

**Privilege versus the People:
A Study of Food, Volk, Elitism, and the Nazi State**

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Introduction

This essay investigates the topic of food in the Third Reich (1933-1945). It begins by exploring the way the National Socialist German Workers' Party (NSDAP) used a volatile food situation following the First World War to aid their pursuit of power in the 1920s and 1930s. It then offers an explanation of the origins of Nazi ideology behind food, which stressed a united and equal *Volksgemeinschaft* (racial community) and provides valuable context to support the primary focus of the essay: the radical differences between the majority of the *Volksgemeinschaft* versus the “upper-10,000” of the Nazi regime in terms of their experiences with food under Hitler. The *Volksgemeinschaft*, or *Volk*, were “insider” Germans: those deemed “racially valuable” to German society. The “upper-10,000” is here defined as a distinct group that included both the long-established upper-class and the topmost members of the National Socialist Party.¹ This group was a particularly privileged demographic within the estimated three to four million upper-class Germans who already enjoyed lives of privilege and wealth before and after January of 1933, when Hitler became the chancellor of Germany. Roughly 10,000 people who embraced Nazism before Hitler's chancellorship or were seen as particularly valuable to the Party and the state were granted “extraordinary” privileges beyond the majority of the upper-class, and certainly beyond the rest of the *Volksgemeinschaft*, notably in terms of food consumption.²

¹ Gesine Gerhard, *Nazi Hunger Politics: A History of Food in the Third Reich* (London: Rowan & Littlefield, 2015), 51; Lizzie Collingham, *The Taste of War: World War Two and the Battle for Food* (London; New York; Penguin, 2012), 377; Fabrice d'Almeida, “Luxury and Distinction under National Socialism,” in *Pleasure and Power in Nazi Germany*, ed. Corey Ross, Pamela E. Swett, and Fabrice d'Almeida, 67-83 (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 69.

² D'Almeida, “Luxury and Distinction,” 69.

It is important to note that while the majority insider German experience with food under Hitler resulted in heavy consumption restrictions and drastic changes to German food culture, German “outsiders” and later those under Nazi occupation were the most affected by Nazi food policy. Members of this outsider group within Germany included Jews, Sinti and Roma, and those deemed “Asocial.”³ The Nazis viewed this group as “racially inferior.” Outsiders received fewer ration allocations at the beginning of the war and were limited to when they could shop for food, what they could purchase, and they were often overcharged for their items.⁴ During the Second World War (1939-1945), outsiders and non-Germans under Nazi occupation, especially Ukrainians, Greeks, and the Dutch, were systematically starved to facilitate the insider German diet.⁵ A discussion about National Socialist racial food policy and its implementation against outsiders and those later under occupation is beyond the scope of this essay. This essay focuses instead on the effects of racial food policy on insider Germans, who benefitted from Nazi racial food policies as members of Hitler’s envisioned *Volksgemeinschaft*.

Through the formative years of the Nazi Party, Adolf Hitler, its leader since 1921, had a vested interest in the volatile food situation in Germany, seeing it not only as an opportunity to manipulate the masses in the pursuit of power but as a problem that needed solving. The Party used the food situation as a tool through which to gain support from the German population, who after years of instability were looking for a strong leader who offered solutions to the problems facing Germany.⁶ After Hitler became Germany’s chancellor in January of 1933, the Party immediately began to implement policies and campaigns that would make the country autarkic

³ “Asocials” were usually alcoholics, drug addicts, those deemed mentally ill, disabled people, beggars, prostitutes, pacifists, “work-shy,” and others who did not adhere to societal norms and were therefore “detrimental” to the “Aryan race.” Sinti and Roma were placed in this category as well. (“Asocials,” *Holocaust Memorial Day Trust*.)

⁴ Collingham, *The Taste of War*, 359.

⁵ Jill Stephenson, *Women in Nazi Germany* (New York: Longman, 2001), 98.

⁶ Gerhard, *Nazi Hunger Politics*, 29.

(self-sufficient). The Party aimed for Germany to become less reliant on food imports and to strengthen the nation in preparation for war. These policies and campaigns fundamentally reshaped the German relationship with food, but they were not followed by all. Despite Hitler envisioning a society based on equality within the *Volksgemeinschaft*, strong class divides remained, which is evident when looking at the implementation of food policy and ideology. While the majority of the *Volk* were influenced from the beginning of the regime to make do with less, to waste nothing, and to eventually ration to the point of being placed on a state-sanctioned survival-only diet, the “upper-10,000” of Nazi society were indulging in lavish dinners free of regulation and enjoying France’s finest wines.⁷ The regime made little effort to control this behaviour, while strictly regulating the majority. The result was a hypocritical dichotomy that rewarded the few while restricting the many. This essay discusses this aspect of the regime: how hypocrisy and classism with regards to food policy, consumption, and culture among insider Germans further confirms the larger historical consensus that corruption was one of the key characteristics of the Nazi Party.⁸

Historiography

Food as a historical subject emerged relatively recently. Before the middle of the twentieth century, the topic of food in history had been primarily limited to accounts of culinary traditions in the upper classes of society. It was largely studied as part of the “anthropology of ceremony” and frivolity.⁹ Not until the mid-twentieth century did historians become particularly interested in ordinary people, their lives, their culture, and societal conditions. Naturally, since

⁷ Diana Spechler, "For 115 years, One Restaurant has Fed the Elite in Berlin and now Madrid. Nazis Included," *The Washington Post*, 17 December 2019.

⁸ Richard Grunberger, *A Social History of the Third Reich* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1971), 90.

⁹ Paul Freedman, *Food: The History of Taste*, Vol. 21 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007), 7.

access to food dictates quality of life, historians began by focusing on “how well or ill-nourished they [peasants and workers] were; how they coped with the unpredictability of harvests, food supply and prices.”¹⁰ Since then, the field has significantly expanded beyond these questions and now includes more demographics. One of the pioneering works on the subject is Reay Tannahill’s *Food in History*, first published in 1973, which broadly investigates food from prehistoric times to the present.¹¹ The pioneering journal of the discipline, named *Petits Propos Culinaires* (Little Culinary Matters), was founded by Jane and Alan Davidson in 1979. The journal has since published over one hundred issues. Alan Davidson went on to write the extensive *Oxford Companion to Food* which, at nearly nine hundred pages, has proven to be a valuable resource and piece of scholarship in the area.¹² The study of food in history as a whole is an immensely valuable tool to use in gaining historical and cultural insight from a previously unutilized perspective.

However, in the vast historiography on the Third Reich, the topic of food remains relatively unexplored. Gesine Gerhard stresses in her 2015 book, *Nazi Hunger Politics*, that “there [were] no books published on food during the Third Reich” before hers.¹³ This is a pioneering work that marries the topics of food and the Third Reich. Even so, Gerhard was understandably unable to discuss everything related to the topic, such as corruption related to the political and societal elite and food, a focus in this essay. While there is a fair amount of literature on agrarian policies and the influence of the Reich Minister for Food and Agriculture, Richard Walther Darré, on Nazi food ideology, the effect of these policies on the “Aryan” and “non-Aryan” German population has not been prioritized by historians. Nor has there been a

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Reay Tannahill, *Food in History* (New York: Stein and Day, 1982).

¹² Alan Davidson, *The Oxford Companion to Food* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999).

¹³ Gerhard, *Nazi Hunger Politics*, 9.

significant literature on the role of food in the decision to carry out the Final Solution against Europe's Jews, despite historians such as Lizzie Collingham arguing it as being a key factor in the decision-making process.¹⁴

Since "Aryan" women bore the brunt of National Socialist food policy towards insider Germans and were responsible for the development of food culture during this period, their experiences from the time that Hitler came to power, through the indoctrination of Nazi gastronomic ideals, and throughout the rationing period that began shortly before the *Wehrmacht* (German armed forces) marched into Poland are the focus of the first chapter, "Feeding the *Volksgemeinschaft*." An important starting point was to investigate the literature on the female experience in the Third Reich. Beginning in the 1970s, originating with Jill Stephenson's 1975 study on women in Nazi society, the subject has expanded as many historians have explored the impacts of National Socialism on women through various lenses.¹⁵ In this literature, there is vital information pertaining to Nazi food campaigns, regulations, and wartime rationing. Nancy Reagin's studies on "Aryan" housewives' experiences in the interwar period help to shed light on the importance of the housewife in the National Socialist agenda of reshaping food culture to make the German economy more autarkic in preparation for war. Lisa Pine offers insights on the experiences of women on the home front during the Second World War, outlining what effects rationing had on the German household and how women navigated the volatile food situation.¹⁶

¹⁴ Collingham, *The Taste of War*, 211.

¹⁵ Jill Stephenson, *Women in Nazi Society* (London: Croon Helm, 1975).

¹⁶ Lisa Pine, "German Women and the Home Front in the Second World War: Daily Life, Work and the Impact of War," *Women's History Review* 26, no. 4 (2017): 634-646; Nancy Reagin, "Comparing Apples and Oranges: Housewives and the Politics of Consumption in Interwar Germany," in *Getting and Spending: European and American Consumer Societies in the Twentieth Century*, ed. Susan Strasser, Charles McGovern, and Matthias Just (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998); Nancy Reagin, "Marktordnung and Autarkic Housekeeping: Housewives and Private Consumption Under the Four-Year Plan, 1936–1939," *German History* 19, no. 2 (2001): 162-184.

