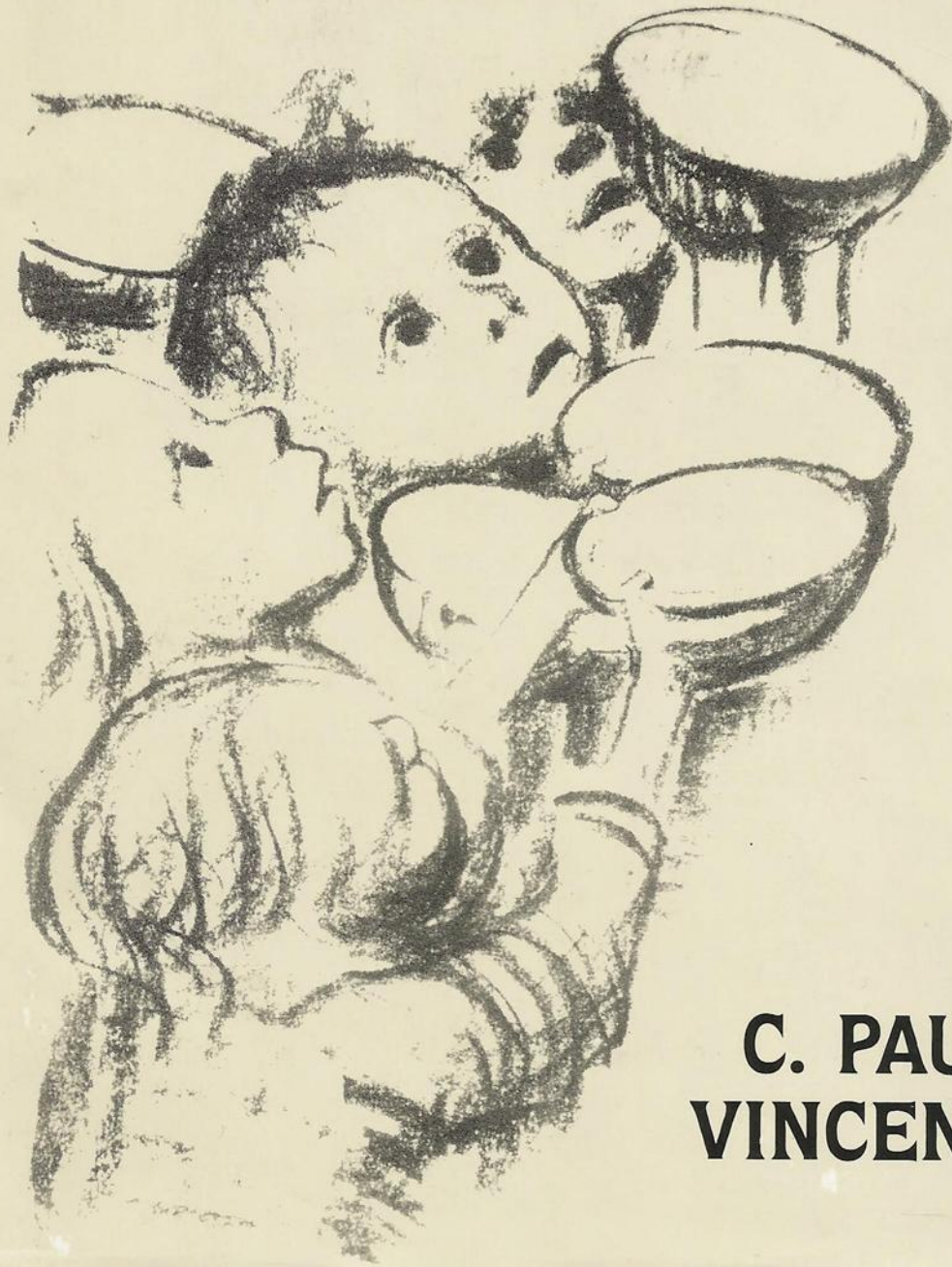


THE POLITICS OF HUNGER

The Allied Blockade of Germany, 1915-1919



C. PAUL
VINCENT

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THE POLITICS OF HUNGER: The Allied Blockade of Germany, 1915-1919

C. Paul Vincent

In his study of the Allied blockade of 1915-1919, Vincent examines the rationale and impact of this first large-scale use of food as a weapon in the twentieth century. Vincent demonstrates that the collapse of the German war effort was induced as much by prolonged hunger as by military reversal. Under blockade since 1915, the starving Germans were, by 1918, in a state of growing anarchy. Remarkably, however, the armistice ending hostilities specifically required the continuation of the blockade until such time as German signatures had been affixed to a peace treaty.

The Politics of Hunger reveals a wide variety of motivation for allied behavior from November, 1918 through July, 1919. Emotional, economic, pragmatic, and political considerations combined, however, to produce a dangerously short-sighted policy prolonging an already tragic action. In his account of the impact of the blockade, Vincent draws upon a wealth of primary sources, including personal memoirs and diaries, to document the prolonged malnutrition and its immediate consequences—increases in the incidence of such diseases as rickets, scabies, and tuberculosis, and a particularly devastating impact upon infants and children. Further, he speculates on the sinister, long-term legacy of enforced hunger—a generation suffering disproportionately from physical and psychological deformity.

While *The Politics of Hunger* provides insight into the formation of Allied policy and the roles of individual Allied

leaders in shaping and implementing that policy, this study's major conclusions address the impact and wisdom of that policy. The maintenance of the hunger blockade, Vincent argues, was an ill-advised and unjust action which contributed to the radicalization of post-war Germany, the collapse of the Weimar Republic, and the eventual rise of National Socialism.

C. Paul Vincent received his Ph.D. from the University of Colorado at Boulder. He has taught at Franklin and Marshall College and is currently the library director at Keene State College in Keene, New Hampshire.

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The Galerie St. Etienne. *Deutschlands Kinder hungern!* (Germany's children are starving), a lithograph by Kathë Kollwitz, commissioned in 1924 for use as a poster by Internationale Arbeiter-hilfe (IAH).

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Deutschlands Kinder hungern! (Germany's children are starving), a lithograph by Käthe Kollwitz, commissioned in 1924 for use as a poster by Internationale Arbeiterhilfe (IAH). Courtesy of The Galerie St. Etienne.

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*The Allied Blockade of
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Preface

Few historians today would claim that John Maynard Keynes's *Economic Consequences of the Peace* did not exaggerate the repercussions inherent in the financial clauses of the Versailles Treaty. After a rather short period of severe economic turmoil, some of it self-inflicted, the Germans experienced a rapid and considerable economic revival. But studies of Germany's recovery, while essential in demonstrating the recuperative powers of the defeated country, invariably fail to address the crisis faced by the Germans in 1918–1919 and the pessimistic mindset that inevitably evolved when the people combined this crisis with their gloomy perception of the deliberations then taking place in Paris. The Treaty of Versailles was a punitive peace; it was not, however, a “Carthaginian Peace.” But the immediate postwar experience suggested to the average German—and, indeed, to John Maynard Keynes—that the Allies would be motivated in their treatment of the Central Powers by hatred and a longing for revenge.

The following monograph was initially conceived as a study of the post–World War I blockade of Germany. As I researched the materials bearing on this episode, however, I grew increasingly convinced of the centrality of, first, the complex structure of the blockade apparatus and, second, the irrational antipathy resulting from four years of brutal warfare as factors underlying the mentality that rationalized the postwar blockade. The weight of evidence suggested that the postwar blockade could not be studied in isolation; the long history of British blockade policy, and the four years of conflict, demanded attention as precursors of this postwar event. I concluded, more significantly, that the immediate postwar policies of the Allies assume some kind of logic only if the shell-shocked condition of European society is first established as an operational backdrop. This is not to suggest that the story of the postwar blockade represents a simple case of irrational behavior. The following pages demonstrate that the determinants of Allied policy were often varied and complex—with fear, idealism, pragmatism, hatred, and (eventually) compassion, all in varying degrees, influencing the manner by which the Allies deliberated with the Germans. And it is the very pervasiveness of these factors that has led me to emphasize the psychological ramifications of the war as a key determinant of postwar behavior. World War I was the great psychological watershed of the twentieth century, and the critical months of armistice exemplified its tragic impact

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on human behavior. The history of the postwar blockade must be refracted through this experience.

The following study does not, however, simply outline the rationale behind the blockade; it also examines the very unfortunate consequences of utilizing that weapon. The desperate hunger, physical deformity, and death resulting from an extended period of malnutrition are examined in detail. The psychological impact of such suffering is also analyzed. And of considerable import is the tentative conclusion, based on medical research of the last three decades, that prolonged malnutrition in infancy and childhood may have had a considerable and irreversible effect on brain development.

It would be too easy for the historian to manipulate such findings and thereby speculate that the critically undernourished generation of children from World War I logically grew up to become the loyal *Schutzstaffeln* of the 1930s. Although I have made an attempt to avoid this kind of speculation, this study does emphasize that the full physiological and psychological impact of the “hunger-blockade” upon Germany's population has heretofore not received adequate examination.

The seed for this book was planted more than a dozen years ago when, as a graduate student, I encountered S. William Halperin's history of the Weimar Republic, *Germany Tried Democracy*. In his discussion of the Republic's inauspicious inception, Halperin briefly focused on the postwar blockade. His remarks provided the inspiration for the following study. Over the course of these twelve years, I have pleasantly incurred numerous debts of gratitude. Some of them will be insufficiently repaid through brief mention here.

First of all, the generous assistance of librarians at the Center for Research Libraries in Chicago, the Regenstein Library at the University of Chicago, the Michener Library at the University of Northern Colorado (especially Lucy Schweers), and the Suzzallo Library at the University of Washington has greatly facilitated my research. In addition, I appreciate the assistance offered me by the curators of special collections at the Public Record Office in Kew Gardens, London; the Institut für Zeitgeschichte in Munich; the Bibliothek für Zeitgeschichte in Stuttgart; and the library and archives of the Hoover Institution (especially Agnes Peterson). Without such professional guidance, this study could not have been completed.

From Robert A. Pois, mentor and friend, I received both encourage-

ment and inspiration, for it was he who encouraged me to expand this project beyond its origins as a master's thesis. In one form or another, portions or all of the manuscript benefited from the readings and criticisms of Frederick S. Allen, James E. Bernhardt, Alfred E. Cornebise, Paul A. Rahe, Barry Rothaus, Robert D. Schulzinger, and Robert G. L. Waite. A special debt is owed Charlotte B. Brown, archivist at Franklin and Marshall College, who read the final draft and perceptively improved it with numerous stylistic suggestions.

Finally, I am indebted to my wife and parents. Nancy Terrizzi Vincent shared in the collective agonies and pleasures of watching the book progress. It benefited, moreover, from her deliberative reading and subtle criticism. The sustenance she furnished in patience, encouragement, friendship, and tenderness has been priceless. My parents too have provided love and support that cannot be repaid. To them the book is affectionately dedicated.

1.

The Loss of Innocence

It was the war of an unsuspecting generation.

—Stefan Zweig

When, in November 1918, the artillery ceased its pounding of the European battlefields, the ensuing silence brought a sense of relief as well as concern. A struggle of unprecedented and bewildering magnitude had come to an end. During four brutal years, nine million soldiers and thirteen million civilians had perished. The scars of war were everywhere in evidence. European civilization had been permanently and profoundly altered. Most significantly, humanity had lost its innocence. Anxiety, despair, fear, bloodshed, hatred, death—all of these had combined and fed upon one another during the harrowing conflict. Despite the pretensions of a few, there would be no restoration of life as it had existed prior to the cataclysm.

Hindsight reveals the bizarre fact that this terrible war had a rapturous beginning. The well-known stories of flower-bedecked soldiers marching to the front provide insight into the state of mind that had gripped Europe in August 1914. After decades of peace, humanity was suddenly delirious with excitement. It seemed as if every man, woman, and child had been groping for a freedom found only in war—a freedom from the uninspiring and self-absorbed dissensions of domestic life. The events of August 1914 provoked an unparalleled, almost aesthetic, reaction, bringing joy and unity to great masses of people. This sensation of unity was, perhaps, most profoundly expressed in the German Reichstag. On 4 August this institution, the largest number of whose representatives were Social Democrats, unanimously passed a resolution granting the government five billion marks in war credits. Although later events would reveal that such agreement in favor of war credits was a reflection of party discipline, not of party unanimity, the vote was a necessary key toward ushering in Germany's famous *Burgfrieden* (truce of the fortress). In his penetrating memoir of the economic and social effects of the war, Ernst Gläser provided evidence of the intoxicating quality of those first few weeks.

At Müllheim we saw the first German soldiers. . . . They were greeted with storms of cheering. "*Die Wacht am Rhein*," cried the women and threw them fruit, cigarettes and chocolate. . . .

We all knew one another. Strangers shared their food together, exchanged cigarettes, presented the children with chocolate. The children were a little afraid, for they had never seen so many good people before. . . .

I thought I was dreaming. A single movement, I thought, might destroy this dream, and the people would become as indifferent or as hostile to one another as before. I held my breath and implored God to keep the miracle from coming to an end. . . .

The flags and the singing closed me in. My mother kissed me, strange men lifted me on their shoulders, strange ladies gave me chocolate and stroked my hair, young girls talked to me as if I were their brother—I was giddy with this incomprehensible human love.¹

The possibility that these soldiers were soon to perish on a foreign battlefield was not implied by such celebrations. "Were they going on a holiday or to a festival?" Gläser asked. The cars of the transport trains, covered with banners and sprays of foliage, were filled with the laughter of soldiers. "The war had made everything beautiful."² But it was a delicate beauty, and it would wither as quickly as the flowers on their rifle barrels. Most of these high-spirited young men were soon to be the cruel statistics of war. Moreover, their families would witness a rapid deterioration of the domestic *Burgfrieden*.

Although many of prewar Germany's actions had reinforced the country's reputation for militarism, the exuberance of 1914 represented a welling up of nationalism, not militarism. To be sure, this irrational upsurge was duly appropriated by the generals. But the German experience was closely approximated, if to a lesser degree, in all belligerent countries. In the Habsburg capital the spirit of elation combined with the expectation—premature, as it turned out—that the annoying and complicated problems of the Balkans would now be settled. Austria-Hungary entered the struggle deluded by the belief that war would prevent the dissolution of the multinational state. Russia joined the conflict determined to stand at the head of a Pan-Slavic movement, boldly demonstrating to the world the renewed vigor of a regime that only nine years before had suffered humiliating defeat at the hands of the Japanese. In the early campaigns the Russian people selflessly supported the czar in this endeavor.

But national unity was not necessarily an asset that a government

could take for granted. With good reason, its manifestation came as a pleasant surprise to the generals of the Third Republic. The history of France since the 1789 revolution was replete with instances of open or covert conflict between civilians and professional soldiers. Georges Clemenceau's famous remark that war is too serious a business to be entrusted to generals was indicative of the faith that French civilians were prepared to place in their military leaders. On the eve of World War I, after more than a century of turmoil between politicians and the army, sufficient cause for concern existed in regard to how the French people would react to the outbreak of war. Troubled since the Dreyfus affair by uncommon civilian interference in strictly military matters, the generals lived in fear during the earliest days of the war that some group might attempt to sabotage the mobilization. The focus of their greatest apprehension was the Socialists, whose famed leader, Jean Jaurès, had been assassinated by an unbalanced reactionary on 31 July. This anxiety was not without foundation. A resolution passed at the International Socialist Congress of August 1907 had exhorted all workers to revolt in the event of a declaration of international war. On the morning of 4 August, however, a fraternal and patriotically based alliance of all Frenchmen manifested itself at the funeral of the slain Socialist leader.

In the face of renewed aggression by Germany then, France witnessed the miracle of revived national unity. Bitter memories of Sedan combined in the hearts of many people with the reality of a lost Alsace-Lorraine. *Revanche*, which had continued to be a topic of patriotic discussion since the Franco-Prussian War, quickly brought singleness of purpose to a nation famous for its disunity. As in Germany, daily routine and domestic animosities were subsumed to the exigencies of war. In fact, the first few months of the war affected the nation atavistically, returning it to a mild form of the military rule experienced so virulently under the Bonapartes. The ethos of these early weeks was established when, on 4 August, Premier René Viviani read President Poincaré's war message before the Chamber of Deputies: "France will be heroically defended by all of her sons, whose sacred union in the face of the enemy nothing will break, and who are today fraternally assembled in a common indignation against the aggressor and in a common patriotic faith."³

Despite considerably less concern with prewar disunity, the French experience was duplicated in England. Even in England, however, the declaration of war came as a climax to a general, if more subtle, feeling of

disturbance and unrest. One of Prime Minister Asquith's sons expressed the national temperament well when he wrote that "sinister influences, hostile and imponderable, seemed to be moving behind the veils . . . [and] there was a sense also of the tramp of some malign destiny marching forward to disaster."⁴ If the war proved the imponderable destiny of which Asquith wrote, in their initial reaction Englishmen concealed from themselves any of its sinister attributes. Lloyd George asserted that a public-opinion poll on 1 August "would have shown 95 per cent against . . . hostilities. . . . A poll on the following Tuesday (4 August) would have resulted in a vote of 99 per cent in favor."⁵ H. G. Wells, once a member of the socialistic Fabian Society, wrote in the *Daily News*: "I find myself enthusiastic for this war against Prussian militarism. . . . Every sword that is drawn against Germany is a sword drawn for peace."⁶ The novelist Agnes Hamilton came closest to echoing Ernst Gläser's perceptions when, in *Dead Yesterday*, she had one of her characters exclaim: "After all these years of unreality and sham, a big thing like this gives one the sense of having escaped out of the tunnel into the air."⁷ But the most poignant expression of England's spirit in 1914 came from the pen of Caroline Playne.

The exceeding complexity of life . . . had produced an overstrained generation. Men's patience failed them in facing the great tasks of organization necessitated by new conditions. . . . The war. . . was a welcome relief from facing the difficulties inherent in the situation. . . . It was felt to be a war to save civilization, to clear a certain blocking of progress. . . . Men chose the hymn of hate rather than the song of revolution. . . . "Let us fight," they said, "peradventure amidst the excitement of battling we shall stumble on life fit for heroes." There was a feeling abroad that life without great excitement was no longer tenable, that explosive forces . . . had become too threatening, too dangerous to tolerate, too intractable to coordinate, impossible to subdue. Nations of men, fearing one another, glided into a suicidal attitude. Then they departed from the course of life and plunged into the adventure of death. They dethroned reason and espoused force, till large tracts of habitable earth became fatal playgrounds for maddened millions, whilst the masses of the home population watched and upheld and encouraged and loudly applauded the murderous game.⁸

Thus it was that the peoples of Europe set themselves up for disillusionment. The overall atmosphere in the belligerent countries was marked to an unfortunate degree by naiveté. Dizzy with the joy of unity,

few of the combatants, civilian or military, grasped the seriousness of the war they were about to enter; indeed, many were seriously shaken when they first encountered the violent reality of warfare. Nor was the common soldier alone in his ignorance; a majority of senior officers were equally oblivious to the massive scope of the war they were undertaking. As recently as 1909, the former chief of the German General Staff, Count Alfred von Schlieffen (1833–1913), had stated that long wars "are impossible in an age when the existence of the nation is founded upon the uninterrupted continuation of trade and industry. . . . A strategy of exhaustion cannot be conducted when the maintenance of millions depends upon the expenditure of billions."⁹ Neither Schlieffen nor his several counterparts throughout Europe could understand that it was precisely the industrial might of nations that produced the likelihood of both lengthy and *total* wars. Dwelling upon the short wars of German unification or Balkan retrenchment, the generals apparently overlooked the circumstances of the American Civil War. This conflict had demonstrated the modern age's capacity for enormous tragedy and bloodshed over a protracted period. But Antietam and Gettysburg were not European events; thus, they were generally ignored. Following an uncommonly peaceful century, the soldiers of Europe marched to the Marne with no comprehension of the enormity of the sacrifice that would be demanded—or of the grave degree to which this sacrifice would poison international relations.

A significant difference between the two total wars of the twentieth century lay in the sublime naiveté with which the soldiers of 1914 marched to their slaughter. The soldier of 1939 responded to the call of war with gravity and fatalistic silence. To be sure, he was serious in his determination to defend the homeland; but he obeyed the call of his country without rejoicing. The credulity of his 1914 counterpart was missing. Rarely did the soldier of 1914 understand war. War had become something legendary, romantic, heroic. And as its frightful reality became manifest, the early ignorance actually had a malignant effect on the intellectual climate in which the war was ultimately concluded.

The hazards of modern warfare quickly made themselves known. The English poet Robert Graves, for example, experienced the usual exuberance of comradeship as he approached the battle on the Allied side. Any sense of patriotic euphoria was promptly dispelled, however, during the second lieutenant's first night in the trenches, a night spent on guard duty.

As I went towards company headquarters to wake the officers I saw a man lying on his face in a machine-gun shelter. I stopped and said: "Stand-to, there." I flashed my torch on him and saw his foot was bare. The machine-gunner beside him said: "No good talking to him, sir." I asked: "What's wrong? What's he taken his boot and sock off for?" I was ready for anything odd in the trenches. "Look for yourself, sir," he said. I shook the man by the arm and noticed suddenly that the back of his head was blown out. The first corpse that I saw in France was this suicide. He had taken off his boot and sock to pull the trigger of his rifle with his toe; the muzzle was in his mouth.¹⁰

Despite the generally accepted assumption to the contrary, the average German soldier quickly developed a strong distaste for this war in which he had so willingly embarked. Carl Zuckmayer observed that, whereas the new German recruits at the first battle of Langemarck (22–24 October 1914) stormed French machineguns and died by the hundreds with the *Deutschlandlied* on their lips, there was no singing at Verdun or during the battle of the Somme.¹¹ Softened by decades of peace, both sides discovered to their horror the consequences of unleashing gas, bombs, and machineguns. The fires of patriotism were soon quenched by a flood of blood and death; *blood* and *death* soon became words that commonly appeared in personal communications from the front. The following comments, taken from the letter of a young German, are representative of the emotions of many front-line soldiers, and they testify further to the evaporation of that "holiday spirit" of August 1914. Written by a philosophy student from Leipzig, the letter was dated 13 March 1915.

Anybody who, like myself, has been through the awful days near Penthys since 6 February, will agree with me that a more appalling struggle could not be imagined. It has been a case of soldier against soldier, equally matched and both mad with hate and rage, fighting for days on end over a single square of ground, till the whole tract of country is one blood-soaked, corpse-strewn field. . . .

In three days, on a front of about 200 yards, we lost 909 men, and the enemy casualties must have amounted to thousands. The blue French cloth mingled with the German grey upon the ground, and in some places the bodies were piled so high that one could take cover from shell-fire behind them. The noise was so terrific that orders had to be shouted by each man into the ear of the next. And whenever there was a momentary lull in the tumult of

battle and the groans of the wounded, one heard, high up in the blue sky, the joyful song of birds! Birds singing just as they do at home in springtime! It was enough to tear the heart out of one's body!¹²

This soldier was relieved of his torment when killed near Béthenville on 14 July 1916. Millions of others on both sides of the front joined him in death. Many, however, survived bullets, barbed wire, infection, rats, shrapnel, and disease to return home with the most fearsome memories of the dead and the dying. Never before or since have so many men survived so great a war with so many memories deluged in blood. Victims of gas poisoning, loss of sight, and loss of limbs could be observed in every hospital and on numerous street corners in London, Paris, and Berlin.¹³ Machineguns, flamethrowers, and phosgene gas—all symbols of "progress" after more than a century of industrial revolution—were introduced en masse during World War I and left visible scars in their wake. But there were also the invisible scars, the nightmares, that so many combatants brought home with them. Many must have shared the following recollection by Wilfred Owen, taken from one of his several poems:

Gas! Gas! Quick, boys!—an ecstasy of fumbling,
Fitting the clumsy helmets just in time;
But someone still was yelling out and stumbling
And flound'ring like a man in fire or lime . . .
Dim, through the misty panes and thick green light,
As under a green sea, I saw him drowning.
In all my dreams, before my helpless sight,
He plunges at me, guttering, choking, drowning.¹⁴

Although life on the homefront was free from both the fear of imminent or sudden death or the sight of heaped-up blood-soaked corpses, it was not free from the agony of war. The civilian as a fundamental part of war was also an epochal alteration. Each belligerent nation was forced to discover how far conducting a war could be made to harmonize with its social and economic order. To a significant degree, the economic *Weltanschauung* of the early twentieth century helped alleviate the strain of governmental centralization. World War I erupted in a Europe where national economic policies were in the ascendancy. Laissez faire and free trade, dogmas of both the nineteenth century and the classical econo-

mists, were giving way to state intervention and protectionism. Subsidies, control of foreign investments, the advance of capital by the state to private concerns, investment of state funds in economic enterprises, high tariffs, and social legislation give ample evidence of the trend of the times. Such practices influenced the course that wartime economy would take. Nevertheless, the devastation inflicted by the war, and the commitment and sacrifice that it demanded of civilians, blurred the old dividing line between battleground and homefront. Although the period of active warfare was considerably shorter than that of Napoleon's era (albeit, it must be recalled that the Napoleonic wars were made up of a series of battles, generally confined to small areas, which were separated by prolonged periods of peace), the war of 1914–1918 was a total war in that it compelled the belligerents to mobilize *totally* their resources, their manpower, their manufacturing industries, their farming, their shipping, and their transport and communications systems.

To ease their miserable existence, the men in the trenches had the comradeship that comes from bearing a trial in common. Although this scarcely guaranteed survival, it produced no small sense of comfort, as the following statement, taken from the German Archives, relates:

It seemed to us then as if a quite exceptional bond linked us with those few who had been with us at the time (that is, during the Battle of Verdun). It was not the normal sensation of affinity that always binds together men who have endured common hardships. . . . It derived from the fact that Verdun transformed men's souls. Whoever floundered through this morass full of the shrieking and the dying, whoever shivered in those nights, had passed the last frontier of life, and henceforth bore deep within him the leaden memory of a place that lies between Life and Death, or perhaps beyond either.¹⁵

Civilians, particularly those in the blockaded Central Powers, were forced to deal with rigid competition for goods and services and an increasingly dehumanizing struggle for survival—an especially hideous struggle because it took place among fellow countrymen. The situation was made worse on the homefront because of the distorted view of the war that necessarily developed under a system of strict censorship. Although it was the German civilian who probably suffered the most under a censorship that forced a reliance on underground information provided by soldiers on leave, correspondents, nurses, and others traveling between the fighting line and the homefront, all belligerents had to

make do to a greater or a lesser degree with the half-truths that are so much a part of propaganda. As a tool of war, propaganda produced twisted animosities, profound disillusionment, and an unnecessarily wide gulf between the soldier and his civilian counterpart.

The English joined the conflict, as already noted, amidst a significant display of national unity. On 24 August 1914, the Trades Union Congress, the Labour Party, and the General Federation of Trade Unions declared, through their Joint Board, an “industrial truce.” By this action, all existing trade disputes, whether strikes or lockouts, were summarily terminated. Of course, such a statement of solidarity was no guarantee for the future, particularly in a conflict that was to last far longer than anyone predicted in August. Under the auspices of the War Office, in early 1915, various regions of England witnessed the establishment of local armaments committees, joint bodies of employers and union officials designed to overcome those disputes that arose after the truce.¹⁶ But the local-committee experiment was short-lived, for in June 1915 the government established the strongly centralized and bureaucratic Ministry of Munitions. David Lloyd George was appointed first minister of munitions. Lloyd George quickly constructed a war bill restricting profits to one-fifth in excess of their prewar level, requiring arbitration of disputes in *any* industry, and forbidding all “negative” union activity.¹⁷ As an immediate result of this measure, the British achieved control over their economy unequaled by any of the other belligerent states.

But all was not well in England. Separated from the military conflict by the Channel, the country's long work hours, paltry wages, inadequate food supply, and increased rate of death and disease combined to mollify the patriotism of those women and children who simply longed for the safe return of husbands and fathers. Estelle Pankhurst, one of Britain's several humanitarian activists, disclosed some of the more disquieting aspects of life at home as she described how workers at a Liverpool munitions factory were expected to begin work as early as 6:00 A.M. on Saturday, work through the day and, following two hours of rest, go on night duty.¹⁸ After another short rest, these same laborers were obliged to return to day duty. Should an ill-used worker show up late on Monday morning, he would be “docked a quarter” and reported for lost time. Such offenders were rarely permitted a word in their defense; to the contrary, the Ministry of Munitions fined them five to sixty shillings apiece. Despite this harsh treatment, resentment rarely led to open rebellion. Almost every worker had a relative at the front. Even those

laborers who detested the war recognized that the soldiers required armaments and food, and so long as the war lasted they generally did their utmost to fulfill such needs. When a strike did in fact break out among London's tramway men, an inordinate number of volunteer strikebreakers brought it to rapid conclusion. But there was a more serious threat which tended to keep those unmoved either by patriotism or by brothers at the front from striking. Upon returning to work on promise of arbitration, the London tramway strikers discovered that no man between the ages of twenty-one and forty would be reinstated. Induction had become the wartime method used for preventing strikes.¹⁹

Pankhurst's observations of the British homefront also record a dramatic rise among women in the death rate from tuberculosis. The proliferation of this disease was combined, moreover, with appallingly high infant mortality. "Poor mothers came flocking to our clinics with their wasting infants, wizened and fleshless from wasting, twisted and misshapen by rickets. Rickets, impetigo, scabies—which the soldiers brought home with them—poverty diseases; I learnt to know them sorely."²⁰ Of course, these problems were compounded because the hospitals, crowded to capacity with wounded soldiers, were unable to treat ailing women and babies.

The food crisis of World War I has been correctly associated in most people's minds with the Central Powers and the neutral countries. Nevertheless, the evidence demonstrates that the unwary British came precariously close to starvation themselves. Having been accustomed to importing the greater part of her food supply since the early nineteenth century, Britain continued to rely on the well-worn and universally accepted belief that her unchallenged superiority in sea power would prevent any serious shortage of food. Thus, when war broke out, the British government had no plan in reserve for dealing with food shortages. There seemed, of course, no immediate need for such a plan; again, it was widely assumed by all belligerents that "the boys will be home by Christmas." The fact that the war went on beyond December 1914, however, did not have any marked effect on the English attitude toward food. It was not until September 1915 that the government even went so far as to issue a patriotic appeal as a means of getting farmers to increase production.²¹ But by 1916 the shortage of food had become a favorite topic of conversation, and the food queue was raising the spectre of increasingly harsh times. Finally, it was the disappointing harvest of 1916 that signaled the initiation of more stringent measures.

The demands of modern warfare served, of course, as the prime cause for the food shortages experienced in the Allied countries during 1916. But a worldwide drought also made 1916 a year of reduced agricultural output. In his memoirs, Lloyd George pointed out that total grain production in the United States, Canada, and Argentina was lower than that of the previous year by almost forty million tons.²² The fact that the munitions minister foresaw the potential food crisis testifies to his wartime leadership, even though this is often neglected in favor of more colorful episodes. When, in December 1916, Lloyd George became prime minister, he identified food production as one of his administration's most fundamental concerns. One of his earliest measures helped institute very small agricultural holdings, called "allotments," the products of which were used to supplement regular commercial farm output. The allotment movement was strongly encouraged by the government as a voluntary measure because it combined recreation with a contribution to the food supply. Playgrounds, parks, golf courses, and suburban yards were broken up in the interest of food cultivation.²³

Concurrently, the prime minister established the office of food controller—destined to become an increasingly powerful position—which worked closely with the Ministries of Agriculture, Shipping, and National Service, and with the War Office.²⁴ Continued attempts at controlling prices and consumption through voluntary means, the initial action taken by the food controller, failed, however, to measurably improve England's situation. Voluntary rationing joined voluntary enlistment as an ideal, if pragmatically bankrupt, policy. The sudden and costly rise in the number of submarine sinkings finally forced the British government to accept the necessity of controlled rationing in the spring of 1917. Lord Rhondda, Lloyd George's second food controller, established a Ministry of Food that managed to consolidate within one department every agency in any way responsible for victuals. The ministry's ability to compel maximum land utilization while guaranteeing minimum prices had the desired effect. Acreage under tillage had dropped in 1916 by 148,000 acres as compared to 1915. In 1917, however, 975,000 new acres were under tillage.²⁵ Moreover, the vast and demanding system of rationing that Rhondda had established for the British Isles was accepted by the ordinarily independent populace because it succeeded in providing fair shares for everyone.²⁶

Despite such acceptance, the average citizen still lacked sufficient information to know that Rhondda's system represented the single barri-

er between general survival and possible starvation. At one point in April 1917, for example, British sugar supplies were sufficient for only four days' consumption. To be sure, rationing benefited from an excellent balance between centralized and localized administration, which allowed rationing to operate more efficiently within the United Kingdom than in the other belligerent countries in which it was introduced. Moreover, by keeping the British fed, Rhondda's rationing program undermined the strategic goal of Germany's submarine campaign: starving England into surrender. Of course, supplies were never plentiful. The London police counted up to 550,000 people standing in food queues as late as February 1918.²⁷ Although actual starvation was prevented, hunger remained an acute fact of life in wartime England. Knowledge that the worldwide food shortage was due to drought did not change the average English citizen's belief that his hunger pangs were the direct consequence of Germany's war effort. These anxieties of daily existence and their believed cause would not be forgotten.

The two historic high points of French national economics occurred in the wars of the Great Revolution and during World War I. Indeed, as has been true of all modern industrialized countries, war proved to be the largest state economic enterprise in France. Yet, in spite of this fact, the French endeavor to establish centralized economic control during World War I amounted to a travesty. A strong executive is one prerequisite for the proper functioning of a centralized economy, and the Third Republic suffered from a notoriously weak executive. The premierships of Viviani, Briand, Ribot, and Painlevé—their very number bespeaks their weakness—were rendered ineffectual by a lack of parliamentary cooperation. Only with the ascendancy of Clemenceau to the premiership did the emasculation of that office end. But Clemenceau's rise occurred in November 1917, more than three years after the war's outbreak and just one year before its end. With the confidence of the country behind him, Clemenceau restored the authority of the executive by imposing his will upon both parliament and the nation. He demanded the extraordinary power to legislate "by decree in the whole domain of the country's economic life."²⁸ That this right was granted him on 10 February 1918 demonstrates how low the French economy had sunk after forty-two months of war.

The most noticeable scarcity for both army and civilians in war-torn France was that of coal. Owing to the calculations of General Joseph Joffre, to whom the Chamber of Deputies temporarily abdicated authori-

ty at the war's outbreak, the French army initiated a heroic campaign against the Germans. But Joffre moved in the wrong direction. Discounting the German Schlieffen Plan as a bluff, the French commander met with so many rapid reverses that, by 25 August, sombre speculation regarding the fall of Paris was rife.²⁹ These early French defeats ushered in the country's coal shortage since forty percent of French coal-producing capacity was lost when Germany successfully invaded the Lille area.

The loss of the Lille coal fields created a problem even more serious than that of keeping the citizenry warm in winter. This region of France more than any other supplied the basic necessities with which modern wars are fought: steel, iron, coal, and textiles. And these valuable resources were not simply lost to France; they were gained by the enemy, thereby creating a very substantial problem for the immediate future. Deprived of her coal, France had to replace that resource with extensive imports from England and America; and these imports had to be bought and paid (borrowed) for, with consequent loss of wealth and credit.

In spite of the grave concern occasioned by the loss of the Lille, mere lack of coal would not result in the kind of austere hardship experienced by a population driven to extreme hunger. Despite its agricultural losses, France never did initiate food rationing in anything like the serious fashion that Lloyd George's England employed. Some half-hearted measures were taken. But their very nature suggests that the food crisis was not severe. One law, passed on 20 April 1916, "permitted" price fixing for sugar, potatoes, milk, margarine, and dry vegetables.³⁰ Moreover, 1917 witnessed the actual rationing of bread and sugar, and the curbing of meat, milk, egg, and wine consumption. In almost every case the government's chief means of dealing with food shortages was propaganda, not strictly enforced laws. The population was encouraged not to waste bread and to substitute cheaper articles of food such as potatoes, beans, and lentils for the bread that was available. Measures of this sort were, not surprisingly, bound to fail. In fact, wartime France witnessed a phenomenal *increase* in food consumption.³¹ Rather than restrict the diet of its people, the French government chose to import large quantities of foodstuffs from abroad. Since the war effort demanded the importation of an already overwhelming number of resources, it is interesting to speculate on the motivation of the government in supplying the population with so much food. Bread, it might be recalled, had always been a significant factor in France's revolutionary tradition. It is possible that full-fledged rationing was rejected in wartime France because the gov-

ernment feared that such a move might inspire considerable turmoil. Antipathy to government restrictions was a fact of French history. An acute awareness of this fact may have resulted in the government's becoming a prisoner of its country's history.

An ill-advised economic policy was to result in terrible financial problems for the Third Republic. During a conflict of the length and magnitude of World War I, consumption was bound to exceed production. This was true for any of the major belligerent powers. Capital that had been amassed over a period of decades was thoroughly used up in a short time. Not only was the production of useful, peacetime goods neglected in favor of the production of war materiel but the capacity for future production was severely depleted and sometimes destroyed as well. None of the traditional criteria of sound financial policy could be relied upon. Given the readiness of the wealthier allies and many of the neutrals to lend money to governments like that in Paris, the overall monetary system had to be devalued. In France's case, the devaluation was extreme. Credits could be based not on the prospect of future production but solely on the need for immediate consumption; and war breeds a form of consumption, moreover, in which the extinguished value of the consumed goods has no compensating economic effect. France combined these economic facts with financial measures that could only aggravate an already precarious situation. A country long noted for improvisation, France stood out in the war years as the country which managed its finances and limited resources with the least foresight and skill. According to Denis Brogan, once the war began, it became impossible in France to learn "what had been spent, or how, or on what, or even what had been borrowed. . . ." ³² The government exacerbated the country's financial predicament by refusing to make any serious attempt to raise new revenue until the war had been in progress for over two years, and the resultant increase in taxes was insufficient to cover the country's normal peacetime expenditures. Again, it is probable that an inherent antipathy to taxation, a further legacy of the country's past, prevented the French government from raising the funds necessary for financing the war. Haphazardly, France drifted into a situation in which, to carry on the conflict, she was forced to borrow extravagantly. Her position as a creditor nation was thereby exchanged for that of a debtor.

Out of a total budget of 210,380 million francs between August 1914 and November 1918, France borrowed 175,520 million. The first step in this process was the mobilization of securities held by the citizenry.

England and France were both pressured into this course. In the endeavor, however, France did not enjoy the success achieved by her ally, mobilizing the equivalent of only 400 million dollars, basically as the result of poor prewar investment. Although the 400 million dollars was far below French monetary holdings abroad, the largest portion of these holdings were in Russian securities, and these proved unmarketable both before and after the Russian Revolution. ³³ By 1917 French credit was exhausted in both England and the United States. With the English in the same predicament vis-à-vis the United States, it was only with the latter's entry into the conflict as a co-belligerent that the continued flow of supplies to the depressed European economies could be assured. ³⁴ At the conclusion of hostilities, the British had borrowed 1,365 million pounds—1,027 million of which were owed to the United States. Approximately half of this amount, which was in turn lent to Russia, could not be recovered. Direct borrowing, mostly from the United States, explains a foreign debt in France of over 30 billion gold francs. ³⁵ Such extraordinary and unprecedented borrowing resulted in the acute impoverishment of both England and France. It also proved to be the spearhead of disillusionment and hostility. Enormous sums would be required to meet the pressing reconstruction needs of both countries. Germany's economic potential was regarded increasingly as the vehicle by which the Allies would carry their almost limitless monetary burden.

The severe wartime conditions and the experiences of the English and the French on the homefront were generally matched and in many cases exceeded in Germany. First of all, it was the German, more than his belligerent counterparts, who was caught up in the rapturous and seductive aura of those first days of war. Even Stefan Zweig, who would soon speak out against the war, was so seduced by the atmosphere of August 1914 that he declared that "there was a majestic, rapturous . . . something in this first outbreak of the people from which one could escape only with difficulty. . . . I should not like to have missed the memory of those first days. As never before, thousands and hundreds of thousands felt what they should have felt in peacetime, that they belonged together." ³⁶ The economist, Emil Lederer, touched upon the metaphysical significance of Germany's transformation when he declared that "on the day of mobilization the *Gesellschaft* which existed until then was transformed into a *Gemeinschaft*." ³⁷ But it was a *Gemeinschaft* which ended abruptly at Germany's border. As Ernst Gläser observed, the Germans joined together because "they need their hatred for the other people." ³⁸

Animosity between individuals was replaced by hatred among nationalities. "Solemnly the poets swore never again to have any cultural association with a Frenchman or an Englishman; they went even further, they denied overnight that there had ever been any French or English culture."³⁹ But even this transformation could not persist in Germany. The war was too long for that. The German Jews were gradually regarded once again as *die Juden*, while a community without classes reverted back to a society plagued by *verdammt Sozialismus*. Except for its heady beginning, the social experience of war failed to be an experience of *Gemeinschaft*; in fact, social distinctions were increasingly magnified by the circumstances ushered in by the conflict. In light of this fact, the revolutionary conditions existing in 1918 must not be viewed in a vacuum. Without the tragedy of the previous four years, the domestic events of November 1918 are inconceivable.

