

From Steven Béla Várdy and T. Hunt Tooley, eds., *Ethnic Cleansing in Twentieth-Century Europe* (New York: Social Science Monographs, dist. by Columbia University Press, 2003).

The United States and the Refusal to Feed German Civilians after World War II

RICHARD DOMINIC WIGGERS

At least seven million Germans perished during the Second World War, and 25 to 50 percent of that country's housing and transportation systems were destroyed by wartime bombing and shelling. When the fighting ended, ten million internal refugees and expellees from the eastern territories were already crowded into the devastated towns and cities to join twenty million other homeless Germans.¹ Worse was still to come. The first Allied assessments of the food situation indicated that there were acute shortages, and that starvation was almost certain to occur within occupied Germany later in the year.² The ensuing famine continued for nearly three years, but the few scholars who have examined the issue have concluded that the German famine was simply a tragic by-product of world-wide food shortages.³

¹ Alan Kramer, *The West German Economy, 1945-1955* (New York, 1991), 11-7; Michael Ermarth, ed., *America and the Shaping of German Society, 1945-1955* (Providence, 1993), 5; Eileen Egan and Elizabeth Clark Reiss, *Transfigured Night: The CRALOG Experience* (Philadelphia, 1964), ix, 6-11, 160.

² John J. McCloy, ASW, to President, 26 April 1945, National Archives (NA)/RG107/E180/B29; Press conference of Secretary of War and ASW John J. McCloy, 26 April 1945, NA/RG107/E180/B29; CCS 844, United States Chiefs of Staff, "Employment of German Prisoners of War in European Industry," 26 April 1945, NA/JCS, Strat/R12; SHAEF Forward, Eisenhower, to AGWAR and Combined Chiefs of Staff, 6 June 1945, NA/RG332/ETO,SGS/B57.

³ John H. Backer, *Priming the German Economy: American Occupational Policies 1945-1948* (Durham, 1971), 50, 52, 200; James F. Tent, "Food Shortages in Germany and Europe, 1945-1948," in Guenter Bischof and Stephen E. Ambrose, *Eisenhower and the German POWs: Facts Against Falsehood* (Baton Rouge, 1992), 97, 100; Edith Hirsch, *Food Supplies: in the Aftermath of World War II* (New York, 1993). See also Douglas Botting, *From the Ruins of the Reich: Germany 1945-1949* (New York, 1985), 137-257; Eugene Davidson, *The Death and Life of Germany: An Account of the American Occupation* (New York, 1961), 127-61; Franklin M. Davis, Jr., *Come as a Conqueror: The United States Army's Occupation of Germany 1945-1949* (New York, 1967), 135-61; Josue de Castro, *The Geopolitics of Hunger* (New York, 1977), 425-39; Guenter J. Trittel, *Hunger und Politik: Die Ernährungskrise in der Bizone* (Frankfurt, 1990); Harold Zink, *The United States in Germany 1944-1955* (Princeton, 1957), 293-303. A published account by Canadian novelist James Bacque has alleged recently that as many as nine million civilians died of starvation and malnutrition in postwar Germany: *Crimes and Mercies: The Fate of German Civilians Allied Occupation, 1944-1950* (New York, 1997).

The situation in defeated Germany was unique, however, because the feeding of a civilian population ruled under conditions of belligerent occupation was considered by most contemporary experts to be an obligation under international law. According to Article 43 of The Hague Rules of Land Warfare, "The authority of the legitimate power having in fact passed into the hands of the occupant, the latter shall take all the measures in his power to restore, and ensure, as far as possible, public order and safety."⁴ Although there was no explicit obligation contained within that clause that required the occupying power to adequately feed the enemy civilian population that had fallen under its control, that was certainly the interpretation that was accepted at the time.

More than a year after the war ended, during special Senate hearings held in Germany, U.S. military government officials affirmed that it was generally recognized that under international law, the conquering nation does have "an obligation, as far as possible, to prevent epidemics and pestilences."⁵ During Senate hearings in Washington in 1946, another witness testified that

The Hague conventions are generally recognized as laying down the law which has to be followed by an occupying power. They are based on the assumptions that when a country has been defeated and occupied, the occupier or occupiers have become responsible for the orderly government of the people in their power. They must safeguard the basic rights of the local

⁴ Major General J.H. Hilldring, Director, Civil Affairs Division, War Department, Office of the Chief of Staff, for Mr. McCloy, "Comments on Mr. Warburg's proposals re surrender and post-surrender policy toward Germany," 23 March 1944, NA/RG107/E180/B38. See also Major General O.P. Echols, Civil Affairs Division, testifying before the U.S. Senate, Judiciary, 20 June 1946; Eyal Benvenisti, *The International Law of Occupation* (Princeton, 1993), 7-18; Brigadier General C.W. Wickersham, United States Army Commandant, School of Military Government, "The School of Military Government," also printed in *Military Review*, 22 1944, Public Archives of Canada (PAC)/MG42/8176/NSC1812; F.S.V. Donnison, *Civil Affairs and Military Government North-West Europe 1944-1946* (London, 1961), 173.

⁵ U.S. Senate Special Committee Investigating the National Defense Program, Hearings on *Investigation of Military Government*, 79th Cong., 26 May 1946 (Washington, 1946). According to a memorandum produced for the U.S. President's Famine Emergency Committee in 1946 entitled "The Disease Potential in Germany," Hoover Institution Archive, Stanford University (HIA)/USPFEC/B25, a military force has a "definite responsibility for the citizens of a conquered nation under the rules of 'Land Warfare' and the Geneva Convention. This responsibility devolved upon the Supreme Commander of the Allied Forces and was in part delegated by him to the Military Government chiefs of the respective armies." See also James F. Byrnes to the President, "Subject: Responsibilities for Relief and Supply in Occupied Areas," 1 November 1946, Harry S. Truman Library (HST)/WHCF/B38.

population and see to it that their basic needs are met just as if they were the national government of that country. Willfully to deny them the necessities of life is a violation of international law.⁶

Most legal scholars agreed that ensuring adequate feeding of civilian populations under their control and care was "not simply an act of charity or generosity but the fulfilment of a duty of international law, which is part of the general duty of an occupant, even a belligerent one, to restore and maintain law and order in the occupied territory."⁷

The best evidence that the Allied governments recognized a legal obligation to feed the civilian populations living under their control came from their own earlier practices and statements. During the war, the U.S. Army followed a "disease and unrest" formula of civilian feeding based on a 2000 calorie level requirement for the average adult.⁸ If insufficient food was obtained from indigenous sources to maintain that minimum, the shortfall was imported at the expense of the occupying armies. In postwar Germany and Japan, the U.S. Army financed the most urgent food imports by citing obligations under Article 43 of The Hague Rules of Land Warfare. This practise continued during the drafting of the 1946-47 budget when they created a new appropriation known as the Government and Relief in Occupied Areas (GARIOA) fund. That year and in subsequent ones, whenever this portion of the budget was being considered by Congress, U.S. Defense Department officials argued that they were obligated by international law

⁶ Alexander Boker, "Human Events," U.S. Senate Committee on the Judiciary, Hearings on *A Bill to Amend the Trading with the Enemy Act, as Amended, to Permit the Shipment of Relief Supplies*, 79th Congress, 2nd Session, 25 April 1946 (Washington, 1946).

⁷ Max Rheinstein, "The Legal Status of Occupied Germany," *Michigan Law Review* 47 (November 1948): 28-31; Josef L. Kunz, "The Status of Occupied Germany Under International Law: A Legal Dilemma," *Western Political Quarterly* 3 (December 1950): 561-2; Louis M. Gosorn, "The Army and Foreign Civilian Supply," *Military Review* 32 (May 1952): 28; Marjorie M. Whiteman, *Digest of International Law* 10 (Washington, 1968): 979.