While there is ample literature about both top-level Party functionaries and the upper-class in Nazi society, which will be the focus of the second chapter, “Wining and Dining,” virtually none of it investigates the role of food for the “upper-10,000” as this essay does. Still, existing work can be mined to shed light on the topic. Fabrice d’Almeida’s studies on the upper-class in Nazi Germany provide a basic overview with several pieces of information relevant to food culture in high society, essential information for the section entitled “The Gastronomes of Germany.”¹⁷ Beyond that, the majority of these secondary sources for this chapter have been gathered by focusing on key elements of the topic, including fine dining practices and a discussion on the lavishness of Third Reich’s top officials: Propaganda Minister Joseph Goebbels, Field Marshal Hermann Göring, and Adolf Hitler himself.

Primary Source Material

Most primary sources consulted were found on the online databases of the *Bundesarchiv*, the *Bildarchiv Preußischer Kulturbesitz*, and German History in Documents and Images (GHDI). Other sources include the *Deutsches Historisches Museum* and individual images from Getty Images. These sources are image-heavy since linguistic, locational, and online barriers have made reading and accessing textual documents challenging. They include staged photographs, advertisements, propaganda posters, and election posters, all of which tell us how the regime communicated with the German people about things related to food, autarky, rationing, and agriculture. A cookbook from 1939, published in Hamburg, was also consulted.¹⁸ It tells us about regional differences in dishes and the availability of foodstuffs.

¹⁷ Fabrice d’Almeida, *High Society in the Third Reich*, trans. Steven Rendall (Cambridge: Polity, 2008); D’Almeida, “Luxury and Distinction under National Socialism.”

¹⁸ S. Günther, *Kochbuch der Staatlichen Haushaltungsschulen. Hamburg* (Hamburg: 1939).

When discussing the “upper-10,000,” there is little in the way of image-based source material. This is due to the regime’s effective covering up of photographic evidence revealing the corruption of Party officials. There are no publicly available photographs from inside the top elite’s wine cellars, of their lavish dinner parties, or of political and societal elites indulging at fine dining restaurants. Excerpts from Göring’s trial in Nuremberg and Goebbels’ wartime speeches fill some of these gaps.¹⁹

From Expecting Triumph to Eating Turnips: The German Experience with Food During the Great War

Establishing the place of food within National Socialist ideology is essential to understanding why the Nazi regime implemented restrictive policies on the typical insider German but does not explain the behaviour and lack of control the regime had over the “upper-10,000.” The beginnings of Nazi food ideology can be traced back to Germany’s traumatic experiences during the First World War (1914-1918). After Germany’s invasion of neutral Belgium in August of 1914, the Allies established a blockade that ceased imports of raw material to Germany through the North Sea.²⁰ Initially, this was not seen as a dire issue by the German leadership; they, similarly to the other powers at war, had planned for a swift victory. They also believed that Great Britain would not involve themselves in the continental war, so no plans were made to supply the German people with food in the event of a blockade from the world’s most powerful navy.²¹ Since Germany relied heavily on food imports, with over one-third of all foodstuffs - including 27 percent of proteins and 42 percent of fats - coming from outside the

¹⁹*Trials of War Criminals Before the Nuernberg Military Tribunals Under Control Council Law No. 10: Vol. 13: United States of America v. Ernst von Weizsaecker, et al.*, Library of Congress Federal Research Division; Joseph Goebbels, “Nun, Volk steh auf, und Sturm brich los! Rede im Berliner Sportpalast,” *Der steile Aufstieg* (Munich: Zentralverlag der NSDAP, 1944), 167-204, trans. Randall Bytwerk.

²⁰ Gerhard, *Nazi Hunger Politics*, 20.

²¹ *Ibid.*

country, the failure to prepare for a blockade was perhaps one of the most fatal errors of the Imperial regime. The effects of this mistake placed the German home front on a starvation diet, which not only weakened it but also contributed to the *Dolchstoßlegende* (stab in the back myth). This inaccurate but popular belief held that Germany was not defeated on the battlefield, but rather it was discontent on the home front that led to the betrayal of the military and caused the fall of the Imperial government.

The government's panicked attempts to control the food situation yielded no success. It attempted to regulate food distribution by putting price ceilings in place to make food on the market accessible to everyone. This worsened the situation, as more goods previously destined for the public were instead sold on the black market at a higher price, resulting in the scarcity of food and food prices sharply increasing.²² In 1915, to ease tension on the availability of potatoes, the government implemented the '*Schweine-mord*' (pig murder), since potatoes were regularly used as pig fodder. This not only did nothing to relieve pressure on the food supply, but actively worsened it by butchering nearly five million of Germany's pigs, or 77 percent. By the winter of 1916-17, after a failed potato harvest due to an abnormally wet season, the population turned to eating animal fodder to survive. Turnips and swedes (rutabaga), which before the war had been used exclusively to feed animals, became the main source of nutrition for Germans.²³ The winter of 1916-17 came to be known as the 'turnip winter.'

While this starvation-level diet ravaged the health of those at home, soldiers on the front remained relatively well-fed.²⁴ This further contributed to the *Dolchstoßlegende*, since the morale at home was so harshly affected by the complete lack of food, whereas on the front lines

²² Ibid., 21.

²³ Ibid., 23; Collingham, *The Taste of War*, 24.

²⁴ Ibid., 27.

German soldiers enjoyed full bellies. As Lizzie Collingham observes, “though the German request for armistice was a result of failure on the battlefield, those who witnessed the events blamed the loss on hunger.”²⁵ In the end, more than 700,000 Germans died from malnutrition during the war, with many more dying from illnesses exacerbated by a lack of available nutrients.²⁶

The Allied blockade did not end with the armistice of November 11th, 1918. Rather, the Germans were left to starve for an additional seven months, ending only with the signing of the widely hated Treaty of Versailles in June of 1919, which placed blame for the war entirely on Germany.²⁷

The experience of starvation during the war would not be forgotten. Rather, it influenced various political party platforms in the 1920s, as the food situation in Germany struggled to recover throughout the years of the Weimar Republic.²⁸ Not until 1928 did the domestic food levels reach those of the pre-war production, and even then the country still relied heavily on food imports. This instability was intrinsic to the myth-building period of the NSDAP from 1925 to 1933, which was referred to by the Nazis as the *Kampfzeit* (time of struggle). During this time, Hitler “developed an obsession” with solidifying food security.²⁹ The disaster of the Great War made a lasting impression on him and would become a key talking point in garnering support for the Party. He was determined to make Germany’s food economy autarkic in preparation for a war that had the possibility of lasting longer than the first.

²⁵ Ibid., 25.

²⁶ Ibid., 22.

²⁷ Ibid., 27-28.

²⁸ Ibid., 28.

²⁹ Ibid., 26.

Strengthening the Nation: Nazi Food Ideology

Since the NSDAP's formative years in the 1920s, the topic of food was on the minds of the Party's leadership. While they would not place a heavy focus on agricultural issues until the final years of the Weimar Republic, Hitler did address his concern for food security in his 1925 book, *Mein Kampf*: "if one wants space and soil in Europe, this can really only be achieved at the cost of Russia."³⁰ Here, we can see that the concept of *lebensraum* (living space) was on Hitler's mind from early on. The concept, which emerged in the late nineteenth century, was adopted by the Nazis as a "necessary" solution to the problem of territorial space for racial expansion and the volatile food situation: they wanted to conquer land to the East and cultivate it, which would alleviate the pressure on the German food supply. However, while Hitler did have concerns about food, he had little interest in the practice of farming or a plan on how to actively reform the system to accommodate his *Weltanschauung* (worldview) during the *Kampfzeit*.³¹ It was not until the Nazis recognized the political significance of the peasant population that they shifted their focus from seeking urban support to seeking it from rural communities.³² Part of their propaganda campaigns focussed on elevating the peasant by recognizing their importance in cultivating the land and producing food for the *Volk* but also in ensuring "racial purity." The election poster below depicts the National Socialists coming to the rescue of the peasants, whose

³⁰ Adolf Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, (1925) quoted in Gerhard, *Nazi Hunger Politics*, 40.

³¹ John E. Farquharson, "The Agrarian Policy of National Socialist Germany," in *Peasants and Lords in Modern Germany*, ed. Robert G. Moeller, 233-259 (Routledge, 2017), 234.

³² Gerhard, *Nazi Hunger Politics*, 37.

“traditional basis for rural life was being threatened by the "Jewish-capitalist" market economy, industrialization, and urbanization.”³³



Figure 1: Heinrich Hoffmann, “Hindenburg and Hitler to the Farmers’ Rescue: National Socialist Election Poster for the Reichstag Election,” March 5, 1933. *Bildarchiv Preußischer Kulturbesitz*.

Richard Walther Darré, a scholar and the future Minister of Food and Agriculture (appointed in June 1933), was the man responsible for politically popularizing the term *Blut und Boden* (blood and soil) and introducing its doctrines to the Nazi Party in the 1930s.³⁴ The ideology places a heavy emphasis on idealizing the peasant and rural communities as the epitome of “Aryan” “racial purity.”³⁵ “Blood” refers to generations of Germans who “formed the cultural and racial core of the German nation,”³⁶ whereas “soil” refers to the relationship with the land that the peasants formed after working with it for hundreds of years.³⁷ This formed their strong attachment to the land, which in turn “racially strengthened” the Nordic ancestors who settled it.

³³ “Hindenburg and Hitler to the Farmers’ Rescue: National Socialist Election Poster for the Reichstag Election (March 5, 1933),” *German History in Documents and Images*.

