing that the relatively good nutritional situation of Germans during the war was neither innocent nor apolitical. In answer to the question

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<sup>264</sup> Burger, *Hitler, Hunger, Krieg*, 31

<sup>265</sup> The relatively good health of the population under Nazism is one of the simplest explanations for the German hunger-misery after the war. For example, no other country in Europe associates the postwar years so absolutely and exclusively with hunger as much as Germany, even those, like Austria, Romania or Greece, that were actually worse off nutritionally than Germany. This is presumably because the Germans were as much traumatized by the change in their status as by that status itself; an Austrian historian I spoke with explained Germany's preoccupation with their postwar hunger by claiming that 'Germans had it too good,' whereas Austrians had been long accustomed to hunger and had few expectations after the war.

"why were the Germans so much better off during the Hitler-war?" Communist tracts explained that

in the occupation of Austria, the Sudetenland, in the invasions of Czechoslovakia, Poland, France, the Soviet Union, the Balkan countries etc, the food supplies of these lands were ruthlessly plundered, brought to Germany and used to feed the occupation troops.<sup>266</sup>

Rather than insisting that food autonomy was impossible within the new territorial boundaries of the divided country, these nutritionists claimed that "if you were to theoretically calculate the productivity of our living space, you would realize that we do not need to go hungry but that we could easily be satiated."<sup>267</sup> When conservative German politicians claimed that the German population required vast food donations from the Allies before it could be expected to reject Nazism and become democratic, Communists insisted that

we must feed ourselves from our own soil as much as possible. Insofar as it is not possible, and the great democracies decide out of pure humanity . . . to give us bread, we who stand here with empty hands, we must take this bread with our eyes cast down, for we have no right to this bread.<sup>268</sup>

Rather than claiming uniqueness and extremity, Communists tried to historicize and relativize the suffering of Germans. Reminding the complaining population that "not only Berlin, but all of Europe hungers,"<sup>269</sup> they pointed out that the satiety of the early war years had been responsible for the fact that "constant hunger was a guest in the

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<sup>266</sup> *Unser tägliches Brot: die Gewerkschaften und ihre Aufgaben in der Ernährung* (Berlin: Vorstand d. IG Nahrung u. Genuss, 1947), 9-10.

<sup>267</sup> Wilhelm Ziegelmayer, *Neue Nahrungsquellen. Kommunalpolitische Aufgaben zur Sicherung d. Dt. Volksernährung* (Berlin: Heymann, 1949).

<sup>268</sup> Richard Scheringer, *Wie lange noch? Vorschläge zur Überwindung der Ernährungskrise*. (München: K.P. Landesbezirk Bayern, 1946), 3.

<sup>269</sup> Josef Orlopp, *Im Kampf gegen den Hunger* (Berlin: SED, Landesverb. Gross-Berlin, 1947), 3. Orlopp was to go on to become head of the Administration of Interzonal and Foreign Trade in the GDR.

occupied lands."<sup>270</sup> A 1948 booklet aimed at recruiting German farmers to the party complained that

the most widespread opinion seems to be that there has never been a people anywhere in the world who has experienced anything similar to that of Germany, and there is no place in the world where there is 'such a hunger' as currently in Germany . . . depending upon secret allegiances to one or another periods of German history since sunk into disgrace, certain comparisons are offered to prove the uniqueness of the current situation. Our poor memory for history is no longer acceptable . . . if only we didn't always think only of our bellies.<sup>271</sup>

Such explicit connections of German hunger claims with 'secret allegiances' to the unspeakable German past were unique to German Communists; neither Soviet nor Western officials dared to politicize these civilian claims in the way that these German resistance fighters and self-proclaimed anti-fascists did.

German civilians resisted comparisons and resented accusations. The socialist-leaning British journalist Gordon Schaffer, who toured the Soviet Zone shortly after the end of the war, recognized a dramatic gap between popular perception and the actions of state authorities. Admiring the rapid advances made in schooling, housing, and economic development, the author worried that "the hunger and the [food] shortages conceal from most people in the Zone the very real progress that has been made."<sup>272</sup> Struck like so many observers by the self-absorption of Germans, Schaffer echoed the concerns of Communist leaders and bemoaned the fact that "Germans in the Soviet Zone, as in all the other zones, are much more ready to pity themselves than to recognize their guilt and to join in an effort to make amends to the nations they wronged and to purge their life of the

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<sup>270</sup> *Unsere Ernährung: die brennendste Frage* (Berlin: 1946), 3.

<sup>271</sup> *Grundfragen unserer Ernährungs-Wirtschaft im Zweijahresplan* (Deutscher Bauernverlag: Berlin 1948), 6.

<sup>272</sup> Gordon Schaffer, *Russian Zone of Germany* (New York: SRT Publications, 1947), 25

fascism that brought all their suffering."<sup>273</sup> In sum, in the SBZ Communists countered indigenous claims of uniqueness and victimization; in contrast, in the West, German political leaders confirmed and augmented civilian complaints, forming a united front of hunger against the (Allied) world.

The Western zones however also had their share of controversy regarding German hunger claims. Predictably, organizations representing DPs, especially European Jews, chief among them UNRAA, were particularly reluctant to recognize German hunger. Spokespeople for these homeless men and women insisted that German claims of mass hunger were exaggerated. Like German Communists they reminded the Allies who controlled food distribution that the nutritional situation of the populations of other parts of Central Europe, particularly Poland, was much worse than in Germany.<sup>274</sup> These arguments often highlighted the aspect of the German food narrative that German civilians were unwilling to recognize – that German civilians had been in relatively good health at the end of the war, particularly in comparison with the semi-starved populace of occupied Europe even disregarding camp and ghetto inmates. Jewish delegates argued that Aryan German had not suffered 'long years of persecution and privation,' and emphasized the significance of stored supplies and levels of self-sustenance impossible for dispossessed and penniless displaced Jews.<sup>275</sup> A Jewish American officer wrote to his wife in December 1945 that former SS and Nazi officers received "more calories per day than the people who really suffered under the Nazis."<sup>276</sup> Not only Jews made such accusations. Both implicitly and explicitly, many Allied men and women compared

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<sup>273</sup> *ibid.*, 19

<sup>274</sup> John E. Farquharson, *The Western Allies and the Politics of Food: Agrarian Management in Postwar Germany* (Dover: Berg Publishers, 1985), 239.

<sup>275</sup> Grossmann, *Jews, Germans, and Allies*, 94.

<sup>276</sup> Cited in *Ibid.*, 140

German civilian bodies to those of the victims of just-liberated camps, to the ravaged peoples of much of Eastern Europe, and, for Soviet and British visitors, to their own populations at home, who had lived under strict rationing, if not downright hunger, throughout most of the war.

Within occupied Germany as well, initial Allied response was largely critical. Their skepticism originally stemmed from the perceived disjuncture between the healthy appearance of large segments of the civilian population and German assertions of mass starvation, documented in the frequent references to the 'plump' appearance of the population particularly in rural, less damaged areas of the country.<sup>277</sup> Allied soldiers reported with disgust on a self-pitying population that complained about not having enough to eat while hoarding stores of food in their barns and cellars.<sup>278</sup> In his report on the state of the defeated country from April 1945, Eric Fisher Wood, the Acting Director of the P.O.W. and D.P. Division of the U.S. Army, described the German countryside as "fat and prosperous. The people are fat, well dressed, and smug with good living. Even the dogs are fat."<sup>279</sup> Like German Communists, these Allied visitors associated the 'fatness' of Germans with the famished state of non-Germans, insisting that the "barns, storehouses and cellars full of foods and wines" were "raised in Germany with the help of

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<sup>277</sup> Former First Lady Mrs. Roosevelt famously visited Berlin in 1946 and observed that "Germans seem comparatively well-fed." Her statement unleashed a tremendous amount of anger among the civilian population, which claimed that "Mrs. Roosevelt was in Germany for so short a time that they cannot understand how she had the opportunity to see a sufficient number of Germans to arrive at such a conclusion." NARA: RG 260/OMGUS, ICD, OSB, Box 145, Folder: Daily Intelligence Digest

<sup>278</sup> Farquharson, *The Western Allies and the Politics of Food*, 236. Atina Grossmann, *Jews, Germans, and Allies: Close Encounters in Occupied Germany*, 31-32.

<sup>279</sup> RG 260 Records of United States Occupation Headquarters, World War II. Office of Military Government for Germany (U.S) (OMGUS). Records of the Executive Office: The Office of the Adjutant General – General Correspondence, Box 91 (AG 383.7 Displaced Persons, Care and Feeding of thru AG 383.6 Prisoners of War (Policy)), Folder 2.

slave labor or looted from the rest of Europe."<sup>280</sup> The film *Deutschland erwache* [Germany Awake], made as part of American denazification policy to be shown to German POWs, juxtaposed the image of a chubby civilian with a starved camp inmate; the narrator commanded his listeners to "look at these Germans after five years of war: fat, round, with double chins and swollen bellies. This man lives only two kilometers from this man."<sup>281</sup> Even relatively sympathetic officers like Military Director of the U.S. Zone Lucius Clay, greeted early pleas for increased food supplies with skepticism, emphasizing the fact that the population of Germany was in the best physical health of all of mainland Europe and most of Asia.<sup>282</sup>

With so many conflicting reports on the dietary status of occupied Germany, and highly sensitized to the destructive economic and political potential of hunger, both Western and Soviet authorities were committed to preventing mass hunger and extreme malnutrition. This commitment rested upon the establishment of norms of nutrition and shared definitions of hunger, concepts that became a source of contention between the medical and civilian populations, and between the German and Allied medical professions. Because the occupation powers relied on medical reports to determine the health of their respective populations, and in turn to evaluate the nutritional needs of the populace, British, American and Soviet doctors were dispatched to the various zones as

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<sup>280</sup> RG 260 Records of United States Occupation Headquarters, World War II. Office of Military Government for Germany (U.S) (OMGUS). Records of the Executive Office: The Office of the Adjutant General – General Correspondence, Box 91 (AG 383.7 Displaced Persons, Care and Feeding of thru AG 383.6 Prisoners of War (Policy)), Folder 2.

<sup>281</sup> Commentary to "Deutschland Erwache," 1945. See Ulrike Weckel, *Shameful images* (Steiner: forthcoming 2009)

<sup>282</sup> As I detailed in the first chapter, Allied sympathy for the suffering of the German population did not originate among the soldiers and Allied officials stationed in occupied Germany, but in the civilian populations of the United States and Great Britain. While German Americans in the USA were vocal in their calls for sympathy with their relatives in Europe, in England it was largely the work of philanthropists, most notably the Jewish publicist Victor Gollancz, who spearheaded the movement to 'save Germany's children.'

soon as the war was officially over to determine the extent of German hunger. However, Allied and German doctors found themselves more frequently at odds than unified in their struggle against German hunger. In fact, in open contradiction to the near-universal German claims of hunger, Allied medical reports did not confirm wide-spread or deadly starvation.

The single largest Allied study of German nutrition during occupation, the British-organized Wuppertal project, concluded that "there were in fact none of the signs of really severe undernutrition, and no deaths which could be attributed simply and solely to this cause [hunger] occurred in Wuppertal or in the whole of the British Zone."<sup>283</sup> Indeed, this group of nutritionists diagnosed German complaints of starvation as a psychological symptom as much as a physical one:

the great majority [of civilians interviewed] stated that their chief worry was the shortage of food . . . to the majority, however, hunger meant much more than a desire for food to satisfy a temporary physiological need. It represented a threat to their well-being, and was associated with frequent appraisals of the degree of undernutrition that they could tolerate, and the fear that they might not survive. . . in fact their 'hunger' had implications much wider than the momentary satisfaction of bodily wants.<sup>284</sup>

An American report summarized that "there has been a considerable amount of exaggeration" within the German medical profession regarding the damages of hunger:

when they [the reported hunger-deaths] were investigated in an impartial manner, they were frequently found to be due to causes other than malnutrition, and in general they were less frequent than stated by some observers. Exaggeration and agitation about the state of nutrition did a great deal of harm since it provoked exaggeration also on the part of those who considered themselves criticized in an improper manner.<sup>285</sup>

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<sup>283</sup> University of Cambridge, *Studies of Undernutrition, Wuppertal, 1946-9*, (London: H. M. Stationery Office, 1951), 15.

<sup>284</sup> *ibid.*, 161-162.

<sup>285</sup> Werner Klatt, "Food and Farming in Germany: I. Food and Nutrition," *International Affairs*, 26, no. 1 (Jan., 1950), 54.

A journalist who visited hospitals in the Soviet Zone found that "though there are extensive signs of malnutrition, there is no great evidence of starvation."<sup>286</sup> The Bi-Partite Food Report, authored by Western experts who were generally sympathetic to German civilian suffering, acknowledged that "starvation of the population, as the term is generally understood, does not exist."<sup>287</sup> Even in the winter of 1947, at the peak of German hunger, Allied doctors could only confirm that "a great many Germans appear to believe that they are slowly starving to death owing to the cruelty and indifference of the occupying powers."<sup>288</sup>

From the perspective of the Allied occupation forces who were in daily contact with the population, the onus was clearly on the Germans to 'prove' that they were hungry. 'Feeling' hungry was not sufficient impetus to change rationing plans or food donations, particularly for the British, French and Soviet forces facing their own domestic food shortages and civilian poverty. The Allies demanded statistics, graphs, unbiased and impartial 'facts' to establish the dietary status of the civilian population. The German medical profession dedicated itself to this task, struggling desperately to pin down a 'disease' that proved to be indefinable. German doctors continually modified and expanded the category of 'hunger,' or, more specifically, 'hunger-disease,' in their efforts to prove that the population was desperately and uniformly hungry. Their medical research implicitly cast Germans as the victims of an Allied 'starvation plan,' while 'medicalizing' the claim that hunger eliminated political pasts and collective agendas.

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<sup>286</sup> Schaffer, *Russian Zone of Germany*, 145.

<sup>287</sup> U.S.-British Bipartite Food and Agriculture Panel, *Food and Agriculture: U.S. - U.K. Zones of Germany*, (Berlin, 1947), 56.

<sup>288</sup> Cited in Farquharson, *The Western Allies and the Politics of Food*, 235

From the moment of the German surrender, German doctors secured a high profile for themselves in negotiations with Allied authorities, despite the fact that the medical profession had been one of the most heavily nazified professions.<sup>289</sup> In a pattern that was repeated in many spheres of German society, Communists in the Soviet Zone were the only group to pursue the denazification of the medical profession; however, even their claims to employ exclusively 'anti-fascist' medical workers remained largely rhetorical.<sup>290</sup> In all four zones, doctors working on issues of hunger and nutrition were primarily drawn from the large pool of men and women who had willingly served under Hitler.<sup>291</sup> In the West, almost all major figures in the field of nutrition during Occupation and through the 1950s and 1960s were former Nazis who had often performed dietary research in concentration and POW camps. Of the figures whose works dominated Occupation research on German hunger: Ernst-Günther Schenck had been the nutritional expert of the SS and was found guilty of performing starvation experiments on Russian POWs.<sup>292</sup> Surgeon Major Heinrich Berning performed experiments on hunger edemas on Russian POWs before going to become an important West German medical figure.

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<sup>289</sup> A 1945 Allied report judged that "the Nazis in their twelve years in power managed to get a very tight grip on the German medical profession, favoring their own men in every possible way. With few exceptions, Nazis were given all public health appointments, or the officials already appointed were forced to join in order to keep their jobs." (Cited in Ellerbrock, "*Healing Democracy*," 136)

<sup>290</sup> The contradictions of Soviet policy toward Nazi doctors were repeated in their policy toward schoolteachers. See Benita Blessing's *An Antifascist Classroom: Denazification in Soviet-Occupied Germany, 1945-1949*.

<sup>291</sup> Ulrike Thoms is completing a book project on this topic. An excellent discussion of the dilemma of the nazified medical profession in postwar Germany is Geoffrey Cocks, "Repressing, Remembering, Working through: German Psychiatry, Psychotherapy, Psychoanalysis, and the "Missed Resistance" in the Third Reich," *The Journal of Modern History* 64, no., Supplement: Resistance Against the Third Reich (Dec., 1992). Alexander Neumann has written several articles on the nutritional sciences during the Third Reich, and is currently working on a book-length project. Christoph Kopke has published an article on Schenck's activity during the Third Reich: "Der Ernährungsinspekteur der Waffen-SS. Zur Rolle des Mediziners Ernst Günther Schenck im Nationalsozialismus" in *Medizin und Verbrechen*. For a general survey on the topic, Ernst Klee's book *Deutsche Medizin im Dritten Reich* remains the standard work.

<sup>292</sup> Klee, *Deutsche Medizin im Dritten Reich*, 187. Nonetheless, he was made 'Reparation-Expert for Starvation-Damages' in the League of Homecomers (returning POWs) in the FRG.

Dr. Hans Schulten, one of the leading experts on postwar hunger disease, unabashedly referred to his wartime research "on about 200 people who had been subjected to the most severe starvation for many months."<sup>293</sup> And Dr. Heinrich Kraut, who went on to become the Federal Republic's most important nutritionist and leader of the Max-Planck Institute for Labor Physiology, had calculated the optimum return on caloric expenditure for starving Soviet POWs forced into labor.<sup>294</sup> The two leading nutritionists of the Soviet Zone and the early GDR, Arthur Scheunert and Wilhelm Ziegelmayr, were both active during the Third Reich, Scheunert as a vitaminologist and Ziegelmayr working to optimize diets for the troops.

The consequences of such political backgrounds for the hunger discourse of the Occupation Years is difficult to determine, and the reasons for Allied indifference numerous: an uncritical view on the part of the Allies toward medicine; long-standing international respect for the German medical tradition; a belief that medical knowledge and skills were 'scientific' rather than political (i.e. that one could be a good doctor regardless of one's political beliefs); and a general consensus that postwar Germany was in dire need of medical help.<sup>295</sup> Ironically the centrality of hunger for Nazi military and social policy (deliberately applying it to their enemies, while obsessively avoiding it at home) had given these doctors both a wealth of experience and a framework for

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<sup>293</sup> Schulten, *Die Hungerkrankheit*, 74

<sup>294</sup> Questioned by the American forces in 1947 as to his past work, Kraut declared under oath that his primary focus had been the improvement of the diet of foreign workers at the same time that he denied poor conditions in Nazi concentration camps. Asserting his familiarity with a wide array of forced labor camps, Kraut explained that he "always visited the camp kitchens and sampled the camp food. Everywhere that I went I always found proof of the sincere desire to feed all foreign workers, including prisoners of war, as well as possible." He also reported large-scale smuggling of food items by the German camp personal to the prisoners that was motivated by empathy and personal friendship. "Eidesstattliche Erklärung" DIFE 225 # 294

<sup>295</sup> Ellerbrock's *Healing Democracy* is an excellent study on the political contexts and consequences of Allied, especially American, relationships with the German medical profession after the war.

evaluating its harms. German doctors proved to be some of the most impassioned and influential voices in the struggles over food policy in occupied Germany. Indeed, of all the tasks assigned to German doctors by the Allied forces, perhaps the most politically laden and medically controversial was that of documenting and diagnosing German hunger.

### ***Sein oder Schein: Hunger-Disease as German State of Being***

On June 15<sup>th</sup>, 1947, the West German medical board, based in Nordrhein-Westphalen, released a formal statement on the German food situation, declaring that:

an entire people, once strong and healthy, has been weakened by hunger to the point of absolute incapacity and to the point of true disease . . . a lack of calories and proteins have transformed a people who once possessed an internal freedom and strength, who were well equipped to succeed at becoming a peaceful nation despite an inauspicious start into a hopeless and feeble creature. The people once known as the poets and thinkers have no interests outside of their daily bread . . . we doctors know that all of these symptoms of disease are caused by hunger, and that they could be healed through a most simple means, one that however we are not able to provide: adequate food.<sup>296</sup>

Intended to increase international awareness of the plight of the German people and thus to leverage for increases in rations, the report went on to explain that the population could not be expected to be democratic or peace-loving as long as it continued to starve.

Unsurprisingly, the report enjoyed immediate and dramatic popularity within occupied Germany; it was quoted extensively in articles and reports throughout the land, used as evidence for the dire state of the population's health and the need for increased food supplies. Seeing its potential for improving domestic economic growth, the journal of German grocers, the *Deutsche Lebensmittel-Rundschau*, published the lengthy document in its entirety in its fifth issue of the year.

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<sup>296</sup> "Resolution der deutschen Ärzte zur deutschen Ernährungslage" Landesarchiv Berlin B Rep 012 #131

This remarkable success was short lived, as the text quickly came under fire from occupation officials in all four zones. The British occupation authorities ordered German newspapers to issue a statement rescinding any articles based on the statement. The Americans as well roundly condemned the report. The German health board in the Soviet Zone released a statement arguing that "the claim, made as a sort of threat, that hunger has made the German people incapable of responsible democratic behavior must be totally rejected. We Germans were adequately fed when we decided to leave the soil of democracy [*Boden der Demokratie*]." <sup>297</sup> The hubbub ultimately resulted in the elimination of the nutritional branch of the medical board. <sup>298</sup> Despite the text's condemnation by both the Allies and German Communists, it continued to be cited by the German media and is still a popular source for historians of the Occupation Years, who use it to document the severity of civilian hunger. Crucially, the statement cast hunger as an ethical, cultural and philosophical issue as much as a physical one; it threatened 'Germans' not only because children were stunted or workers exhausted, but because the cultural heritage of the land of 'poets and thinkers' was at risk. The statement made explicit the fact that that allowing Germans to go hungry threatened non-Germans as much as Germans, both in terms of the loss of this irreplaceable *Kulturgut*, but also because hungry Germans embodied a violent and anti-democratic force, a force that had already claimed millions of lives.

The philosophical rather than biological emphasis of this medical release was typical for German statements about their nutritional status after the war. One of the greatest medical challenges to establishing the presence and severity of hunger in

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<sup>297</sup> Cited in Thomas Gerst, *Ärztliche Standesorganisation und Standespolitik in Deutschland 1945-1955* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner, 2004), 135.

<sup>298</sup> *ibid.*, 136

Germany after the war was the vagueness of the category, something expressed in the German word '*Hunger*,' which is used both to describe normal, 'everyday' hunger (*Ich habe Hunger*) and the state of abject starvation (*Ich hungere*). Indeed, postwar German hunger continually wobbled between being part of normal life and becoming a deadly and all-encompassing disease. German doctors were obsessed with pinpointing this moment of transition, and they strove to delineate medically 'hunger-disease' in the most inclusive terms possible.

German medical journals agreed that "it is exceedingly difficult, if not impossible, to offer an accurate picture of the damages of undernourishment in a population,"<sup>299</sup> insisting that even those hungry people who lacked "manifest signs of the [hunger] illness" must be regarded as "suffering from a disease."<sup>300</sup> It proved difficult to differentiate between primary and secondary symptoms. Thus, doctors explained why so few Germans were actually starving (to death) by arguing that while "isolated damage due purely to nutritional problems is relatively seldom seen,"<sup>301</sup> a plethora of secondary symptoms, including depression, apathy, aches and pains, insomnia, weakness and fatigue, marked the population as collectively suffering from hunger-disease. In addition, these simple symptoms of hunger were transformed by the presence of hunger into other, deadly afflictions. Thus, when Germans died of tuberculosis, cold, suicide or overwork, these were all ascribed to hunger. Hunger became the primary source of 'disease,' of sickness in its most general form.<sup>302</sup>

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<sup>299</sup> Helmut Gillmann "Über die Schwierigkeit der vollständigen Erfassung der unterernährungsschäden" *Deutsche Medizinische Wochenschrift*, (Nr. 9, March 1949)

<sup>300</sup> Heinrich Berning, *Die Dystrophie*. (Stuttgart: Thieme, 1949), 170.

<sup>301</sup> Ferdinand Bertram "Über Ernährungsschäden vom Standpunkt der zentralen Regulationen Teil II," *Deutsche Medizinische Wochenschrift*, (Nr. 5/8, February 1948)

<sup>302</sup> For example, many argued that hunger was at the root of the two major epidemic threats of the postwar years. The sexual immorality implied by the threat of STDs was attributed to the hunger of German

The tenuous position of hunger within the German medical system, and doctors' discomfort with pinning down a definitive and quantifiable diagnostic system, predictably conflicted with the occupation forces' demands for clear statistics on civilian health.<sup>303</sup> The dilemma of definition was crucial for reasons reaching beyond simple medical knowledge and treatment; above all, it directly affected Allied rationing policies. The Allied forces all recognized the need to supply extra food to starving people, something officially confirmed in the 1949 Geneva Convention on human rights, which itself had been inspired by the suffering inflicted by the Nazis upon European civilians. German doctors recognized that the higher the percentage of Germans medically defined as starving, the more extra food the population would receive, as all the occupation forces recognized the authority of a medical diagnosis of 'hunger-disease.' While the zones differed in their specific policies for distributing supplemental rations, or *Zulagen*, variously rewarding hard labor, war service or camp internment, pregnancy, illness or injury, in all four zones a doctor's diagnosis of 'hunger-disease' resulted in *Zulagen*. In some areas of Germany, these extra 'hunger-rations' were received by more civilians than from all of those other sources of *Zulagen* combined.

Nonetheless, the statistics that doctors provided rarely reflected a wide-spread and devastating hunger, but instead created "a seemingly positive image [of health]."<sup>304</sup>

Eager to increase the number of patients who could be categorized as suffering from

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women driven to indiscriminate sex, even prostitution, in an attempt to fill either their own bellies or those of their families. Similarly, the tuberculosis of the immediate postwar years was named *Hungertuberkulose*, defined through its association with an inadequate diet. (There was in fact nothing medically distinctive about this form of tuberculosis.) Ellerbrock, *Healing Democracy*, 378

<sup>303</sup> This is by no means specific to Germany, but part of the nature of modern categories of hunger and food relief. In the words of the Indian writer Utsa Patnaik, "the entire field of the discussion of hunger and famine is a highly ideological one, and has been routinely characterized by the abandoning of the minimum academic criteria with respect to evidence and estimation." Utsa Patnaik, *The Republic of Hunger and Other Essays* (Gurgaon: Three Essays Collective, 2007), 117.

<sup>304</sup> "Untitled document" Düsseldorf Stadtarchiv NW 45 # 807

clinical starvation, German doctors regularly broadened its definition, incurring the wrath of Allied overseers who doubted the medical veracity of such diagnoses. In turn, German doctors were morally as well as medically outraged by the demands of the Allies that they prove their claims about the status of German health with charts, graphs and calculations, arguing that it was 'impossible' to reduce hunger to statistics or general overviews.<sup>305</sup> In fact, German doctors were divided as to how to measure malnourishment and starvation, constantly inventing new and more accurate (or more amenable to interpretation) ways of quantifying the severity of German hunger. Four primary criteria emerged: hunger edemas, mortality rates, body weight, and caloric intake. Predictably, these different statistical approaches all inspired hefty debates.

In their initial evaluations of the health of the German population, the occupying forces depended heavily on mortality rates. In all four zones, German doctors were required to keep statistics on their patients, and in cases of death to fill out a 'cause of death' certificate. The assumption of both Allied officials and German doctors was that mortality statistics would confirm large-scale and widespread starvation. However, as the case of Henriette Michel illustrated, doctors were hard-pressed to find individual deaths causally related to malnourishment. Doctors explained the disturbing lack of deaths in a variety of ways ranging from flawed statistics to a culturally specific shame over admitting to a hunger-death within a community.<sup>306</sup> Anthropologist Kurt Saller claimed that there were "relatively few 'pure hunger-deaths' in comparison to famines like

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<sup>305</sup> Helmut Gillmann "Über die Schwierigkeit der vollständigen Erfassung der unterernährungsschäden" *Deutsche Medizinische Wochenschrift*, (Nr. 9, March 1949.) See also "Betrifft: Hungerödeme" Historisches Archiv der Stadt Köln 646 #6

<sup>306</sup> A surprising number of German doctors and public officials argued that death statistics were artificially low because of German 'shame' over starving and the cultural stigma attached to weakness and passive suffering. (The tremendous public insistence on their hunger, of course, would seem to belie this argument at least to a degree.) See articles by Helmut Gillmann and various reports from Düsseldorf Stadtarchiv NW 45, the Historisches Archiv der Stadt Köln 646, and Stadtarchiv Dresden 11391.

those in China or India" because "the general high level of social development ensures that scarcity is distributed evenly throughout the entire population."<sup>307</sup> Such claims of cultural superiority held little sway with the critical Allied medical profession. The indisputable fact that civilian mortality was no higher during the Hunger Years than during the 'abundant' prewar years, with the exception of deaths among infants and the elderly, led doctors to reject this form of evaluation.<sup>308</sup>

While the relationship between hunger and mortality was open to interpretation, the presence of edemas – swollen limbs and joints associated with a lack of protein in the diet – was a clear sign of undernourishment. Allied doctors suggested measuring their presence in the population as an alternate method of quantifying the spread of hunger disease. Unexpectedly, edemas among the population were scarce, and their presence did not directly correlate with individual nutritional status; as a result, German doctors complained that isolating this symptom from other markers of hunger gave deceptively low numbers of the hungry.<sup>309</sup> Once again, medical statistics failed to support claims of widespread and pathological hunger, and German medical authorities concluded that "the number of hunger edema cases is clearly not an adequate measure of the level of undernourishment in the population."<sup>310</sup>

Body weight, the simplest and most quantifiable way to measure general health in postwar Germany, was the simplest criterion for establishing the presence or absence of

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<sup>307</sup> Karl Saller, *Kampf dem Hunger; eine Aussprache*. (Stuttgart: Hippokrates, 1948), 12.

<sup>308</sup> In fact, as German doctors began to point out as early as the 1950s, mortality for many common diseases actually decreased during the hunger years, including deaths due to heart disease, diabetes and cancer.

<sup>309</sup> "Betrifft: Hungerödeme" *Historisches Archiv der Stadt Köln* 646 #6

<sup>310</sup> Helmut Gillmann "Beitrag zum Problem der unterernährung aus den Erfahrungen einer ärztlichen Prüfstelle an Hand von 123,425 Fällen" *Ärztliche Wochenschrift*, (vol. 7/8 February 1948.)

hunger.<sup>311</sup> Requiring no equipment except for a scale, weighing was fast, easy, and cheap, and the results were admirably straight-forward: a single number. The medical meaning of specific body weights, however, was far from clear. The German medical profession gathered these numbers, and indeed proved statistically that there was a clear decrease in body weight in comparison with the mid and late 1930s. However, those earlier data became a source of controversy, as Allied doctors argued that Germans had previously been overweight, rather than currently underweight.<sup>312</sup> Because the 'normal' weight of German youth and adults was substantially above American standard weight, evaluating postwar German weights with American weight tables failed to reveal widespread undernourishment. Such disputes put into question the basic relationship of weight to hunger, and the German medical profession admitted that even the establishment of a basic 'normal weight' was beyond its capacities.<sup>313</sup>

Rather than using body weight as the dominant shorthand for summarizing the physical status of individual bodies, the most popular strategy for measuring undernourishment and representing German hunger ultimately became caloric intake and caloric requirements. A veritable obsession with calories made them the most common symbol of the relationship between Allied occupiers and the German civilian population.<sup>314</sup> However, "although few statistical measures seem more innocuous, the

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<sup>311</sup> See Ellerbrock, *Healing Democracy* and Dr. Karl Egen and Hubert Hosemann, "Die Bedeutung der Gewichtsprozentbestimmung in der Praxis und ihre Anwendung zur Feststellung des Untergewichts aller Altersklassen beiderlei Geschlechtes" *Deutsche Medizinische Wochenschrift* (Nr. 14, April 1949.)

<sup>312</sup> Significant underweight emerged only upon comparison of current statistics with those of Germans taken in 1932. This comparison revealed that 20-30% of young adults were underweight by 12%, older adults by 19%, and the elderly by 20%. (Ellerbrock, *Healing Democracy*", 309.)

<sup>313</sup> Helmut Gillmann "Über die Schwierigkeit der vollständigen Erfassung der Unterernährungsschäden" *Deutsche Medizinische Wochenschrift* (Nr. 9, March 1949)

<sup>314</sup> This reliance on the calorie as a method of measuring community health and nutrition is paradigmatically modern; for a discussion of its special significance for the post-World War II era, see Nick Cullather's 2007 article "The Foreign Policy of the Calorie."

calorie has never been a neutral, objective measure of the contents of a dinner plate."<sup>315</sup>

In occupied Germany, doctors assumed that the caloric intake of the population consisted exclusively of officially distributed rations, ignoring the importance of unofficial channels of food acquisition as well as of food aid and mass feeding programs. There was also little attention paid to food quality and food preparation. Despite such obvious limitations, the entire civilian population as well as the medical and occupation staff soon learned to evaluate their food situation not by references to nutritional quality or actual foods, but to numbers of calories.<sup>316</sup>

According to German experts, the biggest problem with the calorie as a way of evaluating mass nourishment was the fact that just because people were getting enough calories did not mean that they were well nourished, or even that they were not starving. Questions of vitamins, minerals, quality or adulteration of foods, let alone flavor or digestibility, were disregarded, and the result was a gross overestimation of the nutritional situation of Germans. (The opposite scenario, of underestimating German diet, was never discussed in the German sources, though they were in parallel Allied writings.) In addition, doctors were concerned that there was no medical definition of exactly how many calories an individual person needed to survive, let alone how many were needed for optimal performance.<sup>317</sup> Despite these gaps in knowledge, German

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<sup>315</sup> Cullather, "The Foreign Policy of the Calorie," 338.

<sup>316</sup> Dr. Heinrich Kraut worried that precisely because "everybody is speaking in every place and at every time of calories . . . there is the danger that through these less accurate 'calorie-discussions,' the deadly earnestness of the calorie-problem will be misrepresented [*die ungeheuere Ernst des Kalorienproblems zerredet wird.*]" Heinrich Kraut "der Nahrungsbedarf des körperlichen Arbeitenden" *Ärztliche Wochenschrift*, (vol. 31/32, August 1948.) See also Dr. Georg Lutz, "Vorschlag zur Schaffung eines Wertmessers der Ernährung, der mehr als bisher die für den Organismus wertbedingenden Eigenschaften der Nährstoffe berücksichtigt," *Deutsche Medizinische Wochenschrift*, (vol. 5/8, February 1948.)

<sup>317</sup> Heinrich von Hoesslin "Ernährungsfragen" *Deutsche Medizinische Wochenschrift*, (Nr. 43, October 1949.)

doctors agreed that "listing calorie amounts must absolutely be maintained."<sup>318</sup> The advantages of caloric evaluation were inarguable: by means of a single figure (usually the number of calories the rationing system allotted each individual per day), both the health status of an entire population, and by metonymous logic the entire occupation policy toward the Germans, could be summed up. Numbers like 800, 1200, 3200, took on enormous political significance: one meant certain death, one daily misery, one blissful satisfaction. Perhaps most useful of all, these numbers allowed simple and powerful, if inaccurate, comparisons with other nations and rationed communities.<sup>319</sup> The mathematic nature of such a caloric accusation made it hard to contradict. Unsurprisingly, however many calories the population received, occupied Germany was at the bottom of all comparative lists, sometimes by differences of thousands, other times hundreds, sometimes only dozens, of calories.<sup>320</sup>

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<sup>318</sup> Dr. Hans Kern "der Nährwertindex" *Deutsche Medizinische Wochenschrift*, (Nr. 29/30, July 1949.)

<sup>319</sup> It is difficult to evaluate Germans' nutritional status in comparison to other postwar countries, even disregarding those places, like the Ukraine, where true famine emerged after the war. Even the wealthier and less damaged of European nations took years to re-establish the food consumption levels of the pre-war era. Both Great Britain and Israel maintained austerity policies and extensive forms of rationing into the 1950s. (Orit Rozin "The Austerity Policy and the Rule of Law: Relations between Government and Public in Fledgling Israel." (Tartu 2007.) In contrast, the USSR abolished rationing as early as 1947, largely for propaganda purposes. In Poland during the war, official rations provided by the Nazis (often far less was actually available) covered 50% of the calories necessary for survival; for Jews it was 10%. (Stargardt, *Witnesses of War*, 128.) In a report on nutrition in Poland under the German occupation delivered at the European Conference of the Nutrition Society in 1947, Dr. A. Szczygiel estimated that "at least one-third of the population simply starved. The food situation did not improve rapidly after liberation, many additional difficulties having arisen from the large-scale migrations of the people to their original or to new homes." (A. Szczygiel, "Nutrition in Poland under the German Occupation." *Proceedings of the Nutrition Society*, vol. 5, Nr. 4, 1948, 279.) Food shortages continued throughout the postwar years; rationing coupons were eliminated in 1949 but major meat shortages reemerged in 1951, resulting in the decision to reintroduce coupons for food purchases for the next year. (Mariusz Jastrzab, "Rationing in Poland in 1944-1953." (Vienna 2008). In Japan, the other major Axis power, food shortages, the leading cause of death among Japanese soldiers during the war, worsened dramatically upon its closure. Average daily calories hovered around 1300, but often sank much lower thanks to typhoons or shipment problems. Poor crops and the severance of food imports meant that here as well 1945 to 1949 were years of extreme food shortages, causing the population to eat offal, gather wild herbs, and rely on international food aid to survive. Katarzyna Cwiertka, *Modern Japanese Cuisine: Food, Power and National Identity* (London: Reaktion, 2006), 133.

<sup>320</sup> See for example Alfred Strothe, *Weltproblem Ernährung: Beiträge zur Ernährungslage* (Hannover: Strothe, 1948), which listed the Germans as receiving 1500 calories followed by the Austrians with 2000

From a medical perspective, no sickness better explained the dismal condition of the German people better than hunger – its symptoms ideally correlated with the political and cultural status of the nation. All moral and psychological problems amongst the post-defeat population became "purely biological in nature, rooted in inadequate protein supplies."<sup>321</sup> Hunger was evoked to explain the social crisis and chaos of postwar Germany, the fact that families and friends no longer aided one another, and the abandonment of traditional German values.<sup>322</sup> The persistence of hunger threatened morality and explained the inexplicable emergence of large-scale crime in what was unabashedly claimed to be an otherwise 'law-abiding society.' With a medical logic that was never applied to the former forced laborers or DPs who 'terrorized' the postwar landscape, German doctors reminded the Allied legal system that "a person whose food supply cannot be guaranteed will become asocial, eventually a criminal."<sup>323</sup> If Germans seemed hostile, selfish, depressed, racist, reluctant to work, and still glorified the Third Reich and Hitler, thus displaying traits "otherwise not present in their character,"<sup>324</sup> these

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and the Italians with 2100. Based on such lists, the author claimed that Germany was "the only land whose population lives under the minimum necessary to survival." (ibid., 60) For similar claims, see also Ernst Günther Schenck, *Das menschliche Elend im 20. Jahrhundert* (Herford: Nicolai, 1965), 290. International reports of daily caloric consumption showed that, on average, Romania, Austria and Germany remained at the bottom of rationing calories throughout the immediate postwar years. This does not mean that these populations were the most poorly nourished in Europe. Other areas, including much of Central Europe and parts of the Mediterranean, had periods of time when caloric consumption dropped below that of these three countries.

<sup>321</sup> "Resolution der deutschen Ärzte zur deutschen Ernährungslage" Landesarchiv Berlin B Rep 012 #131

<sup>322</sup> This emphasis on the negative impact of hunger on the German *Gemeinschaft* was drawn directly from rhetoric from the Hunger Blockade of the First World War. A 1922 nutritional guide titled "A Frugal Diet Based on the Lessons Learned during War and Peace" explained that the hunger blockade ensured that "we have been transformed into a poor people, threatened in our freedom, health, strength and very existence. (Walter Kruse and Kurt Hintze, *Sparsame Ernährung nach Erhebungen im Krieg und Frieden*.) Hans Glatzel, in a 1939 dietary manual, explained in language eerily similar to that of defeated Germany six years later, "not only did that [the blockade] cause all thoughts to revolve exclusively around hunger and food, so that traditions, obligations, camaraderie and friendship suffered in the face of this misery as hunger poisoned the soul of the Volk – it also made deep wounds in the body of the Volk." Glatzel, *Nahrung und Ernährung; Altbekanntes und Neuerforschtes vom Essen*, 179-180

<sup>323</sup> Karl Saller, *Kampf dem Hunger: eine Aussprache*. (Stuttgart: Hippokrates, 1948), 12.

<sup>324</sup> Schulten, *Die Hungerkrankheit*, 43

were not responses to war or military defeat, the internalization of Nazi values, or signs of psychological disturbances, but rather symptoms of the hunger-disease.

### **Unwanted Appetites: Non-German Hunger during the Occupation**

The discourse of hunger that linked Germans in all four zones created a powerful myth of community and commonality, a strong basis for the formation of a collective identity ravaged by Nazism, war and division. However, in claiming hunger as a definitionally German attribute, Germans drew the lines of their community tightly, excluding some hungers as they incorporated others. Hunger brought Germans together, and it distinguished them from other, unwanted bodies. In public and private discourse, Germans constantly evaluated the nutritional status of foreigners and the occupation armies, seeing in plumpness a sort of mockery and in thinness the threat of competition. In all four zones, but particularly the French and Soviet ones, the population was convinced that the occupying forces were feeding themselves at the expense of the population, getting fat off of the sweat of the German farmers' brow.<sup>325</sup> Hunger dictated German responses to the DPs, forced laborers and other former victims of Nazi persecution who were in occupied Germany by the hundreds of thousands during the immediate postwar years. Ultimately, hunger became a means of asserting a German

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<sup>325</sup> Despite regrettably limited historical research on the French occupation, it was clearly the worst zone to live in in terms of rationing. The French, like the Soviets, were perceived not only as political but as racial threats, thanks to the presence of North African soldiers in the French occupation army during and after World War I (the *schwarze Schmach am Rhein*). Long-standing hatred for the French was so strong that German governing officials often refused to work with French officials; even in the face of widespread German corruption within the food distribution system, local officers "were prevented by a feeling of national honor and patriotic sentiment from turning their own fellow Germans over to the French military justice." (Karl-Heinz Rothenberger, *Die Hungerjahre nach dem Zweiten Weltkrieg*, 64). Germans often associated the French with the Soviet armies, both of which were seen as sexually predatory and particularly voracious, demanding unfair amounts of food from the local populations.

identity perilously close to being racialized.<sup>326</sup> There were infinite gradations within the overarching claim of German hunger, which was wielded defensively and offensively against the vast array of individuals and organizations that populated the postwar landscape.

Hunger was central to relations between Germans and the occupying forces. A 1947 Office of Military Government, United States (OMGUS) survey on German opinion on the food situation revealed that "public dispositions seem to be centered upon a set of ideas which may be interpreted as 'charges' against the Allies and, particularly in Berlin, against the Russians specifically."<sup>327</sup> With the exception of German Communists, the public sphere denied any relationship between Nazi food policies and current scarcity.<sup>328</sup> Neither the global food crisis with its accompanying widespread famine nor economic and political difficulties within Allied nations were seen as relevant to their own food problems. Instead, the food catastrophe was seen as the result of willfully negligent, even cruel, decisions of the Allied forces. They were responsible for deliberately forcing "the sacrifice of east Germany, the bread basket of the Reich, to Russia and its satellite Poland . . . the expulsion of almost 15 million ethnic Germans . . . and restrictions on the production of fertilizers along with the destruction of the relevant factories."<sup>329</sup> These three causes of German misery augmented one another. By depriving Germany of its

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<sup>326</sup> Ironically, a poem published in the journal *Natur und Nahrung* described hunger as "a shadow. Large and black and merciless. He floods all the lands. He spares no race." The word *Rasse* here, perhaps the most contaminated German word in the aftermath of the Third Reich, is doubly powerful here because it is used to emphasize German suffering; if Nazism carefully selected its victims, hunger is even crueler, recognizing no distinctions. Käthe Kamossa, "HUNGER" in *Natur und Nahrung* (Nr. 10/11 1947)

<sup>327</sup> Office of Military Government. Opinion Surveys Branch, *German Understanding of the Reasons for the Food Shortage*. (Berlin: OMGUS, 1947), 2.

<sup>328</sup> Destruction inflicted by the Nazis was commonly subsumed into the damage inflicted by the 'liberating' enemy armies. Although individual criminal reports mention the "wild SS-hordes destroying in senseless intoxication," (Otto Wagner, *Probleme der Ernährung und Versorgung nach dem Kriege* (Dresden: Rat d. Stadt, Nachrichtenamt, 1946), 3.) collective voice and memory blamed destruction and theft almost exclusively on foreigners and the occupying forces.

<sup>329</sup> Baade, *Amerika und der deutsche Hunger*, 9

primary source of grains, the Allies decreased the amount of food available. Secondly, the very people who had transformed this fertile land into the 'breadbasket' of Germany, ethnic German farmers, were driven out, depriving the land of its cultivators while increasing the number of mouths to feed within a newer, smaller land.<sup>330</sup> And finally, the lack of adequate supplies and infrastructure within these modest boundaries meant that even the 'brave German farmer' could not adequately feed the millions of bellies waiting in vain for the fruits of his labor. Topping off this litany of misery were the demands of "a million homeless non-Germans, who refuse to let themselves be repatriated, and do not want to work," and whom Allied policy had made the German populace responsible for feeding.<sup>331</sup>

Although reports and criminal records documented an enormous amount of criminality and violence perpetrated by Germans against other Germans, the population at large denied any culpability. The theft of food items by hungry German women and children was cited as an example of the vast suffering of an entire population; police reports inevitably blamed hunger for any and all German-committed crimes. Lack of food alone was responsible for the destruction of "all sense of mutual help and trust; in some cases family members have even stolen from one another, or burgled their neighbors."<sup>332</sup> In sum, "the feeling of community has been completely dissolved."<sup>333</sup> As one Allied survey tactfully put it, "those factors [of the food crisis] which are under

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<sup>330</sup> Baade goes so far as to blame the famine in postwar Poland on "the destruction which the Poles wrought as they drove the ethnic Germans out of these regions." *Ibid.*, 20

<sup>331</sup> Böhringer, *Zur Versorgungslage des europäischen Kontinents im Herbst 1945*, 11. Along with criticizing the Allies, there were vigorous attempts to defend Germans, especially German farmers and German bureaucrats, from any responsibility for the current food crisis. *No Reconstruction without Food; a Remedy for Near Starvation in Germany* (New York: 1948), 20.

<sup>332</sup> Cited in Paul Erker, *Ernährungskrise und Nachkriegsgesellschaft: Bauern und Arbeiterschaft in Bayern 1943-1953*, 178.

<sup>333</sup> *ibid.*, 178

German control are not as frequently mentioned as the more remote factors outside their control."<sup>334</sup> Although men, women and children all publicly acknowledged their participation in the acquisition and distribution of illegal food supplies, they blamed the existence of the black market and hunger-related crime entirely on 'foreigners.'<sup>335</sup> Refusing to recognize the significance of their own actions, of hoarding by farmers, corrupt collection and distribution by German officials, black market profiteers and widespread theft and pillaging, there developed an "increased sense that Germans were not only victims of the war and of Nazism, but also that they were the neediest, worst-off country in Europe."<sup>336</sup>

Former forced laborers, POWs, and Displaced Persons who similarly acted hungry were accused of simply 'acting' in accordance to their nature, a nature understood in Nazi racial terms. Russians who seized bread or cattle acted out of instincts of pure destruction, while Jews demanded food simply for the sake of humiliating Germans. The crimes of non-Germans, in particular of released POWs and DPs, were most frequently food crimes, the theft of grains, small animals, or cooked meals. However, the German victims of these crimes refused to attribute them to hunger, or at least to the sort of morally righteous hunger that they themselves were complaining about. In a particularly grotesque example of this disjuncture in perception, an outraged German interviewed several months after the liberation of the concentration camp Bergen-Belsen recalled with disgust the released 'Gypsy women,' who were considered "the very worst" of all the former prisoners because they dug the bulbs out of local flower gardens and devoured them. This act of desperate pillaging, suggesting the depths of starvation, was interpreted

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<sup>334</sup> Office of Military Government, *German Understanding of the Reasons for the Food Shortage*, 3

<sup>335</sup> Steege discusses German attitudes toward their own participation in the massive black market in Berlin.

<sup>336</sup> Steinert, *Nach Holocaust und Zwangsarbeit*, 189

as a sign of degeneration, greed and threatening appetites. These women, he claimed, ate flower bulbs not out of hunger, but because "they were their favorite."<sup>337</sup> Jews, Russians, DPs and Gypsies were always described as eating food that they had stolen from community inhabitants, and usually in a bestial manner: with their hands, pouring food on the ground and lapping it up, or devouring uncooked or rotten foods.

German speeches and articles, as well as memoirs and private interviews from the time, reveal that the hunger at the end of the war provided a framework for maintaining the categories of racial enemies that had framed the Nazi years: the Jews and the Russians. Both of these peoples had been historically represented as ravenous threats to the German people; they also had a demographic presence in occupied Germany on a scale that set this period apart from Germany both before and afterwards. Such conflicts camouflaged the fact that the assigned rations of German civilians and DPs differed little. The rations allotted to DPs were quite variable, changing over time, between zones, and between the different categories of people who made up the DP population.<sup>338</sup> In fact, by the end of 1946 the American Zone had officially eliminated extra food rations for former victims of Nazism. Indeed, the American push to distribute food relief 'regardless of race or religion or political history' was to the advantage of the German population and the disadvantage of former victims of Nazism. The German press supported this "principle of

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<sup>337</sup> Cited in Schulze, *Unruhige Zeiten: Erlebnisberichte aus dem Landkreis Celle 1945-1949*, 297

<sup>338</sup> In 1946, the 266,000 DPs in the British zones were fed the same rations as German civilians. The primary difference was a more liberal distribution of supplemental rations for workers. Former camp inmates and victims of Nazi persecution received an extra 400 calories a day. In the American Zone, DPs who were living in camps received food from American stocks, therefore of a higher quality, which made up 2000-2400 calories a day; those who could prove their status as persecuted were granted a daily supplement. (U.S.-British Bipartite Food and Agriculture Panel, *Food and Agriculture: U.S. - U.K. Zones of Germany*, 62) In the Soviet Zone, 'Victims of Fascism' were allotted more generous rations, but usually provided from German supplies. Here, rations were explicitly linked with ideology. While the Western zones promised to feed everyone equally, regardless of political past, the Soviets' feeding plan rewarded regime opposition and Communist activity with higher food allotments. See Landesarchiv Berlin B Rep 209 #1551

the equality of all sufferers, without disadvantaging the politically persecuted, nor former National Socialists, all of whom might find themselves in equivalent states of suffering."<sup>339</sup> This Western stance was also used as an effective critique of the Soviet rationing system, which continued to discriminate quite openly against individuals based on their social status and political activity during the Third Reich. However, even in the more biased Soviet Zone, DPs were not generally granted excessive food. Nonetheless, German civilians perceived them as overfed parasites or louses, working in cahoots with the occupation forces to starve Germans.<sup>340</sup>

The primary symbol of Jewish evil in occupied Germany was, however, not the anonymous DP but the Jewish American politician Henry Morgenthau, who had been Goebbels' "most detested Jew" during the final months of the war.<sup>341</sup> In what was one of the most direct legacies of Nazi wartime propaganda, the liberal Morgenthau was the object of intense and seemingly universal hatred in occupied Germany.<sup>342</sup> His plan to forcibly de-industrialize Germany and transform it into an agricultural land was seen as "the clear-cut expression of Jewish vindictiveness,"<sup>343</sup> representative of an ill-concealed desire on the part of both Jews and Americans for the 'decimation of the German

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<sup>339</sup> "Die Brücke der Menschlichkeit: ausländische Liebesgabensendungen für US-Zone" BArch R 86/3585

<sup>340</sup> These stereotypes are not specific to Germany. During World War II in Britain, the long queues for rationed foods were "hotbeds of anti-Semitism [due to the] belief, very generally held, that Jews 'always manage to get hold of more food than other people.'" Ina Zweiniger-Bargielowska, *Austerity in Britain: Rationing, Controls, and Consumption, 1939-1955* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 77.

<sup>341</sup> Shlomo Shafir, *Ambiguous Relations: The American Jewish Community and Germany since 1945* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1999), 38.

<sup>342</sup> In the summer of 1945, the German émigré Volkmar von Zuehlsdorff wrote to the Austrian Jewish author Hermann Broch suggesting that American Jews organize charity programs "for the hungry and starving German children . . . above all for the sake of the children, as well as in order to make it clear that Morgenthau does not 'speak for the Jews.'" Cited in Odile Jansen, "Wahrheit und Erinnerung. Die Spuren des Jahres 1945 in Texten von Christa Wolf" in Helmut Schmitz, *A Nation of victims?: representations of German wartime suffering from 1945 to the present.* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2007), 183

<sup>343</sup> Shafir, *Ambiguous Relations*, 37

people.<sup>344</sup> In fact, the leaked rumor of the Morgenthau Plan as the war was slowly coming to an end had given the NSDAP persuasive fodder for their propaganda. German reporters writing after the end of the war warned that American policy, under the leadership of Morgenthau, was "motivated by revenge or sympathy for the Communist program for rule or ruin in western Europe." Morgenthau's point-blank claim that "if Germany makes a serious attempt to feed herself, she can do so,"<sup>345</sup> blatantly contradicted popular opinion, and was predictably resented. Baade, one of the Federal Republic's most respected economists, calculated that this Jewish-authored plan was deliberately designed "to exterminate [*auszurotten*] half of the population of western Germany through hunger."<sup>346</sup>

Although Morgenthau's 'murderous plan' was abandoned by an America quickly convinced of the desirability of strengthening and fattening West Germany, popular opinion in the Western zones continued to see Jews as part of a larger conspiracy to destroy Germany through hunger. The vast majority of Jewish DPs were located in the British and American zones, where there was a widespread belief that the German Jews who had fled to the United States during the Third Reich had returned as members of the occupation army in order to extract revenge on the population. In fact, these communities of mostly Central European Jews included some former concentration camp victims but were mainly made up of young men and women who had survived by fleeing

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<sup>344</sup> Right-wing British revisionist historian David Irving dedicated an entire book to the plan, claiming that "the Morgenthau plan would have meant the death of about 10 million Germans due to starvation and disease during the first two years after the end of the war, in addition to the one million who died in the air raids and the three million who died while being expelled from the Eastern regions." David John Irving, *Der Morgenthau-Plan: 1944-45* (Bremen: Wieland Soyka, 1986), 7.

<sup>345</sup> Henry Morgenthau, *Germany is our Problem*, (New York: Harper & brothers, 1945), 56.

<sup>346</sup> Baade, *Amerika und der deutsche Hunger*, 5

to the USSR or by going 'underground.' In an ironic and unwanted consequence of Hitler's Final Solution.

it often seemed . . . to both Germans and the American military government, that Jews in post-Nazi Germany were more present than ever before, increasing in numbers and demands daily, populating the black market bazaars, demonstrating loudly and sometimes violently for emigration permits, even outnumbering Germans in small towns in Bavaria or Hesse.<sup>347</sup>

They were caught in the limbo of occupied Germany, desperate to leave, unable or unwilling to return to their place of origin, and with no easy way of getting to a new home. Uninterested in the complex motivations of Jewish survivors for remaining on German soil, civilians perceived their presence as a threat, assuming a vengeful desire to 'take' food from hungry German women and children.

As a result, hunger emerged as an important space of conflict between the (categorically hungry) Germans and the (categorically non-hungry) foreigners. Historian Atina Grossmann has carefully traced the complex ways in which food served as a site of negotiations between Displaced Persons, non-Jewish Germans and the occupation authorities, as these various hungry peoples competed for recognition of past and present suffering. With such a multiplicity of claims to hunger, "differential access to food supplies or to goods that could be exchanged for food became a key gauge of the occupiers' favor,"<sup>348</sup> with the psychological and social consequences of such recognition as important as the biological benefit of increased allotments of marmalade or small portions of ersatz-coffee. In these struggles for hunger-recognition, German civilians often drowned out the assertions of former victims of Nazism, denying the fact that, of all the real and imagined hungers of Hitler's Germany, it was not the casserole-cooking

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<sup>347</sup> Grossmann, *Jews, Germans, and Allies*, 164

<sup>348</sup> *Ibid.*, 175

German housewife or the ascetically vegetarian Führer, but the starved inmates of Auschwitz who asked: "how could one imagine not being hungry? The Lager is hunger: we ourselves are hunger, living hunger."<sup>349</sup>

Disinterested in 'foreign' hunger, German civilians resented and felt threatened by the perceived 'special treatment' allotted Jews and other camp survivors. Especially the hotly desired care packages sent to DPs by Jews in other countries and organized by UNRAA and the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, convinced hunger observers that they were getting more than their 'fair share' of food and political support.<sup>350</sup> A largely imagined but powerful conviction in global sympathy with the Jewish plight alongside callous disregard for the German one, encouraged the proliferation of stereotypes of fat, greedy, and treacherous Jews. Nazi representations of Jews as fat leeches or ticks who fed off of the German national body implied that their corpulence was the cause of German thinness. Such imagery provided German civilians with a vocabulary for expressing both the extremities of their own hunger, and their tremendous discomfort with the presence of large numbers of foreign Jews on their soil. After all, the idea that Jews were responsible for German suffering, and particularly German hunger, was one of the most important metaphors of Nazi anti-Semitism.<sup>351</sup>

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<sup>349</sup> Primo Levi, *Survival in Auschwitz: The Nazi Assault on Humanity* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1996), 74.

<sup>350</sup> Grossmann, *Jews, Germans, and Allies*, 112

<sup>351</sup> European Jews' traditional engagement in the financial and trade sectors meant that they were often blamed for high prices and for hoarding or unfairly selling foods in times of shortages. After the war, Germans were not the only ones who blamed Jews for widespread hunger. In much of the Western world, the postwar international food crisis was fodder for transnational anti-Semitism. The Swiss writer Borge Jensen, for example, wrote a British booklet entitled "The World Food Shortage: a Communist-Zionist Plot." With language echoing Hitler's discourse on food control, the book linked Communism and Judaism by claiming that "permanent famine and food-rationing were two of the outstanding features of the immense areas controlled directly by the Jewish bureaucracy of Moscow, and, ultimately, by the Jewish international banking houses of Wall and Pine Street, New York." (Jensen, *The "World-Food-Shortage": A Communist-Zionist Plot*, 6). For a less overtly anti-Semitic version of the same arguments from occupation Germany, see *Warum das Volk hungert! Die Lüge von der Welternährungskrise* BArch R86 / 3585

Local populations were particularly outraged by being required to feed DPs who remained on German soil at the same time that DPs themselves forcefully demanded such provisions: "they, who are guilty of our sufferings and tortures, they who robbed us of our fortunes, they must be forced to feed us during the time we are compelled to stay in this country in order to make it possible for us to regain our health."<sup>352</sup> Despite extensive reeducation programs and a slowly improving diet, in 1947 85% of Germans living in the American Zone did not think that Germany should feed Displaced Peoples, including former inmates of concentration camps.<sup>353</sup> Germans who lived near DP camps continued to complain that survivors "demanded that we [Germans] feed them," and were convinced that 'for the Jews' "of course it had to be the tastiest and the best. Sausage and ham for breakfast."<sup>354</sup> Former camp inmates were explicitly disassociated from the very category of hunger: "the former camp inmates were really quite well fed. Especially when they began to get extra rations, they started to burst at the seams. If they didn't like their food, they would scream: what kind of food is this! We ate better in the camp."<sup>355</sup> Another local inhabitant, recalling his visits to Bergen-Belsen during the war, claimed that most of the inmates there were adequately nourished: "you saw some that were scrawny, but you also saw those that were well fed."<sup>356</sup>

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<sup>352</sup> Cited in Grossmann, *Jews, Germans, and Allies*, 175

<sup>353</sup> Steinert, *Nach Holocaust und Zwangsarbeit*, 190

<sup>354</sup> Cited in Schulze, *Unruhige Zeiten*, 121. In these interviews were frequent assertions that Jews insisted on seizing pork products from Germans. There are two possible interpretations of this German fantasy. On the one hand, pork was particularly popular amongst non-Jewish Germans, especially during the fat shortages of the Hunger Years. On the other hand, the fact that observant Jews did not eat pork was one of the most widely known aspects of Judaism in central Europe, and central to the shape of European anti-Semitism. For a brilliant discussion of the importance of pigs and pork for Jewish-Christian relations in Europe, see Claudine Fabre-Vassas' *The Singular Beast: Jews, Christians, and the Pig*.

<sup>355</sup> Cited in Schulze, *Unruhige Zeiten*, 121

<sup>356</sup> *ibid.*, 305

With a complete lack of empathy, one German remembered with anger that a former camp inmate, the Jew 'E', "always had a lot of bread, he still had the [rationing] cards of all of his murdered relatives, he had four of them. Therefore he could bargain with the extra supplies, he had 4-5 extra bread loaves."<sup>357</sup> In this German's angry eyes, the profound wrongness of Jews having food while Germans were hungry negated any demand for historical awareness or contextualization; the speaker of this sentence, for example, made no attempt to deny the murder of this Jewish man's family at the hands of the Nazis, nor did he try to justify it. However, it was only relevant insofar as it allowed a Jew imagined access to foodstuffs. Anti-Semitism took on a specifically postwar form. By underplaying or simply denying the reality of hunger as part of the Jewish war experience, Germans denied the necessity of their extra food allotments, and blamed their current hunger on Jewish appetites.

The very presence of definitionally over-fed Jews was causally linked to starving (non-Jewish) Germans, and associated with presumed Jewish control over the massive black market that Germans often blamed for the extremity of their hunger.<sup>358</sup> The sight of Jewish food consumption was a slap in the face for German civilians who complained to Allied authorities that "our women with infants and young children have no butter, but there [in the DP camp Zeilheim] it is sold on the black market in huge quantities."<sup>359</sup> The fact that (non-Jewish) Germans were the main buyers of black market foods was not mentioned in such equations of hunger and culpability. Instead, Jews were envied as the

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<sup>357</sup> *ibid.*, 287 It is worth mentioning that this scenario is implausible; Jews during the Third Reich did not have rationing cards that would have been recognized after the war.

<sup>358</sup> Angelika Eder, "Jüdische displaced persons im deutschen Alltag," in *Überlebt und unterwegs: jüdische Displaced Persons im Nachkriegsdeutschland*, (Frankfurt: Campus Verlag, 1997) 176.

<sup>359</sup> Cited in Jutta Heibel, *Vom Hungertuch zum Wohlstandsspeck: die Ernährungslage in Frankfurt am Main 1939-1955* (Frankfurt am Main: Verlag Waldemar Kramer, 2002), 192.

recipients of undeserved foreign aid and resented as the presumed lynchpins of the black market that was both feeding and starving the native population of occupied Germany.

Hated as Jewish Displaced People were in the mainstream German imagination, it was the Russian army that was most feared. Having heard "horrifying tales of German victimization and Soviet barbarism since the last years of the war," Germans were primed to see in the Soviet occupation a threat of epic proportions.<sup>360</sup> The unique status of Soviets in postwar Germany complicated the traditionally hostile emotions felt by Germans toward 'the Russians.' They were the only occupying power whose population was already in Germany in substantial numbers at the end of the war in the form of POWs and forced laborers. Indeed, the sight of Soviet POWs in a miserable state of health and visibly starving was more familiar to German civilians than that of Jews, Gypsies, or other victims of Nazi atrocities. While Jews had traditionally been thought of as fat and greedy, Russians had always been portrayed as hungry; indeed, during the Third Reich, Soviet soldiers were the only category of victim deliberately targeted with starvation as a direct method of mass murder.<sup>361</sup> While the world demanded that Germans accept guilt and responsibility for the fate of European Jews, little mention was made of a specific burden of guilt toward Russians – except, of course, by the Soviet occupiers, something that only increased resistance to the 'red hordes.' Seeing Soviet soldiers reminded Germans of the horrors of which their former state was guilty (the starvation and murder of millions of Russians) and at the same time of the terrors that they feared they would be forced to endure (starvation at the hands of Russians.) In postwar Germany, Soviets represented the ultimate reversal of victim and perpetrator

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<sup>360</sup> Moeller, *War Stories: The Search for a Usable Past in the Federal Republic of Germany*, 32

<sup>361</sup> Especially Christian Gerlach has done important work on this topic.

roles, simultaneously invoking hatred toward the conqueror and the resentment, disgust and fear of revenge felt toward former victims.