⁸ Major General J.H. Hilldring, Director, Civil Affairs Division, the War Department, to the Secretary of War, "War Department Responsibility for Procurement and Financing of Civilian Supplies in Occupied Countries," 8 October 1945, NA/RG107 E106/B3; President Truman to Secretary of War Robert P. Patterson, 1946, HST/WHCF/B38.

to import food at their own expense to prevent "disease and unrest" in the occupied territories under their direct military control.⁹

There was also an agreed standard for the calorie level required to maintain what Article 43 of The Hague Rules of Land Warfare referred to as "public order and safety," and what the Allies referred to during the war as "disease and unrest." During World War II, the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) concluded that levels of 2200 calories or lower should be temporary, and that 1700 should be considered the "upper limit of the 'semi-starvation level.'"¹⁰ The U.S. Department of Agriculture used 2000 calories as the standard to estimate postwar global food needs.¹¹ At the outbreak of the war, Great Britain also established a baseline "disease and unrest" formula of 2000 calories for civilian populations. In 1945, that country's Standing Committee on Medical and Nutritional Problems still recognized 2000 calories "as the minimum necessary to prevent serious loss of life from the spread of epidemic."¹² The U.S. National Research Council also determined that the emergency food subsistence level for the average Western European or North American should be 2000 to 2200 calories.¹³ Twenty-five years later, in 1970, the same body reported that even

⁹ Ben Hill Brown, Oral History Interview, 24 May 1975, HST/OH/Brown; Gunther Harkort, Oral History Interview, 12 November 1970, HST/OH/Harkort; J.W. Brabner-Smith, "Concluding the War—The Peace Settlement and Congressional Powers," *Virginia Law Review* 34 (July 1948): 553, 555, 568.

¹⁰ "Memorandum on Food Consumption and Related Matters," Appendix on "Classification of Food Consumption Levels on the Basis of Their Relations to Health, Well-being, and Capacity for Work"; "Attachment to Appendix: Excerpts from the report of a special joint committee (published April 1944) on Food Consumption Levels in the United States, Canada, and the United Kingdom, U.S. Edition, pages 30-33," HIA/Becker/B2.

¹¹ United States Department of Agriculture, Office of Foreign Agricultural Relations, Washington, D.C., "The Food Situation and Outlook in Continental Europe, the Mediterranean Area, and the Soviet Union," 16 April 1945, Library of Congress (LOC)/Harriman/B178.

¹² John E. Farquharson, "Hilfe für den Feind: die britische Debatte um Nahrungsmittellieferungen an Deutschland 1944/45," *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte* 37 (April 1989): 254; Harry L. Coles and Albert K. Weinberg, *Civil Affairs: Soldiers Become Governors* (Washington, 1964), 150-1.

¹³ National Research Council, Food and Nutrition Board, "Memorandum on Questions Submitted by the Cabinet Committee on World Food Programs, Part I: Calorie Consumption Levels and Their Relation to Health, Well-Being, and Capacity for Work," 13 December 1946, HST/WHCF/B8.

2000 calories were inadequate to maintain health in the average adult.¹⁴

Not surprisingly, the Allied governments protested at wartime reports indicating that civilians in German-occupied Belgium, France and Holland were being forced to subsist on ration levels of 1100-1600 calories when "the absolute minimum necessary to sustain the life and health of a sedentary adult male is estimated by experts as 2500."¹⁵ Prosecutors at Nuremberg accused German defendants of committing a war crime when they conspired to force down the ration levels in occupied France below 2000 calories.¹⁶ Allied officials also complained when they discovered that POWs liberated from German captivity were subjected to "starvation rations" of 1800-2000 calories during the last phase of the war, and were forced to rely on Red Cross packages to supplement their diet.¹⁷ Despite its imperfections and imprecision, the generally accepted 2000 calorie level provided a realistic benchmark for what the Allied armies referred to during World War II as their "disease and unrest" formula. Most importantly, civil affairs officials employed it to determine the requisitions and import requirements for civilian relief supplies in liberated and occupied territories.¹⁸

But this benchmark was deliberately ignored when it came to planning for the occupation of Germany. The first step towards a retributive food policy was taken during the fall of 1944 in response to a draft SHAEF handbook that suggested that German civilians be guaranteed a base ration of 2000 calories after the

¹⁴ "Ration Scale Established by Supreme Headquarters, European Forces (SHAEF) in January 1945 for the West German Population and the Type of Food Supplied," 1970, HIA/Becker/B1.

¹⁵ Spencer Coxe, "Relief and Reconstruction In Western Europe," *New Europe and World Reconstruction* (May 1943): 3.

¹⁶ Adolf Arndt, "Status and Development of Constitutional Law in Germany," *The Annals of The American Academy of Political and Social Science* (November 1948): 4; Montgomery Belgion, *Victors' Justice: A Letter Intended to Have Been Sent To a Friend Recently in Germany* (Hinsdale, 1949), 97.

¹⁷ George W. Wunderlich, Office of the General Counsel, to Mr. Alfred E. Davidson, General Counsel, "Subject: Food Rations of German Prisoners of War in American Prison Camps," 13 April 1945, HST/Rosenman/B10.

¹⁸ Major General J.H. Hilldring, Director, Civil Affairs Division, the War Department, to the Secretary of War through The Deputy Chief of Staff, "War Department Responsibility for Procurement and Financing of Civilian Supplies in Occupied Countries," 8 October 1945, NA/RG107/E106/B3; Military Government of Germany, "Monthly Report of the Military Governor, U.S. Zone", No. 5, "Monthly Report of the Military Governor," 20 December 1945, NA/RG94/OpBr/B1175.

war.¹⁹ While the authors of the handbook were naturally preoccupied with the postwar rehabilitation of the European economy, this particular undertaking struck officials in Washington as being far too soft and constructive.²⁰ President Roosevelt proposed a much harsher food policy in its place: the Germans "should have simply a subsistence level of food—as he put it, soup kitchens would be ample to sustain life—that otherwise they should be stripped clean and should not have a level of subsistence above the lowest level of the people they had conquered."²¹ Soviet officials also proposed that the Allies limit grain and food production in postwar Germany, and U.S. Secretary of the Treasury Henry Morgenthau conceived of a similar program that would limit the civilian population "to a subsistence level."²²

Even State Department planners believed Germany should be guaranteed only bare subsistence for a period of at least several years after the war and not immediately brought up to the level of the other European states that had been the victims of her wartime aggression and occupation.²³ Secretary of State Cordell Hull concluded that "it is of the highest importance that the standard of living of the German people in the early years be such as to bring home to them that they have lost the war and to impress on them that they must abandon their pretentious theories that they are a superior race created to govern the world. Through lack of luxuries we may teach them that war does not pay."²⁴ By the end of

¹⁹ David B. Woolner, "Coming to Grips with the 'German Problem': Roosevelt, Churchill, and the Morgenthau Plan at the Second Quebec Conference," in David B. Woolner, ed., *The Second Quebec Conference Revisited: Waging War, Formulating Peace: Canada, Great Britain, and the United States in 1944-1945* (New York, 1998), 72.

²⁰ President Roosevelt to the Secretary of War, 26 August 1944, U.S. Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States, Diplomatic Papers 1944*, I (Washington, 1966), 544.

²¹ Forrest C. Pogue, *George C. Marshall: Organizer of Victory 1943-1945* (New York, 1973), 467-8; Walter Millis, ed., *The Forrestal Diaries* (New York, 1951), 10.

²² Canadian Ambassador in Washington to the Secretary of State for External Affairs, 21 August 1944, PAC/RG25/F7-E-2[8]; Secretary of War Stimson, "Suggested Recommendations on Treatment of Germany from the Cabinet Committee for the President," 5 September 1944, Franklin D. Roosevelt Library (FDR)/RG24/B333.

²³ Eleanor Lansing Dulles, interview #8, 28 June 1963, Dwight D. Eisenhower Library (DDE)/OH/Dulles.

²⁴ Cordell Hull, *The Memoirs of Cordell Hull*, II (New York, 1948), 1619; Davidson, *The Death and Life*, 8-10.