Many of Germany's wartime problems were, to be sure, a direct result of serious and complex structural deficiencies predating the war. The convoluted German governmental edifice reflected the nation's retarded constitutional development. Moreover, the significant achievements of the country's bureaucrats in the management of the particular problems falling within their respective jurisdictions simply camouflaged their complete incapacity to solve any of the substantive problems confronting German society. In essence, the problem was a lack of *real* German unification. The prerogatives of the state assemblies (especially that of Prussia) were often at variance with those of the national Reichstag, which in turn had to accommodate the idiosyncracies of the national secretaries, which generally did not coincide with those of the Prussian state ministers. Above this network of discord stood the emperor—who doubled as the Prussian king—and his reactionary court cabinet. The stunted development of centralized administration in Germany was a product of the Bismarckian constitutional compromise between authoritarianism and parliamentarianism. Inadequate in peace, Germany's mode of development proved doubly inadequate in war. One can little wonder at the Habsburgs' perplexity in August 1914 as they attempted to comprehend who exactly ruled in Germany.

In its hasty but unanimous vote in favor of war credits, the Reichstag went far in stripping itself of whatever authority it had possessed during the prewar years. By making real the dream that German society could achieve a state of political and social inertia—an absolute *Gemeinschaft*—the Reichstag's *Burgfrieden* ironically opened the door to a

nightmare of intensified political and social conflict. The power vacuum created by its ill-advised action was filled, through default, by the army. That the army was then forced for a major part of the war to cope with Germany's civil problems was, however, a consequence of its own history. For years the army had practiced a continuous and pervasive form of intervention in strictly civilian affairs.⁴⁰ The worrisome nature of the task of organizing a war effort, both at the front and at home, demonstrated that such intervention had been imprudent.

Despite its reputation for efficiency and centralized control, the German army proved as labored as the German bureaucracy in its management of political and social problems. Already at cross-purposes with both the General Staff and the War Department, the War Ministry compounded its difficulties at the outbreak of hostilities by placing into operation the old Prussian Law of Siege. Under this nineteenth-century decree, the empire was divided into twenty-four army-corps districts that were answerable to twenty-four separate deputy commanding generals.⁴¹ Entrusting these generals with virtually unlimited power within their respective districts, the law contained absolutely no provision for the coordination of policy, and a condition was thereby created that plagued Germany throughout World War I. The lack of responsibility of the deputy commanding generals to the War Ministry and the extreme decentralization under the Law of Siege were the military counterparts of the prewar administrative decentralization of the civil government. Through four difficult years, the German population suffered from the idiosyncratic policies of twenty-four separate and equal commanders. Some were liberal, some were reactionary. While many favored industrial or agrarian interests, others favored labor and the urban consumer. Many worked through the black markets to obtain food for their regions. Others severely punished anyone found to be involved in black-market activities. All, at one time or another, supported policies which were at cross-purposes with those of the War Ministry.⁴²

Any other state might have collapsed under the weight of the difficulties inherent in so decentralized an operation. Germany was able to muddle through. In spite of irrational complexities, she experienced an unusual degree of success in managing her economic problems during the war. In large measure, this success was due to the foresight and initiative of two men outside government. Walther Rathenau, head of Germany's General Electric Company, and Wichard von Moellendorf, one of Rathenau's engineers, were quick to recognize the precarious

state of Germany's economic situation. In a lecture presented on 20 December 1915 before the Deutschen Gesellschaft 1914, Rathenau stated:

When on August 4 of last year England declared war our country became a beleaguered fortress. Cut off by land and cut off by sea it was made wholly self-dependent; we were facing a war the duration, cost, danger, and sacrifices of which no one could foresee.

When three days had passed after England had declared war I could no longer stand the agony. I called on the Chief of the War Department, Colonel Scheuch, and on the evening of the same day I was kindly received by him. . . . Returning home deeply concerned and worried I found a telegram from von Falkenhayn, then Minister of War, asking me to come to his office the next morning.

This was Sunday, August 9. . . . Our discussion lasted the greater part of the forenoon, and when it was ended the Minister of War had decided to establish an organization, no matter whether great or small, provided it had authority and was efficient and able to solve the problem which we were facing. . . .

I was about to take leave, but the Minister detained me by making the unexpected demand that I should organize the work. I was not prepared for this; I asked for time to think the matter over, but my request was not granted; I had to consent, and a few days later I found myself installed at the War Office.

The *Kriegsrohstoffabteilung* (the KRA) [War Raw Materials Section] was established by ministerial decree. . . .⁴³

According to Gerald Feldman, the most successful economic organization created by Germany during the war was undoubtedly the KRA.⁴⁴

Falling into Schlieffen's trap of discounting the possibility of a long war in the modern age, Germany was unprepared for a conflict lasting more than a few months. Her supply of saltpeter, the essential raw material for gunpowder, was not a matter of concern to the German General Staff. In fact, the problem of raw materials in general was regarded as a long-term industrial problem and, hence, an irrelevant distraction from the achievement of quick victory. But imminent victory eluded the Germans. As a result of the military's attitude, Germany's limited stores of saltpeter, which had been imported from Chile, became so depleted that, on 14 November 1914, German artillery on the western front had only a four-day supply of shells.⁴⁵ Without the organizational

abilities of men such as Rathenau and Moellendorf, and the scientific accomplishments of Professor Fritz Haber and Dr. Robert Bosch, Germany's critical shortage of raw materials might well have brought about her defeat by the end of 1914.⁴⁶ When, in April of 1915, Rathenau resigned as head of the KRA, the distribution of war materials had been brought under central control and a fiscal policy had been established which, by mortgaging the future and offering unlimited profits to industry, had brought the production crisis of 1914 under control.

Such efforts resolved only the country's immediate predicament. Germany's basic economic problem of surviving a protracted war against a coalition of powers possessed of both superior resources and command of the sea remained unsolved. Moreover, Rathenau's policy of aiming production primarily at meeting the army's needs proved a financial disaster for the government and a continual source of conflict with industrialists. Once it became obvious that the war would not be over quickly, the question of its relationship to industrial and business interests assumed greater importance. Since the army chose to increase productivity by raising workers' wages, industrialists were given an excuse for wider profit margins. The workers at the same time developed a sense of their worth that would come back to haunt army and industry alike as the war grew more demanding. The selfless, patriotic character of the war's early days was thereby altered, and the change was not lost on the average German. Ernst Gläser expressed his anxiety at this transformation.

With astonishment we heard people talking of it [i.e., the war] as if it were part of their daily round. They praised it, but no longer as a miracle, only as good business. . . . The first annexation programs were appearing. Many began to make money out of the war. It became a sort of industry. . . .

We had experienced the war as a great impulse to brotherhood; now we saw it suddenly declared to be a business proposition. Germany, it was said, must become richer; it needed this or that coal field, this or that road to the sea.

We did not understand. Had Germany become a firm and the war a commercial undertaking, and were our fathers travellers for this firm, whose board of directors stayed in their homes? Since when had heroes been transformed into commercial travellers?

We felt very clearly this alteration in the war at that time. We only lacked words to express it. . . .⁴⁷

To such disillusionment was soon added a more serious problem: hunger.

Prewar Germany had depended upon foreign suppliers for a third of the country's food. The wartime blockade, which cut off these imports, threatened Germany with starvation. Not only did she lose a third of her annual food supply but she was also faced with the loss of nitrogenous and phosphatic fertilizers, imported products upon which German agriculture had an almost absolute dependency.⁴⁸ Rathenau was quick to recognize the consequences of Germany's reliance on imported foodstuffs and fertilizers. As early as August 1914 he suggested to General Falkenhayn that the War Ministry establish control over food by using a system similar to that under consideration for the control of raw materials.⁴⁹ In this instance, however, Falkenhayn balked. Along with the imperial state secretary of the interior, Clemens von Delbrück, the military refused to acknowledge that there was not enough food to supply Germany's population in wartime. Recognizing the effects of a protracted war on Germany's limited supply of war materiel, the same authorities virtually ignored the equally disastrous effects of a food shortage.

The short-term food problem was taken care of by the wheat stores available in various west German mills. Moreover, the good harvest of 1914 seemed to belie the urgency of Rathenau's warning. But the picture soon changed as an army purchasing policy, which failed to show any regard for civilian need, was coupled with a sharp rise in food prices. When, in January 1915, the Social Democratic Party and union leaders threatened to terminate the *Burgfrieden* if price ceilings and controls over production were not established, the government was forced to respond. Wheat production was nationalized, with the result that farmers had to declare their stores while being forbidden to use wheat and rye as fodder.⁵⁰ By June 1915 bread was rationed throughout Germany.

These measures, welcomed by the urban consumer but resented by the farmer, were unable to compensate for Germany's basic dependency upon foreign foodstuffs. Moreover, the decentralized nature of Germany's administrative machinery confounded the government's efforts to exert control over the insufficient foodstores that the country did possess. Not only was passive resistance common but the policies of the various state authorities were often circumvented by the deputy commanding generals. In the case of the former some effort was made to serve agrarian interests at the expense of the consumer. The generals, on the other hand, had consumer interests uppermost in mind; they chose to

impose on farmers price ceilings and production quotas which were more severe than those of the Interior Office.⁵¹ Thus, by 1916 the government's program had collapsed. Heightened resistance, an increase in tension between urban and agrarian communities, food riots, and strikes—these were the results of Germany's plunge into a war for which she was neither administratively nor materially prepared. In 1916 the number of strikes increased to 240, compared to 137 for 1915.⁵² And the food situation was not improved by the weather. Although the government responded further in May 1916 by establishing the Kriegsernährungsamt (the KEA or War Food Office), the civilian population increasingly inclined toward solving its food problem independently of the authorities. General Wilhelm Groener, a member of the KEA, summarized the problem as follows:

The difficulty lies in the many-sidedness of our administrative apparatus. To me, as an officer, the relationships seem like a labyrinth which is so confused that one cannot find one's way. But we cannot get away from this administrative apparatus, cannot set up something new in its place, above all not a military organization. There has been much talk of a military food dictatorship, but the way things stand, I do not know what a military apparatus is supposed to create. . . . It would be another matter if this had been prepared in the mobilization plans before the war.⁵³

By 1916 the German population was surviving on a meager diet of dark bread, slices of sausage without fat, an individual ration of three pounds of potatoes per week, and turnips. Only the turnips were in abundant supply. Many farmers hid food stores, and some even refused to slaughter their pigs. Industry engaged in "self-help," a euphemism for buying food on the black market for workers.⁵⁴ By the winter of 1916–1917 the war had turned the families of soldiers at the front into scavengers. Ernst Gläser's words again serve to highlight the degree to which Germany had deteriorated.

[It] was a hard winter right to the end. The war now got past the various fronts and pressed home upon the people. Hunger destroyed our solidarity; the children stole each other's rations. . . . Soon the women who stood in pallid queues before shops spoke more about their children's hunger than about the death of their husbands. The war had shifted its focus.

A new front was created. It was held by the women, against an entente of field gendarmes and controllers. Every smuggled pound of butter, every sack

of potatoes successfully spirited in by night, was celebrated in their homes with the same enthusiasm as the victories of the armies two years before. . . .

Soon a looted ham thrilled us more than the fall of Bucharest. And a bushel of potatoes seemed much more important than the capture of a whole English army in Mesopotamia.⁵⁵

By 1918 Germany was in a state of entrenched internal turmoil. Russia's Bolshevik Revolution had reinforced radical sentiment among the hungry and war-weary masses, while the gradual weakening of government controls caused the food situation to deteriorate to its lowest level. The country's rudderless predicament was made public by the Social Democratic *Vorwärts* when it published, on 16 December 1917, a secret memorandum of the Neukölln Municipal Council—a communication originally intended for the KEA. In vivid detail the memorandum described “the complete collapse of the economic system of the government departments.”⁵⁶ It condemned industrial “extortioners,” whose illegal black-market purchases were forcing municipal authorities into illegalities as a means of maintaining food supplies.⁵⁷

As the war approached its conclusion, the majority of Germany's population seemed to be staggering between anarchy and starvation. The farmers, whose plight was far worse than generally acknowledged, were often made scapegoats for the country's misery. Although such an accusation was sometimes justified, it was also frequently unfair. The farmers' horses had been sequestered, their land had been overcultivated and insufficiently fertilized, and they had to endure periodic searches for hidden food stores. By the end of the war, many farmers themselves no longer had sufficient food. The *Kleinburgertum*, the backbone of the old empire, also fell victim to that empire's war. Minor officials, small businessmen, craftsmen; these individuals were generally overworked, underpaid, and underfed. To free up coal for heavy industry, many were forced to close down their enterprises. Both bitter and hungry because of their inability to buy on the black market, they bore the added anxiety that comes from falling in life to an economic position inferior to that of most workers. And, of course, there were the soldiers. Rent from their homes and jobs, the soldiers survived the worst of hardships for meager earnings while their “brothers” on the homefront were getting “rich” by means of profiteering and high wages. As Gerald Feldman has pointed out, “Only two groups may be said to have derived any benefits from the

war: the industrialists and the workers employed in the war industries.”⁵⁸ Such benefits were derived at the expense of fellow Germans. In this respect, at least, there was some truth in General Erich Ludendorff's assertion that the army had been stabbed in the back. But the general overlooked the fact that the army had fashioned the knife.

Thus it was that every European state suffered, in varying degrees, tremendous material, agricultural, financial, and human losses during World War I. Such losses bore with them consequent psychological damage. But added to the subtle and indirect psychological impairment was a further wound that proved more damaging in its consequences.

In the rapturous, seductive mood of the first weeks of war, the individual in every country experienced the exultation that comes with incorporation into a mass. Life was imbued with new meaning as people of all classes and origins let themselves believe that they had been united as one.⁵⁹ Extreme peril lurked in such delusion. Sigmund Freud stressed that the human animal is possessed of an unconscious, primitive instinct to rebel against culture, to break out of the conventional bourgeois world of codes and standards, and to give free rein to primitive instinct. War permits the individual a release from the bonds of civilized society. Indeed, it feeds upon this metamorphosis. But it is a change that, in its irrationality, must remain stimulated by a high degree of emotionalism. War and reason are inherently antithetical. The words of Stefan Zweig provide evidence of this fact: “[All] the warring nations [of 1914] were . . . in a state of over-excitation and the worst rumor was immediately transformed into truth, the most absurd slander believed.”⁶⁰

Given the inherent need during wartime for irrational hatred to be generated against an adversary, how were the belligerents to maintain the primitive instincts of August 1914 in a prolonged conflict? Deep emotion cannot be sustained indefinitely, either in an individual or in a people. Recognizing this fact, the leadership in each country won the intellectual to its cause. Poets, novelists, journalists; a tremendous number in each country excited the population to fever pitch and cultivated the seeds of hatred so skillfully that even the unprejudiced began to believe that justice was solely on the side of their respective countries. When combined with the terrible demands of total war, the propaganda of World War I was only too successful in creating mass hatred and mass delusion. According to Zweig, there was “no city, no group that had not fallen prey to this dreadful hysteria of hatred. . . . It was the war of an unsuspecting generation, and the greatest peril was the inexhaustible

faith of the nations in the single-sided justice of their cause.”⁶¹ And whereas the excitement of national unity abated, the hatred of the enemy remained, continuing as an unfortunate wart on the peace process. For victor and vanquished alike, the consequence of such hatred could only be tragedy.

NOTES

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3. Quoted in Jere Clemens King, *Generals and Politicians* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1951), p. 11.
4. Herbert Asquith, *Moments of Memory* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1938), p. 196.
5. Quoted in Alfred F. Havighurst, *Twentieth-Century Britain* (New York: Harper and Row, 1966), p. 122.
6. *Ibid.*
7. *Ibid.*, p. 123.
8. Caroline Playne, *Society at War* (London: G. Allen and Unwin, 1931), pp. 2, 21, and 25.
9. Quoted in Gerald Feldman, *Army, Industry, and Labor in Germany* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1966), p. 6. Gordon Craig, *The Politics of the Prussian Army* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1955), pp. 280–281, records that Field Marshal Helmut von Moltke (the Elder) prophesied that Germany's next war would last at least seven years, perhaps as many as thirty.
10. Robert Graves, *Goodbye to All That* (New York: Jonathan Cape, 1930), pp. 130–31.
11. Carl Zuckmayer, *Als wär's ein Stück von mir* (Vienna: S. Fischer, 1966), p. 207.
12. Quoted in Jere Clemens King, ed., *The First World War* (New York: Walker and Co., 1972), pp. 231–232.
13. See John Keegan, *The Face of Battle* (New York: Viking, 1976), p. 266. Keegan points out that although surgical technique was well developed by World War I, surgery was generally quite radical since the bone grafting and other reconstructive techniques utilized during World War II had not yet been adequately perfected.
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24. Lloyd George, *War Memoirs*, 3:1275.
25. Hurwitz, *State Intervention*, p. 221.
26. Ernest L. Woodward, *Great Britain and the War of 1914–1918* (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1967), p. 507.
27. Frank Chambers, *The War behind the War, 1914–1918* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1939), p. 442.
28. Shepard Clough, *France, A History of National Economics* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1939), p. 264.
29. King, *Generals and Politicians*, p. 27.
30. Clough, *France*, p. 274.
31. *Ibid.*, p. 275.
32. Denis W. Brogan, *France under the Republic* (New York: Harper, 1940), p. 517.
33. David S. Landes, *The Unbound Prometheus* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1969), pp. 362–362.
34. One might speculate that, had the United States not been drawn into the war by Germany's policy of unrestricted submarine warfare, the Allies would have been forced to terms by the Central Powers as their bankruptcy would have prevented them from obtaining further war materials on credit. When compared with the America of President Franklin Roosevelt, the United States of World War I was far more apt to regard monetary and material assistance as a business transaction and much less likely to view it in terms of national security or ideological affinity. Indeed, this points to one of the fallacies inherent in regarding the Wilson administration as one directed predominantly by ideology.
35. Landes, *Unbound Prometheus*, p. 363.
36. Stefan Zweig, *The World of Yesterday* (New York: Viking, 1943), p. 223.
37. Quoted in Feldman, *Army, Industry, and Labor*, p. 27.
38. Gläser, *Class of 1902*, p. 225.
39. Zweig, *World of Yesterday*, p. 230.

40. See the description of this problem in Craig, *Politics of the Prussian Army*, pp. 216–254.

41. See Albrecht Mendelssohn Bartholdy, *The War and German Society* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1937), pp. 108–114.

42. Of course, one should be aware that the civilian government, as roughly outlined heretofore, existed coincidentally with this military apparatus. Accordingly, Germany's bureaucratic nonsense became even more acute during the war.

43. Quoted in Ralph H. Lutz, ed., *The Fall of the German Empire* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1932), 2:78–79.

44. Feldman, *Army, Industry, and Labor*, p. 51.

45. Craig, *Germany, 1866–1945* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978), p. 354.

46. For an intriguing account of the work of Haber and Bosch, see Joseph Borkin, *The Crime and Punishment of I. G. Farben* (New York: Free Press, 1978), pp. 13–20.

47. Gläser, *Class of 1902*, pp. 274–275.

48. Louis Guichard, *The Naval Blockade* (New York: D. Appleton, 1930), pp. 281–283.

49. Feldman, *Army, Industry, and Labor*, p. 105.

50. A transcript of the document that enacted these changes is to be found in Lutz, ed., *Fall of the German Empire*, 2:143–153.

51. Feldman, *Army, Industry, and Labor*, p. 105.

52. Ernst von Wrisberg, *Heer and Heimat* (Leipzig: K. F. Koehler, 1921), p. 116.

53. Quoted in Feldman, *Army, Industry, and Labor*, p. 114.

54. *Ibid.*, p. 107.

55. Gläser, *Class of 1902*, pp. 327 and 329.

56. Lutz, ed., *Fall of the German Empire*, 2:178.

57. *Ibid.*, 2:184. For the entire text of this document, see *ibid.*, 2:177–186.

58. Feldman, *Army, Industry, and Labor*, p. 469.

59. Zweig, *World of Yesterday*, p. 223.

60. *Ibid.*, p. 233.

61. *Ibid.*, p. 235.

2.

The Blockade

This much is certain: that he that commands the sea is at great liberty, and may take as much and as little of the war as he will.

—Francis Bacon

At the beginning of the present century, Germany established herself as Great Britain's most feared economic and maritime rival. Not content as the world's premier military power, Germany embarked upon a naval construction program that was destined to place her on a collision course with the British. Totally dependent upon open sea lanes for national survival, Great Britain could ill afford to yield her supremacy at sea to any Continental power. This axiom proved fundamental to the establishment of a blockade that was to bring agony to Germany first in war and then in peace.

Although Great Britain had maintained her preeminent position as a maritime power throughout the nineteenth century, the principles on which this supremacy depended had become outmoded by 1900. The idea that the fleet was essential for national survival had been obscured by other concerns during a century governed by peaceful, if vigorous, overseas expansion. In fact, not since the Napoleonic Wars had the English manifested a clear awareness that survival depended upon a strong navy. The effectiveness of the fleet had been compromised in 1856 with the acceptance of the Declaration of Paris, a document whose naval clauses limited some of those very practices that had assured the safety of the British Isles against the encroachments of Napoleonic France.¹ Ensuing decades only served to increase the country's inability to comprehend the necessity of a sophisticated maritime policy. Referring to the British fleet of 1900, the historian Arthur Marder contended that "though numerically a very imposing force, it was in certain respects a drowsy, inefficient, moth-eaten organism."² It is a commentary on British apathy that, at the end of the nineteenth century, it took a distinguished American naval officer, Captain Alfred Mahan, to reawaken interest in the influence that sea power had exerted, and would continue to exert, upon history.³

Before the English were drawn into World War I through Germany's violation of Belgian neutrality, they had already embarked upon a course that would compel them to violate several codified rules of maritime blockade originating in the nineteenth century. Stirred from its apathy by the emergence of the German High Seas Fleet, the British admiralty began, in 1905, to plan for a possible war with England's Continental rival. The ensuing seven years led to fundamental changes in the admiralty's approach to maritime warfare. But certain of these changes implied a compromise of established international law, a fact that should be examined more closely.

The rivalry which preoccupied Great Britain in the early twentieth century was essentially one without precedent in her history. Since the seventeenth century, England's rivals had been Continental powers that were incapable of challenging her at sea, except perhaps in combination. Even that most dramatic of Napoleon's attempts to defeat the British fleet off Cape Trafalgar ended with Nelson's substantial victory over the combined fleets of France and Spain. Consequently, fleet commanders were routinely assigned the purely military task of defending the islands and bottling up the enemy's fleet in its own harbors. It was such a novel occurrence for the admiralty to make provision for defeating a single, well-prepared naval antagonist that the fleet's orders of June 1905 did not differ substantially from those issued to commanders during the previous two centuries.⁴ In essence, these orders did little more than simply inform the commander-in-chief that, in the event of war, the fleet would be placed under his command so that he might watch the enemy's warships and bring them to action should they leave harbor. In fulfilling this assignment, the commander-in-chief was given a free hand to take whatever measures he thought best. Blockade was not even suggested as a possibility.

Fundamental domestic and international events were destined to alter these poorly conceived and inadequately defined naval plans. First, in 1906 the British government undertook a detailed review of its wartime naval policy toward both neutral and belligerent shipping in preparation for the second Hague Conference (15 June–18 October 1907). Spearheading this endeavor was the Committee of Imperial Defence. In a May 1906 memorandum prepared for the prime minister, the committee explained that Germany's trade "with the British Empire is nearly one-quarter of her total sea-borne commerce." In view of this significant fact, the committee recommended that in the event of an Anglo-German war

the mass of the British navy's home fleet "be imposed between German ports and blue water." Although it was unable to ascertain the degree of economic stress that such action might inflict on Germany, the committee did maintain that distress "would be severely felt throughout [Germany's] whole commercial and industrial structure, and all the elements of the population depending thereon."⁵

The committee's report is remarkable in that it demonstrates that as early as 1906 a significant agency of the British government was aware of the economic hardship that a blockade would impose upon Germany. But awareness and naval policy did not yet correspond.

Since the Paris Declaration of 1856, Britain had given substantial support to the posture that neutral powers might assume in the event of war. Her representatives arrived at the Hague committed to maintaining this support. (There is some reason to believe that the British continued to envision themselves as neutral in *any* future conflict.) Indeed, Britain's proposal for restricting the contraband list proved so extreme that it met with opposition from France, Germany, Russia, and the United States—the French arguing that the power to prevent contraband traffic under a neutral flag was a genuine right of legitimate self-defense in the hands of belligerents.⁶

The inability of the delegates to arrive at an agreement on the definition of contraband at the Hague motivated the major powers to consider the question further at the London Conference. But the second Hague Conference did not lack consequence because of this failure. Despite their unusual position at the gathering, the coincidental examination of the assembly's records by the British delegates spawned in them a new understanding of the significance of international trade to German survival. England continued to possess the superior fleet. Since in the event of war she was likely to control the sea lanes, perhaps, it was reasoned, there was room for balancing England's traditional anxiety over trade restrictions against a similar anxiety on the part of the Germans. With this consideration as backdrop, the admiralty assured the British government that a tight blockade of the German coast could be instituted during the opening weeks of a war.⁷ This assurance proved a major step in the radical transformation of Britain's posture, for it placed unusual importance on the interruption of German commerce.

Coincidental with the Hague Conference, a series of domestic events strengthened the conviction in England that the fleet's mission should be reexamined. Such scrutiny quickly brought to light the inadequacy of the

1905 war plans. The resulting doubt arose partially in response to both the admiralty's radical restructuring of the officers' training program and the founding of a Naval War College in November 1906.⁸ Established at Portsmouth, the War College was an advanced technical school designed to promote the scientific study of war and strategy. It fulfilled its originators' purpose. Among its students the conviction developed that the traditional policy of providing the commander-in-chief carte blanche in regard to generalized war plans was outmoded and potentially dangerous. As a direct link had apparently been established between the War College and Naval Intelligence by mid 1908, this perception did not go unnoticed by those in authority. In July 1908 the admiralty issued new war orders placing responsibility for both the strategic conduct of war and the placement of the fleet under the supervision of the entire admiralty.⁹ Moreover, these new plans provided sophisticated detail for the concentration of a superior force of vessels in the North Sea. In summary, such a force would have as its objectives (1) blockading the German coastline and thereby forcing a decisive naval confrontation and (2) preventing all enemy maritime trade in the North Sea. The arrangement of these objectives is significant. It remained the admiralty's hope that the pressure of a commercial blockade would encourage the fulfillment of the fleet's primary purpose of forcing the enemy to offer battle.¹⁰ Nevertheless, the admiralty's post-Hague conception of an operation with economic repercussions had now become an integral part of the naval war plan. And as an appreciation of the fleet's economic potential increased, the manner in which the War Orders would be executed was refined.

The London Naval Conference, which lasted from 4 December 1908 until 27 February 1909, considered the two factors influencing liability in merchandise seizure: the nature and the destination of the merchandise. With respect to the nature of merchandise encountered at sea, the powers chose to uphold Britain's distinction between two kinds of contraband.¹¹ First, "absolute contraband" was the designation assigned to those items susceptible of military usage exclusively. Within this category fell such basics as arms, munitions, and military equipment. Second, "conditional contraband" was the term applied to objects susceptible of both military and civilian use. Under this classification the powers agreed upon a list of fourteen articles. Among these were food, fodder, articles of clothing, fuel, and lubricants.¹² In addition, the conference drew up a third grouping covering articles that could never be

declared contraband of war. This division included cotton, rubber, and fertilizers. That the list of noncontraband items quickly contracted and finally disappeared following the outbreak of hostilities was largely the result of British action, a fact that stands in stark contrast to Britain's recommendation at the Hague Conference to abolish contraband altogether.

Once the nature of the various commodities was established, the conference examined their status in regard to destination. Article 30 of the Declaration of London clearly states that absolute contraband is subject to capture if shown to be destined for territory either belonging to or occupied by the enemy, or intended for the military forces of the enemy.¹³ It is immaterial whether the transport of such goods is direct or requires reshipment or subsequent carriage by land. But the regulation applying to conditional contraband is significantly different. Although article 33 declares that conditional contraband is subject to capture if it is shown to be destined to either the armed forces or the government of an enemy state, article 35 specifies that such materials are not subject to capture if they are to be discharged at a neutral port.¹⁴ Accordingly, the old precept of continuous voyage was applied only in the case of absolute contraband.¹⁵ Had the Declaration of London passed into international law, foodstuffs consigned to the German government but unloaded at Rotterdam would have been immune from capture by British cruisers during World War I.

The declaration was not destined, however, to become an official part of the international legal code.¹⁶ Although the representatives of the eight participating powers were to sign the declaration on 26 February 1909, the document immediately induced violent reaction throughout the United Kingdom. Ironically, the agitation had nothing whatsoever to do with the limitations placed upon belligerents regarding the capture of conditional contraband. The British still retained too much anxiety over their presumed neutral or isolated belligerent status to desire a relaxation of these limitations. Rather, their chief objection was to article 34, which would have allowed a belligerent at war with Great Britain to stop all foodstuffs destined for the United Kingdom "if they are consigned to a contractor established in the enemy country who as a matter of common knowledge supplies articles of this kind to the enemy."¹⁷ Posters were displayed throughout the country depicting a neutral ship laden with food for England being sunk by enemy fire. The restrictions governing contraband were actually viewed by the British as too severe. Not

appreciating the power of its navy to prevent most enemy interference with food traffic, the House of Lords listened to the populace and voted on 13 December 1911 to reject the essential points of the London Declaration.¹⁸ Curiously, those aspects of the agreement which would have most damaged Britain's pursuit of an economic war against Germany were never at issue in the parliamentary debate. Despite the declaration's failure in the House of Lords, the admiralty reprinted it in the naval prize manual that was in effect when the war began.¹⁹

While the Declaration of London was being debated in the United Kingdom, an international incident occurred that served as a catalyst in the initiation of the final peacetime transformation of English naval policy. On 1 July 1911 the German gunboat *Panther* steamed into the port of Agadir in Morocco, a country which, by virtue of the 1906 Algeciras Act, was within the confines of French jurisdiction.²⁰ The action of the *Panther* was perceived as nakedly provoking France and as pronouncing to the world that the Algeciras Act was no longer valid. More importantly, Great Britain concluded that Germany's action promoted international anarchy.

Prime Minister Herbert Asquith was greatly disturbed by the Agadir crisis. On 27 August he secretly convened a special session of the Committee of Imperial Defence.²¹ The membership of this body comprised those ministers responsible for the fighting forces (army and navy), as well as Sir Edward Grey (foreign minister), and David Lloyd George (chancellor of the Exchequer). Significantly, Asquith also requested the presence of the home secretary, although this officer was not ordinarily a member of the committee. But the home secretary in question was Winston Spencer Churchill, and Mr. Churchill was destined to become first lord of the admiralty within two months of this clandestine gathering. In light of his imminent promotion, Churchill's recollection of the committee's deliberations is significant.

[The] First Sea Lord, Sir Arthur Wilson, . . . expounded his views of the policy we should pursue in the event of our being involved [in a war with Germany]. He did not reveal the Admiralty war plans. Those he kept locked away in his own brain, but he indicated that they embodied the principle of a close blockade of the enemy's ports. It was very soon apparent that a profound difference existed between the War Office and the Admiralty view. In the main the Admiralty thought that we should confine our efforts to the sea; that if our small army were sent to the Continent it would be swallowed up among the immense hosts conflicting there. . . . This view, which was

violently combated by the Generals, did not commend itself to the bulk of those present.²²

One of those disturbed by Sir Arthur's views was the author of these observations. Indeed, his convictions were far closer to those expressed in the old Committee of Imperial Defence memorandum of May 1906. It is not surprising that when Churchill became first lord, he chose as his initial task the restructuring of the blockade principle. A close blockade of the German ports had been prescribed in the war orders of both 1908 and 1910. "To my mind," Churchill wrote, "the torpedo seemed . . . to have rendered impossible" a close blockade.²³ He was concerned, moreover, that the great distances at which Britain's cruisers and destroyers would have to operate such a blockade apparatus would greatly reduce that instrument's effectiveness. Although the war plans designed since 1908 included the goal of capturing one of Germany's offshore islands for the purpose of establishing a base—thereby alleviating the problem of distance—Churchill remained inflexible concerning the impracticality of a close blockade. He wrote:

These considerations were not lost upon the Germans. They greatly increased the fortifications of Heligoland, and they proceeded to fortify one after another such of the Frisian Islands as were in any way suitable for our purposes. At the same time a new and potent factor appeared upon the scene—the submarine.²⁴

Churchill's concluding sentence must be regarded with some suspicion, for he wrote these words with the benefit of hindsight. In 1911, or even in August 1914, the European fleets did not attach great significance to the value of submarines.²⁵ At the outbreak of the war, Germany possessed only eighteen submarines—England and France had more than twice that number—and of these weapons only a third were serviceable at any one time.²⁶ The remaining either were undergoing maintenance or were en route to and from their station areas. But despite this qualification, Churchill's stated conviction regarding a close blockade accurately reflects his early position. When in November 1911, the first lord of the admiralty replaced all but one of his sea lords with younger flag officers he thereby indicated that he was attaching himself to that body of professional opinion most skeptical about the successful operation of a close blockade. This move was manifested in the new war orders of May 1912. Churchill later explained the transformation.

Seeing that we had not for the time being the numerical force of destroyers able to master the destroyers of the potential enemy in his home waters, nor the power to support our flotillas with heavy ships, and having regard also to the difficulty and hazard in all the circumstances of storming and capturing one of his now fortified islands, we proceeded forthwith to revise altogether the War Plans and substitute, with the full concurrence of our principal commanders afloat, the policy of distant blockade.²⁷

It was under these orders that the fleet assumed its war stations in August 1914. The economic operations that had been tentatively ordered in the 1908 plans had finally assumed greater importance than the traditional military operations. Rather than rely upon dangerous coastal operations in an effort to tempt the High Seas Fleet into engagement, the British navy finally agreed to act on the conviction of the Committee of Imperial Defence that confinement could prove more valuable than encounter. The fleet thus was relocated to the outer edges of the North Sea as a means of severing German's commercial activities.

The new plans necessitated the application of continuous voyage to conditional contraband if an economic blockade were to be effective. Not only would this application be in violation of the unratified Declaration of London but, more importantly, it would also circumvent the still valid Declaration of Paris. This agreement clearly instructed that "blockades, in order to be obligatory must be effective, that is to say, maintained by a sufficient force really to prevent access to the coast of the enemy."²⁸ True, the United States had violated this caveat by maintaining a "paper" blockade of the Confederate States during the American Civil War. But this action hardly established a precedent as the United States had refused to sign the Declaration of Paris. The British were, however, signatory to this agreement. Even if German commerce could be effectively eliminated in the North Sea, the protocol of 1856 declared such procedure illegal if it were incapable of preventing maritime trade at Germany's Baltic ports. Ironically, just after the outbreak of World War I, this very inability to control the Baltic quickly lured England into a further violation of international maritime regulation: the unlimited expansion of the contraband list.

The economic encirclement of Germany, established at the war's outset solely on the basis of naval means, developed into a complex undertaking that not only involved intense diplomatic activity but also had tremendous economic consequences. Although the story need not be

told in all its convoluted detail, an abbreviated description is necessary for a proper appreciation of the problems generated by the blockade.

Britain's blockade organization was particularly complicated. This was due largely to the fact that, from the war's outset, Britain was more interested in the establishment and enforcement of the blockade than any of her co-belligerents. The fulcrum of her apparatus was the Foreign Office, that permanent Ministry most concerned with the blockade's administration. One can realistically argue, in fact, that during the course of the war, the Foreign Office exercised a substantial degree of surveillance over the affairs of all governmental departments concerned with the conduct of trade.

In addition to such general supervision, the Foreign Office administered two departments specifically concerned with the regulation of war trade: the Foreign Trade Department and the Contraband Department. The first comprised two sections; one constituted the financial section of the Ministry of Blockade, and the other maintained jurisdiction over the Statutory Black List. The Contraband Department, meanwhile, furnished the secretariat for both the Ministry of Blockade and the Contraband Committee. Numerous additional administrative duties fell within the jurisdictions of both departments.²⁹

Organized early in the war, the Ministry of Blockade theoretically was in charge of the blockade's administration; however, the facts reveal that it may not actually have served this function. During the greater part of the war, the minister of blockade served concurrently as an under-secretary of state for foreign affairs. That Sir Robert Cecil performed his functions primarily as an official of the Foreign Office, or did so as the minister of blockade, is a matter for conjecture. As has been stated, the secretariat for the Blockade Ministry was furnished by the Contraband Department while the Foreign Trade Department provided its financial section—both of these departments constituting part of the Foreign Office. The facts imply that the Ministry of Blockade was merely an adjunct of the Foreign Office.

The structural complexity did not end here. A War Trade Department, comprised of members from almost every ministry in the government, issued licenses for commodities exported from Britain. It also administered the General Black List, which differed from the Statutory List in that it was confidential. The Import Restrictions Department, which was under the jurisdiction of the Board of Trade, investigated and regulated

imports into Britain. Finally, the Restriction of Enemy Supplies Department, an auxiliary of the War Trade Department, investigated exports from Britain and imports into neutral countries. Upon America's entry into the war, this last-named department also assumed the important duty of making recommendations to the Allied Blockade Committee.

Prior to the active participation in the war of the United States, a rather informal Allied blockade organization had been located in London. The French created a Ministry of Blockade using various members of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and in Italy a rather negligible Blockade Committee was established. Representatives from these French and Italian bodies had been assigned to London; however, their collective effect upon the functioning of the blockade was negligible.³⁰ In general, one can assume that the blockade, as it existed between 1914 and 1917, was a British apparatus.

International maritime trade was of paramount importance to Germany's economic survival. An examination of her commercial balance sheet for both 1912 and 1913 demonstrates that Germany's imports exceeded her exports by 640 million dollars.³¹ Importations of foodstuffs and raw materials accounted for the overwhelming portion of this imbalance. Quite simply, Germany was unlikely to survive without maritime trade.

Approximately sixty percent of Germany's overseas trade was conducted under her own flag. Commerce was carried on by a merchant marine of 2,090 steamers and 298 sailing vessels, amounting to a total of about 5.5 million tons of shipping.³² In their naive belief that the war was destined to end by Christmas, the Germans were unconcerned to find a considerable number of their merchant ships in foreign waters at the war's outbreak. From 28 July onwards, 623 German steamers took refuge in neutral ports; and to this loss must be added the tonnage figures for ships detained in British, French, and Russian ports, making it evident that at the beginning of the war Germany retained less than 2 million tons (or thirty-six percent) of her merchant shipping.³³

It is of academic significance only to chronicle this severe shipping reduction. With Britain's declaration of war (4 August), the Allies assumed command of the sea, and the German merchant marine ventured from port at great risk of probable capture. In any case, Germany's international maritime trade, with the exception of that in the Baltic, was more or less terminated by the end of August 1914.

As her flag was unable to proceed beyond home waters, Germany

sought to reprovision herself under neutral flags in conformity with the Declaration of London. It was in view of this possibility that, on 6 August, the United States telegraphed all belligerents, requesting to be informed about their respective attitudes concerning international law. Washington urged, moreover, that the belligerents adopt the Declaration of London since everyone was cognizant of its provisions and it corresponded "with the generally recognized principles of international law."³⁴ Although Britain had failed to ratify this document, she was not entirely free to disregard its provisions. British representatives, with the support of their government, had contributed to the document's contents and had endorsed its prescriptions with their signatures. The government was consequently committed to the proposition that the Declaration of London was not only a codification of recognized principles of international law but was also an expression of British maritime policy. Besides, the British Admiralty, having emphatically endorsed the declaration, had incorporated its provisions unchanged into its manuals. Similar initiatives had been taken as well by the French and German navies, and it came as no surprise when, in August 1914, both France and Russia informed Great Britain of their preparation to honor the declaration in full.³⁵ By establishing the Declaration of London as the basis for contraband determination, Britain would have certainly avoided many of the serious misunderstandings that ensued between herself and the neutrals during the first two years of war.