During the transitional years between the Third Reich and the formation of the two German states in 1949, German civilians relied upon a racially defined understanding of the very concept and meaning of hunger that singled out the 'Slav' as the person most intimately associated with hunger.<sup>362</sup> Slavs were always hungry but never hungering, a paradoxical model that had long inspired German nutritionists to look to what they imagined as traditional Russian dietary habits when looking for ways to stretch rations and stave off starvation.<sup>363</sup> In the Soviet Zone and throughout occupied Germany, civilians' descriptions of their own suffering relied upon race-based Nazi propaganda imagery of the horrors of defeat: drunken raping and pillaging, theft, and the senseless destruction of food supplies. Throwing grenades in fishing ponds, burning silos, slaughtering cattle, brewing vodka rather than allowing grain to be used for bread were all definitionally 'Russian' acts. In addition to these 'random' acts of violence, Russians were perceived as particularly voracious eaters, consuming vast amounts of food in an inhuman manner— stuffing themselves with raw onions and partially-plucked chickens – all stolen from the German population. The Health Ministry in the industrial city of Chemnitz, for example, blamed "high-level undernourishment on the part of the entire

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<sup>362</sup> This idea of race-specific varieties of hunger has a long medical tradition in the West. According to this theory, certain races of people are prone to starvation, while others cannot suffer from it. The most familiar application of this theory is the argument that Russians and Asians, particularly the Chinese and Indians, evolved in 'lands of eternal famine,' and therefore were either accustomed or inured to the pains of hunger. See Amy Bentley's *Eating for Victory* for a discussion of this theory in the development of American food relief after the war.

<sup>363</sup> Respected anthropologist Kurt Saller, known for his resistance to the Third Reich, in fact advocated the reputed Russian dietary strategy of relying on sunflower seeds, wrongfully "mocked by us as Stalin's chocolate," as a food that "satisfies the fat and protein requirements of the simple Russian worker," and apparently ensured that the Russian peasant "be healthy, have excellent teeth, high productivity, and sadly be biologically superior to our own rural population." Saller, *Kampf dem Hunger; eine Aussprache.*, 16-17. During the Third Reich as well there had been considerable interest in the possibility of using 'Russian' sunflower seeds as a cheap staple food.

population" on the "very wide-reaching confiscation of the in any case very minimal [food] supplies by the Russian occupation troops."<sup>364</sup> The idea that Russians caused German hunger was predictable and, in a sense, inevitable.<sup>365</sup>

This belief had a profound impact on daily life in the Soviet Zone.<sup>366</sup> German civilians inevitably viewed Soviet policy with skepticism, fear and anger. Hunger metaphorically divided civilians from their Communist leaders rather than linking them together in a shared network of suffering. When activists and labor organizers insisted that Germans needed to 'work for their food,' that 'Hitler was responsible for their hunger,' or that 'other people are hungrier than you are,' popular outrage was guaranteed. Claims that the situation was as bad or worse in the Western zones were dismissed as lies; explanations that widespread hunger was due largely to German (Nazi) activities during the war, as well as to a global food crisis, were regarded as 'commie propaganda.' Soviet officials complained that the Berlin population, who received the best rations in the Zone, did not believe that the food that they received came from Russians; they bartered with local farmers for grain without realizing that seeds for those crops had been

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<sup>364</sup> "Staatliches Gesundheitsamt Chemnitz an Landesverwaltung Sachsen" Stadtarchiv Dresden 11391 #1758. See also "Schreiben zur 'Information an Genossen Walter Ulbricht' von 15.6.1945," in Dieter Hanauske, *Die Sitzungsprotokolle des Magistrats der Stadt Berlin 1945/46 Teil 1* (Berlin: Verlag A. Spitz, 1995) fn. 7, 136-137

<sup>365</sup> Although not directly invoked by Germans, the dreadful memories of Stalingrad confirmed Russia's reputation as a deadly wasteland of freezing cold and insatiable hunger. The 'slaughter of Stalingrad,' the battle generally understood as the turning of the tide against the NSDAP and cause of a collapse of popular support for the war, caused the death of hundreds of thousands of German soldiers. The vast majority of deaths were due to starvation and exposure. Here, for the first time, Germans "experienced the fate that they . . . had been supposed to accord to the Soviet population. Few soldiers recognized this. When survivors remember hunger, it is almost always their own hunger, in POW camps and during the first postwar years." (Rolf-Dieter Müller, "Stalingrad: Was wir an Hunger ausstehen müssen, könnt Ihr euch gar nicht denken: eine Armee verhungert" in Wolfram Wette and Sabine R. Arnold, *Stalingrad: Mythos und Wirklichkeit Einer Schlacht* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer-Taschenbuch-Verl., 1993), 145.)

<sup>366</sup> Historians have confirmed the suspicion of the population of the Soviet Zone that "leading western officials showed greater understanding for the need to improve the food supply" than their eastern counterparts. (Landsman, *Dictatorship and Demand: The Politics of Consumerism in East Germany*, 28) This chapter suggests some possible causes, contexts and consequences for these different responses to German postwar hunger.

delivered from the East.<sup>367</sup> When rations finally improved, the population was convinced that "*der Russe* [the Russian] is improving rations only because elections are coming up, and [he] is trying to influence the population."<sup>368</sup> Deeply rooted anti-Communism meant that Soviet food policies, reparations and especially collectivization, were feared as attempts to permanently 'Sovietize' German society, and associated with present and future hunger.

Although Soviet seizure of food stuffs (primarily grain, sugar and potatoes) did take place in 1945 and 1946, Soviet Military officials' recognition that the Germans had inadequate supplies gradually ended direct food siphoning.<sup>369</sup> Nonetheless, local populations remained convinced that they lacked supplies because their crops were being sent to the USSR long after that hungry country had become a net exporter of foodstuffs. More significant than outright food theft was the Soviet seizure of farm equipment and farm animals, as well as much of the mechanical technology necessary for processing foods. While such reparation-seizures of agricultural equipment gradually tapered off, their impact was slower to repair; these dismantlings remained an easy object of blame for inadequate food supplies for years. The most hated of Soviet policies, however, was the collectivization of farmlands, which began in September of 1945. Indeed, despite

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<sup>367</sup> Donna Harsch argues that the female population's rejection of the SED, and their refusal to support the Communist party during early elections, was rooted in the Communists' refusal to take 'domestic concerns,' particularly food supplies and household work, seriously. Donna Harsch, *Revenge of the Domestic: Women, the Family, and Communism in the German democratic Republic* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007) Harsch as well as Atina Grossmann have also discussed the crucial impact of the fantasy and reality of Soviet rape for postwar reconstruction in both East and West.

<sup>368</sup> Cited in Paul Steege, *Black Market, Cold War*, 88.

<sup>369</sup> Nikita Perrov "SMAD, deutsche Selbstverwaltung und sowjetisierung Ostdeutschlands" in Andreas Hilger, Mike Schmeitzner and Clemens Vollnhals, *Sowjetisierung oder Neutralität? Optionen sowjetischer Besatzungspolitik in Deutschland und Österreich 1945-1955* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2006.) Although the Soviet army was particularly active in claiming German goods, both out of a sense of vengeance and in accord with the Soviet policy of reparations, all four armies engaged in pillaging, destruction, and arbitrary seizures of German foods and goods immediately after the war. For complaints about the British forces stealing food, see Stadtarchiv Düsseldorf RW 175 # 9.

enormous propaganda to educate the population about the advantages of this policy, German Communists remained frustrated and angry over popular resistance to the redistribution of agricultural lands. Rejecting assertions that it would improve food production, German farmers equated collectivization with institutionalized starvation, remembering the mass hunger deaths under Stalin rather than the millions of Russians starved under Hitler.<sup>370</sup> One anonymous letter-writer, mortally frightened by the threat of land distribution, accused the Soviet occupying forces of having an agenda of "pure mass murder . . . now the poor starved skeletons are so unobtrusively and secretly dealt with that their own neighbors don't even notice when another one dies."<sup>371</sup>

This imagined landscape, littered with the discarded bodies of emaciated German victims of a Soviet/Allied/Jewish vengeance, provided an important originary foundation for the two postwar German nations. During occupation, the German populations of all four zones compared Western pity and aid with a Soviet rhetoric of self-help; a shared understanding of the uniqueness and scale of German hunger conflicted with a reality split between conflicting external interpretations of that same hunger. For all zones, the experience of hunger allowed German civilians to insert themselves into the postwar order, an order that was based largely on the calorie. Individual hunger served as a public, recognized form of punishment, repentance, and redemption. It also provided familiar vocabulary and imagery for Germans to frame their new status as a defeated and divided nation. Finally, it provided a means of separating an old (Nazi) Germany from a

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<sup>370</sup> Since its founding in 1947, the West German news magazine *Der Spiegel* ran extensive coverage of the USSR and the Eastern Block. Although not overtly ideological, the journal described the 'Famine-Land' of the Soviets in detail, reporting cannibalism and mass starvation due to land reform and a typically Communist disregard for life. See, for example, the May 1947 (#20) issue which was dedicated to German hunger.

<sup>371</sup> Cited in Rainer Behring, "SMAD, Alltagserfahrungen mit der sowjetischen Besatzungsmacht" in Andreas Hilger, Mike Schmeitzner and Clemens Vollnhals, *Sowjetisierung oder Neutralität?*

new (capitalist or socialist) one by wiping the population clean of all politics and all history, an embodied version of the *Stunde Null* or Zero Hour. Hunger seemed a point of both ending and beginning, a state of transition that permanently changed the bodies and souls of those who experienced its purifying pain.

After the official end of occupation in 1949, both new German states simultaneously celebrated and denied German hunger. Relegating hunger to the past (albeit different pasts), both capitalism and socialism wanted to claim the end of hunger as one of their greatest successes. They did so, however, in different ways, creating different narratives of postwar development and different networks of food trade and food aid. These differences, in turn, encouraged the creation of different official memories of the Hunger Years. Germany began the Second World War with a vision of solving its own imagined hunger at the price of the lives of those it deemed unworthy to eat. World War II ushered in the Cold War, an era when food and hunger were central to domestic developments, global relations and political conflict in Germany and around the world. The following chapter explores some of the ways in which the FRG and the GDR approached the topic of hunger, developing distinctly socialist and capitalist models for understanding its causation and solution. By focusing on the ways in which the two postwar German states maintained the category of hunger in popular awareness, this chapter reveals the legacy of hunger, not only for Germans, but for the postwar and the Cold War world.

## Chapter 4

### Cold War Hungers: Battles over Food between Socialism and Capitalism

Less than a year after the end of the war, Winston Churchill delivered a speech that was to define the state of the world for the next half-century. On March 5<sup>th</sup>, 1946 the former Chancellor and leader of the British war effort against Nazi Germany spoke in Fulton, Missouri to an audience of 40,000 Americans, evoking the horrors of the past war and expressing thankfulness for the Allied victory. Quickly, however, he came to his main point: fear of what the future held in store. At that point, the great orator declaimed, he "shudder[ed] to visualize what is actually happening to millions now and what is going to happen in this period when famine stalks the earth. None can compute what has been called 'the unestimated sum of human pain.'" Churchill went on to reassure his audience that "there is enough for all. The earth is a generous mother; she will provide in plentiful abundance food for all her children if they will but cultivate her soil in justice and in peace." However, this vision of shared abundance was ruptured by the fact that "from Stettin in the Baltic to Trieste in the Adriatic, an iron curtain has descended across the [European] Continent."<sup>372</sup> Citing occupied Germany and in particular the Soviet Zone as decisive for the future of Europe and the world, Churchill declared both the incompatibility of the Soviet Union with the West, and the grave dangers represented by

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<sup>372</sup> Sir Winston Churchill's "The Sinews of Peace" in Robert Rhodes James (ed.), *Winston S. Churchill: His Complete Speeches 1897-1963 Volume VII: 1943-1949* (New York: Chelsea House Publishers, 1974) 7285-7293.

Communism and the newly emerging Eastern Bloc. While Churchill's predictions and fears were by no means new, this speech is widely seen as the first announcement of a new postwar balance of power, an official declaration of the Cold War. The speech was not only a public delineation of a new state of permanent war; it also set the terms for this global conflict. The British statesman claimed defeated and divided Germany as the heart of this new struggle, and predicted that food would be one of its primary weapons.

International interest in German civilian hunger had been embedded within larger fears of global power distribution since the war had begun. Allied aid policy to Germany was shaped by recognition of the historical relevance of hunger for the development of modern Europe, and especially for modern Germany's descent into Nazism. Over the course of the occupation, the American and British governments became increasingly concerned with the political and economic consequences of German hunger. Allied policy makers generally believed in an economic explanation for Hitler's rise to power: the Depression and low employment rates had given Hitler and his cronies a foothold in society, and it was promises of jobs and full bellies that won them the fanatical support of the population.<sup>373</sup> As discussed in Chapter Two, the relationship between food and Nazi ideology had in fact been far more complex than the simple abolishing of hunger.

However, such subtleties became unimportant in the charged postwar environment and in the face of a looming global food catastrophe. When narrating their recent past, Germans said that they had been hungry before the Third Reich, and they believed that Hitler had fed them well – and this was to become the standard Western explanation for the Nazi rise to power. This explanation, in fact, became part of the West's Cold War arsenal, as shared origins in hunger provided a convenient link between Communism and Nazism;

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<sup>373</sup> Alfr. Strothe, *Weltproblem Ernährung: Beiträge zur Ernährungslage*, 10.

the USSR's 1917 revolution was, along with the French Revolution, seen as paradigmatic examples of the revolutionary potential of hunger.

The assumption that hungry people were drawn to Communism lay behind the American military's steady push to improve civilian rations in occupied Germany. In the face of international sympathy with the plight of German civilians, and a growing consensus over the severity of the Communist threat, the U.S. had abandoned its early policy of maintaining a low dietary level in Germany as punishment for initiating the war. General Lucius Clay, Military Governor of the U.S. Zone, famously warned that

there is no choice between becoming a Communist on 1500 calories and a believer in democracy on 1000 calories. It is my sincere belief that our proposed [low] ration allowance in Germany will not only defeat our objectives in middle Europe but will pave the road to a Communist Germany.<sup>374</sup>

Because Germany was perceived as central to the global balance of power in a way that other, hungrier countries were not, it received disproportionate amounts of Western food aid. In the fall of 1946, the American occupation authorities publicly declared that only the improvement of the general quality of life and the strengthening of the free market through increased food supplies could ensure that Germany "be inoculated against the virus of the totalitarian eastern economic reform."<sup>375</sup>

There were directly self-serving economic agendas at stake as well. Of all the occupying forces, the United States was the only one with a vested interest in increasing food exports to Germany, thanks to an unprecedented postwar explosion in agricultural productivity. Of the other occupation authorities, formerly divided and occupied France was in a state of almost complete economic crisis after the war; the USSR faced the

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<sup>374</sup> Cited in Günter J. Trittel, *Hunger und Politik*, 49. This argument was also popular amongst German politicians, who successfully used the threat of increased Communist sympathies to negotiate for increased rations from the Allies.

<sup>375</sup> "Pressespiegel. Ausland: Mit dollars gegen Truppen" BArch DL1 / 68

overwhelming task of reconstructing its own devastated country in the face of widespread food shortages. Britain was under such economic pressures, largely from the costs of German occupation, that it was forced to expand its wartime rationing programs after the end of the war.<sup>376</sup> In contrast, American food aid to Europe and especially to occupied Germany "was conceived simultaneously as a solution to domestic farm-support problems and as a part of Cold War economic and political strategy."<sup>377</sup> Although Americans initially complained about German lack of appreciation for these imports – "the arrival of tons of American food in Germany seems to make absolutely no impression. According to reports reaching the office, the population accepts the incoming shipments of white flour from America with little appreciation or thanks"<sup>378</sup> – by the end of the Occupation Years American food aid had succeeded in transforming German attitudes toward the USA. It was America that came to be remembered as almost single-handedly responsible for 'feeding the Germans,' ending the Hunger Years, and enabling the reconstruction of the Federal Republic.<sup>379</sup> The event that epitomized this relationship and that was retrospectively known as 'the first major battle of the Cold War' was the Berlin Airlift.<sup>380</sup> The Airlift did more than simply provide foodstuffs to the frightened and hungry population of West Berlin. It established a Cold War vocabulary

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<sup>376</sup> In 1946, bread rationing was first introduced, and a year later potatoes were added. Great Britain did not finally end all food rationing until 1954. This rationing plan was crucial to the Labor Party's postwar agenda for British reconstruction, and, as Ina Zweiniger-Bargielowska argues, a major contributing factor for the collapse of the Left in postwar Britain.

<sup>377</sup> Friedmann, "The Political Economy of Food: The Rise and Fall of the Postwar International Food Order," 260

<sup>378</sup> Cited in Paul Erker, *Ernährungskrise und Nachkriegsgesellschaft: Bauern und und Arbeiterschaft in Bayern 1943-1953*, 60.

<sup>379</sup> Historian Johannes Steinert has noted that the few historical studies of foreign aid to postwar Europe focus almost exclusively on aid provided to Germans rather than to camp survivors. Interestingly within Germany, American aid is most remembered, while British aid, though it began earlier than its American counterpart, is scarcely remembered. Steinert, *Nach Holocaust und Zwangsarbeit*. 199

<sup>380</sup> Michael L. Hughes, "'Berlin in the Balance, 1945-1949: The Blockade, The Airlift, The First Major Battle of the Cold War' by Thomas Parrish (Book Review)", *The Journal of Military History* 63, no. 2 (Apr., 1999), 494-495.

of food and hunger that had particular purchase in divided Germany, allowing the categories of East and West to constitute themselves and one another through manipulations of the concept of hunger.

### **Starving Berlin: Hunger as Cold War Salvation**

The Berlin Airlift of 1948-49, one of the most popular food aid programs of the twentieth century, was the climax of American food aid to postwar German civilians. It also remains, in the words of historian William Stivers, "one of the most ambiguous and least understood events of the Cold War era."<sup>381</sup> The Soviet government in the Eastern Zone of Berlin, in an attempt to force the economic consolidation and unification of the city, severed most land-bound transport lines linking West Berlin to the other Western zones. West Berliners themselves were not limited in their personal travel and could move freely; however, goods could no longer be delivered by truck or by train. Immediately after the beginning of the blockade, West Germans and Western observers linked the plan with mass starvation. In response to these fears, America, later joined by Britain, developed the idea of an 'airlift' or *Luftbrücke* as a way of supplying the population with additional supplies. Given the limited amount of food actually brought in by the West, and the consistent availability of food in blockaded Berlin from Soviet and private sources, it is unlikely that the Airlift actually prevented starvation. However, it was to fulfill a far more important and long-lasting ideological purpose.

Beginning in June of 1948 and officially called off in May of 1949, the Western airlift of supplies, primarily coal and food, to the inhabitants of the Western Zone of

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<sup>381</sup> William Stivers, "The Incomplete Blockade: Soviet Zone Supply of West Berlin, 1948-49," *Diplomatic History* 21, no. 4 (October, 1997), 571.

Berlin by means of an almost constant stream of planes, was a pivotal moment in the history of both postwar German states. By focusing on the ways in which the program was symbolically understood by Germans and the American and Soviet occupation forces, and examining how it solidified previously held expectations as well as allowing for new possibilities, I argue that the Airlift was both part of a longer tradition of German hunger-fantasies and at the same time successfully reframed this older discourse within the international context of the Cold War.<sup>382</sup> The Airlift provided an ideal opportunity for Germans to illustrate, in front of the eyes of the world, the redemptive power of their hunger. This was the first moment when the majority of the German population and the (Western) Occupation forces were in complete agreement, united by their anti-Communism, distrust and fear of Russians, and above all by their conviction of the scale and significance of German hunger.

From its inception, the Airlift was intended to politicize food consumption in both Eastern and Western zones of the city. The German civilian's choice of what to eat became not just representative of his or her political identity but constitutive of it. At the same time, the Airlift was a global media spectacle that provided a stage upon which to perform, and resolve, German hunger. Perhaps the most important aspect of this mediated hunger was the Western insistence that the goal of the Soviet blockade was to starve the people of West Berlin. As late as 1999, an American military historian described the Airlift as "a brutal method to change western policy by starving 2.5 million West Berlin civilians."<sup>383</sup> This was, of course, not accurate. Instead the blockade was

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<sup>382</sup> There are several monographs on the logistical and political debates surrounding the Airlift; the most recent, if highly polemical, one is Andrei Cherny, *The Candy Bombers: The Untold Story of the Berlin Airlift and America's Finest Hour* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 2008).

<sup>383</sup> Hughes, "Berlin in the Balance, 1945-1949," 494-495

intended to force the population of the western zones to integrate themselves economically into the Soviet Zone by purchasing food products and other necessities from Eastern sources. In fact, as the Eastern Zone's media emphasized throughout the blockade, both the Soviet government and the city leadership of the Eastern half of the city "repeatedly offered to supply the entire city with food and coal."<sup>384</sup> The Berlin newspaper *Berliner Zeitung* summarized the situation simply: "one cannot speak in honesty of a blockade by the Russians, rather of a self-blockade."<sup>385</sup>

This was, in effect, largely true. The Soviets did offer to feed the population of West Berlin, and accumulated large supplies of food and coal before initiating the blockade in expectation of a barrage of citizens from the Western Zone. The Western sections of the city acknowledged these offers but successfully discouraged their population from taking advantage of them by means of an extensive propaganda campaign. Both Germans and Americans shared a common suspicion of Soviet ability and desire to feed West Berliners. Rumors of poisoned and rotten food distributed by the Communists, as well as Western news reports describing the lives of Germans in the Eastern sector as marked by misery, filth, and starvation, made Soviet food seem at best unappetizing, and at worst downright dangerous.

There were some West Berliners who remained unconvinced, or simply proved weaker at withstanding hunger pangs. A small group of men and women, making up at their peak about 5% of the West Berlin population, chose to travel across the zonal border, register for the Socialist rationing card, and receive additional supplies of foodstuffs and coal. These West Berlin citizens were the subject of tremendous public

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<sup>384</sup> "Jedes Kind weiss, daß der 'Telegraf' lügt" Landesarchiv Berlin B Rep 010-02 # 686

<sup>385</sup> "Jedes Kind weiss, daß der 'Telegraf' lügt" Landesarchiv Berlin B Rep 010-02 # 686

hostility and censure. Several months into the blockade, the *Sozialdemokrat* ran a lengthy article titled "Now They Want to Come Back! Discussions with West Berliners who shop in the Eastern sector." The article presented interviews with West Berliners who had 'defected', introducing a wide array of men and women, young and old, who had chosen to register for rationing cards in the East. By documenting moral and physical degeneration as a result of this ethically indefensible behavior, the article detailed shifty personalities, vacant political values, and a lack of commitment to community. Mocking those who "want to enjoy both the rights of a democracy and the bait [*Lockmittel*] of the dictator simultaneously," the article concluded with the charge that these people needed to learn "that grocery shopping is not simply a question of household economy, but rather something that one has to answer for with his political and human conscience."<sup>386</sup> This lesson was one that the majority of the population of the Western zones seemed to have known intuitively.

The Berlin media negotiated a delicate balance between highlighting the horror of those who 'betrayed' the cause of Western hunger by eating Soviet food and insisting that almost no one fell for this socialist trap. In the words of one particularly gleeful article, "The Eastern Bait Seduces No One," "the Soviet plan to feed all of Berlin has failed. In November only 78,000 West Berliners – that is 3.7% of the population of the western sectors – registered for food distribution in the Soviet Zone."<sup>387</sup> The reporter quoted these numbers with pride, proof that

the people of West Berlin – with a very few insignificant exceptions – resisted all the threats and blandishments of the Soviets, accepted the serious privations that

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<sup>386</sup> "Sie wollen nun wieder zurueck! Gespräche mit Westberlinern, die im Ostsektor kauften – Kartoffeln und Kohle als 'Gründe'" Landesarchiv Berlin B Rep 010-02 # 688

<sup>387</sup> "der Ostköder zieht nicht" Landesarchiv Berlin B Rep 010-02 # 686

the blockade entailed, and remained loyal to the democratic government of Berlin and the representatives of the western powers who stood behind it.<sup>388</sup>

For 96.3% of the West Berlin population, the decision to go hungry rather than accept 'communist bait' was a sign of political allegiance and an expression of a commitment to a Western system of values. In this sense, it is striking that tens of thousands of West Berliners chose to accept Russian food; with the choice of democratic hunger or socialist satiety, they picked full stomachs. As Berlin historian Paul Steege reminds us, the choice to accept or refuse the proffered foodstuffs was not "motivated solely by some sort of moral or ideological opposition to the Soviet Union."<sup>389</sup> Rather, the very ability of West Berliners to reject Soviet food for political reasons contradicts claims of imminent starvation, revealing the permeability of the blockade and the resourcefulness of Germans in the face of a hunger that they performed as much as they felt.<sup>390</sup>

In the context of the Occupation Years and the pressures of German division and reconstruction, the Airlift proved to Berliners that the Western world sympathized with and even admired them. Their rejection of Soviet bread and margarine, and their gathering of the lollipops and coal briquettes distributed by smiling American pilots, existentially transformed them in the eyes of the world from former Nazis into victims of Communism. In turn, the event conclusively transformed German hunger into proof of

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<sup>388</sup> W. Phillips Davison, "Political Significance of Recognition via Mass Media. An Illustration from the Berlin Blockade," *The Public Opinion Quarterly* 20 (Spring, 1956), 328.

<sup>389</sup> Paul Steege, *Black Market, Cold War*, 215-216.

<sup>390</sup> The actual nutritional situation of Germans in divided Berlin was not as affected by the blockade as was (and still is) commonly supposed. West Berlin was never truly isolated from the surrounding regions, and West Berliners were allowed to continue unlimited trade with their East German neighbors; only shipments to West Berlin from West Germany were restricted. Indeed, a 1948 American report acknowledged that "although it [the Airlift] is effectively supplementing other sources in supply of the most critical items, the vast majority of the needs of the population and industry in the western sectors are still met through East-West trade, which is only slightly less necessary to the Soviet sector than to the western parts of the city." Stivers, *The Incomplete Blockade: Soviet Zone Supply of West Berlin, 1948-49*, 570. While West Berliners definitely had a limited diet during the occupation years, there is little evidence that it was worsened due the blockade.

moral righteousness and political correctness. By going hungry, Germans became heroic soldiers in Churchill's new global battle between East and West. The people of Berlin could now claim to have "given the world an example," not of tyranny or the "weapon of death" but of "the will for freedom, for social justice and for peace."<sup>391</sup> With its connotations of voluntary suffering, even martyrdom, the Airlift linked civilians, and particularly the housewives responsible for acquiring food, with hunger strikers and freedom fighters. Like those noble pacifists, Berlin citizens perceived themselves as using self-imposed hunger as a weapon against oppressive forces, albeit not those of colonial regimes, institutionalized racism or sexism, or unfair labor policies,<sup>392</sup> and the lifting of the blockade was "a success of female self-sacrifice [*weiblicher Opferbereitschaft*]."<sup>393</sup> The suffering and perseverance that defined the Berlin population linked (West) Germans with the rest of the 'free world' and especially with freedom-loving Americans, defying those powers "who could not achieve their goals through democratic means, whose allies are hunger and cold, disease and misery."<sup>394</sup>

The blockade additionally served, for West Berliners, and, by extension, for Germans throughout the Western zones and later the FRG, as a way of re-staging the just-lost War. It transformed a situation of ignominious defeat into one of German victory – one over the feared Russian enemy, no less. It proved to the world that, in the proud

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<sup>391</sup> "Blockadeaufhebung – ein Erfolg weiblicher Opferbereitschaft" Landesarchiv Berlin B Rep 002 # 25925 West Berliners generally did not go hungry during the Airlift. Thanks to the influx of additional calories, along with a largely steady supply of basic groceries from the region, citizens of West Berlin actually had a higher caloric intake during the air-lift than at any other time during the occupation. Landsman, *Dictatorship and Demand: The Politics of Consumerism in East Germany*, 46

<sup>392</sup> See Vernon, *Hunger: A Modern History*, 48 for more on these traditions, particularly in Ireland, India and Britain.

<sup>393</sup> "Blockadeaufhebung – ein Erfolg weiblicher Opferbereitschaft" Landesarchiv Berlin B Rep 002 # 25925

<sup>394</sup> "Blockadeaufhebung – ein Erfolg weiblicher Opferbereitschaft" Landesarchiv Berlin B Rep 002 # 25925

words of Berlin mayor Ernst Reuter, "all attempts to bring us to our knees have proven themselves to be entirely in vain."<sup>395</sup> The successful marriage of German hunger and American abundance solidified Germans' status as victims, and their integration into the community of the West. More pragmatically, Berlin's inhabitants saw the Airlift as the "entry to a better time and the beginning of the reconstruction of our much-suffering city," the "most impressive display of the commitment of the entire world not to abandon us to our fate." The planes flying over Berlin, dropping not bombs but chocolate, their pilots "no longer enemies, but friends" confirmed the intertwined threats that faced Germans and the 'free world:' hunger and Communism.<sup>396</sup>

Thus, the Airlift solidified the tropes of hunger and power that were circulating through the postwar world.<sup>397</sup> It seemed irrefutable confirmation of German hunger.<sup>398</sup> Even more importantly, however, the Airlift signaled the absolute moral valence of this

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<sup>395</sup> "Wortlaut der Erklärung, die Obm. Reuter namens des Magistrats in der Ausserordentlichen Sitzung der berliner Stadtverordneten-Versammlung am Donnerstag, dem 12. Mai 1949 abgeben wird." Landesarchiv Berlin B Rep 002 # 25925

<sup>396</sup> "Wortlaut der Erklärung, die Obm. Reuter namens des Magistrats in der Ausserordentlichen Sitzung der berliner Stadtverordneten-Versammlung am Donnerstag, dem 12. Mai 1949 abgeben wird." Landesarchiv Berlin B Rep 002 # 25925. The text of the original speech concludes with the frightening evocation of an "entire system of political oppression and the usurpation of political power through invading foreigners [*hergelaufende Fremdlinge*]." The final two words, expressing a sense of invasion and racialized threat that was typical of Third Reich descriptions of Slavs and Russians, were crossed out for the final radio broadcast.

<sup>397</sup> The Berlin Airlift was as important for Americans as it was for Germans. It was the United States' first postwar performance of its new identity as the global bread-basket, distributing highly desirable foods at its whim. It also provided a counter to American war-time atrocities, an opportunity for the U.S. military, especially the air force, to redeem itself after the horrors of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Claiming that the world must realize that American planes dropped food not bombs. Army officers claimed, in an openly self-serving way, that "while not as devastating as atomic warfare, there are few weapons that can paralyze a city as can hunger." *A Special Study of Operation "Vittles."* (New York: Conover-Mast Publications, 1949), 12. Such claims implied that the Soviet military had more blood on its hands than the Americans.

<sup>398</sup> The importance that food and the threat of hunger played in the establishment of the Cold War extends beyond Germany. American policy also cast the other major Axis nation, Japan, as "the most important testing ground in the Far East in the ideological and political conflict between Soviet Communism and the doctrines of liberty and constitutional government represented by the United States and Western Europe." And, as in Germany, "problems of food and population are of fundamental importance. Just as the logistic problem of feeding Japan's population is recognized as a major problem in the event of war, the economic problem of securing an adequate food supply is of crucial importance to Japan in time of peace." Howard Smith, "Food Controls in Occupied Japan," *Agricultural History* 23, no. 3 (July, 1949), 277.

hunger. The Airlift allowed for a triumphant rewriting of the terrible fate of women like Henriette Michel, whom cruel occupation authorities had allowed to wither away and die little more than a year ago. Here, again, Germans actively chose hunger; however, this hunger led not to death but to wealth, satiety, and the forgiveness of past sins. The Airlift also established a clear set of attributes for the competing economic and social systems of the Cold War, attributes that shaped this global struggle between East and West.

American food invited its consumers into the capitalist West. It also became the central symbol of German-American relations. Dr. G. Thiede, head of the Federal Ministry of Nutrition and Agriculture, published a laudatory article on American food aid to West Germany in 1954 claiming that "the material aid of the first postwar years – it was almost entirely food – protected the German people from starvation, if not from hunger."<sup>399</sup> This 'biological' salvation was overshadowed, Thiede claimed, by the psychological and spiritual significance of these provisions. Dismissing the need for concrete statistics on the distribution and consumption of food aid, as such numbers "at the most only reflect material aid provided," the agricultural expert insisted that "the abstract value for the entire German Volk of receiving a helping hand from thousands of people from around the world time and time again during this time of misery and need defies all methods of measurement."<sup>400</sup> At the moment of the Airlift, capitalist America became a land of generosity, deliciousness, and satiety, confirming that the socialist USSR was a desolate space of hunger, bad flavors, and arbitrary consumer restrictions.

These categories remain so strong and seemingly self-evident that it is useful to remember that they were postwar inventions. Immediately after the war, in the face of

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<sup>399</sup> Thiede, *Die Ernährungshilfe für Westdeutschland von 1945/46 bis 1952/53*, 237

<sup>400</sup> *Ibid.*, 247

the global food crisis, mass unemployment and misery, and a remarkable Soviet increase in food production, it was not obvious which system would better feed its respective populations. The dramatic postwar boom in state-organized feeding programs throughout most of the world, ranging from school lunch programs to food relief organizations, reflected an international recognition of the inadequacy of the free market for dealing with the nutritional crises of the postwar era. Although many condemned Stalin's murderous social policies within the Soviet Union, there was a general consensus that his collectivization policies had increased agricultural yield, as well as a grudging recognition that his draconian food policies were partially responsible for the Soviet victory over Nazi Germany. Franklin Roosevelt's policies in the United States during the Great Depression had convinced many Americans that, when it came to satisfying basic hunger, socialism had better success than capitalism, and FDR's successors in the White House, despite an often rabid anti-Communism, continued his expansion of domestic food policy, agricultural subsidies and state-sponsored collective feeding programs. The Airlift put such troubling facts at rest, conclusively aligning hunger with socialism and satiety with capitalism.

For the German population, the Airlift had particular significance. Before it began, all of the occupying powers had been seen as enemy forces – the Russians and French might be more hated than the British and Americans, but all were the former enemy, and all were held responsible for the myriad sources of postwar German suffering. The Airlift erased this commonality, replacing it with a new dichotomy: the USSR versus the USA. Divided Berlin became an international stage for enacting the new Cold War, allowing America to emerge as the 'leader of the Western world' and the

enemy of 'totalitarianism' and 'tyranny.' In the overwrought words of a recent book on the blockade, the Airlift was

the moment America came to fully accept the mantle of leader of the free world . . . it was the moment when America became beloved by the very people it had defeated in battle and whose cities it had leveled – and was revered by people around the world who looked to the United States as a source of decency and good.<sup>401</sup>

Americans and West Germans joined together to form a united Cold War front; the weapon of starvation, now wielded by the Soviets rather than the Germans or the British, became part of a plot of global rather than national significance.<sup>402</sup> As an American air force propaganda pamphlet from 1949 explained, the starvation plot was not only aimed at the Germans; if unchecked, the Communists intended to use "a hunger weapon against the Americans, against the British, and against the French." Therefore, the decision to feed Germans was made in order "to keep Berliners alive – and to keep Americans and their families well fed."<sup>403</sup> The Airlift became emblematic of America's new postwar mission to solve the global food crisis and control the threat of international famine. Ultimately, of course, feeding West Germans who were oppressed by Soviets proved

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<sup>401</sup> Cherny, *The Candy Bombers: The Untold Story of the Berlin Airlift and America's Finest Hour*, 6

<sup>402</sup> The integrative function of the Airlift as a way of signifying West Germany's acceptance by the Western world cannot be overemphasized. A fascinating cookbook published by the wives of American GIs stationed in blockaded West Berlin bears testimony to the pedagogical aspect of American food distribution to the Germans. These American women are uniformly dismissive and critical of the primitive and ignorant cooking and eating habits of the native population, while emphasizing their own responsibility for teaching them how to eat 'properly:' like an American. Describing a population of foolish and ill-skilled but affable German housewives desperate to learn American cookery, these women were "amazed at the German's unfamiliarity with light cakes," and found that "'hot foods hot' and 'cold foods cold' often seemed the most difficult principle to teach our German cooks;" it took "long months to teach the Germans the wide variety of foods which we considered better preserved by refrigeration." *Operation Vittles Cook Book* (Berlin: Deutscher Verlag, 1949), 10, 46, 94.

<sup>403</sup> *A Special Study of Operation "Vittles."* (New York: Conover-Mast Publications, 1949), 12.

more palatable than feeding famine victims in the many regions where men, women and children were actually starving to death.<sup>404</sup>

For West Berlin, the Airlift radically transformed popular associations with America. American military planes no longer evoked the merciless barrage of bombs that had destroyed Dresden and Cologne, but dried eggs, bread, potatoes – and most of all delicacies like chocolate, chewing gum, and raisins. In contrast, Soviet food was associated with suffering and absence, a moral or ethical hunger collectively deemed far worse than mere physical hunger.<sup>405</sup> The food of the East was 'bait,' while that of the West evoked the alimentary bounty promised by postwar capitalism.<sup>406</sup> The Airlift also allowed West Germans to use their own much celebrated hunger to stand in for an assumed hunger in the East. After all, while West Berliners could refuse to consume Soviet-made bread, sweets and sausages, they were all too aware that this choice was unavailable to their unfortunate brothers and sisters who actually lived in the Eastern zones. The Airlift helped to create a vision of a specifically East German hunger that proved to be definitional to how West Germans imagined themselves and the GDR, but also to how East Germans understood themselves and the meaning of their food.<sup>407</sup>

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<sup>404</sup> The Americans immortalized this 'greatest of food aid programs' as much as did West Germans, which is disturbing in light of the fact that it was a food aid program that targeted not hunger but ideology.

<sup>405</sup> A report on the Airlift put out by West Berlin in the early 1950s acknowledged that rations in the Soviet Zone were approximately 100 calories higher than in the Western Zone, and that the Soviets offered to provide food to the West Berliners. However, this offer "was rejected almost universally by the population." "Die Versorgung der Stadt Berlin mit Ernährungsgütern über die Luftbrücke in der Zeit vom 25.6.48-12.5.49" Landesarchiv Berlin B Rep 010-02 # 468

<sup>406</sup> Although the Western Zone of Berlin received fewer calories than the Soviet Zone during the Airlift, Americans were nonetheless sure that the "quality of western food is much better," emphasizing especially the extra rations of cheese and fats that were "of considerable importance in keeping the German in the western sectors content." *A Special Study of Operation "Vittles"*, 14

<sup>407</sup> The Airlift left a long legacy for Berlin's inhabitants. For years after the end of the war, West Berliners remained convinced that hunger was imminent. Shops sold out during the Cuban missile crisis, the Suez conflict, and the Korean War, as well as at times of local emergencies like floods and labor strikes. The population was regularly admonished by the Consumer Board, housewives' associations, and the city government to cease buying out supplies of flour, oil, sugar, noodles and other "food items particularly

While the remarkable and still unabated propagandistic success of the Airlift, with German and American museums, films and novels memorializing this 'battle against starvation,' make it unique, it was by no means America's only attempt to use food and manipulated hunger fears as a Cold War weapon. In a less-known but hugely influential moment of postwar East German history, the GDR was the brief recipient of an officially unwanted miniature Airlift, as the West stepped up to defend the East German population against an assumed hunger. This food distribution program took place during the months before and after the June 17<sup>th</sup> 1953 Workers' Uprising. (The following chapter will discuss the uprising itself in more detail.) This series of marches by East German workers protesting increased work quotas and inadequate consumer supplies was brutally repressed by Soviet tanks. It was the first and last major public protest in East German history; it also inspired one of America's most contested food aid programs in postwar Europe.

In the face of the growing unrest in the GDR that culminated in the marches of June 17<sup>th</sup>, the U.S. government initiated a controversial 'Food Relief Program' intended to destabilize the Soviet government and to promote the higher quality of life in the Western sphere. The program called for the distribution of packages containing high-quality and

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appropriate to being hoarded as emergency supplies." ("Was die Statistik erzählt: der Je-Kopf-Verbrauch von Nahrungsmitteln in West-Berlin" Landesarchiv Berlin B Rep 010-02 # 329) At the same time, the fear of future hunger was institutionalized in city recommendations that every household maintain a "private supply of food stuffs, carefully guarded and continually expanded." The city of West Berlin released a booklet in 1963 that was distributed free of charge to every household in the city limits, offering guidelines for preparing emergency food supplies. After all, "not only all the political conflicts of today's age demands such a supply, but also the experience that at any moment a natural catastrophe could interrupt the regulated distribution of foods for several days . . . whoever has such a thoughtfully maintained food supply will be able to just laugh at all those foolish panic-shoppers with all of their associated stupidities. ("Der beruhigende Haushaltsvorrat: auch an Kinder, alte Leute und Diätpatienten denken" Landesarchiv Berlin B Rep 010-02 # 329) National household surveys of the early 1960s revealed that a full third of all West Germans maintained extra food stores in case of crisis. While the blockade was rarely explicitly mentioned, its memory continued in these hoards of powdered milk, dried eggs and crackers.

luxury food items to all GDR-citizens who could travel to West Berlin. All that was needed to claim a package was an East German identification card. Indeed, to encourage the wide dispersal of these packages, the West German workers who staffed the pickup points were encouraged to have extremely lax security. Some GDR citizens arrived with the ID cards of their entire villages in tow, and were duly allotted hundreds of these boxes of sweets, meats, fats, and processed foods.

Outside of the West Berlin city government and the United States, few supported the program. Even Konrad Adenauer, Chancellor of the Federal Republic, expressed initial reservations. The USSR publicly condemned the program, calling it an act of propaganda; both France and Britain were suspicious of it as well, viewing this act of American publicity as an "untimely provocation."<sup>408</sup> And of course the SED was the program's greatest critic. In an ironic echoing of West Berlin diatribes against Soviet food during the Airlift, the SED warned that "whoever eats the Ami-food will die! Grab those honor-less people by the arm, those who would sell out their fatherland for American lentils. Make sure that no worker gathers the poisoned crumbs scattered from the table of the masters of capital and of war!"<sup>409</sup> German Communists fell back upon the strategies that they had unsuccessfully used during the Hunger Years, linking civilian desire for (excess) foods with the suffering of non-Germans at the hands of the Nazis. They demanded that citizens recognize the political agenda behind the proffered food, recalling the time

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<sup>408</sup> Valur Ingimundarson, "The Eisenhower Administration, the Adenauer Government, and the Political Uses of the East German Uprising in 1953," *Diplomatic History* 20, no. 3 (Summer, 1996), 384.

<sup>409</sup> Cited in Karl-Ludwig Sommer, *Humanitäre Auslandshilfe als Brücke zu atlantischer Partnerschaft: CARE, CRALOG und die Entwicklung der deutsch-amerikanischen Beziehungen nach Ende des zweiten Weltkriegs* (Bremen: Selbstverlag des Staatsarchivs Bremen, 1999), 342.

when the fascists seized French silk, Greek wine, Danish cheese, Ukrainian butter and eggs from the occupied lands! In those times almost no one cared where those products came from. They did not want to know that people had been robbed. But what seemed so pleasant had a high price . . . millions of dead, destroyed cities, bombed out apartments, an ocean of blood and tears, this was the price that we had to pay because so many did not want to look a gift horse in the mouth.<sup>410</sup>

Predictably, this propaganda, which had failed to convince Germans to lessen their pleas for additional food rations during the postwar food crisis, proved even less resonant with increased distance from the horrors of the war. With East Germans picking up food packages in droves, from the perspective of the West the program was a remarkable success. Immediately upon the program's initial announcement, traffic to Berlin from all over the Eastern sector increased exponentially. Entire villages traveled en masse to the capital, stories circulated of people waiting in line for days to receive one of the *Ami-packs*. By the time the program was finally dismantled in October 1953, a remarkable third of the population of the GDR had received a food package, a total of more than 5 million distributed. Despite a hate-campaign aimed at package recipients, the closure of train lines to the capital city, and state-endorsed harassment of those who collected packages, the East German population asserted their desire for Western food products.

Terrified by the violence of the June 17<sup>th</sup> Uprising and shocked by the depth of popular desire for American foods, the SED put a premium on improving living standards, particularly in the realm of groceries, and raised general rations. Huge increases in the funding allotted to collective feeding organizations, particularly school lunch programs and factory canteens, dramatically improved the diets of large portions of the GDR's population. The SED also attempted to organize various charity programs

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<sup>410</sup> "Umsonst ist am Teuersten." Landesarchiv Berlin B rep 002 # 1770

aimed at feeding the hungry and marginalized people of the Federal Republic, highlighting in particular the difficult situation of the unemployed. Despite successfully showing that portions of the Western population did struggle to stay well-fed, these programs did not succeed in linking the West with hunger in the minds of the populace.<sup>411</sup> Proud announcements that East Berlin was feverishly working to distribute "an 800 gram can of lard, four small cans of condensed milk, a pound of dried beans and a two pound bag of flour" to West Berlin's poor met with little resonance. It became increasingly difficult for the Soviet-led regime to convince East Germans that they were being adequately fed, nor could it convince West Germans of the possibility of being well nourished under socialism. The hunger of the East, not just for food but for Western food, had come into the headlines, where it was to remain until the Fall of the Wall.

### **Still Hungry after All These Years: Keeping Hunger Alive in Divided Germany**

With the formation of the two German states in 1949, the 'hunger years' officially came to an end. In West Germany, the early abolishment of rationing along with the 1948 currency reform actually meant that malnourishment increased rather than decreased during the first months of the new Federal Republic. Even as West Germans threw themselves wholeheartedly into the consumerist mentality of the 'economic miracle' of the 1950s, hunger remained a constant and inescapable part of daily life. On the one hand, many in West Germany remained convinced that the Germans were still starving. In 1950, German nutritionists warned that "one can still not speak of having

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<sup>411</sup> "Jetzt täglich Lebensmittelpakete für Erwerbslose und Rentner." Landesarchiv Berlin B rep 002 / 4938

overcome the hunger crisis,"<sup>412</sup> while an American economist and agricultural specialist observed that

nowhere in Europe is the inequality between the rich and the poor of such dimensions as in western Germany where, in spite of economic recovery, approximately every fifth family is still short of the barest necessities of life, such as a dwelling, some furniture, household goods, and a reasonable supply of foodstuffs.<sup>413</sup>

Exposés reporting pervasive childhood malnutrition were printed alongside dieting advice for the newly, happily, fat. Even when it was on the table or in the cupboard, food seemed a source of fear as much as pleasure; rumors of tubercular milk, contaminated poultry and pesticide-laden citrus regularly swept through a population in the midst of the infamous 'wave of gorging.' Doctors and economists warned of the potentially devastating consequences of over-estimating the health and especially the nutritional intake of the population: "with the end of rationing and the emergence of freely purchasable, long absent and dearly craved foods like meat, fat, sweets, white bread and so on, the constant hunger-sensations have vanished," yet the economic successes of the *Wirtschaftswunder* were blamed for spreading false illusions of success:

overflowing shop windows contribute to the impression that the worst is over [*alles überstanden wäre*]. This belief however is completely false, and it is the responsibility of the nutritional sciences to point out the true circumstances continually and to counter false conclusions.<sup>414</sup>

However, this elimination of the most obvious markers of hunger concealed even more nefarious harms. Doctors argued that the physical appearance of German bodies misrepresented the presence of hunger:

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<sup>412</sup> "Die Lücken in der Welternährung," *Ernährung und Verpflegung* 1-2 (Janury/February, 1950).

<sup>413</sup> Werner Klatt, "Food and Farming in Germany: I. Food and Nutrition," 58.

<sup>414</sup> "Hippokrates. Zeitschrift für praktische Heilkunde, Ernährungsfragen und Ernährungsforschung." BArch DC 6 / 89

With the normalization of external appearances, the disappearance of wrinkles and other evidence of poor blood circulation from faces, the reemergence of feelings of physical and intellectual vigor and the sight of long-missed curves due to the re-establishment of fat deposits, memories of the Hunger Years are quickly disappearing. . . . despite the gradual disappearance of typical signs of hunger like hunger edema . . . many other medical disturbances are present.<sup>415</sup>

Twenty-five years of continuous German malnourishment were held responsible for "severe damage to the biological substance of the *Volkskörper*;" though "the old damages of the Hunger Years have not yet been healed, already we are facing the possibility of newly inflicted harms." As much now as at the worst of the hunger, "securing a balanced diet for the German people is a matter of life or death."<sup>416</sup> A constant fear that malnourishment lurked in every West German body was part of the Federal Republic's coming to terms with the past, and, especially, its coming to terms with the East.<sup>417</sup>

In the West German imaginary, hunger and the East were caught in a complex embrace. The 'lost East' of the former German Reich became the prototypical *Heimat*, "a powerful idiom of national victimhood and suffering."<sup>418</sup> This idiom was inexplicably linked to the Third Reich's policy of *Blut und Boden*, which had cast these Eastern regions as the breadbasket of the nation; their allotment after the war to Poland and

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<sup>415</sup> "Hippokrates. Zeitschrift für praktische Heilkunde, Ernährungsfragen und Ernährungsforschung." BArch DC 6 / 89

<sup>416</sup> "Hippokrates. Zeitschrift für praktische Heilkunde, Ernährungsfragen und Ernährungsforschung." BArch DC 6 / 89

<sup>417</sup> A desire to hold on to experiences of hunger is not specific to Germans. A recent ethnographic project on elderly Russians showed that former Soviet soldiers were "not only nostalgic for the tastes of hunger – wild sorrel, stinging nettle – but see their struggles with hunger during the war as part of their own participation in and contribution to these historic events." (David E. Sutton, *Remembrance of Repasts: An Anthropology of Food and Memory* (Oxford; New York: Berg, 2001), 167-168.) Similarly, Vernon argues for the political relevance of the British glorification of the 'Hungry Thirties' after the war, a decade that "came to signify the deprivation that staked out subsequent prosperity, the hunger was known, now past." (Vernon, *Hunger: A Modern History*, 264.) These two leftist examples of the community-building nature of hunger are an interesting opposition to the early FRG, where memories of hunger were largely reactionary, conservative and above all negative. It would be interesting, though beyond the scope of this project, to explore the RAF and other radical West German groups' use of the hunger strike during the 1970s and 1980s.

<sup>418</sup> Alon Confino, *Germany as a Culture of Remembrance: Promises and Limits of Writing History* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2006), 85.

Czechoslovakia in turn cast them as metaphors for the predicted postwar hunger. The German East, as the lost sections of Germany were termed in the FRG during the early postwar decades,<sup>419</sup> had been primarily an agricultural region that was imbued with a mythic atmosphere of authenticity, simplicity and German tradition. The Federal Republic not only refused to recognize the new, smaller borders of its territory; it continually evoked the "48% of the German soil [that] lies behind the iron curtain,"<sup>420</sup> using memory and fantasy to assert both the integrity and permanence of the German nation as a food-based entirety, an "organic and prosperous unit."<sup>421</sup> The *Grüne Woche*, the German agricultural and food exhibit held in Berlin since 1928, had regular exhibitions focusing on the past nutritional production of the German East.<sup>422</sup>

The ethnic Germans who had been expelled in the wake of the war were remembered above all as farmers, emblematic of the hard-working and soil-loving German agricultural tradition long romanticized and elevated to figures of racial supremacy during the Third Reich. The 1952 *Grüne Woche* centrally featured "The Agriculture of the German East," which was "dedicated to the agriculture of the German regions on the other side of the Oder-Neisse line." The display was accompanied by sorrowful reminders that

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<sup>419</sup> The FRG referred to the GDR as 'Middle Germany.'

<sup>420</sup> Landesarchiv Berlin B Rep 012 # 132

<sup>421</sup> Karl Pagel, *The German East*, (Berlin,: K.Lemmer, 1954), 126. See BArch B 310 / 308 for arguments over a grade-school text that printed a map of German agricultural production depicting the national borders from 1939. During the 1960s and 1970s, there was an explosion of regional cookbooks which highlighted threatened or lost authentic German culinary traditions of parts of the East that had never been officially part of the German nation and were long since ceded to other countries.

<sup>422</sup> Ironically, West German conservatives had argued against the revitalization of the *Grüne Woche* by claiming that as long as Germany did not possess all of its farmland, it could not adequately represent the agricultural industry: "the conditions for a *Grüne Woche* in the traditional German style lie in ruins behind the iron curtain, in the economic wasteland of the eastern land reform, in the lost German regions on the other side of the Oder-Neisse line." "Verfrühter Wiederbelebungsversuch an einer grossen Tradition: Gedanken und Erinnerungen zur 'grünen Woche' im grauen Berlin." BArch B 116 / 1610

despite the excellent productivity of the West German agriculture during the past years, the absence of the East German agricultural regions is strongly felt in German food supplies . . . the loss of the regions across from the Oder and Neisse weakens the German food situation inordinately . . . 5.5 million people in Germany were fed from the products of the German East.

The exhibit explained that, due to the remarkable skills of ethnic German farmers, productivity in these areas was "dramatically higher than in the neighboring states of Lithuania, Poland and Czechoslovakia."<sup>423</sup> This rhetoric claimed that these German farmers were solely responsible for all agricultural production in these regions, and without their presence, food production had ceased. Fertile land had gone to weed, livestock died or turned wild, vegetables and grains were not harvested; in the aftermath of the Expulsion, this "paradise is once more a wilderness, as East Prussia was 600 years ago."<sup>424</sup> The loss of the agricultural products of the lands ceded to Poland, Czechoslovakia and the Soviet Union continued to be referred to for years, in both popular culture and in schoolbooks on nutrition and agriculture. These lands and food products had a mythic significance, seen as representing the lost promise of eternal satiety. Their loss meant that the threat of hunger hung continually over the heads of West Germans, who claimed that they could not imagine full bellies without the grains, fruits, meats and honey of Pomerania and Silesia.<sup>425</sup>

At the same time that the now-lost East represented Germany's lost chance to be truly well-fed, the new Eastern Bloc, purged of Germans and horrifyingly socialist, was both reminder and threat of hunger. During the early years of reconstruction, these fears focused on the obsessively studied bodies of German POWs, men who were central to the

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<sup>423</sup> "Grüne Woche, Berlin 1952 Pressevorschau" Landesarchiv Berlin B rep 010 / 1329

<sup>424</sup> Pagel, *The German East*, 126-127

<sup>425</sup> Honey memories

creation of a West German narrative of victimization.<sup>426</sup> The medical debates that surrounded the German POW during the 1950s placed him at the center of domestic and international debates over the nature of German hunger. The disability and hunger of released POWs who returned in West Germany during the 1950s meant that their reintegration into society was a national obsession. In particular, their bodies were the subjects of tremendous medical attention during these years. Indeed, returning POWs reported an impressive variety of medical harms, including a disturbing loss of masculinity and sexual drive, as well as an apparently perplexing tendency toward violence, lack of motivation, and various forms of nervous affliction. Nonetheless, experts agreed that "all others forms of suffering faded in contrast to the significance of hunger in the Russian camps."<sup>427</sup> Indeed their hunger was emblematic because it was 'Soviet;' these returnees were frequently diagnosed as being 'Russified,' having lost their individuality and become part of an 'amorphous mass' through their experiences of collective deprivation in the camps.<sup>428</sup> These bodies, scarred and scrawny, were powerful emblems of German suffering, far more politically useful than the increasingly plump figures of West Germany's *Wohlstandsgesellschaft*.

In the aftermath of the last major wave of German POWs released from the USSR in the mid-fifties, German doctors and nutritionists published numerous studies on the physical and mental strain caused by imprisonment in the Soviet Union. The foreword to a medical study by Dr. Ulrich Gries on dystrophy in Soviet POWs reminded its readers that

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<sup>426</sup> Robert G. Moeller, *War Stories: The Search for a Usable Past in the Federal Republic of Germany*, 22.

<sup>427</sup> Ernst Günther Schenck, *Das menschliche Elend im 20. Jahrhundert*, 218

<sup>428</sup> *Ibid.*, 125.

the word 'hunger' threatened people in the First World War, and even more horribly in the last war and then during the postwar years; often their days were entirely consumed with battling this elementary threat. Thus, it is to be expected that every reader will approach the scientific study of Ulrich Gries with interest, understanding and empathy based on his or her own personal experiences.<sup>429</sup>

This 'understanding and empathy' relied on an assumed experience of hunger, and the equating of the civilian Hunger Years with the misery of life in a Soviet POW camp. As the paradigmatic sufferers of dystrophy, these men became central figures in internal and international debate over the nature of German-ness and the burdens of the past.<sup>430</sup> By reading about their hunger, West Germans both remembered and displaced their own, as the horrific suffering of these POWs, seemed both unimaginable and disturbingly familiar.<sup>431</sup>

In a historical quirk of fate, at precisely the moment when German doctors were consolidating their minutely detailed reports tracing the impact of sustained malnutrition in a camp environment on German soldiers, doctors from several European countries were assembling the first major book-length comparative study of hunger-disease among the victims of Nazi persecution, concerned with the slow and inconsistent recovery of former Nazi prisoners. *Damages to Health due to Persecution and Imprisonment and Long-Term Consequences [Gesundheitsschäden durch Verfolgung und Gefangenschaft*

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<sup>429</sup> Ulrich Gries, *Abbau der Persönlichkeit; zum Problem der Persönlichkeitsveränderungen bei Dystrophie in sowjetischer Kriegsgefangenschaft*. (München: E. Reinhardt, 1957), 7.

<sup>430</sup> The disease 'Dystrophy' was also known in Europe as the 'Russian Disease,' and was apparently first diagnosed and treated in famine-stricken Russia. However, in the postwar Federal Republic, the origins of this disease were reinterpreted. Leading expert on dystrophy Hans Glatzel claimed that the affliction was named for the miseries suffered by Germans at the hands of Russians: "several million of our prisoners of war suffered and died from dystrophy in Russia, and Americans experienced similar things when they fell into Japanese war camps." (Hans Glatzel "Möglichkeiten und Grenzen der Ernährungsführung," in Deutsche Gesellschaft für Ernährung, ed., *Ernährungsberatung aus medizinischer, volks- und hauswirtschaftlicher Sicht: Vorträge d. Fortbildungstagung d. Ernährungsberatungsdienstes* (Frankfurt am Main: Deutsche Gesellschaft für Ernährung, 1963), 24.)

<sup>431</sup> Paul Lerner's *Hysterical Men* is a fantastic study of the importance of former soldiers for negotiating German collective identity and a newly damaged masculinity, as well as in the development of the German welfare state after World War I. *Hysterical Men: War, Psychiatry, and the Politics of Trauma in Germany, 1890-1930* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2003),

*und ihre Spätfolgen*] was released in the same year (1955) that the last large group of POWs was returned to the Federal Republic. The book, organized by the German Jewish doctor Max Michel, was based on the results of the 1954 International Social Medicine Conference on the Pathology of former Deportees and Camp Inmates held in Copenhagen. In the aftermath of the book's publication and in the wake of the troubled integration of German POWs into West German society, West German doctors engaged in a passionate argument with Communist, French, Jewish and Dutch doctors over the nature, treatment and uniqueness of war-related hunger-disease.

*Damages to Health due to Persecution and Imprisonment* was the first and only study of its kind to focus international and comparative attention on the health and social integration of victims of Nazi persecution. Members of the medical communities of Belgium, Denmark, France, the USSR, Holland, Italy, Luxemburg, Norway, Austria, West Germany, and Poland participated in the conference and subsequent publication, many of them themselves former camp inmates who "spoke on the basis of concrete experience."<sup>432</sup> Indeed, the speakers and authors were open about both their personal and political stakes in the conference, as they hoped with their work to ensure that the people of the world learn the appropriate lessons from the mistakes of the War and the Holocaust. Evoking the horrors of Atom bombs, postwar global poverty and neocolonial oppression, these doctors argued that it was only by understanding and acknowledging the suffering of the victims of Nazi persecution that such suffering could be avoided in the future. Specifically, the reports all confirmed the centrality of starvation for survivors

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<sup>432</sup> Max Michel, *Gesundheitsschäden durch Verfolgung und Gefangenschaft und Ihre Spätfolgen. Zusammenstellung der Referate und Ergebnisse der Internationalen Sozialmedizinischen Konferenz über die Pathologie der Ehemaligen Deportierten und Internierten, 5.-7. Juni 1954 in Kopenhagen, und ergänzender Referate und Ergebnisse* (Rüderberg-Verlag, 1955), 16.

of Nazi camps and ghettos, as well as its importance for long-term health damages of survivors.

The explicit goal of the collaborative project was to establish a new medical term for a specific kind of hunger-disease. This new term was *KZ-Syndrome*, "a chronic condition of weakness that still today, nine years after the end of the war, offers a clear medical description."<sup>433</sup> The contributors to the volume agreed that

the hunger conditions in and outside the Nazi camps – which were the largest stages of the European hunger tragedy – left its stamp on each of its victims, a shared and permanent marking that was consistent, regardless of nationality and individual personality.<sup>434</sup>

These doctors claimed that the social and political context of hunger determined its impact on the human body as much as the physiological experience itself; all hungers, in other words, were not equal. Collective persecution and deliberate dehumanization changed both the experience of hunger and the chances of recovery. While explicitly recognizing the vast scope of suffering during World War II, including that of German victims of air-raids and postwar expulsions, the book concluded that

inarguably those who suffered the most were the victims of the Nazi regime [and] they were the ones who were promised reparations [after the war.] In consideration of the mass deaths that have taken place over the past years amongst the surviving victims of Nazism, and in consideration of the harms inflicted by the massive delays in the providing of adequate aid, the results of this book . . . are sadly coming too late for many.<sup>435</sup>

The motivations for these doctors were concrete, and premised on what they perceived as a flawed system of national reparations and restitutions. In general, the hastily assembled and non-standardized national restitution programs were unaware of or simply ignored the long-term impact of Nazi persecution on the health and productivity

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<sup>433</sup> Ibid., 41.

<sup>434</sup> Ibid., 22.

<sup>435</sup> Ibid., 12.

of survivors. In order to receive the minimal benefits allotted them, survivors were required to provide local or national government agencies with documentation of their health problems. However, acquiring such documentation proved almost impossible due to current medical definitions of 'hunger-disease,' since doctors after the war assumed that once 'normal weight' was achieved, hunger-disease had been cured. Any other psychological or physical problems, ranging from headaches to insomnia to psychological collapse, could no longer be attributed to dystrophy or camp imprisonment.

Strikingly, Holocaust survivors were not the focus of any of these studies, and the medical conclusions of these doctors on the psychological and mental harms caused by Nazi persecution did not reference the specific relevance of genocide for KZ-Syndrome. The almost total absence of Jewish subjects (Gypsies were practically unmentioned) in these studies of camp survival was explained in terms of practicality. Because these studies were all nationally funded, they were based on nationally specific groups of men (in the interest of medical research, the doctors mainly worked with single-sex groups of participants.) The Dutch study was based on work with Dutch survivors, the French studied French survivors, and so on. Because the Western European Jewish population was relatively small to begin with, very few Jews in total had survived, and many survivors had emigrated after the war; as a result, most of the participating countries lacked significant numbers of Jewish survivors with whom they could work. In at least one case, the Netherlands, Jewish survivors had originally been included but proved particularly difficult to work with. They were quickly kicked out of the study group due to recalcitrance, a refusal to follow directions, and the display of particularly bizarre and

specific symptoms. The only other delegates to mention Jewish survivors were the Soviet and West German doctors.

This exclusion of those peoples most devastated by Nazism resulted in a focus on the former political prisoners of the Axis powers. The countries that had been occupied by Nazi Germany had large populations of anti-fascist, communist, and nationalist resisters who had spent months and often years in various German camps and jails. Upon their release, these prisoners had often been received like heroes but then quickly forgotten, expected to resume their lives where they had left off. However, the vast majority of these men and women continued to suffer from severe emotional, neurological and physical symptoms long after their basic physiological health had been restored. As was the case with German POWs, men suffered from impotence and the dissolution of familial bonds. Different from POWs, however, the main complaints of these former inmates were neurological and psychological, involving muscular spasms, sleep problems, incontinence, inexplicable aches and pains, and especially an overwhelming persecution complex and fear of social contact.