³⁴ Gerhard, *Nazi Hunger Politics*, 37.

³⁵ Anna Bramwell, *Blood and Soil: Walther Darré and Hitler’s Green Party* (Buckinghamshire: The Kensal Press, 1985), 55.

³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 54.

These were supposedly the origins of the contemporary German farmer.³⁸ The ideology stresses the importance of the peasant in the cultivation of food for the nation and glorifies a rejection of industrialism in favour of a more traditional way of life. This was contradictory to Nazi practice, which included funding advancements in new methods of food production and promoting modern technology.³⁹ Still, the Nazi Party organized intricate and well-choreographed harvest celebrations and national “peasant days” to emphasize the importance of this group of people and their supposedly anti-industrial way of life.⁴⁰

The Nazis looked for “purity” not only in the race and culture of Germany’s peasant population but in the food that would be consumed by the *Volksgemeinschaft* as well. They believed that a natural diet, one that consisted of domestically grown and whole ingredients, was essential to improving the “racial health” of the *Volk*.⁴¹ This improvement was necessary if Germany was to win the impending war, as, Gesine Gerhard notes: “greater racial fitness would prepare Germans for the demands of war as soldiers, workers, and mothers.”⁴² The promotion of the improvement of “racial health” through “green eating” was also a way for the Nazi Party to indoctrinate Germans against relying on food imports since domestically available foods from German soil were pushed as being superior in quality. Following the Nazi takeover in January of 1933, the Party launched various campaigns through multiple organizations that focussed on returning insider Germans to a simple, domestically influenced diet that would aid the restructuring of the economy in preparation for war.

³⁸ Ibid., 55.

³⁹ Ursula Heinzelmann, *Beyond Bratwurst: A History of Food in Germany* (London: Reaktion Books, 2014), 263.

⁴⁰ Gerhard, *Nazi Hunger Politics*, 37.

⁴¹ Corinna Treitel, "Nature and the Nazi Diet," *Food & Foodways* 17, no. 3 (2009): 139.

⁴² Gerhard, *Nazi Hunger Politics*, 51.

State-sanctioned reformers did not simply want to change the German diet, however. They wanted to fundamentally restructure Germany's relationship with food and transform eating from an individualistic culture to a collectivist one that considered the whole of the *Volksgemeinschaft*.⁴³ Hugo Hertwig, a leading dietary expert of the Third Reich, advanced the idea that food should "originally and by necessity always be associated with self-sacrifice."⁴⁴ Reformers stressed that "Aryan" German bodies did not belong to the individual, but rather the whole *Volk*, and diet reform would "strengthen" the "racial community" and the food sector.⁴⁵

The target demographic for reform was insider women. The Nazis made this clear beginning in 1933 through campaigns focused on adjustments within the home kitchen that promoted autarky and "racial health." There was a tacit understanding, however, that women within the "upper-10,000" were largely exempt from such campaigns since they typically had paid staff to take care of household matters. This resulted in them having fewer homemaking responsibilities in addition to the unparalleled privilege that allowed them to maintain their lavish lifestyles. While gender did not play a significant role in the food experiences of the "upper-10,000," it certainly had heavy implications for the majority of insider women. Since women were conditioned to be homemakers in addition to often being workers, the responsibility for consumption fell upon them, since they purchased and prepared food within the insider German household even when they also worked outside the home. The Party recognized this and looked to them to facilitate change in accordance with Nazi food ideals.

⁴³ Treitel, *Nature and the Nazi Diet*, 145-6.

⁴⁴ Hugo Hertwig, *Richtige Ernährung, eine Lebensfrage* (Berlin: Gersbach & Sohn, 1938) quoted in Alice Autumn Weinreb, *Modern Hungers: Food and Power in Twentieth Century Germany* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2017), 55.

⁴⁵ Collingham, *The Taste of War*, 357.

Chapter One: Feeding the *Volksgemeinschaft*: War Preparation, Wartime Rationing, and the Role of Women

The National Socialists had a significant influence on food culture in the German household. Some traditions and foods advocated by the Nazis can still be found in Germany today, including *Quark* spread and the *Eintopfsonntag* (one-pot Sunday) meal, a thrifty monthly family meal made from ingredients cooked together in a single pot, such as stew.⁴⁶ The Party was heavily involved in the regulation and distribution of food, both among the whole German population and, later, among those under German occupation.⁴⁷ Their aim within Germany was economic autarky, which they believed required a heavy-handed approach to transforming food culture within the insider German kitchen to make it more efficient and less wasteful so that it could eventually accommodate a wartime diet. As the homemakers, meal planners, and cooks of the household, women's involvement in the consumption of food was by far the most significant among members of the *Volksgemeinschaft*.⁴⁸ While other insider demographics experienced food adjustments, such as soldiers, children, and workers, the vast majority of these adjustments were expected to be made by women.

Preparing for War: Women-Oriented Household Campaigns, The Four-Year Plan, and Autarky

The Nazis used a variety of methods to transform insider German food culture. Starting in 1933, several women's and charity organizations were initially responsible for shifting housewives' consumption behaviours in the regime's *Gleichschaltung* (coordination) phase.⁴⁹

⁴⁶ Ibid., 355.

⁴⁷ Mark Cole, "Feeding the Volk: Food, Culture, and the Politics of Nazi Consumption 1933-1945" (PhD diss, University of Florida, 2011), 13.

⁴⁸ Weinreb, *Modern Hungers*, 56.

⁴⁹ Cole, "Feeding the Volk," 136-7.

This phase of the regime, occurring over the first twenty months following the Nazi takeover in 1933, was a campaign to establish the monopolistic power of the Nazi Party throughout Germany. They did this through a variety of measures, including banning all other political parties, taking control of governmental institutions, and transforming trade and agriculture policies to support war preparation.⁵⁰ The *Deutsches Frauenwerk* (German Women's Bureau, DFW) was an institution whose agenda included transforming the home kitchen into one that helped to pursue the regime's autarkic goals. The campaigns of one specific department, the *Abteilung für Volkswirtschaft/Hauswirtschaft* (Department for National Economy/Home Economics, AV/H) focused mostly on training women in economic matters and instructing them on how to make do with less, both to improve the German economy and to discreetly prepare them for wartime rationing.⁵¹ Their campaigns reached women through a variety of means: "from cooking classes, demonstrations, lectures, exhibitions, and films, to recipe publications, advice centers, and radio broadcasts."⁵²

The DFW's most successful early campaign, in coordination with *Winterhilfswerk* (Winter Charity, WHW), was the *Eintopfsonntag* campaign. Launched in October of 1933, the purpose of this campaign was to replace the traditional German Sunday roast, which required premium cuts of meat, with the more economical 'One-Pot' stew. This was made with mostly vegetables and smaller, cheaper cuts of meat.⁵³ Since the dish only used one pot and had a relatively short cooking time, it required less cooking fuel than other more complex meals. Thus, the *Eintopf* campaign trained women to use not only non-premium ingredients but also to use

⁵⁰ Jean-Denis Lepage, *An Illustrated Dictionary of the Third Reich* (Jefferson: McFarland and Company, 2014), 62.

⁵¹ Cole, "Feeding the Volk," 136-7.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Gerhard, *Nazi Hunger Politics*, 34.

less fuel, which would be required of them during the war.⁵⁴ The money saved by families who participated was then donated to the WHW, who used the proceeds to help feed and provide warm clothing for poor and unemployed veterans of the First World War during the winter months.⁵⁵ As time went on, the campaign began to aid all poor and needy members of the *Volk*.⁵⁶ Unsurprisingly, racial and social outsiders were not allowed to reap the benefits of the campaign.⁵⁷

The *Eintopf* campaign was more than simply one part of the training for housewives during *Gleichschaltung* or to help Germany's poor. It had several ideological implications. Firstly, the *Eintopf* by nature celebrated the self-sacrifice required within the imagined *Volksgemeinschaft*. The sacrifice implied by the meal aided the "racial health" of the nation since it promoted a collectivist mindset. Secondly, some historians suggest that the meal was meant to represent the racial community: "one-pot" representing "one race."⁵⁸ Further, as supposedly everyone within the *Volksgemeinschaft* was consuming the same dish, the class lines that separated the *Volk* in previous times theoretically became more blurred.⁵⁹ In practice, however, the *Eintopf* meal campaign's success did very little to blur these long-established lines.

Beginning in 1936, Hitler introduced the Four-Year Plan under Hermann Göring's direction.⁶⁰ Similar to the campaigns of the WHW, its primary goal was to prepare Germany for a possibly lengthy war and to train citizens in self-sufficiency measures. This included self-

⁵⁴ Collingham, *The Taste of War*, 355.

⁵⁵ Weinreb, *Modern Hungers*, 53.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

⁵⁷ Cole, "Feeding the Volk," 119.

⁵⁸ Gerhard, *Nazi Hunger Politics*, 34; Weinreb, *Modern Hungers*, 53-54.

⁵⁹ Gerhard, *Nazi Hunger Politics*, 34.