But Edward Grey, Britain's foreign secretary, was not inclined to tie the United Kingdom to the Declaration of London simply as a means of reconciling her with the neutrals. Prior to declaring his intentions to the American ambassador, Walter Hines Page, Grey assembled a meeting at the Foreign Office to consider the contraband issue. Two major facts influenced the ensuing deliberations. First, it was concluded that, despite the size of her fleet, Germany was unlikely to pose a serious threat to the merchant shipping of Great Britain. This implied, of course, that there was little reason to fear England's being forced to rely upon the services of neutral shipping. Second, information forwarded by his minister at the Hague made it clear to Grey that Germany, on the other hand, intended to provision herself expansively through such neutral ports as Rotterdam. Such practice, it was decided, would clearly negate any advantage that the Allies might enjoy as a consequence of having command of the sea. (Command of the seas had clearly evolved since 1905 from a purely military consideration into a purely economic one.) Given Britain's

prerogative to travel the high seas as she chose, the conferees unanimously agreed to reject those provisions of the Declaration of London that specifically related to the transit of conditional contraband. The official response to the Foreign Office deliberations was the politically sophisticated Order in Council of 20 August 1914. Deceptively announcing Britain's fidelity to the Declaration of London, the order continued by outlining a significant exception to the declaration's doctrine of continuous voyage.³⁶ Such qualification afforded Britain a substantial loophole for preventing the passage of conditional contraband to neutral ports. And this was the logical outcome of Churchill's 1912 decision to transform the fleet's mission into one accentuating the role of distant blockade.

Despite the provocation that this action represented to the United States, the British fleet was unable to profit from the order in the months immediately ensuant to its announcement.³⁷ In fact, enforcement of the continuous-voyage provision depended upon demonstrable proof that cargoes of conditional contraband were consigned to Germany. Britain did not yet possess sufficient means for collecting such proof. Consequently, the fleet rarely interfered with neutral trade during the first three months of the war.³⁸ Ernest May has argued that this failure to implement the order resulted not so much from inadequate organization as from a policy of diplomatic expediency. Grey was determined, at least in the war's earlier stages, not to compromise American friendship. A total acceptance of the London Declaration was one thing; a complete disregard for neutral rights was quite another. In recalling the consequences of Britain's maritime policy during the Napoleonic Wars, Grey stated that "the surest way to lose this war would be to antagonize Washington."³⁹ But as his confidence in the war's quick termination lessened, his determination to preserve American friendship similarly weakened.

Despite statements and interpretations to the contrary, the Order in Council of 29 October 1914, which abrogated that of 20 August, did not represent a softening of British policy. The new order claimed to revoke the doctrine of continuous voyage as it applied to conditional contraband; however, it made it incumbent upon the merchant ship to provide conclusive proof that such goods were not destined for the enemy.⁴⁰ Guilty until proven innocent became the new law of the sea in regard to conditional contraband. Moreover, the new order enlarged the con-

traband list, adding items that the Declaration of London had expressly designated noncontraband.⁴¹

Basic to the foundation upon which this order rested was the discovery that conditional contraband might be kept away from the enemy by means of negotiated settlements with the neutral states. The importance of such practice cannot be overstated. Whereas a hasty reading of the order of 29 October might inspire one to assume that Britain was embracing the Declaration of London, the order actually moved the British one step further from that document by establishing a principle of reliance upon negotiations with neutrals, rather than upon legal doctrines, to determine the status of contraband cargoes stopped at sea.

The logic of Britain's new position was clear. By January 1915 even though Germany's importation of American goods had been appreciably reduced (in December 1913 German imports from the United States had totaled 32 million dollars; in December 1914 this figure had collapsed to only 2.2 million dollars), the resultant shortfall had been made up by imports from neutral countries in Europe.⁴² Accordingly, the economic life of the typical German remained substantially unchanged at the turn of the year. But this good fortune proved short-lived. Once the neutral trade agreements had taken effect, the consequences were quickly felt in Germany. Moreover, much of the proscriptive apparatus outlined earlier had become operational by 1915 and was consequently boosting the efficiency of the blockade. The War Trade Department had been organized in August 1914, whereas the Contraband Committee was established in November.⁴³

The mere creation of committees, however, could not overcome all the difficulties entailed in levying what was effectively an illegal blockade. Efficient application would require a stern and unbending disregard of neutral interests well beyond any limited advantages gained through negotiated treaties. German naiveté provided the necessary justification for transforming a loose and ineffectual blockade into a sophisticated and potent instrument of war.

The use of illegalities was not, of course, a practice confined to the British. As early as 5 August British destroyers chased and sank a German ship that had been indiscriminately dumping mines in the seas off the English coast. The laying of mines beyond an enemy's three-mile coastal limit was in direct violation of the second Hague Convention. But Germany had refused to accept this portion of the convention because

Russia, one of her chief antagonists, had also rejected it.⁴⁴ Britain thus responded to Germany's mine laying with its 3 November 1914 pronouncement that "the whole North Sea" would henceforth be regarded as "a military area," mined and dangerous. This reprisal, when coupled with the Order in Council of 29 October, constituted a major advance toward shaping the conditions necessary for an effective blockade. If the North Sea was to be a war zone, then no neutral vessel could approach either Scandinavia, Holland, or Germany except through the English Channel; and such vessels could be forced to take on admiralty pilots if they were to be assured safe passage through the Channel's minefields. Given the relatively inappreciable width of the Channel, the November declaration made it far easier for Britain to search the cargo of all neutral ships for contraband. Moreover, neutrals were quick to comply with Britain's action. On 26 December 1914, the Netherlands Oversea Trust Company signed the first contraband agreement with the Allies. Other aggregates of private merchants, in Denmark, Norway and Switzerland, soon followed suit.⁴⁵ Such actions significantly weakened Germany's economic position.

Despite the growing effectiveness of the blockade, its machinery was still functioning below maximum potential. More importantly, from a British perspective, the contraband list remained too narrow and German carriage of noncontraband was still allowed. But Britain had to be careful. Moving too far and too quickly could have disastrous repercussions. American sensibilities had to be considered. Once again, Britain was unintentionally aided by her antagonist. Rather than anticipate Allied restraint, the Germans interpreted the 3 November announcement as a declaration of unlimited economic war. At the conclusion of 1914, the German Admiralty unanimously resolved that it could not yield uncontested control of the seas to the British.⁴⁶ But they could not agree on a solution to this problem. Few of Germany's admirals were prepared to challenge Britain's control of the seas by risking the High Seas Fleet. (One notable, and overruled, exception was Grand Admiral Alfred von Tirpitz, the creator of the fleet.) The chief of the naval staff, Admiral Hugo von Pohl, proposed that Germany counter Britain's policy by announcing a blockade of England and, since such action would inevitably require the use of submarines, informing neutrals that their ships would incur a fatal risk if they endeavored to break this blockade.⁴⁷ Unmoved by serious objections, including those of Naval Secretary Tirpitz, the kaiser approved this precarious operation. On 4 February

1915, Germany declared that, beginning 18 February, submarine warfare would begin against the commerce of Great Britain. Since Theodore von Bethmann Hollweg is correctly viewed as a moderating influence on the pretensions of the German Admiralty, his comments on this occasion bear repeating, for they bespeak the distress already produced in Germany by the Allied blockade: "When we consider the purely utilitarian rules by which the enemy regulate their conduct, [when we consider] their ruthless pressure on neutrals, on the pretext that they are stopping contraband, we may conclude that we are entitled to adopt whatever measure of war is most likely to bring them to surrender."⁴⁸

In their study of the events surrounding the *Lusitania* sinking, Thomas A. Bailey and Paul Ryan have suggested that most of the maritime action of World War I represented little more than a succession of arbitrary liberties taken by both sides. Illegality provoked reprisal which, in turn, prompted further reprisal. The actions reviewed above are typical. Following Germany's indiscriminate mining, Britain justified her reprisal of 3 November 1914 by claiming that "the Admiralty feel it necessary to adopt exceptional measures appropriate to the novel conditions under which this war is being waged."⁴⁹ Germany, of course, reciprocated. Bailey and Ryan contend that this

broad formula of "exceptional measures" growing out of "novel conditions" is one that the British had used to justify their long-range blockade practices [before the war had even begun]. The Germans were to employ the same rationale when they retaliated with their submarine "blockade," proclaimed as a "war area" on February 4, 1915. The British naturally reasoned that their illegality was justifiable, whereas that of the Germans was not. . . . Admiral Scheer, a German officer, charged that the English never admitted "the necessity of war" for their adversary and never recognized the difference between unavoidable severity and deliberate brutality.⁵⁰

Arguments justifying "exceptional measures" were applied to blockade policy throughout both the war and the period of armistice. But although the instrument was British, Germany was largely responsible for its development. Through her actions, Germany helped turn the war at sea into a struggle as ferocious, as unrelenting, and ultimately as decisive as the war in the trenches. The immediate consequence of the submarine proclamation was the famous "reprisals order" of 11 March 1915. By means of this Order in Council, Britain advanced beyond the

issue of contraband, addressed in her orders of 1914, and gave notice of her intention to seize any goods the origin or destination of which was Germany.⁵¹ This most significant of the Orders in Council went a long way toward perfecting the blockade apparatus that helped drag Germany down to defeat.

The response of the United States to this maritime encounter was crucial to the outcome of the war. Ironically, two blockades had been established—one surface and the other subsurface—which were not, from the context of international law, legitimate blockades. Neither maritime power had used the word *blockade* in delineating its intentions. This fact probably worked to the advantage of the Allies. President Wilson, in response to Berlin's proclamation, did not contend that the Germans were violating international law by establishing an incomplete blockade. Rather, Wilson declared that the United States would demand "strict accountability" of Germany if "the lives of American citizens" were sacrificed on the high seas.⁵² The threat of "strict accountability" was left undefined. But when, on 7 May 1915, the *Lusitania* was torpedoed with the loss of 128 American lives, Wilson made it clear that "strict accountability" applied in the event of American life lost on belligerent ships. According to international law, jurisdiction over a ship's crew and passengers is established by the ship's flag. By this definition, the decks of the *Lusitania* were British soil. But Wilson's view of the maritime war failed to stay within the guidelines of such legalities. If his position were carried to its logical extreme, the president could have pressured Germany not to carry out aerial bombardment of London because American citizens might inadvertently be killed in such action.⁵³ The proclamation of "strict accountability" thus placed Germany and the United States on a collision course.

At the same time, the 11 March reprisals order was not constructed so as to conciliate Washington. In the words of the *Nation* (London), those who were demanding an intensified blockade were also saying "to hell with the neutrals."⁵⁴ But since it was clear that a direct threat to American lives was not implied by Britain's blockade, Wilson's response to the reprisals order was legalistic rather than moralistic. This difference would prove significant. The United States did question the legality of the British action because the resultant blockade was not equally effective against all neutrals, owing to Britain's inability to control trade on the Baltic Sea.⁵⁵ This appears to have been a reasonable diplomatic response. But it was not dispatched until 21 October 1915, a

full seven months later! To be sure, Sir Edward Grey had received an assortment of tactful warnings during the intervening period; however, a statement directly related to the 11 March Order in Council was not forthcoming. Moreover, when Wilson's belated note did arrive, its statement of disapproval was not accompanied by a demand that Britain withdraw her blockade. "Strict accountability" would be applied to American lives, not to American property.

Although the president's distinction seems commendable, it implicitly revealed to the belligerents that America was prepared to disregard a clear violation of international law while agitating over matters of moralistic principle. In this fashion, the belligerent blockades forced the Wilson administration into a position favoring benevolent neutrality on the Allied side. But even though idealism has commonly been invoked as the force motivating Wilson's action, it is important to recognize the role played by self-interest in his calculations. There can be no doubt that a rupture between America and the Entente would have seriously jeopardized American industry and trade. The bulk of America's overseas commerce was carried on with the Allies, not with the Central Powers. This rather cynical explanation for Wilson's actions received substantial corroboration during the Nye Committee Hearings of the mid thirties.⁵⁶ However, economic considerations aside, one can be certain that American sympathies fell overwhelmingly in favor of the Allies. This fact certainly eased Foreign Secretary Grey's anxiety as he intensified Britain's pressure on the neutrals and, consequently, on Germany.

By the spring of 1915 the basic principles upon which the blockade rested were fixed. The Order in Council of 7 July 1916, canceling the Declaration of London, was no more than a paltry effort to formalize the reality of the past twenty months. Moreover, the declaration had already been thoroughly compromised by the diplomatic maneuverings of the United States.⁵⁷ In an increasingly systematic fashion, the British (with Allied assistance) were thus able to strangle Germany economically. First, by means of her fleet, Britain ended Germany's troublesome expectation of maintaining supplies through increased neutral importations. In the words of Admiral John Jellicoe, the man who organized the naval aspect of the blockade, the Germans "had their best opportunities between November, 1914, and February, 1915. After April, 1915, the situation got steadily worse" for them.⁵⁸ Second, through the extensive use of diplomatic channels, the Allied governments obtained gradual

assurance that those imports allowed through the blockade would not be relayed to Germany. In essence, Britain managed to ration supplies used by the European neutrals by exerting influence through the War Trade Board and the Restriction of Enemy Supplies Department. Finally, through further diplomatic dexterity, the Allies prevented the shipment of neutral home production to Germany. But it would be incorrect to conclude that during their negotiations with the Allies the neutral powers willingly acquiesced to such stringent demands. Adherence to Allied dictates implied a partial surrender of national sovereignty. With their overwhelming mastery of the sea lanes, however, the Allies were in an excellent position to force neutral states into compliance. Coal was used as a particularly effective lever to apply pressure on the neutrals. Without the good offices of Britain's far-flung coaling stations, the long sea voyages required for the economic survival of any country would be difficult, if not impossible, to undertake. Appreciating this fact, the Allies placed the name of any firm not abiding by their dictates on a public blacklist, a procedure that served as notification to the firm that its coaling privileges had been terminated.⁵⁹ The impact of this policy increased dramatically when the United States was added to the list of belligerents.

Thus it was that, by the end of 1916, the Allies had equipped themselves with an apparatus for the long-range control of German commerce. Neutral ships were apprehended at sea, escorted into British or French ports, and detained at great cost to both consignors and consignees. By September 1916 the British fleet was singlehandedly intercepting an average of 135 merchant ships weekly.⁶⁰ The number avoiding the blockade was modest. Germany's ships, meanwhile, remained paralyzed in her ports. Even trade with neutrals by means of the relatively safe Baltic Sea seemed hazardous; experience had taught that neutrals could become belligerents overnight.

And the consequences of the blockade were coming home to the Germans. The diet was initially reduced to bread and potatoes. Then, with the failure of the potato crop in 1916, turnips became the principal staple. The impact on the population was notable. Thought and effort were devoted to the location of food. Rather than seek the customary pleasures of life, men and women were forced increasingly to seek the absolute essentials of survival. The days were filled with the labor necessary for purchasing scraps of food; the nights were absorbed with schemes for making the struggle a bit easier.

Particularly severe was the so-called *Kohlrübenwinter* (turnip winter) of 1916–1917, during which period the collective weight of the German population plummeted sharply. The incidence of actual starvation was particularly high among the inmates of jails, asylums, and other institutions where each adult had access only to an unsupplemented food ration.⁶¹ One witness to the consequences of this crisis was George Schreiner, an American newspaper correspondent. In 1918, prior to the conclusion of an armistice, Schreiner wrote:

In the fall of 1916 the war system of national economy had taken the shape it has today. Food had become the irreducible minimum. Not alone was the quantity on hand barely sufficient to feed the population, but its price could no longer be increased if the masses were not to starve for lack of money instead of lack of food. The daily bread was now a luxury. Men and women had to rise betimes and work late into the night if they wanted to eat at all.⁶²

This bad situation was accentuated by the ration lines. People were forced to waste precious hours standing in line in an effort to obtain meagre food rations. It was a picture of bureaucracy sunk to its most debased level: despondent people, desperate for food and enfeebled by malnutrition, compelled to wait hours in severely cold weather for their weekly allotment of an egg (each rationed item had its own line). Schreiner's observations are poignant.

Once I set out for the purpose of finding in these food-lines a face that did not show the ravages of hunger. That was in Berlin. Four long lines were inspected with the closest scrutiny. But among the 300 applicants for food there was not one who had had enough to eat for weeks. In the case of the younger women and children the skin was drawn hard to the bones and bloodless. Eyes had fallen deeper into the sockets. From the lips all color was gone, and the tufts of hair which fell over parchmented foreheads seemed dull and famished—a sign that the nervous vigor of the body was departing with the physical strength.⁶³

Nor should it be assumed that such agony was restricted to the less fortunate. In his wartime diary, Hans Peter Hanssen recorded the following during the *Kohlrübenwinter*:

Berlin, March 30, 1917. Today I happened to sit between Dr. [Wilhelm] Struve and [Philipp] Scheidemann in the restaurant. The latter said that at

nine-thirty last evening he had gone out with a knapsack on his back to get some potatoes, since his family had no food in the house. He had gone from place to place and had not reached home with his fifteen pounds of potatoes until two in the morning. "Who would have thought that such a thing could ever happen," Scheidemann burst out "that I, who am buried in work, should be forced to spend my time begging for a few pounds of potatoes along with women and children!"

According to Dr. Struve, [Adolf] Groeber stated in the Committee on Employment that he was so faint as a result of the poor food in Berlin that he had become a pessimist.⁶⁴

It might be recalled that during the course of this terrible winter, the increasingly desperate government made an extraordinary and far-reaching decision. With German morale nearing the point of collapse, the kaiser chose to "unleash" his submarines in an effort to make irrelevant all of the country's maritime problems. Through such an operation, Wilhelm reasoned, Germany's increasingly acute internal problems could be resolved. Moreover, could it not be argued that, without declaring war, the United States had already cast its lot with the Allies? A statement by Germany's ambassador to the United States underscores this impression.

More than a month has passed since our last note to the United States without President Wilson making up his mind to approach the English Government on the question of the blockade. True I do not expect that England would allow herself to be influenced by the United States to abandon her infringement of international law. . . . But the complete passivity of Mr. Wilson . . . puts the Imperial Government in an extremely difficult position.⁶⁵

Persistent appeals by Ambassador Bernstorff had failed to convince the Americans that German submarine tactics represented a fair and logical response to Britain's blockade. If Germany were to abandon the use of her submarines, what substitute might she find that could effectively counter the British blockade? Bernstorff knew that, unless the blockade was broken, Germany eventually faced starvation and defeat. It was under the weight of this possibility that, on 19 January 1917, the kaiser signed the following decree: "I hereby order unrestricted submarine war to be commenced on 1 February, and to be prosecuted with the utmost energy."⁶⁶

The Germans committed two grievous errors in relying on their submarines to overcome the Allied blockade. First, they totally underestimated the vigor with which the Allies would counter the effects of the submarine. In the Reichstag debates resulting from the kaiser's order, the spokesman for the opposition Social Democrats, Dr. Eduard David, took issue with the naval decision in the following manner: "The Minister of the Marine believes that, by sinking 600,000 tons monthly, we can destroy one half of England's merchant tonnage in six months. But he overlooks the fact that we must count on 150,000 tons of new ships being built each month, and that German tonnage in the neutral countries may be seized and so give a similar increase."⁶⁷ David's estimates, not meant to be conservative, proved a considerable understatement of Allied capabilities. The estimates of his conservative opponents were outrageous by comparison. Whereas the German U-boat sank an average of 550,000 tons of shipping in the last eleven months of 1917, the average decreased to 323,000 tons during the ten months of war in 1918.⁶⁸ Moreover, Allied construction exceeded 12 million tons by the end of the war, clearly offsetting the destruction caused by the submarine.⁶⁹ The United States alone launched over 2.5 million tons of shipping in 1918.

This points up the Germans' second error in judgment: they failed to appreciate the consequence of America's potential addition to the side of the Allies. In the words of the minister of the marine, Admiral Eduard von Capelle:

As far as the financial and economic situation is concerned, I have always laid great stress on the importance of America's entrance into the war. But from a military point of view, her entrance means nothing. I repeat: *from a military point of view America is as nothing*. I am convinced that almost no Americans will volunteer for war service. That is shown by the lack of volunteers for the conflict with Mexico. And even if many enlist, they must first be trained. This will take time, for America has neither commissioned nor noncommissioned officers enough to train large bodies of troops. And when the men have been trained, how are they to cross the ocean? . . . America has no transport ships ready for service. And contrary to all appearances, should America be able to provide the necessary transport ships, our submarines could not wish for a better piece of hunting. I repeat, therefore, once more: from a military standpoint, America's entrance is as nothing. [Italics in the original]⁷⁰

To this terribly misinformed estimate of American military capability

Admiral Capelle added a disclaimer to the significance he had placed on America's economic potential at the opening of his statement: "America has already produced as much ammunition as she is able to produce. So we can rest easy as far as the American danger is concerned."⁷¹

American entry into World War I proved a disaster for Germany. And this fact is particularly notable when one considers the blockade. Not given to half-measures, Wilson ensured that every loophole left open by the Allies for the potential reprovisioning of Germany was closed. First, on 22 June 1917 Wilson appointed an Exports Council charged with preventing any American products from reaching the Central Powers.⁷² In consequence of the council's deliberations, Wilson signed a "general embargo" on 9 July 1917 by which corn, fodder, gasoline, cast iron, steel, fertilizers, arms, ammunition, and explosives were denied shipment from American ports without special license. Under the guidance of Vance McCormick, the council established an absolute embargo whereby even the importation of foodstuffs by neutrals was prevented until December 1917.⁷³

The entrance of the United States into the war made it inevitable that the British blockade system would evolve into an Allied affair. The role of the American navy in maintaining the blockade was too large for London to ignore Washington's wishes. Moreover, the establishment of the American Exports Council, renamed the War Trade Board in October, stimulated a dynamic restructuring of Allied blockade administration. To be sure, coordination of effort was not always easily achieved. The mentality dictating America's choice of remaining associated with, rather than allied to, the powers at war with Germany actively undermined smooth cooperation between the United States and her new European partners. Given this handicap, however, significant progress was made toward increasing both the efficiency of the blockade and the multipower character of its administration.

The first meeting of an interallied blockade committee, held in December 1917, can be viewed as the initial attempt to coordinate policy. Through the combined efforts of McCormick, Robert Cecil of Britain, and Albert Lebrun of France, the meeting made notable progress toward the alleviation of administrative confusion.⁷⁴ Most important was the planned establishment of several Allied committees for the continued administration of centralized blockade control in London. Paramount among these was the Allied Blockade Committee, created in March 1918 and composed of representatives from Britain, France, Italy, and the

United States. The Allied Blockade Committee assumed a considerable amount of the executive authority vested previously in the British Ministry of Blockade.⁷⁵ Consequently, its establishment ended the hegemony exerted by the Foreign Office since 1914 over blockade administration.

Numerous other organizations were created in the last year of the war as a means of increasing the efficiency of the blockade. The Allied Rationing and Statistical Committee, for example, began its work in May 1918. A standing subcommittee of the Allied Blockade Committee, Rationing and Statistics maintained close surveillance of imports into neutral countries and ascertained the extent to which neutral ration requirements were being filled.⁷⁶ Its creation coincided, moreover, with the establishment of an Inter-Allied Food Council, whose principal objective was the fashioning of ration and transport policies conforming to the statistical requirements of the aforementioned subcommittee.⁷⁷ Ultimately, by means of a plethora of surprisingly effective councils, committees, and boards, every aspect of both Allied and neutral shipping was controlled. The goal of preventing the transport of any food into Germany was essentially met.

Such rigorous control produced a notable result. Germany's foreign trade collapsed, moving from a figure of 5.9 billion dollars in 1913 to one of 800 million dollars in 1917.⁷⁸ Civilians were gradually compelled to survive without those items manufactured either partly or totally of materials for which there was a shortage.⁷⁹ Despite substantial civilian cooperation and forbearance, the men and women of the German homefront continued to suffer from a diet consisting by 1918 of approximately one thousand calories a day.⁸⁰ The most noticeable shortage was that of fats, the ration of which had fallen to only twelve percent of the prewar level. The meat ration stood at eighteen percent of the prewar consumption level.⁸¹ Such dietary privation had momentous effects. In 1917 the rate of mortality among civilians had surpassed the 1913 figure by thirty-two percent; the increase was thirty-seven percent in 1918.⁸² In a speech to the Cabinet, Philipp Scheidemann summed up his countrymen's agony: "It is a question of potatoes. We no longer have any meat. . . . [The] misery is so great that it is like asking a complete riddle when one asks oneself: what does North Berlin live on and how does East Berlin exist?"⁸³

On 5 October 1918 Germany's newly appointed chancellor, Prince Max von Baden, requested of President Wilson an armistice based on the Fourteen Points. His request was certainly inspired by the reversal of

Germany's fortunes on the battlefield. However, Prince Max must have been motivated as much by the effectiveness of the blockade as by Ludendorff's impassioned prophecies of impending defeat. The chancellor surveyed a sick, despairing country. Between December 1916 and the end of the war the rate of tuberculosis had doubled.⁸⁴ During the single day of 15 October Berlin suffered seventeen hundred deaths from influenza.⁸⁵ And the agony of hunger was no longer limited to the civilian. At the front the food problem had assumed critical proportions. Archival records indicate a fear in early November that the eight-day supply of food remaining for Germany's soldiers would be insufficient to feed them during their return home.⁸⁶

Evolving through a slow and often painful process of adaptation, the economic blockade producing this agony had begun as little more than a British afterthought. It was almost by accident that the admiralty had maintained the concept of blockade as part of its prewar naval strategy. Gradually adjusted to the demands of a modern protracted war, however, the blockade became, by November 1918, the most potent weapon in the Allied arsenal. And the Allies were fully aware of its significance. As former Prime Minister Asquith remarked, it was "the control of the sea by the British Navy which fed and equipped the Allies, by successive stages drained the life-blood of the enemy, and won the War."⁸⁷

In the interallied debate that erupted with Prince Max's request for an armistice, Lloyd George stressed that the second of Wilson's Fourteen Points—that guaranteeing freedom of the seas—could not be accepted by the British as a condition of peace. According to the prime minister, to accept freedom of the seas would mean "that the power of blockade goes; Germany has been broken almost as much by the blockade as by military methods."⁸⁸ This remark had two unfortunate consequences. First, because it was accepted by the United States, it opened the door to further compromises of Wilson's peace program. Second, it lent support to the argument of those who insisted that the blockade should be temporarily maintained following the surrender of the Germans. Through recourse to the logic of Lloyd George, the Allied ministers presented the Germans with the following armistice stipulation: "The existing blockade conditions are to remain unchanged."⁸⁹ The stage was set for the calamitous period of the armistice.

NOTES

1. By the Declaration of Paris, not only are "paper" blockades (noneffective blockades) illegal but enemy property is subject to capture only when it is being carried by an enemy ship—save for contraband. This document was the cause of heated controversy in England. A major argument for its repudiation was published at the turn of the century: Thomas Gibson Bowles, *The Declaration of Paris of 1856* (London: S. Low, Marston, and Co., 1900). Although Bowles argued that the declaration prevented Britain from using her fleet as an offensive weapon, he was most concerned lest the document be used to destroy British commerce.

2. Arthur J. Marder, *From the Dreadnought to Scapa Flow* (London: Oxford University Press, 1961), 1: 6. The author states that although huge ship-building programs since 1894 had provided Great Britain with a numerical superiority over the navies of the Franco-Russian Alliance, the British fleet remained in the nineteenth-century rut of sailing-ship naval tactics. Admiral John Fisher (first sea lord, 1904–1910) would significantly modify this fact.

3. *The Influence of Sea Power upon History* (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1890) and *The Influence of Sea Power upon the French Revolution and Empire* (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1894) effected a revolution in the study of naval history. Although Mahan's purpose was to instill in his countrymen an appreciation of the supreme importance of sea power, the books attracted greater attention in England and Germany. By a plethora of example, Mahan demonstrated, perhaps for the first time, the subtle and far-reaching significance of sea power. In particular, Britain was reminded of her special stake in maintaining naval supremacy.

4. Archibald C. Bell, *A History of the Blockade of Germany* (London: H.M. Stationery Office, 1937), p. 24. (Bell was a member of the Historical Section of the Committee of Imperial Defence. He compiled this history at the request of the Foreign Office, and it remained a confidential document until its declassification in 1961. It is a particularly valuable source for scholars interested in the prewar and early-war decisions of the Committee of Imperial Defence.) Actually, it remained a matter of debate in 1905 which foreign power posed the greatest threat to Britain. According to Marder, *From the Dreadnought to Scapa Flow*, 1: 111, Rear-Admiral Charles Ottley, the director of Naval Intelligence, exclaimed late in 1905 that there was "a considerable chance that we may find ourselves at war with France, Germany, and Russia before next August [i.e., 1906]." And Ottley's was not a voice in the wilderness. In one of his final memoranda as prime minister, Arthur Balfour wrote, on 12 December 1905, that an attack against England would "presumably be from Cherbourg or Havre." Obviously the enemy he had in mind was France. See Balfour's comments in Committee of Imperial Defence, Home Defence "A" Series, vol.

1, paper 34A, "Possibility of a Raid by a Hostile Force on the British Coast," p. 4.

5. Great Britain, Committee of Imperial Defence, Miscellaneous "B" Series, vol. 2, paper 73, "Capture of the Private Property of Belligerents at Sea," pp. 6–7.

6. The English proposal was worded thus: "In order to lessen the difficulties suffered by neutrals in case of war, the Government of his Britannic Majesty is ready to abandon the principle of contraband in case of war between the Powers signing a convention to this end. The right of visit shall only be exercised to establish the neutral character of the merchant vessel." One might well question Britain's candor in making so radical a proposal. Logic suggests that its defeat was a foregone conclusion. If this was the case, then Britain may have made the proposal only to prevent the passage of any contraband agreement that would not have been in her interest. This remains mere speculation; however, in light of coming events, its accuracy is quite possible. See James B. Scott, *The Hague Peace Conferences of 1899 and 1907* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1909), 1: 711–716. Perhaps more fascinating than the proposal is the response that it received. Out of thirty-five possible votes, twenty-six were cast in favor of the proposition, five against, with four abstentions. Its inability to command a unanimous vote prevented it from becoming law.

7. It appears that the admiralty was in the process of "catching up" to the Committee of Imperial Defence. In the memorandum mentioned earlier, "Capture of the Private Property of Belligerents at Sea," pp. 8–10, the committee suggested that Britain's main task should be to cause "the German flag to disappear from the seas." If, indeed, this was the goal, the status of a blockade—i.e., a close blockade—was already in question. "[Of] the two rights—capture or blockade—the latter is less valuable to us as belligerents and the most injurious to us as neutrals." The admiralty, from all indications, did not yet grasp the rather subtle difference to which the Committee of Imperial Defence was addressing itself. Indeed, the committee was proposing that Britain incorporate a distant blockade into her war plans—a tool the significance of which would not be appreciated by the admiralty for a few more years. However, it can be argued that vested interest, rather than limited vision, caused the admiralty to favor a close blockade. The record indicates that the admiralty was suffering from an inferiority complex vis-à-vis the General Staff. In the event of war, a distant and economically motivated blockade would prove a rather passive endeavor when compared to the naval activities of a close, and dangerous, blockade. It is doubtful that the navy would have willingly assumed a passive role in any European conflict.

8. Lord John Fisher, *Memories and Records* (New York: George H. Doran, 1920), 2: 254.

9. Bell, *History of the Blockade*, p. 24. See Nicholas D'Ombrain, *War*

Machinery and High Policy (London: Oxford University Press, 1973), p. 160, for information regarding the connection between the War College and Naval Intelligence.

10. Winston S. Churchill, *The World Crisis* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1924), 1: 150–152. As Churchill pointed out in these pages, even when the blockade was significantly modified in nature by the 1911 war plans, its purpose of forcing battle on the enemy remained unchanged. See also Bell, *History of the Blockade*, p. 25. Again, one might argue that the navy's insistence on an offensive policy was motivated by a fear that the army might assume a predominant position in time of war.

11. William Arnold-Forster, *The Blockade*, Oxford Pamphlets on World Affairs, no. 17 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1939), pp. 5–7.

12. United States, Department of State, *Policy of the United States toward Maritime Commerce in War* (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1934), 1: 112–113.

13. James B. Scott, ed., *The Declaration of London*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1919), p. 152. Scott acted as an American delegate to both the second Hague Conference and the London Conference.

14. *Ibid.*, pp. 154 and 156.

15. By way of the Rule of the War of 1756, a British Prize Court demonstrated the first known appreciation of the fact that voyages, which may be distinct in actuality, can be continuous by law if the ultimate destination of carried goods remains the same. In other words, the continuity of a voyage is not broken if goods, whose final destination is enemy territory, are unloaded in a neutral port. It has been by means of this eighteenth-century ruling that all subsequent definitions of "continuous voyage" have evolved.

16. The use of the word *official* is significant. In point of fact, when World War I erupted, the naval policy of all the major powers conformed to the declaration.

17. Scott, *Declaration of London*, p. 155.

18. Guichard, *Naval Blockade*, pp. 14–15.

19. Bell, *History of the Blockade*, p. 23. Bell stated that the former first sea lord, John Fisher, and the subsequent first sea lord, Sir Arthur Wilson, both favored the declaration. Moreover, Committee of Imperial Defence, Miscellaneous "B" Series, vol. 3, paper 120B, "Report of the Standing Subcommittee of the C.I.D. regarding the Treatment of Neutral and Enemy Merchant Ships in Time of War," was a document that defined contraband on the basis specified in the Declaration of London and required that customs officers respect that agreement's definitions of contraband. Although published in October 1910, the document's guidelines were not overruled prior to August 1914 (see pp. 28–30 of the report).

20. A documentary record of the Agadir crisis can be located in George P.

Gooch and Harold Temperley, eds., *British Documents on the Origins of the War* (London: H.M. Stationery Office, 1932), 7: 322–648.

21. John A. Spender and Cyril Asquith, *The Life of Herbert Henry Asquith, Lord Oxford and Asquith* (London: Hutchinson, 1932), 1: 345–346.

22. Churchill, *World Crisis*, 1: 56.

23. *Ibid.*, 1: 76. One should be aware that Churchill was not referring here to submarine-launched torpedoes.

24. *Ibid.*, 1: 151.

25. The significance given to submarines can be gathered from the memoirs of First Sea Lord Fisher. In *Memories and Records*, 2: 175, Admiral Fisher recorded that when he left the admiralty in 1910, there were more submarines than when he returned in 1914.

26. R.H. Gibson and Maurice Prendergast, *The German Submarine War* (New York: R.R. Smith, 1931), pp. 348–349.

27. Churchill, *World Crisis*, 1: 152.

28. Bowles, *Declaration of Paris*, p. 140.

29. These details may be found in Maurice Parmelee, *Blockade and Sea Power* (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell, 1924), pp. 85–86.

30. *Ibid.*, pp. 110–111.

31. *The World Almanac and Encyclopedia, 1919* (New York: Press Publishing, 1918), p. 375.

32. Great Britain, Historical Section, Committee of Imperial Defence, *History of the Great War, Based on Official Documents*: Ernest C. Fayle, *Seaborne Trade* (London: John Murray, 1920–1924), 1:13.

33. *Ibid.*, 1, 57. According to Fayle, the total German tonnage additionally seized during the first two weeks of August in Allied ports, including that detained by the Belgians, exceeded 700,000 tons.

34. Bryan to Page, 6 August 1914, *Papers Relating to the Foreign relations of the United States, 1914, Suppl.* (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1928), p. 216.

35. Page to Bryan, 26 August 1914, *ibid.*, p. 219.

36. See Spender and Asquith, *Life of Asquith*, 2: 125; and Viscount Edward Grey, *Twenty-Five Years, 1892–1916* (New York: Frederick A. Stokes, 1925), 2: 105.

37. The State Department requested, late in September, that the British accept the Declaration of London *in toto*. See Lansing to Page, 26 September 1914, *Foreign Relations, 1914, Suppl.*, pp. 225–232.

38. Bell, *History of the Blockade*, p. 44. According to Bell, only three neutral vessels were seized between August and October 1914.

39. Quoted in Ernest May, *The World War and American Isolation* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1959), p. 18.

40. The text of this order may be located in Page to Bryan, 3 November 1914, Department of State, *Maritime Commerce in War*, 2: 230–231.

41. In accordance with the Declaration of London, however, cotton remained noncontraband. According to May, it was to the consternation of France that Grey refused to add cotton to the list of contraband. Grey believed that such a move would endanger Anglo-American relations. See May, *World War*, pp. 21–23.

42. In a note to Washington, Foreign Secretary Grey presented some statistics as proof of the substantial increase in reexport trade that was originating in the United States. His figures, which follow, are quoted in Page to Bryan, 7 January 1915, *Foreign Relations, 1915, Suppl.*, p. 300.

Exports from New York for November 1913 [and] November 1914, respectively:

Denmark	\$558,000	\$7,101,000
Sweden	377,000	2,858,000
Norway	477,000	2,318,000
Italy	2,971,000	4,781,000
Holland	4,389,000	3,960,000

43. George M. Trevelyan, *Grey of Fallodon* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1937), pp. 347–348.

44. The agreement that ensued from the second Hague Conference was actually a compilation of thirteen separate conventions. A government could refuse to sign any of these conventions while still agreeing to uphold the remainder of the document. The eighth convention dealt with submerged mines. Although Germany signed it, accepted procedure did not make it incumbent upon her to abide by it if, in the event of war, her enemy had refused to sign it. Uncertainty arose in 1914 because Britain, which had signed the eighth convention, was allied with Russia, which had not.

45. Sir John Fisher, recently returned as first sea lord, made it clear that mining the North Sea would make it easier for the Grand Fleet to intercept neutral trade. See *Memories and Records*, 2: 226–228. *Foreign Relations, 1915, Suppl.*, pp. 268–294, should be consulted for information concerning the establishment of transit companies in the neutral countries. The details surrounding the 3 November proclamation can be located in Churchill, *World Crisis*, 1: 426–429. The actual proclamation is in *Foreign Relations, 1914, Suppl.*, p. 464.

46. See Theobald von Bethmann Hollweg, *Betrachtungen zum Weltkriege* (Berlin: R. Hobbing, 1922), 2: 109–116.

47. Arno Spindler, *Der Handelskrieg mit U-booten* (Berlin: E.S. Mittler, 1932–1934), 1: 53.

48. Quoted in *ibid.*, 1: 54. See also: Tirpitz to Pohl, 16 December 1914, Alfred von Tirpitz, *Erinnerungen* (Leipzig: K.F. Koehler, 1919), pp. 342–343. Although Tirpitz agreed that Germany should prepare for an eventual submarine campaign, he insisted that early 1915 was much too soon for such action.

49. *Foreign Relations, 1914, Suppl.*, p. 464.

50. Thomas A. Bailey and Paul Ryan, *The Lusitania Disaster* (New York: Free Press, 1975), pp. 29–31. The authors later elaborate (p. 34) that the very use of the term *reprisal* should have been regarded as a damning admission since a reprisal is considered in international law to be an illegal act taken to counter another illegal act. To the ultimate consternation of Germany, the United States ignored this fact.

51. Spender and Asquith, *Life of Asquith*, 2: 130–131; Page to Bryan, 15 March 1915, Department of State, *Maritime Commerce in War*, 2: 274–277.

52. *Foreign Relations, 1915, Suppl.*, pp. 98–100.

53. For the American response, see Bryan to Gerard, 13 May 1915, *Foreign Relations, 1915, Suppl.*, pp. 393–396. Edwin Borchard and William Lage, *Neutrality for the United States* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1937), pp. 116, 136, and 151, explains the traditional status of neutral travelers on belligerent ships. The peculiarity of America's posture might be ascertained in the response of Gottlieb von Jagow, Germany's secretary of state for foreign affairs, to the American telegram of 13 May: "Right of free travel on the seas, why not right of free travel on land in war territory?" See *Foreign Relations, 1915, Suppl.*, p. 396.

54. *Nation*, 17 (24 July 1915): 531–533, was not condoning this attitude but warning against it. The article stated further that "the madness of the howling dervishes in the newspapers, with their bits of imperfect scientific knowledge and ill-comprehended international law . . . is exciting anger amongst those neutral countries to which such newspapers penetrate, and in whose own press these grotesque articles are reproduced."

55. *Foreign Relations, 1915, Suppl.*, pp. 578–601. When Secretary of State Bryan called upon Wilson to protest British action in March, the president refused to do so since it was "something they are going to do, and they are going to do it no matter what representations we make." See Wilson to Bryan, 24 March 1915, United States, Department of State, *Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States: The Lansing Papers, 1914–1920* (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1939), 1: 288–289. Bryan would finally resign over Wilson's refusal to treat Great Britain and Germany as equals.

56. It is generally agreed that the United States, repelled by World War I and its consequences, succumbed to a wave of isolationist sentiment during the 1930s. A March 1934 article in *Fortune* magazine, entitled "Arms and the Men," played on this mood by describing how the armaments trade incited American involvement in World War I. The article was instrumental in motivat-

ing a Senate investigation under the chairmanship of Gerald P. Nyc. Months of hearings disclosed that bankers and munitions makers had reaped tremendous profits as a result of armament sales to the Allies.