This group of doctors and researchers was amply aware of the political ramifications of creating a specific medical diagnosis for the victims of Nazism. Indeed, they were engaged in an open war with the West German doctors who were painstakingly documenting the hunger-disease of German POWs returning from the USSR. Dr. H. W. Bansi, a leading specialist in hunger pathology who had published the most important study on German dystrophy written during the Hunger Years and who was a major figure in determining medical treatment for German POWs, headed the German contingent.<sup>436</sup>

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<sup>436</sup> H. W. Bansi, *Das Hungerödem und andere alimentäre Mangelkrankungen; eine klinische und pathophysiologische Studie*. (Stuttgart: Enke, 1949); Allgemeines Krankenhaus St.Georg and Johannes

Bansi, like the many other doctors who worked with the Federal Organization of Expellees and various federal ministries, including those of Health, Labor and the Family, to improve the physical, emotional and economic conditions of returning POWs, made arguments similar to those of the Copenhagen conference volume. He cited the long-term harms of starvation, the psychological damages of camp life, and the impossibility of rapid readjustment into a postwar society uninterested and unresponsive to the horrific experiences of the patients, as grounds for increased state support and popular sympathy. However, the goals of these two groups of hunger-victims were diametrically opposed. While German doctors attempted to use the dystrophy of their POWs to place Germans within a larger category of massive war-induced suffering, the doctors at the Copenhagen conference wanted to distinguish the suffering of Third Reich victims from that of German POWs. These doctors were not arguing for the uniqueness of the Holocaust, or indeed of the nature of suffering under Nazism. Instead, they employed analogies with the suffering of Africans chained together without food and water for months on slave ships during the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, as well as drawing upon comparisons to contemporary examples of genocide and mass oppression. However, they explicitly rejected analogies to German POWs.

This international group of doctors, many of them Jews or Communists, predicted German attempts to establish connections between these hungers, pointing out that "in contrast to the experiences described by Professor Bansi," wherein returning POWs "usually achieve a high quality of life after their return, the experiences. . . of the victims of Nazism and resistance fighters who have remained in Germany or have returned after

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Gutenberg Universität. Medizinische Poliklinik, *Der Gesundheitszustand der Heimkehrer; Ergebnisse von Forschungsaufträgen des Bundesministeriums für Arbeit und Sozialordnung*, (Stuttgart: Thieme, 1959).

emigration have not been positive." <sup>437</sup> According to their report, "returning POWs are not gripped by the same feelings of hopelessness as the Nazi victims, let alone the fact that they [the POWs] were a selected, fit and healthy group of people disciplined to subordinate themselves to a collective."<sup>438</sup> Although among German POWs, "weight gain occurred with remarkable rapidity [upon return] and 82% even substantially exceeded their normal weight,"<sup>439</sup> studies of former concentration camp prisoners showed that only  $\frac{3}{4}$  had reached their normal weight within the first eight years after their release, with even lower recovery rates in France. Such data suggested that imprisonment and hunger in a Soviet POW camp had different long term impacts than imprisonment and hunger in a Nazi concentration camp. Doctors also highlighted differences in state and popular systems of support for these victims; no survivor group anywhere in Europe had an equivalent lobby or as much collective support and sympathy as did West German POWs.

The German medical profession rejected these medical attempts to distinguish the hunger of the victims of Nazism from that of German soldiers, insisting that "the creation of a specific disease category of 'KZ-syndrom' is not justified."<sup>440</sup> The definitive West German study of dystrophy, published in 1958 by the Ministry of Labor, traced in detail the equivalencies of the symptoms of hunger among German POWs and the victims of Nazi persecution, ultimately selecting the German POW as the medically paradigmatic figure of hunger-disease.<sup>441</sup> West German reparation categories divided recipients into

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<sup>437</sup> Michel, *Gesundheitsschäden durch Verfolgung und Gefangenschaft und Ihre Spätfolgen*, 50

<sup>438</sup> *Ibid.*, 50

<sup>439</sup> Bundesministerium für Arbeit, *Die Dystrophie; Spätfolgen und Dauerschäden*. (Stuttgart: Thieme, 1958), 78. see also *Der Gesundheitszustand der Heimkehrer*, 1959), 6.

<sup>440</sup> *Ibid.*, 140

<sup>441</sup> *Ibid.*

'those persecuted by the Nazis' and those 'persecuted in foreign lands after the war' (shorthand for the East, especially the USSR), institutionalized the equivalency of these two forms of suffering.<sup>442</sup> In German medical discussions on the diagnosis and treatment of dystrophy, postwar victims of starvation continued to be understood primarily as POWs who had been held in the Soviet Union; it was, as Dr. Bansi himself claimed, only "after a large group of former prisoners returned home from Russia that the question of the long-term damages of dystrophy became of interest again."<sup>443</sup> Over subsequent decades, politicians and public discourse ritualistically invoked memories of the civilian Hunger Years, but continued to focus on the German POW as the icon of hunger-disease. This focus confirmed Cold War antipathy toward the USSR, and a consensus that Germans were victims of Russian bestiality. Past hunger embedded German soldiers within a nexus of universal, apolitical and inhumane suffering that voided them and their situation as prisoners of war of historical context.<sup>444</sup> Despite scattered protests in the FRG, medical concern over hunger focused almost exclusively on former German soldiers.<sup>445</sup>

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<sup>442</sup> Inge Worthmann, "Spätfolgen nach alimentärer Dystrophie bei Kriegsgefangenen und KZ-Häftlingen Statistische Auswertung von 2981 Gutachten der medizinischen Klinik Düsseldorf und der II. Medizinischen Klinik München".

<sup>443</sup> Allgemeines Krankenhaus St.Georg, *Der Gesundheitszustand der Heimkehrer*, 3

<sup>444</sup> This early association of hunger-disease with returned POWs also gendered hunger, making it, a primarily male form of suffering. This masculine vision of hunger contrasts with early GDR hunger-discourse, which tended to focus on the suffering of hard-working women who had been oppressed and exploited by overfed, male, Nazis.

<sup>445</sup> Of all of the delegates at the Copenhagen conference, the West German representative most explicitly addressed the moral consequences of the postwar system of rehabilitating survivors of Nazi persecution. Dr. A. N. Simmedinger complained that the German victims of Nazi persecution, who had been crucial in civilian denazification and reconstruction activity immediately after the war, had been deliberately "ousted from their positions, into which the old [Nazi] specialists have wriggled their way back in. In this way the most important moral and political element for the construction of truly democratic conditions, the German resistance fighters, has been systematically eliminated from the Federal Republic." (Max Michel, *Gesundheitsschäden durch Verfolgung und Gefangenschaft und Ihre Spätfolgen*.) Simmedinger was also the only participant to explicitly condemn the lack of support for Jewish victims of persecution. The Soviet doctor joined in condemning the Federal Republic's shoddy treatment of Jews, but celebrated what he termed a 'general success' in treating and re-integrating Russian Jewish survivors of Nazism.

One of the central figures in these debates was Ernst Günther Schenck, who had been active as a doctor in the SS during the war and was responsible for extensive food and nutrition research on inmates at Dachau. Although he was barred from practicing medicine in the FRG due to his activities during the Third Reich, Schenck enjoyed an illustrious postwar career as the expert in hunger-disease and health issues for the Committee for Expellees, POWs and the Relatives of the Missing of Germany (*Verband der Heimkehrer, Kriegsgefangenen und Vermisstenangehörigen Deutschlands*.)<sup>446</sup> In 1956, Schenck published his monumental treatise *Das menschliche Elend im zwanzigsten Jahrhundert* (Human Misery in the Twentieth Century), a work republished several times over the subsequent decades. In it, Schenck analyzed modern suffering through the lens of starvation, and came to the realization that

the deeper that one dives into the material, the more one realizes that the image of utter suffering, in all times and in all peoples, is remarkably similar, and that the hungry generally behave in the same ways and suffer from the same afflictions.  
<sup>447</sup>

Tracing mass catastrophes throughout the world, but with a special focus on Europe during and after World War II, Schenck's primary agenda was the establishment of what he claimed to be 'the truth' (*die Wahrheit*). His book asserted a moral rather than medical or political purpose, reminding German readers of what they should not forget, and correcting those things that had been historically falsified. In the process, Schenck engaged in a careful process of scorekeeping, evaluating both the quantity and quality of modern suffering. Thus, while briefly discussing the tens of thousands of deaths by

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<sup>446</sup> During his denazification trial, Dr. Bansi unsuccessfully defended Schenck against these accusations, arguing that his use of unwilling Dachau prisoners for his nutritional experiments was excused by the war-context, and thus not place his medical credentials in question. Klee, *Deutsche Medizin im Dritten Reich: Karrieren vor und nach 1945*, 189.

<sup>447</sup> Schenck, *Das menschliche Elend im 20. Jahrhundert*, 25

starvation in besieged Leningrad and the Warsaw ghetto, and acknowledging that the 'horrors' of World War II were largely inflicted by the Nazis, the author "considered it appropriate and necessary" to site a report from the Neugamme Concentration Camp issued during the winter of 1944/45, which reported that "the preparation of meals in the prisoners' kitchen is clean and adequate, the distribution is fair . . . the prisoners who are not capable of a full work-load are given lighter tasks." Such reports, Schenk explained, show that "here, just as in other prisons, there was . . . real humanity."<sup>448</sup> The text however lacked examples of Soviet 'humanity' toward German POWs, instead focusing on the seemingly incomparable suffering of Germans during and after the war, a suffering "second only to the Soviets" in terms of scale, and "equivalent in terms of quantity to the losses of the Jewish and Polish peoples."<sup>449</sup> For Schenck, as for most German doctors and nutritionists in the postwar FRG, these losses, this scale of suffering, was most poignantly and powerfully embodied in hungry POWs, whose bodies, despite fattening quickly upon their return to the West, became an 'eternal warning' of the horrors of human suffering and the redemptive power of hunger.

Along with the public attention focused on healing the returned POW, the 1950s and 1960s were a time that encouraged the civilian population to remember, and even reenact, their own past hunger. Such memories helped to maintain a shared German heritage, or *Kulturgut*, of hunger, while at the same time confirming current affluence. Scientists and nutritionists regularly admonished the population to hold tight to their memories of lack, of pinching bellies and unsatiated appetites. In 1953, the Ministry of Food and Agricultural complained that "long years of good food have weakened our

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<sup>448</sup> Ibid., 113

<sup>449</sup> Ibid., 10

powers of memory, and there are many who sit today in front of an overflowing table, without a care in the world, who have scarcely a sense anymore of those pitiful rations of the Hunger Years."<sup>450</sup> These concerns grew parallel to the size of West German stomachs. Cookbooks advised housewives to occasionally recreate the once-loathed flavor of black bread and dandelion greens; cultural icons like the television chef Clemens Wilmenrod regularly warned his viewers not to forget the suffering of the Hunger Years. The novelist Johannes Mario Simmel, in his enormously popular postwar novel *Es muss nicht immer Kaviar sein* (It Needn't always be Caviar), expressed the fears of his generation when he bemoaned the fact that "stuffed with food as we are today, we are scarcely able to recall the way it was then."<sup>451</sup> Hans Schlange-Schöningen, former Director of Nutrition and Agriculture in the Bizone, published *Im Schatten des Hungers* in 1955 out of concern that "like so many forms of suffering from the war and postwar years, the years of hunger are already beginning to be forgotten."<sup>452</sup>

German hunger proved to be more uncomfortable and politically volatile in the East than it was in the West. Images of starving Germans from any epoch were unpopular in the GDR, certainly because the Soviet-influenced government was uninterested in emphasizing German suffering, but also because indigenous socialist traditions highlighted ideals of abundance, health and vitality.<sup>453</sup> Continuing patterns that had been established during occupation, the socialist leaders of East Germany preferred

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<sup>450</sup> Ministerium für Ernährung, Landwirtschaft und Forsten, *Unser täglich Brot; Aufgaben und Leistungen der Ernährungs-, Land- und Forstwirtschaft in Nordrhein-Westfalen*, 9.

<sup>451</sup> Johannes Mario Simmel, *Es muss nicht immer Kaviar sein: die tolldreisten Abenteuer und auserlesenen Kochrezepte des Geheimagenten wider Willen* Thomas Lieven (München: Knaur, 1960), 436.

<sup>452</sup> Hans Schlange-Schöningen, *Im Schatten des Hungers; Dokumentarisches zur Ernährungspolitik und Ernährungswirtschaft in den Jahren 1945-1949*. (Hamburg: P. Parey, 1955), 11.

<sup>453</sup> Carol Poore, "Illness and the Socialist Personality: Philosophical Debates and Literary Images in the GDR" in Margy Gerber, ed., *Studies in GDR Culture and Society 4: Selected Papers from the Ninth New Hampshire Symposium on the German Democratic Republic* (Lanham: University Press of America, 1984).

to promote an image of independence and self-reliance. While there was a strong cult of martyrdom and suffering that focused on communist resistance during the Third Reich, their suffering was specific, politicized and evoked strength and determination. In contrast the West willingly emphasized its frailty, need for assistance, and of course its hunger in order to acquire both economic and social support. Similarly, the situation of POWs in the GDR was far more complex and variable than it was in the FRG. During the early 1950s, East German discourse on returned prisoners of war was largely critical, emphasizing "the apparent apathy, incompetence, and political indifference of male returnees."<sup>454</sup> These former German soldiers were seen as inadequate and politically suspect, suspected of being antisocialist to the same degree that their fellow POWs in the East were suspected of having been 'Russified.' POWs were not embraced as the embodiment of the collective German experience of the war, but rather cast in opposition to 'real' East German resistance fighters. As in the West, hunger played an important role in this East German critique, but it was a hunger located at home rather than in Soviet camps. This was a hunger that was denied to POWs and instead evoked as an accusation against them.

In 1949, the readers of the East German women's magazine *Für Dich* learned that German soldiers in Polish POW camps received a veritable king's ransom in food supplies. Female reporters interviewed returning former soldiers and were regaled with stories of truly excessive corporeal luxury. One man longingly reminisced about the "3038 calories per day. I couldn't even manage to finish off all of my daily serving of bread, since we received 800 grams every day, and in addition 40 grams of bacon, 50

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<sup>454</sup> Frank Biess, "'Pioneers of a New Germany:' Returning POWs from the Soviet Union and the Making of East German Citizens, 1945-1950," *Central European History* 32, no. 2 (1999), 5.

grams of sugar, 125 grams of packaged foods."<sup>455</sup> The magazine, one of the most widely read in the early GDR, dwelt on the fact that imprisoned soldiers had it better than their wives and daughters who were struggling to rebuild their devastated homeland.<sup>456</sup> A year later, the same journal published a shocking two-page spread "How it is in Rüdersdorf: How it was in the concentration camps," detailing the relatively high quality of life at a POW camp run by Soviet officials. Here, the contrast was not to starving East German civilians but to former camp inmates. Next to photos of starved female corpses from the death-camp Maidanek was a photo of the smiling and plump Alfred Müller, "who was a violent participant in the notorious *Kristallnacht* . . . no one could claim that he ever had suffered from hunger edema."<sup>457</sup> Such reportage implied an opposition between German male soldiers and hunger, which acquired instead feminine and political connotations it lacked in the West. In fact, POWs were the East German regime's primary postwar target in their long tradition of blaming Nazis for German hunger.

Making no distinction between common foot soldiers and SS-officers, and simply denying the horribly inadequate facilities at Soviet camps, these critiques were an important first step in the establishment of an East German narrative of itself as a nation of anti-fascists. Only morally impeachable Germans were allowed to claim hunger, a hunger, in turn, that was not debilitating and depoliticized but inspiring, driving bodies to work harder, faster and longer to earn their honest bread. The implication was that it was

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<sup>455</sup> "Sie kehren zurück" *Für Dich*, November 1949.

<sup>456</sup> While this claim was certainly intended as propaganda, there is archival evidence to support such cases. For example, on February 25<sup>th</sup>, 1949, a group of 350 POWs gathered in Berlin for a public appeal for their elevation to the rationing category II. Their argument was that most returning soldiers had received better rations in the East European prisoner of war camps than what was allotted them once they returned to the SBZ. Landesarchiv Berlin C Rep 126 / 68.

<sup>457</sup> "So ist es in Rüdersdorf: so war es in den Konzentrationslagern" *Für Dich* October 1950.

well-nigh impossible for a Nazi to starve, while Communist commitment resulted in scrawny bodies, thin limbs, and fevered eyes. At the same time, the fleshy plumpness of Nazis was associated with weakness and apathy, while the skinniness of leftist revolutionaries granted them otherworldly strength. Flagrant criticisms of POWs became increasingly uncommon in the GDR over the course of the 1950s, and they were gradually remade into positive, masculine role models; however, the POW never acquired the symbolic significance that he maintained in the West.

The only German hunger which was regularly mentioned in the GDR was that of imprisoned antifascists. This discourse, however, was far removed from the pathos-ridden hunger-memories of the West. In the stomachs of dedicated Communists, hunger became a creator, rather than a destroyer, of community; it was remade as a foundation for solidarity, an obstacle that was overcome through companionship and shared struggle. In the officially approved memories of former Communist inmates, hunger was a badge of honor, and survival was attributed to the shared labor of the collective to provide extra foods and to shield from extra punishment.<sup>458</sup> Former President of the GDR Erich Honecker reported in his memoirs that during his concentration camp internment, though "hunger was throughout all of these years our constant companion . . . [I survived] thanks to the solidarity of illegal [Communist] party organizations, which secretly smuggled me pieces of bread."<sup>459</sup> Having survived years of imprisonment and torture on smuggled

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<sup>458</sup> These memories are not false but misleading. Former camp inmates recognized that Communists and other political prisoners maintained the strongest sense of solidarity, worked to help and feed one another more frequently, and as a result had a substantially higher survival rate than 'racial' prisoners, particularly Jews, Gypsies and Soviet POWs. However, the primary reason for the higher survival rates of Communist prisoners was not these shared crusts of bread, but the fact that these prisoners, recognized as German and often Aryan by their Nazi prisoners, were treated far better, allotted higher rations, housing and medical care, and spared the most devastating fates of 'foreign' enemies of the Reich.

<sup>459</sup> "Ernährung von Häftlingen in der Zeit des NS-Regimes" DIFE 226 # 298.

communist crusts, Honecker saw little need to change his diet even in the prosperous Farmers' and Workers' State. Instead, he avowed publicly that

whoever knows me knows that I drank much water and little wine . . . every morning I ate one or two rolls with only butter and honey; for lunchtime I was in the Central Committee [canteen]; there I had either sausage with mashed potatoes, macaroni with bacon, or goulash, and in the evenings I ate a little something at home, watched some TV and went to sleep . . . Thus I never lost my connection to the *Volk*.<sup>460</sup>

Unlike the postwar rhetoric of a consumerist food world, it was not an excess of delicacies that proved the ultimate elimination of hunger from society. Just the opposite: the simple, unadorned nature of Honecker's diet marked it as socialist, and therefore as intrinsically 'enough' to satisfy. In the early GDR, hunger was not the provenance of Germans, nor was fatness free of guilt. Hunger was instead inserted into an anti-fascist tradition linking hunger to the victimized proletariat while the swollen belly evoked the exploitative banker: both were supposedly eliminated with the founding of the German Democratic Republic.

### **Our Hungry Brothers: Hunger in the 'Other Germany'**

In the FRG during the 1950s and into the 1960s, the very existence of the GDR served as a reminder of and shorthand for German hunger. It evoked the present and real suffering of fellow Germans under the Communist dictatorship, and at the same time the threat of future hunger represented by the Cold War. At the same time that the lost 'East' was a Edenic space of mythic German plenty, the new 'German East,' the GDR, was turned into a landscape of hunger that was used to highlight the abundance of the Federal Republic. Convinced, that, in the words of the West German agricultural expert Frieda

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<sup>460</sup> Cited in Ina Merkel, *Wunderwirtschaft: DDR-Konsumkultur in den 60er Jahren*, (Köln: Bohlau, 1996), 314.

Wunderlich, the goal of the Russians was "above all the ruin of East German agriculture,"<sup>461</sup> West German anti-communists believed that a socialist government inherently caused malnourishment and hunger. West German descriptions of life in the GDR relied upon tropes of hunger and deprivation that had been established during the Hunger Years: poorly stocked stores and empty shelves, flavorless and obligatory canteen meals, and badly made and preserved foodstuffs.<sup>462</sup> The repetition of this imagery encouraged a sense of identification and familiarity on the part of West Germans, whose own past-but-not-forgotten hunger remained real and present in the women in Leipzig, Dresden and Magdeburg standing patiently in line for bread or potatoes, basket on arms, bellies assumed as empty as they had been in 1947.<sup>463</sup> West Berlin politicians used their location in the heart of the GDR to engage in propaganda attacking socialist food structures, and praising the abundance of consumer capitalism.<sup>464</sup> In a typical example, the 1954 *Grüne Woche* included a 'food politics' section of a display of store windows from 1846 through to 1953 "to clearly illustrate the continual improvement of the food economy" in the West.<sup>465</sup> The exhibit originally intended to include a window from the

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<sup>461</sup> Frieda Wunderlich, *Farmer and Farm Labor in the Soviet Zone of Germany*. (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1958), 50. Wunderlich linked these Cold War fears with the fear of an upcoming demographic food crisis with typical Cold War Malthusianism, warning that "we are living in an era in which the population is increasing with explosive force. Before a half century is gone the population of the world will be twice what it is today. Where will it get its food?" Ibid., 50

<sup>462</sup> Kathy Pence and Paul Betts' edited volume *Socialist Modern* offers an excellent collection of articles discussing the contested relationship between modernity and East German socialism. Ina Merkel's essay ("Alternative Rationalities, Strange Dreams, Absurd Utopias: On Socialist Advertising and Market Research") and her writings more generally have argued that the GDR was not 'less modern' but 'differently modern;' her focus on consumer culture, often including food, has also pointed out the importance of imaginings of the GDR as un- or anti-modern for the development of the postwar FRG.

<sup>463</sup> For a striking example of such rhetoric, see Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, *Der Alltag in der DDR*. (Bonn: Verlag Neue Gesellschaft, 1986).

<sup>464</sup> West Berlin was one of the poorest regions of West Germany, both because its economy was severely restricted by the nature of its isolation within the GDR, and because it attracted a poorer, immigrant and less professional population.

<sup>465</sup> "Abteilung Ernährung, Grüne Woche 1954" BArch B 116 / 1595 Such displays were standard parts of consumer and food education exhibits that toured the Federal Republic during the postwar decades.

Soviet Zone that was to be nearly empty; however, the idea was cancelled because "as a consequence of the recently improved food situation in the SBZ, it is scarcely possible to construct a significant contrast"<sup>466</sup> with the situation in the West. Nonetheless, until the construction of the Wall in 1961, the Grüne Woche deliberately wooed farmers and food providers from the GDR, offering free products and propaganda material to East German visitors. Such material generally assumed widespread food shortages and poor nutritional quality in the GDR. Indeed, beginning in the late fifties, the West Berlin government began stockpiling vast amounts of groceries in city storehouses as advisors predicted a food crisis as a result of an expected unification, imagining hordes of half-starved East Germans buying up supplies of sugar, butter and meat.<sup>467</sup>

The longest-lived and best known icon of the food relationship between East and West Germany were the *Westpakete*, or 'West packages,' the regular shipment of gift packages from the people of the FRG to those of the GDR that took place throughout the duration of the division. These packages contained everything from bonbons to soaps, exotic fruits to stockings, noodles to imported chocolates. With these packages, East German citizens, whose socialist government had refused to confirm popular assertions of hunger since the occupation, were granted the status of permanent food aid recipients.

*Westpakete* became a steady accompaniment to life in the two Germanies; West Germans

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<sup>466</sup> The possibility of deliberate misrepresentation was weighed and discarded "since the visitor from the Eastern Zone would easily spot mistakes, and this could color his opinion of the Grüne Woche in general." ("Vermerk über die Sitzung Grüne Woche 1954" BAArch B 116 /1595) From the Grüne Woche's postwar inception to the construction of the wall in 1961, the East German government tried to restrict travel to the Western part of the city during the convention, and performed searches on travelers to ensure that they did not bring back inflammatory material.

<sup>467</sup> "Betr: Arbeitsgruppe 'Lebensmittelindustrie'" Landesarchiv Berlin B Rep 010 02 / 316/ There were at the same time paradoxical concerns that the sudden increase in competition from the formerly East German food industry would weaken West Berlin's economy. Indeed, rapid developments in East German and Soviet food science, especially in the area of fats, caused considerable anxiety for West German food scientists; however, such technical advances, like East German success in collective feeding programs, were never assumed to result in a better fed population. ("Protokoll über die 18. Sitzung der Arbeitsgruppe Lebensmittelindustrie" Landesarchiv Berlin B Rep 010 02 / 316 )

began sending packages by the thousands to family, friends and strangers in the GDR even while themselves still receiving food shipments from the United States and international charities. (CARE continued to send food packages to poor families in the Federal Republic until 1960.) Discussions of *Westpakete* have typically focused on the GDR, on the desires of the population for Western products and the justified fears of the East German state that these products would negatively impact morale and productivity.<sup>468</sup> Less discussed remain the motivations of the West Germans who, with remarkable commitment and reliability, assembled and mailed packages of chocolate, coffee and cigarettes to the 'needy East' long after the GDR had transformed itself into a relatively prosperous, industrialized and well-fed socialist country.

Since the early 1950s, the West German government encouraged its populace to ensure that their Eastern relatives partook in the postwar economic miracle. Widely distributed brochures supported an intimate identification with Easterners, while at the same time fixating on their difference: "your package sent over [to the East] is a sign of connection with relatives, friends and acquaintances on the other side of the Elbe and Werra. . . Your package sent over will help to maintain and strengthen connections that hold us Germans together beyond the political zone border."<sup>469</sup> Packages usually concentrated on luxury items, or items that Westerners imagined would be luxurious for the inhabitants of the East. Therefore, by the 1960s, the National Center for All-German Aid rather paradoxically explained that

unless there is a special request, you should no longer send flour, legumes, rice, sugar, tea . . . the people there are no different from us. They would like to finally

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<sup>468</sup> Christian Härtel and Petra Kabus, *Das Westpaket: Geschenksendung, keine Handelsware* (Berlin: Ch. Links, 2000).

<sup>469</sup> Bernd Lindner, "Dein Päckchen nach drüben" in Härtel and Kabus, *Das Westpaket*, 32

be able to participate in the finer things in life, and take pleasure in something that is not simply the most primitive necessity.<sup>470</sup>

Negotiating the familiar line between similarity and difference, such guidelines asserted a common German-ness while confirming a strict hierarchy. Those in the East were 'no different from us,' yet their lives, were it not for the intervention of the West, apparently revolved around 'the most primitive necessities.' These were presumably the groceries like legumes, rice, and sugar that in fact made up the daily diet of most Germans in both East and West.

For the givers, these packages represented a transition from the humiliations and deprivations of occupation to the abundance of a prosperous capitalist society. Relegating the GDR to a state of permanent want, these shipments recreated the internalized model of inequality that was central to West German identity during the Cold War. All members of the West, regardless of their status within that society, could confirm their superiority to the East through the mailing of a *Westpaket*. During the early postwar years, expellees from the former Eastern parts of Germany were some of the most avid senders of West-packages, which allowed their senders to feel prosperous despite the fact that they were at the bottom of the West German social and economic hierarchy.<sup>471</sup> In later years, retirees spent much of their limited pensions sending boxes of chocolates and coffee over the Wall. The GDR was transformed into what the FRG used to be; it was a constant reminder of a painful and hungry past. As a 1954 ad in the national society journal *Prima* explained to its readers:

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<sup>470</sup> Cited in Christian Härtel, "Ostdeutsche Bestimmungen für den Paketverkehr im Spiegel Westdeutscher Markblätter" in Härtel and Kabus, *Das Westpaket*, 48

<sup>471</sup> Ina Dietzsch, "Geschenkpakete – ein fundamentales Missverständnis" in Härtel and Kabus, *Das Westpaket*, 107

food packages seem to be a permanent aspect of our age. Before the currency reform, many lives depended on them. That's how it was with us. Then came the great [currency] reform, and suddenly we were no longer dependent on the food packages. We were not. But on the other side of the oft-cited curtain not much has changed, and so we now send packages across it. What you and I fill the packages and gift baskets with is not insignificant. It must be luxurious food products, butter and cheese, fish conserves, a sausage, fruit juices, a bottle of wine, valuable things for which our brothers and sisters will thank us.<sup>472</sup>

Such wares were not recommended for distribution in the hungry Third World, nor were they distributed to the poor of the Federal Republic.

Over the years, the preparation and shipment of these packages became a regular industry; most East Germans did not know that the majority of packages they received were not personally assembled, but prepared and shipped anonymously and en masse. Some recipients resented assumptions of poverty and greeted these packages with skepticism or anger. Many East Germans insisted on responding in kind, sending millions of packages back over the border both as simple tokens of generosity and affection, and as a way of resisting assumptions of their intrinsic poverty.<sup>473</sup> Many were unable to stomach the condescension in West German letters explaining that "we fill our packages with citrus fruits because we know that in the year 1970, these things and many others are still scarce in your 'Workers' and Farmers' state,' and we particularly want to give your children access to vitamins."<sup>474</sup> At the same time, however, East Germans' general enthusiasm over these packages and their desire to accumulate Western products confirmed the existence of a meaningful discrepancy between lives in the two German states, as this intensive traffic in goods kept specific hunger-myths alive.

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<sup>472</sup> "Prima: Abschrift" BArch B 116 / 8075

<sup>473</sup> Of course the content of these packages was quite different, often focusing on handcrafted or home-baked goods, particularly regional specialties like the Christmas cake *Stollen*. In the West, attention remained on sending name brand and luxurious consumer objects. (Lindner, "Dein Päckchen nach drüben" in Härtel and Kabus, *Das Westpaket*, 36)

<sup>474</sup> Cited in Dietzsch "Geschenckpakete," in Härtel and Kabus, *Das Westpaket*, 109

East German doctrine attempted to link West Germany with hunger as a way of bolstering popular support and attacking the West; however, this rhetoric was largely unsuccessful. During occupation, media in the Soviet Zone had reported heavily on nutritional and health crises in the West, covering bread riots in Düsseldorf, grocery store closures in Hamburg, and childhood malnutrition in Bavaria.<sup>475</sup> Such reportage was usually true; however, the situation was little different in the Eastern Zone and the population continued to believe that the West, under the Americans, was better fed than they were.<sup>476</sup> Despite limited success distributing East German food packages to needy West Berlin elderly, the SED never established a reputation for itself as a food distributor in the West. East German reports on the quality of life in the West incessantly used hunger as both literal and figurative sign of the suffering of the working classes under capitalism; the trope of workers hungering under the capitalist yoke remained an important accusation wielded by German socialists, but the SED gradually turned to non-German areas to highlight the miseries of hunger. Articles on the 'starvation wages' in Britain, malnutrition among poor black in the USA, and the hunger of former colonial subjects in the Third World, were constant referent points in reportage on the West.

Perhaps the single most important aspect of GDR hunger-discourse was the basic and inviolable assumption that socialism as a political system rendered hunger impossible. Cookbooks, popular magazines, and educational materials argued that "in our current societal conditions, agriculture, the food industry and trade all ensure the basic food supplies of our population. Hunger has been overcome; no one need fear it

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<sup>475</sup> See BArch DL1 and R86 for several such articles from 1945 and 1946 including titles like "In der Ostzone bessere Ernährungslage als in den Westzonen," "Hungerdemonstrationen im Westen," "Ernster Zwischenfall in Dortmund," and "Brotknappheit im Westen."

<sup>476</sup> Gries' *Die Rationen-Gesellschaften* discusses in length the universal assumptions that 'other' zones were better fed than one's own.

anymore, not even in winter."<sup>477</sup> The East German state, different than the West German, did not rely on the Malthusian logic of population control, or even on economic underdevelopment arguments, to explain widespread famine and hunger in the Third World. Instead, the SED developed a simple socialist analysis by which capitalism ensured that workers within industrialized countries were abused, exploited and placed in a state of permanent malnourishment; at the same time material goods in underdeveloped countries were taken by force through the apparatus of colonialism or neo-colonialism, resulting in economic depression and widespread starvation in the places of food production. Disputing Malthus' naturalized relationship between population growth and famine, socialist nutritionists argued that

hunger is not an eternal and uncontrollable law of nature. If we ask how it is that millions of children are hungry in Africa, Asia and Latin America, in the ghettos of New York and other capitalist cities, yet not a single child in Moscow, Ulan Bator, Havana, Berlin or Sofia . . . the answer is simple.<sup>478</sup>

The SED not only asserted its own nutritional success but assured the population that "humanity has the ability to ensure everyone a life free from hunger and need,"<sup>479</sup> since hunger, like satiety, was "not only a biological process but a product of society."<sup>480</sup> In contrast to West German attempts to make both hunger and satiety universal absolutes, socialist nutritional discourse claimed that it was "the development of productivity and the relations of production [that] determine[d] the diet of both the propertied and the exploited classes." Hunger was an inherent part of capitalism, thanks to the "constantly growing social gap between the classes;" in socialism "the steady growth of productivity,

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<sup>477</sup> Hans-Joachim Goetze, *Konservieren: Methoden d. Haltbarmachung von Obst u. Gemüse* (Leipzig: Verl. für die Frau, 1986), 5.

<sup>478</sup> "der Sozialismus hat den Hunger beseitigt" DIFE 233 # 137

<sup>479</sup> "der Sozialismus hat den Hunger beseitigt" DIFE 233 # 137

<sup>480</sup> Semmler, "Gesunde Ernährung. Informations- und Argumentationsmaterial zur Gesundheitserziehung," (no page numbers.)

the elimination of exploitation and the basic agreement between personal and social interests on the basis of socialist methods of production assure an adequate diet to all levels of the population."<sup>481</sup> Hunger, "the most widespread form of malnourishment and one of the most dreadful consequences of oppression and exploitation,"<sup>482</sup> was a political rather than personal state of being, incompatible with a socialist nation that freed its citizens "from the fear of having to waste away while others are wasteful."<sup>483</sup> Out of its humble and hungry beginnings, the GDR claimed to have irrevocably eliminated hunger, something that its far wealthier Western half had little desire to assert.

West German economists and policy experts relied upon a purely mathematical explanation for global hunger. Economist Fritz Baade explained famine as the result of unchecked population growth:

when we eat our breakfast every morning, every now and then we should remember that in the time between yesterday's breakfast and today's, the number of people whom the world must feed has risen by 70,000 . . . many fear that this increase in the global population will lead to the world catastrophe of hunger.<sup>484</sup>

While Baade, like many other West German economists of his era, expressed openly racist fears of the "suppression of the white population"<sup>485</sup> by Africans and Asians were the current population-food ratio to be maintained, he was also at the forefront of advocating West German food aid, based on the aid that the Federal Republic had so eagerly received a few years ago. West German economists praised an especially strong German interest in aiding the victims of hunger as it was "during and after the Second

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<sup>481</sup> Ibid.

<sup>482</sup> Ibid.

<sup>483</sup> Ibid. This did not preclude a constant and open critique of the inadequacies of popular diet in the GDR. Nutritionists constantly bemoaned the fact that people did not eat the healthiest foods, and that healthier foods were not available for the people to purchase. However, these problems in the socialist food economy were completely divorced from, and ideologically incompatible with, concerns over hunger.

<sup>484</sup> Fritz Baade, *Welternährungswirtschaft* (Hamburg: Rohwolt, 1956), 7.

<sup>485</sup> Hugo Berger, *Droht Nahrungsnot?: eine ernste Betrachtung zur Nahrungsmittelversorgung in Gegenwart und Zukunft*. (Frankfurt am Main: DLG-Verlags, 1952), 10.

World War [that we] learned again to understand was hunger really is, and what death by starvation really means."<sup>486</sup> This asserted hunger-equivalency was regularly evoked in the West German media's postwar discovery of African hunger. During the massively publicized Biafra crisis of the late sixties, Germans led the international donations list, because, according to German agricultural economist Theodor Dams, food aid "acquires in the Federal Republic of Germany an additional accent, thanks to the memories of the American food donations to the hungry population in the time after the Second World War."<sup>487</sup> West German media represented Africa as a land of helpless people in constant danger of starvation. In response, the West German civilian population believed that they were responsible for saving them from death, creating food dependency that was at once irritating ('they should be capable of solving their own problems') and a source of pride ('we have saved the lives of countless innocent children').<sup>488</sup> Remaking itself as a country that gave rather than received food, a *Stern* article from the early 1970s explained that "the Federal Republic is not a military power, and we have nothing to do with the weapons trade. Here, however, in the hunger provinces of Ethiopia, our nation has the opportunity to reveal itself to be a world power when it comes to generosity."<sup>489</sup> Not the elimination but the alleviation of hunger through increased consumption was the ideal for a country that obsessively remembered how it had been saved from hunger by being (air)lifted into a free-market consumer economy.

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<sup>486</sup> Ibid., 10

<sup>487</sup> Theodor Dams, *Nahrungsmittelhilfe; Ein Beitrag zur Beseitigung des Hungers in der Welt?* (Aachen, Germany: 1969), 6.

<sup>488</sup> Dirke Köpp, "*Keine Hungersnot in Afrika*" hat keinen besonderen Nachrichtenwert: *Afrika in populären deutschen Zeitschriften (1946-2000)* (Frankfurt am Main: Lang, 2005).

<sup>489</sup> Cited in Dirke Köpp, "*Keine Hungersnot in Afrika*", 253

In the GDR, a country that defined itself as a state of resistance-fighters and which was bound politically and economically to the Eastern Block and the USSR, hunger was neither a major part of the German present nor the German past. Unlike in the West, there were frequent references in East German cookbooks to the sufferings of non-Germans under the Nazis. A cookbook of Eastern European specialties, for example, reminded its readers amongst recipes for blini and goulash that

there are Poles who still remember those tragic, grief-filled Christmases during the last war; the horrible terrors of the Nazi regime . . . the hunger, the humiliating bitterness of the hated occupation . . . the thin borscht made from home-frozen beets and a single hard-won herring.<sup>490</sup>

When East German nutritionists did evoke the hunger suffered by ordinary German civilians after the war, they emphasized the negative impact of this hunger on the community as a whole. Rather than lingering on the physical consequences of an inadequate diet, these medical reports explained that "the struggle to ensure individual survival created in often dramatic ways an uninhibited egoism, a deadly antisocial behavior that destroyed the life of the individual and that poisoned the community."<sup>491</sup> In addition, German suffering was not depoliticized but instead contextualized and often downgraded. In a typical example, the popular cookbook *Gesunde Küche* from 1960 began its plea for healthy cooking with an evocation of the "war and postwar years" when we "experienced in a dreadful way the consequences of an inadequate diet on our own bodies." The cookbook, however, then promptly reminded its readers that it was the

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<sup>490</sup> Maria Lemnis and Henryk Vitry, *Altpolnische Küche und polnische Tischsitten* (Warszawa: Verlag Interpress, 1979), 10.

<sup>491</sup> "Richtige Ernährung, deine Gesundheit und Leistungsfähigkeit" DIFE 104 # 42

"dystrophic prisoners, those concentration camp inmates forced to live on the camp diet for years, who suffered the worst consequences."<sup>492</sup>

Formed by this legacy, East German cookbooks were not texts of leisure or fun but political treatises, situated within the larger context of the historical anti-fascist struggle of the state of 'workers and farmers.' *Guten Appetit: A Journey through the World with Fork and Knife*, interspersed historical information about cookbooks among its recipes. The book used the Communist resistance to Nazism as a way of explaining the importance of cookbooks for radical history and the German resistance:

when people talk about German cookbooks, it is important to remember those small pamphlets that circulated from hand to hand during the years of fascism. Whoever owned these pamphlets risked concentration camp and the death penalty, for, concealed behind innocent titles like "50 casseroles recipes," were Lenin's writings on the state, nestled between lentils with sausage or baked cod.<sup>493</sup>

At the same time that East German cookbooks evoked the battles of resistance fighters and the sufferings of victims of Nazi occupation and repression, they asserted the need to create a new, socialist, German cuisine. This cuisine would be a necessary support and enabler of the larger revolution in society. Anti-capitalist and especially anti-American rhetoric inevitably focused on the excessive consumption of luxury foods, particularly lobster and champagne; these fat bodies were contrasted with the skinny, or simply sturdy, ones of proletarian workers.

The East German insistence on an absence of hunger within its own boundaries hinged upon a specific definition of hunger and satiety; the socialist government's

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<sup>492</sup> Herbert H. Krauss, *Gesunde Küche; Anleitung zu einer gesundheitsfördernden Ernährung*. (Berlin: VEB Verlag Volk und Gesundheit, 1960).

<sup>493</sup> Günter Linde and Heinz Knobloch, *Guten Appetit: eine Weltreise mit Messer und Gabel* (Leipzig: Verl. für die Frau, 1967). This is largely true. Because cookbooks had high circulation and relatively low levels of censorship, the German underground, particularly the KPD, frequently smuggled resistance texts into cookbooks. For example, the cover and first several pages of a German dietary guide by the well-respected Nazi nutritionist Felix Buse were bound around a Communist pamphlet. Buse, *Gesunde Volkskost mit geringsten Mitteln! Ein volkstümlicher Beitrag zur Frage der Ernährung in Notzeiten*

commitment to the abolition of what it recognized as hunger dictated national economic policy. The false assumption that adequate calories could be equated with an adequate food economy was at the root of East Germany's extended rationing program. With Great Britain, East Germany was one of the only European countries to attempt to establish a postwar food-rationing program as a long-term policy rather than an emergency measure.<sup>494</sup> Although, despite continuing food shortages the rest of the Eastern bloc abandoned food rationing as quickly as possible, the SED's maintenance of rationing until 1958, along with the constant promotion of mass feeding programs, was intended to sever such policies from their associations with hunger and societal crisis. Such efforts failed. Regulated and controlled food consumption continued to be interpreted as a sign of an inadequate food economy and the lurking threat of hunger.

The artificially frozen prices of basic food items, especially bread, milk, sugar and some meat products, have been blamed for the economic crises of the GDR, both because they encouraged waste and because they focused attention on simple food products that lost their appeal early on in an increasingly prosperous society. This policy of artificially low food prices was not incidental but central to East German socialism, which had been bragging about its bread prices since the early 1950s. In 1962, a year after the construction of the Berlin Wall, the SED introduced several new and improved bread varieties in an effort to mollify an angry and frightened population. These improvements were not accompanied by a substantial increase in price – and it was the cheapness as much as the quality of the bread that government propaganda emphasized: "here in the

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<sup>494</sup> Zweiniger-Bargielowska, *Austerity in Britain*, 60. In postwar England, the Labor party transformed the policies of austerity, first understood during the war as a sort of shared sacrifice, into a strategy for increasing social equality. However, the population refused to accept rationing outside of the context of war.

GDR we have low and stable bread prices; in contrast, the NATO-politics of West Germany lead to constant price increases . . . it is clear – our bread is dramatically cheaper than the equivalent quality of bread in West Germany."<sup>495</sup> Government officials regularly reminded the population that steady increases in the average income of the population of the GDR were paired with stable prices for basic food items. As a result, they claimed, "everyone can feed himself adequately, tastily and healthfully, no one suffers from want."<sup>496</sup>

The most basic premise of socialism is the stilling of hunger: 'bread on every table.'<sup>497</sup> This goal was met quite early in the GDR, but by that point, in the face of the escalating Cold War and the food politics of the West, the definition of hunger had changed. Despite optimistic proclamations that "the earth has bread for all . . . but she has even more, our earth. She also has bread-spreads and she has cake for us all – at least in a socialist world,"<sup>498</sup> it rapidly became clear that even cake was not enough, bread did not satisfy like bananas, and potatoes paled in comparison to imported marmalade and Coca-Cola. East Germans were caught in a struggle between their socialist leaders, who tried to convince them that they were well fed, and their relatives in the West, who sincerely believed that they were malnourished. While the FRG argued that the best, indeed the only, way to overcome years of hunger was increased consumption, German socialists argued that

the general [dietary] situation demands an essential advising and steering, in order to secure for the population the conditions for health and performance in the

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<sup>495</sup> "Verkauferrinnen fragen – wir antworten" BArch DY 30 /IV 2/6.10 17

<sup>496</sup> "der Sozialismus hat den Hunger beseitigt." DIFE 233 # 137

<sup>497</sup> As the title of a book on the global food situation proclaimed, "reliable food supplies [is] a crucial value of socialism." Klaus Ahrends, *Gesicherte Ernährung, Ein Wert des Sozialismus* [Secured Food Supplies: A Value of Socialism] (Berlin: Dietz, 1987).

<sup>498</sup> Kurt Drummer and Käthe Muskewitz, *Das Fernsehkochbuch; Rezepte, Ratschläge und Hinweise aus der Küche des deutschen Fernsehfunks*, (Leipzig: Fachbuchverlag, 1963), 172.

current economic, sociological and work situations, and to protect against any sort of deficiency and any resultant negative health impacts.<sup>499</sup>

'Advising and steering,' rather than 'free choice,' was the socialist recipe for full bellies. Despite Berlin City Officer Otto Klimpel's assertion that the population would "never forget the Russian trucks that delivered flour for the baker and meat for the butcher. This was done by people who only yesterday were the enemy, and about whom for 12 years lies had been told in Germany,"<sup>500</sup> popular memory preserved Russians as takers rather than providers of food. During the postwar decades, the East German population did not accept the state's claim to have fed the population 'amply and well.' They retained a clear hostility toward Soviets, resented the rationing program, and only reluctantly participated in collective meals. Nor did they believe that the West was the true home of hunger.<sup>501</sup>

This conflict between a state insistence on an absence of hunger in the GDR and the popular rejection of official food policies echoed the conflicts between German Communists and German civilians during the Occupation Years. In turn, the far closer alignment of popular and official discourse of hunger in the Western zones established a shared heritage of hunger and suffering which determined West German collective memory and identity after the war. If the Communists rejected German hunger too early, and denied its continued relevance within a socialist society, the West German state remained obsessed with German hunger, using it to justify cultural and economic policy. Indeed, hunger's regular re-emergence at moments of prosperity served an important function, reasserting the origins of the post-Nazi West German state and the scale of

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<sup>499</sup> "zur Einleitung" *Ernährungsforschung* (1: 1, 1950)

<sup>500</sup> "Mängel in der Versorgung der Bevölkerung" Landesarchiv Berlin B Rep 010-02 # 536

<sup>501</sup> Regardless of the actual status of one's nutritional intake, being the recipient of food donations over decades encourages the sensation of being poorly fed.

German suffering.<sup>502</sup> By framing East Germany as a place of automatic and institutionalized hunger, West Germans found a way to keep hunger German, while simultaneously embracing the abundance and excessive consumer culture that was their due as a member of the 'free world.' In other words, they could hold on to their hunger while still eating record quantities of bananas and chocolate. With their acceptance of the offer of American food during the Airlift, West Germans confirmed the end of their hunger while permanently transferring it onto their brothers and sisters on the other side of the Iron Curtain. Before the Airlift, all Germans were equally hungry; after it, German hunger became synonymous with, and exclusive to, the GDR. Official SED doctrine that hunger could not exist under socialism was countered by a capitalist insistence that socialism was definitionally a state of hunger. This was encouraged by East German consumer skepticism over the adequacy of their own food supplies.

For the duration of the division, the two Germanies' imaginings of each other fixated on food and its absence. The inability of the East German government to feed its population satisfactorily was institutionalized in the Federal Republic, and enacted on a daily basis by the actions of the populations of both states. The West offered foods to the East in the permanent expectation of hunger, and East Germans took the food, seeing it not as proof of their hunger but of the West's (over)abundance. Such tensions over past, present and future hunger also determined domestic social food policy in both German

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<sup>502</sup> In popular memory, West German postwar hunger experiences contrasted with a Nazi system that was remembered as having 'fed us well.' This analysis of Hitler's food distribution program as a successful program within a larger, flawed, framework has remained generally unchallenged within the historiography; it still appears in much current scholarship on Nazi Germany. Indeed as early as 1985 historian Ulrich Kluge warned that "the commonly accepted idea of a [Nazi] food system that functioned for all of those included within the official rationing program right up to the 8<sup>th</sup> of May 1945 requires major revisions." Ulrich Kluge, "Kriegs- und Mangelernährung im Nationalsozialismus," *Beiträge zur Historischen Sozialkunde* 15 (1985), 67.

states. The following chapters explore methods of feeding the hungry populations that emerged out of the food crisis and hunger experiences of the Occupation Years.

## **Chapter 5**

### **Work for Food or Food for Work? Canteens and the German Worker**

On May 1<sup>st</sup> 1953, International Labor Day and the most important holiday in the socialist calendar, the SED passed a popular ruling guaranteeing an improvement in the variety of rationed goods distributed to workplace canteens. The choice to highlight canteen meals on the day intended to celebrate the power of labor reflected the traditional importance placed on canteens by European socialist and labor organizations since the late nineteenth century. It was also an attempt to address one of the most important sources of conflict between the population and the state during the early years of the GDR: food supplies. The ruling itself was prompted by constant complaints from workers, factory supervisors and nutritionists over the state of these workplace meals, and it did significantly improve the quality of the groceries allotted to factory kitchens. However, higher assignments of meats, fats and fresh fruits and vegetables, intended to placate tensions in industrial workplaces, in fact only increased them.

Workers were outraged over a rise in meal price, something that was, contrary to SED hopes, not accepted as a fair trade-off for meals that could finally serve nutritionally as the 'primary meal of the day.' These price increases had not been downplayed by the SED, but incorporated into extensive propaganda campaigns which promoted these improved and more expensive meals as a reflection of the true value of labor and health, and a new opportunity to nourish the collective spirit of the GDR. Posters and pamphlets

distributed to worksites told angry workers that these canteen lunches were a nutritionally balanced meal far below the costs of reproducing something equivalent at home. They also explained the specific returns on productivity and community morale were workers to eat their main meal in the factory canteen. Nonetheless, East German workers rejected these new and improved 'primary meals' in even higher rates than they had earlier, cheaper and less nourishing ones, and popular discontent only increased. Surveys conducted in factories with low canteen participation rates revealed a complete lack of interest in 'ideological education' or the advantages of healthier, tastier foods. Instead "discussions in the factory were almost exclusively focused on the increase in the price of the meal."<sup>503</sup> In a Dresden typewriting factory, "a significant portion of the workers are waiting to pass judgment; they want to see if the improvement in quality is in proportion to increases in meal price."<sup>504</sup> Canteen meals did not seem to be definitional to East German workers' identity and world view, but were thought of as part of the individual-based consumer economy, and thus as all too optional.

Six weeks after the passage of this unsuccessful bill, on June 17<sup>th</sup> 1953, long-seething tensions exploded into massive protests, as working men and women asserted their dissatisfaction with their quality of life in the new 'workers state,' especially perceived inadequacies in consumer goods and food. Beginning with marches by East Berlin construction workers that soon spread throughout the country, the protest was prompted by the announcement of increased work quotas and further delays in the improvement of consumer goods. Coincidentally, on the same day, the GDR's chemical industry hosted a large-scale national conference on the status of East German canteen

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<sup>503</sup> "Bericht über die Verordnung betr: Verbesserung des Werkküchenessens von 9.4.1953 und die Tätigkeit der Werkküche im Kunstseidenwerk Friedrich Engels, Premnitz" BArch DY 34 / 27795

<sup>504</sup> "Bericht über die Verordnung betr: Verbesserung des Werkküchenessens" BArch DY 34 / 27795

meals, struggling to determine the cause of workplace canteens' disturbingly consistent lack of popularity since the founding of the country in 1949. Convinced that a strong factory canteen system was definitional to a successful socialist state and a strong working class, the conference report recommended that canteens develop "collective cooperation and comradely help as well as the encouragement of critique and self-critique." In what proved painfully misplaced optimism, the canteen experts promised in return that "this path will ensure us not only the full support of all workers, but also win their trust, which is necessary to achieve the larger goals established by the five year plan."<sup>505</sup> Recognizing too late that "improving canteen meals is not only an economic but also a politically significant task,"<sup>506</sup> the conveners emphasized the importance of canteen meals for work productivity and popular satisfaction at the very moment when thousands of workers were marching in angry protests through the streets of Berlin, Dresden and Leipzig.<sup>507</sup>

The 1953 Uprising marked a turning point in the history of the GDR. The scale and intensity of workers' dissatisfaction shocked and frightened the SED, which responded by calling in the police and ultimately thousands of Soviet troops armed with tanks, to harshly suppress the protest. Simultaneously, the SED hoped to gain support by affirming a new interest in consumer goods and a commitment to improving food

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<sup>505</sup> "Bericht über die Tagung des ZV der IG Chemie zur Verbesserung des Werkkuchenessens am 17.6.1953" BArch DY 34 / 27848

<sup>506</sup> "Bericht über die Tagung des ZV der IG Chemie zur Verbesserung des Werkkuchenessens am 17.6.1953" BArch DY 34 / 27848

<sup>507</sup> The assumed political meaning of canteen meals resulted in a primarily ideological 'fix.' Studies done throughout factory cafeterias in an attempt to pin down reasons for workers' refusal to participate claimed that the amount and quality of groceries distributed to individual canteens were not the deciding factor in the quality and variety of canteen meals. Instead, "the initiative shown by the factory leadership, the BGL and especially the kitchen leader and the entire kitchen staff have a far more important influence on changes and improvements." "Bericht über die Tagung des ZV der IG Chemie zur Verbesserung des Werkkuchenessens am 17.6.1953" BArch DY 34 / 27848

supplies. The favored strategy for improving workers' diets remained, however, not better stocked grocery shelves or a diversified restaurant selection but the factory canteen. Indeed, the factory canteen became a primary emblem of the successes and failures of East German socialism, and the status of workers in this self-proclaimed *Arbeiter-und Bauernstaat* (State of Workers and Farmers.)

The Institute of Nutritional Sciences, charged with placating the same workers who had just taken to the streets less than a week ago, proposed on June 23<sup>rd</sup> 1953 the creation of a central canteen kitchen within their Institute, to be used to instruct canteen cooks throughout the small country. It was hoped that the centralization of canteen staff training would replace the "blind clinging to tradition of a majority of our trained staff" with a "flexible, scientific approach to kitchen work, based on the newest developments of nutrition and the culinary sciences." Rather than "schematically and automatically following traditional methods," in the well-lit and modern model kitchen of the Institute, cooks would learn a "critical and creative intellectual process" that would allow them to optimize workers' health, satisfy economic requirements, and, quite simply, make the workers happy.<sup>508</sup>

During the early decades of the division in both East and West Germany, the feeding of workers was a crucial economic concern; the *Wirtschaftswunder* of the FRG demanded well-nourished laborers as much as the socialist system idealized collective feeding. Nutritionists in East and West Germany, and indeed throughout much of the world, argued that collective meals and eating outside of the home were definitional to industrial modernity, and they promoted workplace canteens as both necessary and advantageous for a strong national economy. In the GDR, nutritionists, economists, and

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<sup>508</sup> "Denkschrift über die Schaffung einer zentralen Lehrküche" BArch DC 6 / 89

social theorists crafted a model of the factory canteen as the symbolic crux of the country's development. The West, in contrast, lacked a unified opinion as to the shape and aims of workplace canteens, places that proved difficult to integrate into the Federal Republic's self-understanding as a consumer-based and family-centered society. By describing the history of the factory canteen in the GDR and the FRG, this chapter illuminates unexpected similarities and differences between the two German states, as well as moments of both continuity and rupture with the German past. At the same time, this chapter argues that the canteen was a crucial aspect of the development of a modern industrial identity in both the socialist and capitalist context.

### **Feeding the Volk: Collective Feeding from the Kaiserreich to the Third Reich**

The relationship between work and nutrition had been the object of intense interest since the early decades of industrialization, as scientists, economists and welfare workers sought to calculate the ideal 'optimization' diet for the working classes; Jakob Tanner's study of factory meals in Switzerland during the nineteenth and twentieth century remains the most illuminating study of the development of factory feeding programs. Tanner highlights a key transition in these theories of food and work from the idea of 'working in order to eat,' to 'eating in order to work.'<sup>509</sup> Early feeding programs, like Britain's 1834 New Poor Law regulating workhouse meals, adhered to the first model, essentially starving unemployed laborers "with the idea that hunger would help to remoralize them as productive subjects."<sup>510</sup> By the end of the century, new theories of

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<sup>509</sup> Jakob Tanner, *Fabrikmahlzeit. Ernährungswissenschaft, Industriearbeit und Volksernährung in der Schweiz 1890-1950* (Zürich: Chronos, 1999), 68.

<sup>510</sup> James Vernon, "The Ethics of Hunger and the Assembly of Society: The Techno-Politics of the School Meal in Modern Britain," *The American Historical Review* 110, no. 3 (June, 2005), 698.

the production and expenditure of energy offered a different paradigm for feeding workers, one based on manipulating diet to enable and optimize labor. Confronted with the need to incorporate growing numbers of men and women into increasingly mechanized large factories, processes of production underwent "a socio-cultural and socio-economic transformation that also incorporated the field of nutrition."<sup>511</sup> Canteens provided by factories seemed efficient for the employer, saving him both time and money; they also offered a way of bridging the worrisome gap between employees and employers by cementing the worker's allegiance to his workplace, encouraging solidarity and team-spirit. Most of all, these meals were intended to improve strength and productivity, as national fears about economic and biological development led to new concerns over the vitality of the bodies of workers.

During the early part of the century, Germany remained largely resistant to these trends. It was not until the economic crisis of the First World War and the interwar depression that the German government finally began to develop large-scale collective meals. Even then, most supporters of collective feeding programs were explicit about their temporary nature, linking canteens with war-time duress. The Bavarian Hans Kruger, for example, only felt comfortable supporting the expansion of public dining halls because he was positive that "the population itself understands these canteens as an emergency measure, ones that they will make much less use of in times when they can prepare food at home without great difficulty."<sup>512</sup> Although the depression meant that hunger defined daily life of many of those living in the Weimar Republic, neither war-induced collectivization nor blockade-created malnourishment led to a general embrace

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<sup>511</sup> Tanner, *Fabrikmahlzeit*, 95

<sup>512</sup> Hans Krüger and Gustav Carl Heinrich Tenius, *Die Massenspeisungen* (Berlin: Verlag der Beiträge, R. Hobbing, 1917), 31.

of the communal meal.<sup>513</sup> As had been the case during the war, welfare officials and politicians feared the negative impact of collective meals upon the German family, arguing that canteens would cause "the last form of activity for the unemployed household [to] fall away,"<sup>514</sup> threatening the sanctity of the parent-child bond and weakening the German family.<sup>515</sup>

The only mass feeding program that did survive the end of the war were factory canteens. Since at least 1916, most large factories in urban centers, particularly those in armaments, had established canteens to provide their employees with a hot meal during work hours. While previously factories had occasionally included a dining room or some sort of space informally put aside for workers to eat lunches brought from home, these new canteens communalized and centralized not only the consumption but also the production of workers' meals. For the first time, factories felt the need to invest in controlling and improving the diets of their employees. As the war progressed, the "close relationship between workers' conflicts and the food situation," along with the ever increasing concern over maintaining armaments productivity, meant an increase in "the military-political significance of [workers'] mass feeding."<sup>516</sup> Despite this official support of feeding programs, among the actual laborers themselves negative attitudes toward canteens continued even in the face of worsening economic conditions. A contemporary reported that although "many of the heavy industrial factories feed their own workers to the latter's complete satisfaction in their own kitchens," more than half of

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<sup>513</sup> See Alf Lütke, *Eigen-Sinn: Fabrikalltag, Arbeitererfahrungen und Politik vom Kaiserreich bis in den Faschismus* (Hamburg: Ergebnisse Verlag, 1993), 445.

<sup>514</sup> Cited in Crew, *Consuming Germany in the Cold War*, 167

<sup>515</sup> The awkward solution was the innovation of distributing groceries or half-cooked meals to housewives so that they could 'cook' food themselves and then consume it within private domestic space. *ibid.*, 168. See also Keith Allen's *Hungrige Metropole Essen, Wohlfahrt und Kommerz in Berlin*

<sup>516</sup> Anne Roerkohl, *Hungerblockade und Heimatfront: die kommunale Lebensmittel- Versorgung in Westfalen während des Ersten Weltkrieges* (Stuttgart: F. Steiner, 1991), 233.

these factories' workers nonetheless chose not to eat there "as they are not in sufficient distress."<sup>517</sup>

Thanks in great part to the pioneering work of Klaus Theweleit and George Mosse, scholarship on the Third Reich has emphasized the importance of fantasies of the collective and a strong and embodied masculinity for Nazi ideology.<sup>518</sup> In this context, the dearth of scholarship on mass feeding programs during the Third Reich is particularly surprising. Collective feeding programs in Nazi Germany had three primary target groups: military and paramilitary organizations ranging from the army to the HJ movement, prisons and concentration camps, and factories. By the time the war was in full swing in the early 1940s, the enormous number of men serving in the Wehrmacht, along with the vast network of labor and concentration camps, meant that millions and millions of Germans, including almost the entire adult male population, ate canteen meals.<sup>519</sup> These collectivized worlds, the military, the camp and the factory, were imagined as both male and public.<sup>520</sup> In this context, collective feeding was celebrated as the best way for maintaining physical health, collective unity and the strength of the nation.<sup>521</sup>

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<sup>517</sup> Cited in Belinda Davis, *Home Fires Burning*, 157

<sup>518</sup> These studies are more than twenty years old, yet remain important texts for suggesting the importance of fantasy and abstract conceptions of the individual and the collective for Nazism. Klaus Theweleit's *Male Fantasies* remains unique in its vast scope and interdisciplinary approach to understanding the ideology of bodies and gender in German fascism. *Male fantasies*. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987). George Mosse's *Masses and Man* offers a cultural history of ideas of the mass and the nation in 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century Germany. *Masses and man: nationalist and fascist perceptions of reality* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1987.)

<sup>519</sup> According to historian Joachim Drews, when one included the inmates of camps within German national boundaries, the total population of people within Germany fed by collective feeding programs reached 8-9 million, along with 13 million soldiers.

<sup>520</sup> This was despite the fact that large numbers of German women worked at least part-time in the public sphere, and increasingly in the armaments industry.

<sup>521</sup> The NSDAP's collectively prepared and publicly consumed meals were always racialized. Canteen chefs were trained to serve specific racial populations; German soldiers were intended to eat differently from their Allies, and factories had different recipes and cooking styles for forced and voluntary laborers.

In all of these collective feeding programs, the nutritional sciences focused on negotiating the relationship between productivity and nutrition, a relationship best encapsulated in the twinned objects of study of the soldier and the camp inmate.<sup>522</sup> Ultimately, the goal for both was the same – to extract the highest possible level of productivity from the lowest necessary nutritional input.<sup>523</sup> Indeed, nutritional experiments performed on camp inmates were frequently intended to be applied to German soldiers.<sup>524</sup> Of course, these two subjects were at the opposite ends of the feeding spectrum; up to the very end of the war, the German Wehrmacht was famously regarded as the best-fed army in the world,<sup>525</sup> while the inmates of German camps were deliberately starved as they were worked to death in a policy of 'extermination through labor.'<sup>526</sup> These two categories of canteens, those of the German army and the German concentration camp, dominated official NSDAP discourse on collective feeding. In fact, the primary organ for the study of collective feeding, the *Zeitschrift für Volksernährung* almost exclusively focused on these two sorts of canteens. As a result, the factory

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Most famously, of course, German concentration camps distributed meals based on a strict racial hierarchy. See many articles in *Gemeinschaftsverflegung mit Volksernährung* like "vom Borschtsch und Schtschi. Die Verflegung der Ostarbeiter und Ostarbeiterinnen" (January 1943).

<sup>522</sup> The professional collective feeding journal *Gemeinschaftsverflegung mit Volksernährung* ran a weekly series on *Feldverflegung* (the feeding of soldiers on the front), with photo-essays on preparing meals in the trenches. Columns titled "was essen Rommels Soldaten? Falsche und richtige Vorstellungen" (November 1942) established the vast scope of large-scale feeding programs within the Third Reich, and their intimate association with the Nazi military machine. Factory canteens were mentioned in passing, but were rarely the object of close discussion or analysis.

<sup>523</sup> See Joachim Drews, *Die "Nazi-Bohne": Anbau, Verwendung und Auswirkung der Sojabohne im Deutschen Reich und Südosteuropa (1933-1945)* (Münster: LIT, 2004).

<sup>524</sup> Some of the most important such studies were performed by Ernst-Guenther Schenck and Wilhelm Ziegelmayr.

<sup>525</sup> See Drews, *Die "Nazi-Bohne"* 168-169, on the international perception that Nazi use of the soy bean was responsible for German military victory.