⁶⁰ The Plan was officially titled the 'second' Four Year Plan, since Hitler counted the public works plan that was implemented immediately after the Nazi takeover, which included the *Eintopfsonntag* campaign, as the 'first' Four Year Plan. (Gustavo Corni, *Hitler and the Peasants: Agrarian Policy of the Third Reich, 1930-1939* (New York: Berg, 1990), 162.)

sufficiency within the household.⁶¹ Hitler aimed to have the country consume as little as possible to achieve autarky, but even with these measures, there was still a food deficit that could only be solved through the fundamental Nazi doctrine of *lebensraum*, which had been essential to the Nazi agenda since the 1920s.⁶² Four things could be done by insider Germans to avoid the predicted impending food catastrophe: reduce food waste even further, work towards more economical consumption, make Germany's food supply more autarkic, and, most importantly, colonize lands to the East for German cultivation. The latter was always part of the Nazi plan; the food situation was one factor of many that explained why the Nazis deemed the conquest of the East "necessary." The Four-Year Plan's autarky measures included placing more emphasis on farmers within Germany as essential to the *Volk* and pressuring them to produce as much food as possible, despite the awareness that they alone would not be able to produce enough food to provide for all of Germany.⁶³

The implementers of the Plan stressed that housewives utilize various foods that were either made from by-products or were plentiful domestically. The most heavily pushed of these was *Quark*, which is made from by-products of butter production, the left-over soured milk. This process creates a product that can be described as something between yogurt and cream cheese.⁶⁴ It was meant to act as a substitute for butter, margarine, or *Schmaltz* (rendered chicken or goose fat). *Quark* quickly became the most successful food of the Plan. It contained fats, protein, and calcium, proving it impressively nutritious. Since the soured milk was previously used as animal fodder, the diversion of it from livestock to human consumption proved to be an innovative

⁶¹ Reagin, "Marktordnung and Autarkic Housekeeping," 182.

⁶² Corni, *Hitler and the Peasants*, 163, 249.

⁶³ C. R. Lovin, "Farm Women in the Third Reich," *Agricultural History* 60, no. 3 (1986): 106-7.

⁶⁴ Collingham, *The Taste of War*, 354.

marvel.⁶⁵ *Quark* was not, however, a Nazi innovation. It emerged in the 1920s but was not popularized and was virtually unknown to consumers until the Nazi adoption of it.⁶⁶ The *Reichsnährstand* (Reich Food Society, RNS) distributed over nine million pamphlets advertising its benefits and instructions for its use.⁶⁷ Together with the RNS, the DFW's drive for *Quark* was their most successful campaign; consumption rose as much as sixty percent in the 1930s and it is still available on most German grocery shelves today.⁶⁸

Another food pushed by the state was fish, especially German herring.⁶⁹ Since pork shortages occurred semi-regularly, another form of protein was needed to supplement the insider German diet. The fishing industry, which had been struggling since the 1920s, was one solution.⁷⁰ Fish was also known to be a healthy form of protein; its consumption theoretically contributed to the "racial health" of the nation. The Nazis suggested that all insider German housewives should put fish on the table at least one time per week to alleviate pressure from the meat industry, support fishing villages, and consume valuable vitamins that popular meats such as pork (and beef, which was less popular) did not contain.⁷¹

The overarching slogan of the Four Year Plan was "guns before butter." While food had been one of Hitler's primary foci in the years leading up to the Plan, the expectation of an upcoming war meant that focus had to be shifted towards rearming Germany.⁷² As Gesine Gerhard notes, "producing cannons became more important than producing 'butter.'"⁷³

⁶⁵ Ibid., 355.

⁶⁶ Reagin, "Marktordnung and Autarkic Housekeeping," 171.

⁶⁷ Ibid., 169.

⁶⁸ Collingham, *The Taste of War*, 354-55; Reagin, "Comparing Apples and Oranges," 258; this is an official DFW statistic and could not be independently verified.

⁶⁹ Treitel, "Nature and the Nazi Diet," 140-1.

⁷⁰ Reagin, "Marktordnung and Autarkic Housekeeping," 172.

⁷¹ Cole, "Feeding the Volk," 152.

⁷² Gerhard, *Nazi Hunger Politics*, 33.

⁷³ Ibid.

Propaganda had to shift from overplaying the importance of food security to instructing housewives on how to reduce consumption further and readjust their meal plans depending on what may be available one week but unavailable the next.⁷⁴ The Party appealed to insider German women by reminding them of their importance to the Four Year Plan. The leader of the *Nationalsozialistische Frauenschaft* (National Socialist Women's League, NSF) Gertrud Scholtz-Klink “repeatedly invoked women’s ‘cooking spoons’ as weapons that could benefit the nation.”⁷⁵ Examples of this included women being pushed to fundamentally adjust their cooking and consumption methods: they were advised to boil potatoes with the skin on and peel them after cooking while still hot to avoid as much peeling waste as possible.⁷⁶ Even further, women were told not to use wooden spoons while cooking because they absorbed a minuscule amount of valuable fats and oils.⁷⁷ In the same vein, butter, jam and jelly were to be spread on toast directly from the packaging, rather than from a butter dish or plate.⁷⁸ A change that was met with the strongest apprehension by housewives was the regime’s attempts to replace the traditional evening meal of bread, butter, and cold cuts with a warmed vegetable-heavy dish that was more flexible with food shortages.⁷⁹ Throughout the Plan and beyond, women were increasingly expected to replace their routine foods with dishes that required significantly more labour.⁸⁰

The Plan had a drastic impact on what foods were consumed among insider Germans. White cabbage and potatoes gradually became staples in the German diet. Fruit consumption declined by one-eighth.⁸¹ Vegetable oils made from inferior produce had to be used increasingly

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Reagin, “Marktordnung and Autarkic Housekeeping,” 183.

⁷⁶ Reagin, “Comparing Apples and Oranges,” 257.

⁷⁷ Heintelmann, *Beyond Bratwurst*, 262.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Pine, “German Women and the Home Front,” 635.

in the place of scarce animal-based fats and oils.⁸² Meat consumption declined with its unstable availability. Grains and cereals were increasingly used, especially with the Nazi promotion of *Vollkornbrot* (whole wheat bread) over white bread, which required imported white flour.⁸³ The Nazi regime was adjusting to accommodate supply instead of demand. The regime focused on insider women as consumers to achieve this, who had to adjust based on what was available.⁸⁴ One season, potatoes would be plentiful, so housewives' associations published potato-heavy recipes in newspapers and magazines for women to follow. The same would occur with leeks or cabbage. When apples were in abundance, women would be urged to make preserves from them. This technique kept prices stable and allowed the regime to navigate around shortages, placing focus on what the country had instead of what it lacked.⁸⁵

By the late 1930s, consumers were dissatisfied with the *ersatz* (replacement) foods introduced during the Plan. Berliners in particular conjured up disparaging nicknames for some products: *Pellkartoffeln* (boiled potatoes) came to be known as “Four Year Plan nuggets,” *ersatz* coffee (usually made from oats, chicory, barley, or malt coffee) was called “negro sweat,”⁸⁶ and the skimmed milk advertised as healthy, which had a sickly blue tint, was called “cadaver juice.”⁸⁷ The introduction of these low-quality foods only scratched the surface of what was to come: the emergence of more desperate *ersatz* goods and strict regulation on consumption through meagre ration allowances.⁸⁸ On August 27th, 1939, days before the *Wehrmacht* invaded

⁸² Jörg Baten and Andrea Wagner, "Autarchy, Market Disintegration, and Health: The Mortality and Nutritional Crisis in Nazi Germany, 1933–1937," *Economics and Human Biology* 1, no. 1 (2003): 8; Pine, “German Women and the Home Front,” 635.

⁸³ Gerhard, *Nazi Hunger Politics*, 35; Reagin, “Marktordnung and Autarkic Housekeeping,” 176.

⁸⁴ Reagin, “Marktordnung and Autarkic Housekeeping,” 176.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

⁸⁶ This is a racist term, translated from “*Negerschweiß*” (Reagin, *Marktordnung and Autarkic Housekeeping*,” 183).

⁸⁷ Reagin, “Marktordnung and Autarkic Housekeeping,” 183; Pine, “German Women and the Home Front,” 639; Cole, “Feeding the Volk,” 169.

⁸⁸ One example comes from Mauthausen concentration camp, where prisoners were fed newly invented ‘sausage’ made from the waste products of cellulose production. It was crawling with bacteria and killed over one hundred

Poland, a rationing system was introduced that would increasingly limit access to food and carry Germany to the end of the war.⁸⁹

Wartime Rationing and Survival on the Home Front

While a mild form of rationing on some foods and essential goods, paired with controls on pricing non-rationed goods, was introduced on August 27th, ration cards and “a more comprehensive rationing system” came into effect on September 3rd, 1939.⁹⁰ At first, rationing did not affect insider Germans too much, especially in the countryside.⁹¹ Since rations were determined based on household income and number of children, poor families with multiple children were entitled to more food than before rationing began.⁹² At the beginning of the rationing period, the Research Institute of the German Labour Front determined that this demographic amounted to 42 percent of the working family population.⁹³ Insider mothers with many children are reported to have received so many sugar coupons beyond their need that they gave them away for free. Outsiders, on the other hand, were immediately placed on second tier food allocations. Jews, for example, were only allowed to shop at designated stores, whose owners often added a 10 percent surcharge to their bills. They were limited to one hour of shopping each day, between four and five o’clock PM, well past the peak times for stores that often ran out of most foods by then.⁹⁴ While insider Germans did have to make certain sacrifices,

prisoners, but leader of the SS Heinrich Himmler is reported to have described it as an “unbelievably nourishing, tasty sausage-like paste, that made an excellent foodstuff” and the paste was served to prisoners both there and at Dachau concentration camp until the end of the war. (Collingham, *The Taste of War*, 373); *Ersatz* clothing and textiles also saw a significant increase in production

⁸⁹ Jill Stephenson, *Women in Nazi Germany*, 98.