57. The 7 July declaration, entitled the "Maritime Rights Order in Council," was identical to a French Decree adopted 12 April 1916. See the discussion in A. Pearce Higgins and C. John Colombos, *The International Law of the Sea* (London: Longmans, Green, 1943), pp. 534–535.

58. Admiral Viscount Jellicoe, *The Grand Fleet* (New York: George H. Doran, 1919), p. 33.

59. See *Foreign Relations, 1916, Suppl.*, pp. 328–338.

60. Jellicoe, *Grand Fleet*, p. 448. Between January and June 1915 a relatively early period in the war, of 2,466 ships that arrived in neutral ports, 2,132 had been routinely stopped and examined by the Allied blockade authorities.

61. Ernest H. Starling, *Report on Food Conditions in Germany* (London: H.M. Stationery Office, 1919), p. 8.

62. George E. Schreiner, *The Iron Ration* (London: J. Murray, 1918), p. 160.

63. *Ibid.*, p. 239.

64. Hans Peter Hanssen, *Diary of a Dying Empire* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1955), p. 179.

65. Count Johann Heinrich Bernstorff, *My Three Years in America* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1920), p. 276.

66. Germany, Reichsarchiv, *Der Weltkrieg, 1914 bis 1918* (Berlin: E.S. Mittler, 1938), 11: 471.

67. Quoted in Hanssen, *Diary of a Dying Empire*, p. 167.

68. Fayle, *Seaborne Trade*, 3: 465. This decrease in U-boat successes was due in large measure to the toll Allied mines were taking on German submarines. On 18 June 1918, work began on mining the Norwegian coast. Known as the Northern Mine Barrage, it caused greater U-boat losses than German shipyards could sustain. See Great Britain, Historical Section, Committee of Imperial Defence, *History of the Great War: Archibald Hurd, The Merchant Navy* (London: J. Murray, 1929), 3: 258–260.

69. Harold Temperley, *A History of the Paris Peace Conference* (London: Oxford University Press, 1920), 1: 145.

70. Quoted in Hanssen, *Diary of a Dying Empire*, p. 170.

71. *Ibid.*

72. Executive Order no. 2645, 22 June 1917, *Foreign Relations, 1917 Suppl.*, 2: 883–884. (See also Grey, *Twenty-Five Years*, 2: 117. Grey gave evidence of the increased effectiveness of the blockade by stating that all previous problems disappeared. "There was no longer need to prove that goods going to a neutral port were intended for Germany. . . . Neutral countries able or likely to supply Germany were rationed; their own need was assessed, and they were allowed to have so much and no more, in order that they might have

none to spare for Germany. That was a blockade such as the world had never known, but it was possible only because the United States was not criticizing but cooperating.”)

73. Proclamation no. 1385, 9 July 1917, *ibid.*, 2: 903–905. The food embargo was not announced until 17 July 1917. For the latter, see Hoover to Wilson, 14 July 1917, and Wilson to Hoover, 17 July 1917, in Francis W. O’Brien, ed., *The Hoover-Wilson Wartime Correspondence* (Ames, Iowa: Iowa State University Press, 1974), pp. 50–51. See also Jeffrey J. Stafford, *Wilsonian Maritime Diplomacy* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1978), pp. 120–123.

74. Charles Seymour, ed., *The Intimate Papers of Colonel House* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1928), 3: 298.

75. Parmelee, *Blockade and Sea Power*, pp. 114–115.

76. *Ibid.*, p. 117.

77. Seymour, *Intimate Papers*, 3: 297–298.

78. Guichard, *Naval Blockade*, p. 261. Although the figures ballooned in 1919, imports continued to exceed exports by an enormous 5.5 billion dollars. See *World Almanac*, 1922, p. 166.

79. A confidential memorandum from the British Foreign Office, dated September 1918, noted the complete lack within Germany of any illuminants—electric light, gas, lamp oil, and candles—as well as the total absence of soap. See Lutz, ed., *Fall of the German Empire*, 2: 112. In reporting on copper shortages, the United States, Department of Commerce, *German Trade and the War* (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1918), p. 79, stated that “several cases of poisoning have been reported, due to cooking in pots of galvanized iron.”

80. According to one physician, Thomas H. Middleton, *Food Production in War*, p. 51, the calorie intake for an average individual should exceed three thousand per day. A similar figure is presented in the memorandum commissioned at the close of the war by Matthias Erzberger: Germany, Reichsgesundheitsamt, *Schädigung der deutschen Volkskraft durch die feindliche Blockade* (Berlin: Reichsdruckerei, December 1918), p. 7. Here, utilizing the Interallied Scientific Food Committee as a source, a caloric total of thirty-three hundred is given as essential for human survival. That this figure has been reduced in the 1980s to ca. twenty-three hundred is due overwhelmingly to the significant reduction in physical activity common in Western countries.

81. Arnold-Forster, *Blockade*, pp. 28–29. It bears mentioning that 3 March 1918 witnessed the signing of the brutal Treaty of Brest-Litovsk, an agreement ending hostilities between Germany and Russia. Many in Germany (and in Austria-Hungary) regarded this treaty as a “bread peace,” for it was supposed to relieve the food shortage by opening up the Ukraine. The government was so hopeful with respect to this outcome that it did not publish accurate statistics for

the terrible harvest of 1917 in expectation that shipments from the Ukraine would make up for the shortage of wheat. But the Ukrainian wheatfields proved to be a mirage. Chaotic conditions and uncooperative peasants prevented the Germans from obtaining substantial quantities of wheat from the Ukraine. See Feldman, *Army, Industry, and Labor in Germany*, pp. 460–461.

82. *Schädigung der deutschen Volkskraft*, p. 15.

83. Quoted in Lutz, ed., *Fall of the German Empire*, 2: 481.

84. Max Rubmann, *Hunger! Wirkungen moderner Kriegsmethoden* (Berlin: G. Reimer, 1919), pp. 26–27.

85. Prince Maximilian of Baden, *Memoirs* (London: Constable, 1928), 2:

92. Prince Max actually listed 1,722 victims for this date.

86. Reichsarchiv, *Der Weltkrieg*, 14: 714.

87. Herbert Henry Asquith, *The Genesis of War* (New York: George H. Doran, 1923), pp. 138–139.

88. House to Lansing, 3 November 1918, *Foreign Relations, 1918, Suppl. 1*, 1, 455–457.

89. United States, Department of State, *Source Records of the Great War* (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1923), 7: 427.

A Conditional Surrender

If thine enemy be hungry, give him bread to eat; and if he be thirsty, give him water to drink.

—Proverbs 25:21

It is an axiom of history that alliances are formed to neutralize the threat of a common enemy. Although the mere formation of an alliance sometimes achieves such neutralization, more often force must be used following the formalized combination of two or more powers. When the allied force has supremacy, the common enemy collapses. Once this result occurs, the rationale for the alliance vanishes. Comrades in war discover themselves alienated in peace.

Seeds for the mistrust and alienation that plagued international cooperation during the interwar decades of the 1920s and 1930s had already been sown amongst the Allies prior to the collapse of their common foe in November 1918.¹ With the German request for an armistice, shared suspicion became a crucial ingredient of Allied action. A full appreciation of this fact is essential for a proper understanding of the armistice period.

Although disagreement has almost always been a fundamental characteristic of interallied relationships following war, the first major war of the twentieth century provided the diplomat with some unprecedented complications. Most importantly, the war itself had been pursued with formerly unimaginable ferocity and sacrifice. During a portion of the conflict, particularly that encompassing the years 1916 and 1917, considerable sentiment was expressed within all the belligerent countries in favor of a peace of understanding that might simply arrest the terrible bloodshed.² But as 1918 wore on, and the likelihood of German collapse became increasingly apparent, a new sentiment emerged. Wrath gradually warped the reason of the victors and threw obstacles in the way of their governments in the matter of bringing the defeated power back into the society of nations. This is not to imply that the leadership of the victorious powers was prepared to treat Germany with forbearance. Indeed, the leaders by and large believed that German behavior had been criminal; accordingly, the German nation should be forced to pay a

significant price for its crimes. But popular enmity generally surpassed that of the delegates who were to gather in Paris. In an age when expressed opinion could affect the political careers of presidents and prime ministers, the Allied leaders sometimes found themselves confronted with serious dilemmas. Amongst the Allied leaders of 1918–1919, as at no other time in history, mistrust of an enemy was magnified by the demands of angry electorates.³

Germany's initial message to President Wilson, dated 5 October 1918, provoked the first of many impassioned debates among the Allies. The Germans requested a termination of hostilities based upon the president's Fourteen-Point address of 8 January 1918. A foundation for international understanding, the address and its implications had already inspired significant criticism within the president's own country.⁴ Upon Wilson's entry into an exploratory dialogue with Prince Max von Baden, domestic criticism increased in intensity. But it was in England that Wilson's exchanges with the German chancellor earned the most heated censure. Moreover, the disapproval was not voiced by the opposition party, as in the United States, but by the ruling coalition led by Lloyd George. In the midst of what proved to be an ill-timed election campaign, Lloyd George pressed for a victory similar to that achieved by Rome over Carthage in the Third Punic War.⁵ The comparison would beget unfortunate consequences.

Across the Channel, the French were decidedly less critical of the exchanges between Berlin and Washington. In light of later French intransigence, following the termination of hostilities, this is somewhat surprising. But the situation in France must be kept in perspective. Not only was there no election to disrupt the political scene but the proximity of the battlefields—all on French soil and oftentimes within artillery range of Paris—also made France's leadership particularly eager to end the war without the exorbitant sacrifices deemed necessary in any march on Berlin. An intense hatred of the enemy was more than matched by a desire to end the bloodshed. Moreover, Clemenceau was well aware of the feelings of enmity that the war had engendered in the Allied peoples, and he was convinced that the Fourteen Points could be manipulated to the ultimate advantage of France.⁶

For the English, the preeminent stumbling block was the second of Wilson's Fourteen Points. Here the president announced the principle of "absolute freedom of navigation upon the seas, outside territorial waters, alike in peace and in war."⁷ Lloyd George was quick to point out that

Great Britain, which depended for her survival upon the unrestricted utilization of her fleet, could under no circumstances accept freedom of the seas as a basis for the upcoming peace treaty. The principle, he concluded, would serve to neutralize England's power to blockade an enemy.⁸

Opposition to even one of the Fourteen Points pained the Wilson administration. Colonel House, who was representing the president at this time in Paris, actually threatened to terminate discussions with the Allies and sign a separate peace with Germany if the president's principles were not accepted unchanged. His resolve was reinforced when, on 30 October, he received the following message from Wilson: "I feel it my solemn duty to authorize you to say that I cannot consent to take part in the negotiation of a peace which does not include freedom of the seas because we are pledged to fight not only to do away with Prussian militarism but with militarism everywhere."⁹

Despite the uncompromising nature of this communication, Wilson apparently appreciated Lloyd George's position as well as the dilemma of his plenipotentiary. On the following day House received a further telegram in which Wilson made it clear that he sympathized with "the exceptional position and necessities of Great Britain with regard to the use of the seas for defence both at home and throughout the Empire." Wilson explained, moreover, that, given the need for a careful examination of the freedom-of-the-seas principle, the Allies could discuss it beforehand, without presenting it as a condition of peace with Germany. "Blockade," Wilson continued, "is one of the many things which will require immediate redefinition in view of the many new circumstances of warfare developed by this war. There is no danger of its being abolished."¹⁰

With this clarification from the president, the 3 November meeting of the Allied leaders became a crucial one. House began the discussion of freedom of the seas by paraphrasing Wilson's latest telegram. But his hope that this would answer England's objections to the freedom-of-the-seas principle was quickly dashed. Lloyd George stood by his previous position, demanding that each of the Allies acknowledge the extent to which they had all benefited from the blockade's ability to prevent "steel, copper, rubber, and many other classes of goods from entering Germany." Perplexed by the prime minister's apparent inability to comprehend Wilson's words, House declared: "Yes, but the President does not object to the principle of blockade. He merely asks that the principle of

the Freedom of the Seas be accepted." At this point, Clemenceau attempted to resolve the problem by simply stating, "We accept." But, once again, Lloyd George countered:

No, I could not accept the principle of the Freedom of the Seas. It has got associated in the public mind with the blockade. It's no good saying I accept the principle. It would only mean that in a week's time a new Prime Minister would be here who would say that he could not accept this principle. The English people will not look at it.¹¹

The prime minister's allusion to his political obligations was appreciated by the assembled men. It may have been instrumental in prompting the Americans to compromise. In any case, House informed Lloyd George that America would concede the legitimacy of England's reservation on point 2 as it applied to the armistice terms so long as the prime minister agreed to discuss the point in the course of the Peace Conference. This approach met with the prime minister's approval.¹² As events would have it, this proved the first of many compromises by the Americans.

Clemenceau's passive adherence to the Fourteen Points is partially explained by other developments. Following word of Germany's correspondence with President Wilson, the French premier had informed Marshal Foch and General Pétain that they must quickly draw up detailed terms for an armistice and present them for approval to the commanders-in-chief of the Allied forces. In the course of this meeting, which took place on 24 October, the three French leaders had agreed upon the conditions they desired. Among these was the stipulation that "the blockade was to be maintained." Calling a conference on the following afternoon at Senlis, Foch had little difficulty obtaining the consent of the other commanders to the French conditions.¹³ Thereupon, on 26 October, the Allied generalissimo took the conditions to Paris to present them to President Poincaré. The marshal's record of what followed is significant. Although regarded by the Germans as their bitterest foe, Poincaré was so startled by the severity of the terms of armistice that he voiced his fear of potential German rejection. To this Foch simply replied, "Then we will continue the war."¹⁴

It was Clemenceau who once claimed that war is far too serious an activity to be left in the hands of generals.¹⁵ If such is the case, how much more serious is peace? The armistice was being regarded, at the behest of

Clemenceau, as a matter solely within the jurisdiction of military and naval leaders. And at the head of this assemblage was Ferdinand Foch. Undoubtedly *un bon soldat*, the question of this man's skills at dealing with the aftereffects of war remains open to discussion. John Maynard Keynes, England's foremost economic expert at the Paris Peace talks, described the supreme commander as follows:

I am certain that Foch's mind and character are of an extreme simplicity—of an almost medieval simplicity. He is honest, fearless and tenacious. But nine-tenths of the affairs of mankind are blotted out from his vision, and his mind is not susceptible to attention to them. He is capable, therefore, in the appropriate circumstances of being as dangerous to the welfare of mankind as others have been who have added a narrow and impervious intellect to a strong and simple character.¹⁶

With the American compromise on the freedom-of-the-seas principle, and Clemenceau's prescience in having his generals present the other Allied leaders with precomposed armistice terms, the continuation of the blockade during the period of the armistice was assured. But a factor of increasing significance still demanded attention.

Foch had limited his task to the armistice's military framework. Admiral Rosslyn Wemyss, first sea lord of the British Fleet, was to construct the naval terms. The British admiral drew up naval demands at least as harsh as the military terms fashioned by his French military counterpart. Wemyss called for the surrender of 150 submarines, 10 battleships, and 6 battle cruisers—virtually the whole of Germany's High Seas Fleet.¹⁷ The admiral presented this proposal in Paris on 27 October, first to the Allied Naval Council and then to the Supreme War Council. The reaction of the last-named group is significant. Not only did Foch suggest that the terms might be too severe but the British foreign secretary, Arthur Balfour, asked if “there is the smallest prospect of the Germans accepting these terms?”¹⁸ Once again, a civilian's misgivings had little impact on the designs of the military. Wemyss's unaltered proposal found its way into the armistice as articles 22 and 23.

The admiral's attempt to be comprehensive intentionally failed, however, to address the issue of Germany's merchant marine. As events would have it, the disposition of the merchant fleet proved to be a matter of far greater complexity than either the continuation of the blockade or the status of the High Seas Fleet. That the armistice failed to address it is

somewhat ironic since the extension of the blockade beyond 11 November nullified the value of Germany's merchant marine, at least so far as it benefited the Germans. But a fundamental economic issue was implicit in the inability of the Allies to resolve the status of the merchant fleet. The predisposition to distrust one's fellow Allies combined with the economic potential of Germany's merchant ships to create an unfortunate problem that periodically disrupted the proceedings of the Peace Conference. In brief, how was the fleet to be divided or, if not divided, who was to exercise control over it? During a preliminary discussion of the armistice conditions, the British and French Foreign Offices, in conjunction with the Inter-Allied Food and Transport Councils, attempted to manage the issue with the following recommendation:

It would in their view be disastrous if either neutral or enemy countries were able to go into the markets and purchase supplies required for the vital needs of the Allies in competition, but without cooperation with the Allies, the result of such action being necessarily the entire dislocation of the general economic position now prevailing with disastrous results to the civilian population of both Allied and Neutral countries. To avoid this result it appears essential, first, that the large block of enemy tonnage now idle in enemy or neutral ports should be used under Allied direction and in accordance with a general Allied plan.¹⁹

The recommendation was forwarded to the American secretary of state, Robert Lansing, and he in turn transmitted it to the chairman of the American Food Administration, Herbert Hoover.

Hoover has a reputation as Germany's principal benefactor during the armistice period. The characterization is generally well deserved. Eventually, recognizing that the Germans were in a state of near-starvation, Hoover worked to get the first food through the blockade to the hungry Germans. But that did not occur until March 1919, and in the current situation (October 1918) deliberations did not favor Germany. Hoover had already informed Wilson, on 24 October, that he was entirely opposed to any agreement that might further entangle the United States in Allied affairs. He advised that Washington “maintain a complete independence.”²⁰ Totally adverse to the Allied suggestion that Germany's merchant marine be placed under the direction of the interallied councils, Hoover obtained presidential support for his views and, on 7 November, forwarded the following to Joseph C. Cotton, his representative in London:

For your general advice this Government will not agree to any program that even looks like Inter-Allied control of our economic resources after peace. After peace, over one-half of the whole export food supplies of the world will come from the United States and for the buyers of these supplies to sit in majority in dictation to us as to prices and distribution is wholly inconceivable.²¹

Colonel House, who was cognizant of Hoover's and the president's opposition to interallied control of economic affairs, was approached by Arthur Balfour on 8 November with a reiteration of the proposal that the Germans be forced to surrender a large portion of their merchant tonnage as a condition of the armistice. Aware that such a proposal would be regarded with suspicion in Washington, House quickly advised against it, recommending that further statements concerning the disposition of the German merchant marine await the final signature of the armistice. The British foreign secretary acquiesced.²²

Hoover's narrow economic nationalism was motivated, in part, by his own suspicion of Allied motives. Yet even Keynes, the British economist, saw the justice of holding such apprehensions. Hoover was satisfied to utilize his country's economic predominance, however, simply as an instrument of self-reliant national power. According to his calculations, Hoover determined that America must at all times maintain complete control over her economic resources. Even though Keynes appreciated American fears, this notion did not conform either with his desires or with those of other farsighted Europeans. At a later date Keynes wrote that the United States possessed a tremendous opportunity at the end of the war to gain the substance of what it wanted in Europe by being firm, yet cooperative, in the use of its financial power.²³ And it was not only the Europeans who anticipated problems with Hoover's economic ideology. Frank Polk, a State Department official, implored Hoover "not to start a fight with the British by attempting to take the lead and ignoring existing organizations." Vance McCormick, the chairman of the War Trade Board, asked the president to impress upon Hoover the importance of working with the Allies. Unfortunately, neither man's appeal met with success.²⁴

As it happened, in November 1918 an efficient and experienced interallied committee existed which had perfected its organization through a process of trial and error. The Inter-Allied Maritime Transport Council, whose membership included two representatives from the

United States, was in direct touch with the Food Council, which coordinated the activities of distinct committees concerned with wheat, meat and fats, oils, seeds and sugar.²⁵ The operation of these organizations was suddenly disrupted by Hoover when he refused to work with them. Accordingly, they were virtually replaced in early January 1919 by the Supreme Council of Supply and Relief, a body that fell under Hoover's direction. The friction and inefficiency generated by the new organization finally led, in early February, to the creation of a Supreme Economic Council. The latter assumed control over all the existing organs for transport, blockade, food, and supplies. As one student of the armistice explained, the new body was "almost exactly similar to that which the British Government had proposed to set up the previous October."²⁶ Hoover clearly bore much of the responsibility for the delay in establishing an efficient Allied economic organization.

During the early evening of Wednesday, 6 November, the German delegation "for the conclusion of an armistice and to begin peace negotiations" departed from Berlin in a special train destined for Spa, where it arrived early Thursday morning. In Spa the delegation received instructions from Foch to travel via automobile into France. From the Franco-Belgian border, the Germans were escorted by French officers into the forest of Compiègne, arriving at their destination at seven o'clock on the morning of 8 November. Marshal Foch thereupon met with State Secretary Matthias Erzberger, General Detlev von Winterfeldt, Count Alfred Oberndorff, and Captain Vanselow at nine o'clock of the same morning.²⁷ It was during this initial meeting that the armistice conditions were read aloud to the Germans. They were particularly jolted by article 26: "The existing blockade conditions set up by the Allied and Associated Powers are to remain unchanged, German merchant ships found at sea remaining liable to capture."²⁸ In large measure, Germany had been defeated by the blockade. The delegates were stupefied. They were not prepared to sign a document that sentenced their country to prolonged hunger and continuing starvation.

Foch permitted a German courier to relay the armistice conditions to Spa. Paul von Hintze, former secretary of state for foreign affairs and still member of the Foreign Office, was with Hindenburg and the kaiser when the courier arrived. He immediately telegraphed the following to Erzberger:

[Upon] acceptance, the following explanation may be given in the form of

a protocol: "The German Government will obviously take care to complete its assumed obligations with all strength. But in the interest of candidness in the relationship between Germany and her opponents, the undersigned are forced to indicate by the dictates of conscience that the completion of these conditions must plunge the German people into anarchy and famine, and that, by no fault of the German Government and people, a situation can arise whereby the further observance of all obligations will be made unlikely."²⁹

It is improbable that Erzberger required any coaching from Hintze. Although all of the conditions were believed extreme, article 26 and the stipulation covering the delivery of rolling stock (article 7) were deemed inhumane as they would paralyze the work of feeding a civilian population already suffering the severe effects of malnutrition. In the Notes, which served as a written reply to the armistice conditions, the German delegation commented thus:

The effect of Article XXVI would be a one-sided continuation of sea warfare by the Allies and the United States during the armistice, which openly contradicts the purpose of an armistice.

A discontinuance of the blockade, rather, would be much more in keeping with a total armistice. In the meantime it might be decided that the sailing of German ships during the armistice is to proceed only on the basis of specific stipulations. These stipulations should in particular serve to sufficiently provision the German civil population.³⁰

This reply was certainly warranted by conditions then existing in Germany. Moreover, the Allies were not unaware of the enemy's internal predicament. On 8 September 1918, an article had appeared in the English periodical, *Weekly Dispatch*, entitled "The Huns of 1940." Celebrating the success of the hunger blockade, author F. W. Wile claimed that not only tens of thousands of "unborn Germans are destined for a life of physical inferiority" but thousands of Germans not yet conceived must also struggle against an equal fate.³¹ The famous founder of the Boy Scouts, Robert Baden-Powell, naively expressed his satisfaction that "the German race is being ruined; though the birth rate, from the German point of view, may look satisfactory, the irreparable harm done is quite different and much more serious."³² Britain's General Staff remained informed of Germany's plight by means of the weekly *Review of the Foreign Press*. Noting the difficulty inherent in obtaining accurate information from Germany's censored newspapers, a *Review*

from October 1917 praised the Social Democratic *Vorwärts* for acknowledging the "striking increase this year in infant mortality." The same article had placed the blame for the "lamentable increase" on the deterioration of the milk.³³ (Germany's wartime government had managed to downplay the effects of the blockade in most press reports. This buttressed its aim of presenting the German submarine campaign in the best possible light.)

Despite Erzberger's criticism of article 26, and the mounting evidence of German suffering, the Allied plenipotentiaries insisted that the blockade be maintained. Admiral George Hope, one of Britain's delegates, explained that his country was simply not prepared to discuss the subject.³⁴ In the midst of these discouraging proceedings, Erzberger received a message from the new German chancellor, Friedrich Ebert, authorizing him to accept the terms of armistice.³⁵ On the same day, 9 November, a coded telegram also arrived from Field Marshal von Hindenburg, supreme commander of the German armies, requesting that Erzberger make one further attempt to get the blockade raised, at least so far as it affected food supplies. But Hindenburg was also cognizant of Germany's hopeless military situation, and he concluded by advising Erzberger to sign the document even if it proved impossible to negotiate a reduction in its severity.³⁶

Under the weight of his authorization to sign the Allied terms, Erzberger hurriedly implored Ebert to request from President Wilson the immediate conclusion of a preliminary peace so as to avoid famine and anarchy in Germany. He then drafted a statement protesting the Allied terms, which he presented during the early morning hours of 11 November, before the signing of the armistice.

When, at 2:15 A.M. on 11 November, the combined delegates once again assembled for the purpose of ending the war, an argument ensued over article 26. Erzberger insisted that by means of this article an essential part of the war was being continued, namely, England's starvation policy. Count Oberndorff then joined by insisting that such procedure was "not fair." This remark angered Admiral Weymss, who quickly rejoined: "Not fair? Why, you sank our ships without discrimination."³⁷ The Germans failed to counter that, while this was indeed the case, the armistice, which was designed to end the war at sea, required the surrender of all the submarines responsible for such sinkings. But the Allied delegates were moved enough by the sincerity of the German

arguments to include an important addendum to article 26. This was the revised stipulation:

The existing blockade conditions set up by the Allied and Associated Powers are to remain unchanged, German merchant ships found at sea remaining liable to capture.

The Allies and the United States *contemplate* the provisioning of Germany during the Armistice as shall be found necessary.³⁸ (Emphasis added.)

Even though Erzberger's final statement underscored his continued anxiety, he sincerely believed that the rewritten article contained an important promise. In any case, at 5:00 A.M. on 11 November, the Germans attached their signatures to the armistice. Upon discharging this heavy responsibility, Erzberger read his protest.

The German Government will naturally endeavor with all its power to see that the conditions imposed are executed.

The undersigned plenipotentiaries realize that in some points, at their suggestion, a certain good will has been shown. . . .

[However], calling attention to their repeated written and oral declaration, the undersigned plenipotentiaries regard it . . . as their duty to insist strongly that the execution of this agreement can drive the German people into anarchy and famine.

After the discussions which preceded the Armistice, we expected terms which, while assuring our adversary complete and entire military security, would have terminated the sufferings of noncombatants, of women and children.

The German people, who stood steadfast against a world of enemies for fifty months, will preserve their liberty and their unity despite every kind of external pressure. A nation of seventy millions of people suffers, but it does not die.³⁹

Following a moment of silence, Foch responded with "Très bien." He then declared the negotiations at a close. The coming months demonstrated what little significance he had attached to Erzberger's words. As for Erzberger, his signature of the armistice had fateful consequences. Many of his countrymen never forgave him for acquiescing to the "shameful" terms of the Allies. On 26 August 1921, while reflecting on his political future during a respite in the Black Forest, Erzberger was assassinated by two fanatical Germans seeking redress for what they deemed the "crime of 11 November."

When Clemenceau, Foch, and Pétain had gathered on 24 October to frame armistice terms, they had agreed to maintain the blockade for the duration of the armistice. Indeed, there was logic in enforcing the blockade until the armistice's other terms had been fulfilled. But Foch had encouraged the belief that such fulfillment would follow rapidly. On 27 October he stated, for example, that only fifteen days would be necessary for total compliance. Once this period had passed, and the remaining terms had been fulfilled, Foch exclaimed that the delivery of foodstuffs to the Germans would be authorized.⁴⁰ The marshal's naive timetable, which undoubtedly influenced the perceptions of fellow officers and other Allied officials, was based on a complete misconception of conditions then prevalent in Germany. The German government was quite incapable of fulfilling the terms of surrender by the turn of the year, let alone within fifteen days. To point to just one of the government's impediments: no longer was there enough serviceable rolling stock in Germany to fulfill article 7, which specifically demanded the surrender of locomotives and wagons "in good working order."⁴¹ When the fifteen days were up, the blockade remained in force.

Article 34 of the armistice allowed for extension of the agreement after the initial thirty-six days. On 13 December the armistice was renewed for one month, renewal to begin 17 December. Then on 16 January it was again renewed for a month. Finally, on 16 February it was renewed indefinitely. The blockade remained in force throughout. In fact, although the peace treaty was finally signed on 28 June, the blockade was not terminated until 12 July—following the Reichstag's ratification of the document. Moreover, the practical application of the second paragraph of article 26, calling for the provisioning of the Germans, would be forthcoming only in March, after a protracted series of financial negotiations.

An armistice is not properly considered a permanent termination of hostilities; hence, Foch retained the same preeminent position during the prolongation of the armistice that he had enjoyed during the settlement of its terms. For Germany this proved unfortunate. When Hoover announced that the armistice had lifted the curtain on the greatest famine in history, his concern elicited no greater response from the commander-in-chief than had the protestations of the Germans at Compiègne.⁴² Meanwhile, the reaction within Germany was given expression by Gustav Stresemann, a future chancellor and foreign minister of the Weimar Republic. Still persuaded that the principles of President Wilson were to

serve as a foundation for the armistice, Stresemann asked how the terms of 11 November could possibly suggest a peace of understanding, a league of nations, or other high ideals? “Es sind genau dieselben Bedingungen, die Rom Karthago im dritten punischen Krieg auferlegte” (“It is exactly the same agreement that Rome thrust upon Carthage in the third Punic War”).⁴³ Equally agitated by the severity of the armistice, Wilhelm Solf, Germany’s secretary of state for foreign affairs, sent the following plea to Wilson:

[After] a blockade of 50 months . . . the surrender of the means of transportation, and the support of the occupation forces simultaneously with the continuation of the blockade will make the food situation in Germany quite desperate and will bring about the death by starvation of millions of men, women and children.

We were forced to accept these conditions, but we would like to draw the attention of President Wilson, solemnly and earnestly, to the fact that the enforcing of these conditions will bring about in the German people the opposite of that mental attitude which is a premise for the rebuilding of a community of nations and a permanent peace.

The German people therefore turn in this last hour once more to the President of the United States with the request to bring about an amelioration by the Allies of these destructive conditions.⁴⁴

Solf’s telegram, which was sent on 10 November, may have reinforced Wilson’s irritation with the Allies, particularly with Britain’s linkage of freedom of the seas and blockade. When the president addressed a joint session of Congress on 11 November, he included the following observations in his statement: “Hunger does not breed reform; it breeds madness and all the ugly distempers that make an ordered life impossible.”⁴⁵ But despite the high regard in which Wilson was held, it would have been exceedingly difficult for him to alter the conditions under which Germany had surrendered. Moreover, he placed too much value in working with the Allied leaders, hopeful as he was of ultimately realizing his League of Nations dream, to create serious discord over the armistice.

Thus did Foch retain his overriding prerogative regarding the armistice. Only in matters pertaining to the sea was the French marshal inclined to seek guidance. And in this domain, advice came readily from the British Admiralty, represented appropriately by Admiral Edward Browning, president of the Allied Naval Armistice Commission. Keynes described Browning as “a most surly and ignorant sea-dog with a real

and large hook instead of a hand, in the highest nautical tradition, with no idea in his head but the extirpation and further humiliation of a despised and defeated enemy.”⁴⁶ The admiral was not likely to soften the Allied terms in the weeks and months to come.

To be sure, the armistice agreement was severe in its treatment of the defeated Germans. It incorporated little of the spirit that Erzberger and his colleagues had read, perhaps mistakenly, into the Fourteen Points. These men left Compiègne with the heavy burden of an agreement that their countrymen were certain to berate. Given the suffering endured by the Germans during the previous four years, one is warranted in viewing the German delegates with some admiration. It required courage to return to Germany with the explicit news that the country had indeed lost the war.

On the other hand, it would have required uncommon foresight as well as courage for the Allied delegates to deliberate with Erzberger on the basis of equality. Such nobility, more common in a previous era, was one of the many casualties of World War I. The tragedy of the armistice—and later of the treaty—is that the blood, destruction, propaganda, and suspicion of four years prevented the most logical of men from viewing the issues objectively. For such tragedy it is impossible to assign blame.

But the armistice was not a statement of absolute capitulation. The incorporation within the twenty-sixth article of the declaration that the Allies would contemplate the provisioning of Germany during the period of the armistice placed a heavy responsibility upon the shoulders of the Allied delegates. By means of this addendum, the 11 November armistice became a conditional surrender. In coming months the Allies demonstrated to the Germans that they were incapable of grasping, or were unwilling to heed, the vital proviso contained in article 26.

NOTES

1. The term *Allies* has been used here rather than the more cumbersome, if correct, *Allied and Associated Powers*. Throughout this chapter either *Allies* or *Associated Powers* has been utilized to denote the same entity: i.e., that combination of governments that opposed the Central Powers during World War I. Significantly, the very need to concoct such a term as *Allied and Associated Powers* tends to substantiate the fact that mistrust existed amongst this loose alliance.

2. A particularly good examination of this sentiment is provided in Arno J. Mayer, *Political Origins of the New Diplomacy* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1959), pp. 313–367.

3. The dilemma of the Allied leaders is well represented by two quotations from David Lloyd George. Shortly after the German surrender, the prime minister questioned the desirability of allowing Germany to surrender while still on foreign soil prior to “giving the German people a real taste of war” (quoted in Arno J. Mayer, *The Politics and Diplomacy of Peacemaking* [New York: Knopf, 1967], p. 69). On another occasion, certainly within a few months of making the above statement, Lloyd George pleaded that the Allies “do honor to a brave people with whom we have had but one deadly quarrel. They fought to the end with desperate valour” (quoted in Walter Hahn, *Der Ernährungskrieg* [Hamburg: Hanseatische Verlagsanstalt, 1939], p. 65).

4. The chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Henry Cabot Lodge, exclaimed that Germany must not be offered “a negotiated peace. It must be a dictated peace.” See *Congressional Record*, 23 August 1918, pp. 9393–9394.

5. Mayer, *Politics and Diplomacy of Peacemaking*, p. 69.

6. Clemenceau’s opinion with respect to the Fourteen Points was well founded. Wilson’s own secretary of state, Robert Lansing, objected to the president’s peace formula because it was “too indefinite in specific application.” See Lansing, *The Peace Negotiations* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1921), p. 191.

7. *Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States, 1918, Suppl.* (Washington: U. S. Government Printing Office, 1933), 1:15.

8. House to Lansing, 30 October 1918, *ibid.*, 1:421–423.

9. Wilson to House, 30 October 1918, *ibid.*, 1:423.

10. Wilson to House, 31 October, 1918, *ibid.*, 1:427–428.

11. Seymour, ed., *Intimate Papers of Colonel House*, 4:184.

12. *Ibid.*; House to Lansing, 3 November 1918, *Foreign Relations, 1918, Suppl.* 1:455–457.

13. Harry Rudin, *Armistice 1918* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1944), p. 177.

14. Quoted in *ibid.*, p. 181.

15. “La guerre! C’est une chose trop grave pour la confier à des militaires.” The remark was made in 1886. See John Bartlett, *Familiar Quotations*, 14th ed. (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1968), p. 786.

16. John Maynard Keynes, “Dr. Melchior: A Defeated Enemy,” in *Two Memoirs* (London: Hart-Davis, 1949), pp. 15–16. Prior to the war, Foch was a professor at the Ecole de Guerre, where he passionately evangelized the necessity for offensive ardor. Although the portrait given by Keynes is severe, it does not misrepresent the aggressively military character of the French marshal. See

also Correlli Barnett, *The Swordbearers* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1975), pp. 260–261.

17. Rudin, *Armistice 1918*, pp. 169 and 285.

18. Seymour, ed., *Intimate Papers of Colonel House*, 4:117–118.

19. Suda L. Bane and Ralph H. Lutz, eds., *The Blockade of Germany after the Armistice* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1942), pp. 8–9.

20. Suda L. Bane and Ralph H. Lutz, eds., *Organization of American Relief in Europe* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1943), pp. 26–27.

21. Frank M. Surface and R. L. Bland, *American Food in the World War and Reconstruction Period* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1931), pp. 23–24.

22. Herbert Hoover, *An American Epic* (Chicago: H. Regnery, 1960), 2:256.

23. John Maynard Keynes, *The Economic Consequences of the Peace* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Howe, 1920), p. 50.

24. Quotations found in Mayer, *Politics and Diplomacy of Peacemaking*, pp. 275–276.

25. Frederick Maurice, *The Armistice of 1918* (London: Oxford University Press, 1943), p. 64.

26. *Ibid.*, p. 65.

27. Matthias Erzberger, *Erlebnisse im Weltkrieg* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlagsanstalt, 1920), pp. 325–331.

28. Germany, Waffenstillstandskommission, *Der Waffenstillstand 1918–1919*, (Berlin: Deutsche Verlagsgesellschaft für Politik und Geschichte, 1928), 1:49. In German the article reads: “Die Blockade der alliierten und assoziierten Mächte bleibt im gegenwärtigen Umfange bestehen. Deutsche Handelsschiffe die auf hoher See gefunden werden, unterliegen der Wegnahme.”

29. Germany, Reichskanzlei, *Amtliche Urkunden zur Vorgeschichte des Waffenstillstandes* (Berlin: Deutsche Verlagsgesellschaft für Politik und Geschichte, 1927), p. 258.

30. *Der Waffenstillstand*, 1:48–49.

31. Quoted in Werner Schäffer, *Krieg gegen Frauen und Kinder* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlagsanstalt, 1940), p. 7. Note the date of this publication.

32. Quoted in Max Rubner, ed., *The Starving of Germany* (Berlin: Berliner medizinische Gesellschaft, 1919), p. 6.

33. Great Britain, General Staff, *Food Supplement to the Review of the Foreign Press* (London: H. M. Stationery Office, 1917–1919), p. 435.

34. Erzberger, *Erlebnisse*, p. 333.

35. House to Lansing, 11 November 1918, *Foreign Relations, 1918, Suppl.* 1:493–494. Prince Max surrendered the chancellorship to Ebert on 9 November, thereby marking the end of the Second Reich and the unsteady beginning of Germany’s first experiment with a representative government. The ensuing two-three months are collectively known as “the November Revolution.”

36. Rudin, *Armistice 1918*, pp. 379–380.

37. Erzberger, *Erlebnisse*, p. 335.

38. *Der Waffenstillstand*, 1:49. The added sentence in German reads, “Die Alliierten und die Vereinigten Staaten nehmen in Aussicht, während des Dauer des Waffenstillstandes, Deutschland in dem als notwendig an erkannten Masse mit Lebensmitteln zu versorgen.”

39. *Ibid.*, 1:73. The reader might note that Erzberger’s statement is very similar to the message he received from Hintze.

40. Maurice, *Armistices*, p. 47.

41. See House to Lansing, 11 November 1918, *Foreign Relations, 1918, Suppl.* 1:495.

42. Hoover, *American Epic*, 2:239.

43. Gustav Stresemann, *Von der Revolution bis zum Frieden von Versailles* (Berlin: Staatspolitischer Verlag, 1919), p. 42.

44. “Eine Note an Wilson um Milderung der Bedingungen,” *Berliner Tagblatt*, 11 November 1918, evening edition, p. 1.

45. *Congressional Record*, 11 November 1918, pp. 11537–11539.

46. Keynes, “Dr. Melchior,” *Two Memoirs*, p. 13.

4.

Gold, Food, Ships, and Diplomats

[We] depended far too much on French opinion.

—Sir James Headlam-Morley

During the waning weeks of the war, Herbert Hoover acquired an appreciation of the unique and terrible conditions under which many Europeans were suffering. However genuine Hoover’s concern was, it did not yet extend to the suffering Germans. Upon reflection, he chose to publicize his evaluation of European conditions so that Americans would have some awareness of the difficulties that their food administrator would face upon his arrival in Europe. On 12 November 1918, in an address widely disseminated by the press, Hoover told a special conference of state food administrators that Americans would have to survey a Europe

with the whole of its population on rations or varying degrees of privation and large numbers who have been under the German heel actually starving. The group of gamblers in human life who have done this thing are now in flight, leaving anarchy and famine to millions of helpless people . . . The war has been brought to an end in no small measure by starvation itself and it cannot be our business to maintain starvation after peace.¹

In conclusion, Hoover insisted that the United States would be foolish to neglect measures that might enable these millions of suffering people to return to health and self-sufficiency. “Famine is the mother of anarchy. From the inability of governments to secure food for their people, grows revolution and chaos.”²

Prior to his departure, Hoover made a commitment to alleviate the aforementioned distress by arranging for the transport of 250,000 tons of foodstuffs to the Europeans.³ This unilateral commitment was unwise for, while Hoover’s intentions were undoubtedly humane, the already suspicious Allies could only view his procedure as a further sign that America intended to control the Europeans’ economic life without the

courtesy of consulting them ahead of time. Hoover may have anticipated trouble, for, on 16 November, he again issued a statement analyzing the food predicament in Europe. He resolutely explained that his actions were based on an exceedingly urgent situation. Originating from the decks of the *Olympic* prior to the liner's sailing, Hoover's latest proclamation even addressed the issue of Germany's crisis.