<sup>526</sup> The other traditional sites of collective feeding – prisons, hospitals, asylums, orphanages – were deliberately exploited as opportunities to starve rather than feed their respective populations.

canteen was surprisingly under-discussed.<sup>527</sup> This lack of official attention, however, does not change that fact that the factory canteens set up by the Nazi Party were definitional to how 'ordinary Germans' experienced and remembered daily life under Hitler.

Even as nutritionists realized that NSDAP food policy was not adequate to meeting the demands of the population, Nazi leaders continued the Weimar tradition of promoting the collective meal as a temporary and inferior method of feeding the population, insisting that "communal eating programs will not become mandatory; they are instituted only due to the pressures of war and economy."<sup>528</sup> Official statements celebrating Nazi food policy almost exclusively focused on the NSDAP's elaborate rationing programs, which included "generously measured rations for mothers, children and youth" as well as "special rations for long shift- and night-workers." Only a brief note that "work kitchens must also be mentioned" hints at the fact that the feeding of German workers had been moved out of from private households.<sup>529</sup> Nazis made it clear that their overarching aim was to preserve the traditional private kitchen; meals should remain the purview of domestic families. Rather than promoting the large-scale collective consumption of food, the Party promoted a specific and highly idiosyncratic model of 'collective eating.' As a radically atomized collective, the German community

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<sup>527</sup> This might be because the factory was less easily aligned with overt racial hierarchies than both the concentration camp and the army, both of which provided ample opportunity for expressing and experiencing racial difference and collective identity formation through meal production and consumption.

<sup>528</sup> "Deutschlands Volksernährung im Rahmen des totalen Krieges," *Zeitschrift für Volksernährung* 4, no. February 20 (1943).

<sup>529</sup> "Kriegsernährung Einst und Heute," *Gemeinschaftsverflebung mit Volksernährung* July, no. 13 (1944).

was formed by an alliance of millions of privately cooked and consumed meals prepared by armies of housewives working with shared goals and identical recipes.<sup>530</sup>

NSDAP officials were well aware of the many potential advantages of factory canteens for the Nazi state, advantages primarily focused on controlling consumption habits rather than worker productivity per se. A 1936 memo bemoaned the 'possibilities for avoidance' of voluntary rationing programs like the *Eintopfsonntag*, speaking out in favor of the factory-prepared and collectively consumed meal: "with lunch in the workplace canteen there are no such possibilities [for avoidance]. The nearest restaurant is too far or too expensive, perhaps the lunch break is too short to allow for a lunch outside of the factory. Here the factory canteen has a 'food monopoly.'"<sup>531</sup> As rations grew increasingly austere, centralized canteens received increased state support. Over the course of the 1930s, large numbers of canteens were set up to ensure workers' nutrition and to preserve 'nutritional autarchy.' However, despite the subsidized and relatively abundant meals served at work canteens, it continued to be a constant struggle to convince workers to eat there. Nazi officials blamed wives for keeping their husbands from the canteens, but workers themselves expressed distrust of the canteen system and a genuine dislike for the food and the atmosphere.<sup>532</sup>

In 1938, immediately before Germany's invasion of Poland began the war, the NSDAP founded the Imperial Committee for Communal Feeding

[*Reichsarbeitsgemeinschaft für Gemeinschaftsverpflegung*], opening a communal food

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<sup>530</sup> For a discussion of the politics of women's work and Nazi ideology in Austria, see Karin Berger, *Zwischen Eintopf und Fliessband: Frauenarbeit und Frauenbild im Faschismus: Österreich 1938-1945* (Wien: Verlag für Gesellschaftskritik, 1984), 265.

<sup>531</sup> Cited in Drews, *Die "Nazi-Bohne"*, 156

<sup>532</sup> Werner, *"Bleib übrig!" Deutsche Arbeiter in der nationalsozialistischen Kriegswirtschaft*, 126. Werner has persuasively argued for the importance of private food consumption as a way of maintaining familial cohesion and a sense of an intact private sphere in the face of increasing collectivization and social disintegration.

research school in Frankfurt, and ushering in an extensive program of researching new food products and cooking methods for mass feeding programs. The program got off to a slow start. In 1939 there were only 6500 factory kitchens in the whole of Germany which served 1.5 million workers. To improve these numbers, the NS labor organization *Kraft durch Freude* declared that 1939 was officially under the slogan 'a warm meal in the factory.' This propaganda campaign aimed at "shifting food service from the household and private kitchen to large canteens,"<sup>533</sup> however, it had negligible effects and was deemed an almost total failure at popularizing canteen meals among German workers. In October 1939, in response to the increased labor demands caused by the outbreak of war, the NSDAP set official national guidelines for factory collective feeding programs. However, through most of the war, mass feeding remained decentralized and underfunded, far from fulfilling the ambitious platform set out by labor economists and nutritionists. Despite continued propaganda campaigns and direct and indirect censure for not participating in canteens, hundreds of thousands of workers chose to rely on traditional homemade sandwiches for their workplace meal.<sup>534</sup>

Out of growing frustration, in 1940 the Reichsernährungsminister released an order to withhold extra rationing cards from those workers who "in disregard of their own best interest refuse[d] to participate in the factory canteen feeding program,"<sup>535</sup> as well as

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<sup>533</sup> Cornelius Dienst, *Grossküchenbetrieb und Forderungen der heutigen Ernährungslehre; Fehler, die die Grossküche in Krankenhaus- und Werksverpflegung vermeiden sollte*. (Stuttgart: Marquardt, 1944), 11.

<sup>534</sup> Wolfgang Heidel, "Ernährungswirtschaft und Verbrauchlenkung im Dritten Reich 1936-1939" Freie Universität), 154.

<sup>535</sup> Cited in Werner, "*Bleib übrig!*", 127 The historian Franz Werner sees in the German workers' refusal to embrace factory canteens "a reflection of the enormous importance that family life had for the German worker, for in refusing these canteen meals, workers also denied themselves a series of extra provisions that were available through the factory canteens." *Ibid.*, 209 Certainly a desire to eat meals at home with wife and children, as well as the considerable pressure exerted by wives on their working husbands to bring rations home rather than eat meals at work, were significant. However, I would also emphasize the

encouraging other punitive strategies of pressuring workers to eat in canteens. Such policies did have some effect. By the end of 1943, there were 17,500 kitchens, with 4.5 million Germans eating in them regularly; a year later, over 7.5 million German workers ate at one of approximately 40,000 public eating facilities.<sup>536</sup> These numbers still remained far below target rates, and the meals continued to be sources of constant complaint from both workers and factory owners. Although Nazi prioritization of industrial labor ensured that factory canteens remained far better stocked than the average home kitchen, even during the food crisis of early 1945 economists complained that "even now many workers still do not participate in the canteen meals."<sup>537</sup> This failure in popularizing canteen meals can largely be explained by the state's conflicted relationship to them, as the Nazi party remained committed to traditional German familial models whereby female domestic cooking was crucial to the health of the Volk. Rejecting the advice of canteen advocates like Dr. Otto Flössner, who argued that "if we are to say that the Third Reich sees its greatest wealth in a healthy person, then we must pay particular attention to the place that is most significant for the people's nutrition: the canteen kitchen,"<sup>538</sup> the NSDAP never developed a clear, unified stance on collective feeding

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historical specificity of German attitudes toward collective meals, as well as the complex and paradoxical Nazi rhetoric itself that trumpeted the glories of home-cooked meals.

<sup>536</sup> It is interesting to note that this dramatic increase in food consumed at the workplace was met with some resistance among the workers regarding these meals, who were reluctant to use their rationing coupons to purchase a factory-produced meal. Werner, "*Bleib übrig!*", 126. Nonetheless, participation in canteen meals grew steadily over the war years, a growth that is, of course, all the more impressive given the fact the war and total mobilization meant that adult men, the traditional participants at factory canteens, were almost entirely diverted to the front.

<sup>537</sup> Cited in Werner, "*Bleib übrig!*", 331. Werner argued, in fact, that resistance to Nazi feeding plans, particularly canteen meals, was the one widespread act of resistance among the German working classes. Although they continued to work in the service of the Third Reich, and posed few public challenges to their system, many workers refused to eat in their canteen, either bringing food with them from home, sharing or selling their ration coupons, or collecting the canteen meal but smuggling it home to share with their families.

<sup>538</sup> "Die Forderungen der Volksernährung in der Großküche" BArch R 86 / 3573

programs. Their economic and political advantages were always countered by a continued belief in their social disadvantages.

As was the case in Nazi Germany, the war had convinced the Allies to expand and improve collective feeding programs, especially factory canteens. Great Britain developed probably the most ambitious and successful wartime food economy, combining an elaborate rationing program, patriotic 'war kitchens,' school lunches, and a hugely expanded workplace canteen program.<sup>539</sup> In the United States, the massive economic upswing caused by mobilization meant the growth of industrial workplaces, which increasingly bowed to union pressure to provide cafeteria meals. The AFL released a statement in 1944 urging the defense industry to incorporate full-service cafeterias since

the maintenance and improvement of health is dependent in a large measure on food eaten, and workers generally are unaware of the importance of proper diet, and provision of complete nutritionally balanced meals while on the job has proved feasible for workers in manufacturing and other industries.<sup>540</sup>

Factories reported sharp drops in absenteeism and increases in both worker morale and workplace productivity with the addition of canteens; a report issued by the International Labor Office claimed that "providing industrial workers with an opportunity to obtain meals at their place of employment has grown so much in the United States . . . that it is now generally regarded as an integral part of American industrial society."<sup>541</sup> Even the International Hot Springs Conference of 1943, which set the nutritional agenda of the postwar world, included in their list of food-related human rights that "all industrial workers should be given full opportunities of obtaining a third of their total daily calorie

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<sup>539</sup> See Vernon, *Hunger: A Modern History*.

<sup>540</sup> Frank Boudreau, *Nutrition in Industry*. (Montreal: 1946), 99.

<sup>541</sup> *Ibid.*, 105

required for maintaining health and efficiency in their respective employment at their midday meal."<sup>542</sup>

The war seemed to mark a major transition in state support of collective feeding programs, as the vast scale and economic demands of mobilization, concerns over the long-term health impacts of the interwar depression, and the new food and nutrition concerns of the war and postwar era meant that canteens were normalized in mainstream society, and largely freed of their associations with poverty and leftist politics. With the collapse of the Third Reich and the subsequent occupation and division of Germany, both German and foreign authorities recognized that collective feeding programs would be necessary to deal with food shortages and infrastructure collapse. These programs took a variety of shapes and sizes and reflected remarkable regional variation. However, of all the different strategies of feeding the German population that the Allies experienced after the war, the school room and the factory canteen became the iconographic spaces of mass food distribution and consumption. While school meals, as discussed in the following chapter, were crucial for West German memories of the Hunger Years, and the school lunch program was to become the GDR's most successful collective feeding program, school-children were actually of secondary concern immediately after the war. For economic as well as political reasons, Soviet, Western and indigenous attention focused on the nutritional health of the German worker, and the collective meal was at the time synonymous with the workplace canteen.

In the socialist state, workplace canteens were the focus of the Soviet-controlled SBZ's food policies and later of the SED.<sup>543</sup> The first priority of occupation was the

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<sup>542</sup> Noel Curtis-Bennett, *The Food of the People: Being the History of Industrial Feeding* (London: Faber and Faber, 1949), 269

rebuilding of the German economy, something that above all demanded improving workers' diets.<sup>544</sup> One of the first research institutes founded in occupied Germany was the Institute of Nutritional Sciences and Food Provisioning, first located in Berlin and later moved to Rehbrücke outside of Potsdam.<sup>545</sup> Created with the material and ideological support of the Soviet occupying army, the institute was cast as an important weapon in the struggle against hunger and malnourishment. In this struggle, the institute was assigned a specific and enduring purpose; to shape and define mass feeding programs, and especially workplace canteens, throughout the decades of the GDR's existence.

Combining a traditional socialist celebration of labor as definitional to a healthy society with the economic drive to improve productivity, socialist doctors and economists argued that postwar Germans had to work in order to nourish themselves, both literally (by raising their own small animals, gathering wild fruits and vegetables) and metaphorically (since Germans were responsible for their current hunger, they had to work off their sins, 'healing' the national body with their 'healthy' labor.) Wilhelm Ziegelmeier, early leader in East German nutrition, argued that

every single German has the greatest responsibility to do everything he or she can in order to raise the returns on practical labor as close as possible to the theoretically optimal levels . . . our people must draw the strength to heal

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<sup>543</sup> An article from the early 1970s describes school meal programs as "in the second position of importance within the realm of collective feeding," with work canteens ranking first. Gerhard Stopp, *Neue Wege zur Verbesserung der Arbeiterversorgung, Schul- und Kinderspeisung* (Berlin: GBH, 1972).

<sup>544</sup> Because the Soviets demanded far more reparations than the Western Allies, this policy was motivated by self-interest.

<sup>545</sup> In 1969, the institute was formally brought into the national Academy of Sciences and renamed the Central Institute of Nutrition of the Academy of Science of the German Democratic Republic. After the Fall of the Wall, it became a major nutritional research center of unified Germany, the German Institute for Nutritional Research (DIFE.) For an East German history of the Nutrition Institute, see "40 Jahre Zentralinstitut für Ernährung, klinische Forschung usw." (31:4 1986) *Ernährungsforschung*. After unification, the Institute was restructured and brought under West German management. In 1992, it released a new, post-GDR institutional history, "Ernährungsforschung in Potsdam-Rehbrücke: Tradition und Wandel." DIFE 200 # 78-84.

ourselves from our own soil. Only in this way can we heal the wounds caused by an insane era.<sup>546</sup>

Preaching a model of 'self help,' German Communists emphasized the moral and practical necessity of producing food before one could consume it: "Some Germans believe that it is the responsibility of the occupying powers to feed us. This is a false and dangerous opinion . . . we can only ask for help from the occupying powers when we have first done everything in our power to help ourselves."<sup>547</sup> So great was the focus on food that nutritionists advocated a decreased interest in industrial labor, the traditional focus of socialism, in favor of food production, bemoaning the fact that "industrial labor has been seen as first-class labor and agricultural labor as second-class."<sup>548</sup>

By appealing to German 'pride in work' while arguing for the redemptive and healing function of labor, this ideology not only valued work as the necessary precondition for a healthy society; it also created a hierarchy of labor, establishing categories of productive and non-productive work that were intimately linked to food. These categories shaped the Soviet-based SBZ rationing system, wherein people literally ate in accord to the sort of labor that they performed. Soviet Zone food policy aimed to

make clear the idea of proletariat internationalism by assuring specific rationing allotments for workers. They are the creators of material values, and on their shoulders lay the heavy burden of reconstruction and the anti-fascist-democratic new construction [of the GDR.] In Soviet feeding principles . . . the familiar

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<sup>546</sup> Ziegmayer, *Neue Nahrungsquellen. Kommunalpolitische Aufgaben zur Sicherung d. Dt. Volksernährung.* (Vorwort)

<sup>547</sup> *Unsere Ernährung: die Brennenste Frage*, 11. This opinion was contested by many in the Soviet Zone. The local Dresden politician Kurt Unger asserted that "even the most uneducated person knows that no one has ever died from a lack of work, but millions upon millions have died on this earth from a lack of food." ("Denkschrift für die deutsche Wirtschaftskommission f.d. sowj. Besatzungszone zu Ernährungsfragen und zum Kartensystem" Dresden Stadtarchiv 11393 / 321)

<sup>548</sup> Ziegmayer, *Neue Nahrungsquellen. Kommunalpolitische Aufgaben zur Sicherung d. Dt. Volksernährung*, 9-10

principle of the working class was realized: 'who does not work, should not eat.'<sup>549</sup>

In all four zones, rations depended upon the kind and quantity of work performed. General Allied policy favored heavy and industrial workers, particularly those in steel, mining, and transportation. The Soviet categories of value were in some ways more broadly defined than those in the West, as artists, intellectuals and Communist activists were considered 'vital' to creating a new Germany. Nonetheless, it was the Soviet rather than Western rationing scheme that was remembered with hatred and resentment. Soviet policy assigned every adult member of society a rationing category based on his or her contribution to society, a contribution determined both by political history and by type of labor performed. This rationing plan was intended as a way to dictate labor through food, not simply by rewarding those who did good work and punishing those who did poor or irrelevant labor, but also by luring workers into the fields deemed most necessary by the occupation forces.<sup>550</sup> The lowest rationing category was known as Card V, pejoratively referred to as the 'heaven-card' because the calories that it provided were so little as to be inadequate to support life, and allotted to extra, extraneous, and least valuable members of society; it was made up primarily of former Nazis and housewives.<sup>551</sup> Here, in a single 'starvation group,' socialist occupation policy grouped those responsible for destroying the old Germany together with those whose 'labor' was not recognized as producing a new one.

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<sup>549</sup> Alfred Anderle, *Zwei Jahrzehnte deutsch-sowjetische Beziehungen, 1945-1965. Beiträge von einem Kollektiv beim Institut für Geschichte der Völker der UdSSR an der Martin-Luther-Universität* (Halle. Berlin: Staatsverlag der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik, 1964), 64.

<sup>550</sup> Gries, *Die Rationen-Gesellschaft*, 96

<sup>551</sup> Due to distorted demographics and the chaotic economic situation of the occupation years, this 'incidental' group made up anywhere from 20 to 40% of the population of the SBZ. Donna Harsch has written on the significance of the Card V for the long-lived tensions between East German women and the SED.

Housewives as well as workers complained vociferously about the rationing plan, and East German labor experts became increasingly convinced that "the most important prerequisites for the raising of productivity is sufficient nourishment for the employed."<sup>552</sup> As a result, on October 9<sup>th</sup> 1947, the SBZ issued the famous Command #234, eliminating the hated Card V as part of a larger reconstruction of the relationship between labor and food supplies. Titled an 'increase in work productivity and the increased improvement of the material situation of workers and employees,' the command began a trend of using material goods, particularly food products, as an alternative form of payment intended to motivate workers to increase their own productivity.<sup>553</sup> As Mark Landsman put it, the bill

embodied the first attempt to introduce a more systematic, longer-term policy of supplying consumer goods to Germans living under Soviet occupation. . . Order No. 234 articulated that relationship in very clear terms: consumption, beyond the barest minimum necessary for survival, was to serve production.<sup>554</sup>

By eliminating the lowest rationing categories and improving general supplies, the bill reduced the gap in calories between the highest and lowest rationing groups from 1500 to 500 calories. Far more important for socialist planners, it was mythologized as "the beginning of the reconstruction of a collective feeding program in the GDR that was to achieve impressive success."<sup>555</sup> While the cancellation of the Card V was tremendously important for the already strained relationships between German women

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<sup>552</sup> Cited in Katherine Pence "The Paradoxical Construction of the Handelsorganisation" in Peter Hübner and Klaus Tenfelde, *Arbeiter in der SBZ-DDR* (Klartext, 1999).

<sup>553</sup> For an excellent discussion of the significance of #234 for the development of East German economic policy, see Hübner, *Konsens, Konflikt und Kompromiss Soziale Arbeiterinteressen und Sozialpolitik in der SBZ/DDR 1945-1970*, 21-26. Hübner points out that #234 was at least implicitly a Soviet counter-response to the United States' newly declared Marshall Plan.

<sup>554</sup> Landsman, *Dictatorship and Demand*, 31

<sup>555</sup> M. Zobel, "Die Gemeinschaftsverpflegung als ein Träger der Volksernährung," *Ernährungsforschung* XVI, no. 1 (1971), 161. East German nutritionists inevitably cited this ruling as the beginning of formal feeding policy, rather than looking to the many school meal programs that already existed at the time.

and the socialist state, Order 234 was on the whole considered a landmark primarily because of its impact on factory canteens. Institutionalized as the 'birth hour of the factory canteen,' "this was the moment when the ground-stone for workplace communal feeding was placed."<sup>556</sup> By formally guaranteeing every worker at a factory or work-site a hot meal, this bill was a public declaration of a commitment to workers' canteens. The impact of the policy was immediate; participants in factory canteens rose from 350,000 in mid-1947 to 1 million by the end of the year, later increasing to 1.5 million. With better fed workers, productivity rose as well.<sup>557</sup> The leader of the Department of Labor and Social Welfare, Gustav Brack, declared that these hot meals "had an educative function on work morale. Skipping out on work [*Arbeitsbummlei*] has thus been practically eliminated."<sup>558</sup> From the side of workers, however, there continued to be frequent complaints, including expense ("about 400 colleagues chose not to eat a canteen lunch since its price is too high, and especially because an adequate diet has already been assured through their own means"<sup>559</sup>) and poor taste ("we were able personally to witness that the workers scarcely touched the food and poured it down the drain."<sup>560</sup>) However, by far the most criticized aspect of the ruling was its use of food to reward good work and to punish inadequate or unsatisfactory work. At the same time that the ruling normalized canteen meals, it confirmed their use as a tool of discipline, reward and punishment.

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<sup>556</sup> Autorenkollektiv, *Betriebliche Gemeinschaftsverpflegung und Gewerkschaften* (Berlin: Verlag Tribüne, 1972), 7-8.

<sup>557</sup> 'Every worker' in the Soviet Zone did not actually have access to these meals. The original bill provided for a hot meal for full-time workers in large factories in fields recognized as 'significant' by the occupation forces, particularly industrial work and transportation. Hübner, *Konsens, Konflikt und Kompromiss Soziale Arbeiterinteressen und Sozialpolitik in der SBZ/DDR 1945-1970*, 22

<sup>558</sup> "Betr: Kontrolle der Werkverpflegung" BArch DY 34 / 20203

<sup>559</sup> "Betr: Werkküchenkontrolle des Buntmetallwerkes Hettstadt" BArch DY 34 / 20203

<sup>560</sup> "Küchenkontrolle in der Eisen- und Stahlgießerei Meier und Weichelt" BArch DY 34 / 20203

The Ministry of Labor fielded constant complaints about their recommendation that the "removal of the warm lunch" be a punishment for absenteeism.<sup>561</sup> Even worse, Ruling 234 intended to "encourage increased productivity" by allotting a huge increase in funding and food supplies to the canteens of "the leading factories and transportation companies," which together served more than a million workers. These better stocked work kitchens were ordered to produce meals that were divided into two categories: the A-meal, containing 634 calories and higher allotments of meat and fat, and the B-meal, with 479 calories.<sup>562</sup> The ratio of A to B meals at each workplace was set at 40 to 60, and worker assignments were based on individual productivity.<sup>563</sup> Propaganda emphasized the fact that even the less desirable B-meal was a dramatic improvement over both the typical home-cooked meal and the average pre-ruling canteen meal. Nonetheless, both workers and factory directors loathed this divisive and competition-encouraging system, rejecting the argument that "the workers who are especially helpful in the production, and thus in the entire project of reconstruction, must be favored."<sup>564</sup> Many factory organizers sabotaged the program by mixing all of the rations together and offering a single meal for all of their workers.<sup>565</sup> They justified this behavior by appealing to the strength of the worker collective, citing decisions "made collectively by the workers" to have a single meal "so that everyone is treated equally."<sup>566</sup> Canteens

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<sup>561</sup> Hübner, *Konsens, Konflikt und Kompromiss Soziale Arbeiterinteressen und Sozialpolitik in der SBZ/DDR 1945-1970*, 48

<sup>562</sup> "Wer hat Anspruch auf Zusatzverpflegung?" BArch DR 2 / 296

<sup>563</sup> "Wer hat Anspruch auf Zusatzverpflegung?" BArch DR 2 / 296

<sup>564</sup> "zum Thema Befehl 234" BArch DQ 1 / 1628

<sup>565</sup> In Halle, for example, a nutritionist complained that "the reports of the price inspector and our own observations have revealed that meals are not being prepared separately according to the two standards; instead, with the support of the Russian general director, a single uniform meal is distributed to all employees." ("Bet: Werkküchenkontrolle des Buntmetallwerkes Hettstadt" BArch DY 34 / 20203)

<sup>566</sup> "Bericht über die am 27. Januar 1949 erfolgte Überprüfung der Werkküchen-Verpflegung" BArch DY 34 / 20203

became central to the ways in which workers negotiated the meaning of equality and workplace relations, although these concerns that were not focus of the nutritionists and labor theorists who thought of the canteen as a way to control productivity and regulate the workplace.

As had been the case in the East, the occupation forces in the Western zones prioritized meeting the nutritional needs of the German workforce. And, like in the East, rations "created hierarchies of gender that aimed to regulate who had access to consumption within these structures based on definitions of labor . . . bodies involved in a primarily male definition of heavy labor and production were to be strengthened by consuming greater amounts of food."<sup>567</sup> Motives for improving workers' productivity were pragmatic. In famous the words of the American occupation Commander General Clay: "without food we cannot produce coal; without coal we cannot support transport and industry; without coal we cannot produce the fertilizer necessary to improve future food supply. Only food can prime the pump."<sup>568</sup>

As a result, the occupation forces were preoccupied with managing German labor productivity through individual workers' diets. An April 1946 article from the *Hamburger Freie Presse*, in a plea for increased food distribution, declared that the "economic reconstruction of the new Germany and its political liberation depends upon the German worker . . . but his motivation and his productivity are unavoidably bound to certain physical preconditions."<sup>569</sup> Minister of Finance Rudolf Mueller declared in September 1946 that "every thought within the management of our economy . . . begins

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<sup>567</sup> Pence, "Labours of Consumption: Gendered Consumers in Postwar East and West German Reconstruction," 215

<sup>568</sup> in Günter J. Trittel, *Hunger und Politik: die Ernährungskrise in der Bizone (1945-1949)*, 8.

<sup>569</sup> from 10.4.1946 in Christoph Klessmann and Georg Wagner, *Das Gespaltene Land: Leben in Deutschland 1945-1990: Texte und Dokumente zur Sozialgeschichte* (München: Beck, 1993), 74.

with food."<sup>570</sup> During the harsh winter of 1947/48, the industrial productivity of the western zones fell to approximately 50% the rate of pre-war years, which was seen as evidence that "increasing productivity is only possible by means of an increase of workers' calories."<sup>571</sup> The British, responsible for the Ruhr region that was postwar Germany's main source of coal, were particularly obsessed with increasing miners' productivity through diet. A report on the food situation in the British Zone of Germany issued in 1945 reported that

it has become increasingly evident that the Ruhr is vital to the whole food position in the British Zone and outside it . . . unless coal production can be maintained and increased, it is evident that the economic collapse of western Germany will follow with consequences so far-reaching that famine conditions may well spread to large parts of western Europe outside Germany.<sup>572</sup>

In a key difference to the Soviet position, which encouraged Germans to produce their own food in order to enable their labor, in the West workers were seen as needing food in order to be able to work. When pleading for more food, the German population heavily favored improved grocery distribution and higher rations over public communal meals. Nonetheless, the British forces originally supported the expansion of factory canteens rather than simply relying on individual ration distribution as a more effective and economical way to improve workers' health.

British planners were flush with confidence in the power of collective feeding programs, attributing their military success to "a nation- wide industrial canteen

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<sup>570</sup> Rudolf Mueller in Trittel, *Hunger und Politik: die Ernährungskrise in der Bizone (1945-1949)*, 80

<sup>571</sup> Pepler, E. and Cremer, H.D., "Fragen der modernen Gemeinschaftsverpflegung." *Deutsches Medizinisches Journal* 15 (1964), 313.

<sup>572</sup> Cited in Trittel, *Hunger und Politik: die Ernährungskrise in der Bizone (1945-1949)*, 27. At the same time, British domestic policy was experimenting with modifying rations, canteens, and meat allotments to British miners in an attempt to increase their productivity. Ina Zweiniger-Bargielowska, *Austerity in Britain: Rationing, Controls, and Consumption, 1939-1955*, 33.

system."<sup>573</sup> As a result, after the war, Great Britain began a process of improving and expanding its domestic mass feeding systems under a left-wing labor government that was committed to canteens.<sup>574</sup> The British also established a broad network of public eating sites in their occupation zone. Participation steadily increased during the immediate postwar years, something that seemed "confirmation of the necessity of factory canteens."<sup>575</sup> Within a few years of their wide-scale establishment, up to a third of the working population was eating a daily hot meal at an industrial canteen. However, canteens operated below capacity even in times of dire need, as workers continued to conceptualize the canteen meal as an emergency stop-gap solution, rather than a potentially permanent shift in dietary habits. As was to be the case with school lunches, the 1948 currency reform and the subsequent end of occupation ravaged participation rates. Despite rising rates of poverty, unemployment and malnourishment, the final months of occupation witnessed an unprecedented number of canteen closures.<sup>576</sup>

Allied occupation forces ultimately proved unable to overcome traditional hostility to public dining halls. While local German politicians fought for increased rations, they refused to encourage mass feeding and industrial dining programs, advocating home-cooked and home-consumed meals as the best solution for widespread malnutrition. Attempts by German socialists in Bavaria to develop a large-scale system of mass canteens remained unsuccessful; the SPD leader from Munich, Dr. Max

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<sup>573</sup> Curtis-Bennett, *The Food of the People: Being the History of Industrial Feeding*, 247.

<sup>574</sup> In Britain, dining halls were believed to hold the key to an economically and ethically sound labor force; as a 1949 guide to industrial dining declared with confidence: "give a man a good meal and he is fitted to do a good job." Noel Curtis-Bennett, *The Food of the People: Being the History of Industrial Feeding*, 12.

<sup>575</sup> Abert Klek, "Gegebenheiten und Zukunftswünsche: die Werksküche von Heute im Grossbetrieb," *Das Großküchen-Magazin* 1, no. 1 (1949).

<sup>576</sup> Postwar Soviet canteens suffered a similar fate; an early currency reform, paired with severe food shortages and distribution problems, caused prices in public dining halls in 1946-1947 to rise "beyond the reach of many workers [so that] the number of workers taking meals at work therefore fell dramatically." Filtzer, *Soviet Workers and Late Stalinism*, 64.

Grasman, was disappointed by the population's insistence on privately consumed meals, but inaccurately claimed that German resistance to public dining was an unavoidable legacy of the Third Reich:

during the Nazi time, there was always the fearsome specter [*Schreckengespenst*] that one day the obligatory communal meal [*Volksküche*] would march in . . . what even the National Socialism did not bring us, mass feeding [*Massenabfütterung*], the soup kitchen, is coming now.<sup>577</sup>

The mayor of Cologne and future chancellor of the FRG Konrad Adenauer insisted that communal meals were a profound danger to the "carefully introduced material and psychological reconstructive work of the occupation government."<sup>578</sup> While recognizing the importance of improving workers' diets, Adenauer rejected industrial canteens and recommended increasing individual grocery allotments for "mining and the key industrial branches in the Ruhr region, in order to ensure tolerable conditions in places where the outbreak of hunger would have wide-reaching consequences for the entire economy."<sup>579</sup> In other words, while in the East favored sectors of the workforce were given better canteen meals, in the West they were given higher rations.

### **Enabling Labor in the Socialist Canteen**

With the formation of the German Democratic Republic in 1949, the new state reaffirmed its commitment to canteens. The factory canteen was declared a paradigmatic space of the German socialist state, "ensuring a tight link between the productive workers in industry and the laboring farmers,"<sup>580</sup> and perfectly expressing the socialist 'care for the worker.' However, the official end of the Hunger Years resulted in a rapid decrease in

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<sup>577</sup> Cited in Gries, *Die Rationen-Gesellschaft*, 214

<sup>578</sup> *Ibid.*, 303

<sup>579</sup> Germany (West), *Sechs Jahre Danach; vom Chaos zum Staat*, 37

<sup>580</sup> "zur Diskussion über das warme Essen im Betrieb" BArch DE 1 / 27413

participation rates in collective feeding programs of all sorts, a rise in canteen vandalism and theft, and an increase in complaints over meal quality. As early as the spring of 1950, "many recent reports from different colleagues about poor canteen food and a subsequent decrease in participation rates" led to the convening of a conference for the thirty leading canteen chefs of the young GDR. Recognizing that the earlier Command 234 "no longer adequately fulfills current needs," federal recommendations called for a re-education of both factory leaders and especially of workers to teach them to "feel responsible for these institutions [i.e. factory canteens] which were established for their own health and well-being, to ensure that they are no longer damaged or robbed" by the very workers they were intended to nourish.<sup>581</sup>

Worker nutrition remained definitional to German socialists and German socialism. Arthur Scheunert, the most important nutritionist of the early GDR, compared East German reconstruction to the Great October Revolution of the USSR, asserting that "the Soviet peoples tackled this reconstruction with inexhaustible biological reserves in labor strength . . . One might ask as to the source of this strength. Nutritionists know the answer quite easily." He attributed the primal Communist revolution to the Soviet diet, to "ancient dietary traditions [and] eating self-produced and barely processed foods." His conclusion was in fact to prioritize nutritional improvement over that most sacrosanct of socialist aims: the development of industry.

Even the best industrial equipment cannot ensure the maintenance and the future of our Volk. Industrial equipment has no use if the people who work with it are not healthy and productive. Our primary task is the reconstruction and

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<sup>581</sup> "Bericht über den am 1.4.1950 durchgeführten Erfahrungsaustausch von 30 Küchenchefs zwecks Verbesserung des Werkküchenessens" BArch DY 34 SAPMO 24042

strengthening of the vitality of our Volk. The solution of this problem means the introduction of an appropriate, i.e. healthy, diet.<sup>582</sup>

Canteens provided nutritionists with the opportunity to control individual diets, offering a way to bring the "steadily growing and exceptionally diverse research being done in the field of diet and nutrition" into the notoriously conservative working-class stomach.<sup>583</sup>

President Walter Ulbricht asserted early on that "we must make it a priority that factory meals are improved to such a degree that a steadily increasing number of male and female workers take part in them,"<sup>584</sup> and he regularly backed plans to improve and expand canteens. Indeed, the canteen had an ideological significance in the GDR unmatched by any other aspect of the food economy:

of all the policies which were created to realize our goal [of socialism] since the new construction of our entire society after the collapse of 1945, particularly significant is the enabling of our workers to partake in the communal feeding program, which distributes a warm meal during their time of work in the factory, and not simply any meal, but a meal that in always improving quality, preparation and healthfulness matches the requirements of the newest nutritional sciences.<sup>585</sup>

Despite such support, canteen meals in the GDR faced major obstacles. The early years of the Republic saw an unprecedented number of workplaces actually close their newly opened canteens. There was widespread resistance among high-level officials, and especially on the individual factory boards of directors, to canteen meals. These men (and they were always men) were angry with new state requirements that the canteen meal be "an adequate warm lunch that can be the main meal of the day"<sup>586</sup> rather than, as had

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<sup>582</sup> "Denkschrift zur Verbesserung und Sicherung der Volksgesundheit durch richtige Ernährung." DIFE 260 # 36

<sup>583</sup> Richard Schielicke, *Das Fachbuch der Küche; Angewandte Ernährungslehre und Kochwissenschaft*. (Leipzig: Fachbuchverlag, 1956), V.

<sup>584</sup> "Vorläufige Richtlinie zur Überführung von Werkküchen und Werkkantinen aus der Bewirtschaftung durch die Betriebe in Werkrestaurants in der Bewirtschaftung durch den volkseigenen Handel" BArch DL 1 / 3839

<sup>585</sup> "So sollte eine Werkküche geplant und eingerichtet werden," *Die neuzeitliche Gaststätte*, no. 6 (1956).

<sup>586</sup> "Staatliche Plankommission" DIFE 260 # 4

previously been the case, simply something to assuage temporary hunger. Report after report told of factory leaders "who want to close factory canteens because they cause too much work,"<sup>587</sup> seeing the mandatory provisioning of their workers as a financial drain and a potential source of conflict. They argued that their responsibility was to provide workers with jobs rather than food, separating individual nutrition from economic growth by locating it in the private sphere. Experts blamed this "old-fashioned resistance" to feeding workers on a false understanding of the socialist drive for productivity. If capitalist bosses were assumed to reject canteens because they wanted the workforce to go hungry, these East German factory leaders were accused of being too obsessed with increasing output while not understanding the (food) consumption that was productivity's necessary precursor: "there are plenty of examples where those responsible for the factory only think in terms of production and treat the canteens and workers' meals as a fifth wheel on the wagon. In those places the food is poor."<sup>588</sup> Ashamed directors admitted that:

in large part collective feeding is perceived as a necessary evil of the workplace, and we are happy as long as there are no active complaints about the food and the work of the kitchens, so that we can dedicate ourselves without any interruption to [increasing] productivity.

Such men, reluctantly assigned the responsibility of feeding workers, had falsely relegated food to the realm of consumption rather than production.

In an attempt to correct this retrograde way of thinking, nutritionists worked to shift factory canteen food into the realm of production, casting it as both cause and effect

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<sup>587</sup> "Wege zur Erreichung der Rentabilität der Werkküchen und zur Verbesserung der Qualität des Werkküchenessens" BArch DY 34 / 8506

<sup>588</sup> "Vorläufige Richtlinie zur Überführung von Werkküchen und Werkkantinen aus der Bewirtschaftung durch die Betriebe in Werkrestaurants in der Bewirtschaftung durch den volkseigenen Handel" BArch DL 1 / 3839

of well performed labor. They organized lectures, wrote educational reading material, and offered guidance on proper canteen design and cooking strategies in order to teach factory directors and canteen staff to "take up the challenge of committing ourselves absolutely to caring for the well-being of all workers."<sup>589</sup> The relationship between canteen meals and productivity had however multiple angles. While company directors falsely understood food as separate from productivity, the workers who actually produced food – the dining hall staff—were often blamed for poor canteen meals and an off-putting canteen atmosphere. These cafeteria workers, it was assumed, did not grasp the significance of their labor, and they were assigned a "strengthened program of political education, since responsible work in the factory canteen requires a clear political consciousness on the part of the workers there."<sup>590</sup>

Canteen failures, however, were rarely the sole responsible of poor workplace management, or even incompetent cooks and surly servers. It was workers who determined whether or not a canteen would succeed. Indeed, the fact that husbands and their increasingly employed wives often did not want to eat at their canteens was an irresolvable obstacle for the expansion of workplace feeding programs. Disturbingly, even highly productive workers were disloyal to their canteens. Any price increase led almost immediately to a drop in participation and an unpopular dish could cause workplace unrest and hostility, while improvements in canteen meals were seldom acknowledged or appreciated. Increased national prosperity and the stabilization of the food supply meant that workers' expectations rose more quickly than meal quality,

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<sup>589</sup> "Wege zur Erreichung der Rentabilität der Werkküchen und zur Verbesserung der Qualität des Werkküchenessens" BArch DY 34 / 8506

<sup>590</sup> "Wege zur Erreichung der Rentabilität der Werkküchen und zur Verbesserung der Qualität des Werkküchenessens" BArch DY 34 / 8506

encouraging the abandonment of the factory dining hall in favor of steadily improving home-cooked food. A 1952 report, citing diverse worker participation rates ranging from a high of 80% in Saxony to an embarrassing 47% in the capital city of Berlin, explained popular discontent with workplace meals by pointing out this conflict between expectations and reality:

with the successful carrying out of the two year plan . . . the workers in the factories have created the context for a substantial increase in the quality of life for the population. This development however is not reflected in the status of the factory canteen meals in a larger number of our most important production and transportation companies . . . the consequence is that the workers eat this meal unhappily or simply reject it if they are of the opinion that the quality of the food is not in accordance with our economic development.<sup>591</sup>

As had been the case with falsely informed directors, nutritionists' solution was education. They hoped to teach workers to understand the value of canteen meals from a different perspective than simply pleasure in 'consumption' by showing them that the quality of their productive labor was intimately tied to their dietary habits. Studies proved that many workers were unaware of recent physiological research proving "the crucial importance of consuming a well-balanced warm meal during the work hours,"<sup>592</sup> falsely believed that they could simply snack throughout the workday. Misinformed workers regularly staged protests if 'healthy' recipes, often meaning reduced meat and fat content, replaced old favorites. Official suggestions that the chef "accompany the requirements for healthy meals for workers with the necessary justification in the factory newspaper in order to explain [the advantages of these meals] to all workers," proved ineffective at overcoming "occasional hostile feelings toward the kitchen," nor did it

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<sup>591</sup> "Betr: Verbesserung des Werkkuchenessens und der Schulspeisung" BArch DE 1 / 27413

<sup>592</sup> "Vorläufige Richtlinie zur Überführung von Werkküchen und Werkkantinen aus der Bewirtschaftung durch die Betriebe in Werkrestaurants in der Bewirtschaftung durch den volkseigenen Handel" BArch DL 1 / 3839

"establish the necessary contact between the kitchen and the participants in the meal program."<sup>593</sup> Socialist nutritionists acknowledged the presence of workers who were absolutely and ideologically opposed to canteen meals – "the complainers who at home would eat the plaster from their window frames, and yet complain about the best of meals served in the factory" – but they were convinced that such helpless cases were in the minority.<sup>594</sup>

There was a common assumption that food quality and cafeteria atmosphere would improve under the guidance of enlightened staff. After all, canteens, not workers, were the main problem: "there are work canteens that are well equipped and provided with the highest quality ingredients, and yet that still prepare meals that eventually drive even the most positively disposed worker from the lunch table."<sup>595</sup> Nutritionists promised frustrated factory directors that

it has clearly been shown that all factories where the kitchen employees form a strong collective, where everyone supports one another and every individual feels personally responsible for one another, provide food that can fulfill the demands and wishes of our workers.<sup>596</sup>

Training programs organized by the Institute of Nutritional Sciences encouraged canteen cooks to decrease their reliance on the *Eintopf* and to diversify their menus, recommending that individual dishes not repeat themselves within each 14-day cycle. The mantra of the new East German canteen was to become: "short preparation time, short cooking time, and a quick distribution of food."<sup>597</sup> At the same time, a new focus on 'culinary culture' emerged, something that was "not an unnecessary luxury but a

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<sup>593</sup> "Gemeinschaftsverpflegung muß Vollwertig Sein," *Die neuzeitliche Gaststätte*, no. 11 (1955).

<sup>594</sup> "Bericht über die Verordnung betr: Verbesserung des Werkküchenessens." BArch DY 34 / 27795

<sup>595</sup> "zur Diskussion über das warme Essen im Betrieb" BArch DE 1 / 27413

<sup>596</sup> "Bericht über die Tagung des ZV der IG Chemie zur Verbesserung des Werkküchenessens am 17.6.1953" BArch DY 34 / 27848

<sup>597</sup> "Was muß vom Werkessen verlangt werden?" DIFE 260 # 138

physiological necessity." Relying on Pavlov's research on canine salivary production, state advisors mandated "a well-lit, friendly eating room, furnished comfortably and heated in the cold season, in which meals can be consumed comfortably." The decision to focus on the external aspects of the canteen meal promised high returns for the factory as well as for the health and happiness of the worker.

This new focus on atmosphere and culinary culture was part of the GDR's awkward attempt to deal with the consumer-oriented turn of the postwar era. Only a few years after the provisioning of a 600 calorie meal had been sufficient to dramatically improve workplace morale, East German workers asserted "that the canteen-regime be brought to an end, that they no longer want to simply have their bellies filled [*abgefüttert werden*], but demand that their canteen become a restaurant."<sup>598</sup> Such demands conflicted with official East German doctrine, which continued to conceptualize workers as 'participants' in a collective meal rather than 'consumers' of an individual one. Canteen experts countered these demands by falling back on the need to awaken "the internal pleasure evoked by communal eating in the factory dining hall."<sup>599</sup> Sadly, this internal pleasure seemed to remain largely a fantasy, and seemingly largely irrelevant from the perspective of the workers; the pleasure of communal eating was rarely referenced in the countless letters sent to the Institute and the Ministry of Food, and complaints focused inevitably on the food and material environment of the canteen, rather than on them as spaces of sociability.

The long-awaited end of rationing in 1958 only highlighted canteen staffing shortages, long queues which meant that those at the end of the line received cold, burnt

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<sup>598</sup> "zur Diskussion über das warme Essen im Betrieb" BArch DE 1 / 27413

<sup>599</sup> Heinrich-Karl Gräfe, *Vollwertige Gemeinschaftsverpflegung nach den drei Werkessenstufen I, II, III Zugleich e. Ratgeber neuzeitl. Mittagessengestaltung in Heim u. Familie* (Berlin: Verl. Technik, 1955), 29.

or watery portions, and poorly designed and maintained kitchens and factory dining halls. Such inadequacies seemed increasingly intolerable in the face of official statements of prosperity and a steadily rising quality of life. Despite steady improvements in the quality of canteens meals, workers continued to express dissatisfaction, and, most importantly, steadfastly refused to eat them. Even as increasing numbers of women swelled the workforce, the raw number of workers eating in canteens actually dropped from 1,891,100 in 1960 to 1,804,400 in 1961. 1961 saw not only record lows in canteen participation, but also the building of the Berlin Wall in an attempt to stem the flow of East Germans defecting to the West. Much like the painfully timed canteen conference of June 17<sup>th</sup>, 1953, only months before the wall was erected the SED sponsored a large conference on factory canteens to address increasingly open worker dissatisfaction.

Distressed by shockingly low participation rates throughout the country (the worst was the city of Schwerin, with only 22% of the workforce eating in their workplace canteens), the authors of the report were forced to conclude that "the main reasons why a large portion of the workers do not participate in the canteen meal are largely of a subjective nature, that is to say they are not satisfied with the preparation, composition of the meal etc."<sup>600</sup> The report asserted that the simple existence of canteens in the GDR represented a victory of the working classes– "the factory canteens created in our socialist factories are a great social success of the working class and document the political agenda of our party and government,"<sup>601</sup> rather than offering productive suggestions for improvement. If the food at these canteens might not always adequately prove the state's

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<sup>600</sup> "Referat für die Konferenz zur besseren Versorgung der Werktätigen in den Betrieben am 6.3.1961"  
BArch DY 34 / 20033

<sup>601</sup> "Referat für die Konferenz zur besseren Versorgung der Werktätigen in den Betrieben am 6.3.1961"  
BArch DY 34 / 20033

commitment to workers' health, then one must simply look across the border, over the soon-to-be-erected Wall, and see

how different it is in West Germany. A whole row of factories in West Germany also have factory canteens. However, these establishments help capitalists to extract the most possible from the people. One cannot talk in West Germany of canteens that improve the quality of life of the workers; instead they help capitalists to continually perfect the exploitation of the working classes.<sup>602</sup>

The specificities of the ways in which this 'canteen-exploitation' took place remained vague, but consuming them was socially and personally demoralizing as well as physically harmful. Rather than a collective endeavor, they were a profit-driven business aimed at giving workers the least possible value in exchange for the highest possible price. Their worker nutrition was in the hands of men like Albert Steigenberger, "an obvious war profiteer who became wealthy as a result of the last two imperialist wars and from unscrupulous speculation." Interested only in profit, this former Nazi transformed canteens into "a chain of cheap restaurants, with which . . . to exploit the working classes even more intensely."<sup>603</sup>

Evoking the horrors of West German canteens did not reduce the anger and frustration of East German workers, nor did the construction of the wall convince workers to embrace meals that seemed inadequate and undesirable. Participation rates continued to decline; in 1965, an embarrassingly low 22.4% of East Germany's workers enjoyed a 'healthy, communal primary warm meal' in their workplace canteen.<sup>604</sup>

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<sup>602</sup> "Referat für die Konferenz zur besseren Versorgung der Werktätigen in den Betrieben am 6.3.1961" BArch DY 34 / 20033

<sup>603</sup> "Aus dem Wirken eines Multimillinärs: der Lieblings-Gastronom Adenauers." *Die neuzeitliche Gaststätte*, no. 3 (1956). In contrast, the USSR was an important reference point for East German nutritionists, who reported throughout the 1950s and 60s on the "vast numbers of workers" fed in collective kitchens and factory canteens. "Werkskantinen in Rußland" *Kochpraxis und Gemeinschaftsverpflegung* #10 1955

<sup>604</sup> Martin Zobel, "Ernährungswissenschaftlich und technologisch begründete Prognose über die Entwicklung der Gemeinschaftsverpflegung in der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik: mit experiment.

Revealing the tremendous gap between official and popular understandings of the role of the collective, questionnaires and longer-term surveys of workers revealed an increased aversion to the collective nature of these meals; many workers chose not to eat in their canteen because "they claim that their wife would have to cook for the family anyway in the evenings,"<sup>605</sup> or, as another report put it, due to "the desire to consume a warm meal together with the family."<sup>606</sup>

As always, a lack of ideological conviction on the part of the directors ("many workplace direction boards have also not realized that the collective meal program steadily increases in importance with forward-looking socialist development") and the lack of education for the workers ("the intake of a well rounded warm meal during the workday is wrongly seen as a necessary evil") were blamed. However nutritionists who visited the canteens had other, more pragmatic complaints: canteen kitchens had too few or too old machines, unqualified kitchen workers, and inadequate supplies of fresh fruits and vegetables.<sup>607</sup> By the late 1960s, these nutritionists had grown increasingly vocal in their criticisms of the East German canteen, frustrated by their inability to significantly improve rates of workplace meal consumption. State food policy and the majority of innovative nutritional research were shaped by concerns over workers' diets and factory canteens. In a food economy that focused on the factory canteen as the central site of food production and consumption, the fact that less than a quarter of East Germany's

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Beiträgen zur Produktion v. Gefrierspeisen u. zur Kartoffelzubereitung." (Habilitationsschrift, Humboldt-Universität), 1.

<sup>605</sup> "Gemeinschaftsverpflegung im Betrieb. Interview mit Gerhart Stropp, Direktor der zentralen Forschungs- und Informationsstelle, Arbeiterversorgung bei der Hauptdirektion Wismut Handel, Karl-Marx-Stadt." *Gastronomie* 1, no. 3 (1970).

<sup>606</sup> Manfred Möhr, *Zur Ernährungssituation in der DDR*. (Berlin: Gesellschaft für Betriebsberatung des Handels, 1971), 13.

<sup>607</sup> "Bericht über den Stand der Gemeinschaftsverpflegung in den Betrieben" BArch DY 34 / 24570

workers actually ate there meant that good nutrition was inaccessible to the majority of the population.

In 1970, East German nutritionist Dr. Hans Haenel evaluated the situation with a mixture of pride and frustration:

the GDR could play a leading role in the realm of collective feeding from a societal, scientific and social perspective. However, support and development of this branch of the economy has been lacking. Certainly much has already been achieved – we need only think of [canteens'] modest beginnings in the thin warm soups of the first postwar years. However the current state of affairs no longer meets the increased demands of nutritional sciences, of the health industry, of the economy and production, and above all of the participants in these meals.<sup>608</sup>

Dr. Martin Zobel, head of the Collective Feeding Department at the Institute of Nutritional Research, was even harsher:

Unfortunately, it has been repeatedly shown that the great majority of collective feeding programs do not in the slightest meet modern nutritional requirements. Even the flavor requirements . . . of the dishes no longer fulfill expectations . . . the consequences of this can be seen in the dramatic decrease in participants in canteen meals.<sup>609</sup>

These nutritionists increasingly recognized the preeminence of pleasure for encouraging worker acceptance of canteen meals:

as long as the food in many places continues to be prepared lovelessly and with inadequate culinary skill . . . as long as the potatoes are overcooked, the sauces always taste identical, every Monday is 'noodles with tomato sauce,' . . . as long as fresh vegetables are offered only in the form of a limp salad leaf, when salt is the only spice mixed into the cooking pots– but that is used by the handful – then we can only expect anger, complaints, a poor workplace climate, and grumpiness for all participants in the collective feeding programs, let alone the reductions in productivity due to an inadequate nutrition.<sup>610</sup>

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<sup>608</sup> H. Haenel, M. Zobel and M. Möhr, "Probleme der Gesellschaftlichen Speisewirtschaft in der DDR," *Ernährungsforschung* XV, no. 2 (1970), 40.

<sup>609</sup> Martin Zobel, "Ernährungswissenschaftlich und technologisch begründete Prognose über die Entwicklung der Gemeinschaftsverpflegung in der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik: mit experiment. Beiträgen zur Produktion v. Gefrierspeisen u. zur Kartoffelzubereitung," 1.

<sup>610</sup> Haenel, Zobel and Möhr, "Probleme der Gesellschaftlichen Speisewirtschaft in der DDR," 35

A 1971 report evaluated the state of the GDR's canteens, listing four central aims: enabling worker performance and the maintenance of worker health, the sociopsychological significance on the workplace environment, reducing working women's domestic labor, and modeling a healthy, economical, and tasty diet. The report then identified the major problems facing East German canteens: a lack of unified leadership, the absence of a consistent distribution of nutritional knowledge, inadequately educated canteen staff, the absence of a sense of personal responsibility for industrial food production, and inadequate technology along with poor-tasting food.<sup>611</sup> Both the goals and problems of canteen remained changed little over the first decades of the GDR. Despite intensive efforts toward centralization of the design and execution of canteens, quality remained highly variable, regionally specific, and dependent upon the size and type of company involved. Equally as important, popular resistance to canteens proved difficult to overcome. After reaching its nadir in 1961, participation slowly began to increase with the construction of the Wall and the resultant stabilization of the domestic economy. Even more important, rising levels of female employment made a home-cooked lunch, or even a home-packed lunch, increasingly implausible. By 1970 a third of East Germany's workers ate at least one primary meal at their workplace, by 1980 this had increased to 42%, and by 1985 66% of the working population ate at a factory canteen. 22% of total food production and sales ended up in collective feeding establishments, more than half of which consisted of factory canteens.<sup>612</sup> However, these

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<sup>611</sup> "Entwurf: Probleme bei der Realisierung ernährungs- und kochwissenschaftliche Forderungen in der Praxis der Arbeiterversorgung und Schulspeisung." DIFE 420 # 17

<sup>612</sup> M. Zobel, *Zur Gemeinschaftsverpflegung Werktätiger*, Vol. 32 (Dresden: Deutsches Hygiene-Museum in der DDR, 1984).

rates remained a disappointment to East German nutritionists, and canteen development consistently fell below the expectations of the SED.

East German canteen meals are particularly interesting because they complicate the traditional critique made of the SED/SBZ: the Soviet government focused its energy on production, at the expense of consumer culture and consumption.<sup>613</sup> The lengthy continuation of rationing into the late 1950s has been interpreted as a sign of a governmental system that was blind to the needs of the population to consume, putting material culture on the back seat while focusing on heavy industry.<sup>614</sup> However, the workers' canteens were where socialist theory realized its idealized unification of consumption and production. There was one sort of consumption which even the most radical Communist could not put aside until the reconstruction of the German economy was complete: the feeding of workers as a crucial part of the construction of an East German socialist consumer culture, the factory canteen was seen as the crux of adult socialist society, a place where every East German man and woman came together to eat and to learn about nutrition. The canteen did little to change traditional culinary gender hierarchies, as women continued to be the primary domestic food producers. However, both men and woman, as workers, were also understood for the first time as productive consumers of food.

The trajectory of factory canteens in the GDR reveals a complex process of negotiation between the ideological and practical considerations of the socialist government, nutritionists, workers, and factory directors. At their core, these struggles revolved around the meaning of production in a postwar socialist German state. The very

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<sup>613</sup> Landsman, *Dictatorship and Demand: The Politics of Consumerism in East Germany*.

<sup>614</sup> For a fascinating study of the British socialist government's similar postwar decision to maintain rationing after the end of the war and immediate postwar scarcity, see *Austerity in Britain*.

public and highly political significance of canteens for these struggles highlights the complex and often paradoxical meaning of food within a socialist economy. It also reveals larger tensions between individuals and the collective, and between the processes of production and consumption. Rates of participation in factory canteens ebbed and flowed with political crisis and temporary stabilization. The citizens of the GDR became accustomed to seeing the workplace canteen as a space of dialogue and negotiation with the SED. However, despite the tremendous ideological and economic importance accorded workplace canteens, it took decades for participation rates to reach over 50%, an embarrassing, and seemingly inexplicable statistic. Despite this tension, the GDR became an international leader in the planning and execution of factory canteens; collective feeding was one of the few areas of nutritional and economic science where West German experts looked to the East for strategic and nutritional guidance.<sup>615</sup>

### **Nourishing the Individual with the Collective: Factory Canteens in the FRG**

In part due to the West's general rejection of collective feeding programs, the currency reform resulted in a temporary worsening of the nutritional status of much of the working class of the Western zones. By December of 1948, grocery prices had increased by 20%; over the following years, unemployment rates rose steadily. A 1951 survey revealed that a majority of the West German population felt that they were worse off than

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<sup>615</sup> During my interviews with several nutritionists who had worked in the Nutrition Institute during the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s, including Drs. Zobel, Lüder, Ulbricht and Johnson, they all recalled visits from West German experts, particularly in the field of collective feeding, who admired the relative success of the Institute's programs. At the same time, however, these men all shared the consensus that the GDR's restrictions on information exchange, and especially on travel to the West, was especially harmful to the further development and exchange of nutritional information.

they had been a year ago, with little expectation of this trend changing.<sup>616</sup> Increased need, however, did not result in higher demand or institutional support for collective meals. In fact, as British and American funding subsidies decreased and finally disappeared, West German factory owners usually shut down canteens, complaining that their expense outweighed their benefits. While closures inspired scattered complaints from workers, more frequent were complaints about the still-existing canteen meals, confirming business' perception of canteens as a source of conflict rather than profit. Poverty and hunger inspired West Germans to turn to the domestic sphere and reasserted a preference for home-cooked meals.

In response to this steep decline in the numbers of West German canteens, nutritionists and labor economists founded the Federal Republic's first professional journal for canteen cooks *Das Großküchen-Magazin* in 1949. Announcing that "after the experiences of the past years, it has become ever more obvious that the state of an individual's health is dependent upon his diet," the editor insisted on improving not only housewives' cooking abilities, but demanded that "we dedicate increased attention to providing a nourishing diet through factory and other canteens."<sup>617</sup> Confident that "the future will show that collective feeding has a central importance in our economic and social life,"<sup>618</sup> these men praised the economic use-value of collective feeding programs:

In the context of a well-planned, non-schematic consumer control, supported by means of a convincing advertising industry and a wide-reaching educational program informing consumers of the potentials of food optimization, collective

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<sup>616</sup> Arne Andersen, *Der Traum vom guten Leben: Alltags- und Konsumgeschichte vom Wirtschaftswunder bis Heute* (Frankfurt; New York: Campus, 1997), 12.

<sup>617</sup> "Einleitung" *Das Großküchen-Magazin* 1, no. 1 (1949)

<sup>618</sup> Dr Walter Völz, "Aufgabe und Stellung der Gemeinschaftsverpflegung in der Deutschen Ernährungswirtschaft." *Das Großküchen-Magazin* 1, no. 1 (1949).

feeding programs can play an important part in solving food supply and demand problems as they emerge.<sup>619</sup>

These arguments, however, proved difficult to integrate into the *Wirtschaftswunder* and the Federal Republic's embrace of a consumer-oriented free market.

While the 1950s did not witness a mass workers' revolt like that of the 17<sup>th</sup> of June, these years saw a series of tense negotiations between the workforce and the West German state, in the face of growing resentment over economic and social gaps between workers and factory owners, rising unemployment, and persistent poverty among certain segments of the population, particularly single mothers and large working-class families in industrial regions. While severe food shortages and hunger had disappeared by the early part of the decade, childhood malnutrition and poorly fed workers continued to concern nutritionists worried about labor productivity and the future vitality of the Volk.

West German workers fought bitterly to improve their situation, and particularly to expand their workplace benefits. Much like in the East, West German workers exerted pressure on companies and the state for health care, pensions, and job security.<sup>620</sup>

However, canteens were generally absent from lists of workers' demands, remaining an insignificant site of negotiation between employers and employees. West German labor unions like IG Metall distributed groceries and uncooked food packages to needy workers and their families but did not demand canteens to alleviate worker hunger.<sup>621</sup> In the early 1950s, the respected industrial analyst Franz Goossens regretfully observed that

despite the constantly improving quality of the canteen meal and the entire experience of receiving the food and the reasonable price . . . the number of participants in canteen meals has sunk. It sank and continues to sink, despite the

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<sup>619</sup> Ibid.

<sup>620</sup> Andersen, *Der Traum vom guten Leben*, 17

<sup>621</sup> Ibid., 13

objectively advantageous opportunity to enjoy a good lunch at work for a reasonable price.<sup>622</sup>

A factory newsletter from 1951 complained that "it is entirely incomprehensible that since the previous year there has been a reduction in meal participants of around 400 people, a fact that is simply impossible to explain."<sup>623</sup> Goossens, seeking to answer "why the workplace canteen has a constantly decreasing appeal for the workforce, although in most cases it can be proven that the work canteen objectively is a great boon for every worker," concluded that "the ultimate causes probably can be found in the realm of the irrational."<sup>624</sup>

This early resistance to factory canteens determined the development of workplace nutrition in the Federal Republic. Unlike the situation in socialist countries as well as in most of Western Europe, where canteens were conceptualized as a primarily blue-collar institution, here the canteen was integrated into the middle-class ideal of the *Wohlstandsgesellschaft* or 'Prosperity Society.' West Germans linked full bellies with the successful overcoming of the Nazi past and their integration into the anti-Communist, Christian West. As a result, these full bellies were ideologically over-determined—and they were not associated with the workplace collective but with the private family table. West Germans assumed an innately human, and especially innately German "internal revulsion toward mass feeding, toward the *Abfütterung*, or however else the workers tend to disparagingly name the canteen meal."<sup>625</sup> Canteens were thought to threaten Germans' hard-won democratic individualism. Even canteen supporters acknowledged that:

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<sup>622</sup> Franz Goossens, "Warum gehen die Essenszahlen zurück?" *Mensch und Arbeit* (1952), 40.

<sup>623</sup> *Ibid.*, 41

<sup>624</sup> *Ibid.*, 41

<sup>625</sup> "Für und Wider den grossen Topf," *Das Großküchen-Magazin* 1, no. 3 (1949).

collective feeding reaches its critical mass at the moment when it succumbs to the danger of dissolving into the collective [*der Gefahr der Vermassung unterliegt*], evoking a feeling of personal revulsion in the individual that is only augmented by pressure to participate in the collective meal.<sup>626</sup>

An early guide to work canteens by the renowned nutritionist Dr. Hans Dietrich Cremer dedicated a large portion of his text to defending the very concept of communal feeding in factories, distinguishing it from earlier German experiences with collective eating.<sup>627</sup>

This distinction was based on the "clear dividing line" between communal eating [*Gemeinschaftsverpflegung*] and mass feeding [*Massenverpflegung*]. Committed to a Cold War and American-inspired model of individualism, Cremer argued that

the very term 'mass' is impossible to associate with the idea of a personality . . . the situation is quite different with communal eating: within the [factory] community, people do not exist as a mass, but rather as a large or small group of individual personalities, who must not simply be made full but healthy and capable of peak performance.<sup>628</sup>

Such rhetoric was an attempt to give canteens a radical makeover; the attributes that had previously been selling points (a cheap, equalized communal meal) were now associated with the dehumanizing and collectivizing forces of Communism and Nazism. Indeed, the term 'mass feeding' (*Massenverpflegung*) was used to distinguish the "organized misery" of fascist and Communist feeding programs from the individual-based West German canteens.<sup>629</sup> Distinguishing their canteens from those of the past was part of the country's claim to have overcome its past and have achieved postwar democratic prosperity:

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<sup>626</sup> Völz, "Aufgabe und Stellung der Gemeinschaftsverpflegung in der deutschen Ernährungswirtschaft."

<sup>627</sup> Hans Joachim Cremer, 1910-1995, became one of the Federal Republic's most respected nutritional scientists. Among other honors, during the 1950s he was made the Director of the Institute for Nutritional Sciences in Hamburg and later that of Giessen. There has been recent speculation that Dr. Cremer was in fact the notorious Dr. Craemer, who was involved in horrific prisoner experiments in German concentration camps during the war years. This has yet to be conclusively proven, but there is strong evidence. For more information, see <http://www.laborjournal.de/rubric/archiv/editorials/242.html>.