⁹⁰ Pine, “German Women and the Home Front,” 636; Don A. Gregory and Wilhelm R. Gehlen, *Hitler’s Home Front: A Family Surviving the War and the Peace* (Barnsley: Pen and Sword Books LTD, 2016), 30.

⁹¹ Gregory and Gehlen, *Hitler’s Home Front*, 30.

⁹² Collingham, *The Taste of War*, 367.

⁹³ *Ibid.*

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 359.

they were never worse-off than outsider Germans. Still, while insiders were entitled to more food than outsiders, they often were unable to obtain items due to regular shortages of rationed goods.⁹⁵

The rationing system designed by nutritionist Heinrich Kraut from the Institute for the Physiology of Work varied depending on one's age, gender, and occupation. Among insiders, workers received between 3,600 and 4,200 calories per day, and 'normal users' received 2,400 daily calories.⁹⁶ Children naturally received smaller rations, along with young adults who required less caloric intake. Pregnant insider women and nursing mothers received more rations, whereas outsider women in the same situation received barely anything.⁹⁷ The system quickly fell apart, however, with unexpected shortages. At the end of the first year of the war, male workers, who were increasingly replaced by women as the war progressed, began to lose weight.⁹⁸ To remedy this, the Party started a campaign wherein workers were encouraged to use their rationing cards at the factory canteen so that they would not share extra allocations earned from working overtime with their families.⁹⁹ This was to ensure that they had the required caloric intake to work harder for longer, but this effort by the state saw little success.¹⁰⁰ The rationing system gradually declined and rations continued to be cut regularly every six months all the way to the end of the war.¹⁰¹

It was not until 1941-42, with the plundering of Eastern territories that the food situation was slightly alleviated, although not for long. The military was now relying on foods from these

⁹⁵ Ibid., 367.

⁹⁶ Ibid., 359.

⁹⁷ Ibid., 359; Gerhard, *Nazi Hunger Politics*, 47.

⁹⁸ Collingham, *The Taste of War*, 359; 368.

⁹⁹ Ibid., 369.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 368.

¹⁰¹ Gregory and Gehlen, *Hitler's Home Front*, 33.

lands to feed soldiers. Rations for the home front saw little increase despite more food supplies becoming available.¹⁰² The unexpectedly meager supply of food from the East to the home front meant that food that was available domestically had to go further, resulting in more pressure on women from the regime to increase household labour.¹⁰³ The winter of 1942-43, coinciding with the Battle of Stalingrad, saw a detrimental decline in the availability of food, especially potatoes. A poor potato harvest in the summer of 1942, bolstered by an unusually cold winter and military defeat meant that Germans, specifically urban Germans, had very little official access to food and had to find other means to survive.

It should be noted that an insider German's experience with food during the rationing period greatly differed depending on whether they lived in urban or rural areas. For those in the countryside with direct access to agricultural products, a relatively large variety of food was consistently available. Those in the cities had to make do with the repetitive and often scarce ingredients of potatoes, bread, and legumes.¹⁰⁴ Urban housewives attempted to diversify meals made with these ingredients as much as possible, but they could only do so much with a monotonous supply of food.¹⁰⁵ Despite foods such as "meat, poultry, game, eggs, oils and fats" officially being on ration for the duration of the war, they were often unavailable to urban consumers.

Urban women devised several ways to gain access to food. Some of these techniques were endorsed by the regime, some were in a grey area, and some were strictly illegal. The regime's ideal solution to urban food problems was for people to produce and scrounge for food

¹⁰² Collingham, *The Taste of War*, 371; Gregory and Gehlen, *Hitler's Home Front*, 30.

¹⁰³ Gregory and Gehlen, *Hitler's Home Front*, 30.

¹⁰⁴ Heinzlmann, *Beyond Bratwurst*, 273.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid*; Günther, *Kochbuch der Staatlichen Haushaltungsschulen*.

themselves. This could be done by women keeping ‘war gardens,’ which were commonly placed on the balconies of apartment buildings.¹⁰⁶ The vegetables and minuscule amounts of meat from chickens and rabbits became increasingly essential as the war progressed. By 1942, open public spaces replaced their trees with garden plots.¹⁰⁷ Another solution was urban foraging. This task was mostly given to children, who were urged to search for rosehips, nettle, dandelions, beechnuts, and carnation roots, which were usually used to make *ersatz* substitutes for coffee. These ingredients also contained valuable vitamins that the urban people, who lacked access to greens, required.¹⁰⁸

Unusual, and often frowned upon, means to find meat included butchering animals who were victims of the war. In Berlin, for example, when the Allies bombed the Tiergarten (Zoo) in 1943, residents collected the animal carcasses and gorged themselves on exotic meats including crocodile, deer, buffalo, antelope, and bear (from which they made cold cuts and sausage).¹⁰⁹ Later, there were reports from all over Germany of people butchering dead horses they found for meat.

Another means to find food was relying on friends and relatives both rurally and abroad. Farms that had a surplus of food might send some to urban family members. Soldiers stationed abroad, particularly in France, were allowed to send a twenty-kilogram parcel home. This method depended almost exclusively on luck, however, as the amount and quality of goods sent relied on where one was stationed. France was the best place for sending food aid home: soldiers sent relatives and friends “butter, coffee, wine, champagne, cognac, and other luxuries, even

¹⁰⁶ Heinzlmann, *Beyond Bratwurst*, 273; Pine, “German Women and the Home Front,” 637.

¹⁰⁷ Heinzlmann, *Beyond Bratwurst*, 273.

¹⁰⁸ Pine, “German Women and the Home Front,” 639; Collingham, *The Taste of War*, 379.

¹⁰⁹ Heinzlmann, *Beyond Bratwurst*, 273.

whole pigs and sheep.”¹¹⁰ In addition, customs officers were instructed not to bother checking these parcels, since the more money spent abroad on luxuries, the better inflation in Germany recovered. Additionally, the regime saw no need to divert time and energy toward controlling goods exported from these areas.¹¹¹ With luck, someone on the urban home front with the correct contacts could live relatively comfortably while those around them struggled to find extra calories.¹¹²



Figure 2: “Poster Appealing Against Hamster Tours,” 1942. *Deutsches Historisches Museum*.

One illegal method was called “hamstering,” or “hamster tours.” This means of gaining food outside of rationing emerged during the First World War and re-emerged during the Second

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 271.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹¹² *Ibid.*, 272.

World War. Urban women travelled to nearby rural villages to buy or barter for foods that were otherwise unavailable in the cities.¹¹³ At this point, despite being heavily praised by the Nazis for a long while, farmers became more and more fed up with the politics that centralized food collection and fixed prices. Their way of combating the lost profit from the ration was to trade privately, becoming self-sufficient in themselves and building urban contacts to further profits.¹¹⁴ The government did little in the way of responding to these transactions, indicating that the Nazi leadership had not learned from the disastrous repercussions of price ceilings in the First World War and the subsequent black market that spiralled out of control. While Goebbels recommended apprehending women who partook in “hamster tours,” due to its regularity among the population Hitler and Göring were hesitant to take action. They saw it as mostly harmless: if farmers continued to reach their food production quotas, there should not be a problem.¹¹⁵ Goebbels argued that this would result in there being no food left for the shops. Hitler dismissed this, claiming that, even if this was the case, produce under transportation was at a higher risk of spoilage: “Hamster tours” ensured that local towns would be fed by their hinterlands, saving money on fuel and avoiding food deterioration.¹¹⁶ While “hamster tours” were not encouraged, as the above propaganda poster, which compares women who partook in the tours to the food hoarding rodent, confirms, it was not regulated sufficiently, and the outcome was an exponentially growing black market.

The growth of the black market and its necessity in the cities signalled that the ration system in Germany was failing.¹¹⁷ Germans who did not have enough nutrients or calories

¹¹³ Pine, “German Women and the Home Front,” 637.

¹¹⁴ Heinzelmann, *Beyond Bratwurst*, 273.

¹¹⁵ Collingham, *The Taste of War*, 378.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*

resorted to risking persecution including theoretical capital punishment for trading on the black market. Few insiders were actually prosecuted or killed for this; due to the demands of the ongoing war, the Party did not have the sufficient means to monitor nor prosecute partakers. Further, since corrupt Party members and top officials also partook in black marketeering, the Party did not want to publicize these illegal and immoral dealings through trials.¹¹⁸ There was an attempt to instill fear in the population with several public trials of those who slaughtered animals illegally, but most risked unlikely prosecution rather than go hungry.¹¹⁹

While the food situation within the cities was not yet completely dire, with some food still being available in most stores, the rationing system, with its biannual cuts, was itself nevertheless making the German population go hungry. It is important to remember, however, that insider Germans on the home front never starved during the war, even right up until Germany's defeat. While rations were certainly not sufficient, insiders were in a far better position than German outsiders and the majority of Europeans whose starvation facilitated the insider German diet.¹²⁰ This was especially the case for Ukraine, Greece, and the Netherlands, where citizens of the latter resorted to eating tulip bulbs to survive in the final desperate years of the war.¹²¹ As one German woman recalled: "We were hungry, actually we were always hungry, but it was not as though we suffered from starvation."¹²² The black market remained a relatively reliable form of barter and source of food to the end of the war and beyond.¹²³ In fact, Germans later looked back on the war years with some fondness, since the occupation of Germany by the

¹¹⁸ Pine, *German Women and the Home Front*, 637.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 636-7.