1944, British and U.S. Civil Affairs officers being trained in London were informed that despite official "disease and unrest" targets of 2000 calories, many inhabitants of liberated Europe were still receiving only 1600 calories per day. In apparent retaliation, they were to ensure that after the war the average German adult "will receive 1500 calories as a maximum although there is no assurance that he will get that much; that is all he can have during our occupation." The implications were clear:

As for supplying the Germans with food, it will only be as a last resort. We are going to treat Germany as a defeated country. We have to make them realize they are defeated and they are not a liberated country. We expect to put out food to the German people only when there is no other food available... The food problem will probably cause more trouble from a public safety angle than any other one. But we have to be strict with them and we have to watch the food now because later we will have to feed them if supplies become exhausted. We do not want circumstances to force us to import food for Germans.²⁵

Months before Germany surrendered, Allied officials seemed to have agreed on a revised "disease and unrest" formula for the occupied enemy states that was significantly lower than the generally accepted wartime standard. Recommended calorie levels for the average adult were set well below the generally accepted 2000, and the Allied occupying armies were not obligated to furnish supplies to meet even those levels.²⁶ The determination to inflict postwar punishment on the German population had clearly overcome concerns about obligations to Article 43 of the 1907 Hague Rules of Land Warfare. On May 10, only days after the German surrender, the following orders were issued to Dwight D. Eisenhower, Supreme Commander of SHAEF forces in occupied Germany:

²⁵ Lieutenant General John C.H. Lee, The Disarmament School, *Disarmament School Lectures*, Second Course, Vol. 1, London (December 1944), Brig. General F.J. McSherry, "Civil Affairs as it Pertains to Disarmament and Control Machinery," 23 November 1944.

²⁶ "The Treatment of Germany," and attached proposals for "Economic Policies Toward Germany," 12 January 1945, FDR/ RG24/ B337; SHAEF to Headquarters, 21 Army Group, and commanders of the Twelfth and Sixth Army Groups, "Control of Distribution and Rationing of Food in Germany," 25 January 1945, DDE/Smith/WWII/B37; AGWAR and CCS to SHAEF Main and Eisenhower, 19 April 1945, NA/ RG332/ ETO,SGS/ B57; "Germans to Get only Bare Needs," *Evening Standard*, 17 February 1945, NA/ RG218/ E102/ B13.

You will estimate requirements of supplies necessary to prevent starvation or widespread disease or such civil unrest as would endanger the occupying forces. Such estimates will be based upon a program whereby the Germans are made responsible for providing for themselves, out of their own work and resources. You will take all practicable economic and police measures to assure that German resources are fully utilized and consumption held to the minimum in order that imports may be strictly limited and that surpluses may be made available for the occupying forces and displaced persons and United Nations prisoners of war, and for reparation. You will take no action that would tend to support basic living standards in Germany on a higher level than that existing in any one of the neighboring United Nations and you will take appropriate measures to ensure that basic living standards of the German people are not higher than those existing in any one of the neighboring United Nations when such measures will contribute to raising the standards of any such nation.²⁷

Paragraph 5 of Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) 1067—the operational guidelines for the U.S. occupation—also ordered Military Government officials to restrict themselves to promoting the production and maintenance of only those indigenous goods and services “required to prevent starvation or such disease and unrest as would endanger the occupying forces.”²⁸ The U.S. Deputy Military Governor, Lucius Clay, confided that “I feel that the Germans should suffer from hunger and from cold as I believe such suffering is necessary to make them realize the consequences of a war which they caused,” but also warned officials in Washington that

²⁷ “Directive to Commander in Chief of U.S. Forces of Occupation Regarding the Military Government of Germany,” 10 May 1945, in Dennis Merrill, ed., *Documentary History of the Truman Presidency, Volume 3: Unconditional Surrender and Policy in Occupied Germany after World War II* (University Publications of America: 1995), 7-8; See IPCOG 2/1, paragraph 3(d), as cited in February 1950, Russell Fessenden, Foreign Policy Studies Branch, Division of Historical Policy Research, Office of Public Affairs, Department of State, Research Project No. 143, “Negotiations Concerning German Reparations, Part I - Yalta Through Potsdam,” HST/PSF/B179.

²⁸ SHAEF Food and Agriculture Section, Economic Control Agency, G-5 Division, “The Food Position in Western Germany as of 1 June 1945,” 3 July 1945, NA/RG332/ETO,SGS/B57; Backer, *Priming the German Economy*, 37; John H. Backer, *Die deutschen Jahre des Generals Clay* (Muenchen, 1983); John H. Backer, “From Morgenthau Plan to Marshall Plan,” in Robert Wolfe, ed., *Americans as Pro-consuls: United States Military Government in Germany and Japan, 1944-1952* (Carbondale, 1984), 157.

"this type of suffering should not extend to the point where it results in mass starvation and sickness."²⁹

German POWs were among the first to feel the pinch when their Geneva Convention protection and treatment was removed and they were transformed from POW into Disarmed Enemy Force/Surrendered Enemy Personnel (DEF/SEP) status immediately after the war. SHAEF officials set the calorie level for non-working POWs at 1500, though they understood at the time that it was well below their own suggested standards.³⁰ The ration for a normal adult civilian consumer, meanwhile, was set slightly higher at a maximum of 1550 calories.³¹ Several months later, the Level of Industry Committee concocted a formula that would permit the Allies to reduce ration scales in Germany below the European average.³² First, the German Standard of Living Board calculated that during the years of relative hardship that preceded the outbreak of World War II, the average German adult was consuming 2900 calories per day, 10% above the European average at

²⁹ Lucius D. Clay, Deputy MG for Germany, to John J. McCloy, ASW, 29 June 1945, NA/RG107/E180/B29; Clay to McCloy, 29 June 1945, in Jean Edward Smith, *The Papers of General Lucius D. Clay, Volume I: Germany 1945-1949* (Bloomington, 1974), 24, 42.

³⁰ Archer L. Lerch, Major General, Office of the Provost Marshal General, to Commanding General of Army Services Forces in Washington, "Inspection of Concentration Camps and Other Internment Camps in the European Theater of Operations," 9 June 1945, NA/RG160/B331; Brigadier General Frank J. McSherry, Deputy Assistant Chief of Staff, G-5, to SHAEF G-5 Division, Chief of Staff, "Food Situation in Western Germany," 15 June 1945, DDE/Smith/WWII/B37; John Dos Passos, *Tour of Duty* (Boston, 1946), 252.

³¹ G-5 Division, SHAEF, to Chief, Food and Agriculture Section, 22 June 1945, NA/RG332/ETO, SGS/B57; for Chief of Staff, British Zone, "Imports of Wheat for Consumption by German Civilians in the British National Zone," August 1945, Public Records Office, Great Britain (PRO)/DBPO/S1/V5/F8; Colonel O.W. Hermann (US), F. Hollins (UK), and Colonel P. Dessus (France), Combined Resources and Allocations Board, Combined Food and Agriculture Committee, "Food Import Requirements for British, American, and French Zones of Germany for the 1945-46 Consumption Year," 6 August 1945, PRO/DBPO/S1/V5/F7; Colonel T.W. Hammond, Brigadier T.N. Grazebrook, Lt. Colonel M.P.F. DuPont, and Major General N.T. Sidorov, Coordinating Committee, note by Allied Secretariat, "Nutrition of the German Civil Population," 24 August 1945, PRO/DBPO/S1/V5/F14.

³² EC (S)(45) 44, Some Random Notes on the Reparations Discussions in Berlin, September-November 1945, by Mr. G.D.A. MacDougall, "Economic Section of the Cabinet Secretariat," 29 November 1945, in M.E. Pelly, H.J. Yasamee, and G. Bennett, *Documents on British Policy Overseas* 1 (London, 1990): 519-30; Mr. A.K. Cairncross, Economic Advisory Panel, Allied Commission on Reparations, U.K. Delegation, to Sir Percy Mills, "Future German Population," 29 November 1945, PRO/DBPO/S1/V5/F33.

the time and higher in overall quality and fat content. They then recommended that the future German ration level be reduced to 2150 calories, equivalent to the level that prevailed in 1932, the worst year of the prewar depression.³³ What is most striking is that even this planned "standard of living" formula, harsh as it was, was only a long term goal. According to a State Department release issued at the end of 1945, the even lower "disease and unrest" formula, with a 1500-1550 calorie ceiling, would continue to be enforced during at least the first two years of the occupation while reparation removals were carried out.³⁴

The shortage of indigenous food sources was further exacerbated by other Four Power policies. First was the influx of millions of expellees into the increasingly overpopulated western zones with their devastated water supplies, dwellings, and hospital facilities. Second was the disruption of the 1945 planting season combined with the isolation of the food producing lands in the eastern part of the country. Third was the decision to give priority to the housing and feeding of millions of non-German DPs and liberated Allied nationals.