<sup>628</sup> Cremer, *Gemeinschaftsverpflegung*, (Darmstadt: D. Steinkopff, 1962), 2

<sup>629</sup> "Das war Massenverpflegung im Jahre 1932: Ein schon längst vergessenes Kapital," *Kochpraxis und Gemeinschaftsverpflegung* (April, 1961).

when one speaks today of communal feeding one thinks of those huge soup kitchens of WWI, or the feeding station of an army unit during the past war. A long line of waiting men stand at a huge vat, one after the other steps forward with his eating container to receive his portion of stew . . . these times are over, and such memories belong to the past.<sup>630</sup>

Recognizing that "the significance of an adequate and balanced diet for health and performance makes it necessary to establish basic principles for the type of feeding that every fourth German participates in: communal meals,"<sup>631</sup> the German Nutrition Institute (DGE) opened an Advisory Board for Mass Feeding (*Beratungsdienst für Grossverpflegung*) in 1957, and the few nutritional research centers of the Federal Republic focused on 'nutritional physiology,' particularly workers' diets and canteen meals.<sup>632</sup> For the DGE, however, this was a negative trend.<sup>633</sup> In 1959, the president of the DGE bemoaned the "cramming of a huge mass of people into large urban centers [resulting in the fact that] people's diet has shifted into the realm of the collective," one of the greatest "difficulties and disadvantages" of 'technological civilization.'<sup>634</sup>

Even industrial nutritionists believed that workers would never truly enjoy these meals because they did not "taste like at mom's [nor could they] replace the intimate

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<sup>630</sup> "Gemeinschaftsverpflegung – Nicht Massenfütterung," 4

<sup>631</sup> H. Cremer, *Gemeinschaftsverpflegung*, iv. By the mid-1960s, around 70% of those who participated in collective meals did so at their workplace. The remainder ate in hospitals, prisons, orphanages and old-age homes, and the military.

<sup>632</sup> West German nutritionists complained about the lack of federal and academic support for food science and research, leaving the Federal Republic "practically behind all neighboring European countries . . . only [food science in] Austria is in a similarly poor situation as the BRD." Lippki, Lode and Teut, *Essen in der Arbeitswelt. Tatsachen, Ursachen, Hypotheken, Hypothesen*, (Berlin: Internationales Design Zentrums, 1973) 6

<sup>633</sup> According to contemporary estimates, by the end of the 1950s demand for canteens had begun to grow; 50% of the (full-time) employed population eating their lunch in a factory or work canteen. Statistics on participation in the non-centralized and privatized workers' canteen programs in West Germany are extremely unreliable, as the definition of a hot meal, worker, and canteen were all open to interpretation. Workers who had factory cantons available to them were generally assumed to be male, full-time, not doing shift-work, and employed by a large company with facilities for feeding its workers. Generally, sources agree that around 10 million workers were eating their meals at a public feeding facility by the late 50s, and a decade later that number had risen to 16-17 million.

<sup>634</sup> Lippki, Lode and Teut, *Essen in der Arbeitswelt*, 5-6

sphere of the family table."<sup>635</sup> Some blamed canteen meals for a symptomatically modern "loss in individuality and leveling of expectations."<sup>636</sup> Conferences on canteen meals focused on countering the harms that collective meals were thought to be inflicting upon individuals and societies. Psychologist and workplace social workers explained popular resistance to canteens with modified Freudian terminology, citing an innately human "oral bashfulness [*orale Schamhaftigkeit*] which caused many to be embarrassed to eat in public."<sup>637</sup> In contrast with an East German model of food as inherently social and communal, West German nutritional psychologist Dr. Bilz claimed that "food is always a bone of contention. An atmosphere of cheerfulness and satisfaction must be deliberately cultivated, precisely because all things oral, by their nature, encourage aggression."<sup>638</sup>

Rather than liberating women and strengthening community, West German nutritionists saw canteens as both cause and effect of a marked degeneration in the family. The steadily increasing number of West German women joining the workforce was blamed for the fact that families had 'lost their focal point.' The primary symptom of this loss was the new pressure on male workers to eat in canteens:

The family should always remain be the center of gravity in every physically, mentally and spiritually healthy person, and thus also of the nation. However, technology is weakening the family. And, along with this development, nutrition is also caught in a moment of radical change: ever fewer women cook, ever fewer girls learn how to cook. In the background of this often overwhelming, often

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<sup>635</sup> Florian HJ, "Gemeinschaftsverpflegung--Angewandte Präventivmedizin", *Münchener Medizinische Wochenschrift* (1950) 110, no. 34 (1968), 1885

<sup>636</sup> Lippki, Lode and Teut, *Essen in der Arbeitswelt*, 15

<sup>637</sup> R. Bilz "Gemeinschaftsverpflegung und Nahrungswahl in psychologischer Sicht" in J. Kisser and Konrad Lang, *Ernährungsprobleme in der modernen Industriegesellschaft*, (Steinkopff: Darmstadt, 1965), 177.

<sup>638</sup> *Ibid.*, 177

uncontrollable and despite all glitter often dangerous modern development, collective feeding spreads itself out with remarkable doggedness.<sup>639</sup>

While there was a continued effort to improve canteen meals, there was an equally strong and widely-held belief that the family meal was the best and only sure way to improve and secure individual health.<sup>640</sup> Rather than, as in the East, having the private kitchen learn from the canteen, here the kitchen was supposed to correct the inevitable harms caused by participation in a canteen meal system.

West German industrial feeding experts advocated transforming the workplace dining hall as much as possible into a private, bourgeois eating space. Guides to canteen construction emphasized ways of making an industrial hall look intimate, clean and middle-class, with a focus on a familial atmosphere, a background of quiet music, and, most importantly, "clean and efficient women serv[ing] the meal on beautifully arranged tables."<sup>641</sup> The importance of having female staff to serve male consumers (but not, as several chefs made clear, to cook the food itself) was thought to be central to worker satisfaction with their meals. Less the food itself, and more the way in which it was offered to the consumer, was decisive. West German nutritionists and industrial planners attempted to market canteens as a vital part of a modern economy and a civil society. Canteens ceased to be a homosocial and proletariat space, and were transformed into a bourgeois institution seamlessly integrated into a free market consumer culture.

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<sup>639</sup> W. Bening "Vollwertige Großverpflegung" in Kisser and Lang, *Ernährungsprobleme in der modernen Industriegesellschaft*, 192

<sup>640</sup> Cookbooks from the 1960s like the *Kluge Hausfrau* (Clever Housewife), for example, often included recipes specifically for lunches to be taken to the workplace by husbands. Wives, not workplaces, were responsible for ensuring that their husbands not be "forced to rely the entire day on sandwiches. Small wonder that one quickly wearies of liver pate or meat spreads." Wildt, *Am Beginn der "Konsumgesellschaft": Mangelersahrung, Lebenshaltung, Wohlstandshoffnung in Westdeutschland in den fünfziger Jahren*, (Hamburg: Ergebnisse-Verlag, 1994) 237

<sup>641</sup> "Gemeinschaftsverpflegung – Nicht Massenfütterung," 4

The West German canteen was remade as both capitalist and Christian, complete with frequent references to the communal eating traditions of the New Testament, as well as pseudo-ethnographic invocations of a Germanic heritage of shared meals. One enthusiastic canteen chef reminded his readers that a "southern German and West German democracy of the heart" had "deep-reaching roots" in traditional communal eating patterns: "perhaps the only thing that people of different origins, employment and dispositions can do together is to eat and drink together."<sup>642</sup> West German canteens claimed to "support the growing sense of individuality and rising sense of self-worth"<sup>643</sup> among working men. Culinary variety not only increased the health and productivity of the workforce, but gave workers "the illusion of freedom" in their menu choices, allowing them to practice their new skills in consumer-oriented democracy.<sup>644</sup> Dr. Cremer suggested that "it is advantageous to see the member [*Mitglied*] of a canteen meal as a guest, not as a 'participant in the meal' [*Essenteilnehmer*] or, even worse, the recipient of food [*Verpflegungsempfänger*]."<sup>645</sup>

As canteens extracted workers' diets from housewives' control, they become alternate sites of leisure, pleasure and consumption. In the egalitarian and humanitarian society of the FRG, "the worker of today is, like the white-collar worker and the civil servant, a citizen. He therefore expects to receive his meal at his workplace in an environment that corresponds to his private domestic conditions, in other words, looking like a middle-class home."<sup>646</sup> By combining home-scale intimacy with public, purchased meals, the canteen paradoxically "has become a restaurant in which everyone can eat the

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<sup>642</sup> "Für und Wider den Grossen Topf,".

<sup>643</sup> H. J. Florian, "Gemeinschaftsverpflegung--Angewandte Präventivmedizin," 1885.

<sup>644</sup> Bilz, "Gemeinschaftsverpflegung und Nahrungswahl in psychologischer Sicht", 170

<sup>645</sup> Cremer, *Gemeinschaftsverpflegung*, 141

<sup>646</sup> *Ibid.*, 248.

same way that he does in his private kitchen."<sup>647</sup> References to the 'private kitchen' or 'bourgeois home' empowered the food consumer; rather than being unmanned or humiliated by the consumption of a collective meal, workers affirmed their patriarchal authority role by eating in canteens.<sup>648</sup> Thus, the West German canteen was remade to confirm and strengthen firmly held notions of the interdependence but separateness of the public and private spheres, and of production and consumption.<sup>649</sup>

Canteens were not only worrisome because of their perceived potential for weakening the German family unit. They also pose a challenge to the all-encompassing embrace of consumerism and capitalism that was supposed to define the postwar Federal Republic. Canteen feeding seemed to contradict many of the basic premises of consumer capitalism, as they were associated with restricted selection, collective and public consumption, a de-emphasis on individual preference, and artificially low prices. In response, as West Germany's economy steadily improved, and an increasing percentage of the population identified itself with a consumer-oriented capitalist economy, canteen meals were transformed into a consumer object, severed from their historical associations with simplicity and the working class. Rather than maintaining their links with the working and industrialized classes, canteens became increasingly associated with white-collar workers, bureaucrats and office staff. There was a steady shift in the demographic

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<sup>647</sup> "die Millionen Schlüsselkinder der Bundesdeutschen" BArch B 116 / 30525

<sup>648</sup> West German canteens were explicitly maintained as masculine spaces. While female servers added to the 'pleasant' experience of eating food, advisors recommended that chefs and kitchen workers be male. Although in situations where money is tight, "understandable pressures to economize mean that . . . in the communal feeding program unfortunately one must make do with female staff," observers had "often noticed that switching from a female to male cook leads to a multiplication of the number of participants." "Gemeinschaftsverpflegung – Nicht Massenfütterung," 4

<sup>649</sup> For the best study of on the importance of conservative family values for the early FRG, see Robert Moeller's *Protecting Motherhood*.

target audience of these meals; by the late 1960s, more white collar workers (33%) than physical laborers (27%) ate in workplace canteens.<sup>650</sup>

Rather than emphasizing the nutritional makeup of the food, West German canteen advisors focused on the pleasure of the consumer; tasty rather than healthy meals promised to increase an employee's sense of indebtedness to his employer. Thus, although nutritionists recommended that canteen chefs cook healthy and well-balanced meals, they admitted that "the first and most important aspect [of canteen meals] is that they meet the tastes and expectations of the workers . . . for them, a good meal is a large piece of roasted meat, a fatty soup or sauce and preferably white bread."<sup>651</sup> Such meals would affirm workplace hierarchies, just as family meals created and strengthened the 'natural' hierarchies of the family. Whereas under socialism the aim of such collective meals was to replace the private domestic sphere with an equitable workers' community, West German canteens enforced capitalist divisions of labor. They often had prearranged seating assignments for diners based on status within the workplace hierarchy.<sup>652</sup> Nutritionists promised, in turn, that workers thus nourished "show their thankfulness through increased worker productivity, which is one of the central purposes of work feeding programs."<sup>653</sup>

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<sup>650</sup> This was a relatively fast shift; at the beginning of the decade, more than half of all laborers, but only a quarter of white collar workers, ate at canteens or restaurants; the remainder ate their noon meal at home. Wildt, *Am Beginn der "Konsumgesellschaft"*, 118. This shift correlated with a change in the idea of the worker in the FRG, who left the factory for the office. In West Germany, the 'model' canteen eater became a desk-worker, with low energy expenditure and high consumer demands. See Caspar Tropp, *Ernähren Sie sich richtig, Herr Direktor?* (München: Verlag Moderne Industrie, 1965).

<sup>651</sup> Cremer, *Gemeinschaftsverpflegung*, 2.

<sup>652</sup> In fact, canteens highly differentiated pricing, so that the better meals were generally eaten by higher-placed workers, while the upper echelons of factories ate in restaurants rather than the canteen. This caused great resentment among workers, who complained that "if there must be factory canteens, then all workers should eat the same food." Bilz, "Gemeinschaftsverpflegung und Nahrungswahl in psychologischer Sicht", 169.

<sup>653</sup> "Gemeinschaftsverpflegung – Nicht Massenfütterung," 4.

Rather than trying to convince the population that the factory canteen was a preferable, and delicious, alternative to a home-cooked meal, West German canteen advocates transformed the nature of the canteen. It ceased to be working class and community-oriented, and was instead a necessary but undesirable bourgeois substitute for the patriarchal family. This was partially successful strategy. West Germany work canteens lost their stigma of poverty, unemployment, and collective anonymity, becoming sort of middle-class fringe benefit.<sup>654</sup> The dinner, rather than the hot lunch, became the primary meal of the day, and lunch was an opportunity to participate in the capitalist economy rather than a workers' collective. Blue collar workers did not expect, fight for, or generally have access to a workplace canteen.

Throughout the postwar decades, West Germans continued to express discomfort with the political and social ramifications of canteens, and the workplace community continued to be placed in opposition to the nuclear family. Although workers' diets were a source of tremendous concern in the postwar Federal Republic, medical experts never advocated canteens as a method of improving individual diets.<sup>655</sup> Canteens were at best a side-issue, and at worse the enemy of good health. In particular, obesity was blamed on the spread of canteens, despite the fact that they were unavailable to the majority of German workers. Canteens did not seem to offer a way to improve workers' diets, solve the harms of postwar deprivations, nor were they a way of decreasing domestic cooking in order to allow women to join the workforce.

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<sup>654</sup> The 'fringe' nature of the West German canteen is powerfully illustrated by the absence of a canteen, or any sort of feeding system, at the DGE. This is a striking difference to the East German Institute for Nutritional Research, which had one of the country's most developed canteen programs precisely because the "institute stands in the public gaze and everywhere it prioritizes an improvement in the quality of factory canteen meals," "Antrag auf Übernahme von Löhnen und Behältern des Küchenpersonals der Betriebsküche in den Haushalt" DIFE 285 # 122,

<sup>655</sup> Caspar Tropp, *Ernähren Sie sich richtig, Herr Direktor?*.

By the 1960s, some doctors had begun to question the assumed link between public dining halls and ill health; increasing numbers of voices began to complain about the negative economic consequences of the low numbers and poor quality of West German workplace canteens. An inadequate canteen culture, rather than canteens themselves, were increasingly blamed for dissatisfied workers and especially with inadequate worker morale. Unpleasant canteens ensured that

the worker or employee who enters the canteen after intensive work, often a labor associated with anger, receives an additional slap in the face with the infamous canteen-psychosis [*Kantinenpsychose*]. There cannot help but be a laming impact on the drive to work.<sup>656</sup>

Nutritionists noted the steadily worsening health of German men 'despite' the fact that, as a 1968 survey revealed, 50% of West German workers still ate a lunch at home that was prepared by their wives or mothers, another 21% brought their meals with them, and 6% ate nothing(!) at midday.<sup>657</sup> By this point, studies revealed that resistance to canteens had become a top-down rather than bottom-up phenomenon. Although in 1971 only 16% of the country's workers ate daily in a workplace canteen, canteens that did exist operated consistently at a 75% participation rate. In other words, workers used their canteens if they had the option. A 1976 report issued by the Grain and Cereal lobby found that 50% of West Germany's workforce did not have access to any sort of eating facility or restaurant at or near their workplace, a sharp worsening in workplace nutrition since the 1960s, and a situation described as "strikingly inadequate."<sup>658</sup> By 1980, only

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<sup>656</sup> "Essen am Arbeitsplatz." *Rationelle Hauswirtschaft*. (January 27, 1971). While the very reference to a psychological affliction associated specifically with canteens reflects the Federal Republic's deep-seated distrust of collective meals, nonetheless the author of this study explained that an adequate canteen could and should "give participants in the canteen new strength for their afternoon work," thus improving worker morale, productivity and profit margins. "Essen am Arbeitsplatz."

<sup>657</sup> Lippki, Lode and Teut, *Essen in der Arbeitswelt. Tatsachen, Ursachen, Hypothesen, Hypothesen*, 11

<sup>658</sup> Werner Steller, *Zwischenmahlzeiten ausser Haus, Pausenbrot für Erwachsene?* (Bonn: Mühlenstelle, 1976), 17. These declining trends in canteen participation over the 1960s and 1970s were an international

20% of the working population ate in factory canteens, and they were, in a return to prewar patterns, heavily concentrated in the poorer sections of the economy.<sup>659</sup> The attempted bourgeoisization of the canteen had failed; the canteen could not be transformed into a restaurant, instead replaced by one. Those workers who did not bring their meals from home were forced to eat at one of the cheap or fast-food restaurants that had begun to fill the West German countryside by the 1960s.<sup>660</sup>

This stilted development of the worker canteen in the West is not necessarily surprising in a society that fetishized individualism and encouraged private consumption; far more surprising are the struggles of canteens to establish themselves in the socialist GDR. Despite ideological conviction and steadily increasing economic and political

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phenomenon; the GDR's growth, not the FRG's decline, was exceptional. A general postwar boom in industrial feeding programs had begun to slow down during the consumer-oriented 1960s. In Czechoslovakia, for example, factory canteen meal consumption dropped by 46% between the years 1963 and 1967, with many factories replacing their cafeterias with bars only offering cold snacks. By the end of the decade, 20% of Czech workers ate their main meal in a factory canteen, a rate dramatically lower than France's 47%, and less than half of the participation rates for the Federal Republic at the same time. (Hilda Scott, *Does Socialism Liberate Women? Experiences from Eastern Europe*. (Boston: Beacon Press, 1974), 195.) The Soviet Union had a surprisingly underdeveloped canteen system. Despite the vast scope of the feeding agenda of the Revolution and under Stalin, in 1961 there was only a single canteen available for every 1500 workers, a ratio more than three times higher than the smaller and more densely populated Great Britain. (Alena Heitlinger, *Women and State Socialism: Sex Inequality in the Soviet Union and Czechoslovakia* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1979), 86.) Even these rates were to plummet during the economic crisis of the early 1960s, which brought a drop in state subsidies in 1963 and a resultant decline in participation rates. Despite frequent attempts by the Soviet government to revive canteen popularity, in the early 1970s only 17% of the huge country's workers ate a primary meal at their work cafeteria. School lunches were far more successful in the USSR, with over half of all children receiving their meals from the state. (Ibid., 143) Even the canteen system of Great Britain, the West's leader in expansive collective feeding programs since the late nineteenth century, began to disintegrate under the leadership of Margaret Thatcher, who deliberately dismantled both school and factory canteen feeding programs in an effort to privatize and differentiate the country's eating habits. During the 1960s and 1970s, American participation rates also decreased, as cafeterias were privatized and gradually eliminated from many workplaces. By 1992, less than 33% of American workplaces with more than fifty employees offered any sort of food-related activity, with far fewer offering a complete warm meal to their employees. (The American Dietetic Association and Office of Disease Prevention and Health., *Worksite Nutrition: A Guide to Planning, Implementation and Evaluation*. (Chicago: The Association, 1993).)

<sup>659</sup> Hans-Joachim Zietze, *Gelenkte Ernährung: die DDR auf dem Weg zur gesellschaftlichen Ernährung* (Frankfurt am Main; New York: P. Lang, 1989), 135.

<sup>660</sup> Otto Neuloh and Hans-Jürgen Teuteberg, *Ernährungsfehlverhalten im Wohlstand: Ergebnisse e. empir.-soziolog. Unters. in heutigen Familienhaushalten*. (Paderborn: Schöningh., 1979); Lippki, Lode and Teut, *Essen in der Arbeitswelt*.

support, it took decades for the East German state to convince even half of its workforce to accept canteen meals as a permanent alternative to the home-cooked meal. As the following chapter will explore, this aversion to collective meals was not absolute. The story of school lunches in the two German states reveals that the mass feeding of children evoked quite different concerns, and inspired quite different solutions under socialism and capitalism.

## Chapter 6

### Feeding Germany's Children: the Fate of School Meals in East and West

In the spring and summer of 1950, a crisis swept the school lunchrooms of the two newly founded German states. In Cologne and in Dresden, in Berlin and in Munich, children were complaining about their meals, turning up their nose at too-watery soups, throwing away their turnip casserole, refusing servings of dark bread and skim milk. Frankfurt parents reported that "tin bowls full of soup are rejected or secretly poured in the gutter,"<sup>661</sup> and children in Berlin complained that their school meals were mixed with cyanide, full of worms, and "swimming with disgusting filth."<sup>662</sup> Five years after the end of the war and less than a year after the official end of occupation, German schoolchildren were by no means overfed. With significant regional differences related to proximity to agricultural areas and population density, anywhere from ten to thirty percent of the school-age children of both the Federal Republic of Germany and the German Democratic Republic were underweight or showed signs of light to moderate malnutrition.<sup>663</sup> Pediatricians agreed that even with an abundant diet it could take years

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<sup>661</sup> "Ärzte, Stadtväter und Eltern fragen sich: Schulspeisung überflüssig?" BArch B 142 / 447

<sup>662</sup> "Eure Schulaufsätze, die ihr kürzlich über die Schulspeisung geschrieben habt" Landesarchiv Berlin C Rep 113 / 652

<sup>663</sup> Some statistics were even more dramatic. Emphasizing the "absolute necessity" of school lunches, West German medical experts warned that "around fifty-five out of a hundred of all schoolchildren are described by their teachers as well as by doctors as needing additional nutrition." ("Die Schulspeisung muss fortgesetzt werden: 35% aller Schulkinder speisungsbedürftig – das Hilfswerk für die Jugend darf nicht aufhören" BArch B 142 / 447) See also the many medical studies done on postwar schoolchildren that relied upon height and weight as approximations for health. Peter Weinsheimer, "Kritischer Vergleich der untersuchungsergebnisse von Körpergröße und Körpergewicht deutscher Volksschulkinder der

for these young bodies to recover from the deprivations of the war and postwar years. In any case, neither of the two German states was able to provide its population with ample food this soon after the war.<sup>664</sup> Despite a consensus on the poor dietary status of German schoolchildren, the role that school lunches should play in repairing damaged health was controversial. Embedded within a nexus of concerns over the shape of the modern German family and the definition of the modern welfare state, school meals, or *Schulspeisung*, was one of the earliest and most significant sites of contestation between the German peoples and their respective governments, becoming a defining distinction between East and West Germany.

### **No Free Lunch: School Lunches and the Changing German Nation**

*Schulspeisung* did not have a strong prewar tradition in Germany, with a history that, as a West Berlin medical dissertation noted in the early 1960s, revealed a "specifically German aversion against mass feeding programs of all kinds."<sup>665</sup> While France and Great Britain had established large, centralized meal programs for

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Geburtsjahrgänge 1937/1938 (Vorkriegskinder) und 1945/46 (Nachkriegskinder)"; Beer, R. "Über die Größen- und Gewichtsentwicklung Schleswig-Holsteinischer Volksschulkinder in der Nachkriegszeit unter Berücksichtigung ihrer sozialen Schichtung." *Archiv für Hygiene und Bakteriologie* 136, no. 4 (1952), 303-16; Herbert Erler, "Über den Einfluss der Ernährung auf Körpergröße und Gewicht der Schulkinder im Landkreis Zittau/Sa".

<sup>664</sup> For specific West German concerns about the diet and health of their children, see H. Hoske Dr., "Befund: Jugendernährung Unzureichend!" *Ernährungs-Umschau*, no. 4 (1954), 93-95.

<sup>665</sup> Klaus Dieter Frombach, "Gemeinschaftsverpflegung im Wandel der Zeit", 82-3. In general, societal interest and state intervention in children's diets has been recognized as crucial within the development of the modern science of nutrition as well as to the emergence of the modern welfare state and what Foucault has termed the 'surveillance state.' This was because, as Foucault has pointed out, "the family is assigned a linking role between general objectives regarding the food health of the social body and individuals' desire or need for care. This enables a 'private' ethic of food health as the reciprocal duty of parents and children to be articulated on to a collective system of hygiene and the scientific technique of cure made available to individual and family demanded by a professional corps of doctors qualified and, as it were, recommended by the State." (John Coveney, *Food, Morals, and Meaning: The Pleasure and Anxiety of Eating* (Abingdon, Oxon; New York: Routledge, 2006), 78.) For a more detailed discussion of nutrition for foucaultian social theory, see chapter six "The Nutritional Policing of Families."

impoverished children in many large cities by the turn of the century, in Germany equivalent programs remained decentralized, infrequent, and organized at a local level, usually by churches or individual philanthropists.<sup>666</sup> Believed to weaken the family and encourage welfare dependency, collective meals for children were criticized on economic, medical, moral and social grounds. Hans Luther, later to become Minister of Nutrition during the Weimar Republic, warned of the "dangers of the dissolution of family life . . . that is automatically bound with every thought of mass feeding programs."<sup>667</sup> As Belinda Davis described in her study of the gendered politics of food in World War I Berlin,

eating a warm midday meal at home with the family represented not only unity with other Germans in some bourgeois ideal of national culture; it was also a cherished if long threatened working class custom, providing the proper setting to reconstitute the family physically and conceptually as well as offering respite from the work environment.<sup>668</sup>

Feeding children was seen as the core daily activity of the healthy family; replacing private home-cooked meals with collective ones threatened to produce unhealthy and unhappy children and encouraged women to abandon their families and join the workforce. Working women themselves were opposed to relying on mass feeding programs for their own meals and especially those of their children, seeing them as a mark of poverty and an admission of their own inadequacy as wives and mothers: "they

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<sup>666</sup> The single most important figure in establishing these early school meal programs in Germany was Hermann Abraham, who singlehandedly developed a program for feeding poor children, first focusing on the Jewish children of Eastern immigrants, but expanding to feed all poor children in Berlin. Interestingly, many of the other Berlin philanthropists who focused on developing school meal programs during this time period were also Jewish, including Helene Simone and Lina Morgenstern.

<sup>667</sup> Cited in Keith Allen, *Hungrige Metropole. Essen, Wohlfahrt und Kommerz in Berlin* (Hamburg: Ergebnisse, 2002), 70. Allen offers an excellent discussion of Germany's historical resistance to mass feeding programs.

<sup>668</sup> Davis, *Home Fires Burning: Food, Politics, and Everyday Life in World War I Berlin*, 142.

would rather starve inside their own four walls than be seen going to a communal kitchen."<sup>669</sup>

Despite this reluctance to establish formalized school meals, Weimar Germany was in fact the center of a huge child feeding program, one organized not by Germans, but by American Quakers, and under the leadership of U.S. President Herbert Hoover. Post-World War I Europe evoked enormous international concern regarding the nutritional status of its children. This first 'total war' had left in its wake not only dead and wounded soldiers, but countless numbers of malnourished and psychologically vulnerable children – a situation that, in turn, was to play a definitional role in the development of modern aid programs. Under the guidance of President Hoover, who took up the case of hungry children as central to his new brand of American political humanism, various public and private organizations developed to combat specific forms of hunger and poverty. Convinced that "feeding children would maintain the social and political order needed for international trade,"<sup>670</sup> the publicity work of President Hoover and the many high-profile humanitarians whom he managed to win to his cause quickly succeeded in overcoming the "entirely natural skepticism and distrust with which the American public still view any appeal for help from Germany."<sup>671</sup> Relying on the eugenic imagery typical of the interwar years, Hoover declared that

it is a protection to your children and to my children in the future that they should not be infected by a mass of moral and physical degenerates from Europe . . . thus every day of every week and every week of every month until the next harvest

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<sup>669</sup> Cited in *Ibid.*, 141.

<sup>670</sup> Dominique Marshall, "Humanitarian sympathy for children in times of war and the history of children's rights, 1919-1959" in James Alan Marten, *Children and War: A Historical Anthology* (New York: New York University Press, 2002), 185.

<sup>671</sup> Haven Emerson, *Report upon Health, Sickness and Hunger among German Children, to the American Friends Service Committee*, (New York: American association for international conciliation, 1924), 77-78.

this helpless mass of humanity must physically sit at a table spread with American food under the American flag.<sup>672</sup>

A year and a half later, Ellis Loring Dresel, American commissioner to Germany, toured the country in the winter of 1920/21 to evaluate the need for food aid. With pride, he noted that, in regards to the *Quakerspeisung*, "no other charity is so well known in Germany nor [creates] such a deep feeling of gratitude to America."<sup>673</sup>

*Quakerspeisung*, or the Quaker-Meal, was the Hoover-sponsored system of hot lunch distribution to schoolchildren set up in Austria and Germany in 1919. Although memory and rhetoric represent the program as wide-scale food distribution reaching large numbers of German children, in fact it was highly selective; children had to qualify by means of a medical examination to receive the bowl of soup or stew. Nonetheless, the program reached an impressive scope, distributing 687 million hot meals between 1920 and 1925. Despite this success, the Weimar government refused to take over the responsibility of feeding German children; when the Quakers no longer perceived a nutritional emergency in Germany and ceased providing supplies for their school lunches in April 1925, mass feeding for German children ended with them.<sup>674</sup> Despite the worsening economic conditions toward the end of the decade, and the continued threat of widespread hunger, the German state consistently reduced or eliminated collective feeding programs, until by the early 1930s, public meals were almost entirely restricted to the restaurants, and children waited until their school-day was over to eat a hot meal at

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<sup>672</sup> Herbert Hoover, *Central European Relief*. (New York: American association for international conciliation, 1921), 110.

<sup>673</sup> Sidney Brooks, *American Aid to Germany 1918-1925*, (New York: Russell Sage foundation, 1943), 21.

<sup>674</sup> Hans Breuer, "Das Schulfrühstück und seine Bedeutung im Rahmen der Ernährung des Kindes", 2.

home.<sup>675</sup> Consistently, the only scattered protests to these closures came from the KPD and the SPD.<sup>676</sup> Paradoxically, however, it was the rise of the radical right that shaped German conceptualizations of collective feeding for generations to come.

While the rise of Nazism and the onset of war did result in a dramatic increase in participation in collective meals, the NSDAP continued to promote the ideal of home-cooked and home-eaten meals, particularly for children.<sup>677</sup> Despite a perception of the NSDAP as a party that glorified collective meals, and although increases in female employment and the almost universal participation of children in various Hitler Youth programs meant that many children were being fed by the state or other collective organizations rather than by their mothers, these group meals were never permanently institutionalized, nor did the Nazi Party promote school lunches as an acceptable alternative to a mother's cooking. At the same time that programs like the *Eintopfsontag* encouraged housewives to cook privately for the good of the collective, Nazis were dismantling the scarce remnants of Weimar mass feeding programs. Between 1933 and

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<sup>675</sup> Allen, *Hungrige Metropole. Essen, Wohlfahrt und Kommerz in Berlin*.

<sup>676</sup> Universal school lunches were a pet project of the British Communists during the first part of the century, who were a key force behind that country's extensive and enormously successful national school lunch program. Indeed one very important German advocate of school meals, the Jewish philanthropist Helene Simone, was a member of the British Communist Fabian Society. See Barbara Drake, *Starvation in the Midst of Plenty. A New Plan for the State Feeding of School Children* (London: The Fabian society, 1933); *"After Bread, Education", a Plan for the State Feeding of School Children*, Vol. 120 (London: The Fabian society, 1905).

<sup>677</sup> See the NSDAP journal *Zeitschrift für Volksernährung*, the professional journal for canteen workers, for articles simultaneously promoting mass feeding and vowing to strengthen home cooking. The almost complete absence of school feeding programs from debates over optimizing and expanding mass feeding programs is striking. Probably the best source for information on German mass feeding programs under the Nazis, focusing on workers and factory canteens, remains Werner's *"Bleib übrig!" Deutsche Arbeiter in der nationalsozialistischen Kriegswirtschaft*. For information on nutritional concerns over German soldiers, see Ulrike Thoms, "Ernährung ist so wichtig wie Munition: die Verpflegung der deutschen Wehrmacht 1933-1945" in *Medizin im zweiten Weltkrieg: militärmedizinische Praxis und medizinische Wissenschaft im "Totalen Krieg"*, eds. Wolfgang U. Eckhart and Alexander Neumann (Paderborn: Schöningh., 2006), 207-229. A manual on feeding the Hitler Youth reflected Nazi concerns over feeding children with mass-produced meals, but does not mention school meals. Wolfgang Eberhard Kitzing, *Die Verpflegung in den Zeltlagern der Hitler-Jugend*. (Lpz.: G. Thieme, 1938). The official mouthpiece of collective meal preparation, the journal *Gemeinschaftsverpflegung*, included, as far as I could find, not a single article on school meals.

1937, the party closed down the few remaining communal feeding programs, usually run by charity organizations and aimed at the poor, unemployed and elderly; as a replacement, "grocery coupons were distributed in order to encourage the preparation of lunch at home."<sup>678</sup>

A continued allegiance to the primacy of a gendered and nuclearized eating experience ran parallel to an unprecedented expansion of collective feeding programs, programs that were ideologically and pragmatically distinct from their Weimar and Communist precursors.<sup>679</sup> While the Party normalized and at least ideologically embraced factory canteens, with their all-male adult participants, school meals remained generally taboo; even Nazi collective feeding specialists were almost completely silent on the topic. In a 1943 history of 'child feeding programs,' the respected family health expert Hans Bernsee vaguely asserted that "in the *völkisch* state, the mass feeding of children should subordinate itself to the organized system of the care of the *Volk*."<sup>680</sup> The article, which traced a long history of foreign and domestic food aid programs aimed at German school-children, did not mention Third Reich school meals. Instead, it focused on Nazi programs to feed orphaned children and victims of Allied air raids. For Bernsee the primary goal of all social feeding programs "must always be to strengthen the family

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<sup>678</sup> Peter Zolling, *Zwischen Integration und Segregation. Sozialpolitik im "Dritten Reich" am Beispiel der "Nationalsozialistischen Volkswohlfahrt" (NSV) in Hamburg*, 176.

<sup>679</sup> While school meals were rhetorically discouraged, the enormous size of the Hitler Youth, BDM, and other children's and youth groups, meant that almost all German children had extensive experience with collective feeding. Indeed, there was an extensive amount of research on the ideal diet for the Hitler Youth; the official interest in feeding these children was presumably due to the explicit paramilitaristic aspects of the organization. A 1938 analysis of Hitler Youth feeding programs explains that "education in proper nutrition and the improvement of productivity through a proper diet are two of the most important goals of the medical aspects of the HJ." (Kitzing, *Die Verpflegung in den Zeltlagern der Hitler-Jugend*, 11-12.)

<sup>680</sup> Hans Bernsee, "Zur Geschichte der Kinderspeisung," *Nationalsozialistischer Volksdienst* 4 (May, 1943), 74. Bernsee further specified that "child feeding programs should not aim to only help the child and his parents, but, like all protective health measures serves the health of the Volk and ensures the preservation of a productive lineage, the future of the health." *Ibid.*, 74

as the most important cell of the *Volkskörper*, and to preserve it through the stimulation of a sense of self-confidence and pride."<sup>681</sup> Home-cooked meals were central to this vision.

A 1938 publication on the development of the Nazi food industry trumpeted its prioritization of children's health acknowledged the large number of weak, nervous and undernourished German schoolchildren prior to Hitler's rise to power. However, rather than providing food for these hungry children, employees of the NSDAP state "ensure that the bread brought to school is eaten, and observe – but with tact – what sort of fillings and bread spreads are used." They also were responsible for organizing educational meetings with parents to teach them how to feed their children in accordance with "the demands of hygiene and the four-year-plan."<sup>682</sup> Even during the war years, a time defined by food scarcity and a dramatic increase in communal meals, the sanctity of a mothers' home-cooked meal for her children never lost its rhetorical value.<sup>683</sup> An article from 1943, atypically addressing the potential impact of female employment on family life, reminded its readers that "the question of feeding the family is in this situation [of an unemployed mother] the most important. We all agree that family nutrition should not suffer under the absence of the housewife." Advising worried

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<sup>681</sup> Ibid., 73

<sup>682</sup> Reichsausschuß für Volkswirtschaftliche Aufklärung, *Ernährungspolitik und Schule* (Berlin: 1938), 44.

<sup>683</sup> Nazi discomfort with school meals contrasts with their Axis ally Japan's approach to domestic feeding concerns. The wartime Japanese government also heavily politicized food by integrating individual diets into the war machinery. However, here the wartime government promoted school lunches, expanding them massively over the course of the war. In fact, Japan's equivalent to *Eintopfsonntag* was a school lunch meal, the 'Rising Sun Lunch Box,' made up of a meal of rice and pickled plum that were assembled to resemble the Japanese flag. Since 1937 "this patriotic lunch box was consumed by pupils each Monday as a token of solidarity with the troops fighting in China. By 1939 the idea was adopted by schools all over the country, and during subsequent years the 'flag lunch' rose to the symbol of wartime mobilization and national unity." Cwiertka, *Modern Japanese Cuisine: Food, Power and National Identity*, 118. While the consumption of this meal officially ended with Japan's defeat in 1945, school lunches continued to expand during and after occupation. Today Japan has an extremely well-developed universal school meal program.

working mothers to get female neighbors, their own mothers or grandmothers, or children themselves to shop and cook, the author acknowledged that

some women are tempted to get lunch [for their children] from a communal kitchen. We have learned from the [first] World War that this is not an ideal solution, even if such kitchens [today] cook better than they did then. Mass feeding has specific nutrition-physiological disadvantages.<sup>684</sup>

The article concluded firmly, "whoever is able should continue to prepare daily meals for the family, applying the lessons of nutritional science."<sup>685</sup>

An ideological celebration of the home-cooked meal along with a continued expansion of collective meals produced a population encouraged to dislike them while forced to partake in them. By the end of the War, communal meals evoked air raids, refugees, and factories, as well as with Communists, prisons, concentration camps and military service and with poverty, defeat and international food aid. Thus, after the war, the Allied forces were faced with a population that was malnourished and demanded improvements in rationing but that was notoriously suspicious of collective feeding programs. Both popular and governmental opinion held that instituting wide-spread collective meals not only threatened the integrity and health of the German family unit, but were associated with a 'Bolshevization' of society. Continuing in their long tradition of advocacy for school meals, in occupied Germany the Left alone spoke out for the universal school lunch.<sup>686</sup>

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<sup>684</sup> "Wie meistere ich die Familiennahrung trotz Berufsarbeit?" *Zeitschrift für Volksernährung* March, 6 (1943), 73.

<sup>685</sup> *Ibid.*, 73

<sup>686</sup> This is not a universal trend. While in Britain as well, the leftist Labor party advocated school lunches, and the conservative Margaret Thatcher dismantled them, in the United States, school lunches were, and still are, heavily supported by the Republican Party. In addition there were many socialist countries with underdeveloped, even largely non-existent school meal programs. Most notably Romania lacked school meals; Poland as well, despite its socialist government, proved resistant to school meals. Few socialist countries in Europe could boast as widespread a school meal program as the GDR.

The long tradition of mass feeding programs within socialism, particularly within Soviet Russia, set the context for the remarkable speed with which the Soviet occupiers established large-scale feeding programs for the German population, focusing special attention on school meal programs. The East German nutritionist and specialist in school feeding programs, Dr. Manfred Möhr, narrated a specifically German and socialist origins of the East German school lunch program in his 1985 history of school meals:

among the very first recipients of extra food products were, along with the workers, the schoolchildren. Despite the greatly restricted food situation, a special position [*Sonderposition*] was made for the schoolchildren. In order to ensure that the children really received their extra rations, these foods were distributed through the schools.<sup>687</sup>

The ideological importance of school meals for the development of German socialism in the GDR was compounded by the particular importance of children for socialists, who were constructing a new, antifascist, Germany.<sup>688</sup> The feeding of German children in schools was a crucial way of embedding these children in the process of reconstruction, a process understood as demanding new models of both consumption (eating) and production (working). In most of the major cities of the Eastern Zone, school meals were made available to children within months of the capitulation. By October of 1945, 60,000 schoolchildren in Leipzig were receiving hot meals five days a week; a year later, in September 1946 the Soviet administration passed a ruling requiring that all schoolchildren in the Soviet Zone receive a daily snack of a hot rye roll and mug of

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<sup>687</sup> M. Möhr, "Entwicklung der Schülerspeisung in der DDR seit 1945," *Ernährungsforschung* 30, no. 4 (1985), 103.

<sup>688</sup> Jaimey Fisher's article on youth in the early GDR, focusing on DEFA films, argues that young people were an obsession in these early movies "because their task was to represent the social crisis and the lack of faith in the traditional social order, but also to point toward reconstruction." Jaimey Fisher, "Who's Watching the Rubble-Kids? Youth, Pedagogy, and Politics in Early DEFA Films," *New German Critique*, no. 82 (Winter, 2001), 103. See Blessing for a discussion of the importance of schools for German and Soviet socialists.

coffee.<sup>689</sup> This light meal was soon replaced by thick soups, usually based on potatoes or root vegetables and thickened with bread or crackers.<sup>690</sup>

Newspapers in the Soviet Zone began running extensive propaganda campaigns for the new school lunch program as early as November of 1945. An article in the *Berliner Zeitung* represented school meals as central to the construction of a 'new' Germany out of the ashes of its fascist past, describing a Berlin school building that was "surrounded by the dreadful image of absolutely hopeless destruction," but that nonetheless has become "an oasis, for here behind these walls begins a new Reich . . . as every day that school meets, the boys and girls here receive from Father Magistrate a warm and tasty meal."<sup>691</sup> By the end of the year, about 50,000 children in the Soviet Zone of Berlin were receiving a school meal, a number that had almost doubled by March 1946 to include approximately half of the zone's schoolchildren. Attributing this increase to successful parental re-education, the paper asserted that "Berlin can boast again of 'clever parents' who recognized the pulls of 'prudence and practical consideration.'"<sup>692</sup> Touting the fact that "school meals offer advantages and essential relief to parents and their children,"<sup>693</sup> both German Communists and Soviet officials saw school meals as an expression of

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<sup>689</sup> Gries, *Die Rationen-Gesellschaft*, 113. This snack sounds paltry but in the context of wide-spread food shortages, a roll and hot drink were tremendously popular. A daily guarantee of this food source was life-changing for many children. Such Soviet policies were a source of concern to the Western Allies, who early on could not match these extra forms of child-feeding.

<sup>690</sup> These policies remained, for many, simply words. Particularly rural areas had inadequate or non-existent school meals well into the 1960s, and even the emergency declarations made during occupation met with at best partial fulfillment. In general, children in cities and industrial areas did receive the allotted snacks. An official commitment to universal school meals, however, remained exclusive to the Soviet Zone.

<sup>691</sup> "Mutter hat eine Sorge weniger. Die Schulspeisung ist im Gange." *Berliner Zeitung*. November 24, 1945.

<sup>692</sup> "Kluge Eltern sind für die Schulspeisung," *Berliner Zeitung*. March 12, 1946.

<sup>693</sup> "Warum Nicht Alle? Schulspeisung, ein Vorteil für Kinder und Eltern," *Berliner Zeitung*. March 19, 1946.

the humanistic character of the socialist social structure, in which children are cared for and treated as a precious resource. Concern and care for the young generation is an essential part of the socialist state, and another site that reveals its superiority over capitalist society.<sup>694</sup>

Not seen as a form of emergency aid but as a way of restructuring social and economic relations, the school meal program did indeed reveal a key difference between Soviet, American, and British occupation policies. This difference was, however, less one of humanism or concern for children but of differing relations between respective occupying powers and their indigenous German populations, and differences in the economic status and cultural traditions of the occupying nations themselves. In terms of school meals, the German Communists who worked with the Soviets in the SBZ and went on to become leaders of the SED were, unlike their equivalent politicians in the Western zones, personally committed to school meals as a pedagogical tool, a way to monitor health and nutrition, and a means for restructuring the local and national economy. At the same time, the poverty of the Soviets, and their focus on German 'self-help,' as well as a general animosity and suspicion toward Russians amongst the German population, meant that school feeding programs in the Soviet Zone almost immediately ceased to be perceived as 'food aid' from the USSR.

In the Western zones, the British, building upon their own domestic tradition of school meals as well as colonial experiences abroad, were far quicker to establish collective feeding programs than the Americans.<sup>695</sup> On December 28<sup>th</sup>, 1945 the British Zone passed Regulation Nr. 35, requiring school meals in "all areas where serious undernourishment dominates," specifying that "German school doctors were responsible

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<sup>694</sup> Cited in Gries, *Die Rationen-Gesellschaft*, 113

<sup>695</sup> For more information on British food policy in the context of their colonial empire, see Cynthia Brantley, *Feeding Families: African Realities and British Ideas of Nutrition and Development in Early Colonial Africa* (Portsmouth: Heinemann, 2002).

for the selection of the children who most urgently need such meals."<sup>696</sup> These meals, like those in the Soviet Zone, were reserved only for those children who attended school, a measure intended to discourage food theft and truancy. However, unlike the parallel Soviet order, British policy conceptualized these meals as a medical aid for sickly children rather than as a definitional part of the German school day. By the end of 1946, about 12% of the area's children received the 300-calorie portion of soup.<sup>697</sup> However, many school directors were angered by the inclusion of meals into the school curriculum, as food distribution was made part of the daily lessons, shortening learning time and increasing labor. Reluctant teachers frequently had to be bribed with extra food in order to convince them to support what they saw as a disruptive and inappropriate use of school time. Conversely, staff members were occasionally accused of stealing children's food for themselves; an anonymous letter from November 1946 to the school board of the city of Herne complained that "students receive only three spoonfuls of soup, the ladies and director [of the school] take the remaining 10-15 liters."<sup>698</sup> The district of Stade, near Hamburg, reported that the British lunch program "is in total less successful than hoped for, as the children secretly share the food with their families, which is absolutely forbidden, throw the food away or crumble it while playing during school recess, and sell the chocolate bars – 28 grams – provided by the military government on the black market."<sup>699</sup> Reports of spoiled food, theft, the hoarding of ingredients, as well as of children simply wasting their meals, were common. The most frequent complaint, of

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<sup>696</sup> Cited in Heinz-Jürgen Priamus, *Die Ruinenkinder: im Ruhrgebiet 1945* (Düsseldorf: Droste, 1985), 91.

<sup>697</sup> Wildt, *Der Traum vom Sattwerden*, 80.

<sup>698</sup> *ibid.*, 98

<sup>699</sup> Cited in Christa Keller-Teske, *Mangeljahre. Lebensverhältnisse und Lebensgefühl im Landkreis Stade, 1945-1949: eine Dokumentation* (Stade: Stadt Stade, 1989), 293.

course, was the classic: 'revolting flavor.'<sup>700</sup> Over the following years both participation rates and meal quality improved, until up to 80% of the children in the British Zone received a hot meal at least three days a week.

In contrast, the American Zone did not begin wide-spread school meals in Bavaria until the fall of 1946, reaching on average only 14% of the school-age population.<sup>701</sup> The Americans' relative lack of success with feeding school children came to a dramatic end with the formation of the Bizonie in 1947 and the subsequent initiation of the *Hoover-Speisung*, the beloved school lunch program named for and created by Herbert Hoover. With his long tradition of concern for the nutritional status of German children, Hoover had advocated an American-led feeding program for German children since before the war was over. His 1947 tour of postwar Germany, replete with scenes of hollow-eyed children scavenging for crumbs, convinced him to take immediate action. According to his advisor Mr. Voorhees, Hoover commanded the leader of the American military occupation General Lucius Clay to find nutritious foods "that could be made available to begin at once a school lunch program which helped save a whole generation of German youngsters."<sup>702</sup> Demanding more food from the U.S. government was untenable due to the potentially negative publicity of increased food aid to the former enemy. Desperate to find food for these children, Hoover and his advisors searched for food sources within the territory of occupied Germany. Their search was unexpectedly rewarded when they stumbled across "large food supplies being held for displaced persons, most of whom

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<sup>700</sup> There were also frequent complaints about literally dangerous meals, of needles or glass shards in soup and rolls. Wildt, *Der Traum vom Sattwerden*, 99

<sup>701</sup> Participation numbers have as much to do with local German attitudes toward these programs as with Allied policies. For example, American-controlled Bavaria was notoriously opposed to collective feeding programs, with a conservative, Catholic and rural population resisting them on principle; the traditionally poorer and more industrialized British-controlled Ruhrgebiet was more accustomed to and accepting of collective dining.

<sup>702</sup> Louis Paul Lochner, *Herbert Hoover and Germany* (New York,: Macmillan, 1960), 181.

were not Germans."<sup>703</sup> The refugee organizations that held these supplies were initially reluctant to release these foodstuffs to feed German children rather than the DPs for whom they had been intended. However, Hoover wielded substantial political power in the Western zones, and he ultimately managed to claim 19 million dollars worth of food from these camps, including large amounts of fats, proteins and chocolate. This food became the basis of one of the best remembered and most praised food aid programs in modern history.

The real impact of these American-organized school meals was not as straightforward as rosy memories imply. The food served was definitely of a higher quality than the typical British-zone school meal; there was also a new focus on diversifying the school menu. Replacing the unpopular British soups with the more luxurious Hoover meals, however, came with the imposition of far stricter rules regarding children's qualifications. Under these new, more restrictive policies, approximately 1.7 million children out of a total of 2.15 million British and 1.4 American-zone school children could participate in the Hoover meal program. These children received a warm breakfast of approximately 350 calories, generally paying 25 pfennig a meal. While some children wrote paeans of gratitude to Hoover, famously rhyming that they were "very pleased/ with those American calories" (*wir sind doch sehr zufrieden/ mit den American-Calorien*), many children actually saw a decline in their nutrition with the implementation of Hoover's lunch program. Both the more stringent medical qualification requirements and the higher cost prevented tens of thousands from enjoying these improved meals. Despite their uniformly positive publicity and recognized positive

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<sup>703</sup> Ibid., 182.

impact on malnourished German children, even Hoover's lunches were accompanied by a steady decline in participation rates.

The June 6<sup>th</sup>, 1948 currency reform dealt the final blow to school lunches in the Western Zone. The introduction of the Deutschmark was intended to solidify the economy, limit inflation and encourage industrial and economic development. The reform was instantly memorialized as the moment when storefronts suddenly became full, empty window-displays transformed overnight into overflowing cornucopias of consumer goods. German civilians gasped that 'everything' was available again to purchase, and the first purchases almost always went toward food. Above all, the currency reform was perceived as marking the end of the postwar crisis years, and ushering in the beginning of a prosperous and post-Nazi Germany. However, the immediate impact of the reform on the average German civilian was far from positive. Skyrocketing prices, decreases in the value of wages and the loss of savings held in the now defunct Reichsmark meant a huge increase in unemployment and poverty for hundreds of thousands of West Germans. One of the most dramatic effects of the currency reform was the reduction in school meal program participation, as these lunches became too expensive for many parents scrambling to feed themselves, their children, and unemployed, elderly or ill relatives. A sociological study of West Berlin from 1948 revealed that

participation in the current school meal program seems quite low . . . often mothers keep their children from the school meals because they do not want to spend the requisite [rationing] coupons. . . the mothers believe that they can provide their children with those rations a better meal at home.<sup>704</sup>

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<sup>704</sup> Hilde Thurnwald, *Gegenwartsprobleme Berliner Familien; eine soziologische Untersuchung an 498 Familien*. (Berlin: Weidmann, 1948), 48.

Pediatricians and nutritionists were quite concerned about the impact of this development on the already ravaged health of German schoolchildren. Municipal governments sponsored various surveys and studies to determine the best way to increase parents' willingness to pay for their child's school lunch. Frustrated officials steadily reduced the original American-set price in an attempt to increase participation rates for the zone's many undernourished children, but to no avail:

despite the reasonable prices, the excitement of children and parents [for school meals] has been diminishing since the reform [*Abwertung*] of 1948. The children willingly and patiently stand in line only to receive special rations of chocolate, fruit confection, and peanuts.<sup>705</sup>

Out of desperation, in February 1949 the military government of the Bizone decided to provide free food to the kitchens in order to enable the neediest of children to receive meals at no cost and outside of the auspices of the Hoover program. These temporary measures notwithstanding, however, American food aid for the Hoover program, the heart of West Germany's school feeding program, would come to an end in 1950. The future of school lunches hung in the balance.

### **In Bad Taste: School Lunches during the West German *Wirtschaftswunder***

American food donations to Germany had long been scheduled to end in June 1950, which meant that the costs for school meals would be transferred entirely to the Federal government. Since the currency reform, despite doctors' and education experts' best efforts to increase participation rates, school meals had been struggling. During the early months of 1950, with the deadline for cancellation fast approaching, passionate debates broke out in the West German cabinet about the fate of school meals. Health and

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<sup>705</sup> Cited in Keller-Teske, *Mangeljahre*, 294

education experts cited grim medical statistics, warning that the impact of hunger on growing children could go unnoticed and invisible for years before emerging in the form of lowered labor productivity and reduced fertility. The Ministries of Finance and of Agriculture in turn argued against school lunches, refusing to fund 'wasteful' and 'unnecessary' school meals that seemed to contradict assertions of a prosperous, healthy West German society. On the other side were voices warning of an increasing income disparity, and the spread of childhood poverty and its associated malnutrition. With the notable exception of some politically left-wing doctors, even those who were in favor of maintaining school lunches continued to conceptualize them as a form of charity or emergency relief. No one suggested that they be freed from their association with poverty and ill health to become a normal part of the West German school day.<sup>706</sup>

The Ministry of Agriculture claimed that "the necessity of school meals has diminished due to substantial improvements in the food situation," arguing for a "complete decentralization" of school meals. The dairy board representative attacked the very principle of canteen food, asserting that

it has been proven that providing children with school meals from a canteen is not healthy, as both the cooking of the food and its transport in thermal cans spoils the food. On the contrary, milk is natural and pure, and that is much more important than the current meal based on reconstituted powdery substances.<sup>707</sup>

There was an increased focus on the negative moral and cultural impact of school meals on vulnerable postwar German children. A Hessian Parents' League representative

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<sup>706</sup> The United States, home to one of the world's largest school lunch programs, deliberately forged a link between school lunches, which had previously largely middle-class phenomenon, and poverty in the 1960s. Although the original impetus for America's postwar School Lunch Act was largely agricultural and social (standardizing dietary habits and decreasing cultural diversity), under Nixon the program was both expanded and worsened in quality when it was transformed into a feeding program explicitly aimed at poor children. As such, it became, in the words of historian Susan Levine, "the nation's premier poverty program." Levine, *School Lunch Politics: The Surprising History of America's Favorite Welfare Program*, 3

<sup>707</sup> "Betr. Auszug aus dem Protokoll der Dienstbesprechung vom 18.2.1950" BArch B 142 / 447

argued that "school canteens resemble the feeding programs of prisoners because the children must stand in line. If we do not eliminate the need for standing in line to get food, children's culinary culture is in danger."<sup>708</sup> Conservatives cited the horrors of Nazism as a central reason to reject school meals; collective eating, they claimed, was only one step away from fascism, as well as, of course, from Communism.<sup>709</sup>

Reports were submitted telling of children throwing away or simply refusing available meals; a Frankfurt official told in horror of an "entire vat of what was really very high quality food [that] had to be returned and ultimately used as pig feed."<sup>710</sup> The disregard of children for the proffered food seemed to have two possible explanations, both of which opponents evoked to show the problems inherent in school meals. On the one hand, refusal to eat school lunches was interpreted as an obvious sign that the children were no longer hungry – the poverty of the postwar era was deemed overcome. On the other hand, however, this behavior on the part of school children was seen as a sign of moral and ethical disturbance, a profound and disturbing lack of gratitude. Observers agreed that "parents are responsible" for those children "who frequently do not eat the school meal and also do not bring it home, but simply throw it away."<sup>711</sup> According to this logic, children rejected school meals because they were not properly

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<sup>708</sup> "Schulspeisung gefährdet Eßkultur" BArch B 142 / 447

<sup>709</sup> Ironically, the same argumentation was used in the United States to promote school meals. One of the most passionate advocates of the original 1945 School Lunch Act, Virginia representative John Flannagan, claimed in defense of school meals that "the dictator nations exist upon hungry bodies and befuddled minds. If you want to dispel the gloom of Nazism and Communism from the face of the earth, the thing to do is to feed and educate the people of these nations. A full stomach and a trained mind will never embrace either Nazism or Communism." Levine, *School Lunch Politics*, 82 Throughout the 1950s, in fact, "Legislators, policy makers and the public at large touted America's school lunch program as a symbol of prosperity, equality and democracy in the Cold War world." *Ibid.*, 8,

<sup>710</sup> Cited in Jutta Heibel, *Vom Hungertuch zum Wohlstandsspeck*, 246.

<sup>711</sup> Cited in *Ibid.*, 164

brought up; at the same time, the fact that they were not being fed by their mothers was itself a sign of improper parenting.

Given the economic and political power imbalances within this debate, the results are unsurprising; the Federal government voted to end school meals and replace them with partially subsidized milk or cocoa. (This was the suggestion of the powerful dairy lobby, which faced an enormous milk surplus after the war.<sup>712</sup>) The decision was covered extensively in the national media, and unexpectedly unleashed "a great agitation" among the population.<sup>713</sup> The public outcry included countless letters from doctors, teachers and parents, as well as scathing articles in regional newspapers.<sup>714</sup> Horrified by what was seen as "the deliberate sabotage of the school children's meal program,"<sup>715</sup> West German doctors and educators saw the decision to end the national school meal program as primarily economic, motivated by the desire "simply to dispose of the excess

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<sup>712</sup> For the policy origins of the excessive milk production – "seas of excess milk and mountains of excess butter" – in the FRG, see Ulrich Kluge's "West German Agriculture and the European Recovery Program" in Jeffrey M. Diefendorf, Axel Frohn, Hermann-Josef Rupieper, *American policy and the reconstruction of West Germany, 1945-1955* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 155. The Ministry of Agriculture, supporting the Dairy Board, recommended an exclusively milk-based school breakfast due to the "substantial savings in preparation." The associated Verwaltung für Ernährung, Landwirtschaft und Forsten (VELF) strongly lobbied for the transition to an exclusively milk-based school meal program in order to promote childhood health and to guarantee a market for steadily increasing FRG milk production. ("Betreff: Dienstbesprechung am 18 Febr. 1950 in Frankfurt," BArch B 142 / 447.) The remarkably fast growth in milk production in the Federal Republic, encouraged by Marshall Plan aid that emphasized developing Germany's dairy industry, was part of a general postwar explosion in Western and Northern European milk production, causing markets to be over-saturated with milk and milk by-products, and ultimately successfully increasing the average consumption of dairy products. During the 1950 debates over the dissolution of West Germany's school meal program, school board leaders and pediatricians argued both that the quality of milk available for mass distribution was inadequate (there were fears of tubercular or otherwise contaminated milk), and that milk alone would not adequately nourish German schoolchildren. "Bericht über Dienstbesprechung bei der VELF in Frankfurt/Main am 17./18 Febr. 1950 (anlage 1)" BArch B 142 / 447.

<sup>713</sup> 80. Kabinettsitzung am 4. Juli 1950 6. Kinderspeisung, BMI (Kabinettsprotokolle der Bundesregierung< online)

<sup>714</sup> For example, citing a Bavarian study that found that 712,000 of an examined 962,000 schoolchildren were underweight, a Swabian newspaper article called the current 350-calorie school lunch "a welcome enrichment of the diet," and warned that "the conditions for an improvement of the general situation are by no means approaching." "Die Schulspeisung muss fortgesetzt werden: 35% aller Schulkinder speisungsbedürftig – das Hilfswerk für die Jugend darf nicht aufhören." BArch B 142 / 447

<sup>715</sup> "Gesundheitsbehörde der Hansestadt Hamburg" BArch B 142 / 447

production of milk" and to create a new generation of heavy milk drinkers.<sup>716</sup> Despite a commonly voiced assumption that the only malnourished West Germans were the "children of evacuees,"<sup>717</sup> nutritional reports had revealed widespread poverty and malnutrition that were associated less with parental origins than with employment.<sup>718</sup> Teachers spoke of improved performance and school participation rates thanks to hot meals, claiming that the cancellation of school lunches was tantamount to condemning Germany's children to long-term hunger. These arguments, however, proved fruitless in the face of the dairy and agricultural lobbies, the economic pressures of reconstruction, and West German politicians' profound antipathy toward collective meals.

A conception of the FRG as a country of wealth and abundance and at the same time as in a state of social crisis framed much of West Germany's future welfare and food policy over the subsequent decades. Despite assertions from dissident cabinet members and charity workers that even "in the wealthiest countries in the world school meals have become self-evident,"<sup>719</sup> the Federal government, and much of the population, remained convinced that school meals created an impression of poverty and childhood hunger. These fears reveal that the decision to end of the school lunch program was not simply based on economic expediency, nor simply the result of a powerful dairy industry lobby. While both of these were significant factors in the 1950 *Schulspeisung* cancellation, just

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<sup>716</sup> "Die Schulspeisung muss fortgesetzt werden: 35% aller Schulkinder speisungsbedürftig – das Hilfswerk für die Jugend darf nicht aufhören." BArch B 142 / 447

<sup>717</sup> "83. Kabinettsitzung am 14. Juli 1950 6. Kinderspeisung, BMI" (>Kabinettsprotokolle der Bundesregierung< online.) In fact, contrary to popular expectations, medical surveys revealed "no statistically meaningful difference between the children of evacuees and local children." Beer, R, "Über die Größen- und Gewichtsentwicklung Schleswig-Holsteinischer Volksschulkinder in der Nachkriegszeit unter Berücksichtigung ihrer sozialen Schichtung." 315.) The report went on to predict that economic trends in West Germany were increasing the gap between wealthy, local families and poorer evacuee families.

<sup>718</sup> Studies in both Bavaria and the Rhineland had shown that the children of unemployed workers (West Germany had the highest rate of unemployment in its history during the early 1950s) were badly undernourished, and claimed that even employed blue-collar laborers were not earning enough to adequately feed their families. "Betr: Schulkinderspeisung" BArch B 142 / 447

<sup>719</sup> "Betrifft: Schulkinderspeisung [Standpunkt der Gesundheitsverwaltung]" BArch B 142 / 447

as important was its significance for the development of a West German national narrative within which the school lunch was made into a symbol of the Hunger Years. The dissolution or downsizing of school lunch programs in the Federal Republic was akin to other, better studied markers of this transition like the currency reform in 1948 or the founding of the country in 1949.<sup>720</sup> The Federal Republic's transformation into a free-market economy was officially elided with a permanent end of German hunger. Almost immediately the Adenauer Cabinet declared its aim to "shift emphasis from the control and rationing of food to that of increasing food production."<sup>721</sup> School meals were one of this policy's first victims.

The fate of school meals was quickly mythologized, incorporated into a narrative of West German modernization and economic development. In his propaganda booklet *Sechs Jahre Danach* (Six Years Later), published in the same year that the school meal program came to end, Chancellor Adenauer was already reminiscing about a program that sounded as if it belonged to years, rather than months, earlier in German history:

If one wants to describe the overcoming of the nutritional difficulties of the past years, one cannot avoid the school feeding program, a program that will go down in history as the greatest aid ever provided to West Germany.<sup>722</sup>

Although it was the United States' nutritional education programs that inspired the founding of the DGE in 1953, West German nutritionists explained that, due to low levels of female employment, short distances between homes and schools, and the fact that

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<sup>720</sup> For example, out of the tens of thousands of school children in Frankfurt, only 3100 children received school lunches within months of the passing of the resolution. (Jutta Heibel, *Vom Hungertuch zum Wohlstandsspeck*, 231) In Bavaria, from the 320,000 participants at the beginning of 1950 only 112,000 continued to receive a free lunch after the bill, and this number dropped quickly and steadily over the following months. (Winfried Müller, *Schulpolitik in Bayern im Spannungsfeld von Kultusbürokratie und Besatzungsmacht 1945-1949* (München: Oldenbourg, 1995), 95.)

<sup>721</sup> Hubert G. Schmidt, "Postwar Developments in West German Agriculture, 1945-1953," *Agricultural History* 29, no. 4 (Oct., 1955), 153.

<sup>722</sup> Germany (West), *Sechs Jahre Danach; vom Chaos zum Staat*, 40-41.