¹²⁰ Stephenson, *Women in Nazi Germany*, 98.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*; "Eating Tulip Bulbs During World War II," *Amsterdam Tulip Museum*, 25 September 2017.

¹²² Maria H. in Collingham, *The Taste of War*, 383.

¹²³ Collingham, *The Taste of War*, 383.

Allies following the German defeat resulted in the food situation becoming even more acute and the black market flourishing further.¹²⁴

Consent in the Third Reich

Lizzie Collingham stresses in *The Taste of War* that the Nazi rationing system was initially implemented “to distribute a limited supply of food across the population as efficiently and fairly as possible, while at the same time securing the loyalty of the working classes.”¹²⁵ Collingham’s observation raises questions about the extent to which perceived food security influenced support from the population for the regime. Compared to the hard times of the First World War and the Weimar Republic, the perceived stability that came with the Nazi regime’s iron-handed approach to food policy may have helped form the consensus of most of Germans that this regime was far more stable than previous ones. Hans-Ulrich Wehler argues that “bread and circuses”, or food and theatrics, were factors that significantly contributed to the popular support for the regime.¹²⁶

¹²⁴ Earl R. Beck, *Under the Bombs: The German Home Front, 1942-1945* (Lexington, Ky: University Press of Kentucky, 1986), 185.

¹²⁵ Collingham, *The Taste of War*, 359.

¹²⁶ Richard J. Evans, "Coercion and Consent in Nazi Germany," *Proceedings-British Academy*, Vol. 151 (2007): 55; Evans translated these ideas from Wehler’s book, *Deutsche Gesellschaftsgeschichte* (1989), and interpreted them in his article “Coercion and Consent” (55).



Figure 3: Hanns Hubmann, “Female Clerks in the Brunningen Grocery Store in Munich,” 1934. *Bildarchiv Preußischer Kulturbesitz.*

From where did this consensus that the Nazis had a firm grasp on the food situation in Germany emerge? Beginning in early 1933, once in power, the Party had already started to reform the food system through policies and campaigns that promoted autarky. Despite constant food shortages throughout the Party’s rule, Germans had a sense that, since the Nazis had such an intense hand in food policy, their interests were being represented and the situation was bound to stabilize. The above propaganda photograph of an exceedingly well-stocked grocery store in Munich demonstrates the regime’s attempt to convince Germans that under Nazi rule, they would have plentiful food if they consumed wisely. While Nazi food policy did stabilize the situation to an extent, and during the Second World War insider Germans never did starve, Germans were heavily urged to consume as little as possible, making their calorie intake not much higher than during the previous regime.¹²⁷ The Nazi regime was simply more organized

¹²⁷ Weinreb, “Modern Hungers,” 55.

and reliable, which was enough for most Germans to be content with the food situation, and by extension, the regime, consistently throughout its existence. Relative contentedness may have been sufficient for most insider Germans, but the upper echelon of Nazi society proved that reducing consumption and being merely 'content' was too modest for their preferred lifestyle.

Chapter Two: Wining and Dining: Food, Drink, and Nazi Germany's "Upper-Ten Thousand"

While the majority of those within Hitler's *Volksgemeinschaft* were fundamentally adjusting their diet to suit the goals of the regime, a small but significant number of the elite were not contributing to the cause. Gesine Gerhard and Lizzie Collingham define this group as the "upper-10,000," the upper echelon of Nazi society, including the Party elite and long-established members of the aristocracy, who enjoyed a lavish lifestyle at the expense of not only those whom they plundered but also the *Volksgemeinschaft* they claimed to serve.¹²⁸

Membership consisted of men and women with significant influence in National Socialist society, not limited to state or Party officials. They included diplomats, aristocrats, members of noble families, state ministers and secretaries, advisors, elite SS and SA officials, actors, artists, businessmen, and others of distinction.¹²⁹ In his book chapter "Luxury and Distinction under National Socialism," Fabrice d'Almeida estimates this number as being closer to six thousand.¹³⁰ Still, despite this slight discrepancy, several historians agree that this elite group did exist, and its members consumed the fruits of labour produced by millions in occupied Europe and millions within Germany itself.¹³¹

Two case studies reveal the phenomenon of the "upper-10,000's" food and drink consumption during the Third Reich. To begin, an examination of the fine-dining establishments in Germany and occupied Europe, specifically Otto Horcher's restaurant in Berlin, will identify the privileges associated with those who frequented these establishments. Secondly, a closer look

¹²⁸ Gerhard, *Nazi Hunger Politics*, 51; Collingham, *The Taste of War*, 377.

¹²⁹ D'Almeida, "Luxury and Distinction," 69.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, 68-69; Gerhard, *Nazi Hunger Politics*, 51; Collingham, *The Taste of War*, 377.

at the personal food-related habits of Hermann Göring, Joseph Goebbels, and Hitler himself will provide insight into the food culture of those at the top, whom D’Almeida describes as being at the “very core” of the regime.¹³²

The Gastronomes of Germany: Fine Dining and Privilege of the Societal and Party Elite

Despite the Nazi regime’s implementation of policies that limited access to certain foods for most Germans, there were some establishments whose ties to the “very core” of the regime allowed them to continue serving luxury goods. One of the most famous of these restaurants was Otto Horcher’s in Berlin, Horcher. While Horcher was not the only restaurant to serve Berlin’s Nazi dignitaries, it was certainly a favourite among the societal and Nazi elite. The restaurant, established in 1904 by Horcher’s father Gustav, can be used as a prime example of Nazi luxury continuing for the “upper-10,000” while most members of the *Volk* were expected to make do with the bare minimum.

Horcher’s restaurant was associated with the German nobility since it specialized in game dishes, products of hunting, an aristocratic pastime. Between 1904 and 1943, it was the place to be seen in Berlin; it was a place that confirmed elite status while serving unparalleled luxury dishes.¹³³ During the Third Reich itself, Horcher hosted a plethora of Nazi dignitaries who held meetings at the upscale restaurant. The content of these meetings ranged from providing entertainment for various members of the elite, to conspiring between the Chief of the *Abwehr* (the German military intelligence service) Wilhelm Canaris, Chief of the German General staff Ludwig Beck, and Secretary of State at the Foreign Office Ernst von Weizsäcker, to assassinate

¹³² D’Almeida, “Luxury and Distinction,” 69.

¹³³ *Ibid.*

Hitler.¹³⁴ In contrast, other Party members such as Minister of Foreign Affairs Joachim von Ribbentrop and Leader of the *Schutzstaffel* (Protection Squadron, SS) Heinrich Himmler entertained the regime's various top dignitaries at Horcher, unaware of the discrepancy in loyalties to the *Führer* at each table.¹³⁵ When Hitler's power was consolidated during the Night of Long Knives in 1934, removing Ernst Röhm as head of the *Sturmabteilung* (Storm Detachment, SA) and purging the Party of suspected conspirators, Göring, Himmler, Minister of War Werner von Blomberg and several others celebrated at Horcher by feasting on crab.¹³⁶

Until 1943, Otto Horcher significantly benefitted from the Nazi takeover. After establishing a favourable relationship with Göring, he catered the Field Marshal's personal functions, which had become well-known to societal and Party elites as a place for gourmands to access luxury foods.¹³⁷ In the early years of the Third Reich, when the Nazi Party was implementing its plans for autarkic food consumption, accurate rumours spread among lower- and middle-class women about restaurants like Horcher, which continued to serve luxury foods to the upper echelon of Nazi society, despite the official Party rhetoric about consumption reduction and equality within the *Volk*. The double standard of restaurants and members of the "upper-10,000" who frequented them continuing operation relatively undisturbed caused some resentment between the classes.¹³⁸ Their continued ability to obtain luxury ingredients for the few despite them disappearing for the many was noted among the population.

When rationing first began, Horcher was relatively unaffected. The restaurant was reported by some to have clipped the rationing coupons of patrons, but they also offered a variety

¹³⁴ Ibid; Giles MacDonogh, "Otto Horcher, Caterer to the Third Reich," *Gastronomica* 7, no. 1 (2007): 33.

¹³⁵ MacDonogh, "Otto Horcher, Caterer to the Third Reich," 33.

¹³⁶ Spechler, "For 115 years, One Restaurant has Fed the Elite in Berlin."

¹³⁷ MacDonogh, "Otto Horcher, Caterer to the Third Reich," 33.

¹³⁸ Pine, "German Women and the Home Front," 643.

of foods not under ration that were not commonly available, such as beef and goose.¹³⁹ Others claim that Horcher “scorn(ed) the very idea of food coupons”¹⁴⁰ and guests with the means to do so would often gorge themselves in one meal on what was comparable to a week’s worth of food rations even by 1941.¹⁴¹ These meals were considered a loophole in the rationing system, since largely unavailable foods were technically not under ration, such as oysters, pasta, lobster, luxury fish, and fowl.¹⁴²

When the tide of the war turned following the German defeat at Stalingrad in 1943, Goebbels made perhaps his most famous speech, referred to as the “Sportpalast” (Sports Palace) speech. On February 18th, 1943, Goebbels stood before a large audience and made a public admission that the German military was now on the defensive.¹⁴³ He declared Total War, calling for all members of the *Volk* to fully commit to the cause, to continue in their unwavering loyalty to Hitler, and to sacrifice further in their everyday lives.¹⁴⁴ With this speech came new restrictions, including the shuttering of most restaurants.¹⁴⁵ The declaration, paired with Allied bombings, made it impossible for Berlin’s luxury restaurants to continue operating and most closed or relocated. In the case of Horcher, in 1943 it temporarily moved to the Berlin lakeside suburb of Wannsee after its original location was bombed.