SHAEF planners soon realized that food imports would be needed to sustain even a minimum standard of 2000 calories for the DP population.³⁵ They also acted quickly to encourage the

³³ E. Lewin, British Secretary, Allied Control Authority, Directorate of Economics, Level of Industry Committee, "A Minimum German Standard of Living in Relation to the Level of Industry," and "Explanatory Notes to Table IV, V, and VI," 17 September 1945, NA/RG107/E106/B3; Military Government of Germany, "Monthly Report of the Military Governor, U.S. Zone", No. 2, 20 September 1945, NA/RG94/OpBr/B1175; Major General J.H. Hilldring, Director, Civil Affairs Division, the War Department, Civil Affairs Division, to the Secretary of War through the Deputy Chief of Staff, "Comments on Preliminary Report by the Working Staff of the German Standard of Living Board," 9 October 1945, NA/RG107/E106/B3; "Draft First Report on Reparation by Economic Advisory Panel," 3 November 1945, PRO/DBPO/S1/V5/F33; OMGUS, Office of the Legal Adviser, to Director, Economics Division, "Average of Standards of Living of European Countries," 8 February 1946, NA/RG260/LD/B55; Lewis H. Brown, *A Report on Germany* (New York, 1947), 247; John Gimbel, *The American Occupation of Germany: Politics and the Military, 1945-1949* (Stanford, 1968), 20-1; John Gimbel, "Governing the American Zone of Germany," in Wolfe, *Americans as Proconsuls*, 93; B.U. Ratchford and Wm. D. Ross, *Berlin Reparations Assignment: Round One of the German Peace Settlement* (Chapel Hill, 1947), 71.

³⁴ "Reparation Settlement and Peacetime Economy of Germany," December, 1945, LOC/Harriman/B184.

³⁵ Major General F.F. Scowden, Chief, SHAEF, Supply and Economics Branch, G-5 Division, to CCAC, "Justification of food import requirements for SHAEF Zone of Germany during June, July and August 1945," 12 March 1945, NA/RG218/E88/B65; CCS 551/15, Combined Civil Affairs Committee for consid-

planting of home gardens, revive production of farm machinery, and resume the operations of the German fishing fleet. By 1948, in fact, the western occupation zones had attained 95% of prewar domestic food production. But Germany had always been a net importer of foodstuffs, and the 25% increase in the population of the western zones due to the influx of refugees and expellees meant that domestic production could provide barely half of total needs.³⁶

Not surprisingly, the average daily ration level in the western occupation zones during the summer of 1945 fluctuated between 700-1190 calories, far below not only the generally accepted minimum of 2000, but also the substandard ceiling of 1550 calories established by the Allies through their revised "disease and unrest" formula.³⁷ While non-German refugees living within DP camps were soon receiving 2300 calories thanks to emergency food imports and Red Cross supplements, German civilians living in the U.S. and British zones were authorized to receive just over half that amount (1354), and were in fact believed to be obtaining only 1250 on average.³⁸ Conditions appeared to be only marginally better in the Soviet zone, which contained most of Germany's best agricultural lands, and slightly worse in the French zone. In most dire need were the millions of ethnic Germans being expelled from their homes in eastern Europe.³⁹

Even Allied officials began to protest the conditions. In an October 1945 letter to the Assistant Secretary of War, U.S. Deputy

eration by the Combined Chiefs of Staff, "Control and Distribution and Rationing of Food in Germany," 9 April 1945, NA/JCS/1/R11; SHAEF Forward, signed Eisenhower, to AGWAR and Combined Chiefs of Staff, 16 May 1945, NA/RG332/ETO,SGS/B57.

³⁶ Backer, *Priming the German Economy*, 37, 46.

³⁷ SHAEF G-5 Division, to Chiefs of Staff, SHAEF, 26 June 1945, NA/RG332/ETO,SGS/B57.

³⁸ Military Government of Germany, "Monthly Report of the Military Governor, U.S. Zone," No. 4, "Monthly Report of the Military Governor," 20 November 1945, NA/RG94/OpBr/B1174.

³⁹ German League of free Welfare Associations, Central Committee for the Inner-Mission of the German Protestant Church, Caritas Association for the Roman Catholic Germany, and the German Red Cross, to the Allied Control Council, 5 September 1945, HIA/Lochner/B2; Committee Against Mass Expulsion, *The Land of the Dead: Study of the Deportations From Eastern Germany* (New York, 1946); Egan and Reiss, *Transfigured Night*, 21-30, 54-8; Alfred-Maurice de Zayas, *The German Expellees: Victims in War and Peace* (New York, 1993), 149-50.

Military Governor Lucius Clay reported that "undoubtedly a large number of refugees have already died of starvation, exposure and disease.... The death rate in many places has increased several fold, and infant mortality is approaching 65 percent in many places. By the spring of 1946, German observers expect that epidemics and malnutrition will claim 2.5 to 3 million victims between the Oder and Elbe."⁴⁰ A British report warned that the 1150 calorie levels prevailing in places like the Ruhr would almost certainly lead to "Belsen" conditions, and reminded readers that "2000 calories is considered the minimum necessary to keep body and soul together," and that by comparison the British civilian ration was 3000 calories at the time.⁴¹ At a Cabinet meeting in London in early October, the participants acknowledged that the overall death rate among German civilians had already climbed to four times the prewar normal, while the mortality rate for children had risen tenfold.⁴²

During the fall of 1945, the Combined Nutrition Committee completed a detailed survey of the food situation in the three western zones of occupation. They reported prevailing ration levels that ranged from 840-1400 calories, and warned of the probable side effects: reduced worker efficiency, an expanding black market, retarded growth in children, and increasing symptoms of malnutrition in children and pregnant women. Although they did not observe any "unusual incidence of disorders arising from malnutrition among the few children that we examined," and only a few cases of famine oedema, the authors of the report warned about the progressive loss of weight documented among civilians of all ages. Their study also noted that "the sole justification for a policy involving partial starvation for the German people is that the needs of the liberated Allied countries must come first."⁴³

⁴⁰ Lieutenant General Lucius D. Clay, Office of the Deputy Military Governor to John J. McCloy, Assistant Secretary of War, War Department, 5 October 1945, NA/RG107/E180/B26; Hans W. Schoenberg, *Germans from the East: A Study of their Migration, Resettlement, and Subsequent Group History since 1945* (The Hague, 1970), 32, 38.

⁴¹ Lt. Colonel. J.H.B. Lowe, "Report on the Visit to the British Zone of Germany and British Sector in Berlin," September 1945, PRO/DBPO/S1/V5/F7.

⁴² Cabinet, Gen 93 (Ministerial)/1, Minister of State, "Control of Epidemics," 5 October 1945, PRO/DBPO/S1/V5/F27.

⁴³ "Combined Nutrition Committee (US/BR/FR) Report," July 30-August 8, 1945, HIA/Becker/B1; Military Government of Germany, "Monthly Report of the Military Governor, U.S. Zone," No. 1, "Monthly Report of the Military Governor," 20

Later that fall, another inquiry into conditions within Germany was completed by Byron Price. He reported to U.S. President Truman that he knew of "no competent medical authority who would regard a ration of 1550 calories as satisfactory, or who considers that present rationing in Germany is adequate for a people who are expected to work, and who have no heat at home and no way to reach their places of employment except by walking." According to Price, a growing body of medical evidence was showing a widespread and dangerous loss of weight and an alarming loss in resilience to disease, and he warned that "epidemics and rioting will not be far behind." Even the generally accepted minimum ration of 2000 calories to prevent starvation would not permit the "bombed-out, freezing, pedestrian Germans to live anything like as well as the European average." Price reported to Truman that there could be no question that

the vengeance of Nature's God lies heavily on the German people. They are paying in kind for the unparalleled miseries and cruelties for which they are responsible. As cold weather begins, millions find themselves housed against the raw climate in rubble heaps and caves, without fuel for heating, and with a food supply rated by medical standards well below the level of subsistence. Just now these people are quiescent, and lawlessness is negligible, although epidemics begin to threaten the health of western Europe.⁴⁴

U.S. Secretary of War Robert Patterson wanted the Price Report made public, and agreed with his conclusion that the official calorie ceiling of 1550—let alone the lower ration amounts that were actually being administered in postwar Germany—was inadequate to maintain the health of the German civilian population.⁴⁵ Months earlier, the U.S. Catholic Bishops had already spoken out against the restrictions on food imports into occupied Germany, and warned that "it is unworthy of the victors to revenge injustices by violating human rights and heaping insults on human dignity. As things are now, future generations may well charge the victors

August 1945, NA/RG94/OpBr/B1175; "Die Lebensmittel - Rationierung in Deutschland 1939-1946," 1946, HIA/Becker/B1.