There is a great problem in the situation of the enemy people—about 60,000,000. This problem is not one of going to their relief. It is a problem of relaxing the watertight blockade, which continues through the armistice, sufficiently so that they may secure for themselves the bare necessities that will give stable government. Unless anarchy can be put down and stability of government can be obtained in these enemy states, there will be nobody to make peace with and nobody to pay the bill to France and Belgium for the fearful destruction that has been done. . . . Justice requires that government be established able to make amends for wrongs done, and it cannot be accomplished through spread of anarchy.⁴

Hoover's forewarning was given substance by a classified State Department report that arrived in Washington on the day of the food administrator's departure. Particularly alarmed over the prospect of revolution, the author of the report made note of the physical misery in Germany resulting from lack of food.

The military terms of the armistice have been received with complete apathy. . . . The terms of the armistice which require the surrender of rolling stock and transportation equipment, however, have evoked a wail of genuine terror. There is probably enough food in Germany to tide over the economic crisis during a period of three or four months [i.e., until March 1919 at the latest]. But it is badly distributed and Germany needs all her transportation facilities to prevent famine in the centers of population. Protests against the terms of the armistice which seem to spell starvation have been general.⁵

Upon his arrival in London on 21 November, Hoover discovered that the British were little inclined to be magnanimous in considering their former enemy's food situation. In fact, he found the Allies quite irritated over Germany's persistent appeals to Washington and the effect that these appeals were apparently having on the American attitude. Of course, the unified front of European opposition that Hoover encountered in Great Britain, and which troubled him well into 1919, was to

some degree of his own making. But the depth of feeling against Germany was not provoked by Hoover. "Sir John Beale of the British Food Ministry called upon me the day I arrived and urged that I not discuss the food blockade on Germany publicly anymore, as they were opposed to relaxing it 'until the Germans learn a few things.'"⁶

A very significant complication, and one that affected Hoover, was England's mid-December election. Being forced into political posturing proved unfortunate for a government that needed to confront Europe's immediate postwar problems in a clear-headed fashion. Ideological extremism had arisen in British politics as a result of the war, Bolshevism, and Woodrow Wilson's mass appeal. His Liberal Party in disarray, Prime Minister Lloyd George allowed himself to be maneuvered into an uncompromising position on the side of the superpatriotic Tories. Recognizing the uncertainty of the prime minister's political future, the Tories were able to force Lloyd George to do their bidding. This meant exploiting the "anti-Hun" sentiment gripping a nationalistic country at the close of a difficult war. To Hoover's chagrin, Lloyd George chose political expediency over his own good judgment. (Once the prime minister had capitulated to the irresponsible fringe—those stating that England should "squeeze the German lemon until the pips squeak"—the wisdom of his choice was forfeited.) In December 1918 few Englishmen were prepared to be receptive to German accounts of starvation. According to the generally accepted consensus, appeals for food were likely to be another instance of "Hun" trickery.

In the midst of this politically charged atmosphere, the *Daily News* managed to retain a degree of objectivity in its coverage of Germany. In an article of late November, the newspaper reported:

The terrible efficiency of the Allied blockade of Germany is convincingly demonstrated in a report prepared by the well-informed correspondent who had from time to time furnished "The Daily News" with information, its accuracy fully established by events, concerning internal conditions in the Central Empires. "It is probably not too much to say," writes this authority, "that quite apart from the question of defeat in the field, Germany would have had to throw up the sponge merely as the result of our economic warfare."

The great bulk of the population in the large towns and industrial districts (a Swedish journalist resident for years in Germany puts it as high as 95 percent) are now stated to have been existing for at least two years in a condition of "approximate starvation."⁷

The substance of this article was soon confirmed by the reports of British officers sent to Germany to investigate the country's social and economic situation. These observations, which began in December 1918 and continued through April 1919, were to be of cardinal importance in the gradual revision of Great Britain's policy toward the blockade. On a more personal level, they caused Lloyd George to regret the extreme position to which he had tied himself during the 1918 election campaign.

The earliest military communiqué to arrive in Britain was written jointly by Brigadier General H.C. Rees and Lieutenant A. Campbell after their sojourn in Germany between 12 and 15 December. General Rees opened the report:

Germany appears to be completely beaten and disorganized. . . . The nation as a whole is on the verge of starvation. The scarcity of food is much more pronounced in the large towns than in the country districts, but the reduction of the food rations had been carried out so gradually that the masses are hardly aware of the extent of the reduction.⁸

Campbell adjoined a separate statement.

I talked with very many Germans of all classes. . . . They are hungry, very hungry; that is, all except the superrich, who can afford to spend 100 marks or more per diem on food. The one question in Berlin is: "When are the American or English troops coming, and will they give us food?" . . . They fear that food will not be given to them until all danger of a Bolshevik movement is past.⁹

The Americans were not inclined to await British reports on the state of the German economy. On 11 December Hoover sent Ellis Loring Dresel to Germany.¹⁰ At the same time he asked the Ebert government for a complete account of Germany's food and economic situation.¹¹ Ebert delegated this task to the Reichsgesundheitsamt (National Health Office), and, in early January 1919, Hoover received a detailed report showing the injurious effects of the blockade upon the health of the German people as well as a record itemizing the available supplies from the three crop years 1916, 1917, and 1918.¹² The situation outlined appeared to be a critical one.

Unwilling to accept Ebert's report at face value, Hoover sent a second mission to Berlin to determine the accuracy of the submitted data. Made up of Doctors Alonzo Taylor and Vernon Kellogg, as well as Colonel W.

B. Ryan, the mission reported that, as a result of the diversion of manpower and industry required by a wartime economy, Germany's grain production had plunged from thirty million tons prewar to only sixteen million tons at the harvest of 1918. The ration of bread (by 1918, a scarcely digestible concoction) had fallen to less than eighteen hundred calories per day per person, and large imports would be required to maintain this figure. The condition in regard to fats and meats was much worse. The production of this category of food, which before the war had exceeded three million tons per year, had dropped to less than one million tons. The population as a whole was about twenty percent below normal weight, and the effects of such malnutrition were reflected in the mortality statistics. In Berlin the annual deathrate had increased from 13.5 per thousand in 1913 to 19.6 per thousand. Moreover, whereas the birthrate had decreased from 6.1 per thousand to less than 1 per thousand, child mortality had jumped by thirty percent. Of those children surviving, the Hoover mission estimated that a third were suffering from diseases specifically associated with malnutrition. "Worse still, our men reported that actual starvation had beset the lower-income groups in the cities, and that there were eight hundred deaths daily in North Germany from starvation or diseases caused by undernourishment. They reported that the food shortage was worse after the Armistice than before."¹³

While Hoover's emissaries were confirming the accuracy of the Ebert report, Americans not associated with the food administrator were relaying statements that gave further evidence of the need for urgent action in Germany. A State Department report, dated 24 November, attested to the immediate need for food in support of those who were working for order. "The leaders of the Spartacus group are referring to the reports of relief of the food situation by the Allies as chimerical. [Richard] Müller of the Executive Committee of the Workmen's Council of Greater Berlin recently stated that these reports were lies invented by the bourgeois press in order to aid the capitalists."¹⁴ Another message forwarded to the State Department claimed that a

reliable informant who has just returned from Berlin declares that the one hope of the Germans is Wilson, and that, if the Allies impose too drastic terms, the result will be to drive Germany towards Bolshevism. . . . In the industrial centers, particularly among the miners in Saxony, there is widespread undernourishment. There is imperative need for food to save Germany: some cities have a food supply sufficient for some months, some for only a few weeks.¹⁵

President Wilson was becoming increasingly aware of the German situation. The information coming to the Department of State, combined with Hoover's petitions for support vis-à-vis the Allies, motivated the president to take a significant step. Upon Wilson's direction, Colonel House presented the Allied governments with a memorandum encompassing Hoover's views of how European relief should be administered. Dated 1 December, the memorandum called for the establishment of a director general of relief. Under this individual's guidance, the enemy's merchant marine would be brought into service as early as possible. The president explained:

I have carefully considered the suggestion made by Mr. Balfour to the Supreme War Council at the time the terms of armistice to be offered the enemy were under discussion to the effect that the enemy should be required to place under the operation and control of the Allied Maritime Transport Council the enemy merchantile fleet in enemy and neutral ports. It appears to me that in practice there would be many embarrassments presented by this plan, and that the principle should be maintained that this fleet be used as to its carrying capacity for purposes of relief and be under the direction of the Director General of Relief.¹⁶

As one might expect, these proposals were not accepted benignly by the Allies. But there was more to the memorandum. Wilson argued further that the bulk of the German merchant fleet should be divided between the United States and Great Britain, with the proposed director general having the authority to determine both the source and the destination of all cargoes. And the memorandum asked that, given the fact that the preponderance of world foodstuffs came from the United States, the director general be an American; that is, the United States food administrator assume the post.¹⁷

Although the European Allies had hoped America would cooperate in demanding Germany's surrender of her merchant marine, they were opposed to Wilson's plan for the fleet's administration. The Europeans wanted all resources pooled, or held in common, by the Allied and Associated Powers. They continued to believe that the existing interallied agencies were appropriate to handle relief work. Whereas new agencies might create confusion and require additional expense, the preexisting institutions could simply be expanded to accommodate additional work loads. Most importantly, the Europeans preferred an interallied board.

consisting of two members from each of the Associated governments, to centralized control under a director general of relief who was likely to be manipulated by American interests. This last point had particular significance. On Hoover's authority, the War Department and the Food Administration had already shipped 250,000 tons of foodstuffs to Europe.¹⁸ It appeared to the Europeans that Hoover was attempting to saddle them with a *fait accompli*. Their suspicions were not lessened when they learned that American cold-storage facilities for pork and dairy products were seriously overcrowded.

For the American food administrator, December 1918 proved a particularly difficult month in which to deal with the Europeans. A pattern was set on 2 and 3 December in London when, during a discussion among Lloyd George, Clemenceau, and Orlando, two commissions were established for the purpose of investigating both Germany's food problem and her capacity to make war reparations.¹⁹ Forthcoming conferences further established the kinship between these issues. But for the moment the chief significance of this gathering was the curious absence of an American during its proceedings.

Once again, on 12 December, the Europeans established their predilection for meetings to which Americans were not invited when Lord Reading (Great Britain), Etienne Clémentel (France), and Silvio Crespi (Italy) presented Hoover with a new relief scheme that they had devised earlier. Although it was a compromise proposal, offering Hoover the position of chairman, it retained the old idea of a long-term interallied pool. As before, Hoover found the plan totally unacceptable. Discouraged, and troubled by the apparent intrigue, he wrote that the European conception "would subordinate and jeopardize prevention of starvation until complete agreement of all four governments on every point—political, financial, transportation, and source of supply, instead of mere agreement on general policy as proposed by the President."²⁰

In examining the rationale for Europe's firm adherence to the idea of a pool, one should remain aware of a fundamental problem. The Old and New Worlds were continuing to play out a long-running conflict. A sense of superiority still colored the perceptions of Europeans in their relationships with the sometimes boorish Americans. Indeed, without European forebears, the United States was inconceivable. But the Europeans also possessed an appreciation for the colossal power and potential of the United States. Unfortunately, the Americans seemed only too aware of this themselves. Wilson's pronouncements, which aimed at reshaping

the Old World in the image of the New, increased the apprehensions of many Europeans. The European leaders, especially the French, justifiably feared that many Americans were ready to use the economic might of the United States to force an acceptance of the president's idealistic proposals as the basis of peace.²¹ Hoover appeared to stand in the forefront of such ambition.

The food administrator was losing patience with his European counterparts. On 10 December he forwarded a message to Colonel House: "In a broad sense, there is no longer any military or naval value attaching to the maintenance of the blockade of enemy territory. Its retention has political value in the right settlement of ultimate political issues, but its principal incidence is now economic in character."²² After three weeks in London, where he had vainly attempted to win the Europeans to his point of view, in mid-December Hoover abruptly transferred his headquarters to Paris.

Although the president had by now arrived in Paris, Hoover hardly found the French capital an improvement over London. "The problem was one of higher statesmanship struggling against the miasmic atmosphere of Paris."²³ And more than ever, French officials and reporters were responsible for poisoning the atmosphere. Samuel Shartle, who served the United States as a member of the Armistice Commission, provided some insight into France's attitude, particularly as it concerned the United States.

The [French] papers gave the main points of the Armistice Agreement and chronicled the acts and movements of the French, English, and Belgian leaders. There were accounts of the heroic parts these countries played in the War and of congratulatory messages exchanged among these leaders, but silence as to *l'Amerique*. Had we then played such an insignificant part in winning the war? Perhaps it was an oversight and a small matter, but it was symptomatic. The feeling that our decisive, even if comparatively few, accomplishments toward saving the victory was [sic] not receiving the spontaneous recognition that might be expected from the chief beneficiaries grew among our soldiers.²⁴

Directly, Shartle's observations had little to do with Hoover's growing dilemma: how to get food into Germany. But as the American armistice commissioner stated, what he was witnessing "was symptomatic." In the first instance, it was symptomatic of a disregard—indeed, a resentment—of America's assumptions regarding the fashion in which the

postwar world should be shaped. The French realized that a significant part of the Wilsonian program would have to be incorporated into the final peace settlement. One means for limiting just how significant this part would be was simply to ignore its existence. Such determination to maintain the status quo had to affect Hoover's program, for Hoover could not separate himself from President Wilson.

But the French attitude was symptomatic of a far more significant condition. A resentment of America's maneuverings in European affairs could not even approach the animosity that France held at that time for Germany. To be sure the French retained an enormous respect for Germany's power and her potential for recovery. But respect was coupled with simple hatred, not with wisdom. Nothing so clearly demonstrates the brutal milieu of postwar Europe, so well represented in those months by France, as the unforgiving—and unforgivable—remark of Clemenceau, recorded by Count Harry Kessler: "Germany lay prostrate. France gave open vent to her desire for our extermination, expressing it monumentally in her Prime Minister's words, 'There are twenty million Germans too many.'"²⁵

With the armistice agreement due to expire on 16 December, the various commissioners assembled on 13 December to extend the original terms for an additional month. As before, article 26 voiced the Allied intention of providing food for Germany "as shall be found necessary"; but the elapsed time since 11 November had demonstrated the great difficulties involved in attacking this problem.

Although various British delegates continued to frustrate Hoover's attempts to reach an accord in dealing with Germany, it was French officials who blocked his efforts more and more. In reference to the ongoing armistice exchanges, Shartle wrote that "the French . . . took an uncompromising attitude and assumed a leading part in the direction of affairs."²⁶ On 8 December, in a letter to his wife, Shartle presciently noted that "peace is inevitable and that whether it will or not, the world must reckon with the Germans—that is, a nation cannot be wiped out and it will be much better to help this nation help the world than to make of it an encumbrance."²⁷ Clemenceau did not sympathize with Shartle's observations.

On 13 December, while the commissioners deliberated on the extension of the armistice, French and Belgian financial representatives were secretly meeting for the purpose of negotiating a supplement to the original terms.²⁸ The German government had ended hostilities with 570

million dollars in specie. The French and Belgian officials concluded that Germany should be strictly prohibited from disposing of this gold, or any other liquid assets, on the grounds that it was a pledge over which the Allies held a lien for the purpose of reparation.²⁹

By mid-December Hoover was confronted with several distinct, if related, problems: the continued existence of the Allied blockade; the obdurate determination of the Europeans to pool all resources, including American foodstuffs and Germany's merchant marine, in the face of America's equal determination to retain a decisive economic role in Allied affairs; the vast supplies of foodstuffs now within sight of Europe but with, as yet, no specific destination; the increasing callousness of the French toward both their former enemy and their recent benefactor; and the new determination of French and Belgian officials to prohibit Germany's use of gold in purchasing food. For the American food administrator, the complex problem of feeding the hard-pressed neutrals, let alone the Germans, was overwhelming.

When Wilson arrived at Brest on 14 December, Colonel House immediately informed him of Hoover's failure to secure approval of the American plan for the organization of European relief. The following day, after arriving in Paris, the president took the question up with Prime Ministers Lloyd George, Clemenceau, and Orlando. To Hoover's amazement, all "readily agreed that I should be appointed sole Director of Relief and Rehabilitation, directly responsible to the 'Big Four.'"³⁰

This surprising development, when coupled with the fact that the British financial delegates again countered with their pooling idea upon Hoover's renewed presentation of the Big Four's decision to the Allied Blockade Committee, lends credence to a remark by Sir James Headlam-Morley. A minor British official at Paris, Sir James wrote that "the whole difficulty arises from the fact that neither the British nor the Americans have any competent diplomatist among the plenipotentiaries. They are all amateurs, and especially the Prime Minister [Lloyd George], who will not even read the documents put before him."³¹ The almost instantaneous agreement that Wilson obtained on 15 December, and the opposition that Hoover once again encountered on 22 December, demonstrates a very serious lack of communication between the Supreme War Council (in this case, Lloyd George) and the advisory teams of its members.³² It also points up the differences between the civilian leaders (the Supreme War Council) and the military authorities who continued to control the terms of armistice.

During his 22 December meeting with the Allied Blockade Committee, Hoover presented a further proposal for which he had Wilson's backing. Given the difficulties posed by the establishment of a new relief organization, Hoover proposed to get food into the famine areas by immediately rescinding the blockade as it applied to neutral and liberated countries. He also recommended that the neutrals be allowed to reexport food to Germany in exchange for commodities (not specie) that did not compete with Allied exports.³³ To Hoover's satisfaction the committee approved this portion of his proposal on 24 December, and news of its action was quickly disseminated by the world press. The food administrator immediately notified the affected neutral and liberated nations directly of the decision, and these proceeded at once to make contracts with Hoover for the delivery of grain and fats.

With this crack in the blockade, Hoover turned to the task of reinstating to Germany the Baltic Sea fishing rights preempted since the signature of the armistice. Here was a situation of some peculiarity. It will be recalled that by means of article 26 blockade conditions established during the war were to remain unchanged. In fact, not only did the period of armistice witness an extension of the blockade into the Baltic Sea, where Germany had continued to maintain minimal commerce with the Scandinavian countries, but the British Admiralty ordered the abrogation of German fishing rights in these waters. To a people already hungry as a result of the wartime blockade was thus added the additional hardship of no longer being allowed to fish for food. German reaction to these new circumstances was expressed by the liberal *Berliner Tageblatt*.

The entry of the British into the Baltic Sea, a move which they could not achieve throughout the entire war, has paralyzed the traffic between the German and Nordic harbors in one blow. The English have imposed on the German Baltic coast a hunger blockade in depriving Germany of places of supply it had even during the war. This has been done after the conclusion of an Armistice in which Article XXVI expressly stated that Germany, during the Armistice, would be supplied with all necessary food. . . . There are steamers in Scandinavian harbors with fish products intended for Germany which perish because the English have extended their hunger blockade.³⁴

Upon his arrival in Paris Hoover received authorization from General John Pershing and Admiral Wilson Benson to command at any time the

services of either the American army or the American navy. The situation concerning the Baltic seemed to require the navy's services. On 25 December Hoover called upon Benson, the American chief of naval operations, to intervene in blockade policy, attempting to have it relaxed for fishing purposes.

We have recently received many complaints from the Germans regarding the limitation on German fishing for food purposes, which has reduced their food intake so that they have even less food in this particular than before the Armistice. In view of the Armistice provisions assuring food supplies, it appears to me as the first matter to look into.³⁵

Despite the large role that America had played in formulating and implementing blockade policy during the war's final two years, Admiral Benson met with no success in his attempt to get the British Admiralty to relax its restrictions on German fishing rights. "[It is] simply a stupid action of admirals ignorant of food problems," observed Benson.³⁶

Benson's report disappointed Hoover, but far worse news quickly followed. On 31 December Hoover's frustrating month ended with an astonishing reversal. A sudden joint meeting of the British, French, and Italian members of the Allied Fats Executive, the Wheat Executive, the Allied Maritime Transport Council, and the Allied Blockade Committee, together with various European military leaders, was held in London without notice to Hoover, indeed, without the presence of any American. Those attending resolved to reverse the 24 December decision of the Allied Blockade Committee relaxing the blockade. The tight blockade was reimposed on all of Europe save the Allied countries. Neutrals were immediately notified by the Blockade Committee that they would have to repudiate any food orders just contracted with the United States. And the decision did not apply simply to neutral orders. The Allied Fats Executive canceled all of its American orders, including two hundred million pounds of bacon already cured and packed for the British, and the Wheat Executive annulled a contract for one hundred million bushels of American wheat.³⁷ Every outstanding contract with American processors of beef, pork, and dairy products, and with the Grain Corporation for wheat, seed, beans, cotton, and other crops, was broken. In effect the Allies were evading the problem of starvation. According to Winston Churchill, officials in both France and England were deliberately refusing to face the facts. Harassed by subtle indictments of abetting the

enemy, they deluded themselves into believing that they were doing their duty by "haggling and stippling."³⁸

Hoover, whose anxiety over a hungry Europe had markedly increased since his arrival in London, refused to endorse the Allied action. In a 1 January memorandum to President Wilson, he emphasized the need to modify the blockade. Pointing out that the weapon was now of economic significance only, Hoover solicited the president's immediate consideration of its character since "political values may be entirely destroyed by its present harsh action."³⁹ Since American food was already en route to the neutrals, and with the British apparently leading the opposition to American food contracts, Hoover followed his appeal to Wilson by meeting once again with Admiral Benson. "I asked him," Hoover wrote, "if the Allies had any right to stop ships flying the American flag and carrying food to people dying of starvation. . . . Being a roughhewn sailor, the Admiral replied: 'Not as long as there is a ship left in our fleet.' I suggested that he tell this to the Allied admirals. He relished his mission."⁴⁰

With such assurance from Admiral Benson, Hoover informed the neutrals that their contracts with the United States would be filled regardless of the new blockade measures.⁴¹ Moreover, fully aware that the food situation in France and Italy did not warrant a repudiation of contracts with the United States, Hoover skillfully demonstrated to officials from both countries how inappropriate it was to follow the lead of the British. On 3 January the food administrator met with Ernest Vilgrain, food minister of France, and Silvio Crespi, food minister of Italy.

I informed them that . . . it would be my duty instantly to notify our Treasury representatives in Paris to cancel all agreements for advances to them for food purchases—present and future. I added that if they did not need the food, I would divert it to the neutrals and the starving areas of Central and Eastern Europe via American flag-ships under the protection of the U.S. Navy.

At once Vilgrain and Crespi protested that they had no funds with which to buy from the distant markets, and that they had not realized the implications of the London actions.⁴²

Vilgrain and Crespi thereupon repudiated the actions of both the Fats Executive and the Wheat Executive.

Hoover's victory remained incomplete. The neutrals were not allowed the option of reexporting to Germany any of the acquired foodstuffs. Given this caveat, far more food than required was en route for Europe. Hoover initiated a policy of storing the surplus fats and wheat in Copenhagen, Antwerp, Amsterdam, and Rotterdam. But his financial dealings had placed him in a most unenviable position. At one point, over 1.2 billion pounds of fats and 100 million bushels of wheat were in European storage. According to Hoover, his consignment obligations exceeded 550 million dollars.⁴³ Humanitarian inclination aside, Hoover was desperate to open the door for German purchase of foodstuffs lest the government's considerable borrowings lead to the collapse of American bankers and farmers.

The financial reversal, which came as such a shock to Hoover on 31 December, was tempered by the Europeans' long-awaited acquiescence in the struggle over relief administration. On 23 December the French foreign minister, Stephen Pichon, announced his country's willingness to accept the American method of provisioning Europe. By this time the British had received the first reports on the terrible conditions in Germany. Despite the hostility so recently evidenced in the election campaign, these reports immediately softened England's attitude toward her former enemy and materially hastened the negotiations necessary for establishing a relief apparatus. On 31 December 1918 Great Britain, France, Italy, and the United States agreed on the establishment of a Supreme Council of Supply and Relief.⁴⁴ Although the new council would incorporate the old pooling scheme of two delegates per government, it was agreed that Hoover should be made the director general of relief in Europe. This was no small achievement, for many in Europe were persuaded that Hoover wished to be "food dictator."⁴⁵

Such anxiety was unfounded. The establishment of the Supreme Council of Supply and Relief proved a hollow victory for the United States. Despite Hoover's tremendous efforts, the food blockade remained in effect. From its inception the new council was watched closely by Foch, and Hoover was quick to discover the meagerness of his powers. Although he possessed acknowledged authority in the area of food supplies, the problem of relief went beyond food. It involved questions of finance, shipping, inland transportation, and blockade—all of which had to be coordinated. The Supreme Council of Supply and Relief, which had proven so difficult to establish, enjoyed a tenure of less than two months and was incapable of coordinating all of these vital provinces.

Such weakness was not immediately evident. On 11 January 1919 the new council held its first session, and Hoover was officially designated director general of relief.⁴⁶ Following two months of inaction, at least from the German perspective, the council at last confronted the problem of fulfilling the Allied obligations of the armistice agreement as set forth in article 26. The French delegates (Clémentel and Vilgrain) proposed an examination of Germany's shipping situation.

It will be remembered that the United States had opposed the Allied plan to utilize the German merchant marine in an Allied shipping pool.⁴⁷ But given an organization established loosely along the administrative lines proposed in President Wilson's 1 December memorandum, the United States favored Germany's surrender of the mercantile fleet. Since at the December renewal of the armistice the Allies continued to oppose the American plan (in essence, the Hoover plan), the promise of food provisions was again not linked to a demand for the surrender of the merchant marine.⁴⁸ But in late December Colonel House informed the British ambassador of Wilson's complete sympathy for the Allied desire to secure the German ships.⁴⁹ Accordingly, once an organization such as the Supreme Council of Supply and Relief had been established, the disposition of the merchant fleet acquired a fundamental significance in dealings with the Germans.

All the delegates quickly agreed that the delivery of Germany's ships should be required prior to any shipment of food to that country. It did not matter that the delivery of food had been ensured by two previous agreements without such stipulation. The delegates of the Supreme Council, deficient in appropriate information, exclaimed that the shipping shortage created by German submarines necessitated the new provision. It was believed that, without Germany's cargo ships, the Allies would be unable to provision the hungry country.

Harold Temperley, who served as a minor British official at the Paris peace deliberations, refuted the contention that a major shipping shortage existed in 1919. In July 1914, Temperley explained, the world's merchant marine had amounted to about 49 million tons (gross). By 31 October 1918 losses had risen to over 15 million tons, of which 9 million were British. But against these losses could be placed new constructions, especially those of Great Britain and the United States. By the end of 1918 these constructions exceeded 12 million tons (gross), offsetting eighty percent of the losses of Allies and neutrals combined. Arno Spindler, who consulted Lloyd's Register to determine how much mer-

chant tonnage was actually sunk during the war, presented a figure of 13,233,672 tons. If this figure is accurate, then almost ninety percent of Allied losses had already been offset by new constructions.⁵⁰

One additional fact brings into question the research, and perhaps the motivation, that led to the Allied demand of Germany's commercial fleet. Much of the food destined for the Germans had already arrived in Europe, and would continue arriving, only to be stored in Belgium, Holland, and Denmark. It seems inconceivable that, if the Allies could transport more than a billion tons of food from New York to ports such as Rotterdam and Copenhagen, they were ill equipped to ship this same food from Rotterdam and Copenhagen to Düsseldorf and Hamburg without Germany's merchant tonnage. If an ulterior reparation motive existed as rationale for demanding the German merchant marine, then this claim would more properly have appeared as part of the forthcoming peace treaty.

At the second meeting of the Supreme Council of Supply and Relief (12 January), the delegates agreed to the following formulation:

The Supreme Council of General Supply believes that it is indispensable that the Associated Governments recommend to their representatives on the Naval Armistice Commission, which is sitting in London under the chairmanship of Admiral Wemyss, that they should insert among the clauses of the new Armistice Treaty which is to be signed with Germany, a provision to the effect that the German passenger and cargo fleet shall be at the disposition of the Associated Governments to be operated through the intermediary of the Allied Maritime Transport Council, for the purpose of augmenting the sum total of the world's, from which there may be drawn the tonnage necessary for the supply and relief of Europe.⁵¹

Although forthcoming weeks would reveal the feebleness of the Supreme Council of Supply and Relief in accomplishing its aims, the resolution of 12 January was immediately incorporated into the terms of the January armistice renewal by the Allied commissioners. It remained an *ex post facto* mandate of the armistice.

On 13 January the entire question of the blockade, food, and ships was addressed by the Big Four. Despite Hoover's apparent success at eliminating some of the barriers standing between Germany and food, the director general of relief again discovered that his toil had effected little progress. He recorded, "I sat in a small chair behind the President's right shoulder. Vance (Vance C. McCormick, Chairman of the United States

War Trade Board) was behind him to the left. . . . The President made a strong presentation and we managed to get acceptance of the principle that the Germans were to have food and if nothing else could be done they could pay gold and export some quantities of commodities."⁵² In view of his previous experience, Hoover now sensed that he finally had some real basis for optimism. "McCormick and I thought that at least a crack in the food blockade of Germany had been opened. Not so. . . ."⁵³

How were the Germans to finance food shipments? For almost two more months, this question brought Hoover to an impasse. It was posed by the French. John Maynard Keynes, also present on 13 January, recorded the French delegate's reaction when Wilson indicated that Germany could buy food with her gold. "M. Klotz (Louis Klotz, French Minister of Finance) was the protagonist of opposition. He had no objection to England or America furnishing Germany with food, but he was determined that Germany should not pay for it out of assets which were available for reparation and virtually belonged, therefore, to France."⁵⁴

It will be remembered that, on 13 December 1918, French and Belgian financial officials had secretly agreed to prohibit Germany from disposing of any of her gold.⁵⁵ This determination had now become public knowledge. Germany could be supplied with food, but she would not be allowed to purchase such food with any of her liquid assets.

While Klotz was busy immobilizing the resources Germany needed to stem the tide of starvation, British officers were once more visiting the defeated country so as to update their government's data on economic conditions. Lieutenant Colonel Cornwall and Captain Hinchley-Cooke forwarded the following observations, made between 12 and 15 January, from Leipzig:

In Saxony, the situation as regards food is undoubtedly serious. Except perhaps for Berlin, the food situation in Saxony is worse than anywhere else in Germany for the following reasons: (a) Saxony is an industrial state with a large mining and manufacturing population, while its agricultural resources are not sufficient to make it self-supporting as regards food; (b) the main food supplies, such as corn and potatoes, are normally drawn from Posen, Silesia, and Bohemia, which are now cut off owing to the political and international situation. . . .

Every single article of food, except vegetables, is rationed, including potatoes, and the rations are very much reduced. . . . The people have a distinctly sallow and pinched appearance. . . .

In general, the economic situation in Germany is going from bad to worse.⁵⁶

In accordance with the 11 November armistice (article 34), it was again time to exercise the “option to extend” the agreement. This article had additional significance, for it also stated that “to assure the execution of the present convention under the most favorable conditions, the principle of a Permanent International Armistice Commission is recognized. This Commission shall act under the supreme authority of the High Command, military and naval, of the allied armies.”⁵⁷ It has already been pointed out that Marshal Foch stood at the pinnacle of the High Command. He exercised ultimate authority over all facets of the armistice. As it happened, Foch was seldom troubled by the decisions of the commission. The records of Samuel Shartle provide some basis by which to understand Foch’s enviable position. “The President of the Inter-Allied Branch of the P.I.A.C. (Permanent International Armistice Commission) was the Chief of the French Mission (General Nudant), and the chairman of each committee was usually the French member of the committee. It is important to note this organization because it has a bearing on the proceedings of the Commission.”⁵⁸ In essence the entire structure controlling the armistice appears to have been under French direction. The permanent commission controlling this structure was quite active. Sitting at Spa, Belgium, from 18 November 1918 through 7 July 1919, the commission met each day in a plenary session. Significantly, until Count Ulrich von Brockdorff-Rantzau and the other German delegates were invited to Paris in April to accept or reject the Allied peace terms, the only official exchanges between Germany and the Associated Powers took place in the sessions of an Armistice Commission, superintended by the French.

Reviewing his experience as a commissioner, Shartle characterized the various nations charged with executing the armistice. With respect to the French delegates, he wrote:

The French, brave and brilliant fighters, with a good memory! They gave no quarter either in war or in peace. Their hatred of the Germans was not concealed and they exacted their dues. . . . The French were inclined to monopolize affairs in the proceedings of the Armistice Commission. This was partly due to the organization which made the French Mission the mouthpiece of Marshal Foch.⁵⁹

It was this commission that, on 15 January, gathered once again in Trier to renew the armistice. As Shartle’s memoirs have demonstrated, the commissioners had met on a daily basis at Spa. But it was the monthly proceedings in Trier, attended by the German commissioners, that have achieved historic importance. Erzberger was allowed to open the January sessions with the following appeal:

Now that the German people is without weapons, it must not in all conscience be made breadless. Hunger and despair would deprive the German people of its last remnant of vitality, and the Allies, too, are interested in maintaining this. A broken people may satisfy the lust of a victor, but I tell you today with all urgency: I warn you. Your own people are not immune from world revolution, whose most effective pacemakers are repression, robbery, misery and starvation.⁶⁰

Erzberger may be faulted for lack of foresight: the Germans were not remotely close to the Bolshevik-style revolution he feared. But Erzberger was not a paranoid. His fears were shared not only by many of his countrymen, including the leadership of the Social Democratic Party, but also by a large number of Allied delegates whose bitterness toward Germany was often counterbalanced by fear and abhorrence of Bolshevik Russia.

The January sessions were divided between financial and shipping problems. In the financial meetings, the Allies agreed to deliver 150,000 tons of foodstuffs to Germany. However, no decision was reached regarding how the latter would pay for this initial shipment. The Germans offered to exchange one hundred million gold marks, twenty-five million marks in foreign currencies, and 50,000 tons of potash for the foodstuffs. But the Allies claimed that they would have to reserve their decision on such an offer.⁶¹

At first the Germans had hoped to finance food imports by securing a loan from the United States, unaware that American antipathy would prevent Congressional approval of such beneficence toward Germany. Ironically, Hoover’s correspondence indicates that the French suffered from the same illusion. Once they comprehended American realities, the Germans offered gold and foreign securities in exchange for food. But the French held to their miscalculation. If the gold were used, the French reasoned, Germany’s ability to pay reparations would be curtailed; the Germans would be fed at the expense of the legitimate claims of

France.⁶² Hence, prolonged discussions with Dr. Karl Melchior and Edler von Braun, Germany's financial representatives, produced only stalemate. "A month later," Keynes wrote, "there was still no provision for the finance of German food imports."⁶³

The outcome of the Trier financial sessions left the provisioning of Germany in continued doubt. Even though the Germans received their perennial promise of food, no decision was reached concerning how such food would be financed. Nevertheless, in the sessions on shipping, a decision was reached that should have complemented the results of the financial sessions. During the shipping deliberations, the Associated Powers officially requested the German surrender of the merchant fleet, a summons duly incorporated into the agreement for the prolongation of the armistice (article 8).

In order to ensure the supply of foodstuffs to Germany and the rest of Europe the German Government will take all necessary measures to place the whole of the German mercantile Marine throughout the period of the Armistice under the flags of the Allied Powers and the United States, who will have a German Delegate to assist them.

This agreement in no way affects the final decision regarding these ships. The Allied Powers and the United States can, if they regard it as necessary, relieve the crews in part or whole. The officers and men released in this fashion shall be sent back to Germany.⁶⁴

The Germans were not sufficiently well positioned to reject the new directive. The internal situation and the military posture of their country had deteriorated considerably since November. Hence, on 17 January Captain Vanselow signed a document prolonging the armistice a second time. From Germany's perspective the new agreement hardly engendered optimism. Whereas food was again promised, the Allies were unable to offer the Germans a means for its purchase. In any case, food had been "promised" since November, but not a single shipment had arrived. The Allies now insisted upon the surrender of the German merchant marine "in order to ensure the supply of foodstuffs to Germany." And the new directive hinted that such surrender might be permanent. A growing cynicism was impressing itself upon the German commissioners. Until assurance was received that food could be purchased, they determined that the merchant fleet would not budge. In light of their country's increasingly lamentable circumstances, the German delegates viewed the fleet as their only trump card.

When the Supreme Council of Supply and Relief opened its third session on 18 January, the inability of the Trier conference to provide a means for Germany's financing of foodstuffs was discussed. The council recommended that the blockade be relaxed just enough to allow for the reexport of food from neutral countries to Germany.⁶⁵ But the recommendation failed to address the issue properly. From a commercial perspective food was not a problem; the means for purchasing such food was the issue. As had been the case with a similar proposal in December, the new recommendation proved stillborn. The ensuing period—that is, that between 18 January and 14 March 1919—was the most frustrating and damaging of the food blockade. Even though a protracted series of financial negotiations went on at Spa, Belgium, and Trier, Germany, they only reinforced the impasse.

The British no longer played a significant part in maintaining the impasse. In fact, support was growing in Great Britain for any policy that might get food to the Germans. The attitude of the press is illuminating. Emerging from the vindictiveness of November and December, English journalists were, by late January, expressing concern over the consequences of maintaining the blockade. A 20 January article appearing in the *Manchester Guardian*, and picked up by the *Berliner Tageblatt*, was representative of the gathering uneasiness over Germany, an unrest that was partially induced by a Keynesian concern for the long-term prosperity of England.

The continuation of the blockade shames the English businessman, the English worker, and the English soldier. . . . In all seriousness, someone has to be quite dumb to demand the further administration of the blockade which generates and serves to expand an infectious Bolshevism, paralyses British industry, and causes an increase in unemployment in England.⁶⁶

Hoover's difficulties now pivoted almost exclusively on the disposition of the French. To summarize: the Allies demanded Germany's merchant marine; the Germans insisted on the right to purchase food in exchange for their merchant fleet, offering one hundred million gold marks as partial payment for foodstuffs; the French emphasized, with their minds on reparation, that the gold was no longer Germany's to offer; prohibited from utilizing their specie, the Germans refused to surrender their ships. Ipso facto, no food was transported. Distressed by the stalemated situation, Hoover placed the blame, perhaps inap-

propriately, on the Allied Blockade Committee for its refusal “to give the necessary orders.”

The British Navy refused to allow ships to go into Germany. The occupation armies refused to allow us to ship supplies across the frontier. The Allied Committee in Berlin refused to allow the Germans to send us the gold. Every day for another two months we were given the run-around from one authority to another on some pretext.⁶⁷

It should be borne in mind that Hoover’s earlier actions were partially instrumental in producing this unfortunate situation. Had he sympathized with the Allied conception of an economic pool, Germany might have received food by January 1919. By opposing the European proposal for an interallied economic council, Hoover had been responsible for the loss of valuable time. His long-awaited victory in the establishment of an American-led Council of Supply and Relief had proven hollow. The organization was incapable of treating the complexity of Europe’s economic problems, and its deliberations were ancillary to the operations of the Armistice Commission. Whatever his principal aspirations may have been in November, compassion was motivating Hoover by January. One presumes that he secretly regretted the obstinate tack that he had taken in November.

Unable to import food, Germany’s new Social Democratic government was forced to the unpopular strategy of reducing by two-thirds the already meager bread ration.⁶⁸ And critical scarcity was not limited to food. The German people were desperate for shoes, clothing, tools, agricultural articles, and a variety of other manufactured implements. The country’s mines should have been producing coal, iron, and potash for export. But it was almost preposterous to contemplate exporting. There were too few domestic raw materials to supply the factories; there was too little food to feed the fortunate workers who had retained jobs; and, even if adequate manufacturing had taken place, Foch had established prodigious barriers against German exportation.

Immediately after the January armistice renewal, three more British officers were sent to investigate Germany’s food situation. Visiting Munich between 22 and 26 January, Captains J. R. Somerville and J. E. Broad and Lieutenant D. Pease reported on the scarcity of milk, fats, and flour while praising the efficiency of the German ration system. Their report concluded with the following observations:

Judging by what we have been told and shown, and after thorough investigation, we think: (a) There is a very great shortage of food in the country. (b) The existing supplies of food will not last till the next harvest and should be augmented within the next two months. (c) Unless assistance is given before April, when food supplies will be exhausted, it will not be possible to keep the people of Bavaria—already underrationed—within bounds. . . .