"German parents want to have their children at home for their meals for educational reasons and to strengthen family life, a psychological aspect that is far less significant to American families," school meals could never be part of the country's nutritional policy;

for schoolchildren in the USA, school meals are essential to improvements in dietary health and in nutritional education . . . we can adopt few of these methods here [in the FRG.] The problem of school meals is crucially different in Germany than it is in the United States.<sup>723</sup>

The paradoxical claim that Germany was too poor to be able to afford school lunches and that it was too wealthy to need them had set the tone for future struggles over the nutritional health of West Germany's children. The very real presence of childhood poverty within the FRG was something that the West German welfare system had been reluctant to accept since the early 1950s, when aid focused on war victims, and "other groups which lacked recognized claims fell into the background: workers, large families (benefits for children were not reintroduced until 1954, and then only for workers' families with three or more children) and the unemployed."<sup>724</sup> One of the foundational myths of West Germany was its origins in mass, even universal poverty – something crystallized in the Hunger Years that were defined by wide-scale school lunches. This poverty and hunger acquired its constructive power through contrast to current and future well-being, the so-called *Wohlstandsgesellschaft*.<sup>725</sup> As the Minister of Economics and future Chancellor Ludwig Erhard announced in 1956, during the founding years of the

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<sup>723</sup> Heinrich Kraut and Willy Wirths, *Mehr Wissen um Ernährung. Berichte über Studienreisen im Rahmen der Auslandshilfe der USA*. (Frankfurt am Main: Verlag Kommentator, 1955), 104. Despite this conviction, the authors admitted that "by forgoing a sustained school meal program, we are sacrificing an effective method of practical nutritional education for our children. In addition, we lose the valuable possibility of having a long-term influence over the nutritional and health conditions of our schoolchildren." *Ibid.*, 104.

<sup>724</sup> Lutz Leisering and Stephan Leibfried, *Time and Poverty in Western Welfare States: United Germany in Perspective* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 177

<sup>725</sup> See the title of Klaus-Dieter Kraus' memoir "*Vom Kaugummi und der Schulspeisung bis hin zum Brausepulver.*" *Erinnerungen Kindheit und Jugend* (Bochum: Paragon, 2001) for a typical example.

FRG "the people were led from poverty to a new well-being."<sup>726</sup> The West German insistence throughout the 1950s that theirs was a society without material poverty – and specifically without hunger – was central to the Federal Republic's rejection of school lunches.<sup>727</sup>

In the guide to the Federal Republic's first national health exhibit, "*Deine Gesundheit*" (Your Health), hosted by the newly opened Cologne Health museum in 1950, a West German UNICEF worker described postwar child relief programs, including an elaborate list of international postwar food aid: "Austrian children are receiving Bulgarian marmalade; Chinese children eat Italian rice; in Palestine, raisins from Greece are part of the food served in the refugee camps; Yugoslavian children eat

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<sup>726</sup> Cited in Leisering and Leibfried, *Time and Poverty in Western Welfare States*, 176.

<sup>727</sup> This idea that school meals were a sign of collective poverty was unique to the FRG. After World War II, the vast majority of the world's nations, both wealthy and impoverished, accepted the idea of a state-organized school lunch program. A 1951 UNESCO study of childhood health found that school meal programs were being expanded in every country examined with the exception of the Federal Republic. (International Bureau of Education, *School Meals and Clothing*. (Paris: Unesco, 1951), 57-58.) In Germany's former Axis ally Japan, American occupation food aid was channeled into a school lunch program that expanded with the growing prosperity of the country. (Levine, *School Lunch Politics: The Surprising History of America's Favorite Welfare Program*, 106) In neighboring Czechoslovakia, in 1951, 30% of the country's children were eating a school lunch. This relatively low participation rate was not satisfactory to the country's nutritionists, who explained that "within the framework of the five-year plan, it is intended to introduce a system ensuring the adequate nutrition of all schoolchildren." As was the case in the GDR, this 'school meals law' was "based on the scheme for workers' canteens." (Unesco, *School Meals and Clothing*, 57-58) On June 4th, 1946 U.S. President Truman signed the National School Lunch Act, claiming that "today . . . I feel that the congress has acted with great wisdom in providing the basis for strengthening the nation through better nutrition for our school children. In my message to congress last January, I pointed out that we have the technical knowledge to provide plenty of good food for every man, woman and child in this country, but that despite our capacity to produce food, we have often failed to distribute it as well as we should. This action by congress represents a basic forward step toward correcting that failure. In the long view, no nation is any healthier than its children or more prosperous than its farmers; and in the National School Lunch Act, the congress has contributed immensely both to the welfare of our farmers and the health of our children." (Kelly D. Brownell and Katherine Battle Horgen, *Food Fight: The Inside Story of the Food Industry, America's Obesity Crisis, and what we can do about it* (Chicago: Contemporary Books, 2004), 163.) In India, the country perhaps most ravaged by war and postwar famines, school meals were a major political project; in the words of an Indian nutritionist, "after two world wars, the relief and rehabilitation of devastated or less affluent countries became the concern of conquering or richer nations, and thus a great deal of international diffusion of welfare ideas has taken place . . . The imposition of nutritional standards in general and the midday [school] meals' attempt to meet these standards in particular is an illustration of this kind of international diffusion." Prodipto Roy and R. Rath, *School Lunch in Orissa* (New Delhi: Council for Social Development, 1972), 5.

Polish sugar; milk powder from the United States is given to the children of the Philippines."<sup>728</sup> The FRG was notably absent from this list, though food aid, in the form of CARE packages, continued to be sent to West German families throughout the decade. By the 1960s, school meals were associated primarily with international foreign aid programs and thus shifted almost exclusively to the Third World. Indeed, one West German nutritionist argued specifically that Germans' experiences with collective meals due to "the food situation we had 15-20 years ago" made them particular good advisors for creating such programs in poor countries, where the collective feeding of children is "the most important aspect of developmental aid."<sup>729</sup> West Germans could help others feed their children collectively, but refused to feed their own. Among the postwar European nations, West Germany seemed farthest removed from perceiving access to food as a core human right. Instead, the state protected and valorized the family, rather than the (potentially hungry) individual; school meals in the FRG remained associated both with material poverty and with a disrupted or perverted family life. These twinned concerns haunted early West Germany, representing physical and moral degeneracy and societal breakdown.

Controversies regularly occurred around child nutrition, with their concurrent debates over the appropriate role of the state, the school and the family. Such debates highlight the ways in which school meals were an important part of the West German state's attempt to create a national myth of prosperity while relegating both maternal and childhood nutrition to the private, familial sphere. Despite insistence that West German

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<sup>728</sup> Eleonore Enzmann, *Ein Ja dem Leben* (1951, Frankfurt, Main) and Deutsches Gesundheits-Museum (Köln), "Ein Rundgang durch die Gesundheitsausstellung, (Verl. Dt. Gesundheitsmuseum, 1951).

<sup>729</sup> Pepler, E and Cremer, H.D., "Fragen der modernen Gemeinschaftsverpflegung," *Deutsches Medizinisches Journal* 15 (1964), 314.

children did not 'need' school meals anymore, concerns over the health of German children steadily grew over the postwar years. A 1953 housewife's consumer guide reported that "the health of our children is a subject that causes us grave concerns." Without making any direct reference to the elimination of school meals, the author noted that "since 1950 we have been unable to document any real improvements [since] the poor economic conditions of many parents render them unable to provide their children with the essential high-quality protein-rich foods."<sup>730</sup> The paper concluded, however, not with a call for school food distribution, but with a request for private and corporate donations to support school milk distribution, as the subsidized price remained too high for many parents. A year later, the nationally renowned sports doctor and pediatrician Dr. Hans Hoske, in a paper titled "Healthy Nutrition as a Social Responsibility," sounded a dramatic warning over the state of Germany's children:

the health of our youth is in a precarious situation. After the war, we assumed that the youth would recover after a few years of improved living standards. Observation at first seemed to confirm this belief. Only experienced scientists realized that this was an illusion that we were only too willing to believe in order to escape the worries of the war and postwar years. Our youth is not healthy! There is no doubt that their health, happiness, development and performance are continually worsening.<sup>731</sup>

Hoske went on to explain that "our youth, ravaged by war and the difficult postwar years, need a correct diet in order to recover."<sup>732</sup> His solution was a radically revamped maternal training program; school meals remain completely unmentioned.

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<sup>730</sup> Liane Haskarl and Wolfgang Clauss, *Die Macht der Hausfrau. Eine ernährungswirtschaftliche Fibel für d. Verbraucher* (Kiel: Verl. d. Kieler Druckerei, 1952), 21.

<sup>731</sup> H. Hoske, "Befund: Jugendernährung Unzureichend!", 93. Hans Hoske was one of Nazi Germany's leading medical figures. A convinced racial hygienist and member of the SS, he was a central figure in the development of the Nazi ideal of 'performance' (*Leistung*); his work focused on providing medical evidence for the superior health and beauty of the Aryan body.

<sup>732</sup> Hoske, "Befund: Jugendernährung Unzureichend!", 95

Throughout the postwar decades, pediatricians bemoaned an increase in poorly nourished children due to ill-intentioned or poorly educated parents. Hoske, emphasizing young people's lack of interest in their diet, insisted that

accustoming the individual early on [to an appropriate diet] is an important task; important, because it is out of this diet that the good or bad dietary habits of the *Volk* emerge, along with all of their consequences. Food is the source of life, and our health, performance and vitality depend upon it.<sup>733</sup>

These experts did not demand school lunches as a remedy for inadequate childhood nutrition. Instead they almost uniformly focused on improving education in nutrition and food preparation for children and for mothers. Dr. Heinrich Kraut, West Germany's leading expert in nutritional physiology and the relationship between diet and work productivity, published the abysmal results of a nutrition survey done of Cologne schoolchildren, revealing that "in Germany knowledge of the basic issues of nutrition is inadequate." Nonetheless, Kraut assured his readers that "mistakes [in children's diets] can be avoided through education and training."<sup>734</sup> Kraut concluded that faults in the diet of Germany's children lay with the mother, as poorly cooked vegetables, imbalanced meal design, and inappropriate portion control revealed that "the necessary knowledge is missing in the parents' home."<sup>735</sup> Nutritionists particularly blamed working mothers for badly fed children, and developed special cooking classes and educational materials aimed at this small but growing group of West German women.

By the late 1950s, school meals were rarely mentioned, nor was the relationship between poverty and childhood malnutrition. West German doctors and planners developed their models of childhood nutrition around a traditional middle-class and

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<sup>733</sup> Hans Hoske, *Hochwertige Ernährung als soziale Aufgabe*, (Freiburg: R. Tries, 1955), 8.

<sup>734</sup> Heinrich Kraut, *Richtige Ernährung, Die Grundlage der Leistungsfähigkeit*. (Köln a. Rh., 1955).

<sup>735</sup> Hoske, "Befund: Jugendernährung Unzureichend!", 94

single-income nuclear family. Studies that reported "many more poorly nourished children in the Federal Republic than one would expect"<sup>736</sup> explicitly denied poverty as a cause of childhood malnutrition. A sensational 1960 *Spiegel* exposé on childhood poverty in West Germany claimed that "the most acute needs no longer consist of material deprivations; they are caused by the lack of love and lack of family security."<sup>737</sup> Despite such claims, in poorer cities and regions, demand for even the limited school milk program often exceeded supply. A 1957 report from Bochum, for example, complained of "the many undernourished children, the weakest of Bochum," who cannot afford the subsidized school milk.<sup>738</sup> One of the few pediatricians to recognize the role of parental poverty for determining children's diets, Dr. Ingeborg Hoffmann, suggested that "it would be absolutely welcome to provide a daily school breakfast – at least in the public schools [*Volksschulen*]."<sup>739</sup> However, such voices were grown increasingly rare as the years went on, and West German thoughts of school meals dwindled to vague memories of the beloved *Hoover-Speisung*. By the 1960s, progressive West German nutritionists regretfully acknowledged that "an ideal model like that of Sweden, where children receive complete meals [at school], will never be realized here, although such a program would provide an optimal linkage of nutritional theory and praxis."<sup>740</sup>

School lunches did not entirely disappear from public awareness, they returned briefly but dramatically to the headlines in the mid-1960s in connection with a perceived

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<sup>736</sup> "Vielfraß und Suppenkaspar," *Kochpraxis und Gemeinschaftsverpflegung* (March, 1967); "zum Frühstück: Heiße Milch mit Tränen; Jede Vierte ging hungrig zur Schule," *Kochpraxis und Gemeinschaftsverpflegung* (March, 1969).

<sup>737</sup> Cited in Leisering and Leibfried, *Time and Poverty in Western Welfare States*, 182

<sup>738</sup> Johannes Volker Wagner, *Vom Trümmerfeld ins Wirtschaftswunderland. Bochum 1945-1955: eine Dokumentation* (Bochum: Brockmeyer, 1989), 225.

<sup>739</sup> Ingeborg Hoffmann Dr. and Helli Kiessling, "Ausreichendes Frühstück für unsere Schulkinder," *Verbraucherdienst* IV, no. 9 (September, 1959), 103-107.

<sup>740</sup> Pepler and Cremer, "Fragen der modernen Gemeinschaftsverpflegung," 319.

crisis in childhood health. The controversy was spawned by the *Düsseldorfer Schulbrot-Test*, a trial meal program sponsored by the *Vereinigung getreidewirtschaftliche Marktforschung* (Market Research Group for Grain and Cereal Products) that ran from February 19<sup>th</sup> –27<sup>th</sup>, 1964.<sup>741</sup> It provided a free breakfast to the schoolchildren in several schools in both Mainz and Düsseldorf every morning during the first class period, allowing the children to choose from a wide array of bread products and spreads. The test was inspired by a sudden national realization that,

despite the relatively high quality of life of the majority of the population, the health of our school children has not been satisfactory . . . nutritionists and physiologists believe that the false diet of schoolchildren is a central reason for this development.<sup>742</sup>

Although the original goal of the test was to establish guidelines for mothers to prepare a healthy breakfast for their children before school began, the test unexpectedly revealed that 25% of children arrived at school without having eaten any breakfast at all.

This unexpected result garnered extensive local, national and even international media coverage, and TV reporters and journalists recorded children's enthusiasm over the free and healthy meals provided them in the Düsseldorf test.<sup>743</sup> The key issue suddenly

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<sup>741</sup> It is interesting to note that both this school lunch discussion, as well as the 1952 dissolution of school lunches, were initiated by the efforts of specific food lobbying organizations. The Dairy board pushed for a school milk program in the early 1950s, and the Bread and Grain Lobby for increased institutional bread consumption among school children in the 1960s.

<sup>742</sup> "Die Ergebnisse der Schulbrotteste in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland" BArch B 116 / 30525

<sup>743</sup> Such was the scale of public debate over the *Schulbrot-Test* that it inspired similar studies in the GDR. There, however, studies did not focus on malnourishment on the part of children, nor on the harms of working mothers too 'lazy' to feed their children. While the FRG study focused on the numbers of children arriving at school without having eaten breakfast and without an adequate *Schulbrot*, in the East the attention focused on children throwing away their home-packed sandwiches. In the face of wide-spread school lunches, the lack of an early meal or snack did not inspire concerns over hunger or malnourishment, but rather one of waste and a lack of respect for labor: "Parents fail to train their children to economize, to respect the labor of other people that is contained within all food products. . . this is something ungraspable, such an attitude in a time that teaches all working people to think of the development of the collective, and to aim for rational economizing . . . Wealth does not allow for waste! And especially not when there are still millions of people in the world who are starving." Ingeburg Hirsch, "Die Paar Stullen . . . ?" *Für Dich*, no. 27 (1967), 36. In fact, the East German studies recommended that mothers cease providing their

seemed to be not rye or wheat bread, but having bread at all. A few months later, German president Heinrich Lübke gave a speech on the national "Day of Bread" inspired by the "horrifying results" of the survey. In his speech, Lübke blamed poor dental health and childhood hunger on an inadequate consumption of daily bread products. He made clear that "there is no excuse for the fact that parents – so soon after the Hunger Years that we all struggled through – are not capable of providing their children with bread. That is a sin [*Versündigung*]!" More even than the health damages represented by an inadequate childhood diet, Lübke was convinced that it

represents the degeneration of the family when they no longer consume their meals together, insofar as this is possible. Next to love, it is after all the fact that members of a family share bread with one another that provides one of the strongest bonds [*Kräfte des Zusammenhaltes*].<sup>744</sup>

Although Lübke was clearly not an advocate for school meals, his public recognition of the poor diet of Germany's children launched a remarkable wave of concern over the nutritional status of school children and the care-giving abilities of their mothers. In the words of Düsseldorf Mayor Willy Rasche, the test "offered concrete proof of just how falsely some parents regulate their children's diet."<sup>745</sup> The causes of this poor parenting were manifold: some mothers were "often too comfortable to get up in the morning and prepare bread. Working mothers don't have the time."<sup>746</sup> All shared the consensus, however, that mothers were not only responsible for their children's diet and health, but that they should be the sole providers of their children's meals. Obligatory schooling, by

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children with additional, home-prepared foods. Secure in the knowledge of the provisioning of a hot school meal, nutritionists gently mocked those mothers who "fear that their children will be undernourished if they do not bring a school-bread with them. . . . School breads belong neither in the garbage can nor necessarily in every child's life." Ulrike Zakis, "Die Eltern Fragen: Warum ißt mein Kind sein Schulbrot nicht?" *Brigitte*, no. 21 (1968).

<sup>744</sup> Vereinigung Getreidewirtschaftliche Marktforschung, *Der Düsseldorfer Schulbrot-Test*, 3.

<sup>745</sup> *Ibid.*, 4

<sup>746</sup> *Ibid.*, 8

requiring the child's extended absence from the home, threatened to challenge this linear relationship between a mother's kitchen and her child's stomach. The bread-based *Schulbrot*, or school-bread, seemed the only solution.

The term *Schulbrot* itself is ambiguous. When Luebke and others called for a *Schulbrot* for all children, they actually meant a bread-based meal prepared by the mother and consumed by her child before school began. Others demanded a sandwich prepared by parents and sent to school with the child. Although the Düsseldorf test was based on school-provided provisions, most politicians and child nutrition experts ignored the fact that a *Schulbrot* could be provided by schools. Instead, their focus remained on getting parents to feed children better at home. For the parents themselves, however, the possibility of state support of their school-children's' diets was by far the most relevant part of the test. While women rarely wrote to nutritional advice boards asking for advice on how to assemble a nutritious sandwich for their children, they wrote in by the dozens to demand school meals. A national survey of housewives done in connection with the test revealed that "regardless of income and regional traditions," 77% favored a state-sponsored school breakfast.<sup>747</sup> Despite pockets of resistance, particularly in rural areas where parents claimed that "mothers were responsible for the *Schulbrot*," between 70-80% of West German parents surveyed supported the introduction of free breakfast in schools.<sup>748</sup> The Research Group for Grain and Cereal Products, seeing the advantages of a permanent state contract for bread for the entire German schoolchild population,

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<sup>747</sup> "Die Ergebnisse der Schulbrotteste in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland" BArch B 116 / 30525

<sup>748</sup> The focus was on breakfast rather than lunch because the West German school day ended in the early afternoon, usually around 1 pm. At that point, the child was supposed to go home and receive a substantial, warm *Mittagessen*. Based on the assumption of maternal unemployment, this model explicitly required someone to be at home and to feed children during the afternoon. The concern over childhood hunger revolved around the hours preceding this *Mittagessen*. The fact that some children might not only receive no breakfast before school, but that they might also not have a meal after school, was unmentioned within these debates.

publicized the fact that "a great majority of German parents demand that the state partially relieve them of their responsibilities for their school-age children."<sup>749</sup> Although confirming parents' ultimate culpability for poorly nourished children, "for children, this ruling [of school-provided breakfasts] would certainly be to their advantage."<sup>750</sup>

In response to this sudden unwanted explosion of popular support for school meals, the medical student Hans Breuer produced a dissertation at Göttingen University in 1968 on "the significance of the school breakfast for children's nutrition." His study, including surveys of local schoolchildren, showed that only 6.5% of children went entirely without breakfast, and 35% actually received too many calories. And rather than providing free meals to children or developing nutritional training programs for parents and children, Breuer had a simpler proposition. He advocated simply lengthening the time of the school snack break by five to ten minutes, allowing teachers and students to consume their home-made sandwiches in communally shared peace and quiet. In his idyllic vision of this shared eating time,

sitting together, with the quiet conversation and soothing environment of the classroom, it would be irrelevant if the children brought white, wheat or rye bread, if they had cheese or sausage; even those who, either due to their own irresponsibility or that of their parents, came without their own *Pausenbrot* would either quickly remind their mothers [to make one] or they would not forget it at home while packing their schoolbags, so that they would not have to continually sit in the circle of their eating comrades with nothing to do.<sup>751</sup>

Convinced that it "is not the responsibility of the school to be concerned for the proper diet of the children,"<sup>752</sup> Breuer's report denied any economic or cultural causes for children's dietary problems; instead, poor childhood diets were due to the "current social

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<sup>749</sup> Vereinigung Getreidewirtschaftliche Marktforschung, *Der düsseldorfer Schulbrot-Test*, 12

<sup>750</sup> *ibid.*, 16-17

<sup>751</sup> Hans Breuer, "Das Schulfrühstück und seine Bedeutung im Rahmen der Ernährung des Kindes", 58

<sup>752</sup> *ibid.*, 57 To overcome an acknowledged protein deficiency among more than half of the children examined, Breuer predictably suggested expanding the school milk program.

structure of our people," with large numbers of "destroyed and endangered families," dual-income families, and the 'over-stimulation' and 'general nervous tempo' of modern times.<sup>753</sup> In West Germany's *Wohlstandsgesellschaft*, there was no room for mothers who either could not afford to provide a healthy lunch for their child or who were physically incapable of doing so due to work or other obligations.

Breuer, with the support of most national nutritional figures, won the day. 'School meals' in the sense of a rounded warm meal remained almost entirely absent in the Federal Republic. The few exceptions were small pockets of usually urban communities that had municipal or charity-run school canteens, aimed almost exclusively at poor and immigrant children. Bremen and West Berlin, for example, both developed such programs. Instead of providing warm meals, the government subsidized a wide network of school milk and cocoa distribution, which was consumed along with the traditional 'Schulbrot,' a light meal of bread, usually with a filling of cheese or meat, prepared by mothers and eaten by schoolchildren during the morning recess.<sup>754</sup>

By the late 1960s and 1970s, alternative child rearing and educational models were emerging that often advocated various forms of communal eating. In addition, West German feminists recognized the significance of school lunches for female emancipation; these meals were at the heart of reforming the structure of the school-day, which traditionally ended at 1 pm. Sociologist Helga Pross complained in the mid-seventies that

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<sup>753</sup> *ibid.*, 57-58

<sup>754</sup> The lack of school lunches became one of the distinguishing features of the Federal Republic. An introductory German textbook from Great Britain noted that, in contrast to England, "there are no school canteens in Germany, and there is a long gap between breakfast and lunchtime. So many German [schoolchildren] carry a second breakfast with them; a few sandwiches (*Butterbrot*) which will be eaten thankfully at midmorning." (Martin Leggott, *Eating in Germany* (London: Mary Glasgow Publications, 1975), 9.)

regardless of whether the mother prepares a modest snack or a full warm meal, in any case she is forced into the kitchen because of the half-day school system. Because Germany has no full-day schools, the mothers must spend the afternoon cooking; that is how the country can afford to remain with half-day schools.<sup>755</sup>

With the gradual liberalization of West German education, the Board of Education began to consider some sort of school meal program due to continued concerns of poor childhood nutrition and changing economic and educational structures. In the early 1970s, a movement developed to institute full-day schools for five days a week. Such a schooling system seemed predestined for some sort of school meal program simply because of the number of hours that a child was away from his or her mother. Despite widespread popular support for the development of this more modern model of schooling, the West German nutritional establishment yet again came out against institutionalized school meals.

Dr. W. Droese, Director of the Institute for Child Nutrition in Dortmund, wrote in 1970 of the feeding dilemmas faced by the full-day school. Warning that "it is almost impossible for a school collective feeding program to appropriately acknowledge the different appetites and individual tastes of the school-child," Droese feared the negative impact of such meals on the fragile body and more fragile ego of the growing child.<sup>756</sup> In the face of renewed pressure to expand full-day schools, Dr. Droese returned to the topic of school meals several years later. In a 1973 study of the few full-day schools in the Federal Republic that did provide hot meals, he argued that the unpalatable flavor of mass cooking and the loud and chaotic atmosphere of the canteen destroyed youthful appetites. Not only were school meals unpopular, but they were reported to have lower

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<sup>755</sup> Cited in Alois Wierlacher, *Vom Essen in der deutschen Literatur: Mahlzeiten in Erzähltexten von Goethe bis Grass* (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 1987), 23.

<sup>756</sup> W. Droese and Helga Stolley, "Die Ernährung des Schulkindes," *Ernährungs-Umschau* (1970), 519.

nutritional values than home-cooked dishes: children at whole-day schools, he claimed, were malnourished *because* of their school meals. His solution was as predictable as it was not novel: children, "as much as possible must be sent home for lunch. The belief that the majority of children can not receive a warm lunch at home is . . . not accurate."<sup>757</sup> Even in the middle of their school-day, children's travelling home to eat lunch seemed both nutritionally and socially advantageous. A child's consumption of his or her mother's home-cooked meal remained a central and irreplaceable aspect of childhood in the FRG. To this day school meals have been neither institutionalized nor normalized in the Federal Republic.

### **Lunches for All: Liberating Mothers and Strengthening Children in the GDR**

Almost immediately after the formation of first the Federal Republic and then the GDR, what had since the end of the war been a definitional aspect of daily life in all zones of occupied Germany – the school lunch— was to become an important marker of German-German difference.<sup>758</sup> Within months of their founding, both German states remade their respective school feeding programs, which were seen as legacies of the postwar Hunger Years and respective occupation policies. Faced with an overabundance of dairy products, sullen children and distraught parents, the Federal Republic of Germany chose to dismantle school meals, replacing hot lunches with moderately-priced provisions of milk and cocoa. At the same time that West German officials were

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<sup>757</sup> W. Droese, "Erste Erfahrungen über das Mittagessen in Ganztagschulen. Zugleich ein Beitrag zur Gemeinschaftsverpflegung von Kindern." *Deutsche Medizinische Wochenschrift* (98: 35, 1973) 1567. A parallel study done in Nordrhein-Westphalen found that 92.5% of West German mothers could and did prepare a warm midday meal for their children.

<sup>758</sup> There were many non-socialist countries, including the Scandinavian countries, Britain and the USA, that had as high as or higher school lunch participation rates than the GDR. However, for both East and West Germans, the GDR's school feeding program seemed definitional to the state's socialist identity.

negotiating with the dairy industry over exclusive contracts for school milk distribution, the East German government was initiating an evaluation of their troubled school feeding programs, prompted by decreasing numbers of enrollment and increasing expressions of dissatisfaction and resistance.<sup>759</sup>

In the capital city of Berlin, dwindling rates of participation led to visits by hygiene inspectors to the schools, kindergartens and public dining facilities responsible for feeding the city's children. The reports of the city officials were depressing. The most widespread complaints were of the monotony of the menu:

they [the schoolchildren] don't want any more of the sweet soups, and wish for more savory dishes, like noodles cooked in broth, more vegetable dishes with potatoes, or beans cooked with meat, but not with fatty pork. Currently in the summer months they want porridge with fruit juice or fruit; in general they want more frequent candy.<sup>760</sup>

Facilities were inadequate, staff was untrained, and even the modest prices were perceived as too high. There were complaints about salty food, hard peas, thin soup, too fatty or too large portions of meat, and insufficient marmalade on the rolls.<sup>761</sup> In a typically socialist gesture, the magistrate sponsored a city-wide school essay contest on the topic of *Eure Schulspeisung* (Your School Meal Program) to find out what Berlin's children really thought about their school meals. While the essays themselves have not been preserved in the archives, the magistrate's response has. Opening by thanking the essay-writers for being "so honest and open about what you did not like about the school

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<sup>759</sup> Participation in Berlin's school lunch program dropped from almost universal participation at the peak of the Hunger Years to an average of slightly over 50% by mid-1950. It is impossible to know why participation rates decreased so dramatically; there was not a dramatic price increase as there had been in the West. Probably a combination of factors were responsible, including the improving health of the children, and popular reluctance to have children participate in what was stigmatized as an 'aid program' for the poor.

<sup>760</sup> "Betr. Überprüfung der Schulspeisung in den Bezirken" Landesarchiv Berlin C Rep 113 / 652

<sup>761</sup> "Beanständungen zur Schulspeisung für die Besprechung am 16.6.1950" Landesarchiv Berlin C Rep 113 / 652

meals, and what improvements you would wish for," he went on to make clear what the appropriate relationship to this 'socialist meal' should be: "many of you were quite insightful, and said that you were happy simply to be able to receive these meals. Others of you recognize that school meals have improved in contrast with earlier ones, due to the addition of the [daily] white roll with marmalade." However,

you do not need to spread such malicious phrases as: 'the food was mixed with cyanide,' or 'disgusting filth was swimming around inside of it,' or 'there were worms in the food.' All of these phrases are simply things that you have been told by others [*sind euch nur eingeredet*], and you must not believe such rumors.

Finally, as proof of the desirability of these misunderstood school meals, he reminded the children that, after all, "all of our foods were produced by the entire population with enormous sweat and toil."<sup>762</sup> Honest labor, he claimed, could not produce bad food.

Nonetheless, prompted by such widespread and undeniable discontent, the SED began drafting its first official resolution to institutionalize school meals. Quite different from the divisive atmosphere of the West German cabinet during these months, a city report "on the irregular participation and steady sinking in the number of [school] meal recipients" stated that "everyone agreed that the percentage of participating children must be increased."<sup>763</sup> This early crisis marked the beginning of what was to be a more than twenty-year-long process of continual modification, expansion and improvement of the school lunch program. School lunches, second only to factory canteens as the most economically and socially important aspect of East German nutritional policy, were to become the widest reaching form of collective feeding in the GDR. By the 1980s, 85-

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<sup>762</sup> "Zentrale Prüfungsstelle" Landesarchiv Berlin C Rep 113 / 652

<sup>763</sup> "Betr. Die unterschiedliche Beteiligung und das ständige Absinken der Essenteilnehmer" Landesarchiv Berlin C Rep 113 / 652

90% of all school-age children ate at least one meal a day in a school-affiliated meal program.

The different responses of the two German governments to these early crises in school lunches shaped childhood and family structure in the two German states. While West German children were fed by school-purchased milk, sandwiches, bakery rolls and, especially, home-cooked lunches, the vast majority of East German schoolchildren participated in the school lunch program, which became as much a part of East German childhood as the *Freie Deutsche Jugend* (the socialist youth organization) or lessons on Marxism and worker solidarity. The East German state, rather than linking school meals with malnutrition, passivity and foreign aid, cast school lunches as definitional to a socialist modernity. They were a sign of individual and collective independence and vitality, enabling the labor of both mother and child and ensuring the health of the next generation of German socialists.

Beginning the East German government's commitment to expanding school lunches, on March 30<sup>th</sup>, 1950 the SED passed the *Anordnung zur Durchführung der Schulspeisung*, which formalized the provision of school meals "to all kindergartens and child care facilities as well as in the primary-, high- and training schools," a decision that, in the words of the bill, "enabled a whole-day educational labor."<sup>764</sup> The 1950 bill, formally establishing the school meal as a standard part of the East German educational system, was the first in a long series of policies aimed at increasing participation in and satisfaction with school lunches. As in the West, school meals were central to official constructions of motherhood. However, rather than being seen as an inducement to poor mothering and a threat to the nuclear family, state feeding programs in the GDR were

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<sup>764</sup> Cited in Karin Opelt, *Volkshochschule in der SBZ* (Opladen: Leske + Budrich, 2004), 66.

seen as a way of supporting mothers, allowing them to work and thus encouraging the full development of their 'socialist personality.'

Immediately after the war, the incredibly high rates of female employment in all four zones were driven by necessity. In the western zones, these numbers dropped dramatically as soon as husbands and sons returned from the front, and the FRG adopted a model of a Christian conservative society based on the integrity of the single-income nuclear family. The SED, in contrast, claimed that this new ubiquity of female labor was the beginning of a positive, and permanent, shift in labor patterns – and the school meal was understood as pivotal to this development. The SED state continually reminded working mothers that "it is, after all, the school meal program that first made it possible for many mothers to pursue their careers in peace."<sup>765</sup> As the famed nutritionist and vitaminologist Dr. Arthur Scheunert pointed out in 1952:

The young woman who marries is no longer able to cook, and has no time to do so. Thus, the focal point of nutrition is moved out of the family and into community feeding programs, which are achieved in kindergartens [and schools] for the children, and in work canteens and restaurants for the adults. . . it is self-evident in this regard that child feeding programs deserve particular attention.<sup>766</sup>  
The transfer of responsibility for childhood nutrition from the mothers' kitchen to

the state's schoolhouse was not as straight-forward as such rhetoric implied. The very first official School Lunch bill of the GDR, the 1950 *Anordnung*, provoked widespread discontent. The bill intended to mark the end of the occupation and the founding of a 'new' Germany by declaring a dramatic shift in the meaning and nature of school lunches. The original lunch, the much celebrated roll and hot coffee organized by the Soviet

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<sup>765</sup> Rolf Henschel, ". . . Nun Lasst es euch Schmecken," *Für Dich*, no. 6 (1968), 11.

<sup>766</sup> Arthur Scheunert, *Ernährungsprobleme der Gegenwart* (Leipzig: Hirzel, 1952), 18-19. By the 1960s, school feeding programs had frequently expanded to include both a breakfast and a lunch, as well as a 'milk-break.' However, in these earlier years the aim was to provide a single warm meal, with an additional light snack, usually of a roll and a hot or cold drink.

occupiers as a method of getting additional calories into empty bellies, was officially proclaimed redundant. Instead, the new East German school lunch was to be not supplemental, but a complete and nutritious meal, an ambition that inspired the policy's requirement that schools provide a hot meal rather than the previously standard cold lunch.

Like the workers' canteen meal, this new school lunch was intended to become a central part of the socialist school experience, part of the labor of learning. However, there was unprecedented resistance to these mandated hot school meals, which were condemned by parents and rejected by their children as both unnecessary and unwanted. While embracing school-provided cold snacks for their children, usually milk, bread and cold cuts, mothers opposed these warm meals, which were made up of a grain, vegetable and occasional meat. Seeing such meals as an encroachment on their rights as parents and a threat to the well-being of their children, parents' organizations and women's groups petitioned local and national educational boards to receive exemptions from participating in this state-wide policy. Local newspapers from around the country published numerous complaints that complete school meals would render mothers' cooking unwanted or redundant:

experience has shown that children were either so full from this meal that, when they arrived home in the afternoon, they did not want the hot meal their mothers had provided for them, or that there were mothers who from laziness did not prepare a warm meal for her children because she believed that they had received enough to eat in school.<sup>767</sup>

Ultimately, the Ministry of Education rejected all appeals for exemption, declaring that "the cold school meal does not satisfactorily fulfill the political content of the demands of

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<sup>767</sup> "Schulspeisung – warm oder kalt?," *Volksstimme* BArch DR 2 / 2422

the law,"<sup>768</sup> which explicitly intended the school lunch to become the schoolchild's primary daily meal.

Of course, no one could force children to eat these meals, nor were mothers easily convinced of the benefits of a communal school meal. Improvements in economic development and the general health and well-being of the population did not, as expected, result in an increasing acceptance of these improved school lunches. Despite aggressive propaganda campaigns, nutritionists and educational specialists watched in frustration as "every year the number of participants sank. The growing prosperity of our workers, the continually improving food provisioning, all allowed many parents to forego the additional meal for their children at school."<sup>769</sup> East German mothers rejected the official claim that labor in the workforce should replace labor at home. Instead,

parents absolutely want their children to partake of their warm lunch in their home, a meal which, as a result of the improvements in the food situation, is more individual, better, and tastier, and which allows [parental] control over the diet of children.<sup>770</sup>

Even as mothers increasingly took up full time work outside of the home, they found ways to provide home-cooked meals for their children, either by giving them foods to take to school, preparing precooked meals at home for the child to reheat, or leaving their workplace at the child's lunchtime to cook. Many families shifted their primary meal to dinner, so that women could cook full meals for their children after the end of work and school days. Ironically, women's raising rates of participation in the workplace gave some mothers added ammunition for their battle against school lunches. Women who worked full-time were aware of, and complained about, the fact that SED policy

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<sup>768</sup> "Protokoll über die Sitzung am 15.3.1951" BArch DR 2 / 725

<sup>769</sup> "Neuregelung der Schulspeisung erfüllt viele Wünsche" *Der Demokrat* BArch DR 2 / 4449

<sup>770</sup> "Betr: Schulspeisung" BArch DR 2 / 725

prioritized supplies for workers' canteens over those for children.<sup>771</sup> The higher quality of factory lunches highlighted the inadequacies of many small schools' meal quality. Working parents made "constant comparisons" between these two collective meals, finding factory meals both cheaper and "of a far higher quality" than the school lunch;<sup>772</sup> one worried mother reported that she was "embarrassed to sit at my good factory meal at noon knowing that my child does not receive an adequate meal in his school lunch,"<sup>773</sup>

Since the Occupation Years, East German mothers had been uncomfortable relying on the state to feed their children, believing that by definition "the school meal was not adequate,"<sup>774</sup> and preferring instead to cook for their children at home or give them a lunch to take to school. Despite the fact that "the school meal program today prioritizes the children of working mothers; they represent the overwhelming percentage of those children intended to partake in the school meals," a 1957 survey of eleven large East German cities revealed the disappointing fact that, although 41% of children had mothers with full-time employment, only 30% participated in school meals.<sup>775</sup>

In response to constant and vitriolic complaints, in 1955 the SED approved a second bill improving both the quality and variety of the foods allotted to schools, as well as dedicating increased funding to the construction of better cooking and eating facilities for schools, particularly rural ones and those in smaller towns. Primarily designed to provide meals to the children of working mothers, improved school meals were supposed to eliminate, once and for all, the pressure felt by many mothers to cook for their children

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<sup>771</sup> "an Genossin Gertrud Asriel" BArch DC 6 / 1

<sup>772</sup> "Analyse vom 22.9.1955 über den Stand der Durchführung der Verordnung vom 20.7.1955 über die Einführung der verbesserten Schulspeisung," BArch DR 2 / 3890

<sup>773</sup> M. Boenheimm and I. Leetzi, "Wird die Schulspeisung ihrer Aufgabe gerecht? Teil I" *Das Deutsche Gesundheitswesen* (1958, 13, 45) 1460

<sup>774</sup> *Ibid.*, 1460

<sup>775</sup> *Ibid.*, 1459

during the work week. After all, inadequate school meals meant "an additional burden for working parents," who would otherwise "have less cooking to do at home in the evenings, for they as well usually eat in their work canteens."<sup>776</sup> In an unprecedented development, these real improvements in the food quality of school lunches led to a new category of complainers: "mothers who have to care for many children, and who therefore do not work full-time and whose children for this reason are not allowed to participate in the school lunch program" began to write in, demanding recognition of their own 'labor' as mothers and claiming the right to be thus freed from the labor of cooking meals for their children.<sup>777</sup> In response, the requirements for participation were loosened, so that mothers of multiple children, even if they were not working or only worked part-time, were allowed to receive the school lunch.<sup>778</sup>

In 1958, the year that marked the belated end of rationing in the GDR, the SED passed Ruling #3, formally guaranteeing a free lunch to all children of working or needy parents.<sup>779</sup> Recognizing that "the weary working mother has scarcely the time and energy for lengthy food preparation, to clean and cook vegetables, to steam potatoes etc, in order to offer her entire family a filling, and from day to day variable meal," the state declared, in familiar rhetoric, its commitment to "free[ing] working mothers from having to cook in the evening, especially since both mothers and fathers usually receive an adequate warm lunch at their workplace canteens."<sup>780</sup> Ironically, the East German state's appropriation of school meals as a central symbol of the successes of a socialist economy

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<sup>776</sup> "Unsere Kinder sollen gut und kräftig essen!" BArch DR 2 / 4449

<sup>777</sup> "Über die Einführung der verbesserten Schulspeisung," BArch DR 2 / 3890

<sup>778</sup> "Neuregelung der Schulspeisung erfüllt viele Wünsche" BArch DR 2 / 4449

<sup>779</sup> Hildegard Marcusson, *Das Wachstum von Kindern und Jugendlichen in der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik; Grösse, Gewicht und Brustumfang nach Untersuchungen in den Jahren 1956-1958*. (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1961), 129.

<sup>780</sup> "Der derzeitige Stand der Schulkinderspeisung in der DDR und Vorschläge zu ihrer weiteren Verbesserung" BArch DR 2 / 1967

focused popular attention on their persistent limitations. The end of rationing, intended to mark the economic recovery of the GDR and promise increases in the quality of life, only heightened

the discrepancy between the good nutritional situation of the population and the inadequate feeding of children by means of the school meals. We want to guarantee our children a good education, a high level of cultural development . . . as a result, children rightfully expect us to ensure them a good diet.<sup>781</sup>

Nutritionists and health care workers complained constantly over the quality of school meals, often highlighting infrastructure problems more than the quality of the food itself. The highly publicized Ruling #3 resulted in highly publicized complaints regarding its lack of success: "although the Order of August 20<sup>th</sup>, 1958 established all necessary material and personnel guidelines for a wide-reaching improvement in school meals, the local hygienist can by no means be pleased with the current state of affairs in his region."<sup>782</sup> A shortage of space and the continued use of temporary or inappropriate buildings meant that the majority of East German schoolhouses lacked an adequate dining hall. Many children were forced to eat their meals in the hallway or on the stairs; a few particularly crowded schools served children in the courtyard even in the middle of winter. Frequent complaints about food were attributed to the problem of distribution, particularly for schools lacking their own kitchen and located far from the urban canteen kitchens that provided them with lunches. Nutritionists blamed the reliance on Thermocans, large insulated vats used to transport meals, for vitamin loss as well as inappropriate temperature, undesirable consistency, and inadequate flavor. A highly critical 1959 report by district hygiene inspectors warned that the consequences of

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<sup>781</sup> Boehheim and Leetzi, "Wird die Schulspeisung Ihrer Aufgabe Gerech? Teil I," 1463.

<sup>782</sup> "Erfahrungsbericht über die Schulspeisung vom Standpunkt eines Bezirks-Hygiene-Institutes" DIFE 423 # 203

improperly stored food could be even more dramatic than cold potatoes or flavorless stews; a recent outbreak of dysentery among schoolchildren could be traced back to the consumption of a meal that had been served more than five hours after its preparation in a centralized factory canteen.<sup>783</sup>

The steadily improved diet of the population continued to highlight the monotony, poor flavor, and lack of 'primary nutrients' of school meals. Margot Honecker announced in a May 1969 lecture that it was an anachronism that "today as much as earlier, in many schools the school meals are not acceptable."<sup>784</sup> Struggling to catch up with continually rising expectation, the SED passed a series of bills, each more sweeping than the last, which resulted in gradual but decisive improvements in East German school canteens. School feeding programs ceased focusing on basic health and economic requirements, instead understood as "a sociopolitical and community health measure . . . [which] should give working parents the reassurance that their children receive a nutritionally high-quality diet through the school meal program."<sup>785</sup> Recognizing the increased demands of modern living upon children and the need to optimize performance, the opportunity to positively affect the nutritional habits of the child and its parents, and, especially aiding "working mothers so that they can pursue their work careers without worries about the

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<sup>783</sup> "Erfahrungsbericht über die Schulspeisung vom Standpunkt eines Bezirks-Hygiene-Institutes" DIFE 423 # 203

<sup>784</sup> Karl-Heinz Günther, *Dokumente zur Geschichte des Schulwesens in der Deutschen demokratischen Republik* (Berlin: Volk u. Wissen, 1969), 182-183.

<sup>785</sup> Möhr, "Entwicklung der Schülerspeisung in der DDR seit 1945," 103 This new scientific focus on a complete meal, with the appropriate amounts of protein, vitamins and minerals, led to the December 1965 *Verordnung über die Schul- und Kinderspeisung*, and the institution, a year later, of obligatory milk distribution to every schoolchild. Several other bills mandating the nutritional requirements of school lunches and regulating the maintenance of the school eating facilities were passed over the following years; as a result, participation in school lunches increased by 160% between 1960 and 1970. Grossmann, H., Möhr, M. and Hölzer, H., "Die Schul- und Kinderspeisung in der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik: inhaltliche und organisatorische Aspekte," *Die Nahrung* 15, no. 2 (1971), 133-40.

physical well-being of their children" – for all of these reasons, "a healthy diet [for schoolchildren] acquires considerable societal importance."<sup>786</sup>

As the SED steadily improved the quality and reach of school lunches, it developed an increasingly modulated and complex rhetoric delineating the ideal relationship between a socialist mother and the school canteen. The aim of 'freeing' women from the burden of cooking for their children was reframed within a new focus on maintaining a mother's responsibility for her children's diet. Rejecting the idea that collective meals would or should lead to the 'dying out' of family cooking, East German nutritionists instead argued that a woman's ability to properly mother her children depended upon her child's consumption of a school lunch. These nutritionists attempted to convince concerned women that school lunches increased the potential for controlling and 'optimizing' children's diets. GDR discourse on school lunches thus maintained a traditional bourgeois emphasis on the mothers' preeminence over the nutrition of her child, positing the state as a necessary intermediary but not a replacement.

Mothers were encouraged to equate private cooking for the family with monitoring school canteens; worried that "many mothers stand in the kitchen after the workday is over, peeling potatoes and cleaning vegetables,"<sup>787</sup> because they felt that school lunch quality was inadequate, nutritionists advised

any mother who is worried about the school lunches of her children should not . . . accept these poor conditions and, resigned, resume her own cooking; instead she should make use of her democratic rights and obligations, and help to create an atmosphere of impatience toward the non-fulfillment of state-regulations [for school meals].<sup>788</sup>

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<sup>786</sup> Herbert Grossmann, *Schul- und Kinderspeisung. Hinweise z. Organisation u. gesetzl. Bestimmungen* (Berlin: Verl. Volk u. Wissen VEB, 1967), 21.

<sup>787</sup> Henschel, "Nun lasst es Euch schmecken," 10

<sup>788</sup> *Ibid.*, 10

This argument remade the traditional German model of mothering. A good mother did not need to actually cook for her child. She did, however, remain the ultimate guardian of children's diets, expressing a specifically socialist maternity not by feeding her own children but by ensuring that the state feed all children better. Both within and outside of the school cafeteria, East German scientists and policy makers, the vast majority of them men, did not question traditional gender dichotomies, with women as the producers of food and men and children as the consumers. Advisors made sure to point out that the development of mass feeding programs, particularly school meals, was intended "to reduce individual food production in the household,"<sup>789</sup> but not to eliminate (women's) domestic cooking. Men and children ate, while women controlled what was placed on the private as well as the communal table.<sup>790</sup> This gender bias, in turn, meant that the state was particularly aware and sensitized to mothers' complaints about school meals; the continued series of bills to improve food quality can be seen as an attempt to address the concerns of mothers, rather than the needs of children.<sup>791</sup>

In a compromise solution negotiated between working mothers and the socialist state, East German women were formally involved in the realm of *Schulspeisung* at an unprecedented level, something supported by the same government that asserted that

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<sup>789</sup> Scheunert *Ernährungsprobleme der Gegenwart* 19

<sup>790</sup> Similarly, Jakob Tanner has noted the ways in which Swiss workers' meal programs maintained, rather than challenged, the basic gender-economic structure of traditional food production and consumption. Jakob Tanner, *Fabrikmahlzeit*, 34.

<sup>791</sup> East German mothers took their responsibility for the diet of their children seriously. Throughout the 1950s, the East German Food Research Institute received, and responded to, dozens of letters a year from concerned citizens asking for food advice; the vast majority was from mothers requesting information about feeding their children. Mrs. Boegel wrote in inquiring about the health advantages of wheat or rye groats for porridge, as "offering my child the best food is something that is very dear to me . . . I would be very thankful for a brief explanation." (DIFE 436 # 11) The assumption that women would continue to cook for their children in the GDR remained unchallenged; when Mrs. Guttman, with a daughter who was allergic to wheat, wrote in regarding the possibility of the mass production of cornbread, (DIFE 436 # 59) Dr. Thomas, head of the Grain Research section, extended an invitation to come to the Institute "to learn for yourself the production of this bread. You would then have the opportunity to bake this same bread yourself during your domestic baking according to our directions." (DIFE 436 # 60)

school meals would reduce mothers' cooking responsibilities. In the early years of the GDR, the majority of school canteens were staffed by volunteer housewives without formal training, a pattern that was tolerated and even encouraged by a state hard-pressed for labor. A 1958 survey of school cafeterias found that "regarding kitchen staff, up to now we have found almost exclusively untrained mothers, the great majority of whom are full of the greatest good will and idealism."<sup>792</sup> Indeed, such evaluations often implied that only mothers would have the "great idealistic commitment" necessary to continue working in such difficult conditions.<sup>793</sup> Once formal training programs had been established for canteen staff, education and nutritional experts advised local school boards to "contact at least one mother knowledgeable about cooking in every district who will supervise the preparation of the school meals in the canteen kitchens and follow through on problems."<sup>794</sup> As late as 1961, a report from the Institute of Nutritional Sciences recommended that schools, "in order to overcome possible labor shortages, win over temporarily unemployed mothers to work as assistants in the preparation [of school lunches], as they happily perform this daily labor as a societal obligation."<sup>795</sup> It was taken as self-evident that the best solution for poorly prepared and flavorless meals was the incorporation of mothers, so that "the preparation of meals takes place with enthusiasm and love."<sup>796</sup> After all, "for what mother is it not close to her heart that her children receive in school a warm and nutritious lunch that meets the child's needs."<sup>797</sup>

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<sup>792</sup> "Erfahrungsbericht über die Schulspeisung vom Standpunkt eines Bezirks-Hygiene-Institutes" DIFE 423 # 203

<sup>793</sup> "Erfahrungsbericht über die Schulspeisung vom Standpunkt eines Bezirks-Hygiene-Institutes" DIFE 423 # 203

<sup>794</sup> "Unsere Kinder sollen gut und kräftig essen!" *Der Morgen* BArch DR 2 / 4449

<sup>795</sup> "Denkschrift: Ernährungsfragen im Schulwesen der Deutschen demokratischen Republik" (DIFE 187 # 58)

<sup>796</sup> "Protokoll über die Sitzung am 15.3.1951" BArch DR 2 / 725

<sup>797</sup> Henschel, "Nun Lasst es Euch schmecken," 10

By ensuring adequate nutrition for children, freeing their mothers from the 'nonproductive labor' of the kitchen, and embedding its youth in a communal and ideologically saturated food world, "the school meal program reflect[ed] the constant forward-thinking development of the people's economy of our republic."<sup>798</sup> As the improved diet of the population drew attention to the monotony, poor flavor, and the absence of 'primary nutrients' of school meals, the SED increased its support of various projects focused on improving lunch quality. The Institute of Nutritional Sciences developed extensive training programs for the chefs of these school canteens, as well as creating an index-card-based collection of "model recipes for meal plans" which were "declared mandatory for all school meals."<sup>799</sup> This catalogue of model recipes, which was computerized by the 1970s, was exemplary, successfully marketed as a sign of the GDR's progressive collective feeding programs. Foreign visitors came to the Institute to learn about establishing such a system in their home countries, and even Western food planners were impressed. An admiring British article explained to its readers that "the carefully balanced meals provided by the computer recipe system comprise an ingenious outflanking maneuver against the main enemy – fat – while ensuring a more healthy diet in other ways."<sup>800</sup>

In the first decades of the GDR's school meal program, praxis remained distinct from theory. The painstakingly developed and distributed school meal recipes were often "used only occasionally, while in other schools they are completely unknown or remain

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<sup>798</sup> "Neuregelung der Schulspeisung" BArch DR 2/4449

<sup>799</sup> M. Boenheimm and I. Leetzi, "Wird die Schulspeisung ihrer Aufgabe gerecht? Teil II" *Das Deutsche Gesundheitswesen* (1958, 13, 52) 1737.

<sup>800</sup> "Morning Star Reports Healthy Card-Index Meals" DIFE 233 # 294

hidden in the drawers of the secretary's desk."<sup>801</sup> However, increased funding and improved food supplies, and especially the steady construction of school canteens and kitchens, improved these daily meals. Parallel to constant efforts to improve worker productivity through canteen meals, in accord with international trends in nutritional science, nutritionists began to focus increased attention on the specific ingredients of school meals, arguing that they were "of extraordinary importance in view of the maintenance of the health of our developing generation."<sup>802</sup> By the end of the 1960s, an increased interest in diversity and cultural 'sophistication' meant that school canteen workers were told not simply to focus on providing calories or nutrients but to attend to regional culinary differences. After all, "what pleases the palate of a child in Thuringia does not necessarily evoke the same pleasure on Mecklenburg tongues."<sup>803</sup>

By the late 1960s, school meals were heavily regulated and controlled, largely through the work of the Institute of Nutritional Sciences, which designed meals, trained school chefs, and monitored health and nutrition amongst East German children and adults. In 1971, the East German dietician Herbert Grossmann described a clear teleology of progress for the school canteen: "what was originally a decidedly modest school breakfast or warm soup has meanwhile become a highly nutritious hot midday meal, complemented with a communal breakfast and afternoon snack [*Vesper-Imbiss*] at

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<sup>801</sup> "Erfahrungsbericht über die Schulspeisung vom Standpunkt eines Bezirks-Hygiene-Institutes" DIFE 423 # 203

<sup>802</sup> "Denkschrift: Ernährungsfragen im Schulwesen der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik" DIFE 187 # 58) See Jakob Tanner's *Fabrikmahlzeit* and Anson Rabinbach's *The Human Motor: Energy, Fatigue, and the Origins of Modernity* (New York: Basic Books, 1990) for a history of the relationship between the modern nutritional sciences and theories of labor productivity.

<sup>803</sup> "Viele Köche und ein Ziel" *Gastronomie* 1, no. 7 (1970). This theoretical interest in regional difference was rarely put into practice; generally, canteens in both schools and factories cooked according to a nationally standardized menu, using the vast card catalogue of canteen recipes established by the East German Food Research Institute.

full-time schools, kindergartens and nurseries."<sup>804</sup> Despite the greater social prestige and financial support for workers' canteens, nutritionists acknowledged that "in no other category of collective feeding are there comparably high rates of development" as in school meals.<sup>805</sup> The major obstacles to successful school lunches, especially in regards to inadequate technological and sanitary facilities, were gradually overcome.<sup>806</sup> By the 1980s, more than 85% of East German school children were eating at least one hot meal a day at their schools, and mothers who cooked midday meals for their children were a clear anomaly.

In terms of the health and economic activities of the population, the incredible reach of school lunches in the GDR meant that they were a definitional part of daily experience for the nation as a whole, not only for the children who ate them. School lunches were also a crucial site of contact and conflict between the East German state and the adult population – especially working mothers. At the same time that the state tried to claim responsibility for children's nutrition, it also recognized and confirmed mothers' higher authority in that realm. The delicate negotiation between encouraging mothers' interest in her child's diet, and her need to cease cooking at home in order to join the workforce is a fascinating example of the paradoxical workings of GDR state socialism. School meals were constructed and ultimately accepted by the population as a positive and definitionally socialist attribute of East German society. As in the West, the fate of school meals became mythologized, a turning point in the development of a postwar and modern Germany. Here, however, the elimination of school lunches did not signify

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<sup>804</sup> Grossmann, H., Möhr, M. and Hölzer, H., "Die Schul- und Kinderspeisung in der Deutschen demokratischen Republik," 136.

<sup>805</sup> Möhr, "Entwicklung der Schülerspeisung in der DDR seit 1945," 105.

<sup>806</sup> See for example "Berliner städtische Großküchen VEB" BArch DR2 / 4449.

entrance into a prosperous, Christian and capitalist world. Instead, a radical expansion and redefinition of school lunches defined the GDR as a progressive, socialist welfare state. The strength and stability of the socialist Germany was revealed in the fact that "in the years following 1945, the school lunch program in the GDR acquired a scope never before experienced in Germany."<sup>807</sup> Paradoxically, both the valorization and the elimination of the school meal confirmed the importance of the German mother for her child's dietary health. The next explores the significance of the home-cooked meal in postwar Germany, as an enduring icon of maternal love, a fount of economic vitality, and as a potential cause of societal oppression.

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<sup>807</sup> "Der derzeitige Stand der Schulkinderspeisung in der DDR und Vorschläge zu ihrer weiteren Verbesserung" BArch DR2 / 1967

## Chapter 7

### Love, Labor or Leisure: Women's Work in the Private Kitchen

In 1959, Dr. J. Kühnau, president of the German Nutritional Society, penned a passionate defense of the home-cooked meal titled "Woman as Protector of Human Nutrition." In it, this nationally renowned nutritional expert explained that "the family diet, earlier the exclusive concern of the housewife, has been removed from her control and increasingly handed over to the anonymous society of a canteen or mass kitchen." This trend, he warned, was "in a particularly advanced state in the countries of the east, where collective feeding is used in all levels of society as a means of political coercion in the service of collectivization." In these countries, in one of the most nefarious crimes of Communism, "eating within the familial sphere has almost entirely disappeared."<sup>808</sup> Even here in the West, however, there was little protection against the "modern trend toward collectivization [*Vermassungstendenz unserer Zeit*], whereby "the family table is increasingly replaced by the canteen or mass kitchen." Kühnau feared that the consequences of this trend were wide-reaching, as woman's responsibility for feeding her family was at the heart of "human, cultural and moral development." Citing the research of Konrad Lorenz, wherein mammalian mothers instinctually nursed their young, the

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<sup>808</sup> Kühnau, Prof. Dr. med. J., "Die Frau als Hüterin der Ernährung," in Deutsche Gesellschaft für Ernährung. *Die Frau und ihre Ernährung*, (Frankfurt am Main: Franz Jos. Henrich, 1959), 6-7. Indeed, contemporary feminist scholars have argued that Western society "shrink[s] from gender equity" because of a fear that women will cease to care for us, a world "in which no one cooks for us – except a fast food chain restaurant." Marjorie L. DeVault, *Feeding the Family: the Social Organization of Caring as Gendered Work* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), ix.

author rooted *Humanitas* itself in the preservation of woman's role as 'protector of human nutrition.' Despite the fact that he was a trained nutritionist, Kühnau spent little time discussing diet or physical health; instead, he focused his diatribe on the cultural degeneration and spiritual vacancy produced by the shift away from the family meal. The collective meal, both cause and effect of women's increasing level of employment outside of the home, "rob[bed] women of her biologically and culturally determined centrality in human society: her role as leader of the nation's food consumption and production," ultimately weakening her health and that of her family and "degrad[ing] [the German woman] from subject to object . . . and [posing] a threat to our occidental culture."<sup>809</sup>

Neither his diagnosis nor the dramatic tone and Cold War imagery were unusual for the era. During the 1950s and 1960s, the FRG expressed a remarkable interest in the figure of the housewife. Robert Moeller has convincingly argued for the centrality of women's issues and the family for the development of West Germany after the war. The family, imagined as distinct from the public and the political, was seen as free of the taint of National Socialism, offering a "storehouse of uniquely German values that could provide a solid basis for postwar recovery."<sup>810</sup> As Moeller eloquently put it, "building a new Germany required building new Germans, and this was work that began at home."<sup>811</sup> Many scholars have noticed the particular importance of domesticity for the reconstruction of the FRG, often focusing on the reemergence of conservative family values and a celebration of the home and private sphere.<sup>812</sup> Recently, Paul Betts has

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<sup>809</sup> Kühnau, "Die Frau als Hüterin der Ernährung," 9

<sup>810</sup> Moeller, *Protecting Motherhood*, 6

<sup>811</sup> *Ibid.*, 110

<sup>812</sup> See for example Loehlin, *From Rugs to Riches: Housework, Consumption and Modernity in Germany*.

pointed out the specific importance of home design, and especially the home interior, during this era:

the restored nuclear family, domestic stability, and the 'private virtues' of individual prosperity and decency were commonly lauded as the bedrock of a postfascist social order. . . the upshot was that the private sphere took on unprecedented political gravity during the postwar period.<sup>813</sup>

No domestic space was as mythologized in the West as the kitchen, and no maternal task as important as cooking for the family.

In both East and West Germany, women's responsibility for the diet of her family was portrayed as an issue of great societal importance.<sup>814</sup> In the aftermath of a devastating war and even more devastating defeat, women were seen as the primary placeholders of a 'German-ness' that had been rendered largely untenable in the eyes of the world. Through her tireless struggles during the Hunger Years, the German woman had come to embody the values that had traditionally defined German culture: a strong work ethic, sense of self-sacrifice, dedication, and absolute commitment to a higher good (her family). In a time known as 'the hour of women,' it was women's labor, and especially her work at feeding her families during these years of food shortages, that signaled Germany's transition away from Nazism and toward a new socialist or capitalist modernity.<sup>815</sup> Only the mother "can and must lead the family out of its currently so

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<sup>813</sup> Paul Betts, "Building Socialism at Home. The Case of East German Interiors," in Pence and Betts, *Socialist Modern: East German Everyday Culture and Politics*, 97.

<sup>814</sup> The political importance of the home-cooked meal in the two postwar German states had ample historical precedent. Since the late nineteenth century, German resistance to collective feeding programs had depended upon an equivalent valorization of the family meal, wide-scale German concern over the impact of mass meals on the integrity of the German family, the appropriate role of the wife and mother, and the class implications of large-scale communal eating.

<sup>815</sup> Elizabeth Heinemann, "The Hour of the Woman: Memories of Germany's 'Crisis Years' and West German National Identity," in *The Miracle Years: A Cultural History of West Germany, 1949-1968*, ed. Hanna Schissler (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), 21-56.

disturbing state of desolation."<sup>816</sup> This chapter expands and modifies Nancy Reagin's argument that domesticity and housekeeping were "enshrined as a crucial site of national identity" in modern Germany.<sup>817</sup> Her study focused on the late nineteenth and first half of the twentieth centuries, highlighting the 'private rituals and practices' that helped to define and create a shared German identity. The experiences of World War II only increased the importance of domesticity for postwar Germans on both sides of the Iron Curtain.<sup>818</sup>

In this chapter, I trace the different ways in which both East and West Germans claimed the family meal as central to negotiating individual and collective relationships to the past and the future, and for the shaping of labor and leisure during the postwar decades. The home-cooked meal, unlike the school lunch or the canteen meal, was defined by societal practices and ideology, rather than institutionalized through the establishment of scientific, economic and nutritional research. This was particularly true in the early Federal Republic, where the very importance of the home-cooked meal meant that it played a key symbolic role not only in debates over nutrition and family life, but also in arguments over religion and spiritual identity, postwar economic reconstruction, the legacy of Nazism and the battle against Communism and the East. The fluidity of the category of the home-cooked meal was largely specific to the West, which relied upon its

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<sup>816</sup> Dr. Saul, "Die Ernährung im Dienst der Gesundheitserziehung in der Familie" in Hans Hoske, *Gesundheit aus eigener Verantwortung*. (Tries, 1956).

<sup>817</sup> Nancy Ruth Reagin, *Sweeping the German Nation: Domesticity and National Identity in Germany 1970-1945* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 6.

<sup>818</sup> This postwar fixation on domesticity, the politics of private consumption, and the nature of female labor was by no means specific to the two German states. These were the terms within which the Cold War took shape, most famously during the 1956 'Kitchen Debates' between Khrushchev and Nixon, when the two world leaders compared their respective economic systems in terms of women's domestic labor and kitchen technology. Historians of gender have drawn attention to the importance of the kitchen in Cold War negotiations over families and women's role in society in the postwar world. Sherrie A. Inness, *Kitchen Culture in America: Popular Representations of Food, Gender, and Race* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001); Ruth Oldenziel and Karin Zachmann, *Cold War Kitchen: Americanization, Technology, and European users* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2009).

(unemployed and domestically oriented) women to drive the country's consumer and reproductive agendas. The East German state, in contrast, tried to limit and simplify, rather than expand, the role of the home-cooked meal.