⁴⁴ Byron Price to President Truman, 9 November 1945, HST/B-File/Germany/F1; J.J. McCloy, War Department, Office of Assistant Secretary, to Judge Patterson, 24 November 1945, NA/RG107/E106/B4.

⁴⁵ Secretary of War Robert P. Patterson, War Department, to President Truman, 27 November 1945, HST/B-File/Germany/F1.

with guilt of inhumanities which are reminiscent of Nazism and Fascism."⁴⁶ Other Americans also began to complain that the failure to restore mail service to Germany was preventing them from exercising their rights as U.S. citizens to communicate with or send personal packages to friends and family members.⁴⁷

At first, President Truman turned a deaf ear to the growing volume of protests. He explained to one U.S. Senator that though all Germans might not be guilty for the war, it would be too difficult to try to single out for better treatment those who had nothing to do with the Nazi regime and its crimes:

While we have no desire to be unduly cruel to Germany, I cannot feel any great sympathy for those who caused the death of so many human beings by starvation, disease and outright murder, in addition to all the regular destruction and death of war. Perhaps eventually a decent government can be established in Germany so that Germany can again take its place in the family of nations. I think that in the meantime no one should be called upon to pay Germany's misfortunes except Germany itself. Until the misfortunes of those whom Germany oppressed and tortured are obliterated, it does not seem right to divert our efforts to Germany itself.⁴⁸

Several months later, however, the first chink appeared in the armor of harsh Allied food policy. Throughout 1945, the Allied occupation armies centralized relief efforts to ensure that any international aid flowing into occupied Germany went exclusively to liberated Allied POWs, concentration camp survivors, and non-German DPs awaiting repatriation or resettlement.⁴⁹ Only a few

⁴⁶ "Bishops Discuss World Peace," *Catholic Action* 27 (May 1945).

⁴⁷ Karl Brandt, Economist, the Food Research Institute, Stanford University, to Burton K. Wheeler, Senate Office Building, 14 September 1945; Milton S. Young, U.S. Senator, Committee on Agriculture and Forestry, to the President, 3 December 1945, HST/B-File/Germany/F1; W.O. Lewis, Baptist World Alliance, to the President, 10 May 1946, HST/B-File/DP/F2; Merrill, *Documentary History* vol. 3, 114.

⁴⁸ Harry S. Truman to Burton K. Wheeler, U.S. Senate, 21 December 1945, HST/B-File/Germany/F2; Harry S. Truman to Burton K. Wheeler, United States Senate, 6 October 1945, HST/B-File/Germany/F1; Mr. Philip E. Ryan to Mr. William H.G. Giblin, 15 October 1945, NA/RG200/B1016.

⁴⁹ Pogue, *George C. Marshall*, 458; Edward N. Peterson, *The American Occupation of Germany: Retreat to Victory* (Detroit, 1977), 118; L.P. (45) 182, Cabinet, Lord President's Committee, "World Food Outlook: Memorandum by the Minister of Food," 1 October 1945, PRO/DBPO/S1/V3.

licensed international relief agencies such as the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration (UNRRA) and several Papal relief missions were even permitted to operate in the U.S. zone. To ensure that they assisted only non-German nationals, the U.S. Military Government controlled all supplies, transportation and travel permits.⁵⁰ Only indigenous organizations such as the *Innere Mission* and *Caritas Verband* were permitted to help the German people, but the national Red Cross was dissolved and its remaining activities severely curtailed, and none of the agencies were permitted to obtain outside supplies.⁵¹ In their determination to ensure that international relief was denied to enemy civilians, the State Department even prohibited efforts by the Vatican and the German community in Chile to transmit food supplies to infants living in the western zones of occupation.⁵²

By the beginning of 1946, the tide of public opinion was beginning to turn against the official policy of harshness. In January, thirty-four U.S. Senators signed a petition urging that Germany and Austria be opened to private relief organizations. In particular, they expressed concern about the desperate food situation "which presents a picture of such frightful horror as to stagger the imagination, evidence which increasingly marks the United States as an accomplice in a terrible crime against humanity."⁵³ Even Lucius

⁵⁰ Magda Kelber, "Patterns of Relief Work in Germany," *The Year Book of World Affairs 1951* (London, 1951), 10-11.

⁵¹ Rose B. Dolan to Mr. George Kulp, Supervisor of 7th Army ARC-CWR, "The German Red Cross," 1 July 1945; N. de Rouge, League of Red Cross Societies to Francis B. James, 11 July 1945 and 8 June 1945; Office of the Legal Adviser, USGCC, "Status of the German Red Cross," 23 August 1945; Office of the Legal Adviser, USGCC, 20 August 1945, NA/RG200/B1016; Headquarters USFET, G-5 Division, to Commanders of Third and Seventh US Armies, "Control of Benevolent German Welfare Organizations," August 1945; Captain Anton J. Vlcek, Public Welfare Branch, Headquarters, USGCC (Germany), Public Health and Welfare Division, Public Welfare Branch, to Major General Stayer, "Preliminary Report on Welfare Activities in Bavaria," 10 August 1945; Fred S. Reese, Legal Adviser, Public Health and Welfare Division, USGCC (Germany), Public Health and Welfare Division, Office of Legal Adviser, to Mr. Charles Fahy, Director of Legal Division, "Opinion on Status of German Red Cross," 20 August 1945; Fred S. Reese, Legal Adviser, Public Health and Welfare Division, USGCC (Germany), Public Health and Welfare Division, Office of Legal Adviser, to Lt. Col. William G. Downs, Public Welfare Branch, "Status of (Deutsches Rotes Kreuz) German Red Cross," 20 August 1945, NA/RG260/LD/B60.

⁵² Secretary of State to U.S. Embassy, 14 September 1945, LOC/Harriman/B182.

⁵³ Kenneth S. Wherry, United States Senate, Committee on Appropriations, to the President, 4 January 1946, HST/WHOF/B1272.

Clay, by now the U.S. Military Governor in Germany, was warning officials in Washington about the dangers of allowing hunger to persist in postwar Germany: "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 ration allowance in Germany will not only defeat our objectives in middle Europe but will pave the road to a Communist Germany."⁵⁴

Responding to growing pressure from Congress and public opinion, President Truman permitted representatives of seven U.S. relief organizations to survey the situation in occupied Germany, and their final report was critical of the conditions that prevailed.⁵⁵ On February 19, 1946, he decided to approve the creation of a Council of Relief Agencies Licensed for Operation in Germany (C.R.A.L.O.G.), an umbrella organization which would operate under the direction of the U.S. Military Government. Several months later, relief organizations were permitted to send humanitarian aid to starving German children for the first time, and during the summer they expanded their operations to include other age groups and the British and French zones.⁵⁶

As outside observers began to pour into occupied Germany during the spring and summer of 1946, reports about the terrible conditions began to reach a broader audience. U.S. relief workers and journalists were equally critical of the famine conditions that they witnessed. A group of editors and publishers travelled throughout Germany to survey the situation, and almost all concluded in later editorials and articles that more food aid was needed.⁵⁷ During Senate hearings in June 1946, one U.S. Army official testified that given the prevailing ration scales of 1180-1225 calories, if it was not starvation, "it is very close to it."⁵⁸ Another

⁵⁴ Clay to Echols and Petersen, March 27, 1946, in Smith, *The Papers*, 184.

⁵⁵ Joseph Buttinger, International Rescue Relief Committee, and Abram Becker, Acting Executive Secretary of the International Rescue Relief Committee, 25 April 1946, U.S. Senate, Judiciary, *A Bill to Amend the Trading with the Enemy Act*.