From conversation with all classes of Bavarians, we have gathered that their opinion is the present critical situation would be greatly minimized by the raising of the blockade.⁶⁹

The rate of arrival of such gloomy evaluations was beginning to increase apace. In rapid succession the London War Office received additional reports from Hamburg and Hanover. Visiting the former city between 28 January and 9 February, Captains A. D. Seddon and H. M. Henwood, along with Lieutenant H. A. Rose, commented on the unfortunate restriction of German fishing rights in the Baltic Sea. The officers reported the eagerness with which the people of Hamburg anticipated fishing, the widespread inability to understand Allied logic in terminating fishing privileges, and the physical deterioration that only seemed to increase the perplexity. Throughout the city, the officers observed a sickness associated with undernourishment (the Germans called it *Steckrübenkrankheit*, or “turnip-disease”). But the bulk of their report concerned the *Kriegsküchen* (communal kitchens) that attempted to provide hot midday meals for Hamburg’s residents.

We have visited several of these kitchens; we have tasted the food, conversed with the diners, and remark: The food is a basin of hot soup, the ingredients of which are potatoes, either mangold wurzels (*Steckrüben*), or cabbage, together with certain thickening substances and a so-called meat extract produced from plants. Twice a week either a couple of small spoonfuls of stewed meat are added, or cold sausage is issued, and the soup is strengthened by stock made from stewed horse bones. . . . To us, both taste and smell were odious.⁷⁰

Reacting to “unmistakable signs” of malnutrition among children aged seven to fourteen and a general rise in the rates of disease and death, the British officers urgently requested an immediate shipment of food to Hamburg.⁷¹

Soldiers who had so recently anguished in the trenches, and were thus

little given to compassion for a despised enemy, would hardly have reported “odious” food conditions unless those conditions were truly abysmal. But the 2 February report of Captains E. B. Trafford and E. Christie-Miller concerning the predicament in Hanover has even greater poignance when one learns that both officers had spent ten months in Hanover as prisoners of war. Upon suggesting that this history should expel any notion that they are friendly toward the Germans, Trafford and Christie-Miller disclosed that Hanover suffered from an extreme food shortage. Not only were milk supplies unavailable to children of six years or older but the city was slaughtering milk cows and tubercular cattle for food.⁷² In general, the report from Hanover was actually bleaker than those written in Munich and Hamburg.

Meanwhile, in Paris, the Supreme Council of Supply and Relief continued to address the problem of financing food allocated to Germany. On 19 January the council’s permanent committee agreed to treat the problem in some depth at a forthcoming Spa Conference, to which the Germans would be invited as participants, scheduled for 6–8 February.⁷³ Such agreement was superfluous, however, if the Allies were unable to reach an accord prior to the meeting regarding a method for financing food supplies. Hoover attempted to resolve the dilemma. At a subsequent meeting of the permanent committee, he disclosed that the United States might be willing to accept French francs in exchange for the gold that the Germans were proposing to use to buy food.⁷⁴ But the French, viewing this suggestion as a ploy, argued that the gold reserved for reparations was still being inappropriately calculated as the means for purchasing food.

Keynes later wrote that Germany possessed no assets in adequate quantity, aside from her gold, with which to purchase food.⁷⁵ As a result of the war, her holdings of foreign currencies were quite depleted. Although many Germans held bonds from neutral countries, any effort to requisition these would likely lead to bankruptcy between German banks and their neutral creditors. Such an outcome would only exacerbate Germany’s already deteriorating financial situation. Of course, the maintenance of the blockade prevented Germany from alleviating her financial situation through foreign trade. Nor was this predicament about to be modified. On 3 February Marshal Foch forwarded the following message to the French minister of foreign affairs (Pichon):

I have the honor to inform you that I agree entirely with the conclusions in

your letter in regard to the blockade of Germany. The strict maintenance of the rules of the blockade is imperative from a military point of view. As a matter of fact, when the allied armies are reduced to such a point as to make all important military operations difficult, the blockade, the severity of which can be increased or diminished according to circumstances, will remain the best and most rapid means of obtaining the respect for the armistice agreement and, in a general way, for compelling Germany to bow to our wishes.⁷⁶

With the financial stalemate as backdrop to the forthcoming Spa Conference, Hoover contacted Wilson in the hope that the president’s influence might serve to alter the French position. In this communication, dated 4 February, the food administrator provided the following appraisal:

The French, by obstruction of every financial measure that we can propose to the feeding of Germany in the attempt to compel us to loan money to Germany for this purpose, have defeated every step so far for getting them the food which we have been promising for three months. [We must] at least find some channel by which the Germans can help themselves by trade with neutrals and South America.⁷⁷

Whatever influence the president may have enjoyed with the Allied leaders, it was not sufficiently utilized—or perhaps not sufficient—to undo the financial entanglement. Hence, with dubious expectations, the representatives of the Associated governments met with their German counterparts at Spa for the purpose of determining how Germany might finance food relief. As might be expected, the Spa sessions ended without the desired result. Echoing the Trier financial sessions of 17 January, the Associated Powers agreed to authorize the sale of 125 million gold marks worth of foodstuffs, but with the proviso that the manner of Germany’s payment be determined by the Allied financial representatives. According to the minutes of the Spa Conference, the financial experts were to meet on 12 February (in fact, they met on 11 February).⁷⁸ In the meantime, the Allied delegates at Spa insisted that Germany’s merchant vessels sail no later than 12 February.⁷⁹ In other words, Germany was being asked to surrender her merchant marine prior to receiving any guarantee that the ships would be allowed to transport German foodstuffs.

The 11 February financial meeting produced no breakthrough on the crucial issue of underwriting German food.⁸⁰ Nor did the following day

witness the sailing of any German ships.⁸¹ McCormick, who now served as chairman of the Superior Blockade Council, confided the following to his diary on 13 February: "Hoover discouraged. . . . Thinks he will have to play lone hand in relief. French seem to block every effort in this direction."⁸²

Meanwhile, the deterioration of Germany's nutritional situation proceeded, and British army personnel remained in the forefront of those predicting disaster. Between 2 and 11 February, Captains W. S. Roddie, Claude W. Bell, and E. W. D. Tennant visited Berlin. The lengthy report submitted by these officers contained the following statements:

It has been shown that there has been no increase in the milk or fat rations since the Armistice . . . whilst flour has been somewhat more plentifully distributed, but only in order to stem the tide of political unrest. The authorities realized that when they increased the flour ration, they were, so to speak, borrowing out of capital, not merely spending up to the limits of their income. The choice lay between two courses: (1) to apportion the supplies on a starvation basis and possibly postpone the crash; (2) to overapportion the supplies and risk a still earlier and more complete disaster in the hopes of sustaining the morale of the people . . . inwardly trusting to early relief from outside.⁸³

Subsequent to his assignment in Berlin, Captain Roddie went to Leipzig. On 14 February he completed a supplemental report containing the following harsh observations:

I wish to prefix my report on my visit to Leipzig with these words:

To those who have had the opportunity of studying Germany recently from the inside, the policy of continuing the starvation of that country must appear not only senseless but utterly harmful to ourselves.

My visit to Leipzig has strengthened the conviction to which the study of conditions in Berlin has already led me, namely, that the one and only result must be disaster. I believe that Germany at the present moment is on the brink of a volcano which may burst forth at any moment. It would be folly to suppose that the ensuing disaster would be confined to Germany.⁸⁴

Roddie continued by noting the terribly emaciated condition of the cattle, now living exclusively on straw since the people were consuming fodder. He also described the circumstances of seven different families, representing every economic class, and noted that all subsisted on the

same meager diet. In conclusion Roddie described a scene witnessed in Leipzig's market place: columns of people, having waited from six in the morning until noon in the expectation of receiving food, were finally greeted with a sufficient quantity of fish to satisfy the ration proviso of a tenth their number.⁸⁵

Captain Bell, who had accompanied Roddie to Berlin, visited Cassel between 13 and 15 February. Once again, the people were found to be in distressed physical condition. Noting Germany's wartime rise in civilian mortality, Bell claimed that the armistice period was stimulating an even higher death rate. Only the dismantlement of the blockade made any sense.

All that I have seen and heard during my fortnight in Berlin and Cassel goes to convince me that the country is helpless and that its condition may become desperate at any moment. Hunger is at the bottom of a good deal of the unrest. . . . I certainly consider that it is in the Allied interest not to drive Germany beyond the limits of her endurance.⁸⁶

Although the British government was most energetic in probing Germany's internal condition, it was not alone in receiving startling reports on the country's depressed circumstances. Captain Gheraidi, who served as an American courier between Germany and Paris, was quick to notice the unhealthy condition of the people in Cologne. Particularly evident was the deterioration of the children. Noting the phenomenal outbreak of influenza, which continued daily to claim thousands of victims throughout Germany, Gheraidi expressed fear that the Ebert government would eventually lose control of the people because of its inability to feed and care for them.⁸⁷

But the most riveting account of Germany's conditions in early 1919 was offered by Keynes as the testimony of a member of one of Hoover's American missions. The account inspires images of the pictures Käthe Kollwitz sketched of undernourished children begging for food.

You think this is a kindergarten for the little ones. No, these are children of seven and eight years. Tiny faces with large dull eyes, overshadowed by huge, puffed, rickety foreheads, their small arms just skin and bones, and above the crooked legs with their dislocated joints, the swollen, pointed stomachs of the hunger edema. . . . "You see this child here," the physician in charge explained; "it consumed an incredible amount of bread and yet it did not get any stronger. I found out that it hid all the bread it received underneath its

straw mattress. The fear of hunger was so deeply rooted in the child that it collected the stores instead of eating the food: a misguided animal instinct made the dread of hunger worse than the actual pangs.”⁸⁸

Each of these reports served to inform the Associated governments that many people in Germany were, in fact, starving as a consequence of the inability to reach agreement on financial terms for German food imports. And the Germans were not unaware of the diplomatic impasse, news of which filtered through the press under such captions as “Keine Aufhebung der Blockade” (No Cancellation of the Blockade) and “Noch keine Einigung über die Lebensmittellieferungen” (Still No Agreement over Food Provisions).⁸⁹ As far as other issues were concerned, inter-allied disagreement might have been viewed by the Germans as a sign of hope. But with respect to food, diplomatic paralysis could be regarded only with horror. A mood of depression and hopelessness inevitably prevailed amongst the Germans following interminable reports of dead-locked food negotiations.

As information arrived in Paris concerning Germany’s need for food supplies, the diplomatic debate over financing dragged on. The expectation that the January armistice clause addressing the disposition of the German merchant fleet might serve to relax the food blockade had proven ill founded. With the passage of another month, Hoover blamed the French more and more for impeding “every proposed method of German payment for supplies.”⁹⁰ Once again it was time to negotiate with the Germans.

Between 14 and 16 February the armistice commissioners reassembled at Trier to negotiate the terms of the cease-fire. It was to prove the final extension of that agreement. The sessions, dominated by the financial question, were opened again by Erzberger.

Gentlemen, the German people can no longer live on promises, or on long-drawn-out negotiations in which more or less imposing figures are mentioned to make its mouth water. At this point too, I must demand deeds at last. The German people is tired of giving and giving from its own resources, and now it wants to see some return. In wide circles of the German people I am asked quite rightly: What is it the Allies want of us? We are making sacrifice after sacrifice, and in the surrender of our resources we are going even to the length of impoverishment. We do not want you to give us the foodstuffs we need, as we are ready to pay for them. Despite this deliveries

have been postponed again and again, and we are going hungry. If the Entente wishes to destroy us, it should at least not expect us to dig our own graves.”⁹¹

In the ensuing negotiations, Erzberger made it clear that the shipping, food, and finance issues represented a unified whole for the German government. “If the putting to sea of the ships has been delayed,” Erzberger exclaimed, “it is the fault of the Allies.”⁹² The German state secretary was particularly miffed since, on the eve of the renegotiations, Foch had presented him with a further demand, one calling for the surrender of merchant ships that were not to be completed for several months. The French marshal was ignoring the complexity inherent in Erzberger’s position. Even had the German sympathized with the Allied demand for a surrender of the entire German merchant fleet prior to the conclusion of a financial agreement—and this is most unlikely—he remained responsible to the German National Assembly and large-scale German shipping interests. These groups would not countenance an unreciprocated surrender of the ships, certainly not ships that were yet to be constructed. As Captain Vanselow remarked, the “*most serious* difference was that Germany had up to the present been given no guarantee that she would actually receive food.”⁹³

Given the exceptional difficulties inherent in resolving this dilemma and the time already elapsed in the attempts to surmount it, an American delegate (H. W. Harris) suggested a relaxation of the blockade between the northern neutrals and Germany. In such circumstances the Germans would be able to obtain food through trade in noncompetitive commodities. In effect, Harris was recommending that the Allies embrace the position that they had briefly taken in December. A similar suggestion had met with failure in January, and this new proposal for compromise suffered an equal fate. As usual, the French maintained that a tight blockade remained absolutely essential. Any other arrangement would be vigorously opposed.⁹⁴

In light of the fact that three months had elapsed since Germany had originally been assured food supplies and that vast quantities of food were going to waste in neutral storage, Erzberger and his colleagues had ample reason to doubt the truthfulness of Allied promises. Their perception of the Allied inability to agree on a method of financing the cost of the food only sharpened their determination to retain Germany’s ships. Another Trier conference thus ended with no firm agreement about how

German foodstuffs might be financed. On 16 February the Allied delegates did formally agree that Germany should deliver one hundred million gold marks to the Associated Powers commencing in March; however, they failed to identify the actual recipient of such specie.⁹⁵ The designation of March, and the conspicuous lack of detail, must be interpreted as a method of further delaying a comprehensive decision. The deadlock remained firm.

Despite the continued impasse—or perhaps because of it—February witnessed a new resolve to undercut French inflexibility amongst certain well-placed Allied delegates. The change of heart characterized various British and American commissioners in particular, and the stratagem they devised was to have dramatic and significant results.

Much of Hoover's problem in circumventing the blockade had been created by the unwieldy array of Allied agencies controlling various aspects of economic policy. Hoover's organization, as already noted, was responsible for the distribution of food. But before food could be distributed, questions of blockade, shipping, financing, and inland transportation had to be resolved. These areas were all beyond the scope of Hoover's authority. Early in February, at the behest of Hoover and Colonel James Logan, the Supreme War Council established a new agency: the Supreme Economic Council. The new organization was to have final supervision over *all* economic activities connected with the armistice. Accordingly, it was able to absorb whatever agencies and powers it deemed necessary to accomplish its mission.⁹⁶ The new council was established with a rotating chairmanship. In effect, it was quite similar to the organization that the British government had unsuccessfully recommended during the armistice negotiations of October. But whereas Hoover had adamantly opposed the creation of the earlier structure, he was instrumental in the establishment of the new one.

When the Supreme Economic Council opened its first meeting on 24 February, it voted to establish five divisions under its authority dealing with food, blockade, finance, raw materials, and shipping.⁹⁷ The Supreme Council of Supply and Relief was thereby absorbed, becoming instead the Food Section of the Supreme Economic Council. Within this new arrangement, Hoover retained the title director general.

Although the creation of the Supreme Economic Council resulted in something of a demotion for Hoover, under the new system he found himself better able to achieve positive results. For the first time the recurring problems associated with the feeding of Europe became read-

ily apparent to those possessing power enough to surmount the impediments placed in their way by minor officials. Hoover and McCormick could finally entertain a guarded optimism that their efforts to break the financial stalemate would be rewarded.

Intent on speeding up the process, the Americans actually feigned a new indifference to the blockade. In effect, Hoover chose to deemphasize the necessity of feeding the Germans or the neutrals or, for that matter, the European Allies. This indifference must have seemed very odd to the French, for the United States had been applying continuous pressure for the blockade's relaxation since early December. McCormick apparently initiated the stratagem at the 20 February meeting of the Superior Blockade Council. In a diary entry of the same date he exclaimed that it "worked like a charm. French and Italians are now the beggars as they want trade and we can sit back and let them worry. Think in a couple of weeks we will have accomplished our object."⁹⁸ In a later entry dated 25 February McCormick wrote that "our policy . . . of indifference on the relaxation of the blockade is having the desired effect and the Allies are now coming to us."⁹⁹

The British, in fact, were already working with the Americans, which action represented a substantial alteration since December. Churchill exaggerated only a little when he wrote that the British army had been responsible for supplying "the sudden punch" that overcame the inertia of the diplomats.¹⁰⁰ That the reports of Britain's officers had a powerful impact can be gathered from a 28 February *London Times Weekly* article summarizing the details of their many observations.¹⁰¹

But for Hoover and McCormick, the greatest dividend their labors paid was the winning of Lord Robert Cecil to their cause. Cecil was a leading figure in British politics, and he was then serving on a variety of interallied economic committees. His widespread influence would temper and make manageable the difficult task still remaining to the Americans.

Cecil, Hoover, and McCormick met on 1 March to discuss the gravity of the blockade situation. The Americans anxiously noted that the huge quantities of perishable food stored in European ports was at the point of spoilage. They insisted that America's economy had been seriously threatened by the annulment of food contracts on 31 December. In summation they explained that the position of the United States was becoming increasingly intolerable; the deadlock would have to be broken.¹⁰² Cecil was in complete sympathy with Hoover and McCor-

mick's predicament. He suggested, therefore, that a further conference be held at Spa with the Germans. Details were immediately settled. This time, it was determined, the conference would have an impact.

On the eve of the second Spa conference the diplomatic impasse was unchanged. When the terms for feeding Germany were discussed at a 3 March session of the Supreme Economic Council, the financial stalemate obstructed progress once more. McCormick recorded in his diary, "As usual, French again balked. Same old trouble, apparently political and financial. Regret French so shift—hot meeting. Lord Robert [Cecil] got after Clémentel on a statement which looked like a threat. . . . I believe we are facing another revolution in Germany and Bolshevism if they don't get food."¹⁰³

McCormick's fears were echoed by two members of the Allied Armistice Commission. In a letter dated 27 February, Sir James Headlam-Morley wrote, "I have recently seen a number of officers who have come back from Germany; they have been working separately; they have been to different parts of the country, but they are unanimous that unless food is supplied there will be a collapse of the social order which will take the form of Bolshevism."¹⁰⁴ In similar vein Samuel Shartle wrote the following letter on 4 March:

The impressive thing now seems to be the insistent reports of growing Bolshevism in Germany. . . . The situation, according to the Germans, is desperate. It seems almost unbelievable—the delays. Perhaps the League of Nations can cure Bolshevism, perhaps not. While the League has been formulating, anarchy has spread—due to lack of food and lack of peace. It is not an answer to say, let Germany suffer. Not only Germany is involved. . . . "Food won the war" and food may win the peace—if the hungry had more food and less promises.¹⁰⁵

Against this foreboding backdrop, the delegates held their meeting at Spa on 4 and 5 March. Again the formal deliberations proved fruitless.¹⁰⁶ McCormick interpreted the predicament in a further diary entry—this one dated 5 March.

French still blocking food deliveries to Germany. Situation there alarming. Cables all show state of revolution. Americans in Germany being attacked. My opinion, we are living on top of a volcano; if relief not immediate, bound to have trouble and will affect France. English fully alive to situation and

fighting hard with us to better conditions. French . . . really hinder whenever possible.¹⁰⁷

But a significant event differentiated this gathering from those of the previous weeks and months: its abrupt and unannounced close. As a consequence of this dollop of drama—probably from the script of Cecil, Hoover, and McCormick—the delegates of all countries were shaken from their ever-more-ingrained torpor. Perceiving the weightiness of the Spa developments, Shartle wrote on 6 March that "[we] are going through a rather delicate situation now."¹⁰⁸

Keynes, a principal agent in the events of the Spa conference, presented an illuminating account of what had happened. Suffering through an additional series of discussions that presaged only continued deadlock, the British economist resolved to

bring matters to a head and attract the attention of the Great Ones. For this purpose a dramatic move was essential. Let there be a public rupture of the Conference, which the Great Ones would read about in the newspapers. I begged Hope (Rear Admiral George R. Hope, head of the Allied Economic Delegation), therefore, to break off the Conference . . . and to order our train to return to Paris that night (5 March), so that when the Germans woke in the morning it would be to find us flitted. He fell in with the motion.¹⁰⁹

By the morning of 6 March the Allied delegates were back in Paris.

Lloyd George, in session on 6 March with Colonel House and Clemenceau, received a message announcing the breakdown of the Spa negotiations. All discussion relating to Germany's food supply, as well as that concerned with the surrender of her ships, had been terminated.¹¹⁰ Startled, the prime minister read the contents of the report to the other leaders, and the three men decided to address the stalled negotiations at the 8 March meeting of the Supreme War Council. Keynes's tactic had brought about the desired results. The prickly issue of food and ships would finally receive the attention that it deserved.

In the hope of uncovering the inspiration for the dramatic adjournment of the Spa talks, Lloyd George asked Hoover to visit him on 7 March. Upon his arrival, Hoover found the prime minister discussing the German food situation with General Herbert Plumer, commander of the British Army of Occupation. According to the American food administrator, Plumer's emotional state was unusual for a soldier of his rank

and experience. With woeful mien the general emphasized the immediate need for food in Germany. The situation had deteriorated so markedly, he exclaimed, that his men were begging to go home; they could no longer suffer the spectacle of "hordes of skinny and bloated children pawing over the offal from British cantonments."¹¹¹ Indeed, Plumer concluded, his soldiers were now depriving themselves to feed Germany's starving children.

Hoover's interview with Lloyd George had clearly been so arranged as to force the American to hear the general's report. Once he had finished, Plumer left. The prime minister thereupon turned on Hoover, demanding to know why Germany had not yet been fed. Had not Hoover been appointed chairman of the Supreme Council of Supply and Relief in order to achieve this end? Why had he failed?

Hoover immediately understood that, until the abrupt conclusion of the Spa discussions, the prime minister had completely lost touch with the ponderous negotiations that had been taking place with Germany for the past seven weeks. Out of patience, Hoover now lost his temper and proceeded to outline the details of two months of persistent Allied obstructionism. He revealed to Lloyd George that, with the exception of Lord Cecil's assistance, he had received little cooperation since his arrival in Europe. He reviewed the entire history of the blockade, including its relaxation on 24 December, its reimposition on 31 December, and the British-inspired repudiation of Allied contracts for American food. Hoover angrily explained that, in order to protect the interests and financial stability of American farmers, he had been forced to store three million pounds of perishable foodstuffs in neutral ports. In conclusion Hoover vented his spleen on a British naval policy that had prohibited German fishing in the Baltic Sea since 11 November; a policy, he protested, that was deliberately starving the women and children of a nation that had surrendered.¹¹²

At this point Hoover regretted his outburst. Appreciating the tremendous pressure upon the prime minister, he apologized, and was about to take his leave when Lloyd George called him back. "To my surprise, [Lloyd George] mildly inquired if I would deliver 'that speech' to the Council of Ten. I said that I would be delighted to do so but that if he agreed with me, it would carry much more weight if it came from him. He made some notes."¹¹³

The decisive meeting of the council was held on the afternoon of 8 March. A list of the participants reveals the importance of the proceed-

ings. Among the American delegates were Robert Lansing and Colonel House, assisted by a team of experts including Hoover and McCormick. The British were represented by, among others, Lloyd George, Lord Robert Cecil, and Keynes. French interests were defended by Clemenceau, substantially assisted by financial experts like Clémentel and Klotz. The armed forces were represented by Marshal Foch, General Weygand, General Bliss, and Admiral Hope.¹¹⁴

Cecil opened the proceedings by outlining the Supreme Economic Council's plan for feeding Germany. He noted that unanimous agreement had been reached by the council, except on the matter of financing foodstuffs. He then explained that "the gravest differences of opinion had been expressed in regard to the manner of payment."¹¹⁵ Central to these "grave differences" was the status of Germany's gold.

Cecil had deliberately moved directly to the salient issue. The French proved adept, however, at taking advantage of that opening. Clémentel, the French minister of commerce, was quick to advance difficulties. In the first place, Clémentel argued, the Allies had never promised to feed the Germans. The article of the armistice pertaining to food had merely suggested that they would *contemplate* the provisioning of Germany. Moreover, Clémentel added, it was the opinion of France that those wishing to eat should work. There were entirely too many Germans living off welfare.¹¹⁶

Keynes later maintained that the French now attempted to monopolize the proceedings. Klotz, the French minister of finance, asked that the views of Marshal Foch be aired. But the marshal had little constructive to offer. In fact, he refused even to acknowledge the necessity for feeding the Germans since such action would only serve to weaken the blockade and thereby weaken the Allied position.¹¹⁷

With all this, Cecil's opening remarks were being obscured. As the debate lengthened, the issue of financing foodstuffs became increasingly distorted, and it appeared that "once again the French would succeed, while appearing to give way a little, in getting some qualification inserted which would allow them in practice to obstruct the whole thing."¹¹⁸ But just as Cecil's theme seemed completely subverted, Lloyd George roused himself. Here is Keynes graphic description of the prime minister's reaction:

Now he spoke; the creeping lethargy of the proceedings was thrown off, and he launched his words with rage. . . . Under the terms of the Armistice

the Allies did imply that they meant to let food into Germany. The Germans had accepted our Armistice conditions, which were sufficiently severe, and they had complied with the majority of those conditions. But so far not a single ton of food had been sent to Germany. The Allies were now on top, but memories of starvation might one day turn against them. The Germans were being allowed to starve whilst at the same time hundreds of thousands of tons of food were lying at Rotterdam. . . . The Allies were sowing hatred for the future: they were piling up agony, not for the Germans, but for themselves.¹¹⁹

These remarks impressed the French delegates, who were now obliged to reconsider their position. Clemenceau rendered the statements of Clémentel and Foch void by stating that France would have no objection to *giving* the Germans food.¹²⁰ In the context of preceding remarks, this was a significant modification of the French position. But Hoover must have suffered great irritation at Clemenceau's inference. France had, of course, no food to give away. If any country were capable of "giving," it was the United States. The American food administrator knew, however, that the American farmer was incapable of being so humane. Fortunately the discussion was not permitted the opportunity to run this course.

As the session seemed about to revert to a stalemate, a secretary unexpectedly dashed into the conference with a sealed message for Lloyd George. Enclosed was a telegram from General Plumer. Seeking to capitalize on its contents, the prime minister hurriedly read it to the group. It stated:

Please inform the Prime Minister that in my opinion food must be sent into this area by the Allies without delay. Even now the present rations are insufficient to maintain life and owing to the failure of supplies from Germany they must very soon be still further reduced. The mortality amongst women, children and sick is most grave and sickness due to hunger is spreading. The attitude of the population is becoming one of despair and people feel that an end by bullets is preferable to death by starvation. . . . I request therefore that a definite date be fixed for the arrival of the first supplies. This date should not be later than March 16th even if from that date regular supplies cannot be maintained.¹²¹

According to Keynes, Plumer's telegram had considerable impact. Even the French were moved by its pronounced sense of urgency. But Klotz demonstrated his ability to withstand even the most provocative of

humanitarian arguments. Persisting in his position that Germany's gold rightly belonged to France, he demanded that the Germans be forced to defray the cost of food with something other than specie.¹²²

Klotz's filibustering had momentous consequences. Exceedingly angry, Lloyd George decided to abandon diplomatic niceties. The poignant observations of Keynes once again merit quotation.

Lloyd George had always hated him and despised him (i.e., Klotz); and now he saw in a twinkling that he could kill him. Women and children were starving, he cried, and here was M. Klotz prating and prating of his "goold." He leant forward and with a gesture of his hands indicated to everyone the image of a hideous Jew clutching a money bag. His eyes flashed and the words came out with a contempt so violent that he seemed to be spitting at him. The anti-Semitism, not far below the surface in such an assemblage as that one, was up in the heart of everyone.¹²³

Although Clemenceau attempted to counter the prime minister's fusillade, recounting the destruction to which his country had been subjected, he was unable to subdue the passion that it had produced. Klotz did not utter another word.

From the beginning the Americans had stressed the necessity of using Germany's gold. The British, led by Cecil and Keynes, had slipped into this posture by late February. Now the Italians, as a consequence of these deliberations, supported the Anglo-Saxon position. Faced with these odds, the French succumbed. Germany's gold would be used for food.¹²⁴

The 8 March meeting of the Supreme War Council was Hoover's watershed in overcoming the problems associated with the feeding of Germany. Although numerous difficulties remained, including the British Admiralty's determination to restrict German fishing in the Baltic, the understanding with respect to gold was final.¹²⁵

Once French obstinacy had been surmounted, events moved quickly. On 13 and 14 March, the Allies met at Brussels with the German armistice delegation. In contrast to previous conferences, this one had immediate results. One of Shartle's letters, dated 28 March, alluded to the catalyst for this success: "The wings of the French seem to be clipped. They were when the English took charge at Brussels in the negotiations about food. The results will have a good effect on order in Germany."¹²⁶ With the understanding that they were free to use their country's gold in exchange for food, the Germans agreed to the delivery

of their merchant marine. To assuage legitimate French concern, the German delegates pledged that to the best of her ability Germany would pay for the food by exporting articles not on the blacklist. Since such exports would not yield sufficient revenue to cover the cost of the food, the Brussels agreement stipulated that the Germans should use their gold to meet the balance of their obligations.¹²⁷ It is not insignificant that the blacklist was relaxed on 20 March.¹²⁸

On 21 March the first of the merchant ships left Germany (the steamers *Bürgermeister Schröder* and *Bürgermeister von Melle*).¹²⁹ The Germans made their initial gold deposit at Rotterdam on 22 March and three days later the first food was delivered at Hamburg.¹³⁰ (By the Brussels agreement, the Allies had agreed to deliver 270,000 tons of food in March and 370,000 tons per month thereafter until September.) Finally, on 27 March a significant portion of the merchant fleet sailed for England: from Hamburg, the *Windhuk*, *König Friedrich August*, *Gertrud*, *Wolfgram*, and *Gundomar*; from Bremerhaven, the *Frankfurt* and *Heffen*; from Stettin, the *Normannia*, *Ohrensburg*, and *Altenburg*; from Kiel, the *Heilbronn* and *Reinscheid*; from Lübeck, the *Atta*; and from Danzig, the *Frida Horn*.¹³¹ The hunger-blockade had ended. Throughout the remaining weeks of the peace negotiations, food was delivered to Germany's port cities.

Not everyone admitted the logic of the Brussels accord. According to Hoover, Marshal Foch insisted repeatedly that the food blockade would have to be reimposed if the Allies were to be assured a German signature on the peace treaty.¹³² Until the moment when the Reichstag ratified the Versailles Treaty, the threat of renewed hunger was used by Clemenceau and Foch to terrorize the Germans.

One should recall, moreover, that the apparatus constituting the blockade was maintained throughout the period from 14 March and 12 July. The Brussels agreement was concerned only with food. Article 26 of the armistice continued to prevent the import of raw materials and the export of finished commodities, procedures that might have aided the slumping enemy economy while availing Germany of an additional means of paying for foodstuffs without recourse to gold. Thus, from the extended perspective of the 1920s, article 26 was inimical to the Allies' quest for reparation. But in the heightened irrationalism of 1919 and the concomitant antipathy to German recovery, many of the Allied delegates were blind to the self-interest that could accrue through assisting Germany's economy. As late as 25 June 1919, when the German plenipoten-

tiaries attached their signatures to the Versailles Treaty, Clemenceau remarked, "It may be useful to remind the Germans of the fact that the blockade shall cease at the same moment as the state of war, and that legally what brings a state of war to an end is the exchange of ratifications."¹³³ Clemenceau spoke for those who were especially determined to see Germany humbled for an extended period. Only with the Reichstag's 11 July ratification of the treaty did Clemenceau, in his capacity as president of the Peace Conference, inform the Germans that they could view the blockade of their country as terminated.¹³⁴ Eight months had elapsed since the surrender at Compiègne.

The significance of these final months should not be minimized. Certainly, despite the arrival of food, Germany suffered appallingly under the weight of financial, material, and transportation restrictions. Nevertheless, in combination all other economic difficulties seemed trivial when compared with the misfortune of the food shortage.

The step from detailing to explaining the politics of the hunger-blockade is not an easy one to make. The comments of Foch and Klotz, while suggesting a general French antipathy toward accommodating the Germans, do not necessarily lend themselves to coherent explanation. Consequently, a rather muddled array of interpretations are provided to explain this unfortunate episode in twentieth-century history. The one usually associated with Foch is the claim that the strict maintenance of the blockade was essential from a military perspective. Malnourished Germans, it was surmised, would be less likely to resume the war upon the unveiling of a harsh treaty. Keynes, who perceived the British Admiralty at the center of the problem, offered a more cynical appraisal. Analyzing the blockade in the period immediately following the cessation of hostilities, the British economist concluded that it

had become by that time a very perfect instrument. It had taken four years to create and was Whitehall's finest achievement; it had evoked the qualities of the English at their subtlest. Its authors had grown to love it for its own sake; it included some recent improvements, which would be wasted if it came to an end; it was very complicated, and a vast organization had established a vested interest. The experts reported, therefore, that it was our one instrument for imposing our Peace Terms on Germany, and that once suspended it could hardly be reimposed.¹³⁵

Although this explanation was somewhat justified, not all of Keynes's

countrymen believed narrow self-interest to be the prop supporting the blockade's continuation. Harmful policies have more often resulted from naiveté than from cold calculation. Sir James Headlam-Morley fell nearer to truth when he wrote the following in a letter to the British Foreign Office:

The whole treatment strikes me as having been as unwise as possible. The origin appears to have been that we depended far too much on French opinion and whatever merits the French may have, that of understanding the Germans does not seem to be included among them. . . . [It] seems to me with wiser action, we could have done almost anything we wanted to with Germany. Now things appear to be going very badly. The great mistake has been the delay in getting the food question settled. . . . The origin of half the difficulty is that we have scrupulously insisted on refusing all communications with Germany except through Spa (the residence of the Armistice Commission) and thereby left things much too much in the hands of the soldiers.¹³⁶

Leaving negotiations “in the hands of the soldiers” was in large measure a means of relegating responsibility for the peace—during the period of armistice—to those closest to the war. It was the soldiers who had experienced the most intimate contact with the Germans, and four years of trench warfare had hardly endeared the French, British, or Belgian soldier to his counterpart in field gray. The savagery of such combat was vividly remembered by Allied participants, who were, however, too quick to forget their own wartime truculence. Coupled with the almost universally accepted belief that submarine warfare was inhumane, and the valid revulsion from German diplomatic ruthlessness at Brest-Litovsk, was this stigma of the Western Front experience. But the terror of the war was not simply a memory of the military. As has been illustrated, World War I was a total effort, involving soldier and civilian alike. Hostility toward the enemy thus shaped the attitude of the housewife in Penzance no less than it motivated the veteran of Verdun. And to be sure, such hostility was directed at all Germans, regardless of military status. In short, there were many in the Allied camp, and not always soldiers, who simplistically argued that the blockade should be maintained indefinitely as just retribution for the war. One need not sympathize with this position to understand it; it was an unfortunate consequence of World War I.

None of these interpretations is totally adequate, however, in explain-

ing the postwar blockade. The difficulties of Hoover and McCormick demonstrated, for example, the central significance of German gold—and ultimately Allied debt—in French efforts at preventing the arrival in Germany of food shipments. The entire episode provides, in addition, an insight into the perceptions of Allied diplomats. Until eyewitness accounts thoroughly unmasked the reality of blockade-imposed starvation, the majority of the politicians and diplomats labored under the weight of viewing Germany too abstractly. This fact is most clearly illustrated in the remarkable transformation of Lloyd George. Tragically, most of these men apparently avoided confronting the evidence of the eyewitness reports until late February or early March. The German people were consequently forced to live with extreme privation far too long.

Explanations such as those of Keynes and Headlam-Morley reveal that some of the Allied experts were alert to the serious deficiencies of postwar blockade policy. These men searched for a rationale that might assuage their own uneasy sensibilities while appeasing the injured and perplexed Germans. But the sufferings of innocent people condemned to starvation are not easily purged from memory. The British prime minister recognized this fact. At the heated meeting of 8 March, Lloyd George noted that the fruits of victory are notoriously perishable. The Allies could one day find the memories of starvation turned against them. It had been “like stirring up an influenza puddle, just next door to one’s self.”¹³⁷

NOTES

1. Hoover, *American Epic*, 2:249–250.
2. *Ibid.*
3. Surface and Bland, *American Food*, p. 189.
4. Quoted in Bane and Lutz, eds., *Blockade of Germany*, pp. 17–18.
5. United States, Department of State, *Weekly Report on Matters Relating to the Countries of the Central Powers* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, n.d.), p. 1107.
6. Hoover, *American Epic*, 2: 319–320.
7. “Blockade and Famine,” *Daily News*, 22 November 1918. Reprinted in Germany, Reichsgesundheitsamt, *Schädigung der deutschen Volkskraft durch die feindliche Blockade* (Berlin: Reichsdruckerei, December 1918), pp. 59 and 61.
8. Great Britain, War Office, *Reports by British Officers on the Economic*

Conditions Prevailing in Germany, December 1918–March 1919 (London: H.M. Stationery Office, 1919), p. 4.

9. *Ibid.*, p. 6.

10. United States, Department of State, *Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States, Paris Peace Conference, 1919* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1933), 2: 130–172.

11. Surface and Bland, *American Food*, pp. 28 and 189.

12. *Schädigung der deutschen Volkskraft* (see above, note 7).

13. Hoover, *American Epic*, 2: 319–320.

14. *Weekly Report on . . . the Central Powers*, p. 1237.

15. *Ibid.*, 1273.

16. Seymour, ed., *Intimate Papers of Colonel House*, 4: 245–247.

17. *Ibid.*, 4: 247.

18. Surface and Bland, *American Food*, p. 25.

19. Gerhard Schulz, *Revolutionen und Friedensschlüsse, 1917–1920* (Munich: Deutscher Taschenbuch-Verlag, 1967), p. 181. The absence of an American at this meeting was both striking and significant. It demonstrates that the relationship between the United States and the Europeans was not that of an alliance. The Europeans feared and distrusted American intentions during the peace process. Such emotions were not entirely unjustified (see note 21). If they could get away with making policy alone, the Europeans were certainly prepared to do so.

20. In Memorandum, *Foreign Relations, Paris Peace Conference, 1919*, 2: 658–661.

21. A statement by John Foster Dulles, an American counsel on the Reparations Commission, demonstrates why the Europeans (including Keynes) were often wary of American intentions. On 20 November, Dulles declared that at “the peace conference the economic power of the United States must be entirely unrestricted, as this force in our hands may be a powerful assistance in enabling us to secure acceptance of our views. If any international economic control is to be maintained after the peace this will be decided at the peace conference. We must not, even by implication, be committed to it now.” Quoted in David Hunter Miller, *My Diary at the Conference of Paris with Documents*, (New York: Appeal Printing Company, 1924), 2: 43.

22. Hoover, *Memoirs* (New York: Macmillan, 1951), 1: 336–337.

23. *Ibid.*, 1: 336.

24. Samuel G. Shartle, *Spa, Versailles, Munich* (Philadelphia: Dorrance, 1941), p. 17.

25. Harry Kessler, *Walther Rathenau* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Howe, 1930), p. 271.

26. Shartle, *Spa, Versailles, Munich*, p. 27.

27. *Ibid.*, p. 29.

28. Keynes, “Dr. Melchior,” *Two Memoirs*, p. 22.

29. Robert G. Vansittart, *Lessons of My Life* (New York: Knopf, 1943), p. 32.

30. Hoover, *Memoirs*, 1: 297.

31. James Headlam-Morley, *A Memoir of the Paris Peace Conference* (London: Methuen, 1972), p. 9.

32. Tangentially, the Germans would later conclude, when presented with the completed treaty, that Wilson had betrayed them. There is probably more truth in the thesis that inadequate organization had precipitated the defects in the treaty by allowing technical “experts” too large a role in the writing of the final document.

33. Hoover, *Memoirs*, 1: 331. It should be noted that Germany possessed a surplus of potash and dyestuffs, items that were in demand throughout the world.

34. “Die Ausdehnung der englischen Blockade auf die Ostsee,” *Berliner Tageblatt*, 13 December 1918, morning edition, p. 2.

35. Bane and Lutz, eds., *Blockade of Germany*, p. 22.

36. Hoover, *American Epic*, 2: 304.

37. *Ibid.*, 2: 304–305. This action of the Allied Blockade Committee defies adequate explanation. Shelton Hale, the assistant secretary of the War Trade Board, advised Hoover on 31 December that, in the opinion of the War Trade Board, existing restrictions upon the exportation of foodstuffs from neutrals to Germany should be maintained until the delegates at the Versailles Conference could approve a new method. Hale’s memorandum is located in *Foreign Relations, Paris Peace Conference, 1919*, 2: 780–781. More importantly, in the same place Norman Davis, the American ambassador to Great Britain, is quoted as stating in a telegram to Frank Polk, the acting secretary of state, that in the interval between 24 and 31 December, opposition to the exportation of foodstuffs from neutrals to Germany had materialized “within a department of the British Government.” In *ibid.*, 2: 789, Hoover confessed his conviction that certain people in the British government were trying to ruin the American market. It might be sensible to note that the votes in the rabidly anti-German election of 14 December were counted on 28 December.