For the duration of the war, Goebbels tried to shut down luxury Berlin restaurants. He specifically loathed Horcher since it was where his rival Göring most often indulged in unsubtle lavish behaviour.¹⁴⁶ Its popularity among the societal and Party elite undermined the Propaganda

¹³⁹ D’Almeida, *High Society in the Third Reich*, 206.

¹⁴⁰ Marie Vassiltchikov, quoted in *The Taste of War*, trans. Lizzie Collingham, 376.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁴² Heinzelmann, *Beyond Bratwurst*, 274; Pine, “German Women and the Home Front,” 637.

¹⁴³ Aristotle A. Kallis, *Nazi Propaganda and the Second World War* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 81-2.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 134

¹⁴⁵ Spechler, “For 115 years, One Restaurant has Fed the Elite in Berlin.”

¹⁴⁶ Gerhard, *Nazi Hunger Politics*, 51.

Minister's carefully cultivated image of an imagined egalitarian *Volk*, in which everyone, regardless of class, sacrificed relative comfort to support the "racial community."¹⁴⁷ He resented Horcher's incompatibility with Nazi ideology and propaganda. In the "Sportspalast" speech, Goebbels specifically named such establishments as detrimental to the war effort:

We have also closed luxury restaurants that demand far more resources than is reasonable. It may be that an occasional person thinks that, even during war, his stomach is the most important thing. We cannot pay him any heed. We can become gourmets once again when the war is over. Right now, we have more important things to do than worry about our stomachs.¹⁴⁸

Following the announcement, Göring furiously contacted Goebbels by phone and for forty-five minutes argued how he would simply have Horcher reopened as a *Luftwaffe* (Air Weapon- the German air force) club. The Propaganda Minister responded by having the restaurant's windows smashed by "thugs" under his employment.¹⁴⁹ The restaurant relocated to Madrid shortly thereafter and is now run by the fourth generation of Horchers.¹⁵⁰

Berlin was not the only city where the "upper-10,000," particularly the Party elite, indulged at fine dining restaurants. They often entertained themselves at the most luxurious of Europe's restaurants and nightclubs in occupied cities. "Maxime's and the Grand Hôtel in Paris, the Bacchus and the Silberne Rose in Warsaw, and the Krakau Haus, south-east of Adolf- Hitler

¹⁴⁷ Ibid.

¹⁴⁸ Goebbels, "Nun, Volk steh auf, und Sturm brich los! Rede im Berliner Sportpalast."

¹⁴⁹ MacDonogh, "Otto Horcher, Caterer to the Third Reich," 36.

¹⁵⁰ Interestingly, though the restaurant's official website houses a fair amount of history about the institution, it fails to mention their past during the National Socialist period, despite the amount of attention it receives from historians compared to other aspects of the restaurant. Indeed, until recently the restaurant had Göring's favourite dish, Backhendl (Viennese fried chicken), on their menu. Giles MacDonogh argues that the dish's inclusion was a tribute to the Field Marshal, who protected the restaurant from closures and food shortages for as long as he could. This piece of history remains omitted from the restaurant's website.

Square in Krakow” were only a few of the choice locations.¹⁵¹ In Paris, French people were barred from luxury restaurants to ensure enough product was available for German clientele.¹⁵²

In the words of Göring:

I would think ill of you-if we didn't have a fabulous restaurant in Paris where we can provide ourselves properly with the best food; but I don't want the French to be able to saunter into it. Maxime's must have the best food for us. Three or four absolutely first-class restaurants for German officers, German civilians; but not for the French. They don't need to eat that way.¹⁵³

The nature of the occupation led some German diners to question the authenticity of the items they were ordering from the menu, especially with respects to wine. They were unsure if the vintage they were paying for was accurate, or if the restaurant had switched the labels to protect their valuable wines from consumption by their occupiers. In fact, the German suspicions were correct. Many restaurants would purchase dust from a local carpet cleaning company, Chevalier's, and sprinkle it on new bottles of wine to make them appear older than they were. This technique was successful, as many Germans were happy to pay exorbitant prices for something they believed to be valuable.¹⁵⁴

The experience in fine dining amongst the “upper-10,000” reveals that the group typically indulged in institutions which were inaccessible to the majority, undercutting the Nazi doctrines of societal egalitarianism and self-sacrifice. While Germans deemed “racially valuable” did enjoy many benefits of life under Nazi rule compared to outsiders, there was still a substantial difference between millions of insider Germans and the “upper-

¹⁵¹ D'Almeida, “Luxury and Distinction,” 81.

¹⁵² Don and Petie Kladstrup, *Wine and War: The French, the Nazis, and the Battle for France's Greatest Treasure* (New York: Broadway Books, 2001), 111.

¹⁵³ *Trials of War Criminals Before the Nuremberg Military Tribunals*, “Extracts from the Transcript of the Conference of 6 August 1942,” 802.

¹⁵⁴ Kladstrup, *Wine and War*, 96-7.

10,000.”¹⁵⁵ The millions on the insider bottom were relatively privileged, but those on the top reaped “extraordinary” benefits from the regime.¹⁵⁶ The only person among the “very core” who put effort into thwarting the consumption of luxury food was Goebbels. Yet even his public commitment to abstention from luxury food is curious when one looks at his collection and consumption of fine wines plundered from France’s finest vineyards.¹⁵⁷

The Führer, Fat Stuff, and the Front Man: Hitler, Göring, Goebbels, and Food

We now turn to the eating habits of those at the very top of the regime: Göring, Goebbels and Hitler. Göring’s early career with the NSDAP can explain his lavish lifestyle as a Party member. He had joined the NSDAP relatively early, in 1922. After six years of membership, Hitler allowed him to run in the Reichstag elections of May 1928. Hitler’s mission for Göring also included making friends in high places to convince the upper class that the National Socialists were neither revolutionary in nature, nor “common thugs” bent on seizing power illegally.¹⁵⁸ Some contacts included the former President of the Reichsbank Hjalmar Schacht, leading industrialist Fritz Thyssen, and members of the nobility, such as the younger brother of the German Crown Prince, August Wilhelm, and the former Emperor Wilhelm II from his residence in the Netherlands.¹⁵⁹ Since Göring was relatively penniless in the early years of his career in the Party, he needed credit extended to him to court these dignitaries in luxury

¹⁵⁵ D’Almeida, “Luxury and Distinction,” 68-9.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid.

¹⁵⁷ Kladstrup, *Wine and War*, 58.

¹⁵⁸ MacDonogh, “Otto Horcher, Caterer to the Third Reich,” 33.

¹⁵⁹ Alfred D. Low, *The Men Around Hitler: the Nazi Elite and its Collaborators* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), 74.

establishments. Otto Horcher, seeing Göring's potential, extended this credit, so many meetings took place at his restaurant.¹⁶⁰

Göring's hedonism following the Nazi takeover in 1933 was no secret to the German public. His second wife, Emmy, was also known to throw lavish parties, further encouraging the Field Marshal's behaviour. Their wedding in 1935 was unparalleled in luxuriousness and lavishness: "the [wedding] day was declared a holiday, and work ceased. Even for his stag party, a thousand invited guests had assembled at the state opera to see a gala performance of Richard Strauss' the Egyptian Helena, and afterward indulged at four sumptuous champagne buffets."¹⁶¹

Hermann Göring's status as a beloved pilot of the Great War was enough for the public to forgive him for his vices.¹⁶² When he fell from favour with Hitler in 1942 due to failures of the *Luftwaffe* under his command in protecting the German home front from Allied bombs, Hitler would not remove Göring due to this popularity among the people, for fear of jeopardizing his own position. As Alfred D. Low observes, "at times [Göring] was more popular than the Führer himself."¹⁶³ It was perhaps this popularity that also allowed him to enjoy a life of unparalleled privilege and luxury relatively undisturbed; Hitler was hesitant to discipline Göring as his appointed successor; Goebbels' attempts to bring Göring down to modesty mostly failed. This changed with the tide of the war in 1943. The declaration of Total War and subsequent restrictions on consumption slightly humbled the Field Marshal's lifestyle.¹⁶⁴

¹⁶⁰ Kladstrup, *Wine and War*, 33.

¹⁶¹ Anna Maria Sigmund, *Women of the Third Reich*, Trans. NDE Publishing (Vienna: NDE Publishing, 2000), 52, 57.

¹⁶² Low, *The Men Around Hitler*, 71.

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*, 83, 85.

¹⁶⁴ MacDonogh, "Otto Horcher, Caterer to the Third Reich," 36.

Göring's lack of discretion can be explained not only through Hitler's active encouragement from early on but also through his political aims. He was less interested in Nazi ideology, apart from the Party's antisemitic goals, than he was in the pursuit of power.¹⁶⁵ Part of what made him feel powerful was luxury. He built himself hunting lodges, enjoyed large-scale parties with various members of the "upper-10,000" in castles and private residences, plundered France of its wines, hunted for sport (which had been made illegal in 1939 with the introduction of rationing), borrowed lion cubs from the Tiergarten in Berlin to keep at his private estates, and stole Europe's priceless art pieces to excess.¹⁶⁶ Eating foods inaccessible to the majority satisfied part of his desire to feel powerful. He indulged so openly that, at nearly three hundred pounds at his heaviest, he received the nickname "Fat Stuff." Göring was not the only member of the "very core" of the regime to indulge, but his status as one of the most powerful men among the Nazi leaders set a precedent for others to join in indulgence and corruption. It was so rampant and endemic in the Party that not even Hitler himself could stop the behaviour. The most that he and Goebbels could do was censor it from the media and attempt to keep it out of the public eye.¹⁶⁷

While Göring, Himmler, Ribbentrop and many other Party members were inconsequentially enjoying luxury meals that breached food rationing rules during the war, Hitler and Goebbels are reported to have followed the rules closely themselves, at least in the public eye, to set a propagandistic example for the *Volk* as ascetic leaders.