⁵⁶ Egan and Reiss, *Transfigured Night*, 64; James F. Tent, "Simple Gifts: The American Friends Service Committee and the Establishment of Neighborhood Centers in Post-1945 Germany," *Kirchliche Zeitgeschichte* (Spring 1989): 66-69; Wallace J. Campbell, *The History of CARE: A Personal Account* (Westport, 1990), 8, 40, 49.

⁵⁷ *New York Times*, 4 April 1946; OMGUS Berlin to War Department, 14 April 1946; "The Food Situation in Germany's American Zone," *Baltimore Sun*, 16 April 1946, NA/RG107/E187/B1.

⁵⁸ Major General O.P. Echols, Civil Affairs Division, War Department, U.S. Senate, Judiciary, *A Bill to Amend the Trading with the Enemy Act*, 20 June 1946, 50.

witness reported on the high infant mortality rates prevailing in postwar Germany, and asserted that both food and shipping space were available if only sufficient political will could be found to help the vanquished foe.⁵⁹ One relief worker tried to describe circumstances that most Americans could barely imagine:

Starvation is not the dramatic thing one so often reads and imagines... of people in mobs crying for food and falling over in the streets. The starving... those who are dying never say anything and one rarely sees them. They first become listless and weak, they react quickly to cold and chills, they sit staring in their rooms or lie listlessly in their beds... one day they just die. The doctor usually diagnoses malnutrition and complications resulting therefrom. Old women and kids usually die first because they are weak and are unable to get out and scrounge for the extra food it takes to live. It is pretty hard for an American who has lacked enough food to become ravenously hungry perhaps only once or twice in a lifetime to understand what real starvation is.⁶⁰

No individual did more to inform the world about the situation in postwar Germany and win support for an expanded civilian feeding program than former U.S. President Herbert Hoover. He was already a veteran of two relief missions to Europe during and after World War I, and pioneered the use of food as a tool of diplomacy. Hoover was widely respected by the public and members of both parties in Congress, and at Truman's invitation, he began assembling a Famine Emergency Committee in February 1946.⁶¹ For the next few months, they visited both food producing and food deficit countries. In Germany, they discovered that urban and industrial areas continued to be the worst hit by wartime damage and postwar famine, with most civilians relying on official rations of 1,000 calories or less. Available food stocks were quickly running out, the quality of the ration was generally poor, and the

⁵⁹ Mr. James M. Reed, Friends Committee on National Legislation, U.S. Senate, Judiciary, *A Bill to Amend the Trading with the Enemy Act*, 18 June 1946.

⁶⁰ HST/Andrews/30; Testimony of Mr. G.V. Gaevernitz, U.S. Senate, Judiciary, *A Bill to Amend the Trading with the Enemy Act*, 18 June 1946.

⁶¹ Gary Dean Best, *Herbert Hoover: The Postpresidential Years, 1933-1964, Volume Two: 1946-1964* (Stanford, 1983), 284-86; Richard Norton Smith, *An Uncommon Man: The Triumph of Herbert Hoover* (New York, 1984), 351-3; Merle Miller, *Plain Speaking: An Oral Biography of Harry S. Truman* (New York, 1973), 219-20; David McCullough, *Truman* (New York, 1992), 389-90.

condition of children was particularly tragic.⁶² While typhus and diphtheria were already evident in 1945, by the spring of 1946 there was growing evidence of weight loss, rickets, nutritional edema and vitamin deficiency. The infant mortality rate in Germany was double the prewar rate in the U.S., and in the population as a whole deaths continued to exceed births. As the report concluded, "The collapsed Germany of 1945 presented a situation almost without parallel in the annals of modern warfare... Their disintegration was not only physical but psychological as well."⁶³

Many historians view the second winter of the occupation as an important period of transition in U.S. and Allied policy towards postwar Germany. With relief agencies finally permitted to operate, C.R.A.L.O.G. shipped 10,000 tons of private relief supplies in the form of food and clothing by the end of 1946, and C.A.R.E. sent another 550,000 packages. Private parcels also flooded in, reaching a total of 17 million pounds per month by December. In three years, a total of 441 million pounds of goods valued at 200 million dollars were sent to German families and individuals. Furthermore, the country received one third of all U.S. foreign aid during the period 1945-1949, making the United States by far the largest single contributor.⁶⁴ Years later, German President Konrad Adenauer referred to the "great psychological effects" of this relief work: "It was not so much the material assistance that helped us as the connection with the outside world, the hope for reconciliation, a ray of light pointing to a brighter future—all these were awakened in Germany by these actions."⁶⁵

⁶² Herbert Hoover's "Address Before the Emergency Conference on European Cereal Supplies," London, 5 April 1946, HIA/Hoover/B108; "Some Notes on Trip with the Hoover Mission (March-June 1946)," 1 August 1946, HIA/Tuck/B7.

⁶³ U.S. President's Famine Emergency Committee, "The Disease Potential in Germany," 1946, HIA/USPFEC/B25.

⁶⁴ "Report of Conference of Senator W.F. Knowland and OMGUS Officials Held at Headquarters, Office of Military Government for Germany (US)," Directors Building, Berlin, Colonel Lenzner, Deputy Director of Internal Affairs and Communications Division, Dr. R.T. Alexander, Chief, Education & Religious Affairs Branch, Internal Affairs & Communications Division, OMGUS, 8 October 1947, HST/Rockwell/B31; Gabriele Stueber, *Der Kampf gegen den Hunger 1945-1950: Die Ernährungslage in der britischen Zone Deutschlands, insbesondere in Schleswig-Holstein und Hamburg* (Neumuenster, 1984), 475-519; Edward McSweeney, *American Voluntary Aid for Germany 1945-1950* (Freiburg, 1950), 22-85.

⁶⁵ Konrad Adenauer and Beate Ruhm von Oppen, *Konrad Adenauer Memoirs 1945-53*, trans. (Chicago, 1966), 59-60; Louis P. Lochner, *Herbert Hoover and Germany* (New York, 1960), 203-35.

Official policy was also undergoing a radical transformation. In September 1946, Secretary of State James Byrnes made his famous Stuttgart speech, and the following summer the operational directive guiding U.S. policies until then—JCS 1067—was scrapped and replaced with JCS 1779, and a “stable and productive Germany” was proclaimed to be the new economic priority.⁶⁶ By the fall of 1946, more than two-thirds of the entire military government budget was being spent on civilian relief costs, U.S. officials stationed in Germany were trying to launch a limited export program, and more effort was being made to monitor civilian health.⁶⁷

But even the influx of international relief and the apparent transformation of official U.S. policy during 1946 were failing to bring adequate relief to German civilians, and they remained at the end of the world food line. Although infants were doing well overall and their death rate was finally declining, there continued to be a disastrous decline in body weights in all other consumer groups. The situation was worst among those over 70, whose death rate had increased to 34% of the total in May and 45% of the total in October. The rate of suicide in that age group had also increased.⁶⁸ A report by the Combined Nutrition Committee completed just before Christmas 1946 concluded that fewer than 1500 calories had been made officially available to most adult German civilians during the past year, even though 2000 was still considered “the minimum amount of food upon which normal consumers could subsist in reasonable health for a limited period of time.” Even assuming that some were able to supplement their diets with as many as 200-500 calories of non-ration food, the variety and quality of the rations remained poor, which explained why the number of hunger oedema cases was increasing.⁶⁹

⁶⁶ Earl F. Ziemke, “The Formulation and Initial Implementation of U.S. Occupation Policy in Germany,” Hans A. Schmitt, ed., *U.S. Occupation in Europe After World War II: Papers and Reminiscences from the April 23-24, 1976, Conference Held at the George C. Marshall Research Foundation, Lexington, Virginia* (Lawrence, 1978), 39.

⁶⁷ Office of Military Government for Germany (U.S.), Public Relations Office, Press Conference with General Clay, Mr. Petersen, and Mr. Allen, 15 October 1946, NA/RG107/E187/B1.

⁶⁸ Dr. Wetzel, Regierungspraesident Darmstadt, Department I, General and Inner Administration, Public Health, “Report on the Sanitary Problems within the area of the U.S. Zone in Germany,” 20 November 1946, HIA/USPFEC/B25.