38. Winston S. Churchill, *The Aftermath* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1929), p. 56.

39. Bane and Lutz, eds., *Blockade of Germany*, p. 24.

40. Hoover, *American Epic*, 2: 307–311.

41. Hoover, *Memoirs*, 1: 332.

42. Hoover, *American Epic*, 2: 312.

43. Bane and Lutz, eds., *Organization of American Relief*, pp. 2–4; Hoover, *Memoirs*, 1: 333.

44. *Foreign Relations, Paris Peace Conference, 1919*, 2: 689–691; Surface and Bland, *American Food*, p. 28.

45. Hoover had encouraged this conception of his motives by commenting that the food world required "a Commander in Chief [like] Foch." See Bane and Lutz, eds., *Organization of American Relief*, pp. 49–50; Hoover, *The Ordeal of Woodrow Wilson* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1958), p. 93.

46. See minutes of the first meeting in Bane and Lutz, eds., *Blockade of Germany*, pp. 32–34.

47. See chapter 3.

48. Foch indicated to Erzberger on 13 December that the provisioning of Germany would be facilitated by the surrender of the German merchant marine. See Bane and Lutz, eds., *Blockade of Germany*, p. 34.

49. Miller, *My Diary at the Conference*, 2: 307.

50. Temperley, ed., *History of the Peace Conference*, 1: 144–145; Spindler, *Der Handelskrieg mit U-Booten*, 5: 348. Temperley stated, in addition, that the American program of ship building was already far advanced by 1918. Although greatly reduced after the armistice, it was still so productive that in June 1919 the total of the world's steam tonnage was actually higher by two million tons than that of June 1914. In light of these figures, it seems realistic to suggest that the Allies could hardly have been defeated by the submarine, regardless of the war's duration.

51. Bane and Lutz, eds., *Blockade of Germany*, p. 36.

52. Hoover, *Memoirs*, 1: 339.

53. Hoover, *American Epic*, 2: 324.

54. Keynes, "Dr. Melchior," *Two Memoirs*, p. 25. See also *Foreign Relations, Paris Peace Conference, 1919*, 3: 528–529.

55. See this chapter, above.

56. *Reports by British Officers*, pp. 10–12.

57. *Foreign Relations, Paris Peace Conference, 1919*, 2: 7.

58. Shartle, *Spa, Versailles, Munich*, p. 38.

59. *Ibid.*, p. 66.

60. *Der Waffenstillstand* 1: 158–159.

61. *Ibid.*, 2: 20–23.

62. A useful, if brief, account of this problem may be found in Klaus Epstein, *Matthias Erzberger and the Dilemma of German Democracy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1959), pp. 293–294.

63. Keynes, "Dr. Melchior," *Two Memoirs*, p. 37.

64. *Der Waffenstillstand*, 2: 26–27.

65. Bane and Lutz, eds., *Blockade of Germany*, pp. 44–45.

66. "Der 'Manchester Guardian' gegen die Fortsetzung der Blockade," cited in *Berliner Tageblatt*, 20 January 1919, evening edition, p. 3.

67. Hoover, *Memoirs*, 1: 339–340.

68. Richard Watt, *The Kings Depart* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1968), p. 241.

69. *Reports by British Officers*, pp. 18–20.

70. *Ibid.*, pp. 28–34.

71. *Ibid.*, pp. 39–45.

72. *Ibid.*, pp. 57–58.

73. Bane and Lutz, eds., *Blockade of Germany*, p. 49.

74. *Ibid.*, p. 63.

75. Keynes, "Dr. Melchior," *Two Memoirs*, p. 40.

76. Bane and Lutz, eds., *Blockade of Germany*, pp. 91–92.

77. *Ibid.*, p. 76.

78. "Armistice Negotiations with Germany," in *Food Conditions in Germany* (Berlin, 1916–1919), p. 16.

79. *Ibid.*, p. 22.

80. Bane and Lutz, eds., *Blockade of Germany*, pp. 100–102.

81. See memorandum in "Armistice Negotiations with Germany," pp. 32–35.

82. Quoted in Bane and Lutz, eds., *Blockade of Germany*, pp. 111–112.

83. *Reports by British Officers*, p. 70.

84. *Ibid.*, p. 82.

85. *Ibid.*, pp. 82–83.

86. *Ibid.*, p. 86.

87. Miller, *My Diary at the Conference*, 4: 420–421.

88. Quoted in Otto Friedrich, *Before the Deluge* (New York: Harper and Row, 1972), p. 52. For an excellent collection of sketches by Kollwitz, see Käthe Kollwitz, *Das Käthe Kollwitzwerk* (Dresden: C. Reissner, 1930).

89. *Berliner Tageblatt*, consecutive articles on 24 January 1919, morning edition, p. 7; and 11 February, evening edition, p. 1.

90. Hoover, *American Epic*, 2: 326.

91. *Der Waffenstillstand*, 1: 218.

92. *Ibid.*, 1: 245.

93. *Ibid.*

94. *Ibid.*, 2: 63.

95. *Ibid.*, 2: 66.

96. Surface and Bland, *American Food*, p. 28.

97. Parmelee, *Blockade and Sea Power*, p. 142.

98. Quoted in Bane and Lutz, eds., *Blockade of Germany*, p. 142.

99. *Ibid.*, p. 155.

100. Churchill, *Aftermath*, p. 56.

101. "Present Day Germany—Food, Raw Materials and Coal Needed," *London Times Weekly*, 28 February 1919, p. 205.

102. Bane and Lutz, eds., *Blockade of Germany*, p. 173; Hoover, *American Epic*, 2: 332–333.

103. Quoted in Bane and Lutz, eds., *Blockade of Germany*, p. 174. German

political and social turmoil was especially pronounced in early March.

104. Headlam-Morley, *Memoir of the . . . Conference*, p. 37.
105. Shartle, *Spa, Versailles, Munich*, p. 74.
106. The documents presented to the Germans at Spa are located in "Armistice Negotiations with Germany," pp. 61–63.
107. Hoover, *American Epic*, 2: 334.
108. Shartle, *Spa, Versailles, Munich*, p. 74.
109. Keynes, "Dr. Melchior," *Two Memoirs*, pp. 51–52.
110. Miller, *My Diary at the Conference*, 15: 176.
111. Hoover, *American Epic*, 2: 337.
112. *Ibid.*, 2: 337–338.
113. *Ibid.*
114. Bane and Lutz, eds., *Blockade of Germany*, pp. 200–201.
115. *Ibid.*, pp. 202–204.
116. *Ibid.*, pp. 204–205.
117. *Ibid.*, p. 206.
118. Keynes, "Dr. Melchior," *Two Memoirs*, pp. 55–56.
119. *Ibid.*, pp. 56–57; Miller, *My Diary at the Conference*, 15: 266–267.
120. Bane and Lutz, eds., *Blockade of Germany*, p. 209.
121. *Ibid.*, p. 214. One might logically conclude that this sudden interruption of the proceedings was prearranged by Lloyd George and General Plumer. The fact that the prime minister had met with Plumer on the preceding day lends credence to this conclusion.
122. Keynes, "Dr. Melchior," *Two Memoirs*, pp. 59–60.
123. *Ibid.*, pp. 60–61.
124. Bane and Lutz, eds., *Blockade of Germany*, pp. 218–220.
125. In fact, the Baltic was reopened to German fishing on 19 March. See *ibid.*, pp. 265–266.
126. Shartle, *Spa, Versailles, Munich*, p. 62.
127. Bane and Lutz, eds., *Blockade of Germany*, pp. 249–254; Temperley, ed., *History of the Peace Conference*, 1: 313–314.
128. Bane and Lutz, eds., *Blockade of Germany*, p. 277.
129. "Das Auslaufen der Hamburger Schiffe gesichert," *Berliner Tageblatt*, 22 March 1919, morning edition, p. 1.
130. Arnold-Forster, *Blockade*, p. 35.
131. "Abfahrt weiterer Handelsschiffe aus deutschen Häfen," *Berliner Tageblatt*, 29 March 1919, morning edition, p. 7.
132. Hoover, *American Epic*, 3: 92–93.
133. Miller, *My Diary at the Conference*, 16: 454–455.
134. "Zwischen Waffenstillstand und Frieden," *Deutscher Geschichtskalender*, no. 67 (1920): 8–9.
135. Keynes, "Dr. Melchior," *Two Memoirs*, p. 24.

136. Headlam-Morley, *Memoir of the . . . Conference*, p. 43.

137. Miller, *My Diary at the Conference*, 15: 266–267. The prime minister's allusion to influenza was certainly inspired by the epidemic of Spanish influenza that claimed about twenty million lives in late 1918 and early 1919. While there is no such thing as "an influenza puddle," the concept must have had a sobering effect on the assembled delegates.

Famine and Starvation

Folly is often more cruel in the consequence than malice can be in the intent.

—Marquis of Halifax

Germany was completely exhausted by November 1918. Those who insist that the country could have prolonged the war well into the next year have failed to look beyond Germany's apparently untouched condition. The conclusion of hostilities found Germany experiencing the uncontrolled effects of a rapidly accelerating famine. But to appreciate the magnitude of the country's need, one must first apprehend its agricultural predicament. The following pages will address, first, the problem of Germany's inadequate food production and, second, the effects of malnutrition on German health.

As noted earlier, Germany entered the war dependent upon foreign resources for a third of her food supplies. Willing to rationalize the country's procedures for procuring and utilizing raw materials, the government failed in the war's early stages to appreciate fully the need for applying an efficient organization to the procurement and utilization of food. When the Social Democrats threatened to terminate the *Burgfrieden* unless effective attention was given to food problems, the government reacted by initiating a complex system of food control. Thus began, in June 1915, Germany's program of rationing.

Rationing did not address the country's nutritional needs. In 1916 a certain Dr. Neumann, professor of hygiene at the University of Bonn, performed an experiment in which he limited himself to the legally allowed food ration for an average person. After six months on this regimen, the professor had lost a third of his weight and his capacity for work had been destroyed.¹ Nor was the scarcity of food the system's only problem. Because of the application of the country's decentralized war administration—a product of the antiquated Prussian Law of Siege—Germany's already serious food problem was exacerbated by the lack of a system of uniform dispensation.²

A further complication, generally overlooked, was precipitated by the business practices current in Central Europe at the time of World War I.

It remained customary for monetary transactions to take place within a circle of family members or close friends. In fact the word *Kundschaft*, which might be translated "a circle of customers," is a German idiom. The term *trade* does not adequately represent prewar German business practice since the relationship between customer and shopkeeper was generally quite intimate. One can assume that a customer and his family had strictly transacted business with a particular shop for a great many years. For the average family, such a commercial relationship might span several generations. Loyalty was such that a customer would give serious reflection prior to changing shops; and if such change were deemed necessary, it would be viewed by the abandoned shopkeeper as a matter of personal affront. What developed in prewar Germany into the food "speakeasy" had its origins within the context of the *Kundschaft*. A shopkeeper knew from experience that Herr Schmidt required specific items, and he did everything within his power to ensure that these items remained on reserve for Herr Schmidt. Only customers within the *Kundschaft* received such treatment. If necessary, the shopkeeper turned to the black market to meet the needs of a customer.³ Given the long history of the *Kundschaft*, the average German—particularly the city dweller—was acutely dependent upon its continued existence. Gradually, as the system of rationing increased in efficiency and more and more products became unobtainable, the *Kundschaft* collapsed. By the end of 1916, with the old merchant-customer connection shattered and the rationing system increasingly incapable of meeting the population's needs, civilians had become inclined to rely on "self-help"—a euphemism for scavenging or turning to the black market for food.⁴

Owing to the war's duration, the government faced an insurmountable task in regard to food production, for even the most efficient utilization of agricultural resources could not compensate for Germany's fundamental deficiencies. First and foremost, the country's agriculture depended absolutely upon fertilizers. Potash, nitrogenic, and phosphatic fertilizers are all essential to agricultural survival. But of these three, Germany possessed ample quantities only of potash. One must credit Germany's chemists for supplying fifty percent of the country's needed nitrogenous fertilizers during the war.⁵ They could not duplicate the achievement, however, with phosphates. Endeavoring to replace the deficient fertilizers by utilizing the country's ample supply of potash, the Germans supersaturated their soil with it. Whereas in 1913 the country used 356,000 tons of the fertilizer, in 1918 consumption had risen to

834,000 tons.⁶ Such extensive application of potash accomplished little; in fact, there is reason to believe that its long-term impact hurt German agriculture. In any case, this is certain: if the Germans were forced to import a third of their food prior to the war, when unlimited supplies of nitrogenic and phosphatic fertilizers were available, then their external food-dependency was only aggravated by the loss of these products.

We have already touched on the increasingly deplorable state of Germany's food situation during the course of the war.⁷ But the magnitude of the country's problem lends emphasis to the need for closer scrutiny. More than any other food, Germans consumed potatoes. Prior to the outbreak of hostilities, the country's level of potato production successfully met consumption requirements, enormous as consumption was. To do so, Germany devoted about a fifth of her cultivated land to potatoes and achieved a per-acre yield that placed her in the vanguard of potato-producing countries. But the war created circumstances detrimental to continued success. The principal concern was potato storage. Under normal conditions, most of the potato crop was stored on farms, with delivery to the cities of such quantities of the food as might be stored temporarily. But with wartime dislocations in transportation and communication, it became necessary to provide the urban populations with some measure of security by maintaining a large, readily accessible supply of potatoes in the cities. Many individuals, unschooled in the proper technique of storage, were thereby forced to concern themselves with potato preservation. As can be imagined, this practice resulted in a considerable increase in spoilage.⁸

Nutritionists tell us that potatoes contain little protein and scarcely any fat. Had they continued to exist in plentiful supply, some form of supplementary nutrition would soon have been necessary. But even this inadequate source of nutrition grew scarce after two years of blockade. By the winter of 1916–1917, the German people were forced to seek substitutes for potatoes.

The failure of the 1916 potato crop, which led directly to the potato famine of 1917, resulted in the widespread substitution of turnips for potatoes, a significant blow to Germany's gastronomic tastes. Day after day the Germans faced meals of boiled turnips and cabbage, complemented by the coarse and indigestible *Kriegsbrot*, in which fodder-turnips were increasingly substituted for potatoes. Relief from such a meal was occasionally provided through the addition of a piece of stringy boiled beef or mutton.⁹ The magnitude of the nutritional problem can be

appreciated only when one recognizes that the search for substitutes frequently led to a total disruption of food procurement in those cities and industrial areas wherein there were no suitable agrarian districts upon which to rely.¹⁰

Once the potato supply had dwindled, people naturally turned to bread as a nutritional substitute. The government had early required that *Kriegsbrot* be processed with twenty percent potato flour.¹¹ But in consequence of the terrible harvest of 1916, this directive could no longer be met. By early 1917 bread, falling under increasingly rigid controls, was made from a dough consisting of fifty-five percent rye flour, thirty-five percent wheat flour, and ten percent substitutes. The flour was milled from the entire grain, including the roughage, so that the resultant bread proved difficult to digest and assimilate. Eventually, with the further deterioration of conditions, the rye flour was replaced with turnips. Moreover, the daily bread ration, which had been established at 225 grams in 1915, fell to 160 grams in 1917, with consequent psychological and physiological impact.¹² The thoughts of even so well-situated a person as Princess Evelyn Blücher were hereafter chiefly engaged with the problem of acquiring food. In January 1917 the princess confided the following to her diary: "We are all growing thinner every day, and the rounded contours of the German nation have become a legend of the past. We are all gaunt and bony now, and have dark shadows round our eyes, and our thoughts are chiefly taken up with wondering what our next meal will be, and dreaming of the good things that once existed."¹³

Of course, the wartime blockade had an adverse effect on more than potato and grain supplies. What the German farmer called *Kraftfutter*, a concentrated fodder known in England as oilcake or maize meal, was unavailable in Germany, having been imported prior to the war. In the years immediately preceding hostilities, such importations had reached, on the average, an annual rate of over five million tons (metric).¹⁴ By good fortune, importations of *Kraftfutter* were not entirely eliminated as a result of the war, at least, not until the United States entered the conflict and substantially increased the effectiveness of the blockade.

In any event, the reduction of fodder supplies precipitated a devastating chain reaction. A significant diminution of milk reserves followed, which by the end of 1917 reduced by half the amount of available milk. Only the very young, invalids, expectant mothers, and the elderly were permitted to consume milk. But the quantity and quality of the provisions

were such that the health of even those receiving milk was constantly endangered.¹⁵ This situation was then aggravated by the attitude of farmers, who often opposed the strict economic controls they associated with the suspect cities. In the region of Mülheim, for example, agrarian opposition to the city's rationing program forced city officials to assume responsibility for the delivery and rationing of milk. The consequence was a monthly decline of almost 130,000 liters of milk, a fact which had particular impact on young children.¹⁶ Miles Bouton, who served until 1917 as an Associated Press correspondent in Berlin, noted that the city of Chemnitz (now Karl Marx Stadt) boasted of its ability to supply a quarter of a liter (about half a pint) of milk per day to every child up to the age of eight.¹⁷ That such achievement was deemed worthy of exultation poignantly reveals conditions then prevailing in Germany.

Milk cows were not the only farm animals requiring fodder. The German adult had consumed approximately 55 kilograms of meat in 1913, or about 1,050 grams per week.¹⁸ Nine-tenths of this demand was met by German livestock nurtured on imported fodder. Concern for the future of these farm animals triggered a governmental attempt to save Germany's livestock at any price. Meat cards and meatless days were introduced, and stringent restrictions were imposed on slaughtering. But the severity of the country's food crisis again undermined official policy. Valuable breeding stock, refined over many years, was gradually destroyed in an effort to stave off the country's starvation. Often the reduction in livestock was effected to preserve for human consumption substandard turnips and potatoes, previously considered suitable only for fodder. By 1918 Germany's stock of pigs had been reduced by about seventy-seven percent; cattle had been depleted by thirty-two percent.¹⁹ The calamity of this ill-advised action has an added dimension: many of the slaughtered animals were so sadly emaciated that their carcasses supplied little in the way of meat. The weekly per capita consumption of meat, being 1,050 grams prior to the war, consequently dwindled to 135 grams by the end of hostilities.²⁰

A decrease in the amount of milk and meat produced the serious side effect of a severe shortage of fats. Vegetable fats were almost totally reserved to manufacture glycerine for propellants and explosives. As the industrial problem reached acute proportions, it became the object of enormous research efforts. Bones were steamed, grease was extracted from old rags and household slops, and attempts were even made to draw oil out of graphite.²¹ But any benefits accruing to such research did not

redound to the good of human nutrition. Attempts to obtain ersatz fats for human consumption met with little success, even though failure did not result from lack of effort. Oil was extracted from every kind of seed and from a wide variety of fruit stones and pips. Inevitably, however, some of the resultant oils proved harmful when consumed. The average person, particularly the unskilled laborer, was simply forced to rely upon a meager allowance of lard or suet to fulfill his hunger for fat. In such cases, the allocated amount was never sufficient to meet recognized nutritional needs.²²

Food shortages were not restricted to the aforementioned basics. In 1917 the monthly sugar ration was fixed at one and three-quarter pounds. Bouton reported that, during the same period, American housewives considered themselves severely restricted when sugar was sold in pound packages—with a *suggested* limitation on quantity purchased. Even under such minor restraints, recourse could always be made to an unrestricted supply of heavy molasses, and corn and maple syrups.²³ The German household was also forced to subsist without rice, oatmeal, butter, or cereal products like macaroni. Cheese, which had once been available in low-cost and unlimited variety, disappeared entirely. In October 1917 Princess Blücher wrote that, since coffee and tea had vanished, all varieties of berries and leaves were being steeped in hot water as beverage substitutes.²⁴ Of course, neither sugar nor milk was in adequate supply to moderate the taste of these bizarre concoctions. And the invention serving as a beer surrogate must have given cause for considerable despair. More chemical than malt product, *Kriegsbier* rarely contained as much as four percent alcohol.²⁵ Given such austerity, a little fruit might have proven heartening and beneficial; however, there was no fruit. A two-pound can of preserved marmalade—a mixture of apples, carrots, and pumpkins—was sold to each household during the Christmas season. The can had to serve the entire family for one year.²⁶

Although principal attention is being focused on the effectiveness of the blockade in disrupting Germany's system of food supply, it should be noted that the concomitant shortage of other items had a further impact upon the overall health of the nation. The farms, already suffering from shortages of manpower and animal fodder, bore the additional burden of having their workhorses mustered into military service; and given industry's considerable emphasis on armament production, it became increasingly apparent that the agricultural community was no longer capable of replacing the tools needed for planting and harvesting.²⁷

Unfortunate wartime priorities served to aggravate the problem of nutrition since, throughout the course of the war, there had been a steady decline in the size of acreage yield.²⁸

The clothing shortage presented an additional problem of immense proportions, particularly for children. Prior to the war Germany annually utilized approximately 430,000 tons of imported cotton, most of which came from the United States. As the wartime economy demanded more than 300,000 tons annually for the manufacture of explosives, Germany was confronted with an enormous problem in maintaining her war effort, let alone in clothing her civilians.²⁹ In 1915 German chemists succeeded in deriving nitrocellulose from wood pulp, an attainment which was soon instrumental in solving the gunpowder shortage.³⁰ But the population was forced to look elsewhere for garments. Surprisingly durable paper fabrics were fashioned, and these often served as cloth substitutes in the manufacture of aprons and of shoe uppers. But paper was totally inadequate for protecting the body from the harsh German winter. In general such protection was simply unavailable. By 1918 the government decreed that men could retain no more than two suits of apparel. Clothing had grown so scarce that it was common for the police to enter homes in order to requisition items from wardrobes.³¹

The problem of footwear had also become acute by 1916. Most of the available leather was needed by the military; that which remained suffered from the lack of tanning substances. George Schreiner, who served in late 1916 as an American correspondent in Berlin, wrote of his trouble in getting a pair of shoes reheelled. "I had no trouble finding a cobbler. But the cobbler had no leather. 'Surely,' I said, 'you can find scraps enough to fix these heels!' 'But I can't sir!' replied the man. 'I cannot buy scraps, even. There is no more leather.'"³² And this was but 1916. The following year witnessed a ninety percent decline in the number of manufactured shoes. Moreover, those produced were generally the so-called National shoes, with uppers of paper or old cloth and soles of wood. A diary entry by Princess Blücher, dated July 1918, reveals the quality of such footwear.

A friend of mine, after running from one shop to the other for days, at last managed to buy a pair of boots for her little girl eight years old. The first time the child put them on, they cracked and split in a dozen places, and they discovered that the material was not leather but wretched cotton stuff covered over with a thin veneer of varnish. They had cost 27 marks [between four and five dollars].³³

Other shortages, too numerous to list, attest to the severe deprivation caused by the blockade. Such items as old church bells and organ pipes were sequestered more than once to see Germany through a period of extreme difficulty. Lighting became a significant problem, especially in the winter, as both petroleum and methyl alcohol were completely used up. It was not unusual for people to stand in ration lines for several hours in total darkness.³⁴

The extreme scarcity on the German homefront did not translate into a surplus for members of the military. It should be noted that the army had grown to quite unexpected size, thus creating considerable logistics problems. The added necessity of caring for war prisoners, whose total—at least during the first three war years—was higher than comparable losses on the German side, intensified the already threatening food problem.³⁵ By the winter of 1917–1918, the German soldier was enduring a marked decrease in rations. In fact horses would starve as cavalry and infantrymen used their coffee mills to grind the animals' scant rations of barley to make pancakes.³⁶ Bouton, who returned to Berlin in November 1918, learned just how desperate the food predicament had become for the man in the trenches.

A high military official who took part in the drive for the English channel that started in March, 1918, assured the writer that the chief reason for the failure to reach the objective was that the German soldiers stopped to eat the provisions found in the enemy camps, and could not be made to resume the advance until they had satisfied their hunger and assured themselves that none of the captured stores had been overlooked.³⁷

Nor was hunger the only human issue facing the General Staff in 1918. Following four years of war, the typical soldier was clad in threadbare apparel. Uniform material had been exhausted. Many soldiers no longer had soles on their boots, and there were neither socks nor *Fusslappen* (bandages) available to protect their exposed feet. A shirt issued in the summer of 1918 to a military acquaintance of Miles Bouton's was actually a woman's ribbed blouse, cut low in the neck and gathered with a ribbon.³⁸

The conditions faced by Germany at the close of hostilities offered ample reason for despair. Yet by all indications the aforementioned shortages grew progressively worse during the period of armistice. The further deterioration of conditions was in part a direct consequence of the

loss of vast food stores maintained up until then on the western front. But most of Germany's postwar crises can be attributed to one of two causes: (1) the revolutionary atmosphere enveloping much of the country after four years of sacrifice and deprivation, and (2) the unfortunate stipulations imposed by the Allied armistice.

General Hermann von Francois, the subject of some notoriety for his tactical skill in the war's early campaigns against Russia, claimed that the German working classes viewed the armistice as the key to the end of the famine. The laborer issued a sigh of relief when he learned of the agreement's consummation.³⁹ But this faith in the enemy's sense of justice to abrogate the blockade proved naive. The hunger-blockade was retained, and the effect of this news was profound. Princess Blücher, living in Berlin, wrote the following on 12 November 1918:

The few people I have already spoken to were depressed and horrified at the terms of the armistice, especially that the blockade is not to be raised, which means for so many people a gradual death from exhaustion. As one English woman said to me, the idea of continuing to exist and work on the minimum of food still possible under the circumstances was so dreadful, that she thought it would be the most sensible thing to go with her child and try to get shot in one of the numerous street-fights; whilst another lady whose husband is at the front, and from whom she has heard nothing in a long time, is contemplating turning on the gas on herself and her two small children, and putting an end to the horrors of living. A diet of heavy vegetables, cooked without fat of any kind, with dry bread and potatoes, is not in the long run consistent with the nerve-power necessary under the circumstances.⁴⁰

H. N. Brailsford, who served as a correspondent for England's Independent Labour Party, entered Germany via Austria in January 1919 and had the opportunity to overhear the conversation of fellow travelers on, in his words, "the inconceivably disorganized railways of Bavaria and Saxony."⁴¹ In one exchange within a group of Bavarian women—in which the civil war, the lack of food, and the difficulties of clothing themselves and their children were discussed—one lady made this rather poignant comment: "It is far worse than the war. During the war we had hope. We knew it must end one day. Now there is no hope."⁴²

One can be certain that there were several factors apart from the armistice which contributed to the further deterioration of Germany's food situation. Army stocks, beyond those lost in the west, were often passed to the developing Free Corps. Acute inefficiency in distributing

the remaining food stores deepened the emergency. Moreover, the experience of four years had not markedly improved a generally inept system of allocating the country's abruptly terminated supply of artificial fertilizers. Nevertheless, in consequence of the severe conditions of the armistice, many Germans believed themselves to have been betrayed and deceived. Whether or not this conviction was justified is in large measure irrelevant. It is enough that it was given cause to exist. As Bouton pointed out, the opinion was confirmed and strengthened by the fact that there was almost unanimous agreement amongst the neutral nations, including those that had given the strongest encouragement to the Allied cause, that many of the armistice terms merited condemnation on both ethical and material grounds.⁴³

The neutrals had, in fact, a concrete rationale for deploring the Allied conditions. Whereas the end of hostilities had served to remove obstacles to navigation and commerce for other nations, Germany's predicament had only deteriorated. Switzerland, Holland, Denmark, and Sweden, though free to trade elsewhere, were most anxious to resume commercial relations with Germany. This was almost impossible. The situation was colored by the irony that the Allies were never completely successful, during the course of the war, in terminating trade between Germany and her neutral neighbors. As indicated above, Germany's sea traffic in the Baltic had been relatively undisturbed during hostilities. Accordingly, she had been able to fish and trade in this area almost at her discretion. But now the Baltic Sea was at the complete mercy of the Allies.

The victorious powers made commercial intercourse between Germany and her neighbors exceedingly difficult. No German vessel was allowed even to travel between German harbors without first obtaining Allied permission. And the process of gaining permission was arduous and uneven in its results. The skipper wishing to put to sea had to submit an application, stating the purpose of his trip, to the Shipping Union located in Hamburg. The Shipping Union telegraphed these incoming applications once each day to the Sea Transport Section of the National Marine Office in Berlin. In Berlin the applications were reviewed and telegraphed to the German Armistice Commission at Spa. The commissioners forwarded the applications to their Allied counterparts who, in turn, telegraphed them to London. The reply to an application, whether positive or negative, traveled back to the Hamburg Shipping Union via the same route. The entire labyrinthine procedure, dictated by the Allies, generally consumed eight full days—even though the applications could

have been routed directly from the Shipping Union to London and back within two days.⁴⁴ If approved, and quite often they were not, such applications were validated only for a single trip; prior to further sailings, the entire process had to be repeated. For German ships situated at the outset of the armistice in foreign ports, the process of returning home involved additional entanglements.

Further regulations complicated the harvesting and transporting of food. The motivation to work had all but disappeared as a result of Germany's revolutionary atmosphere. Wages provided no incentive as there was so little to buy. The goods that were available were prohibitively expensive. Since the unemployment allowance only just sufficed for the purchase of the inadequate rations, there seemed little logic in working for money that could not buy anything. Brailsford observed that the strikes following the armistice were

a far more deadly form of social disintegration than the fighting. They end only to begin again after an interval for recuperation. The Ruhr miners, for example, have worked for barely half the period from November to May, and the last week of April the output of coal had fallen in Germany generally to one percent of the normal quantity. The effect on the railways and on industry can be imagined.⁴⁵

Those commodities that were loaded aboard railway cars or river shipping did not necessarily arrive at their planned destinations. One observer noted that regular reports appeared in the daily newspapers telling of the disappearance of boxcars and entire transport ships loaded with food.⁴⁶

Amidst conditions of anarchy, smuggling had become common and overt. The demoralized state of the returning troops only intensified the chaotic situation. Unguarded stores of the Military Food Office, including supplies on forgotten army trains, were frequently plundered. Civilian food offices were also robbed, resulting in the additional loss of already limited provisions.⁴⁷ Since such license generally proceeded unchecked, one can hardly wonder at the influx of men into the Free Corps, where discipline and sufficient food stores brought some semblance of harmony and hope to a society otherwise deep in turmoil.

Severe transportation difficulties were exacerbated by an armistice that, while continuing the blockade, required the surrender of Germany's best rolling stock. Without the means to transport food, the problem of

recovering perishable items grew. An examination of this problem, conducted in the autumn of 1919 by the American occupation forces, produced the following appraisal:

Transportation in Germany was hampered by an enormous shortage of locomotives and cars due to the worn out condition of rolling stock and to the delivery of 5,000 locomotives and 150,000 cars to the Entente under the armistice conditions. Passenger cars were cut to a minimum all over Germany and even freight trains were sidetracked in order to give priority to coal and food. [But] locomotive shops seemed to be unable to turn out enough to supply the demand on account of the lack of raw materials, insufficient labor, etc.⁴⁸

It should be remembered that the evidence incorporated in this analysis had been presented much earlier by a different source. The implications of Germany's impaired circumstances were consistently and thoroughly spelled out by the many British officers who had been assigned to the country.

The specific details of Germany's postwar food predicament were, as one might gather, obvious. The ration no longer provided even half the calories considered necessary for existence.⁴⁹ The potato harvest, consistently poor since the famine of 1916–1917, now suffered from an additional complication of perishability.⁵⁰ And the problem of accelerated spoilage was compounded by the aforementioned shortage of labor and transportation. The government attempted to alleviate the potato shortage by raising grain allowances; however, that remedy carried with it the considerable danger that, if maintained, such distribution would completely deplete available grain supplies by midspring.⁵¹

Milk supplies had steadily deteriorated throughout the war. Between April 1918 and April 1919, increased animal slaughter resulted in a further reduction of stock by approximately 250,000 milk cows. In fact, the country lost more than a quarter of its stock as a result of the war.⁵² Moreover, the surviving milk cows produced not only a reduced quantity of milk, but also a commodity so fat-poor that it served as a fertile culture medium for tuberculosis.⁵³ The hazard of aggravating this already widespread disease was thus heightened, especially among children, during the months of armistice. Within this period a relaxation of restraints occurred that severely endangered the milk supply for children, expectant mothers, the sick, and the elderly. (This relaxation was in large

measure an unplanned consequence of political and social turmoil, occurring in the wake of the November Revolution. The revolution had witnessed the removal of kaiser and empire, and their replacement by the precariously uncertain Weimar Republic.)

Inherent in the milk crisis was the concomitant fat shortage. With the abrupt termination of supplies from the east, quantities of which had actually shown a slight increase after the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk, weekly rations of butter and margarine were further reduced by two-thirds.⁵⁴ The impact of such scarcity could not be lessened, of course, by a reliance on meat. Pigs, whose number had declined by seventy-seven percent, were being slaughtered at an average weight of 59 kilograms, as compared to 85 kilograms prior to the war. The reduction in the average slaughtered weight of cattle was even more extraordinary, having declined from 240 kilograms in 1914 to only 125 kilograms in 1919.⁵⁵ Since acute reductions of this kind have long-term ramifications, it is not surprising that the consumption of meat per individual was still down to 26 kilograms in 1922, as compared with 52 kilograms in 1913.⁵⁶

Adding to an already grievous situation was the increased economic cost of survival. By the end of the war the cost of living had no relationship to the level of wages (although, as noted, living costs may have been proportionate to the *availability* of food). Inflation, which continued to weaken the fabric of German society in the coming years, was already a serious concern in the winter and spring of 1919. As a consequence, the food shortage was especially pronounced amongst people on fixed incomes, such as small apartment owners, government officials (including teachers), professionals, former military officers, and students. The resultant anxiety often induced such people to hoard what little food they had, storing it improperly in obscure places. Persistent hunger thereby produced inadequate hygiene. And the evidence suggests that the improper handling of food increased as supplies continued to wane. The obvious outcome was a further deterioration of Germany's overall health owing to irrationality and carelessness.⁵⁷

The health of the people had been in a state of decline, in fact, since the early part of the war. By 1916 the physical effects of malnutrition were apparent to every German. Prior to the armistice, however, German authorities made every effort to minimize the negative attributes of underfeeding. One doctor noted that, if the heavily edited press statements were to be believed, overall German health was in superlative condition. "There were actual congratulations on our losses of weight,

[and] . . . much talk of a diminution of stomach disease, gastronomic excesses having ceased."⁵⁸ Unfortunately, the evidence failed to support such self-satisfaction. Germany was literally decimated by sickness and disease. Working capacity had declined by more than half. Mortality had increased prodigiously, especially among children and the elderly. The death rate of children between the ages of one and five had risen by fifty percent; that among children from five to fifteen was up by fifty-five percent. In 1917 alone, the higher mortality amongst children from five to fifteen years translated to more than fifty thousand deaths over the total for the same age group during the last year of peace.⁵⁹ The elderly, generally on fixed incomes, suffered terribly from inadequate rations, indigestible food, and ersatz substitutes that were at times more harmful than no food at all.⁶⁰ The health of the aged consequently collapsed at the first sign of any infection.

Undernourishment affected not only the young and the elderly. Mortality amongst mothers was very high as many bore the brunt of restricted rations in order to feed their children better. A comparison of mortality statistics for German women and for English women demonstrates the impact upon the Germans of the famine conditions beginning as early as 1916. Whereas both countries experienced a seven to eight percent increase in mortality in 1914 and 1915, from 1916 the comparative statistics show a gradual divergence in figures for physical health. In fact, with the exception of the statistics covering the influenza epidemic in 1918, mortality of women in England steadily declined after 1915. Even in 1918, when England experienced a twenty percent surge in women's mortality, German women suffered a fifty-one percent leap above the mortality figure of base year 1913.⁶¹ The divergence between these numbers is significant, for it provides clear evidence supporting the conclusion that malnutrition was having a catastrophic effect on German life.

Although death by starvation occurred in World War I Germany, malnutrition more often lowered resistance to some disease that ultimately led to its victim's death. The record of the period is replete with cases of tuberculosis, rickets, influenza, dysentery, scurvy, keratomalacia (ulceration of the eye), and hunger edema. In almost every instance the disease could have been arrested, and possibly cured, by proper diet. It is also clear, of course, that an adequate diet would have more frequently prevented such infection in the first place.

Tuberculosis was undoubtedly the most widespread and deadly of

Germany's wartime illnesses. As the food shortage assumed critical proportions in 1916, mortality from this disease, while increasing statistically, was for the most part limited to elderly victims. (Tuberculosis remained the chief threat to the elderly throughout the war and into the immediate postwar period.) But early 1917 witnessed increased tubercular infection among younger people.⁶² In Berlin tuberculosis of the lungs and throat had resulted in an average of 3,375 deaths in the years 1913–1916; more than 5,040 individuals were victims of the disease there in 1917.⁶³ And this escalation proved only a beginning. The first half of 1918 saw more tubercular fatalities than the total for all of 1913.⁶⁴ In 1913–1914, the Breslau Society for the Care of Consumptives had 8,692 patients under its care; by 1917–1918 the society was nursing 20,669 patients.⁶⁵

The fact that resistance to tuberculosis has a strong nutritional basis is made evident by again comparing the mortality statistics for the disease in Germany and England. In both countries, tubercular mortality among women steadily rose between 1915 and 1918. But whereas in 1918 England suffered an increase of twenty-eight percent in tubercular-related deaths over 1913, the comparable German figure was seventy-two percent.⁶⁶

The foregoing comparison should be kept in mind when considering the impact of the disease upon very young children (aged one to five). Whereas this age group was little affected by tuberculosis during the war's first three years, by 1919 it experienced a one hundred percent increase in tubercular mortality over 1914.⁶⁷ Moreover, the disease was being diagnosed in infants. Dr. Haven Emerson, professor of Public Health Administration at Columbia University, undertook a study of health conditions of postwar Germany at the request of the American Friends Service Committee. He visited the homes of approximately a hundred families of various social and economic backgrounds; he examined children up to age fourteen in more than a dozen general and special children's hospitals; he evaluated the health of children in day nurseries, nursing homes, shelters, and orphanages in the cities of Berlin, Breslau, Dresden, Munich, Frankfurt am Main, Cologne, and Coblenz, and in the town and district of Opladen.⁶⁸ His research completed, Emerson reached very specific and troubling conclusions. Many infants of six months and younger, he discovered, were already afflicted with advanced pulmonary tuberculosis. Between fifteen and twenty-five percent of all hospitalized children under the age of two were suffering from the

same condition. And between one and three percent of children still attending schools were found, in some districts, to have some degree of open pulmonary tuberculosis.⁶⁹ Many of these children died, and one is therefore forced to consider how many may have survived had the Allies abrogated the blockade at the initial signing of the armistice. The mortality statistics for English women tend to support the conclusion that, while never blessed with a surplus of food, the English child was fortunate to have maintained a level of nutrition necessary for more than mere subsistence.

The Berlin Juvenile Welfare Office maintained documents on several of the tragic cases it dealt with during this period. Tuberculosis plays a considerable role in its reports. Typical is the case of Ida F.

The 12 year-old Ida F. bears a distinct appearance of malnutrition. Last year, her married sister died of tuberculosis, leaving a small child behind with Ida's grandmother [there is no mention of a mother]. The grandmother became a wardrobe-mistress in a munitions factory so that she could better feed the alarmingly emaciated Ida. At first she was able to acquire butter through the black market, and this improved the girl's health. But then the price climbed too high and the need for food increased once again. Repeatedly, Ida collapsed from weakness at school. The doctor then diagnosed that she had a pulmonary disorder in both lungs. She has been taken to the country, but one does not entertain much hope for her recovery.⁷⁰

Although tuberculosis ravaged Germany's entire population irrespective of age, rickets was generally limited to the children. A disease of malnutrition, rickets is the specific result of vitamin D deficiency. Its most agonizing feature is the manner in which it affects a child's skeletal system. Bones fail to ossify, teeth fall out, jawbones break, and joints become so sore that a child walks with great difficulty.

The state of health of Germany's children was truly appalling by the time of the armistice. Although many mothers had sacrificed their own health in the attempt to correct the nutritional deficiencies of their children, by 1917 such efforts had become pointless. Indeed, one doctor reported that, as early as 1916, more children between the ages of five and fifteen were dying than any other single age group.⁷¹ And among those who survived, rickets became commonplace. As many as 20 percent of the children who applied for admission to school in the spring of 1919 had to be sent home as unfit to attend.⁷² In Frankfurt am Main, of those juveniles examined to determine physical suitability for employ-

ment, only 69 percent were found to be healthy enough for manual labor.⁷³ In one survey, which examined 2,154 children, 39.1 percent were found to have rickets.⁷⁴ Cod liver oil, artificial light, and a general improvement in living standards could have arrested, if not reversed, the crippling effects of this disease during the period of armistice.