### **Modern Traditionalism in the German Kitchen**

The twentieth century has been heralded as the "century of the kitchen."<sup>819</sup> This was the time when the private kitchen emerged as one of the most important symbols of modernity, an expression of fantasies for the future and the promises of unlimited development. The twinned pressures of technologization and rationalization meant that economists, nutritionists, labor experts and inventors focused on the housewife in the kitchen, convinced that solving her problems (or the very problem of her existence) would resolve the dilemmas of modern life, ranging from dissolute family values to poor health to rampant consumerism and extremism and radicalism. The ambiguity surrounding women as both producers and consumers meant that kitchen design was recognized as having a tremendous impact not only upon the lives of the women who worked in them, and the families who ate there, but on the national economy as well. In these debates, German architects and social theorists had long been important international players.<sup>820</sup> During the Weimar Republic, for example, there was a powerful

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<sup>819</sup> Peter Corrigan, *The sociology of consumption: an introduction* (London: Sage, 1997), 99.

<sup>820</sup> During the Weimar Republic, it was largely German architects and social theorists who had revolutionized the 'modern kitchen.' The ambiguity surrounding the woman as both producer and consumer meant the kitchen design was recognized as having a tremendous impact not only upon the lives of the women who worked in them, and the families who ate their products, but on the national economy as well. No space was as central to the dilemma of irrational household labor as the kitchen, the 'heart of the home' and the focal point of female labor. Driven by the vision of creating a kitchen that was "the ideal workspace of the housewife," architects in Germany, including Walter Gropius, Margarete Schuette-Lihotzky and Erna Meyer, argued that housing design, and especially kitchen layout, determined whether a woman was "a slave to her obligations or skillful mistress of them." (Gerd Kuhn, "Die 'Frankfurter Küche'" in Gerd Kuhn, *Wohnkultur und kommunale Wohnungspolitik in Frankfurt Am Main: 1880 bis 1930: auf*

drive to remake the apartment, and particularly the kitchen, to suit a new, modern and liberated female lifestyle.<sup>821</sup> Driven by the vision of creating a kitchen that would be "the ideal workspace of the housewife," left-wing architects in Germany, including Walter Gropius, Margarete Schuette-Lihotzky and Erna Meyer, argued that housing design, and above all the layout of the kitchen, determined whether a woman was "a slave to her obligations or skillful mistress of them."<sup>822</sup> The Third Reich put an end to this tradition of experimentation, however. Nazi Germany remained ideologically committed to the importance of home-cooked meals prepared by wives and mothers, but was little interested in supporting architectural innovations in domestic design or in promoting new kitchen technologies.

For all of the countries involved in World War II, the years of battle had meant an unprecedented explosion in female employment along with restrictions on private consumer spending. The 'modern kitchen' was at the heart of the remaking of the world after the war, the creation of modern consumer culture, and, as Victoria De Grazia has shown, the spread of an idealized model of American consumer culture through Europe. This was the era when the 'modern homemaker' became synonymous with her kitchen, and when her kitchen was newly defined in relationship to a "battery of machinery . . . the stove, refrigerator, washing machine, vacuum cleaner, together with assorted

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*dem Wege zu einer pluralen Gesellschaft der Individuen* (Bonn: Dietz, 1998), 145.) The most famous modern kitchen design, Schuette-Lihotzky's 'Frankfurt Kitchen,' changed understandings of the 'ideal' kitchen. It rationalized and optimized kitchen labor by consolidating space and using new building materials and designs in order to save 'time, energy and money' and increase both productivity and pleasure in work.

<sup>821</sup> Nicholas Bullock, "First the Kitchen, then the Façade" *Journal of Design History* (1988), 181.

<sup>822</sup> Gerd Kuhn, "Die Frankfurter Küche" in *Wohnkultur und kommunale Wohnungspolitik in Frankfurt am Main 1880-1930. Auf dem Wege zu einer pluralen Gesellschaft der Individuen*. (Bonn 1998), 145. See also Nicholas Bullock's "First the Kitchen, then the Façade." The most famous architectural modern kitchen model, Schuette-Lihotzky's design for the 'Frankfurt kitchen,' emerged out of these debates. Her kitchen, which radically changed understandings of the 'ideal' kitchen, was a revolutionary attempt to rationalize and optimize kitchen labor by consolidating space and combining building materials and design to save 'time, energy and money,' and thus increasing both productivity and pleasure in work.

automatic mixers, blenders and coffee grinders."<sup>823</sup> The kitchen was not only the stage for individual performances of consumption; it was also a central metaphor for the international tensions of the Cold War, as "politicians strategically used kitchens to constitute, embody and enact their political goals."<sup>824</sup> In divided Germany, these Cold War struggles over the appropriate role of the modern kitchen in society acquired their own specific narrative and momentum. Both East and West Germany perceived the kitchen as an intrinsically old-fashioned space, and both recognized a need for modernization. Because of the kitchen's association with food production and maternal care, it evoked memories of the past and often a powerful sense of nostalgia; cuisine was imagined as a cultural legacy, and methods of cooking were thought of as 'handed down' from past generations. Thus, the kitchen seemed a site that preserved and even revived the past by means of food production.

In the FRG, the kitchen became one of the most important sites of national memory and collective identity, providing a crucial link between the problematic Nazi past and the unknown and alienating future.<sup>825</sup> It was connected with a longed-for gendered family order that had produced the 'good tastes' of past eras. A desire to maintain the German kitchen as a link between the old and the new, a mainstay of tradition and a 'respite' from modernization coexisted with the belief that the kitchen was the preeminent site of a private, consumer-oriented modernity. The kitchen had the

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<sup>823</sup> De Grazia, *Irresistible Empire: America's Advance through Twentieth-Century Europe*, 419

<sup>824</sup> "Introduction" in Oldenziel and Zachmann, *Cold War Kitchen: Americanization, Technology, and European users*, 4

<sup>825</sup> This is an interesting contrast to the country most famously associated with cuisine as a form of identity formation – modern France. There, a long-held conviction in the special-ness of French food meant that 'gastronomy,' and eventually an elite food culture and the spread of gourmet restaurants, helped to express, preserve and create French-ness. (See Sean Takats' recent dissertation from the University of Michigan, "Corrupting Cooks: Domestic Service and Expertise.") In postwar West Germany, however, it was not simply the food, but the place in which it was produced and consumed – the kitchen—that was seen as uniquely German.

potential to make postwar German identity 'palatable.' As a result, it was obsessively modernized and filled with new technology at the same time that cooking was advocated as a way of maintaining ties to the German past. The tensions embedded in the kitchen's potential to use modern technology to repair the harms of modernity meant that the private kitchen was important for debates over the threats and promises of modernity. The postwar world's 'three Ks,' of *Kinder*, *Kirche* and *Küche* had traditionally delineated the German housewife's realms of power— children, church and kitchen. While the first two have been the subject of some excellent monographs, the third has, with the exception of recent work by Michael Wildt, been relatively unexplored.<sup>826</sup> In fact, in its aggressive marketing of the modern kitchen and new kitchen technologies, its valorization of endangered German culinary traditions, and its transformation of cooking from a productive to a consumptive and reproductive labor, the Federal Republic remade the home-cooked meal into the iconized heart of the West German economic miracle, the literal and metaphoric sustenance of a healthy and "occidental" German family.

Because women's cooking was thought to shape the family that consumed it, changing the kitchen seemed the easiest and most effective way of remaking that family, incorporating it into a new capitalist and consumer-based society while preserving, through the continued insistence on female cooking, traditional gender and familial relations. One of the postwar period's most successful celebrities, TV chef Clemens Wilmenrod, narrated the economic miracle in terms of his kitchen:

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<sup>826</sup> Michael Wildt's two books on the topic are *Am Beginn der "Konsumgesellschaft": Mangelerfahrung, Lebenshaltung, Wohlstandshoffnung in Westdeutschland in den fünfziger Jahren*. (Hamburg: Ergebnisse Verlag, 1995) and *Der Traum vom Sattwerden. Hunger und Protest, Schwarzmarkt und Selbsthilfe*. (Hamburg: VSA-Verlag, 1986.)

As the new money suddenly appeared [because of the currency reform], I shoved my young wife into her chair to listen to me. As of now, I cried, a new era is beginning in our kitchen. You are about to experience miraculous things.<sup>827</sup>

This 'new era' was dominated by the acquisition of new kitchen technologies. In 1952, a time when the majority of the population was still struggling with scarcity and overwork, a cookbook dedicated to gas-powered kitchen technologies proclaimed that "the kitchen, the most important cell in the life of every family, has received a new face."<sup>828</sup>

Accordingly, the purchase of kitchen products was one of the first and most important goals for private spending, as refrigerators, electric stoves, mixers and freezers gradually made the transition from luxuries to staples to necessities.

In 1956 the first nation-wide consortium dedicated to domestic technology and kitchen design was formed. This *Arbeitsgemeinschaft für die moderne Küche* (AgmK) founded a professional journal two years later, *Moderne Küche*, (Modern Kitchen) a response to the troubling fact that there was

not a single popular, woman's or technical journal in all of Germany that was dedicated to the theme of technology in the household, the kitchen and its special requirements. For us today [in 1966] it is scarcely fathomable that, except for a few recipes, popular women's magazines of the time said scarcely a word about the kitchen, its tools and technological developments.<sup>829</sup>

The members of the board of the AgmK argued that "the transformation that the kitchen has undergone during the postwar years in terms of rationality, functionality, sociological and aesthetic meaning sets this era apart from all previous phases of development."<sup>830</sup>

Aiming for a wide audience including nutritionists, architects, domestic scientists and

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<sup>827</sup> Clemens Wilmenrod, *Es liegt mir auf der Zunge* (Hamburg: Hoffmann und Campe, 1954).

<sup>828</sup> Lucie Bürgel, *Kochen Braten Backen mühelos in der modernen Gasküche*. (Berlin-Halensee: Linde., 1952), 13.

<sup>829</sup> "Einleitung," *Die Moderne Küche* 39 (1966).

<sup>830</sup> *Ibid.*

housewives, the journal provided a forum for discussing recent trends in kitchen design, as well as the evolving role of the housewife in postwar Germany.

Despite the widespread propaganda and advocacy work of the AgmK, at large the technologization and modernization of the housewife's kitchen labor was sensitive and hotly contested. While there were few figures who openly condemned or rejected West Germany's chosen consumerist path, many voiced discomfort with the ramifications of the modernization of private cooking. The more modern a kitchen became, the greater the danger of the housewife losing her connection to that most definitional of female activities – cooking. In 1971, the journal *Rationelle Hauswirtschaft* (rational domestic science) published a lengthy critique of the modern kitchen by the well-known journalist and social commentator Heilwig von der Mehden titled "The Programmed Sunday Roast." While continually emphasizing the ease and pleasure accorded housewives by current kitchen technology, "allow[ing] the housewife to take part in the Sunday morning stroll rather than standing in the kitchen and tending the meat," von der Mehden at the same time warned home architects and scientists to remember that "the kitchen is of course not a laboratory, and the housewife not an isolated astronaut." Although in the modern kitchen, "all a woman really needs to do is push buttons and turn knobs," a true kitchen demanded as well "colors, decorations, colorful wallpaper and curtains as well as a little bit of coziness."<sup>831</sup> In her delineation of these competing pulls, casting the kitchen as a springboard into a consumerist and prosperous modernity and simultaneously, with its warmth and coziness, as a feminine escape from a heartless and dehumanizing modernity, von der Mehden expressed the dilemma that framed discussions over the

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<sup>831</sup> Heilwig von der Mehden, "Der programmierte Sonntagsbraten. Trotz ausgetüftelter Technik: die Küche ist kein Laboratorium." *Rationelle Hauswirtschaft*. (January 27, 1971).

impact of modernity of German society, an impact for which the German housewife stood as metonymic shorthand.

The same modern kitchen that promised to reduce the time and energy that women spent cooking could potentially allow her to abandon the kitchen altogether; after all, an electric stove was proudly capable of cooking "the most delicious menus on its own, even when you are not at home. It needs no monitoring. In the morning you select the cooking time on the timer. And that is all – punctually to the minute, your meal is ready to be served."<sup>832</sup> And if a housewife had previously won her husband's heart and ensured healthy children through her skilled cooking, was cooking done by machines in the complete absence of her magical touch still adequately nourishing? Indeed, the West German obsession with housewife's kitchen work, with her shopping, cooking and serving of food, expressed as much fear as it did desire. Rhetorical questions like "is the database replacing the cookbook collection?" did not hope for an affirmative answer.<sup>833</sup>

German women were encouraged to become, like the 'emancipated' American woman, 'kitchenminded,' and taught that the kitchen "has become a space of prestige, and belongs to the parts of the home that are shown to guests with pride."<sup>834</sup> At the same time, however, West German women were strongly encouraged to maintain cooking habits that were constructed as traditionally German. This rhetoric embraced the technology of the United States, ranging from mixers to electric stoves to frozen foods, but at the same time denigrated the country's actual culinary culture, dismissed as overly

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<sup>832</sup> Elisabeth Meyer-Haagen, *Das Elektrische Kochen*. (Berlin-Halensee: Linde, 1963).

<sup>833</sup> "So ist die häusliche Computer-Zukunft nicht gedacht." Karl-Friedrich: ‚was gibt’s zu essen?‘ Doretchen: ‚Gar nichts. Das Doppel-Thermo-Vorschalt-Typen-Aggregat unseres kochsympathischen Elektroherds ist ausgefallen.‘ *Rationelle Hauswirtschaft*. 8. Jahrgang, 27.1.1971

<sup>834</sup> "Anbau-Küchen im deutsch-amerikanischen Gespräch," *Hauswirtschaft und Volksernährung. Fachzeitschrift für Rationelle Haushaltsführung*. 39 (1967).

modern, lacking tradition and cultural cohesion. Advertisements for new technology and modern cooking techniques took pains to establish these products as linked to the past and as carrying on German traditional kitchen-work, rather than as a radical break with the past. Kitchen design experts advised consumers to 'ask their mother' for her opinion as to the best appliances and the most rational kitchen design. After all, "she worked for years in the kitchen and gathered much experience."<sup>835</sup> The fact that she, of course, had no experience with the modern technologies and designs she was supposed to advise her daughter on seemed largely irrelevant.

The paradoxical drive to have the kitchen maintain connections to the past while at the same time embracing modernity had framed West German nutritional discourse since the end of the war. Postwar West Germans were deeply concerned that the war, by forcing women to join the workforce and disrupting traditional familial structures, had severed the traditional passing on of cookery skills from generation to generation, something that held profound consequences for the survival of German society and culture: "When the times of emergency were finally over, millions of young women no longer knew the recipes that had been the pride of the household stove."<sup>836</sup> Younger West German housewives lacked the ability to evaluate and plan healthy meals and were unable to learn it from absent or overburdened mothers. Even those who had the requisite knowledge could not be counted on to feed their families properly; inadequate foodstuffs and increased labor demands meant that "housewives could seldom prepare

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<sup>835</sup> Landjugendberatungsdienst. *Gute Küche – weniger Arbeit*. (Bonn- Bad Godesberg: AID, 1957), 1.

<sup>836</sup> Lilo Aureden, *Was Männern so gut schmeckt. Eine Kulinarische Weltreise in 580 Rezepten* (München: Deutscher Taschenbuch-Verlag, 1953), 40.

meals in the manner to which they were accustomed, and a great many have forgotten how to cook."<sup>837</sup>

In response to the dire state of German housewives and thus of dietary and familial health, the German Nutrition Society (DGE) was founded in 1953. Created as a "wide-reaching scientific society for nutrition that engages with the question, how can a well-rounded diet be made and how can it be realized in our land,"<sup>838</sup> the DGE aimed to be "a linkage between the government and science, and between the sciences and agriculture, the food industry, food marketing and sales and the consumer."<sup>839</sup> From its inception, the DGE emphasized its conservative values while celebrating its interest in supporting the expansion of the consumer economy and the distribution of the newest nutritional knowledge. The institute assured the population in 1958 that

it has not been and will not be attempted, for example, to try to use words or thoughts to suppress handed-down tastes or eating habits in order to revolutionize or reform diet. In a so history-conscious and tradition-bound country as Germany this would not be the proper way. We have chosen the quieter and more intensive method of personal conviction, which encourages the transition to more practical dietary forms in accordance with our development, with a gentle touch and based on previously existing customs.<sup>840</sup>

Indeed, the DGE openly pulled upon earlier models of consumer nutritional education, most notably emulating the Reichsnährstand's "attempt to organically unite the interests

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<sup>837</sup> "Niederschrift über die 18. Arbeitbesprechung des berliner Komitees für Ernährungsfragen am 16. Dezember 1949" Landesarchiv Berlin B rep 012 / 131

<sup>838</sup> Kraut and Wirths, *Mehr Wissen um Ernährung. Berichte über Studienreisen im Rahmen der Auslandshilfe der USA*, 110

<sup>839</sup> *Ibid.*, 110 The DGE has always been closely tied to the food industry, often evoking criticisms for its collaboration with companies and products that counter its own nutritional recommendations, most famously, under the leadership of Dr. Völker Pudel, their endorsement of McDonalds. The organization's official publication, the *Ernährungs-Umschau*, has been dominated by advertisements for products "that went against the dietary advice of the DGE" since the early 1950s. (Melzer, *Vollwerternährung. Diätetik, Naturheilkunde, Nationalsozialismus, sozialer Anspruch*, 299.) Melzer's book discusses this aspect of the Society's history in more detail.

<sup>840</sup> Hans Glatzel, "Möglichkeiten und Grenzen der Ernährungsführung" in Deutsche Gesellschaft für Ernährung, *Ernährungsberatung aus medizinischer, volks- und hauswirtschaftlicher Sicht*, 14

of the many branches of the food industry and the consumer."<sup>841</sup> Indeed, like NS nutritionists before them, West German nutritionists associated modernization with a worsening, rather than improvement, of nutritional health; "industrial society" was the "internal and external social root of Germans' poor diet."<sup>842</sup>

The domestic kitchen seemed to provide the possibility for creating a version of modernity that did not mean leaving behind the past, instead reincorporating (digesting) it in a politically acceptable way. This desire for cuisine to maintain and strengthen connections to the past shaped West German cookbooks as well as kitchens. In East Germany, every single mainstream cookbook was a new text composed after the war, written by East Germans or other food experts from other 'socialist friendship lands.' In contrast, in the West there was a trend for republishing older, so-called traditional cookbooks, particularly those written during the late nineteenth century, but stretching into the 1920s and 1930s. Even some Third Reich cookbooks were re-released after the war. With a focus on "much beloved," "traditional," and "familiar" recipes and cooking techniques, these re-edited cookbooks allowed German cuisine to be an important site of continuity with the German past and an expression of positive, traditional German values. One of the most popular of these cookbooks was Mary Hahn's *Praktisches Kochbuch für die bürgerliche Küche* (Practical Cookbook for the Middle-Class Kitchen) a book that had won prizes at international cooking conventions during the interwar years, and which

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<sup>841</sup> Haskarl and Clauss, *Die Macht der Hausfrau*, 4

<sup>842</sup> Neuloh and Teuteberg, *Ernährungsfehlverhalten im Wohlstand*, 21. This was one of the most striking and consistent differences between East and West German approaches to popular nutrition: East German nutritionists generally cast modernity as the key to achieving an ideal diet, while West Germans saw modernity, with its associated social degeneration, decreased food quality and higher physical and mental demands, as opposed to good health and nutrition. This was, of course, particularly obvious in West German doctors' discomfort with the paradigmatically modern eating form of canteens. This critical approach to modernization's impact on popular diet has in particular shaped the development of the DGE, through to the writings of its most recent head Völker Pudiel.

was awarded the silver medal at the 1956 international kitchen exhibit in Frankfurt am Main.<sup>843</sup> Originally published in the 1880s, the cookbook focused on German recipes with practical suggestions for how to prepare filling and reasonably priced meals for a family. The premise of the cookbook, the assumed audience, and the recipes themselves remained strikingly consistent throughout the decades. While the first postwar reprint began by pointing out that "so much has changed since the first publication of Mary Hahn's cookbook; opinions regarding the appropriate preparation of dishes are quite different today," the cookbook immediately reassured its readers that the "well-known and tried and true Mary Hahn cookbook"<sup>844</sup> had not been profoundly changed. Indeed, the goal of the cookbook was to ensure that "you do not need to abandon those dishes that your mother and grandmother prepared according to Mary Hahn's recipes."<sup>845</sup>

Over the course of the 1960s, the anti-modernization tendencies of the West German nutritional establishment were supported by growing concern over the death of traditional German cuisine. Housewives were encouraged to retreat from an over-hasty embrace of international foods and recipes, and to rediscover the recipes of parents and grandparents. A cookbook written as early as 1953 called upon German housewives to "nourish anew the good, the proven old traditions; only by doing this will we be able to re-attain a certain quality of life through our work."<sup>846</sup> The preservation of German

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<sup>843</sup> Mary Hahn, *Praktisches Kochbuch für die bürgerliche Küche* (Stuttgart: Deutscher Bücherbund, 1954).

<sup>844</sup> Ibid. "Vorwort"

<sup>845</sup> Ibid. The general West German obsession with maintaining 'memories' and traditions of the ethnic German expellees had explicitly political dimensions, a form of resistance to the new national boundaries. The continued interest in the ways in which these Germans used to live, and the preservation of this way as the true and authentic one, "implies that all refugees and re-settlers should not only live in their new *Heimat* in the Federal Republic but should maintain a parallel mental existence in their *alte Heimat* in order to safeguard a real German future for it." Samuel Salzborn, "The German myth of a Victim Nation." in Helmut Schmitz, *A Nation of victims?: representations of German wartime suffering from 1945 to the present*. (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2007), 88.

<sup>846</sup> Aureden, *Was Männern so gut Schmeckt*, 202.

recipes and cooking techniques was seen as a vital sort of conservation, even resurrection, of a German culture conceived of as in real danger of becoming extinct.<sup>847</sup> Preserving German recipes while encouraging the incorporation of modern technology and ingredients into their production seemed an ideal model for a sort of authentically German postwar modernization.

The popular women's magazine *Für Sie* ran a lengthy series in 1968 called "The Colorful Book of Favorite Dishes,"<sup>848</sup> in order to introduce its readers to "more than 300 recipes of typical specialties from our multifaceted native [*heimischen*] cuisine." Confident that "there is hardly anyone who does not have his favorite *Leibgericht*. Often it is a specialty of the land or the region where we grew up as children," the magazine assumed a painful break in postwar German culinary knowledge, diagnosing an entire generation of readers as having spent their "entire lives rave[ing] about it [their *Leibgericht*], perhaps with a bit of melancholy desire, as we seldom if ever receive our self-declared favorite food."<sup>849</sup> Due to their inability to prepare the food that truly satisfied the cravings of German men and children, housewives were blamed for the fact that

even our home-cooked meals have lost much of their earlier special connection to the land [*bodenständigen Eigenart*] . . . [this collection] will help to ensure that

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<sup>847</sup> Concerns over the societal impact of shifts in women's role in society, specifically over their eventual abandonment of the category of the housewife, were specifically tied to the imagined loss of 'good German foods' that were imbued with tremendous nostalgic value. This collective fantasy regarding the 'wholesomeness' and vitality of traditional German cooking was particularly potent in postwar West Germany because cuisine seemed one of the few culturally bound constructs free of political contamination with Nazism. There was a sense that cooking "traditional" recipes and using older cookbooks were activities without political ramifications.

<sup>848</sup> The term used was 'Leibgerichte,' a 'dish for the body' or even more intense, a 'Leib- und Magengericht,' a 'dish for the body and the belly,' implying something both tasty and hearty, nourishing the flesh and the soul.

<sup>849</sup> "Das bunte Buch der Leibgerichte." *Für Sie* 20 (1968).

our indigenous specialties are not forgotten, that the traditional diversity of precisely our domestic cooking is preserved for the future.<sup>850</sup>

This commitment to the flavors and cooking techniques of the past, however, was tempered by a decidedly modern framing. Preparing such dishes did not demand a rejection of modern convenience and consumer culture. Wherever possible, the authors "rationally simplified" dishes while "ensuring that their special quality is not lost." These "good old specialties" still tasted excellent when prepared with canned, frozen or prepackaged foods.

The same year, the women's journal *Constanze*, aimed at a younger readership than the more formal *Für Sie*, began its own series, "The new cookbook of traditional dishes [*Hausmannskost*.]"<sup>851</sup> The opening article, "Grandma's kitchen/cooking remains modern," framed its articles not in terms of repairing the tragic break between eater and *Heimat*, but as a sensual acknowledgment of the innate "desire for simple, primal, hearty and tangible foods; the gusto for the foods of our fathers." By introducing herself and her family to the dishes of all of the regions of Germany, the housewife could instill in them a sense of the richness and diversity of Germany: certainly "your own family will be

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<sup>850</sup> Ibid.

<sup>851</sup> The drive toward 'rediscovering' regional cuisine in Germany that took place in the late 1960s cannot be separated from the larger political contexts of the time, both nationally and internationally. The '68ers, the first postwar generation of Germans to question their parents' relationship to Nazism and the war, aimed a tremendous amount of critique at the 'bourgeois' family structure of their parents, particularly their fathers. Within this generation, the memory of fathers insisting on children cleaning their plate, an *Essenszwang*, (being forced to eat) was an oft-repeated trope, and a motivation for the radicalization of domestic life and family structures that was central to the projects of the 68ers. (For a discussion of this theme in postwar German literature, see Alois Wierlacher, *Vom Essen in der deutschen Literatur*, 147-150.) The refusal to eat that which the father insisted the child eat was constitutive of the rejection of the values, social and economic relations of the father. (For a provocative discussion of the sexual and family politics of these years, see Herzog, *Sex after Fascism: Memory and Morality in Twentieth-Century Germany*.) The German left's turn to vegetarianism and international foods is also tied to an explicitly political rejection of the traditional German foods that were associated with reactionary fathers and passive mothers of this first radicalized generation. In a sense, then, this rhetorical 'rediscovery' of the regional in Germany is not a reaction against an increased internationalism, but instead a response to the rejection of these foods, and the implied rejection of German-ness, German values, and German history associated with it, by the 68ers.

tremendously excited when you announce: next Saturday I will cook Swabian, on Sunday is something Silesian, and for afternoon coffee an original Frisian *Knuppeltorte*."<sup>852</sup>

Such German specialties were described as offering both the producers and consumers of these meals a way of negotiating the harms and losses of the modern age by preserving the German past. West German cookbooks described traditional foods in terms of their opposition to modernity, their ability to "turn back the clock" and recreate a lost time and place imagined as free of the legacy of militarism, Nazism and of the disturbing forces of modernity.<sup>853</sup>

In dramatic contrast, the GDR was in no way caught up in a mystical search for that illusive 'harmonious unity' of the properly prepared and thankfully consumed home-cooked meal. Here, modernity was officially embraced and celebrated; the establishment of a socialist state demanded a radical remaking of the traditional German diet and eating culture. Early on, socialist nutritionists declared an official battle with tradition. In 1950, less than a year after the country's founding, nutritionist Richard Schielicke announced that "the movement away from the old traditions, which are found in abundance in our cuisine, is an absolute necessity."<sup>854</sup> Cooking as practiced in the socialist half of Germany was to be something new and different, a difference marked by specifically

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<sup>852</sup> "Das bunte Buch der Leibgerichte." This use of regionalism to create a shared common German food vocabulary was at its heart paradoxical. As cookbooks taught housewives from throughout West Germany to cook dishes from regions far removed from their own, they ultimately removed the region from the regional dish. Both American and German guidebooks to the FRG recognized this dilemma, and bemoaned a "decline in regional variety, noting the spread of various local dishes throughout the country." Rudy Koshar, *German Travel Cultures* (New York: Berg, 2000), 195.

<sup>853</sup> As one 1969 guide to German culinary regionalism explained, "in the Bavarian Franken region, you will seek in vain for an overwhelming modernity. The past and the present, tradition and progress, are bound together in a harmonious unity. This is particularly true in regards to the gastronomy." Regina Rühmland and Ulrich Rühmland, *Essen und Trinken in deutschen Landen*. (Bonn-Röttgen; Wolfenbüttel: Bonner Druckerei- und Verlagsgesellschaft; Grenzland-Verlag Rock, 1969), 47.

<sup>854</sup> "An Fachbuchverlag" DIFE 252 # 341. Several years later, Schielicke defected to the West for financial and family reasons. This was one of the most embarrassing moments in GDR nutritional history. Despite his defection, his books on collective feeding continued to be used for many years, as they were considered the best in the field.

modern methods of food production of eating. East German cookbooks explicitly rejected any sort of romanticization of the German past; Grandma's cookbook, in the West a powerful icon of abundance, security and cherished traditions, was associated here with primitiveness, poor health, and bourgeois exploitation:

Out of the yellowed, stained pages [of old cookbooks] suddenly emerges the unvarnished truth of the so-called good old days . . . and suddenly it is anything but good, cozy or relaxing. Not only did young women have to . . . cook, fry and bake, they also churned butter and cheese, brewed beer, sewed and bleached, made soap . . . even more disturbing for us today was the humiliation and exploitation associated with kitchen work . . . yes, the only good thing about these old days is that they are over!<sup>855</sup>

The state had a vested interest in promoting 'artificial' and 'chemical' modern foods; because of economic and trade restrictions, the small country hoped that science, and especially chemistry, would solve its food problems; nutritional research emphasized the production of 'ersatz' products for goods that were available in limited quantities (honey) or prohibitively expensive to import (chocolate, coffee.) While there was a celebration of domestically produced foods (apples, pears, plums, potatoes), their virtues were not to be found in their specific German-ness or in their links to history or tradition but in their healthfulness, simplicity and good flavor. The East German Institute for Nutritional Research, the national center for dietary research and education, was squarely opposed to old-fashioned allegiances to traditional foods and recipes. The popular nutritionist and public figure Heinrich Gräfe wrote a column titled "Did Great-Grandmother live more healthfully?" in which he countered the idea that

when it comes to diet, everything was better and healthier in earlier days. The foods were purer and more natural, great-grandmother harvested her own fruits and vegetables every year, she has her own little herb garden, she slaughtered her own pig, she cured, pickled, smoked, dried.

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<sup>855</sup> Kurt Drummer and Käthe Muskewitz, *Kochkunst aus dem Fernsehstudio: Rezepte, Prakt. Winke, Literar. Anm.* (Leipzig: Fachbuchverl. VEB, 1968).

This pure and authentic German food past, however, was injected with a shot of socialist realism, when Gräfe reminded his readers that "under these dietary conditions, with such a simple and monotonous diet as was the case in those days, nobody today would be satisfied" – not to mention, of course, the widespread malnourishment and starvation amongst the exploited and the poor.<sup>856</sup>

This unabashed embrace of modernity relied upon a specific definition of what it was that made a kitchen, a housewife or a recipe 'modern,' one that was quite different from the way that the term was understood in the FRG. In the GDR, it was not the technologies with which one cooked, but the methods that the cook employed that expressed modernization and scientific advances. The labor itself, rather than the tools of labor, had to change. This meant that housewives needed knowledge in order to cook properly. Modernization claims and aspirations in the GDR actually increased the demands placed on cooks as cooks, rather than as consumers. This was in contrast to the West, where modernity promised to simplify kitchen work, and technologies advertised themselves as requiring no knowledge and even less skill on the part of their female users. Indeed, nutritionists in the GDR saw these increased demands as intrinsic to socialist development, contrasting modern, healthful cooking with the "artificial luxury" of older cooking styles. In a 1947 appeal to the female population of the Soviet Zone, Wilhelm Ziegelmayr declared that

today, the common good demands of every single woman that she acquire special kitchen knowledge about preparing healthy food. A woman today must relearn how to cook . . . these days we require a remarkable amount of knowledge [from the housewife], so that she runs her kitchen not only for the good of the individual, but also for the people's economy.<sup>857</sup>

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<sup>856</sup> DIFE 236 # 282-283

<sup>857</sup> Wilhelm Ziegelmayr, *Ernährungswegweiser* (Berlin: Linde, 1948), 37.

During the Hunger Years, socialist nutritionists and politicians promoted the strategies of food preparation that were based in desperation (the harvesting of wild greens, extracting flour from acorns and so on) as scientifically based and profoundly rational. Knowledge was the best weapon against hunger, was the common refrain. (In the West, such measures were described as temporary, primitive, and to be discarded as soon as possible.) Knowledge continued to be the best friend of the cooking housewife into the relatively prosperous sixties, protecting against new health problems ranging from imbalanced diets to exhaustion and obesity. The kitchen should not and could not be the place to maintain connections to tradition and 'old fashioned' values. In fact, quite the contrary. The well-known German nutritionist and cookbook author Elisabeth Wieloch explained in her 1964 edition of *Gesund durch Gemüse* that modernization had "expanded the demands and tasks assigned to women," requiring "a break with the eating habits of yesterday." What an individual ate, and what a woman cooked,

can no longer be random, ruled by superstition and ignorance. Solid knowledge is the base of our new style of eating . . . the only requirement is the people's willingness, for a sensible dietary steering and advising gives them all the cards they need to play successfully.<sup>858</sup>

Cooking experts advocated modern 'techniques' more than modern 'technologies,' which were advocated in the interest of women's liberation but never described as essential to good cooking. Books teaching about rational cooking explained how to use refrigerators or electric stoves, but also how taught thrifty housewives how to construct home-made cooling devices out of empty flower-pots and linen bags. Such alternatives were not seen as compromising the modernization and rationalization of private cooking

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<sup>858</sup> Elisabeth Wieloch, *Gesund durch Gemüse, roh und gekocht: eine Anleitung für naturgemässe Ernährung*, (Leipzig: Fachbuchverl., 1964), 12-13.

because the primary aims – easing the housewife's burden and improving the healthfulness of cooked meals – were achievable through the proper application of knowledge. (This was of course in direct opposition to the West, which advertised technology as a solution to or substitute for knowledge.) Cookbooks and nutritional education programs emphasized increasing dietary knowledge, and spreading new 'modern' cooking techniques like steaming rather than boiling foods, and not soaking cut vegetables.

In 1966, in response to continued complaints from women regarding their inability to satisfactorily master the double burden of working and cooking, the SED initiated a new program to "ease and reduce housework." Noting that "a whole series of regularly occurring household chores remain for psychological and traditional reasons the responsibility of women," the report found that especially "in the realm of food provisioning and preparation there is substantial room for reducing and easing housework," and recommended "simplifying, mechanizing and rationalizing" kitchen work.<sup>859</sup> Although such programs encouraged the purchasing of frozen and prepared foods and an increased use of household kitchen machines, the primary focus remained squarely in the realm of production rather than consumption.

There were rarely attempts to downplay the seriousness and intense intellectual labor that was part of proper cooking. Cooking was both a responsibility and a science, and as such should be taken seriously by those women (and occasional men) who undertook it. Indeed, trained nutritionists authored many of the popular cookbooks published in the GDR, in contrast to the West where 'ordinary housewives' or celebrities

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<sup>859</sup> "Komplexes Programm für die Erleichterung und Verringerung der Hausarbeit" Stadtarchiv Leipzig 20237 / 31647

usually wrote them. These socialist cookbooks explained that "the housewife must select and prepare her basic foods and her supplemental ones based on their differing nutritional makeup to ensure an even coverage of all needs, cooking them properly so as to avoid the loss of nutrients."<sup>860</sup> The new demands placed upon the East German housewife required to "do her best to use the newest methods in her kitchen work in order to ease her labor, and so as not to hinder her ambitions to improve the quality of her work by imperfect techniques."<sup>861</sup>

Confident that "housewives and kitchen workers will not find it difficult to turn away from the old, false culinary skills and embrace new, correct ones,"<sup>862</sup> socialist culinary discourse associated modernity and healthful meals with a new "flexible, scientifically based conception of kitchen work . . . which requires a critical and creative mindset."<sup>863</sup> Although cookbooks here, as in the West, were dominated by traditional German-style dishes focused on potatoes, pork and starchy vegetables, they were framed within a rhetoric of a socialist and scientific modernity:

Have you ever thought about the enormous scientific work – the research, pondering, calculations, tests and not least of all the incredibly precise handiwork – necessary to send a manned spaceship around earth or into the atmosphere? Now you are probably asking: what does this have to do with the publication of a modern cookbook, written in accord with the newest discoveries of nutritional science . . . I can answer quite simply– a great deal! For in cooking . . . there is just as much research, considerations, calculations and tests.<sup>864</sup>

New techniques and the acquisition of knowledge and skills were the key to good cooking; time-saving strategies and kitchen technologies promised to 'liberate' women

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<sup>860</sup> Wilhelm Ziegelmayr, *Küchenmathematik. Nährwertkontrolle für die Hausfrau*. (Berlin: Nauck, 1948), 1.

<sup>861</sup> Herbert H. Krauss, *Gesunde Küche; Anleitung zu einer gesundheitsfördernden Ernährung*. (Berlin: VEB Verlag Volk und Gesundheit, 1960), 24.

<sup>862</sup> Wieloch, *Gesund durch Gemüse, roh und gekocht*, 5

<sup>863</sup> "Denkschrift über die Schaffung einer zentralen Lehrküche" BArch DC 6 / 89

<sup>864</sup> Drummer and Muskewitz, *Kochkunst aus dem Fernsehstudio*, 5

from the kitchen and allow them to work; children and adults were supposed to eat at least one meal a day at the school or workplace; and women were encouraged both to reduce the pressure on themselves to cook perfect meals, and simultaneously to study the most modern nutritional charts in order to ensure 'optimal' food for herself and her family. If modernity in the West was associated with specific, luxurious or high-tech food products, the newest variety of refrigerator and a sleek yet feminine kitchen layout, in the GDR modernity was assured by "unsentimentally throwing overboard foolish traditions,"<sup>865</sup> and embracing a new and modern socialist cuisine.

### **Feeding Families with the Home-Cooked Meal**

The kitchen was not only the place where the newest advances in material technology and cooking techniques entered the domestic sphere and daily life. It was also the site of the most important daily ritual of familial reproduction: cooking. In preparing food for her children and husband, the housewife in the kitchen confirmed her relationship to her family as nurturer, and allowed the nuclear family to create itself anew every day, at every meal, by eating together. The shared nuclear family meal is an iconic construction of modernity. However, this model of parents and children eating together and separate from extended family members, servants or workers became 'normative' among the upper middle classes in the nineteenth century, and only truly 'normal' in the twentieth. The biological process of eating strengthened the metaphoric unit of the family by strengthening its individual members. As the anthropologist Marc Bloch explained: "eating the same food unites the bodies that eat together . . . as a result, families may be understood as being continually unified not only by biology but also by

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<sup>865</sup> Ibid.

being commensal units."<sup>866</sup> The specific structure of the family meal created however difference and hierarchy as much as unity. Most obviously the meal confirmed the mother's role as producer, and her husband and children's roles as consumers. At the same time, every hour that a wife spent producing food within her kitchen was an hour spent working outside of the public sphere – the more she cooked, the more she confirmed her husband's ability to support the family without her financial contribution. Traditional deference to the tastes of the husband, as well as according husbands prime cuts of meat and higher-energy food items, confirmed the mother's self-sacrificial nature as well as affirming her lesser value within the family unit.<sup>867</sup> The specific foods that she created also were deeply significant, as they reflected not only family class allegiances and budgetary constraints but also regional and cultural identity.

Modern western industrial capitalism as a gendered economic system saw the family meal as a primary site of negotiation between the public and private sectors, the place where the interdependence of these two ostensibly separate spheres is made disturbingly obvious. As a result, capitalism has tended to fetishize the family meal, ahistorically attributing to it a central role in Western development.<sup>868</sup> The model of the nuclear family meal ironically became normalized at the moment when the inclusion of women into the industrial economy made it all the more elusive. This economic model, based on a male breadwinner with financially dependent wife and children, cast the

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<sup>866</sup> Maurice Bloch, "Commensality and Poisoning" in Arien Mack, ed., *Food: Nature and Culture.*, Vol. 66 (New York: New School for Social Research., 1998), 138.

<sup>867</sup> A mother's feeding of her family "not only serves the purpose of filling bellies, but is also an act of love, care and tribute, yes even of self-sacrifice." Kühnau, "Die Frau als Hüterin der Ernährung," 8

<sup>868</sup> See Norbert Elias, *The Civilizing Process* (Oxford England ; Cambridge, Mass.: Blackwell, 1994) and Philippe Ariès, *Centuries of Childhood: A Social History of Family Life.* (New York: Vintage Books, 1965).

family as "a haven of privacy beyond the public realm of commerce and industry;"<sup>869</sup> it depended upon wives and mothers accepting the responsibility of feeding their husbands and children in distinctive, isolated family units, and providing this labor for free. This meal, "prepared by the woman and consumed by the family together, symbolizes the gender division of labor and relations of dependence which are constitutive of a specific ideology of the family."<sup>870</sup>

Postwar West Germans assigned a remarkable array of tasks and responsibilities to the home-cooked meal. It was, of course, supposed to maintain and improve the health of all eaters; it was to buoy up the economy and strengthen the consumer marketplace; it was a German housewife's main outlet for creativity, pleasure and self-expression; it should provide a needed counterpart to the German man's stressful and rushed work environment by offering a vital opportunity to relax and slow down; it was a primary site of socialization and familial interaction; it was one of the last remaining ways to preserve German culture; and it was a site of childhood education. In the words of a 1953 consumer guide for housewives, purchasing and preparing food was "the core basis of all female activities, perhaps even the single most important one because it is the most natural expression of the highest task of the woman, motherhood and caring for the family."<sup>871</sup>

Biological, social and cultural health were all seen as dependent upon the preservation and improvement of the shared family meal. While the individual man was presumed to have little ability to control the excessive pace of public life, the German

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<sup>869</sup> Nickie Charles, "Food and Family Ideology" in Stevi Jackson and Shaun Moores, *The Politics of Domestic Consumption: Critical Readings* (London; New York: Prentice Hall, 1995), 100.

<sup>870</sup> *Ibid.*, 108

<sup>871</sup> Haskarl and Clauss, *Die Macht der Hausfrau*, 34

housewife was told that she could dictate the speed and thus the healthfulness of her domestic space and family activities through her structuring of meals, ensuring that they were "an oasis of supportive and relaxing energy."<sup>872</sup> In 1954, the national woman's magazine *Prima* described the fragmentation of postwar society: "the father goes to work, the children rush off to school and mother must pursue at home her many responsibilities. At the table, however, they meet up together." While recognizing the multitude of potential sources of stress at the meal ("father comes home in a bad mood or mother has prepared an unsuccessful dish"), the author reassured her readers that "countless such potential sources of conflict could be quickly eliminated" by ensuring that every meal is calm, delicious and nutritious, and accompanied by "interesting and pleasant discussion."<sup>873</sup> A properly executed family meal

Accustom[ed] children to traditions and orderliness, train[ed] them to come together at the table in a well-contained, self-controlled and civilized [*gesittet*] manner. . . the meal must be used to offer children information about the value of individual nutrients and to illuminate the linkage between biology and the mother earth, the labor of the farmer and the performance of the mother of the family, in order to encourage them not only to give thanks for the Creation, but also for the family: this should be expressed in a thanking after the meal.<sup>874</sup>

The family meal provided both physical and metaphysical nourishment; it was, in the words of a conservative politician, "between suckling at the mother's breast, the soup bowl and the loaf of bread . . . the first decisive unfolding of the human soul occurs and . . . the human ability to love develops."<sup>875</sup>

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<sup>872</sup> Dr. Saul, "Die Ernährung im Dienst der Gesundheitserziehung in der Familie", 130

<sup>873</sup> "Prima: Abschrift" BArch B 116 / 8075

<sup>874</sup> Dr. Saul, "Die Ernährung im Dienst der Gesundheitserziehung in der Familie", 130

<sup>875</sup> Cited in Moeller, *Protecting Motherhood*, 114 Postwar West German conservatives often evoked the 'natural-ness' of maternal breastfeeding as a representation of the biological imperative of women to feed their families. This imagery was often melded with a Christian rhetoric of self sacrifice, in which mothers (like Christ) gave of their own bodies in order to nourish their children and husbands. In a country with a strong if controversial tradition of psychoanalysis, the focus on breastfeeding imagery in the FRG seems to lend itself to a psychoanalytic reading, one that would provide an interesting counterpart to well-known

In the postwar era, with its fixation on spiritual regeneration and the salvation of the German family after the horrors of the war and the Hunger Years, food retained much of the mysticism that it had been granted during the Third Reich.<sup>876</sup> However this mysticism was shifted in focus from a racial or Völkisch to a familial one, one that was spiritually Christian and culturally Germanic. Cooking properly in the kitchen healed recent traumas and promised to counteract the loss or degeneration of German culture caused both by the war and by the general harms of modernity. 'Culture' as a concept is etymologically rooted in the diet, and Germans, like all other human societies, conceptualized themselves collectively through real and imagined eating habits. Emphasizing the Germanic nature of this familial meal, postwar nutritionists emphasized the 'old Germanic' roots of the word *Mahl*, or meal, "meaning coming together. [The family meal] is where people should gather and unite, both externally and internally. The

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discussions of West Germany as a 'fatherless' society or a society 'unable to mourn.' (For the most influential psychoanalytic analysis of postwar Germany, see Alexander Mitscherlich and Margarete Mitscherlich, *The Inability to Mourn: Principles of Collective* (New York: Grove Press, 1975). The breastfeeding imagery of the early FRG also offers an intriguing addendum to Klaus Theweleit's brilliant and controversial study of the Freikorps, *Male Fantasies*. Feminist psychoanalysts in particular have highlighted the centrality of breastfeeding for the gendered structures of Western society, particularly in regards to the relationship between eating and identity formation. In particular the writings of Julie Kristeva have focused on the complex negotiations of the boundaries of self and other that are enacted by breast-feeding; her work "reminds us that the first food that most of us receive comes from our mothers' bodies. It reminds us that our first relationship with another person is founded on a bodily relationship whereby one body feeds another . . . we become subjects, more precisely speaking subjects, because of, and in response to, the primary pleasure of eating." Kelly Oliver, "Nourishing the Speaking Subject: a Psychoanalytic Approach to Abominable Food and Women," in Curtin and Heldke, *Cooking, Eating, Thinking: Transformative Philosophies of Food*, 68

<sup>876</sup> German foods prepared by German hands offered not only the continuity of tradition, but also a metaphysical way of recreating the German peoples. In this, West German continued a line of nutritional discourse that had flourished since the turn of the century in esoteric groups within Germany, and that had acquired mainstream value during the Third Reich, most famously in the cultish celebration of 'blood and soil' and the simple German farmer. A paper delivered at a national health conference in 1956, for example, evoked the image of "the simple man, who thoughtfully stirs his evening soup, slowly crumbles in his piece of bread, and eats it with a simple pleasure in its warming and nourishing nature," who in his eating habits embodied 'devotion' [*Andacht*], as he was full of "satisfaction and therefore with gratitude." Although he might not be "consciously aware of the metaphysical connections between his Germanic history and diet," by maintaining this diet, "some of those cultish bonds from earlier centuries continue to thrive. For after all we cannot overlook the fact that a meal, the simple opportunity to consume food and thus to live, in its very essence borders on the miraculous." Dr. Irmhard Landgrebe-Wolff, "Essen als Genuß" in Hoske, *Gesundheit aus eigener Verantwortung* (Tries, 1956).

meal should be a sacred time [and] it should be celebrated."<sup>877</sup> This attempt to claim 'authentically German' origins for the family meal is historically inaccurate insofar as the original *Mahal* certainly implied the coming together of communities or large groups of peoples with no connection to the nuclear family-based dining unit envisioned by the author of this essay. Nonetheless, it was quite common in the FRG to claim a particularly German affinity for the private family meal.

The dining table itself was construed as one of the most important sites of family socialization and education. Table manners "in this day and age are more important than ever" because they "offer us a certain foothold in society;" the housewife was advised to "dress up nicely and express good manners" even when eating a simple meal at home. Such behavior was "a core aspect of culture in its truest sense," and promised to save troubled marriages and shore up unhappy families.<sup>878</sup> If "strong families producing healthy children offered the best defense against this potential invasion from the populous East, the most effective bulwark against the spread of Communism,"<sup>879</sup> nothing more literally expressed the family's daily (re)production of healthy children than the shared meal. It was the housewife, as "protector of tradition, custom and culture," who "projects these aspects of her essence onto her dinner table," thus "determin[ing] the spiritual and emotional and cultural status of her family."<sup>880</sup> By gathering together to eat together, the family remade itself; in turn so did German society. In a historically false nostalgic yearning for a German past marked by bourgeois family activities like the 'family stroll' and the 'evening music and game hour,' West Germans clung to the family meal as "the

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<sup>877</sup> Dr. Saul, "Die Ernährung im Dienst der Gesundheitserziehung in der Familie."

<sup>878</sup> "Prima: Abschrift" BArch B 116 / 8075

<sup>879</sup> Moeller, *Protecting Motherhood*, 214

<sup>880</sup> Kühnau, Prof. Dr. med. J., "Die Frau als Hüterin der Ernährung," 8

only possibility for a bringing together of the members of a family who are otherwise engaged in activities that pull each other apart."<sup>881</sup>

The unifying power of the home-cooked meal was countered by its ability to strengthen and defend the individualism of its participants. In this regard, the issue of taste was central to the development and expression of postwar consumer culture in the FRG; "good taste" promoted consumption and implied both individuality and conformity while seeming to be culturally specific, an ideal way of expressing and preserving German-ness.<sup>882</sup> Countering the many voices advocating the inclusion of pre-packaged and modern convenience foods into the family diet were constant rejoinders to West German housewives to maintain and preserve "real" cooking, as a way of preventing the standardization of taste:

cooking out of cans, the use of prepared meals and the use of standardized flavorings lead to the de-individualization of the private kitchen . . . we cannot only think of saving time for the housewife, we must also remember the worth of subjective and individual food preparation.<sup>883</sup>

Cooking was supposed to be the housewife's primary expression of individualism, paradoxically something whose success was measured by how well it suited the taste of her family. The best meal was not one that followed a recipe accurately, or that reflected the most scientific nutritional balance, but one that had displayed "a personal touch

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<sup>881</sup> Dr. Saul, "Die Ernährung im Dienst der Gesundheitserziehung in der Familie," 130

<sup>882</sup> Pierre Bourdieu's *Distinction* is the crucial text in discussing the social and cultural power of taste in the modern West. While Bourdieu does discuss food and eating habits, his focus is exclusively on consumption, and the ways in which class allegiances are created and expressed through dietary choices. Interestingly, Bourdieu notes that in contemporary France "the art of eating and drinking remains one of the few areas in which the working classes explicitly challenge the legitimate art of living . . . peasants and especially industrial workers maintain an ethic of convivial indulgence. Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: a social critique of the judgment of taste* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1984) 179.

<sup>883</sup> Lothar Schneider, *Die Ernährung in ihrer Bedeutung für Haus- und Volkswirtschaft*. (Köln: Bundesausschuss für volkswirtschaftliche Aufklärung, 1968), 18.

though careful and creative flavoring."<sup>884</sup> One could not simply learn how to cook, one had to "feel" or "imagine" it. Recipe after recipe explained that the most important ingredient in every dish women prepared was "love," the ultimate substitute for skill. As one cookbook admitted proudly, "after all, we are women, and whatever we cannot manage just with knowledge, we manage with love. With love of the art form [of cooking], and love of those for whom we carry it out."<sup>885</sup>

The privately prepared and consumed meal seemed a counterweight to one of the most disturbing aspects of modern life: collectivization. The better the housewife's cooking, the less likely was the slide into the misery of canteens. Grete Borgmann's extremely popular 1957 household and etiquette guide *So wohnt sich's gut* (How to Live Well) advised the housewife to continually improve her cooking in order to ensure that "her family feels drawn to her table, that her family prefers to eat at home, [and] that restaurants and canteens are truly seen only as emergency aid, as a solution in rare occasions rather than as a goal and temptation."<sup>886</sup> Rational and well-planned shopping and cooking would leave her with the "strength to be the calming core [*ruhende Pol*] of the family at every meal, to extract from harmonious meals enough strength and validation that she learns to perfect her meal planning and preparation even further."<sup>887</sup>

West German nutritionists saw the canteen meal as both cause and effect of an alienated and alienating modern drive toward collectivism and ultimately toward Communism.

West German social commentators and nutritionists general antipathy toward the canteen meal not only dictated the evolution of the country's workplace canteens and school meal

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<sup>884</sup> Anne-Marie Bartel, *Mit Verstand und Liebe. Ein Kochbuch für schlechte und gute Zeiten* (Berlin-Lichterfelde: Boehmer, 1947), 8-9.

<sup>885</sup> *Ibid.*, 8-9

<sup>886</sup> Cited in Wildt, *Am Beginn der "Konsumgesellschaft"*, 116

<sup>887</sup> Cited in *Ibid.*, 116

program; it also shaped West German definitions of the healthy family and the healthy diet. Claiming that the "current trend away from the personal, patriarchal, hierarchical and tradition-bound domestic eating community and toward the anonymous, socially egalitarian, and relatively unbinding collective meal" was one of the most dangerous expressions of modernized industrialization, such experts saw in this shift a source of the degeneration of the German family, a "diminishing of the function of the family as the driving power behind community and socialization," which in turn was "one of the primary causes of the dietary misbehavior of both adults and children."<sup>888</sup>

In the GDR, modernity was defined not by a shift toward the collective, but by increases in female employment. Heinrich Gräfe, another leading dietician and public relations figure at the Institute of Nutritional Research, explained that the "incorporation of women into the public world" has been going on "for approximately two generations." As a result, "we must realize that their thousand year old duty to be responsible for the shaping of daily food intake can no longer be maintained."<sup>889</sup> Arthur Scheunert, the leading postwar East German nutritionist and a man who before 1945 had shown few socialist inclinations, nonetheless declared in 1952 in no uncertain terms that the "incorporation of women into the labor force" demanded that family feeding habits must "undergo radical change since the work of acquiring and preparing these meals, which previously often took many hours a day, is no longer possible." This was "the culmination of a long-term development that began at the turn of the century. The young woman who marries is no longer able to cook and does not have the time to do so."<sup>890</sup>

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<sup>888</sup> Neuloh and Teuteberg, *Ernährungsfehlverhalten im Wohlstand*, 191

<sup>889</sup> Heinrich-Karl Gräfe, *Richtige Ernährung, gesunde Menschen*. (Leipzig: Fachbuchverl. VEB, 1967), 120.

<sup>890</sup> Arthur Scheunert, *Ernährungsprobleme der Gegenwart*, 18.

Gräfe goes even further, advocating the expansion of canteens for working women precisely because of their historical responsibility for feeding the family, a responsibility that had weakened women's health and well-being: "it has often been the case that during times of crisis and inadequate food supply, the housewife, driven by maternal instinct, would deprive herself of adequate food."<sup>891</sup> Canteens promised to rectify this form of patriarchal injustice. Women's traditional assignment to the kitchen, her assumed role of family nourisher, was recast as something structurally linked to past centuries of hardship, unappreciated labor and self-imposed and sacrificial hunger – problems to which socialism offered an alternative.

There was a formal acknowledgement of the fact that "a working woman cannot dedicate herself to questions of nutrition,"<sup>892</sup> and while many, especially older male nutritionists were not happy about this, there were no voices disputing this fact or suggesting that it was something that could or should be changed. Instead, socialism was proudly heralded for causing the woman's "previously crucial role as leader of the family food intake to continually diminish."<sup>893</sup> What in the West was a negative development – the reliance on communal and canteen meals – here was a sign of emancipation. Indeed, "bringing the preparation of food into society is a central part of the development of socialism [because it] liberates women from the individual process of food preparation and incorporates her into the social means of production."<sup>894</sup> She would cook less but better, and more modern, than her mother and her mothers' mother.

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<sup>891</sup> Gräfe, *Richtige Ernährung, gesunde Menschen*, 120

<sup>892</sup> Wieloch, *Gesund durch Gemüse, roh und gekocht*, 12-13

<sup>893</sup> Gräfe, *Richtige Ernährung, gesunde Menschen*, 120

<sup>894</sup> "Die Rolle der staatlichen Gaststätten beim Aufbau des Sozialismus," *Die neuzeitliche Gaststätte*, no. 3 (1957).

While Heinrich Gräfe and other East German nutritionists never challenge women's primary responsibility for the domestic sphere, they encouraged state-sponsored methods of reducing these responsibilities. In the GDR women still 'fed' their families, but this feeding was ideally reduced to morning and evening light meals, with the primary noon-meal taken outside of the home. These auxiliary meals could theoretically be made by other members of the family – even those who could not 'cook' in the traditional sense of the word. Successful socialist cooking meant that "all members of the family are equally responsible for the aspects of the diet that remain within the household and, within reasonable limits, all of them can overtake aspects of its preparation: women and men, adults and often as well children."<sup>895</sup> In addition, nutritionists emphasized the mother's need to feed herself as much as her children and husband – a concern linked to the need for her to maintain her own optimal productivity as a paid worker. The stress of having to juggle this new assortment of responsibilities demanded that

she must also feed herself as a woman properly. Experience has shown that this is only possible with the help of a supportive husband and a well-structured family life. In any other case, a woman's time – and strength – is inadequate to meet the requirements of these two spheres adequately.<sup>896</sup>

During the early postwar years, there was an aggressive advocacy of the reduction of cooking in order to improve the quality of life of both housewife and family; the housewife gained time and energy, and both she and her family would profit from professionally structured collective meals provided by the state. Even the Sunday meal, the last official bastion of the 'family meal,' was not spared. Nutritionists submitted frequent petitions to the Ministries of Trade and of Economics requesting the expansion of restaurant service on the weekends in order to provide "cheap, tasty and filling meals

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<sup>895</sup> Gräfe, *Richtige Ernährung, gesunde Menschen*, 120

<sup>896</sup> *Ibid.*, 120

that would satisfy the family on Sundays," thus eliminating the working woman's need to "expend her energy with the preparation of meals" on the day when "the children are home from school, and the man at home pursues his hobbies."<sup>897</sup> Even this staple of domestic family life – the Sunday meal – was removed from the private sphere, to be consumed in the public collective.

At the same time, however, it was made clear to East German women that a reduction of cooking could not and should not mean an elimination of cooking. In fact, the primary method of nutritional education was not the transmission of familial techniques or recipes, nor was it privately purchased cookbooks and consumer guides, but rather the collective and centralized canteen, which was described not as a replacement but as a training site for domestic cooking. Women were told to new cooking techniques from their canteen meals, so that "the collective feeding program will educate the domestic kitchen."<sup>898</sup> After all, "in the correctly organized collective feeding program, provisioning is generally better than home cooked meals in terms of healthfulness, since in home cooking old habits play a large role."<sup>899</sup> It what can only be seen as an ideological paradox, in fact, nutritionists were particularly obsessive about

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<sup>897</sup> "Die Familie Müller möchte gern einmal essen gehen." *Die neuzeitliche Gaststätte*. 9 (1956). See also "Komplexes Programm für die Erleichterung und Verringerung der Hausarbeit" Stadtarchiv Leipzig 20237 / 31647 for recommendations to expand cheap restaurant meals on Sundays.

<sup>898</sup> Haenel, Zobel and Möhr, "Probleme der gesellschaftlichen Speisewirtschaft in der DDR," 35

<sup>899</sup> Semmler, "Gesunde Ernährung. Informations- und Argumentationsmaterial zur Gesundheitserziehung." The idea that women's participation in canteen meals could provide culinary training and nutritional education was not specific to the GDR; early Soviet nutritionists as well ensured that "the primary driving force behind the tremendous changes in the eating habits of the Soviet population was the system of public food service. Despite its many defects and false starts, its public cafeterias and field kitchens were the places where the average worker became acquainted with new concepts and norms of cooking. Recipes often traveled from public to private kitchens as cooks copied and disseminated favorite recipes learned on the job." (Halina and Robert Rothstein, "The Beginnings of Soviet Culinary Arts" in Musya Glants and Joyce Stetson Toomre, *Food in Russian History and Culture* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997), 192.)

increasing working women's participation in canteens because they wanted to improve the quality of meals cooked at home:

collective feeding establishments must become a model for practical, healthy, economical and tasty eating. Thus they will become a positive influence on domestic cooking and the daily diet, and contribute to the health and productivity of the population.<sup>900</sup>

Canteen recipes were published in factory newspapers scaled down from 400 servings to 4, and workplace lectures and posters taught women specifically that "it is not the big piece of fatty meat, but a sensible, variety-filled combination of all available foods that is the core of our daily nutrition."<sup>901</sup>

This new model of the interdependence of the private and public kitchen assumed the continued existence of the home-cooked meal at the same time that it argued for the superiority of the collectively prepared and consumed one. The GDR's effective and well-designed network of mass feeding programs, "the factory canteens, school kitchens, hotels, restaurants, in barracks or cafeterias, in retirement homes and in medical complexes should offer an example of how to prepare food reasonably, healthfully, economically and tastily." This educative function of these collective meals was necessary in order to achieve the ultimate goal: not eliminating the private kitchen, but ensuring that "the example of collective feeding should train the private kitchen."<sup>902</sup> Canteens did not simply reduce women's work; they modified it, even potentially increasing it, as mothers were admonished to find extra energy to dedicate to their cooking despite recognition that it was "not always easy to divide up work, further career development, contributing to society and housework so that neither you nor your family

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<sup>900</sup> Möhr, *Zur Ernährungssituation in der DDR.*, 28

<sup>901</sup> Haenel, Zobel and Möhr, "Probleme der gesellschaftlichen Speisewirtschaft in der DDR," 35

<sup>902</sup> *Ibid.*, 33.

is shortchanged." After all, of all of a women's responsibilities, her cooking is "the one upon which productivity and pleasure in work depend."<sup>903</sup> Acceptance and support of a steady increase in meals eaten outside of the home accompanied the assumption that socialist wives and mothers would continue to cook at home.

### **A Labor of Love: Cooking between Production and Consumption**

The relationship between a woman's labor and her cooking was as important to the West as it was to the East. In the FRG, kitchen labor was understood as the only productive labor that was entirely embedded within, and dependent upon, the consumer economy. Optimizing private cooking promised to save the housewife both time and money, goals that were irrelevant to the (coded masculine) labor of the public sphere. Neither miner, factory worker nor farmer needed to spend money in order to perform his (or her) labor. This dubious honor was reserved for the modern housewife who depended upon the consumer economy in order to fulfill her duties as feeder of her family. The West German housewife, therefore, was crucial as a consumer and a producer – a producer of food, of health, and of the next generation of democratic consuming capitalists.<sup>904</sup>

The unique dependency of female kitchen work upon a functioning free market caused its nature as productive work to be continually challenged and its nature as 'work' denied. Technology promised to liberate the old-fashioned woman of fifty years ago who had worked in her kitchen for hours every day "because she was without machines and

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<sup>903</sup> "Bei knapper Zeit mit Liebe kochen." *Frau von Heute* 14 (April 4, 1952).

<sup>904</sup> This is an expansion of Erica Carter and Kathy Pence's arguments about women's importance in the postwar German economy as consumers. By focusing on the specific role of food within the economy, I argue that the cooking woman's identity as a consumer was inextricable from her role as a (re)productive figure in society.

had to do all work by hand."<sup>905</sup> Advertisements promised to do away with the work of cooking. With a kitchen mixer, "the daily cooking labor can now be done with a wave of the hand."<sup>906</sup> Electric cooking technologies offered "fully automated food preparation," while the AEG-stove promised "new pleasures every day" by replacing cooking with button-pushing and dial-turning.<sup>907</sup> Cooking, baking, broiling and grilling could all be with only a wave of the hand, as technological innovations seemed to transform household cooking from labor to leisure.<sup>908</sup> Reading cookbooks, while "nowadays no longer mandatory for housewives," moved from an obligation to "a hobby, a way to spend cozy evenings at home."<sup>909</sup> Meals became a time of "relaxation and leisure"<sup>910</sup> when the family was free from the stresses and miseries of daily life; a woman in a clean and well-equipped kitchen was likened not to a worker but was "an artist in his atelier."<sup>911</sup> The proper housewife cooked "without effort," and cookbooks aimed to teach women not to 'work hard' but to have "pleasure in creating [dishes], increase zest for life, and be able to win the hearts of their men every day with their cooking skills."<sup>912</sup> Indeed, cooking's sensual nature and intimate relationship to pleasure of cooking allowed it to be easily shifted to the sphere of enjoyment, something that in capitalism was contrasted to,

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<sup>905</sup> von der Mehden, "Der programmierte Sonntagsbraten."