⁶⁹ Combined Nutrition Committee (Br./Fr./U.S.), “Report of the Sixth Combined Nutrition Survey of settled areas in the British, French and U.S. Zones of Germany made during the period 1 to 12 December 1946,” 12 December 1946, HIA/Germany

According to one White House official who recalled the situation years later, the food supply situation reached "rock bottom" during the bitterly cold and seemingly endless winter of 1946-47:

[it] is stuck in the memory of the Germans, who lived through it, as the time of the shortest and most meager supply ever: 1,000-1,500 calories per day, very little heating fuel, worse, in that aspect, than in any winter of the war and postwar years. The war had been over for one and one half years; nevertheless privation and misery were unequalled, with no chance of improvement in sight. The urban masses were too much in need of rest, physically too weak, too resigned to rise in rebellion.⁷⁰

All of this suffering was taking place during a period when the average U.S. calorie intake for an adult was 3200-3300 calories (2900 in Great Britain), and the normal U.S. Army ration was 4000.⁷¹ Economic output in the western zones had barely reached one-third of its 1938 levels, and in January 1947 a delegate sent to Germany by the Secretary of War observed no improvement in the overall situation.⁷² Six months later, Assistant Secretary of War Howard Peterson reported that ration scales for the average adult still ranged from 900-1200 calories, and that the recent bad winter had only worsened an already deplorable food situation.⁷³ The former U.S. Ambassador to Russia and current Secretary of Commerce, Averell Harriman, observed after a six day stay in Germany

(ACC)/B33; "Summary of a Meeting of the Regional Commissioners of the British Zone with the Hon. H. Hoover," 10 February 1947, HIA/USPFEC/B11; Chief, Public Health Branch, OMGUS, "Nutrition Summary Report, U.S. Zone, May 1947," 20 June 1947, HIA/Becker/B1.

⁷⁰ Oral History Interview with Gunther Harkort, 12 November 1970, HST/OH/Harkort.

⁷¹ U.S. House of Representatives, Subcommittee of Committee on Appropriations, Hearings on *First Deficiency Appropriations Bill for 1947*, 80th Cong., 1st Sess. (Washington, 1947); Secretary of War Robert P. Patterson to George M. Marshall, Secretary of State, 13 June 1947, NA/RG107/E106/B4.

⁷² Forrest Davis to Senator Robert A. Taft, 29 January 1947, HIA/USPFEC/B21; Alan S. Milward, *The Reconstruction of Western Europe 1945-51* (Berkeley, 1984), 13.

⁷³ War Department Public Information Division, Press Section, statement by Secretary of War Howard C. Petersen, 13 June 1947, HIA/USPFEC/B24; War Department, Public Information Division, Press Section, "Statement by the Assistant Secretary of War Howard C. Petersen," 13 June 1947, DDE/Fitzgerald/B1.

that "probably, the strongest impression I carry back from my week's stay is hunger and the hopelessness of the people."⁷⁴

Recognizing that responsibility to avert famine "follows the flag," the War Department finally announced that feeding civilians in Germany and other territories around the world occupied by US forces would henceforth assume first priority.⁷⁵ The most important weapon in the public relations campaign to help postwar Germany was Herbert Hoover, who was recruited in February 1947 for a second food mission directed exclusively at Germany and Austria.⁷⁶ Hoover worked closely with U.S. military government officials to persuade Congress and the American public of the need for an expanded food program.⁷⁷ As historian Jean Edward Smith explained, while U.S. Military Governor Lucius Clay had not been able to spur the government bureaucracy in Washington into action to increase food exports to Germany, "Hoover rolled over it."⁷⁸

In his final report, the former President complained about the fact that the U.S. government was spending \$600 million per year to prevent starvation in Germany. On purely practical grounds, Hoover felt that this costly and stopgap effort had to be stopped, and a new and more effective policy of German and European reconstruction pursued: "These conclusions are not the product of sentiment nor of feeling toward a nation which has brought such misery upon the whole earth. They are not given in condonement of the enormity of her crimes. They are the result of a desire to see the world look forward, get into production and establish a lasting peace."⁷⁹ Besides reducing the costs to the U.S. taxpayer of the oc-

⁷⁴ Averell Harriman to Executive Committee of the National Grange, 16 June 1947, LOC/Harriman/B256; W.A. Harriman, Secretary of Commerce, to the President, 12 August 1947, HST/PSF/B178.

⁷⁵ Secretary of War Robert P. Patterson to the Under Secretary of War, 15 December 1946, NA/RG107/E106/B4.

⁷⁶ Earl Harrison of the Agriculture Department traveled on a similar mission to Japan and China.

⁷⁷ Oral History Interview with Dennis A. FitzGerald, 21 June 1971, HST/OH/FitzGerald; Lochner, *Herbert Hoover and Germany*, 182-91.

⁷⁸ Jean Edward Smith, *Lucius D. Clay: An American Life* (New York, 1990), 339-40, 361-3.

⁷⁹ Hoover quoted in Gustav Stolper, *German Realities* (New York, 1948), 301.

cupation, and preserving the safety and health of Allied troops stationed in postwar Germany, Hoover was concerned that conditions there had sunk "to the lowest level known in a hundred years of Western history. If Western Civilization is to survive in Europe, it must also survive in Germany. And it must be built into a cooperative member of that civilization. That indeed is the hope of any lasting peace. After all, our flag flies over these people. That flag means something besides military power."⁸⁰

As the third winter of the occupation began, public reaction against the prolonged famine was intensifying. Even German citizens were becoming increasingly outspoken and critical of the Allies for depriving them "of the first of all human rights, the right to keep on living."⁸¹ A group of German medical doctors submitted a report to the Second U.N. Conference on Food and Agriculture complaining about the disastrous food situation in their country.⁸² There were also massive food strikes in some cities in the British zone.⁸³

U.S. officials paid close attention to the growing voices of protest both at home and abroad. Secretary of War Robert Patterson warned that if outright famine broke out in Germany, "Such a calamity would be a damaging blow to our foreign policy, to say nothing of considerations of humanity and the unfavorable reaction with our own people."⁸⁴ By the beginning of 1948, the Secretary of the Army, Kenneth Royall, told an audience at a Denver Rotary Club that the current adult ration of 1425 calories was equivalent to little more than a "heartly American breakfast," and that the Allies would soon have to choose between three options as described by a former War Department official: "starve 'em, shoot

⁸⁰ Herbert Hoover, *An American Epic, Volume IV: The Guns Cease Killing and the Saving of Life from Famine Begin 1939-1963* (Chicago, 1964), 242-3; Stolper, *German Realities*, 67.

⁸¹ Dr. F.H. Rein, University of Goettingen, "The Hunger Problem" (June 1947), HIA/Becker/B1.

⁸² Nutrition Board of the German Medical Profession, "The German Medical Profession on The State of Nutrition in Germany," July 1947, HIA/Becker/B1; De Castro, *The Geopolitics of Hunger*, 429-30. See also Manfred J. Enssle, "The Harsh Discipline of Food Scarcity in Postwar Stuttgart, 1945-1948," *German Studies Review* 10 (October 1987): 488, 492, 495, 500-1.

⁸³ Kramer, *The West German Economy*, 83-4.

⁸⁴ Secretary of War Robert P. Patterson to Mr. Petersen, 9 May 1947, NA/RG107/E106/B4.

'em, or feed 'em."⁸⁵ A report issued by the U.S. Military Governor the following year acknowledged that until the end of 1948, Germany's infant mortality rate was double that of other Western European nations, and its birth rate remained the lowest in Europe.⁸⁶ Even a Military Government official who believed that the shortages of food in Germany were exaggerated, and that the average adult was actually receiving 2000-2100 calories per day thanks to unreported production and black market purchases, complained that

It seems to me we are wasting our time arguing over 50 or 100 calories when we know that to get the German population back to any degree of normal recovery we will have to increase the ration level somewhere near their pre-war level, which for non-self-suppliers was 2870 calories daily. I am sure at least it would take another 500 calories to really be significant as far as industrial recovery is concerned.⁸⁷

During May 1948, yet another combined U.S.- British Special Commission surveyed the situation in Germany. Their final report indicated that conditions had improved during the past year, and that the current official rate of 1500 calories was now being supplemented by an additional "spread" of as many as 400 calories through nutrition programs for special groups, and an average of 300 calories of "off the ration" intake. But even these more optimistic estimates remained far below the level required to assure full work capacity for the average adult, and had not prevented an additional loss of 10-15% of body weight in German adults during

⁸⁵ Department of the Army, Public Information Division, Press Section, "Address by the Honorable Kenneth C. Royall, Secretary of the Army, before the Denver Rotary Club, Denver, Colorado," 8 January 1948, HST/Rockwell/B31.