¹⁶⁵ Low, *The Men Around Hitler*, 84.

¹⁶⁶ Collingham, *The Taste of War*, 376-77; Richard J. Evans, *The Third Reich in Power* (New York: Penguin Press, 2005), 406-7; Gerhard, *Nazi Hunger Politics*, 51.

¹⁶⁷ There are photographs of Nazi state dinners, but none exist publicly of opulent dinner parties or overly indulgent functions.

The true contents of Hitler's dining table remain unconfirmed as historians have found it difficult to differentiate propaganda from reality.¹⁶⁸ The official Nazi record describes Hitler as a vegetarian who ate modest meals consisting mostly of barley, crackers, and the occasional piece of cheese. Publicly, he was not indulgent in alcohol consumption.¹⁶⁹ He did eat meat, however, to enjoy the occasional *Eintopf* meal for the cameras during the Four Year Plan.¹⁷⁰



Figure 4: "Stew with the German Chancellor," 1936. *Hulton Archive/Getty Images*.

Despite not having any particular interest in food, unlike his appointed successor, some have claimed that Hitler enjoyed caviar, beluga meat, and roast pigeons. He is also reported to have drunk beer and diluted wine.¹⁷¹ He was rumoured to have a sweet tooth, consuming up to two pounds of chocolate per day.¹⁷² This is difficult to confirm, as, if it did occur, propagandists of the regime concealed it from the public to maintain the image of Hitler as an ascetic consumer

¹⁶⁸ Heinzlmann, *Beyond Bratwurst*, 274.

¹⁶⁹ Collingham, *The Taste of War*, 377.

¹⁷⁰ Heinzlmann, *Beyond Bratwurst*, 260.

¹⁷¹ Kladstrup, *Wine and War*, 58-59; D'Almeida, "Luxury and Distinction," 67; Heinzlmann, *Beyond Bratwurst*, 274; MacDonogh, "Otto Horcher, Caterer to the Third Reich," 35.

¹⁷² Collingham, *The Taste of War*, 377.

who ate only to fuel his body, something that the regime expected of the *Volk*.¹⁷³ The photograph below by Hitler's personal photographer Heinrich Hoffmann of Hitler sitting outside enjoying a simple picnic lunch exemplifies exactly the way Nazi propagandists wanted Hitler portrayed while consuming food: humble and absent of lavishness.



Figure 5: Heinrich Hoffmann, “Hitler’s Picnic,” 1933. *Hulton Archive/Getty Images*.

When Germany invaded France in 1940, Hitler almost immediately recognized the potential economic benefits of plundering France of its wines.¹⁷⁴ Though he had little interest himself in the drink and is reported to have called it “nothing but vulgar vinegar”, he saw the prestige that came with a coveted collection.¹⁷⁵ Göring took little time to voice his support, saying: “I intend to plunder [France], nevertheless, and on a large scale.”¹⁷⁶ Over the next years of the occupation, many members of the “upper-10,000,” including Hitler, took advantage of French wineries, amassing priceless collections by 1945.

¹⁷³ Weinreb, *Modern Hungers*, 55.

¹⁷⁴ Kladstrup, *Wine and War*, 59.

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 57-8.

¹⁷⁶ *Trials of War Criminals Before the Nuremberg Military Tribunals*, “Extracts from the Transcript of the Conference of 6 August 1942,” 802.

Goebbels was careful, at least publicly, in regulating food consumption for both himself and those who dined at his home. When guests arrived at one of Goebbels' wartime dinners, they were met with footmen holding out silver trays for guests to place their ration coupons upon. In return, they received a bland dinner frequently consisting of boiled potatoes and herring, two of the more abundant foods in Nazi Germany, prepared in a way to produce the least amount of waste.¹⁷⁷ Goebbels was also one of the only members of Hitler's inner circle to refuse to look the other way when it came to corruption in elite luxury food culture. The Propaganda Minister did not apply the same ascetic practice, however, when it came to wine. His favourite varietal was Burgundy and he prided himself in his knowledge of fine wines. He amassed a priceless collection of plundered bottles over the course of the war.¹⁷⁸ Despite Hitler issuing decrees in March 1942 and May 1943 calling for those in high-ranking positions to set a good example and live sparingly during Total War, little was done to actively punish those who ignored the orders. The decrees could not be enforced unhypocritically without acknowledging and condemning the frivolous lifestyles of those in the inner circle.

Self-serving corruption was endemic in the culture of the Nazi elite.¹⁷⁹ Not a single member of the "upper-10,000" abstained from both the vices of alcohol and luxury food. Hitler did nothing to change Göring's behaviour, instead actively encouraging it by gifting him luxurious and unnecessary items such as priceless paintings. Here we can find definitive evidence of corruption and hypocrisy in the Third Reich. The majority of Hitler's *Volk* were expected to live off as little as possible, cutting back consumption to a significant extent, while

¹⁷⁷ Collingham, *The Taste of War*, 377; Weinreb, *Modern Hungers*, 56; Reagin, "Comparing Apples and Oranges," 257.

¹⁷⁸ Kladstrup, *Wine and War*, 58.

¹⁷⁹ Collingham, *The Taste of War*, 377.

the regime's societal and political elite, those who theoretically should have been setting an example for the majority and following National Socialist doctrine, consumed in excess.

Conclusion

Hypocrisy and corruption, though not unique to the National Socialists, were fundamental traits of the Nazi Party. Its encouragement of this corruption made the Third Reich the perfect environment for an escalation throughout the twelve years of its existence. Its food policy in comparison to its actual implementation is one example of these traits. As this essay argues, National Socialist food ideology and official Party rhetoric were expected to be followed by the majority of the insider German population. However, the so-called “upper-10,000” of German society were not held to the same standards, a discrepancy which even those at the “very core” of the regime, including Hitler himself, were complicit in. An insider’s experience with food in Nazi Germany was based on privilege, status, wealth, and, most importantly, race. The Nazis wanted to influence insider Germans to become a collectivist and autarkic “racial community,” wherein all those deemed “Aryan” would make appropriate sacrifices for the *Volksgemeinschaft*. In practice, this only applied to those who did not have significant privilege beyond their “racial purity.”

Millions of women, children, workers, soldiers, and farmers fundamentally changed their diets and behaviours to accommodate the regime. Women adopted new, Nazi-supported methods of cooking, preserving, obtaining, and serving food that made their lives significantly more labour intensive. Their efforts were intended to transform the food culture of all insider Germans, since women were responsible for consumption habits within the home. Workers watched soldiers eat larger rations while they consistently lived in a calorie deficit. Farmers were regulated in what they could charge for goods, and when they resorted to black market trade out of necessity, the food situation only worsened. Food gained by plundering the East, specifically in Ukraine, proved only enough to feed the military, and could not adequately subsidize the

entirety of Germany's food deficit. The National Socialist attempt to provide ordinary insider Germans with the tools to remain fed during the war proved, while not totally disastrous since the population never starved, a failure, nonetheless. Meanwhile, outsiders and those under occupation were systematically starved under the Nazi regime to facilitate the insider diet.

By contrasting the experiences of the majority of insider Germans and "upper-10,000," this essay has reached several conclusions. Firstly, when considering support towards the regime demonstrated by most Germans, the food situation is worth observing. After decades of food insecurity, and with the remaining trauma from starvation during the First World War and hunger during the Weimar Republic, a political party that claimed to be able to take control of the situation was attractive to many Germans. When the food system seemingly stabilized following the Nazi takeover in 1933, the masses were happy to consent to the new regime. When it was spiralling out of control by 1942, however, the regime was too far established for many Germans to believe rising against the regime was an option: many had lost faith in the government and "resigned themselves from the situation," but made few attempts to overthrow it.¹⁸⁰ Secondly, it is important to understand that some examples of today's German food culture, whether it be dishes, ingredients, or establishments, have a Nazi past. Acknowledging them as a part of contemporary German history and culture is necessary: it prompts people's memories of the profound influence the Nazis had over Germany and serves as a reminder of the nation's dark history of authoritarianism. As the generation that lived as and among the Nazis passes on, these cultural reminders become more important as tools of accountability and memory preservation. Finally, there was a double standard for food consumption expectations amongst insiders of the

¹⁸⁰ Collingham, *The Taste of War*, 383; Richard Evans, Blog entry on "Corruption and Plunder in the Third Reich," *Richard J. Evans*.
<https://www.richardjevens.com/lectures/corruption-plunder-third-reich/> (accessed February 27, 2022)

regime. This dichotomy's existence further solidifies our understanding of the Nazis as inherently corrupt and bent on obtaining and holding power through any means. The "upper-10,000's" lavishness that was encouraged by the regime demonstrates that, no matter how much the National Socialists told themselves that they were creating the idealistic egalitarian society, their desire for superiority overshadowed theoretical Nazi ideals.

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