<sup>906</sup> Cited in Wildt, *Am Beginn der Konsumgesellschaft*, 149

<sup>907</sup> Meyer-Haagen, *Das elektrische Kochen*, 14

<sup>908</sup> Time saved for the West German housewife was as strictly regulated as it had been in the East; there, women should use their 'free time' to better themselves for the good of society. In the West, women should either dedicate themselves to their family in a display of selflessness, or they should commit more time to transforming themselves into the idealized female consumer, by shopping, dieting, beautifying, and competing with other housewives over the beauty and modernity of their homes.

<sup>909</sup> Bernhard Hehemann, "Unsere Ahnen aßen Anders." *Die moderne Küche* 39 (1966).

<sup>910</sup> *Gesunde Küche leicht gemacht: ein Taschenbuch für die werktätige Hausfrau*. (Berlin: Zentralstelle f. Werbung d. Lebensmittelindustrie, 1963), 33.

<sup>911</sup> von der Mehden, "Der programmierte Sonntagsbraten."

<sup>912</sup> Bürgel, *Kochen Braten Backen mühelos in der modernen Gasküche.*, 6

rather than associated with, productive work.<sup>913</sup> When domestic experts and scientists waxed poetic on the topic of the home cooked meal, insisting that these "hours of happiness" were "the bright spots of daily life, the core of calm around which the rest of the day rotates," asserting that "food should always be and remain a pleasure,"<sup>914</sup> they denied the labor-value of what they themselves proclaimed the most important of all work: nourishing the German family.<sup>915</sup>

Over the course of the 1950s and 1960s, as domestic cooking was severed from the realm of production, it was reassigned to two distinct but interdependent, and heavily feminized, spheres of the economy: reproduction and consumption. Cooking, in other words, was transformed into an act of sex and of shopping. Nutritionists and home economists agreed that a woman's reproductive potential was dictated by her abilities at the stove-top. Elaborate menus may have been "extremely time consuming," but they were "certainly worth the effort. This particular menu has won me at least a dozen marriage proposals, so hopefully you won't be scared away by the effort."<sup>916</sup> West German home economists taught their readers not only to ensure that food and table settings were visually appealing, but, since men 'ate with their eyes' as well as their mouths, to ensure that they themselves were well-dressed and well-groomed. The

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<sup>913</sup> See Barbara Orland, *Wäsche Waschen: Technik- und Sozialgeschichte der häuslichen Wäschepflege*. (München: Deutsches Museum, 1991) for a history of the modernization of household technology over the twentieth century.

<sup>914</sup> Margarethe Haase-Nothnagel, *Harmonische Ernährung für wenig Geld durch gesunde Kost*. (Krailling: Müller, 1958), 44.

<sup>915</sup> In the FRG as throughout the modern world, new kitchen and household technologies did not actually lessen the amount of labor done by housewives, usually only increasing individual and societal expectations for cleanliness. Studies have consistently revealed that household technologies, ranging from dishwashers to microwaves to vacuum cleaners, "reinforce the traditional division of labor in heterosexual couples and bind women even more firmly to their traditional role." (Marion von Osten, "Ghostly Silence: the Unemployed Kitchen" in Klaus Spechtenhauser, *The Kitchen: Life World, Usage, Perspectives* (Basel; Boston: Birkhäuser, 2006), 138.)

<sup>916</sup> Annemarie Huste, *Annemaries Internationale Kochrezepte Feinschmeckergerichte Aus Aller Welt, Tips f. Gepflegte Gastlichkeit* (München: Heyne, 1969), 28.

housewife's sunny personality and attractive physical appearance were the necessary ingredients to transform "breakfast into an always enjoyable party, the lunch table a delightful source of energy for the day, and the evening meal the lovely finale of the day."<sup>917</sup> And as the AEG electric stove rather ominously reminded housewives, "cooking is not only an art, it is an obligation. There is much truth in the old saying that the health, satisfaction and happiness of your loved ones are decided at the stove."<sup>918</sup>

Dieticians advocated the incorporation of modernizing cooking technologies by promising housewives that they would augment her reproductive powers. The desire and the satisfaction that cooking skills could evoke in children and especially in husbands guaranteed a wholesome yet sensual love, even in the otherwise prudish FRG.

Cookbooks often emphasized the overtly erotic, as recipes were prefaced with often graphic anecdotes like the "businessman who wanted me to act as barbecue girl at the firm's picnic in only a bikini!"<sup>919</sup> While East German cookbooks often emphasized the importance of good food for a well-ordered and equitable family life, they generally rejected the linkage between female sexual desirability and food provisioning. In the West, on the other hand, this connection was strengthened by an increasing denial of the labor inherent in cooking. Women's ability to reproduce as mothers depended upon their ability to feed men well – at the same time, if she cooked properly, she would be rewarded with the extra time necessary to purchase the food products that would make her even more desirable to her husbands – and thus lead to her having ever more children.

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<sup>917</sup> "Prima: Abschrift" BArch B 116 / 8075

<sup>918</sup> Meyer-Haagen, *Das Elektrische Kochen*, 14

<sup>919</sup> *Ibid.*, 3

In 1953, Lilo Aureden published her popular cookbook *Was Männern so gut schmeckt* (What Men Like to Eat.) In its pages, the politics of women's cooking were represented as both sexual and capitalist politics:

With this particular recipe, I would recommend that you take care of the actual cooking early in the morning, as soon as your husband and child have left for the day. Then you can while away the day however you please (go to the hair dresser, buy a new hat). In the evening, simply make yourself beautiful and whip the chicken onto the table!!<sup>920</sup>

Seldom has the interdependence of female consumption and production in the capitalist marketplace been so perfectly encapsulated as in this remarkably recipe. The West German housewife must consume (a hat, new hairstyle) in order to make herself desirable, and thus to realize her reproductive function. This consumption however is cast as a leisure activity, set apart from her 'real work' of 'actual cooking,' which she simultaneously is assumed to want to avoid. In the evening, her day of making herself and making food, delicately balancing the gendered acts of consumption and production, melds into a ritualistic offering at the altar of domesticity, as she offers up both her beautiful self and her delicious chicken to her hungry husband.<sup>921</sup>

The shift in focus from women's cooking to their shopping accompanied a shift in the ideal meaning of the kitchen, which changed from a site of production to one of

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<sup>920</sup> Huste, *Annemaries Internationale Kochrezepte*, 73

<sup>921</sup> The cover of the cookbook graphically depicts these dynamics. The book, with a colorful cover depicting a highly stylized couple, the smiling, thin and bejeweled woman reaching out to crown her bulky, business-suited husband with a helmet-shaped pudding, as he eagerly bends over to open a serving dish, clasping his hand to his heart in enthusiasm and excitement. The polka-dot apron of the woman melts into an assortment of fresh fruits and a platter of fish that fill the bottom section of the image. On the back side, the remarkably slender wife flings herself into the embracing arms of her husband, who has a newspaper prominently tucked into his coat-pocket. He carries a set of silverware and a wine glass in his hands – she bears an elaborate casserole and, in her other hand, a serving spoon and whisk. Cooking, the exclusive responsibility of women, links the housewife to her husband and through him to the world of both economic and biological consumption. Outfitted with the suit, tie and newspaper that mark him as an inhabitant of the public sphere, the man's job, which he does with literal and figurative relish, is to eat what his woman prepares. She has the serving ladle, he the knife and fork. In this heavily gendered model of nation-making, men's productivity outside of the home supported and depended upon women's reproductivity within it.

consumption. By the late 1960s, West German women were encouraged to see their kitchens as a social display, a way, in the words of an ad for the Nobilia line of kitchen furnishings, to "demonstrate your good taste to your neighbor. You will be envied because of the contemporary form and the good quality."<sup>922</sup> The kitchen became central to the development of the West German postwar consumer economy; it was the heart of the economic miracle. Not only, as discussed earlier, did the kitchen's complex relationship to modernity make it to focal point of the newest technologies and modernizing trends. It also epitomized the remaking of consumption as production, shopping as cooking. One of the most important 'labors' of kitchen work became selecting and purchasing appropriate appliances. Cookbooks like *Das elektrische Kochen* (Electric Cooking) coded individual recipes in terms of which electric household tools could be used to make it – the more appliances used, the higher the rating of the recipe, with some recipes involving five and more modern appliances. Women's journals ran regular campaigns promoting the purchase of modern 'labor-saving' tools, teaching women the special skills needed to select the best tool from a huge and bewildering assortment. Even more important than the acquisition of new technologies was the fact that kitchen was "a central platform of economic activity" because of "the constant purchase of foods."<sup>923</sup> Because of her role as the paradigmatic 'constant consumer,' shopping an economic activity guaranteed never to become obsolete, the housewife was celebrated by the Federal government as "the true guiding force in the market economy."<sup>924</sup> The 'incredible power' of the housewife in the postwar years was based on

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<sup>922</sup> Cited in Loehlin, *From Rugs to Riches*, 60

<sup>923</sup> "die Küche als Bühne der Ernährungspolitik" BArch B 116 / 24260

<sup>924</sup> Karin Zachmann, "A Socialist Consumption Junction - Debating the Mechanization of Housework in East Germany, 1956-1957," *Technology and Culture* 43 (2002), 86.

her parallel negotiations of her sexual and economic power, a unity that placed her at the forefront of what Erica Carter has termed the "consumer-based model of citizenship" of the FRG.<sup>925</sup> In West Germany, the intimacy of the battle against 'Eastern' styles of government added an almost mystical passion to this pursuit of consumption, a consumer culture that first expressed its new power in the orgiastic celebrations of the postwar *Fresswelle*.<sup>926</sup>

West German economists and politicians claimed that a strong and healthy family structure depended upon unfettered consumption; abundant consumer choice would

free the harried housewife and mother to devote herself much more fully to her family . . . Competitive capitalism – the social market economy – could not threaten the family. Only within this economic framework would the state-free sphere of the family be possible.<sup>927</sup>

The dependence of the German family upon free market capitalism not only focused attention upon the tremendous importance of the housewife's role as consumer; it also reframed women's traditional responsibility for feeding her family members. Providing meals for children and husbands was her most active form of involvement in the consumer economy, and in turn allowed these two activities (feeding and shopping) to seem interchangeable – nourishing the family became synonymous with, and even causal to, nourishing the national economy, and ultimately capitalism and 'market democracy.'

As a result, it was above all the housewife who was expected to negotiate Germany's new

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<sup>925</sup> Carter, *How German is She?: Postwar West German Reconstruction and the Consuming Woman*, 7 The importance of consumer culture for the postwar reconstruction of the Federal Republic has been the focus of several excellent studies over the past years, especially those by Erica Carter, Michael Wildt and Rudy Koshar. A focus on the consumer was, of course, a hallmark of the capitalist half of the Cold War. The 1950s and 1960s were the years when, as de Grazia carefully argues in her study of the 'Americanization' of Europe, consumer freedom became equated with political freedom and economic success. De Grazia, *Irresistible Empire: America's Advance through Twentieth-Century Europe*, 343

<sup>926</sup> See Wildt, *Am Beginn der "Konsumgesellschaft"*, 396. The first sign of prosperity to sweep the war-torn country was the *Fresswelle*, (wave of gorging or eating frenzy) of the early 1950s; within the first five years of the founding of the Federal Republic, 40% of West German adults were clinically overweight.

<sup>927</sup> Moeller, *Protecting Motherhood*, 139-140

economic miracle. The Federal Republic's transition to a market economy was enabled by housewives' abilities to consume and to reproduce.

The 'overflowing store windows' of the postwar economic boom, with a "selection so vast and at the same time so specialized that the individual consumer has no way of taking it all in," seemed to many as much threat as promise.<sup>928</sup> Indeed, many conservative voices worried that "the housewife of 1967 is a tragic figure, one that stands helpless victim of the market, one that demands from the consumer a performance that she is incapable of providing."<sup>929</sup> In order to secure the continued growth of the Volk and the economy, the housewife was required to "live with and affirm progress" by learning to shop properly. Although housewives possessed remarkable economic power, they were seen as particularly susceptible to advertising and the whims of passion, weaknesses that had particularly devastating impact on national health in the design of her family's diet. As a result, nutritional education in the Federal Republic focused on consumer education: "diet, that is to say the proper diet begins with proper shopping."<sup>930</sup> According to the DGE, the modern West German housewife found herself "facing an overflowing market with difficult-to-evaluate, often conflicting products. She stands under the pressure of a huge, alluring selection and has the freedom to select out of this

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<sup>928</sup> "Verbraucherberatung in Berlin" BArch B 116 / 24256

<sup>929</sup> "Verbraucherberatung in Berlin" BArch B 116 / 24256 Over the past few years, the global economic crisis with its associated public food crises have spawned similar critiques of the free market suggesting that unlimited consumer choice actually disempowers the public. See for example psychologist Barry Schwartz, *The Paradox of Choice: Why More is Less* (New York: ECCO, 2004).

<sup>930</sup> "Kochen und Ernähren: Monatsweiser für Einrichtungen der Jugendarbeit: Richtig Einkaufen – aber wie?" BArch B 116 / 8075. For example, in the mid-1950s the DGE established a training kitchen and advice office to teach housewives how to deal with the "growth of prepared foods in the market," a situation that "demands from the housewife a critical engagement with the changed supply situation." ("Verbraucherinformation über Ernährungsgüter" BArch B 116 / 24256.) West Berlin, with high rates of poverty, unemployment and maternal employment, was particularly active in organizing nutritional outreach programs for its female population, including a long-running radio program titled "the economy as seen from the cooking pot: 10 minutes for the consumer." The program was dedicated exclusively toward educating West Berlin women on how to shop properly, acquiring the best nutrients and taste with the wisest expenditure of money.

abundance of wares." Only through proper shopping education could the "demands of nutritional science and the goals and ambitions of the food industry intersect with the wishes and expectations of the consumer."<sup>931</sup>

"Lectures, cooking displays, pamphlets and articles in women's magazines,"<sup>932</sup> helped West German housewives "fulfill their roles as market-appropriate consumers [*marktgerechte Verbraucherinnen*] – for their own good and that of society."<sup>933</sup>

Nutrition programs particularly emphasized improving women's relationship to advertising.<sup>934</sup> Consumer education societies tried to teach women "the real purpose of shopping," which was both to enjoy the 'freedom to choose' while at the same time feeding their families in the most healthy and culturally appropriate way possible.<sup>935</sup> Poor popular diet was blamed on women's inability to select the 'right foods' and thus rooted in her lack of shopping skills – she was most frequently accused of picking 'the most

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<sup>931</sup> Landesarchiv Berlin B Rep 010 / 1062. Postwar West Germany was not alone in expressing tremendous discomfort with the transition to an American-style consumer-driven and individual-focused economy. Victoria de Grazia traces the complex and diverse European responses to this trend during the decades after the war in her recent monograph *Irresistible Empire*. Since the counterculture movement of the 1960s, within the U.S. as well food activists have promoted simpler, environmentally lower-impact foods as more 'free' than mass-produced and pre-packaged food products. The agricultural activist and author Wendell Berry, for example, has argued that "we cannot be free if our food and its sources are controlled by someone else. The condition of the passive consumer of food is not a democratic condition." (Wendell Berry, "The Pleasures of Eating" in Curtin and Heldke, *Cooking, Eating, Thinking: Transformative Philosophies of Food*, 375)

<sup>932</sup> "Mitteilung an die Presse über 'Berliner Komitee für Ernährungsfragen'" Landesarchiv Berlin B Rep 012 # 131.

<sup>933</sup> "Verbraucherinformation über Ernährungsgüter" BArch B 116 / 24256

<sup>934</sup> The decision of West German nutritionists to focus almost entirely upon the education of housewives was a continuation of Third Reich nutritional policy, a policy that had been shaped by many of the men and women who later led the Federal Republic's nutritional education programs. During the Third Reich, there were housewives' education programs and shopping and cooking propaganda aimed at encouraging increased private food production and wild food gathering, and teaching economic cooking. These programs were relatively unsuccessful, the limitations of relying on voluntary food restriction and the nutritional and economic advantages of organizing public canteens obvious from early on. Nonetheless, the FRG followed similar nutritional education strategies.

<sup>935</sup> Dr. Voigt, "Sie Kauft nur das Teuerste. Eine Betrachtung zur Physiologie des Alltags." *Verbraucherdienst* (1959).

expensive products' rather than suspected of not being able to afford healthier foods.<sup>936</sup>

True 'freedom of choice' in the supermarket purportedly resulted in 'correct' food purchases, a paradox that was reflected in the celebration of "one of the greatest freedoms on earth, the freedom to make your own decisions," with the prompt reminder that "in a democratic system like our own, it is always crucial to link the freedom of the individual with responsibility for the others."<sup>937</sup>

Such consumer education programs expressed discomfort with the new consumer-focused society at the same time that they demanded that women master it. For both family planners and nutritionists, the freedom to choose, especially in the hands of emotional and non-productive women, contained as much potential for danger as for liberation. After all, women's traditional maternal role as feeder of her family was thought of as a biologically and socially predetermined necessity, and one, moreover, that was guided by a sense of maternal self-sacrifice. Hence, pleasure, unlimited options and individual decision-making directly conflicted with idealized models of motherhood and family structure. In addition, an emphasis on the importance of free choice for feeding German families demanded women's ability to make rational, well-informed decisions – something in contradiction with a traditional focus on a woman's 'love' for her family as the most important ingredient and best flavoring for every meal.

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<sup>936</sup> West German nutritionists singled out poor women's bad shopping rather than poverty itself as the cause of dietary problems among the *Minderbemittelte*. They blamed the housewife for buying expensive foods rather than simple but healthy products like dark bread, potatoes and cheap cuts of meat. Such accusations did not go unanswered. A 1951 letter to the Berlin Society for Nutrition, for example, critiqued the program title 'eating cheaply and well,' asking the Committee for nutritional issues "if they are trying to make a joke with the unemployed?" The proposed menu of the program had an approximate cost of 35 DM a week "without including either breakfast or bread in that price. Can you explain to me how the wife of an unemployed man, who brings home 34 DM, should 'cook cheaply and well.' The things that you suggested would not even be possible for a temporary worker or employee. Your publication is sheer mockery for the unemployed." (Landesarchiv Berlin B Rep 012 # 131)

<sup>937</sup> Dr. Voigt, "Sie Kauft nur das Teuerste."

The almost complete transformation of domestic cooking from production to consumption and reproduction was not only part of the process of integrating West German society into the Western free world. It was also central to the Federal Republic's fantasies and fears regarding Communism. During these early postwar decades, as the Federal Republic promoted the idea of an opposition between the productive sphere and femininity, West German critiques of the GDR focused upon women's location in the sphere of production. According to an essay published by the West German Ministry for Issues relating to All of Germany (*gesamtdeutschen Fragen*), under socialism women "realize[d] with horror that the value of an individual is exclusively based on his or her productivity as a worker," something that was intrinsically at odds with women's 'most important work: "the maintenance of family bonds."<sup>938</sup> The impact of this horrific 'productivist' ideal was most dire in the realm of the family and consumer culture. The East German woman

must put out her children and abandon them to the political childcare system . . . The husband will have to take care of himself, home offers him little more than a place to sleep at night, and factory canteens are responsible for feeding him.<sup>939</sup>

Not only did woman's forced productivity destroy her reproductive identity as wife and mother, it was also linked to a society where consumer activity, most importantly shopping, was perverted and underdeveloped.<sup>940</sup> Shopping in the GDR, "or rather 'organizing,'" was neither a fun leisure activity nor a perfectible modernizing one, but

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<sup>938</sup> "Arbeiten, Arbeiten, Arbeiten! Die 'neuen Rechte' der Frau in der Sowjetzone." BArch DQ 1 / 1396

<sup>939</sup> "Arbeiten, Arbeiten, Arbeiten! Die 'neuen Rechte' der Frau in der Sowjetzone." BArch DQ 1 / 1396

<sup>940</sup> The association of the GDR with a dismal consumer economy and, as a result, with hunger, goes back to the occupation years, when the population of East Berlin waiting to receive their meager food supplies was described by West Berlin propaganda as a de-individualized and empty-bellied mass, wearing "shapeless gray and brown uniforms, poor shoes on their feet, some clad only in slippers, clasping in their hands a vast array of shopping bags made from gray cardboard, battered suitcases or shopping nets overflowing with milk and cartons of lard." ("Der Kampf der Sowjetzonen-Regierung gegen die Lebensmittelaktion." Landesarchiv Berlin B rep 002 / 1770)

rather an endless series of "trivial errands" that exhausted rather than exhilarated the housewife and ultimately resulted in a dinner table which "has been set more with imagination than with good things."<sup>941</sup> A well-set table and a well-fed family required the freedom to choose and the flourishing consumer economy that defined the parameters of this freedom.

In the GDR, the primary freedom offered to women was, indeed, the freedom to produce. As in the West, both consumption and reproduction remained associated with women, but they were subordinated to the 'right' to perform paid labor. As a result, food and diet were as much as possible shifted from the sphere of consumption to that of production – a shift that often went against the wishes of the population. This was most obviously the case with the constant expansion of mass feeding programs, with the aim of making food production and consumption a central part of the work-day. East German women in particular resisted this process with considerable success. In addition to shaping the relationship between food and work, this focus also meant the emergence of a distinctly East German consumer culture.

Generally, the historiography on the GDR has followed the lead of the Federal Republic's critique of East Germany by focusing on the sphere of consumption, especially shopping, in order to understand women's lived experiences in the GDR. Here, indeed, East German politicians fell embarrassingly short of the desires and demands of the population.<sup>942</sup> It is no coincidence that West German horror stories about

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<sup>941</sup> Loehlin, *From Rugs to Riches*, 44

<sup>942</sup> In fact, in this sense the GDR was an anomaly; Rudy Koshar and Alon Confino argue that throughout the twentieth century Germany had been controlled by governments that prioritized consumption as essential to political success: "Consumption was viewed as entitlement, as a practice and a material reality that defined political legitimacy, but also, significantly, a sense of happiness and self-fulfillment. Nazis, Communists, social democrats and liberals acknowledged consumption as an integral and essential part of modern life. Consequently, to consume was equated with a sense of having order in life, while severe

the GDR focused on their experiences trying to acquire goods, especially food products.<sup>943</sup> As Kathy Pence succinctly put it, "consumption in the young GDR usually was time-consuming, laborious, unpleasant and far from the promised 'joyful' experience." This inadequacy had gendered ramifications, as it was women who "came to bear responsibility for lessening the discrepancy between the ideal consumer culture and the reality of shortages in her daily life."<sup>944</sup> There can be little doubt, indeed, that the GDR's ultimate inability to meet the demands of consumers, and especially of female consumers, was a significant cause of popular unrest and political discontent. However, socialist politicians did not simply disregard the sphere of consumption; they, like their West German counterparts, delineated new boundaries of that sphere, especially in regards to food.

Socialist rhetoric had, since the Russian revolution, singled out women's domestic labor as both cause and effect of exploitative capitalism.<sup>945</sup> Lenin himself explained that

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limitation on consumption was perceived as unnatural." Alon Confino and Rudy Koshar, "Regimes of Consumer Culture: New Narratives in Twentieth-Century German History," *German History* 19 (April, 2001), 152.

<sup>943</sup> West German films depicting life in the GDR inevitably relied upon visual tropes linked to the war and postwar years, in particular unfashionably dressed, weary-looking women waiting in line for foods. Ina Merkel, among others, has noted the frequency with which East Germany was compared with war-time and occupied Germany, locating it in West Germany's past. The clash between modernity and an antiquated food culture seemed to be particularly damaging. The West German booklet 'Everyday Life in the GDR' claimed that the endless waiting in line at grocery stores "bred its own unique psychology in the GDR," as concerns over unlimited foodstuffs caused a "general psychosis." Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, *Der Alltag in der DDR*, 16.

<sup>944</sup> Katherine Pence, "'You as a Woman Will Understand': Consumption, Gender, and the Relationship between State and Citizenry in the GDR's June 17, 1953 Crisis," *German History* 19, no. 2 (2001), 226.

<sup>945</sup> Women's domestic labor had multiple forms, but was usually divided into three categories: childcare, household cleaning (usually reduced to laundry) and cooking. Both the revolutionary USSR and China during the 1960s had theoretically advocated the elimination of private woman's labor in all of these aspects. (Wendy Z. Goldman, *Women, the State, and Revolution: Soviet Family Policy and Social Life, 1917-1936* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993).) Such efforts were most radical in the case of postwar communist China, which saw a concerted effort to replace all domestic cooking and eating with communal meals. The consequences of this policy of deliberately destroying private kitchens in order to force all food to be consumed in public canteens were hunger and even starvation. Such efforts, however, were highly unusual. (Felix Wemheuer "Dining in Utopia: An Intellectual History of the Origins of the

only the establishment of childcare facilities and public catering establishments could provide "the simple, everyday means [to] *really emancipate women*, really lessen and abolish their inequality with men as regards their role in social production and public life."<sup>946</sup> Socialism, according to early German socialists like August Bebel and Frederick Engels as well as later East German leaders like Walter Ulbricht and Otto Grotewohl, would bring an end to an economy that depended upon the 'oppression and subordination' of women, who were forced to be the male worker's 'unpaid serving girl.' In a 1950 address, Grotewohl explained that it was "far nobler when a woman is in the situation to create and claim her own position in society according to her own desire, and thus to lead her life in freedom and independence," than to dedicate herself to caring for her family. Socialist leaders were convinced that every woman should and would chose to be "equally incorporated into the economic sphere" over the dubious pleasures of being a housewife.<sup>947</sup> Shopping seemed not an expression of freedom but its enemy, something to be reduced rather than expanded.<sup>948</sup> Socialism vowed, in the words of East German Prime Minister Otto Grotewohl, to "release women from their domestic responsibilities" so that they could join the workforce; it did not advocate the expansion of consumer

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Chinese Public Dining Halls." Unpublished paper presented at "Hunger, Nutrition and Systems of Rationing." Vienna 2008.)

<sup>946</sup> Cited in Heitlinger, *Women and State Socialism: Sex Inequality in the Soviet Union and Czechoslovakia*, 17

<sup>947</sup> Friedel Schubert, *Die Frau in der DDR: Ideologie und konzeptionelle Ausgestaltung ihrer Stellung in Beruf und Familie* (Opladen: Leske + Budrich, 1980), 51.

<sup>948</sup> Socialist advertising expressed the conundrum of the GDR's rhetoric of freedom, individualism and consumption. Rather than eliminating advertising, socialists redefined it in contrast to the West. There, advertising "generate[d] inauthentic and insatiable consumer demand," but in the East it was intended to "promote rational consumption: the all-embracing range of plan culture was to predict and manage popular desires." Susan Reid and David Crowley, "Style and Socialism: Modernity and Material Culture in Post-War Eastern Europe" in Susan Reid and David Crowley, *Style and Socialism: Modernity and Material Culture in Post-War Eastern Europe* (Oxford ; New York: Berg, 2000), 11.

options but the replacement of a life within the domestic sphere by one dominated by the workplace.<sup>949</sup>

Scholarship on gender and labor in the GDR has frequently, and accurately, emphasized an official disregard for housework, a dismissal of it as not 'real work.' Paid work and the integration of women into the industrial workforce were vital for the development of socialism and the realization of gender equality; domestic labor, especially cooking and cleaning, were obstacles to be overcome in the process of engaging women in the workforce.<sup>950</sup> Communal meals relegated home cooking to the evening meal, which was traditionally bread and cold cuts, and to the weekend, especially Sunday. This formal reduction of family cooking logically implied a devaluation of its importance, as canteen cooking took on the primary responsibility for maintaining the health and vitality of the population. However, family cooking retained a tremendous significance in the GDR; it continued to consume the largest percentage of female household labor, it played an important role in socialization practices and defining familial structure, and it was located at the troubled heart of the GDR's complex and conflicted attempt to remake categories of production and consumption.

The very real necessity during the early postwar years of drawing all adults into the workforce encouraged an absolute and aggressive rhetoric regarding domestic labor,

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<sup>949</sup> Cited in Schubert, *Die Frau in der DDR*, 51

<sup>950</sup> Irene Doelling, "Gespaltenes Bewusstsein: Frauen- und Männerbilder in der DDR" in Gisela Helwig and Hildegard Maria Nickel, *Frauen in Deutschland, 1945-1992* (Bonn: Bundeszentrale für Politische Bildung, 1993), 438. Carola Sachse's recent comparative study of the *Hausarbeitstag*, or the free housework day, in East and West Germany has challenged some of these assumptions. In the West, the early elimination of the *Hausarbeitstag* allowed domestic labor to be transformed into a lifestyle, remade as a site of consumption rather than work. The GDR's maintenance of this monthly 'free day' allotted to women to complete housework in fact maintained a concept of housework as serious, intensive and formally recognized labor. It also remained part of political and labor consciousness, albeit in a marginalized form. (Carola Sachse, *Der Hausarbeitstag. Gerechtigkeit und Gleichberechtigung in Ost und West, 1939-1994* (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2002), 410.)

and particularly cooking. In these early years of the GDR, new developments in the kitchen and the modernization of private cooking habits were advocated as necessary for allowing women to join the workforce. Cookbooks and women's magazines acknowledged the importance of housewives' domestic labor, but promoted it as a labor that accompanied an assumed job in the public sphere. Indeed, women's struggles and strains were assumed to be rooted in the inadequate negotiation of this 'double burden,' rather than, as in the West, as caused by the anomaly of female employment itself. Since the "fulfillment of the five-year-plan is the responsibility not only of all workers, but also of all housewives," a guide to an early kitchen mixer known as the IKA Mini-Kitchen warned that "we cannot under-estimate the amount of hard labor that is bound up with this responsibility [of cooking], especially when that woman is employed and therefore must accomplish her domestic tasks in her spare time." It is to resolve this pressure that these appliances were created: "electric domestic tools are here to ease women's burden, in particular the IKA Mini-Kitchen."<sup>951</sup> Cooking was not reduced in order to allow women to dedicate more time to their families but to the workforce.

Socialist nutritionists recommended that food production and food consumption be brought into closer alignment; the private kitchen could, like the canteen, be ruled by the old Stalinist mantra of '(s)he who works, eats.' Working women were advised to boil their potatoes in their skins, for example, not only because of added nutritional value but because it meant that the labor of peeling would be done by whomever ate that specific potato. Kitchen technology promised to reduce women's labor not only by taking over some of her traditional tasks, but by simplifying them enough to allow "every family member and every guest [to] easily play cook, and at the same time entertain himself

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<sup>951</sup> *Praktische Winke für die IKA Kleinküche*, 2

mightily, and observe how his senses and those of everyone else are aroused by their work."<sup>952</sup> The eating of the meal should be "not an individual but a familial issue. All who eat the meal must also play a role in creating it," an obligation that demanded from women the new task of delegating the labor of cooking. Such ostensible egalitarianism, however, was qualified with reminders that "of course the housewife has the last word – and ultimately primary responsibility – in tasting and flavoring the dishes." What was conceptualized as the real cooking, the creative and productive aspects of preparing meals, remained in the hands of women, while the busy work, the supplemental labor (salads, desserts, and vegetable cleaning), and especially of course the cleaning up, could be left to husbands and children.<sup>953</sup>

By the mid-sixties, East Germans, and especially East German women, began to challenge the official focus on labor and productivity, instead demanding something that was one of the central tenets of capitalist society: leisure, or, as it was more popularly known, 'free time.' This was particularly central to debates over gender in the GDR precisely because of women's double burden, and, ironically, because of the traditional East German emphasis on cooking as labor rather than fun. Nutritionists belatedly celebrated the fact that

the more workers have the possibility to fulfill their nutritional needs in [workplace canteens], and the more they do so, the more free time they will have. And so they have more opportunity to educate themselves, be culturally active, do sports, relax and enjoy life.<sup>954</sup>

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<sup>952</sup> Ursula Winington, *Rationelles Kochen: Gesunde Ernährung*. (Leipzig: Verlag für die Frau, 1975), 18.

<sup>953</sup> *Gesunde Küche leicht gemacht: ein Taschenbuch für die werktätige Hausfrau*, 32

<sup>954</sup> *Betriebliche Gemeinschaftsverpflegung und Gewerkschaften*, 19

Study after study confirmed that women did the vast majority (around 80%) of the approximately 47 hours of housework done weekly,<sup>955</sup> 'wasting' their free time on domestic work. Of course, free time was a difficult concept to reconcile with a socialist society – freedom implied non-productivity, and free time seemed to imply individual or private time, rather than time spent as part of the community. The GDR's socialist solution was to attempt to convince people to 'improve themselves' during their free time, usually meaning either self-education in languages, literature or the arts, furthering work qualifications, or performing sports and other activities that improved health and communal cohesion. As a 1969 article in *Für Dich*, the GDR's weekly women's magazine, titled 'Free time – only a private issue?' advised, "of course it is a personal decision how you spend your free time. But spend it in a sensible way, so that it contributes to society."<sup>956</sup>

Improved cooking techniques, termed 'rational cooking,' claimed to not only guarantee "better, cheaper and healthier meals," but also to actually reduce the amount of labor performed, so that the housewife had "time and energy for the children, for relaxation and education, for theater, cinema, or a concert, for a good book, a new language or some other hobby."<sup>957</sup> Cookbooks reminded working women that a crucial aspect of women's emancipation in the GDR was "steadily reducing the working woman's responsibility for the many small jobs of the household." Thus, it became her responsibility as a socialist woman to use new "timesaving foods and recipes" in order to

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<sup>955</sup> "Muß die Hauswaage schief Hängen?" *Für Dich* 50 (1969).

<sup>956</sup> Ursula Vogel, "Freizeit – Nur Privatsache?" *Für Dich* 27 (July, 1969).

<sup>957</sup> Winnington, *Rationelles Kochen gesunde Ernährung*, 2

acquire "more free time for her own development and for accomplishing more social tasks."<sup>958</sup>

As women's inclusion in the workplace was normalized, strategies for advocating kitchen modernization changed. Modern cooking came to be synonymous with a profound remaking of the nature of the German family. By the mid-sixties, domestic technology was advertised as a way not simply to reduce women's labor, but to change its gendered nature. One of the most common claims was that this technology would allow men (and sometimes children) to take over tasks that were previously reserved for wives and mother: "contemporary electric kitchen machines simplify much labor and thus make housework easier for the entire family."<sup>959</sup> The 'Kitchen Machine KM 8' thus became a tool in the struggle for gender equality and the overcoming of the gender divide. There was a clear shift toward encouraging a more fair distribution of domestic labor amongst family members rather than simply eliminating that labor altogether through the provisioning of social services. Recognizing the failure of large-scale societal shifts and state programs to provide the conditions for women to "combine a career, professional development, social activity and motherhood" so that she could stand on equal footing with her male colleagues, socialist gender theorists began to look for the solution to this gender imbalance within the family rather than within society at large.

According to this new rhetoric, the true liberation of women "cannot be provided exclusively by society at large. Much must change as well within the family," which should be a place of "mutual help and support."<sup>960</sup> Relying on the family as an agent of

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<sup>958</sup> *Gesunde Küche leicht gemacht: ein Taschenbuch für die werktätige Hausfrau*, 3

<sup>959</sup> Advertisement in *Für Dich* (33: 1969)

<sup>960</sup> Dr Herta Kuhrig, "Wir Werden 20. Gleichberechtigung der Frau in der Familie," *Für Dich* 13 (March, 1969).

change was, however, problematic since the 'family' as it was understood in the GDR was, by definition, a bourgeois and patriarchal institution. *Für Dich* ran extensive articles on this issue during the 1960s and early 70s, justifying the continued 'double burden' faced by women by explaining that "century-old traditions, mindsets and behaviors cannot be overcome overnight. . . praxis reveals that old behaviors especially in the familial sphere, when it comes to the division of domestic labor, are particularly obstinate."<sup>961</sup> Popular journals advocating a more equitable distribution of household work recognized light-heartedly that "a recipe for re-educating men does not exist. Every woman will quickly realize what strategy works best for her" in order to 'trick' her husband into taking over the occasional breakfast prep or the post-dinner washing up.<sup>962</sup> Indeed, while 'real' daily and rational cooking remained a deeply feminized field, the GDR developed a new category of 'free time' cooking, usually dependent upon modern consumer objects like mixers, imported food products and 'industrially produced baking mixes and flours' to produce food in a way that "is considered less labor than fun."<sup>963</sup>

The December 1969 issue of *Für Dich* included a dramatic, illustrated full-page documentation of a 'very special' New Years Eve party. Five couples participated, including four ballet dancers and a theater director, all of whom went on to prove their abilities not only on the stage, but at the stove-top. The catch? These multi-talented young people were the male halves of these couples, inspired by the desire to prove their socialist commitment to gender equality, to give their women a day off, and to prove that they too could cook. In a cooking frenzy described as "a dance of excitement" and "something totally different," dramatic photos, overflowing pots and gushing champagne

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<sup>961</sup> Ibid.

<sup>962</sup> "Muß die Hauswaage schief Hängen?"

<sup>963</sup> "Vorwort" in Hanna Enderlein and Uta Lange, *Das Backbuch*. (Leipzig: Verlag für die Frau, 1967).

highlighted the surprise – especially of the women observers. The men themselves were shocked to discover "all the things that one can do [and] all so different than a typical year." Most surprising of all: these men "were hooked; who would have thought that [cooking] would be so much fun?"<sup>964</sup> Following the success of this story, the magazine initiated what was to become, according to *Für Dich*, one of the most successful series in the journal's history: the column "Some Men Like to Cook." Beginning in January 1970, the column ran for a full year to enthusiastic readers and frequent letters and contributions from their target audience: cooking East German men. Indeed, such was their success that in March of that year they were required, with great fanfare, to change the title of the column to "Many Men Like to Cook." The barrage of letters that the (female) editors received every week revealed that East German men "have mastered the kingdom of the kitchen with great love and inexhaustible ideas."<sup>965</sup>

This column was marketed as a way for men to exchange information with one another about their experience with home cooking; however, the demographics of the magazine's readership, as well as frequent jokes and asides to the 'real' family cooks (i.e. women), made it clear that this was essentially an entertainment feature. In fact, the column served not to encourage but to de-normalize men's cooking. Writers-in were requested to include photographs of themselves as 'stars' of gender equality. The column was thin on recipes and actual cooking techniques, focusing more on anecdotes about the wacky and unexpected results of men cooking than on actually improving it. The column ultimately highlighted men's inability to cook. One letter, "meant only for male eyes," jokingly explained how a "cooking man managed to fill his children's bellies without

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<sup>964</sup> "Manche Männer Kochen Gern," *Für Dich* 52 (1969).

<sup>965</sup> "Viele Männer Kochen Gern," *Für Dich* 14 (1970).

cooking at all" by relying on sandwiches and leftovers.<sup>966</sup> Another man who loved to cook for his family recognized that his "wife and family have a lot of disadvantages, which is why they don't shower me with hypocritical praise" when he cooks, "since they have to deal with substantial loss of groceries and twice as many dirty dishes."<sup>967</sup> The recipes themselves were often modified versions of the classic 'bachelor dish' of sausage and potatoes, with the occasional addition of eggs. The very first column, for example, explained that the author's wife "was truly surprised and excited" to receive a dish composed of fried potatoes, bratwurst, and a heated can of *güivetsch*, or assorted Romanian vegetables, garnished with parsley, pickles and tomatoes.<sup>968</sup> 'Cooking' was limited to frying the potatoes and sausage and slicing the garnish. These men were never held up to the standards of good taste and good health that dominated recipes and cooking advice aimed at women. It was not women's cooking that was fun or a leisure activity, but men's cooking. The drive toward making real kitchen work 'productive' continued to block its incorporation into the uncomfortable socialist category of 'free time.'

Unsurprisingly women continued to perform the vast majority of cooking in the GDR throughout the lifespan of the country. However, they also joined the workforce in unprecedented numbers; by 1970, women made up 48.3% of the workforce, the world's highest rate of female employment in an industrialized economy.<sup>969</sup> East German women seemed not only to accept the need to work but to internalize the value of this productive

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<sup>966</sup> "Manche Männer Kochen Gern," *Für Dich* 1 (1970).

<sup>967</sup> "Manche Männer Kochen Gern," *Für Dich* 3 (1970).

<sup>968</sup> "Manche Männer Kochen Gern," *Für Dich* 1 (1970).

<sup>969</sup> Harsch, *Revenge of the Domestic*, 303. In contrast, it was not until 1970 that half of West Germany's female population worked outside of the home, while almost no women with children under fourteen years worked. (Waltraud Cornelissen, "Traditionelle Rollenmuster – Frauen- und Männerbilder in den westdeutschen Medien" in Helwig and Nickel, *Frauen in Deutschland, 1945-1992*, 53)

labor. In the GDR, 60% of women claimed that their career and their family were of equal significance, an idea scarcely conceivable and officially abhorrent in the FRG. While women complained constantly and vociferously over their double burden, they also adapted various strategies of balancing these two pulls, including shorter work days or part-time employment, selecting workplaces closer to their homes, and taking on fewer positions of responsibility at their workplaces.<sup>970</sup> All of these things, of course, dramatically limited women's career paths, as well as perpetuating the sexism of the patriarchal family structure that was ostensibly endemic to capitalism and impossible under socialism.

This chapter argues that West Germany developed a food economy centered on this home-cooked meal as crucial for the creation a specific social system that was German, Christian and capitalist. In contrast, in East Germany the revolution in the kitchen focused on changes in the meaning of the housewife's labor, and on a new negotiation of the role of private food production and consumption under socialism. In defending school lunches, advisors made sure to point out that mass feeding programs were intended "to reduce individual food production in the household,"<sup>971</sup> but not to eliminate (women's) domestic cooking. Remaking the labor of the housewife in the kitchen was one of the most important symbols of the German socialist system, emblematic of the absolute break with the past promised by the revolutionary rhetoric of the GDR. The promise to free the woman from the slavery of the stove, however, was

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<sup>970</sup> Jutta Gysi and Dagmar Meyer, "Leitbild: berufstätiger Mutter – DDR-Frauen in Familie, Partnerschaft und Ehe," in Helwig and Nickel, *Frauen in Deutschland, 1945-1992*, 159. For the history of women's part-time work in postwar East and West Germany, see Christine von Oertzen, *Teilzeitarbeit und die Lust am Zuverdiener: Geschlechterpolitik und gesellschaftlicher Wandel in Westdeutschland 1948-1969* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1999), 411.

<sup>971</sup> Boenheimm and Leetzi, "Wird die Schulspeisung ihrer Aufgabe Gerech? Teil I", 1460

realized not by rejecting the home-cooked meal but by remaking her cooking as "productive" labor, making it in a sense equivalent to the labor of the working classes. Women's productive potential as a feeder, her responsibility to maintain the health of her loved ones, became crucial for maintaining societal well-being and labor productivity. Ironically, while home cooking was substantially reduced through the expansion of collective feeding programs in order to free women to join the workforce, women's cooking was itself remade as a sort of productive labor, and thus preserved and even celebrated. This by no means meant that private cooking received the sort of cultural or governmental support that it did in the West. It explained, however, how it was that East German socialists continue to advocate female cooking, as it ironically was associated with working women rather than stay-at-home mothers.

## Chapter 8

### Conclusion: Alles Bananen

On November 9<sup>th</sup>, 1989, the Berlin Wall fell. In the days and weeks that followed, throngs of East Germans rushed over the newly permeable border. Giddy men, women and children filled the small towns and cities that had lined the western side of the Wall. West Berlin in particular was overwhelmed; roads were impassable, shops sold out of most of their products, and normal life briefly ground to a halt. That same month, the Federal Republic's satiric magazine *Titanic* published an issue dedicated to this historic moment. The November 1989 title image depicted a smiling *Zonen-Gabi*, or "Gabi from the Eastern zone." Dressed in an ill-fitting jean jacket at least a decade out of fashion, with curly red hair shorn in an unfashionably boyish cut, Gabi's goofy grin shone out of her freckled face. In her left hand, she clutched an enormous cucumber, carefully peeled so that strips of green skin fell down the cucumber's flesh like a banana peel. The headline was Gabi's proud explanation: "my first banana." The image was a tremendous success, marketed as both a postcard and full-sized poster, and still today graces the walls of many student apartments in unified Germany.

The *Titanic* picture was only the most famous of a veritable flood of cartoons and satiric images memorializing the Fall of the Wall – an overwhelming number of which focused on bananas. Bananas, indeed, seemed well-nigh ubiquitous during the drama of unification. In Berlin, groups of West German retirees gathered at the Brandenburg Gate

to greet East German newcomers with free bananas. Pictures of frantic grocers trying to protect mounds of bananas from the appetites of long-deprived Easterners projected a mixture of humor and very real fear.<sup>972</sup> Images like the Zonen-Gabi condensed many of the most enduring fantasies of German division. The fact that a woman was chosen to represent the former GDR reflected long-standing West German imaginings of the East, which was seen as weaker, exploitable, desirable yet deadly, and incomplete without her (male) partner. In her out-of-date style and short hair-cut, Gabi was underdeveloped and caught in the past, while her femininity was compromised by her presumed employment in a masculine sphere of work.<sup>973</sup> It was, however, her peeled cucumber that made Gabi a star. One of the few fresh vegetables consistently available in the GDR, the cucumber was a staple of German postwar cooking in both halves of the country. Its popularity and cheapness were rooted in the plant's ability to flourish in the German climate. It was the opposite of the exotic, imported banana. The heart of the joke, of course, was Gabi's almost virginal lack of knowledge; as her smile made clear, she thought that this cucumber was a banana – indeed her first banana. She looks like she is about to gobble the whole thing up, and one doubts that she will realize that this is the same watery fruit she had been consuming in salads and sandwiches for her entire life. This gawky socialist lacks real 'taste,' and finds her nourishment in self-deception and absurdity.

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<sup>972</sup> The fear that unification would lead to East Germans eating all of West Germany's food had been around for decades, particularly in divided Berlin. During the 1950s, the city government stockpiled foods and advised individuals to store extra staples specifically in preparation for unification. (See footnote 398 for specific examples.) It was assumed that massive shortages in the GDR meant that citizens there suffered from a perpetual, ravenous, hunger.

<sup>973</sup> Adding to the absurdity of Zonen-Gabi is the story of her inception. As he explained in interviews over the following years, the editor of *Titanic* had conceived of the image as soon as the Wall fell, and he traveled through the GDR in search of the perfect Ossi to clasp her peeled cucumber. However, his search proved initially unsuccessful; with the deadline fast approaching, he returned to his West German hometown to reconsider. There he caught a glimpse of his young, decidedly West German neighbor, and realized that she was the East German 'Gabi' as he had imagined her.

Ironically, it was for this that Gabi was assumed to have torn down the Wall in the first place – to gain access at last those long-craved bananas.

Bananas had long been an obsession for both East and West Germans, who recognized it as one of the most important symbols of postwar prosperity and luxury consumption. In the early 1950s, Konrad Adenauer had successfully negotiated the FRG's right to import bananas tax-free, making them one of West Germany's cheapest fruits.<sup>974</sup> (His commitment to cheap bananas was such that he threatened to boycott the formation of the European Community were his country not granted this unique privilege.)<sup>975</sup> As early as 1953, West German cookbooks had chapters titled 'What do I do with all these bananas?'<sup>976</sup> In 1961, the country produced its first cookbook dedicated exclusively to banana recipes.<sup>977</sup> Bananas were increasingly integrated into daily eating habits, as housewives were taught to back, broil, fry and mash them, serving them with sweet desserts as well as savory roasts, in drinks and as confections.

In contrast, the East German SED had little access to cheap bananas, though even the geeky Gabi was unlikely to have never enjoyed the mystical pleasures of the fruit.

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<sup>974</sup> While bananas were well-known in the West during the early twentieth century, it was not until the interwar years, with breakthroughs in shipping technology leading to vast refrigerated ships, that bananas could be mass-marketed. During these years of the Great Depression, American fruit import companies claimed that the banana was a potential solution to global food shortages: "During the past twenty years there has been a remarkable increase in the knowledge of nutrition. The World War compelled every one to think seriously of food production as well and it was a large factor in establishing real education in food values and food economies . . . [The banana's] greater utilization is an important factor in the solution of the economic problem of supplying the increasing world population with a staple food, obtainable at all seasons and at low cost." United Fruit Company. Dept. of Research, *The Food Value of the Banana: A Compilation from Recognized Authorities* (Boston: United Fruit Co., 1928).

<sup>975</sup> West Germany's untaxed bananas were a regular source of friction in European trade relations during the 1950s and 1960s. France in particular objected, claiming that the FRG's special dispensation was particularly harmful to banana imports from French colonial holdings. (66. Sitzung am 12. März 1957 Deutsch-französische Verhandlungen über den Bananenzoll im gemeinsamen Außenzolltarif des Gemeinsamen Marktes, Kabinettsprotokolle der Bundesregierung< online). West Germany ended up relying on banana exports produced by U.S.-controlled regions in Central America, cementing the two countries' already strong trade relations.

<sup>976</sup> Aureden, *Was Männern so gut schmeckt*.

<sup>977</sup> Hans Karl Adam, *Bananen-Schlemmereien: ein mannigfaltiges Rezeptbuch* (München: Heimeran, 1961).

The country's primary source of tropical fruits, Cuba, was not a banana producer, and supplies from North Africa and Asia were unreliable, dictated by politics rather than demand, and often prohibitively expensive. In the early 1960s, the Ministry of Trade managed to negotiate a massive banana trade agreement with Vietnam; however, the provided bananas were dried rather than fresh due to shipping difficulties. The bananas proved to be a financial and public relations fiasco despite increasingly desperate attempts to market them as bread-spreads and integrate them into baked goods. Outraged over the ever-growing range of produces made 'with' bananas or carrying the 'flavor' or 'essence' of bananas, the people of the GDR wanted only 'real' bananas – the kind that you peel. The candy company VEB Rotstern, overwhelmed by waves of poisonous letters complaining about the very existence of products with this hated banana flavoring, regrettably conceded that there was "a distinct aversion on the side of the consumer for products with bananas in them."<sup>978</sup> This was to be the country's first and last experience with an overabundance of the tropical fruit. Even during the peak of the GDR's consumer prosperity, bananas, like most tropical fruits, were usually available only during the winter holidays and then in limited quantities. The ubiquity of bananas in German unification discourse cannot however be solely explained by the fruit's excessive consumption in the West, and its scarcity in the East. This discursive trope derived its resonance, and lasting power, from an unquestioned assumption of an East German hunger for Western foods. I argue, moreover, that this assumption had a very specific history rooted in the struggles of the German occupation; it was this projected hunger, moreover, that determined the cultural and political significance of the Berlin Air-Lift in Germany as well as internationally.

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<sup>978</sup> "Betr: getrocknete Bananen." BArch DE 4 / 14571

By 1989, West Germans seemed sure that it was their state of banana-scarcity that had finally motivated the people of the GDR to reject their socialist government.<sup>979</sup> Although the skyrocketing levels of banana consumption in the immediate aftermath of unification quickly stabilized, there is no doubt that unification radically increased former East Germans' banana eating habits. East Germans, however, were not the only ones whose banana consumption was changed by the events of November 1989. By the beginning of 1989, yearly West German banana consumption had risen to 800,000 tons, with a per-head consumption of 14 kilograms a year, numbers that made the FRG Europe's biggest banana importer.<sup>980</sup> With German unification, however, the EC finally called a halt to the country's decidedly special treatment. In 1991, German newspapers reported with horror that "Brussels is determined to raise the banana-price drastically" – and indeed prices rapidly rose, becoming equivalent with those of the rest of Western Europe for the first time since the end of the war.<sup>981</sup> Although it was not formally true that East German appetites were responsible for bananas' rising price and resulting decreased availability, the coinciding of reunification with the establishment of a

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<sup>979</sup> Bananas were not the only food evoked during reunification. Sausages and pickles, as well as coffee and chocolate, were frequently mentioned in both popular culture and serious reportage. The obvious sexual connotations of Gabi's banana is highlighted by the frequency of other phallic food objects in West German cartoons; the feminine GDR seemed desperate to devour the masculine FRG, evoking mingled fear and desire. Coffee and chocolate, in contrast, had long been symbols of luxury and gustatory pleasure; along with cigarettes, they were the products that West Germans had traditionally associated with the end of the Hunger Years. West-Packages had kept such associations alive; these were the most frequently included gift items, and they were rare tropical products that were regular sources of mass discontent within the GDR. (There have been numerous studies of the struggles of the SED to market various varieties of adulterated coffee, usually involved mixing coffee beans with other grains or nuts. The resultant mixtures were loathed, rejected in favor of the steady stream of West German Krönung coffee that came over the border.)

<sup>980</sup> Ursula Brunner and Rudi Pfeifer, *Zum Beispiel Bananen* (Göttingen: Lamuv-Verl, 1993), 73.

<sup>981</sup> Georg Seeßlen "Die Banane. Ein mythopolitischer Bericht" in Rainer Bohn, Knut Hackett and Eggo Müller, *Mauer-show: das Ende der DDR, die deutsche Einheit und die Medien* (Berlin: Ed. Sigma, 1992), 55. In a twist of fate, the same year saw the founding of Germany's first banana museum, located in the small coastal town of Sierksdorf and displaying 'over 10,000 examples of the crooked yellow fruit.' <http://www.bananamuseum.org>. There are several other banana museums in the world, most in the United States. The world's largest banana museum, opened in 1976, is located in Hesperia, California. As far as I know, the German museum is Europe's only banana museum.

standardized EU banana import-tax certainly did not go unnoticed. No longer were bananas cheaper than home-grown produce, cheap enough to be given away with impunity to poor friends and hungry relatives. Small wonder that a 1991 cartoon depicted a West German man slipping on a banana-peel and screaming as he fell: "damned reunification."<sup>982</sup>

The phenomenon of *Ostalgie*, or nostalgia for the East, frequently focuses on food products and recipes 'native' to the former GDR. Movies like the international hit *Goodbye Lenin* highlight processed foods, especially sausages and Spreewald pickles, as evocative symbols of the vanished country. Exhibits on the former East Germany inevitably display an array of canned, pickled and packaged foods alongside kitchen utensils and cooking equipment. An entire genre of cookbooks dedicated to the recipes of the GDR has emerged, popular among citizens from both former German states. Some are primarily intended as entertainment, and include anecdotes, songs and advertisements from the GDR in an effort to recreate lived experience from a dietary perspective.<sup>983</sup> Others are more serious cookbooks, focusing on recipes originating in the regions that made up the former German Democratic Republic. These recipes generally used more yeast-based doughs and locally produced products, especially nuts and apples, than their West German counterparts, and did not require much in the way of kitchen technology or machines.<sup>984</sup> These books highlight former difficulties with fulfilling private cooking obligations while working, and the pressures and pleasures of dealing with frequent and

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<sup>982</sup> *Eulenspiegel*, May 1991. Leftist critics of the newly unified and newly powerful Germany began terming it a 'banana republic.' Georg Seeßlen, "die Banane. Ein mythopolitischer Bericht", 58. Seeßlen's article is a fantastic discussion of the many layers of cultural meaning attached to the banana in modern Western society and especially in Germany, including its relationship to models of civilization, familial health, cleanliness, eroticism, race and gender.

<sup>983</sup> Thomas Heubner, *So schmeckte es in der DDR: Ein Lach- und Sachbuch vom Essen und Trinken* (Berlin: Eulenspiegel, 2004), 191.

<sup>984</sup> Barbara Otzen and Hans Otzen, *DDR-Backbuch* (Köln: Komet, 2005).

unpredictable shortages in ingredients. Taken for granted in all of these representations of the former GDR, however, is the fact that such culinary information preserves a meaningful and revealing aspect of the vanished country.<sup>985</sup>

This dissertation first emerged out of my surprised encounter with the role that food played in the post-socialist society of the former East Germany.<sup>986</sup> "Matters of Taste" in a sense traces the beginning of this story, the development of two distinct but intertwined food economies and food cultures shaped by the confines of the Cold War and the legacy of World War II. Indeed, this culinary focus on divided Germany connects the story of the Cold War with that of the war and the postwar period in striking ways. During the early postwar decades, the socialist and capitalist halves of Germany were continually negotiating their memories of the pasts as well as their relationships with one another. The relative success of both German states – the FRG becoming the most powerful Western European country, and the GDR the most prosperous state in the Eastern bloc – bears testament to the unique power of the divided country's status as the paradigmatic postwar and Cold War ideological battlefield.<sup>987</sup> This dissertation argues for the impossibility of understanding the postwar history of the FRG without studying

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<sup>985</sup> Janet Theophano has suggestively described cookbooks that have been written by women who left their homeland and recreate it through their recipes: "If cookbooks are about the losses of exile and the trauma of expulsion, they are also opportunities for nostalgia, travel, voyeurism, and emulation. They are subtle ways of marking insider and outsider status in social and cultural life. If all these [cookbooks] are about exile in its broadest sense, they are also about exclusion and inclusion. They are about the ways women write a place into being: to defy, delimit, manipulate, and infiltrate social, cultural, and geographical boundaries." (Janet Theophano. *Eat my words: Reading women's lives through the cookbooks they wrote*. New York: Palgrave, 2002, 154). This suggests an interesting way of reading such GDR 'nostalgia' cookbooks.

<sup>986</sup> Sibelan E. S. Forrester, Magdalena J. Zaborowska and Elena Gapova, *Over the wall/after the Fall: Post-Communist Cultures through an East-West Gaze* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004). Ruth Ellen Mandel and Caroline Humphrey, *Markets and Moralities: Ethnographies of Postsocialism* (Oxford, UK; New York: Berg, 2002); Elizabeth C. Dunn, *Privatizing Poland: Baby Food, Big Business, and the Remaking of the Polish Working Class* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2004); Melissa L. Caldwell, *Not by Bread Alone: Social Support in the New Russia* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004).

<sup>987</sup> For a insightful analysis of the context and meaning of the GDR's relative stability, see Andrew Port's *Conflict and stability in the German Democratic Republic* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

the GDR – something that continues to be controversial particularly within Germany. It also suggests, as have many other historians, that 1949 is not an appropriate starting point for understanding the history of postwar Germany, nor is 1945 an appropriate starting point for understanding the history of occupied Germany. The experiences of the War and the Third Reich were simply too central to German self-understanding and Allied, in particular British and Soviet policy to be bracketed out.<sup>988</sup>

On the one hand, this study suggest a new way of approaching the history of the GDR, one that differs methodologically, structurally and in terms of content from most of the work that currently makes up the field. My work does not begin with a structural assumption about the East German state and then work its way down to actual people and lived experience, in an attempt to represent the complexities and paradoxes of life in the GDR – or, in Mary Fulbrook's evocative phrase, to provide an 'anatomy of a dictatorship.'<sup>989</sup> Similarly it does not frame itself around an assumed disjuncture between the people and the state, an assumption most famously expressed in the description of the socialist country as a 'niche-society.'<sup>990</sup> Instead, it uses what can be thought of as 'thick categories' like food and hunger to tell the history of the GDR. This approach, because it

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<sup>988</sup> Probably the most important English-language study of the Soviet occupation of Germany, Norman Naimark's *The Russians in Germany: a history of the Soviet Zone of occupation, 1945-1949* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995), is an excellent example of the productive potential of doing a close analysis of the Occupation Years framed entirely between 1945 and 1949. "Matters of Taste" offers an alternative approach toward understanding the history of the Soviet occupation, by considering the significance of pre-1945 experiences and historically shaped ideologies for German-Soviet experiences immediately after World War II.

<sup>989</sup> Mary Fulbrook, *Anatomy of a dictatorship: Inside the GDR, 1949-1989*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995).

<sup>990</sup> This idea was first expressed in the 1980s by West German diplomat Günter Gaus, who diagnosed a widespread "withdrawal into the private sphere" and a "single-minded preoccupation with the satisfaction of personal needs" among East German citizens. Port, *Conflict and stability in the German Democratic Republic*, 4. Since then it has been taken up and modified by many scholars on the GDR. For example, Mary Fulbrook's recent monograph. *The People's State: East German society from Hitler to Honecker*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005, which offers a careful analysis of average experience and daily life in order to understand the seeming gap between systemic descriptions of East German society and popular memories of that society.

does not rely on any preconceived model of the GDR, can also be applied to the FRG, thus allowing for a different sort of comparative study, one that stretches across space and time in fluid ways. Indeed, crucial to this project is the fact that my analysis of postwar Germany came out of the past (by always asking what came before divided Germany, and how did it shape what came after it) rather than the future (the standard question being 'why did the GDR collapse?'). Most explorations of the legacy of the Third Reich in East and West Germany have focused on the ways in which Nazism, the War and the Holocaust were represented and memorialized.<sup>991</sup> However, I approached the years of the Third Reich specifically through the lens of food and hunger, which allowed me to explore the question of legacy and inheritance in a more complex and nuanced fashion. While memorials to concentration camps and discussions of the Wehrmacht are certainly important for understanding the lasting impact of the Third Reich, my research shows that cookbooks and school lunches were also important ways in which the German past was remembered and negotiated on a daily basis.

The narratives that this dissertation traces are not simply intended to directly challenge prevalent interpretations or assumptions about the two postwar German states. Rather, the comparative framework, expanded temporal focus, and the interdisciplinary and highly complex nature of food itself as a lens of analysis combine to offer a richer context for these interpretations. For example, I do not claim that Germans were not actually hungry during their hunger years. Instead, my analysis pushes the category of

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<sup>991</sup> Jeffrey Herf's *Divided Memory: the Nazi past in the two Germanys* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997) is the most comprehensive and thoroughly comparative of these works. It is, however, shaped by Cold War narratives and is generally uninterested in questions of either ideology or lived experience, both of which are central to this dissertation.

hunger itself by showing that it is not simply a biological fact, but a medically, historically and culturally constructed state of being. Similarly, it would be untenable to assert that the SED ultimately satisfied consumer demands for groceries and food products. However, reading this fact alongside a comparative study of school lunches – an arena in which the SED in a sense exceeded popular desires, changes the seemingly simple meaning of this failure, which shifts from being a teleological Cold War truism and after-the-fact explanation for the Fall of the Wall to becoming part of larger national and international debates over food consumption and nutrition in the postwar era. At the same time, the Federal Republic's outlier status as a school-lunch-free country makes sense, I argue, only in terms of the country's relationship both to the GDR and to its immediate past of occupation, war and the Third Reich.

More than anything else, this dissertation has made claims for the importance of a specific history of food for understanding the postwar world. Food and hunger determined lives and deaths in the FRG as much as in the GDR, in the First World as much as in the Third World. Most work on food history has focused on situations of excess or of dearth: famine as the legacy of colonialism, or the impacts of globalization on local eating habits. A comparative East-West European food history allows us to break out of many of the assumed dualisms that frame such studies: hungry and full, individual and collective, diversity and scarcity, consumption and production, or even tasty and unappetizing. Such pairings map onto divided Germany in inconsistent and fluxuating ways. Neither satiety nor hunger is absolute, but rather always relational. Hunger was a vital category of identity-formation in Germany during and after the war, providing a bodily vocabulary for expressing political, cultural and economic opinions. It

was also perhaps the most important source of conflict during the so-called Hunger Years, not only between Germans and the occupying forces, but between Germans and Displaced Persons. I also argue that hunger as a fluid and mutable category shaped the Cold War in previously unexplored ways, a result of the experiences of the war itself, the global food crisis, and the gradual emergence of a global food economy during the fifties and sixties.

Hunger is not simply a metaphor or a marker of collective identity, however. It is a real and lived experience with only one simple solution: having enough to eat. The second half of my dissertation explored the food economies that the two German states developed after the war, economies differently shaped by a common past of hunger. My discussion of school lunch programs and workplace canteens offers the unusual opportunity to compare aspects of the national food economy that are linked with production as much as consumption. These comparative studies denaturalize many assumptions that historians often take for granted. The West German absence of school lunches can only be recognized as an anomaly when its history is told comparatively. In contrast, canteens struggled to establish themselves in both the socialist and the capitalist Germany, proof that state ideology could not dictate popular tastes.

While much earlier work on food and eating culture has focused on women as consumers, my focus on collective meals allowed working men and children to emerge as important modern consumers. In turn, I also explored the different ways in which the German housewife negotiated her complex powers of production through kitchen labor. Women have traditionally been assumed to have a special relationship to food, something justified through tradition, religion, biology and economics. East and West Germany

both challenged and confirmed this feminization of food. Gender was definitional to the ways in which food was produced and consumed, and we cannot understand the gendered systems of power that emerged in those two states without considering Germany's experiences with food and hunger. Germans, like everyone else in the world, were never simply what they ate. However, what they ate, and how and why they ate it, were decisive for individual well-being and happiness, for the economic and cultural developments of their countries, for individual and community health, and for the emergence of specific patterns of food production and consumption across the Iron Curtain, and even across the globe.

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