⁸⁶ Office of Military Government for Germany (U.S.), "Statistical Annex, Issue No. 23", Report of the Military Governor, No. 43, January 1949, HIA/Germany (OMGUS)/B13; Office of Military Government for Germany (U.S.), "Statistical Annex, Issue No. 28," Report of the Military Governor, No. 48, June 1949, HIA/Germany (OMGUS)/B13; Dr. L. Bachmann, Technical Section (Medical), U.S. Naval Forces, Germany, "Infectious Diseases in Germany Prior to and After World War II," 20 April 1951 HIA/Becker/B6; Harold Zink, *American Military Government in Germany* (New York, 1947), 123; Hans Schlange-Schoeningen, *Im Schatten des Hungers: Dokumentarisches zur Ernährungs politik und Ernährungswirtschaft in den Jahren 1945-1949* (Hamburg, 1955), 292.

⁸⁷ L.J. Stahler, Chief Food Rationing Branch, OMGUS to J.C. Ebbs, Nutrition Advisor, Office of the Quartermaster General, Department of the Army, 19 February 1948, HIA/Becker/B2.

the past year. To restore productivity and morale in postwar Germany, the commission recommended that the revised "disease and unrest" formula (with a ceiling of 1550 calories) and the "standard of living" guidelines (the eventual goal of which was a ceiling of 2100 calories) should both be scrapped and replaced with a new base ration of at least 2540 calories.⁸⁸

As it turned out, however, the end of the famine was already at hand. Thanks to an unusually good harvest during the summer of 1948, the onset of Cold War tensions and the accompanying launch of the Berlin airlift and Marshall Plan, and the unification of the western zones of occupation, economic conditions finally began to improve across Western Europe. The following year, food was no longer a source of concern for most Germans living in the newly created Federal Republic of Germany, and in 1950 the rationing system was abandoned entirely.⁸⁹

In conclusion, the Allied governments did pursue a stern food policy towards the German people in 1945, portions of which persisted into the third year of military occupation. Most of the terrible conditions that prevailed were brought on by the chaos and destruction of war, but some—including the reduction in rations for POWs and civilians and the initial denial of international relief to both—were at least partly the result of a determination to ensure that this time the Germans would feel the sting of defeat and pay reparations for the damage that their nation had wrought across the continent.

The inadequate feeding of enemy civilians began with the wartime decision to scale back the original "disease and unrest" formula from a minimum of 2000 to a maximum of 1550 calories, as well as the decision at Potsdam to reduce Germany to a standard of living below the average for Europe. Depending on the time of year and the region, the actual supply of rations for civilians fluctuated between 1000-1300 calories. Added to that were the problems of unfair distribution and poor quality. While it is true that many Germans were able to supplement their official diet with "off-ration" supplies, usually obtained on the black market, these averaged anywhere from 200-300 additional calories, and the majority obtained less or nothing at all to supplement their official rations. The effects of malnutrition were made worse by accompanying shortages of clothing and shelter, the disruption or contami-

⁸⁸ "Report of the Special Commission Appointed by Secretary of the Army Royall to Study Nutrition in Bizonal Germany," 27 May 1948, HST/B-File/Germany/F1.

⁸⁹ Zink, *The United States in Germany*, 298.

nation of water supplies, shortages of medical personnel, hospital space, and medicines, and the influx of millions of additional DPs and refugees from the East, most of whom were in even worse shape to begin with.

For reasons largely of geography, conditions tended to be best in the U.S. zone and worst in the French and Soviet zones, despite the fact that the latter was traditionally a food surplus region. Urban centers tended to be hardest hit as well, with inhabitants of Berlin and the Ruhr suffering most of all. Small children, university students, and older people were hardest hit by the malnutrition. Though deaths resulting directly from starvation remained rare even during the worst phases of the postwar occupation, there was an increase in the rate of deaths from suicides and diseases like tuberculosis, typhus, diphtheria, and influenza in which malnutrition likely played at least some contributing role. There was also an undeniable increase in the overall death rate in postwar Germany throughout this period. In 1946, when famine was still widespread in Europe and elsewhere, it was double the prewar figure. By 1948, when conditions had improved in the remainder of Europe, it was still 30 percent higher than the prewar level, and about 35% higher than in the U.S.

Clearly, the Allies' own interpretations of Article 43 of The 1907 Hague Rules of Land Warfare were not followed when it came to the postwar occupation of Germany. When they insisted in 1945 on imposing unconditional surrender and supreme authority on the defeated enemy, most officials in London and Washington believed they had found a way to circumvent their legal obligations to feed and otherwise care for civilians living in the occupied territories. As late as 1953, a State Department legal adviser noted that the laws relating to civilian feeding were vague, and that "There is no provision in The Hague rules, requiring the military occupant to furnish subsistence to the inhabitants of the occupied territory." The same official argued that the occupation of Japan—and by implication that of Germany as well—as a result of unconditional surrender "placed the United States in an entirely different position from the occupant of enemy territory during hostilities and left it free to make its own rules of occupation, subject to the dictates of conscience and humanity."⁹⁰ The British delegates to the conference that negotiated the expanded 1949 Geneva Conventions also tried to argue that Article 43 of The Hague Rules

⁹⁰ Yingling to Mr. Robertson, "Did the United States as the Military Occupant of Japan Have an Obligation to Furnish Subsistence for the Japanese People?," 23 October 1953, NA/RG59/E684/Hiss/B1.

of Land Warfare did not apply in the case of the Allied occupation of Germany because of the special circumstances of unconditional surrender and the accompanying assumption of supreme authority over the German state by the victors.⁹¹ In truth, all four of the Allied powers violated both the spirit and probably the letter of The Hague Rules of Land Warfare when it came to the feeding of enemy civilians.

In the end, tens of millions of Germans lived through at least several years of malnutrition and deprivation in the wake of the 1945 surrender. It is unlikely that any historian will ever be able to calculate how many civilian deaths can be attributed—either directly or indirectly—to the prolonged suffering that prevailed in postwar Germany. What is certain is that many more POWs and civilians suffered and perished than needed to in the aftermath of World War II, and that the victorious Allies were guided at least partly by a spirit of postwar vengeance in creating the circumstances that contributed to those deaths. Having returned from a tour of devastated Germany in 1947, British socialist and writer Victor Gollancz attempted to put the best face possible on these and other Allied actions:

I have criticised in this essay our treatment of Germany. It cannot be criticised too strongly: for these policies for which we have been jointly or solely responsible—annexations, expulsions, spoliation, economic enslavement, non-fraternization and starvation—are more in the spirit of the Hitler we fought than in that of the western liberalism for which we fought him. But to go on to suggest that all distinction has vanished, and that we have been utterly corrupted by the thing we have been fighting—this would be to exaggerate, and grossly. We have alienated great territories of the enemy: Hitler would have annexed all Europe, and eventually the whole world. We non-fraternised with the Germans: Hitler murdered six million Jews. We are starving the people in our charge, not deliberately but because to feed them as we ought would be to lower our own standards: Hitler would have starved, and did starve, anyone it might suit him to starve, with complete deliberation and even, God forgive him, as a matter of preference. These are vast differences, and

⁹¹ W.H. Gardner, Chairman, Committee on the Revision of the Geneva Conventions, Deputy Leader, United Kingdom Delegation, War Office "Report on the Work of the War Office Members of the United Kingdom Delegation to the Diplomatic Conference for the Establishment of International Conventions for the Protection of War Victims at Geneva 21st April-12th August 1949," October 1949, PAC/MG42/DO35/3359/ ReelB-6141.

we must cling to the thought of them if we are to retain our self-respect.⁹²

⁹² Victor Gollancz, *Our Threatened Values* (Hinsdale, 1948), 215. See also the following publications by the same author: *Leaving Them to Their Fate: The Ethics of Starvations* (London, 1946) and *In Darkest Germany* (Hinsdale, 1947).