But significant change was not forthcoming. Few children over two years of age were even able to get fresh milk in the months immediately following the cessation of hostilities. A large majority whose families were unable to obtain either shoes or outer clothing were kept indoors to suffer the lack of light and fresh air. Anemia, listlessness, poor muscular tone, sunken eyes, and emaciation joined rickets as the childhood conditions repeatedly witnessed by Allied officials visiting postwar Germany. The spectacle greeting them is summed up by the following documented case from Berlin. The depiction is almost generic in the manner in which it characterized Berlin's widespread suffering.

Frau F. had, in addition to a 4-year old boy, a pair of twins, Hermann and Lothar, born in 1916. Living in a suburb of Berlin, they were not able to obtain the prescribed measure of milk. One of the twins died, states the doctor's diagnosis, of malnutrition. The other was brought to a hospital for infants and experienced a temporary improvement. But once at home again, the child became weaker. As a result of rickets, it is still unable to walk at an age of 2 years and 4 months. The mother writes: "I have already lost one child; thus, as a mother, I should not despair now!"⁷⁵

Witnessing such circumstances of general suffering and self-abasement, how could Allied visitors maintain a "sense of perspective" in respect to Germany's potential for tragedy? The British reports gave a wholly accurate picture of German conditions. But if a mother, having lost one child to starvation, could so easily accommodate herself to rickets in a surviving child, how much more would foreign observers be led to minimize the country's calamitous situation? In any case, when the Brussels agreement of March 1919 finally permitted Germany to get American foodstuffs, the condition of some of these emaciated children had so deteriorated as to make reversal impossible.⁷⁶ Many were condemned to spend the remainder of their lives crippled, sickly, and underweight.

The condition most often associated with malnutrition is edema (oedema). Generally occurring as a symptom of several other complica-

tions, the most observable characteristic of edema is a bloated abdomen caused by the circulatory system's retention of unwanted fluids. This disease, noticed in Germany as early as 1916, was by the conclusion of hostilities manifest in many of the country's boys and girls. Stunted children, with skinny and rickety limbs, sunken and listless eyes, and bloated stomachs—such were many of the generation born and raised during the war. They were, in a special way, the disabled and partially disabled veterans of the front. Only their front was the homefront. But hunger edema was more likely to be the disease of workingmen, particularly during winter weather when a thousand to thirteen hundred calories rich in undigestible cellulose was allotted as sufficient for a day of heavy labor.⁷⁷ One is compelled to invoke an image of crippled children crying to weak and hungry fathers for nonexistent food. Too often, of course, absent fathers were casualties of war.

The influenza epidemic claimed a severe toll in human lives in the Allied countries as well as in blockaded Germany. It would be incorrect to assume, however, that its terrible consequences were proportionally equal for all belligerents. When, at the close of the war, Germany's Reichsgesundheitsamt (Health Office) calculated that 763,000 deaths could be attributed to the wartime blockade, it did not include within this figure the almost 150,000 deaths resulting from Spanish influenza.⁷⁸ One can assume that many would have recovered from influenza had they not been weakened by four years of increasingly severe privation. The evidence presented by one physician lends support to this assumption. Dr. Franz Bumm, who collected the aforementioned female mortality statistics for England and Germany, discovered that 3.9 percent of increased German mortality in 1918 was attributable to influenza; the corresponding English figure was 3.3 percent.⁷⁹ Although this percentage differential seems of slight relevance, the overall increase in German mortality was more than 250 percent greater in 1918 than in England! Such a severe variance in general mortality is of fundamental importance in determining that influenza was considerably more effective in dispatching malnourished Germans than it was in overcoming the resistance of other Europeans, who were often better fed.

But influenza was not strictly the bane of the frail. A member of the Berlin Medical Society observed that whereas tuberculosis, chronic infection, and dysentery often killed people otherwise weakened by malnutrition, the influenza of late 1918 included amongst its victims many who had hitherto demonstrated an unusual resistance to disease. In

October 1918 the city of Berlin attributed 2,770 of 5,385 deaths to influenza.⁸⁰ Two entries in Princess Blücher's diary help convey the awesome power of this epidemic. The princess wrote the following on 24 October while residing in Berlin:

Whilst depicting the last agony of the country at large, one is apt to forget the sufferings of the individual, but what the war is not destroying in human life, the terrible grippe epidemic is carrying off. One hears of whole families dying off in a few hours, and it is an extraordinary fact that most of the victims are young girls and women. The uncanny idea, death thus restoring the balance between men and women.⁸¹

In fact, of Berlin's 2,700 influenza victims in October 1918, more than 1,730 were women.⁸² The princess recorded this further entry on 31 October:

In addition to the news of burning castles, destroyed crops, dismembered countries and the approaching enemy, friend Death is making havoc among the population at home in the form of the grippe. There is hardly a family that has been spared. From our housekeeper at Krieblowitz [location of the Blücher estate] I hear that the whole village is stricken with it, and the wretched people are lying about on the floors of their cottages in woeful heaps, shivering with fever and with no medicaments or any one to attend them.⁸³

The aftermath of the influenza epidemic provides further evidence of the impropriety of the postwar blockade. Once the epidemic had passed—that is, after December 1918—survivors of the disease should have experienced a rapid and complete recovery. Indeed, such was the experience in those countries where the general health of the population had not yielded to the impact of malnutrition. But well into 1919, Germans continued to die of influenza. Those who survived the disease experienced a slow and difficult convalescence, similar to that observed for many of Germany's wartime diseases. And as with the other infirmities, recovery from influenza would have been rapid had the victims had access to sufficient quantities of food.⁸⁴

The physical retrogression of the population, particularly of people residing in the cities, was noticable to observers through factors other than mortality statistics. George Schreiner, the American correspondent,

was traveling in late 1916 on a Berlin streetcar when he had this experience:

[A] lady belonging to Central Europe's old nobility said to me: "Well, it is getting worse every day. First they took my automobile. Now they have taken my last horses. Taxis and cabs are hard to get. I have to travel on the street-cars now. It is most annoying." I ventured the opinion that street-car travel was a tribulation. The cars were always overcrowded. "It is not that," explained the lady, "it is the smell." "Of the unwashed multitude?" "Yes! And—." "And, madame?" "Something else," said the woman, with some embarrassment. "I take it that you refer to the odour that comes from underfed bodies," I remarked. "Precisely," assented the noble lady. "Have you also noticed it?" "Yes. Have you observed it recently?" I asked. "A few days ago. The smell was new to me." "Remind you, perhaps, of the faint odour of a cadaver far off?" The light of complete understanding came into the woman's eyes. "Exactly, that is it. . . . How do you account for it?" "Malnutrition! The waste of tissue due to that is a process not wholly dissimilar to the dissolution which sets in at death," I explained.⁸⁵

The odor of wasting tissue, already in evidence in 1916, was not the only stench greeting an outside observer of postwar Germany. Sanitation had deteriorated throughout the course of the war. It continued to be neglected during the period of armistice.⁸⁶ As already noted, inadequate cleanliness had terrible repercussions on food quality. The fear of starvation often led people to eat provisions unfit for human consumption. Berlin's councilor of sanitation claimed on 6 February 1919 that, next to an insufficient quantity of milk, the appalling quality of the product was the chief cause of high infant mortality.⁸⁷ The smell of decaying food must have added something to the pungency of wasting human flesh.

A similar, yet more disturbing, manifestation of Germany's impaired condition took the form of indifference to simple physical hygiene. An official at Berlin's Juvenile Welfare Center wrote on 8 April 1919 that the sores and skin rashes observed on the bodies of most infants derived entirely from a lack of the use of soap.⁸⁸ In addition to the severe consequences of malnutrition, many of Germany's children were experiencing the often debilitating effects of physical squalor. One children's doctor filed this report:

Skin diseases and vermin have gained a powerful upperhand. The causes: crowded living and sleeping conditions, a shortage of soap and warm water,

and a scarcity of underwear and bedclothes. In many families one sees two to three people sleeping in an unclean bed. Bedclothes are covered by indescribable filth amongst families that formerly maintained an orderly and clean home.⁸⁹

The shabby condition of postwar Germany is poignantly documented in the case of a Mrs. K., a war widow with eight children ranging in age from four to fourteen.

In the first year of the war the children still had sufficient clothing; moreover, the mother was able to manufacture new articles out of the clothes and suits of her fallen husband. But in the course of five years, bed linen and toweling for a nine-member family were gradually fragmented. The mother manufactured two coverings with them. On wash-days, the beds have to remain uncovered. One towel serves the needs of the entire family for a week. One child brought psoriasis (scabies) back with it from East Prussia, as well as a second rash which is also infectious (impetigo). Of course, these conditions were transmitted to the entire family. Scarcely is a sickness removed before another steps in. The mother is forced to go to work, for the survivor's pension is not enough for the procurement of essential food. Among other things, she returns from work too worn out to treat those children who are sick.

With her eight children, she comes to the hospital as a ward of the city. Upon treatment, the family has scarcely been discharged from the hospital when the 12-year old daughter, F., gets a glandular induration on the arm. The child has worn the same wool dress for a full week without washing (there is no soap). The mother readily perceives that the wound may require bandaging, but she no longer has any linen. Buying bandages is almost impossible due to the high prices; moreover, one can only obtain such material with a doctor's receipt, and the mother is not prepared to return once again to the doctor. Thus, the girl, who goes to school, is sent to the doctor only when her bad condition has attracted enough attention. But a younger sister, who sleeps together with F., has, after a brief period, also developed a glandular induration. . . . In the same manner, 8-year old G. transferred a purulent eye infection to a younger brother.⁹⁰

This vivid picture of disease and neglect is laboriously duplicated time and again in the welfare records of the armistice period.⁹¹ And an already grievous situation was aggravated by the fact that many hospitals, nursing homes, sanitoriums, nurseries, and children's homes were forced to suspend activities because of their own lack of food, linen, soap, drugs,

and anesthetics. In the weeks and months following the armistice, Germany's deplorable state further deteriorated.⁹² Dr. Emerson, continuing his research for the Quakers, discovered that three children in a bed, and five or six persons in a bedroom, had become commonplace in city and country alike. "I found a grandmother, mother and child of three all sleeping in the same bed and all with tuberculosis. Premises formerly restricted as unfit for human habitation are now crowded, in cellars below street level, in attics with no artificial light, with the occasional heat from the cook stove, warmed up once a day."⁹³ In such an environment of filth and sickness, it is not surprising that accounts of girls selling themselves for bars of soap circulated.⁹⁴ While the Allies debated the feasibility of allowing food into Germany, the moral fabric of German society unraveled.

The National Health Office, in the memorandum produced in December 1918, calculated that 763,000 Germans had died as a direct result of the wartime blockade. A table within the memorandum itemizes, on a yearly basis, the number of civilian deaths occurring in excess of the 1913 figure. This statistic had risen from a total of 88,235 in 1915 to one of 293,760 in 1918 (as indicated above, the latter figure did not include deaths attributable to influenza).⁹⁵ The manner by which the German authorities calculated these figures was peculiar, and the possibility remains that they were too high.⁹⁶ Nevertheless, it is not essential for one to be a physician to comprehend that years of widespread malnutrition will inevitably result in an increased rate of disease and death, particularly in the case of children and the elderly. While the memorandum's figures are beyond confirmation, there is no question that the vast increase in civilian mortality after 1914 was largely attributable to the blockade.

Similar statistical information for the period immediately following the armistice is unavailable. This is unfortunate. The revolutionary turmoil that beset Germany in the several months after the war discouraged any reliable recording of mortality figures. Most accounts alluding to a further depletion in food stores conclude, however, that the postwar period witnessed a serious increase in physical illness.⁹⁷ A study limited to the food supply of Essen substantiates this position. Essen, which like most major German cities stringently controlled rations, provided a special food allotment, following exhaustive medical examinations, to the sick and severely disadvantaged. Whereas the number of such extraordinary allotments reached a wartime high of more than 64,000 in

1918, their number exceeded 120,000 in 1919.⁹⁸ Certainly, with post-war food supplies nearing exhaustion, Essen's doctors would not have grown more lenient in their treatment of the ailing. Logic suggests that they became more austere. It follows, therefore, that the overall health of the people of Essen was eroding at an accelerated rate during the period of postwar blockade. Moreover, there is no indication that the situation in Essen was unique.

The conspicuous surge in German mortality, and its relationship to a critical food shortage, can lead one to overlook a coexisting reduction in Germany's birthrate. This would be a mistake. While the mortality of children under five was climbing by 50 percent between 1914 and 1919, the birthrate was falling from thirty per thousand to fifteen per thousand.⁹⁹ War is inevitably accompanied by a decline in the birthrate of belligerent countries, which is then followed by an unusually rapid rebound. In the case of Germany, however, there was no upswing in the birthrate following World War I. As late as 1924, when France experienced a .5 percent advance in births, the German birthrate was still 23.9 percent below the country's 1914 figure. This considerable diminution in the German birthrate was not accompanied, moreover, by any reciprocal improvement in the health of expectant mothers. Given Germany's dismal circumstances, there was actually less prenatal care, an increase in mortality from childbed fever, an increase in stillbirths, and a significant reduction in the proportion of mothers capable of nursing their babies.¹⁰⁰

For children surviving malnutrition and disease, endurance brought few rewards. Sick and physically stunted, their dulled minds were obliged to contemplate a future of poverty and humiliation—a prospect that could only have negative effects on their already listless dispositions. Mental tests, introduced prior to World War I, indicated an excessive and continually burgeoning degeneration in the intellectual capacity of children examined throughout the war. The results of arithmetic testing demonstrated both an unusually rapid rate of fatigue and an extreme retardation of the perceptions required for mathematics. Children who had previously manifested high intelligence and an eagerness to learn now evinced a marked lack of energy, initiative, and intellectual capacity.¹⁰¹ Dr. A. Thiele, municipal school physician of Chemnitz, and Friedrich Lorentz, president of the League for School Hygiene of Berlin, recorded the following analysis:

With the feeding of the brain and, accordingly, with general feeding, there is intimately connected another function of the cerebrum, i.e., the attention of pupils. . . . Mental fatigue is a consequence of the permanent under-feeding of our school children, and is responsible for their frequently very striking lack of attention. Pupils otherwise very clever proved listless and absent-minded, as though they were under the pressure of some bodily indisposition of unknown description rendering any concentration of their minds impossible in spite of the best will.¹⁰²

In explaining the nutritional bases of mental retrogression, one doctor emphasized the sharp reduction of egg-white and fat consumption. As the typical German child reached puberty, he or she lacked the nutrition necessary for proper mental development. A diet deficient in albumin and fats resulted in the defective formation of blood, and this in turn produced, first of all, a change in the function of bone marrow and, subsequently, an alteration in internal secretion. This disturbance of a complex process had a considerable impact on the proper development of an adolescent's body and mind.¹⁰³

The concern with the effects of malnutrition on the brain were not manifested only in the schools. With growing concern, parents observed less playfulness in children who had neither the desire nor the strength to partake in activity that hunger-affected minds perceived as optional. As such children grew older, an aversion to physical labor often replaced the childhood disinclination to play.¹⁰⁴

Insufficient nutrition also took a toll on the intellectual capacity of adults. Through the efforts of American and English Quakers, eight hundred students at the University of Berlin were able to obtain a daily meal of about fifteen hundred calories (approximately half the calories considered essential for normal activity). Prior to such relief, these students had been incapable of effectively pursuing their studies. Similar Quaker efforts were tempering the effects of malnutrition at other German universities.¹⁰⁵

But university students made up a minor percentage of Germany's adult population. Many other adults continued to go hungry. In a country that had experienced a twenty-five percent reduction in the aggregate weight of its people, the visitor could easily pick out the average German by his sallow complexion, listless gait, and obvious lack of vigor—all manifestations of malnutrition.¹⁰⁶ Yet languor was just one symptom of near starvation. Acute privation might also stimulate very excited be-

havior. Brailsford noticed the hyperactive consequences of malnutrition at public meetings and street demonstrations. Thinking, he concluded, had become feverish and destructive. Brailsford's depiction here suggests an individual on the verge of complete mental breakdown. In essence, the nervous ill health of the German people manifested itself in temperaments ranging from the dully apathetic to the neurotically over excited.¹⁰⁷

Given the magnitude of the country's nutritional dilemma, it is hardly surprising that postwar Germany was troubled by an unusually high level of criminal activity. The pillage of food stores and the proliferation of strikes were simply the more obvious symptoms of a society threatened by moral collapse. Years of poverty and malnutrition had seriously injured Germany's elaborate social structure. A consequent engendering of hopelessness led almost automatically to criminal behavior.

One observer of German unrest wrote of the unusual energy with which many homemakers and war-widows had kept up appearances in terms of their households during the course of hostilities. The efforts to provide each family member with appropriate and clean apparel on Sundays testified to the self-esteem characteristic of German mothers of every class.¹⁰⁸ But during the armistice the resolution needed to keep up appearances finally crumbled.

An important moral fact lies in this apparent superficiality. From the moment when the family renounced dressing up on a set occasion, perchance to be able to attend a baptism or a confirmation or to receive a visit from relatives, has the step towards pauperism been taken. Then the internal stability collapses together with the external, then arises hopeless indifference towards the health of the children, and towards the husbands remaining at home in the evening—in short, the life of the family literally collapses.¹⁰⁹

Detailed descriptions of the decline of the German family are prevalent in the documentation of the armistice period.¹¹⁰ It becomes apparent, after repeated reading, that a sense of morality and responsibility became subverted by life's more basic impulses. Pain, hunger, thirst, and exhaustion so dominated consciousness that they ultimately controlled both will and action. Whereas the disruption of the society's moral fabric affected every individual, its influence was particularly profound in the case of young people still in their formative years. One official wrote:

The moral danger to our youth has made particularly meaningful strides in

the final year of the war, especially through the paralyzing of will-power and a sense of duty. . . . In the schools, as well, the main object of education—the training of moral character—has been endangered. To be sure, the circumstances of the war are responsible; however, the repercussion is even more a manifestation of the enemy Hunger Blockade.¹¹¹

The director of Berlin's Department of Juvenile Legal Assistance also attributed the paralysis of a moral sense to the blockade.

The criminality of the young people climbs—climbs without there being any reversal in sight. Compulsory educational establishments and prisons are overcrowded. . . . It is astonishing, but even among apprentices and university students, the spread of criminality is increasing. . . . Only the most severe need, called forth by England's hunger-blockade, could have obliterated the vigorous right-consciousness of Germany's youth, burdening both children and young people with the blemish of prison records.¹¹²

It is evident that many Germans felt compelled to readjust their moral and ethical perceptions. When faced with a doctor's diagnosis that a child would perish without the intake of additional fat, a parent was forced to weigh the proportionate value of the state's rationing system against the life of a starving child. Whatever the decision, and most often it favored the child, a compromise had to be reached that strained previously held standards. Viewed individually, such choice, while tragic, appears anecdotal and insignificant. But when one appreciates that such dilemmas were faced by a substantial segment of society, it becomes clear that by the end of World War I the moral foundation of Germany was being dangerously eroded. By their continuation of the blockade, the Allies had unwittingly twisted the traditional habits and mores of a people deeply rooted to traditions.

During the period of armistice, food rationing in Germany was consistently maintained at a rate of a thousand to thirteen hundred calories per day. This represents a caloric intake as low as any suffered during the war.¹¹³ Even the eventual lifting of the blockade did not appreciably increase individual food intake until several months had passed. The Allies logically demanded payment for delivered foodstuffs; however, in a country bordering on bankruptcy, the renewed opportunity to trade scarcely implied an ability to trade. Rationing accordingly was continued throughout 1919, a year in which municipal unemployment continued to plague from twenty to forty percent of the population.¹¹⁴ To

help mitigate the privation, the government gave a family of four, in which no one was employed, 10.5 marks per week—approximately \$2.50. Even when computing the further concessions obtained for bread, rent, and public kitchens, this allotment could barely permit survival—as it did not allow for cleanliness, the replacement of worn out clothing, or the maintenance of physical weight.¹¹⁵ Moreover, an ever-rising inflation rate eroded the already slight value of the unemployment allowance. Well into the 1920s, therefore, Germany's new republic was afflicted by a nutritional crisis having its origins in the war and the armistice. Greater foresight and statesmanship on the part of the victorious powers might have tempered much of the tragedy if such qualities had led to the delivery of significant food supplies upon the immediate signing of the armistice.

Prolonged hunger and starvation are certainly horrible things. They have the capacity to twist minds and emotions. In the case of Germany, the widespread malnutrition of 1916–1919 had woeful consequences, the results of which continue to exert an influence upon the contemporary world. As an outgrowth of both the blockade and their country's defeat, several of Germany's political economists intensified their commitment to the ominous theory that Germany's long-range economic survival was linked to her future hegemony over countries lying to the east.¹¹⁶ Some deemed it a mistake to establish any significant trade with either Western Europe or the United States. Russia could supply the grain for human consumption and the fodder essential to the livestock. Of course, the metals of the Urals, the petroleum of the Caucasus, and the cotton of Asia Minor also stimulated the imagination of a people driven by extreme privation. Although the *Drang nach Osten* had been a long-standing vision of many Germans, it received regrettable promotion in consequence of the events of 1918–1919. Germany's economic fate, it was reasoned, should never again be solely the prerogative of foreign powers.

Such German expansionist dreams might not have received unsuspected encouragement had the Allies promoted, during the postwar period, a sense of goodwill with the Germans. But after the horrors of a singularly brutal war, international goodwill was at a premium. The Germany of the 1930s and the 1940s has been justly condemned for its unqualified declaration of war on all those moral values stressing compassion, tolerance, and the protection and welfare of the individual. No excuse can be allowed for Nazi behavior. Yet it is all too easy to find a

paucity of compassion and tolerance when examining the postwar behavior of the Allies. Even though this behavior can be explained—indeed, the irrationalism and naiveté of the post–World War I Allies must not be classed with the conscious inhumanity of the Nazis—its consequences are not hard to understand. The German people had entered a new and unfamiliar era at the close of World War I. The weakness of their democratic tradition was emphasized when the Allied powers, themselves democracies, ostracized Germany while poverty and inflation declassed large segments of the German population. Ultimately, many of these people would seek simplistic formulas to overcome a difficult and sad situation. A warped economic and foreign policy proved the logical capstone for a people whose bodies and minds had been enfeebled by the blockade policy of the Allies. This was the tragedy of the Weimar Republic; however, it was also the tragedy of the Allies.

NOTES

1. Maurice Berger, *Germany after the Armistice* (New York: Putnam, 1920), p. 206. Tangentially, Dr. Neumann incorporated the results of his experiment into a scientific treatise; however, the censors suppressed it. The government was undoubtedly aware of the inadequacy of rationing but could find no alternative to it.

2. This topic is covered in greater detail in chapter 1.

3. Schreiner, *Iron Ration*, p. 87.

4. Given the necessity of food for human survival, one might speculate that the revolution of 1918–1919 was conceived in the economic conditions of 1916. Once the government could no longer provide for the needs of its citizenry, it could no longer demand the respect that accrues to an effective administration.

5. Guichard, *Naval Blockade*, p. 282; Hans Ulrich Lüning, *Die Ursachen der deutschen Agrarkrise der Nachkriegsjahre* (Würzburg: Handelsdruckerei, 1929), p. 30.

6. Guichard, *Naval Blockade*, p. 282.

7. See chapter 2.

8. Otto Appel, *Die Kartoffellagerung unter Kriegsverhältnissen* (Berlin: R. Hobbing, 1920), p. 3.

9. Stephen Miles Bouton, *And the Kaiser Abdicates* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1920), p. 68.

10. Rubner, ed., *Starving of Germany*, p. 4. This work is a compilation of papers read at the Extraordinary Meeting of the United Medical Societies

(German) held at the headquarters of the Berlin Medical Society, 18 December 1918.

11. Bouton, *And the Kaiser Abdicates*, p. 66.
12. Germany, Reichsgesundheitsamt, *Schädigung der deutschen Volkskraft durch die feindliche Blockade*, p. 9.
13. Princess Evelyn Blücher, *An English Wife in Berlin* (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1920), p. 158. Princess Blücher, formerly Evelyn Stapleton-Bretherton of Lancashire, England, was married in 1907 to Prince Blücher, great-great grandson of the famous marshal who helped turn the tide against Napoleon at Waterloo. At the outbreak of war, her husband's nationality forced her to go to Germany, where she made her home at the Esplanade Hotel in Berlin. She spent the war years either here or on the Blücher ancestral estate of Krieblowitz in Silesia. Her diary provides a rather detailed record of the war as seen from the German side through English eyes.
14. Bouton, *And the Kaiser Abdicates*, p. 65.
15. Wilhelm Gabel, *Die Milchversorgung der Stadt Mülheim* (Giessen: K. Hanselt, 1928), p. 89.
16. *Ibid.*
17. Bouton, *And the Kaiser Abdicates*, p. 66.
18. *Schädigung der deutschen Volkskraft*, p. 11.
19. Lüning, *Die Ursachen der deutschen Agrarkrise*, p. 31. See also appendix 1.
20. *Schädigung der deutschen Volkskraft*, p. 11.
21. Guichard, *Naval Blockade*, p. 227.
22. Schreiner, *Iron Ration*, p. 233.
23. Bouton, *And the Kaiser Abdicates*, p. 66.
24. Blücher, *English Wife*, p. 183.
25. Schreiner, *Iron Ration*, p. 232.
26. Bouton, *And the Kaiser Abdicates*, p. 68.
27. Lüning, *Die Ursachen der deutschen Agrarkrise*, p. 31.
28. Joseph Lange, *Die Lebensmittelversorgung der Stadt Essen während des Krieges* (Kulmbach: G. Schuhmann, 1929), p. 3.
29. Guichard, *Naval Blockade*, pp. 262–263.
30. *Ibid.*, p. 264. See also the discussion in Borkin, *Crime and Punishment of I. G. Farben*, pp. 11–19.
31. Blücher, *English Wife*, p. 225.
32. Schreiner, *Iron Ration*, p. 151.
33. Blücher, *English Wife*, p. 234.
34. *Ibid.*, pp. 182–184.
35. Lange, *Die Lebensmittelversorgung*, pp. 3–4.
36. Bouton, *And the Kaiser Abdicates*, p. 73.
37. *Ibid.*

38. *Ibid.*
39. Herman Karl von Francois, *Deutschlands Hungersnot* (Berlin: A. Scheerl, 1919), p. 44.
40. Blücher, *English Wife*, p. 293.
41. Henry N. Brailsford, *Across the Blockade* (London: Independent Labour Party, 1919), p. 106.
42. *Ibid.*
43. Bouton, *And the Kaiser Abdicates*, p. 189.
44. Friedrich Lützow, *Unterseebootskrieg und Hungerblockade* (Berlin: U. Meyer, 1921), pp. 50–51.
45. Brailsford, *Across the Blockade*, p. 112.
46. Adolf Beythien, *Volksernährung und Ersatzmittel* (Leipzig: C. H. Tauchnitz, 1922), p. 61.
47. Francois, *Deutschlands Hungersnot*, pp. 40–41. The 20 March 1919 issue of the Charlottenburg newspaper, *Neue Zeit*, reported that the authorities also had to enact stringent measures to prevent the theft of food cards. A watchman with a dog was assigned to guard the offices of the Bread Commission at night. Nor would the guard be beyond suspicion. "The activity of the watchman, who will vary from week to week, shall be investigated through controls." See the "Rector Voigt Special Collection." Hoover Institution Archives, box 6.
48. United States, Army, American Forces in Germany, 1918–1920, *A Historical Sketch of the German Republic* (Coblenz: Headquarters, American Forces in Germany, 1921), p. 3.
49. See appendix 2.
50. Rubner, ed., *Starving of Germany*, p. 17.
51. *Ibid.*
52. Francois, *Deutschlands Hungersnot*, p. 57.
53. Gabel, *Die Milchversorgung*, p. 93.
54. Rubner, ed., *Starving of Germany*, p. 17.
55. *Ibid.*, pp. 17–18; Lüning, *Die Ursachen der deutschen Agrarkrise*, p. 31.
56. Great Britain, Department of Overseas Trade, *Report on the Economic and Financial Conditions in Germany* (London: H. M. Stationery Office, 1924), p. 18.
57. Berger, *Germany after the Armistice*, p. 208.
58. Quoted in Rubner, ed., *Starving of Germany*, p. 4.
59. Bouton, *And the Kaiser Abdicates*, p. 69.
60. Franz Bumm, ed., *Deutschlands Gesundheitsverhältnisse unter dem Einfluss des Weltkrieges* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlagsanstalt, 1928), 1: xvii; Lange, *Lebensmittelversorgung*, p. 72.
61. Bumm, ed., *Deutschlands Gesundheitsverhältnisse*, 1: 38–39.

62. Rubner, ed., *Starving of Germany*, p. 19.
63. *Ibid.*, p. 21.
64. Berger, *Germany after the Armistice*, p. 208; Bouton, *And the Kaiser Abdicates*, p. 69.
65. Rubner, ed., *Starving of Germany*, p. 27.
66. Bumm, ed., *Deutschlands Gesundheitsverhältnisse*, 1: 39.
67. *Ibid.*, 1: 41.
68. Haven Emerson, *Report upon Health, Sickness, and Hunger among German Children* (New York: American Association for International Conciliation, 1924), p. 5.
69. *Ibid.*, pp. 8–9.
70. Quoted in Friedrich W. Siegmund-Schultze, ed., *Die Wirkungen der englischen Hungerblockade auf die deutschen Kinder* (Berlin: F. Zillesen, 1919), p. 25.
71. Bumm, ed., *Deutschlands Gesundheitsverhältnisse*, 1: 42.
72. Emerson, *Report upon . . . German Children*, p. 9.
73. Red Cross, Germany, *Want and Suffering* (Berlin: German Red Cross, 1923), p. 11.
74. Bumm, ed., *Deutschlands Gesundheitsverhältnisse*, 1: 99.
75. Quoted in Siegmund-Schultze, ed., *Die Wirkungen der englischen Hungerblockade*, p. 26.
76. Schäffer, *Krieg gegen Frauen und Kinder*, p. 27.
77. Rubner, ed., *Starving of Germany*, p. 9.
78. Edwin O. Jordan, *Epidemic Influenza* (Chicago: American Medical Association, 1927), p. 228. This statistic does not include influenza mortality figures for 1919.
79. Bumm, ed., *Deutschlands Gesundheitsverhältnisse*, 1: 38–39.
80. Rubner, ed., *Starving of Germany*, p. 19.
81. Blücher, *English Wife*, p. 257.
82. Rubner, ed., *Starving of Germany*, p. 19.
83. Blücher, *English Wife*, pp. 266–267.
84. Rubner, ed., *Starving of Germany*, p. 20.
85. Schreiner, *Iron Ration*, pp. 229–230.
86. Schäffer, *Krieg gegen Frauen und Kinder*, p. 27.
87. Lina Richter, “Schädigungen des Familienlebens und der Moral Deutschlands durch die Blockade,” *Preussische Jahrbücher*, 176 (1919): 413.
88. *Ibid.*, p. 411.
89. Quoted in *ibid.*, p. 418.
90. Quoted in *ibid.*, pp. 418–419.
91. See especially *ibid.*; Rubmann, *Hunger!*; and Siegmund-Schultze, ed., *Die Wirkungen der englischen Hungerblockade*.
92. Bumm, ed., *Deutschlands Gesundheitsverhältnisse*, 1: 68.

93. Emerson, *Report upon . . . German Children*, p. 11.
94. Brailsford, *Across the Blockade*, p. 114.
95. *Schädigung der deutschen Volkskraft*, p. 17.
96. The memorandum of the Reichsgesundheitsamt (National Office of Public Health) was a statistical document recording increases in deaths, disease, and stillbirths. The figures were keyed to Germany’s labor force, demonstrating the country’s loss of physical strength—and ipso facto its monetary loss—in consequence of the Allied blockade. Based on a population of fifty million, and an average weight of 114.4 pounds, the Reichsgesundheitsamt calculated that the Germans had lost 520,000 tons in *Menschenmasse* (human weight). Peter Loewenberg has poignantly noted that the memorandum’s heavy, and dehumanizing, reliance on numbers is its chief weakness. “Statistics do not cry or bleed.” See “The Psychohistorical Origins of the Nazi Youth Cohort,” *American Historical Review*, 76 (December 1971): 1474–1475.
97. Berger, *Germany after the Armistice*, p. 207, reported that the blockade continued to claim eight hundred victims each day during the armistice period.
98. Lange, *Die Lebensmittelversorgung*, pp. 72–73.
99. Bouton, *And the Kaiser Abdicates*, p. 69; Emerson, *Report upon . . . German Children*, p. 7.
100. Emerson, *Report upon . . . German Children*, p. 7. Childbed fever, also called puerperal fever, infects the genital, renal, or urinal membranes and organs of the mother within three days of childbirth. Dr. Emerson claimed that mothers capable of nursing their babies never totaled more than fifty percent, and in some districts they numbered less than a third. Moreover, of mothers capable of nursing, few were able to do so for more than three to four weeks.
101. Rubmann, *Wirkungen moderner Kriegsmethoden*, p. 31.
102. Quoted in *ibid.*, p. 33.
103. Bumm, ed., *Deutschlands Gesundheitsverhältnisse*, 2: 123–124.
104. Siegmund-Schultze, ed., *Die Wirkungen der englischen Hungerblockade*, p. 24.
105. Paul D. Cravath, “Impressions of the Financial and Industrial Conditions in Germany,” in *Social and Industrial Conditions in the Germany of Today* (Philadelphia: American Academy of Political and Social Science, 1920), p. 7.
106. *Ibid.*
107. Brailsford, *Across the Blockade*, p. 113.
108. Richter, “Schädigungen des Familienlebens,” p. 416.
109. Quoted in *ibid.*, p. 417.
110. See Smiley Blanton, “Mental and Nervous Changes in the Children of the Volksschulen of Trier, Germany, Caused by Malnutrition,” *Mental Hygiene*, 3 (July 1919): 343–386; and Bumm, ed., *Deutschlands Gesundheitsverhältnisse*. Although both studies are based on documented accounts of the physiological deterioration of the German people, they also allude to the moral

and spiritual collapse of the population. Studies that directly detail the psychological destitution of the people, including the considerable effects that hunger had on family life, are contained in the following: Red Cross, Germany, *Want and Suffering*; Richter, "Schädigungen des Familienlebens"; Rubmann, *Wirkungen moderner Kriegsmethoden*; Siegmund-Schultze, ed., *Die Wirkungen der englischen Hungerblockade*. The accounts contained in Richter and Rubmann are particularly useful.

111. Quoted in Richter, "Schädigungen des Familienlebens," 416.

112. Quoted in Rubmann, *Wirkungen moderner Kriegsmethoden*, pp. 38–39.

113. Francois, *Deutschlands Hungersnot*, p. 39.

114. Bumm, ed., *Deutschlands Gesundheitsverhältnisse*, 2: 35.

115. Emerson, *Report upon . . . German Children*, p. 12.

116. This was not a new belief; at the turn of the century the concept of *Lebensraum* was coined and proselytized by Friedrich Ratzel (1844–1904), a professor of geography at Leipzig University. Ratzel consistently pointed to the lands east of Germany as those most suitable for *Lebensraum*. See Woodruff D. Smith, "Friedrich Ratzel and the Origins of *Lebensraum*," *German Studies Review*, 3 (February 1980): 51–68. A far more serious—and widespread—emphasis on this concept developed, however, following Germany's defeat. Centering on the work of Karl Haushofer, a professor at the University of Munich, the rekindled interest in Eastern Europe and Russia was so substantial as to result in the formation of the Geopolitical Institute at Munich and the establishment of a journal entitled *Zeitschrift für Geopolitik*. Among Haushofer's collaborators were his son, Albrecht, and Otto Maull, Hermann Lautersach, Erich Obst, Josef März, Gustav Fochler-Hauke, Wulf Siewert, and not insignificantly, Rudolf Hess. See Andreas Dorpalen, *The World of General Haushofer* (New York: Farrar and Rinehart, 1942).

6.

The Making of a Quagmire

*We had fed the heart on fantasies,
The heart's grown brutal from the fare,
More substance in our enmities
Than in our love.*

—W. B. Yeats

Students of the Weimar years are prone to misconceptions of what they are studying. By concentrating on the Republic's final act—indeed, even by focusing on the period beginning with the inflation of 1922–1923—a fallacy about the Republic has been nurtured, and it is embodied in the expression "the unloved Republic." The expression is not entirely accurate. In the months immediately following the war's end—that is, the period preceding the signing of the Versailles Treaty—the majority of Germans cultivated hope of significant change. The country had been torn from its past, and the political scene was lively with new and progressive possibilities. Even ardent nationalists and conservatives were resigned to the need for change. The House of Hohenzollern had proven itself bankrupt; as August Winnig noted, "Nobody opposed the Republic in order to die for the Monarchy."¹

Defeat presented Germany with a revolutionary situation. But statesmanship was required lest a golden opportunity be lost. And given Germany's chaotic situation, such statesmanship was demanded as much of the Allies as it was of Germany's new leadership. The Germans, for their part, were not in the mood to be reactionary. The fact that Germany's political community—and, indeed, her General Staff—was prepared to abandon the monarchy demonstrates the fact that the country was at least temporarily inspired by a desire to embrace the Republic. Given the widespread anguish resulting from Germany's war effort, such amenability is not surprising. Since 1916 the war had brought about a situation that saw the progressive leveling of German society.² Ultimately, almost everyone was impoverished. By the time of the so-called November Revolution, socialism was animating the political thought of bourgeois and worker alike. The majority of Germans greeted the period of armis-

tice anticipating a brighter future. The new Republic was to be the beneficiary of their hope.

That Germany lost this opportunity is one of the tragedies of the twentieth century. The often myopic vision of Friedrich Ebert, Philipp Scheidemann, Gustav Bauer, and others certainly figured in Weimar's later misery. Too often the old socialists seemed almost terrified by socialization. They were only slightly less dismayed by the awesome responsibilities bestowed on them by the revolution: concluding the war and formulating a new constitution for their shaken country. Whether or not the foundation they laid would have proven more solid without the impact of the postwar blockade can only be a subject for conjecture. But we now know that these few precious months served as the seedbed for extremism.

The task confronting the victorious powers in early 1919 was not a simple one to execute. The creative imagination of all belligerents had been steadily deadened by the war. As I described the situation in this study's opening chapter, Europe's rationalism was subordinated in the conflict's early days to a war-inspired sense of nationalistic unity. (With respect to the Germans, it has often been said that *Gesellschaft*, or society, was replaced by *Gemeinschaft*, the more mystical community.) The new mood was neither permanent nor genuine. But it had a negative effect on men's minds. As the conflict became more deadly, and the casualty lists grew, the sense of unity found itself reinforced by a growing hatred of the enemy. And the belligerent governments on both sides encouraged such hatred.

Civilians, a fundamental element within the overall war effort, were for the first time manipulated by the increasingly sophisticated propaganda apparatus of governments embroiled in a struggle for survival. With the prolonging and the intensification of the conflict came wartime deprivation, which led to disillusionment and rebellion. In the case of Russia the gulf between population and government finally resulted in revolution and the overthrow of an entire social and political system. By utilizing half-truths to focus the attention of impoverished civilians on a hated enemy, most governments managed to avert serious internal unrest. But an unfortunate price was paid for such machinations, given the length of the war. By November 1918 the Allied governments fell under the influence of populations with warped animosities. Such an atmosphere seriously impeded the maneuverability of the diplomats. The question of the continuation of the wartime hunger-blockade into the

period of the armistice, accordingly, was hardly open to discussion. This was the situation during the first several weeks following 11 November.

Questioning either the logic or the humanity of maintaining the blockade was, in any event, not a serious concern of Allied officials, who were not above the exaggerated enmities of their constituencies. Britain, for her part, had arbitrarily developed the blockade in almost complete disregard for neutral opinion and international law. In the circumstances, the government of Lloyd George could hardly have been expected to consider the position of its late enemy after four years of particularly bloody warfare. And the United States was not likely to soften the prime minister's position; repelled by German militarism, the Americans had been responsible for the fine-tuning of the blockade during the war's final two years. Even Herbert Hoover, upon his arrival in Europe, was not given to appeasing the "gamblers in human life."³ Only gradually did a restored sense of morality combine with pragmatic and economic concerns to alter Hoover's attitude. But economics and pragmatism, in combination with war-generated hatred, led the French to check attempts at amending the blockade apparatus. Forced by financial mismanagement into a policy of unprecedented importation and borrowing, the French ended the war burdened by an enormous debt—payable for the most part to the United States. Utilizing logic which, in retrospect, was suspect, the French concluded that an adjustment of blockade policy would lead to Germany's importation of foodstuffs from America, with a consequent depletion of Berlin's already limited bullion supply. If France were to recover from a terrible financial plight, Germany's gold would be required as reparation. In the short term the French argument was not unreasonable. But what they failed to consider was that a further impoverishment of Germany would serve, in the long term, as an added economic burden on France. If Europe were to recover from the war, it would have to function as an economic unit.⁴ In the shadow of World War I, such a course would have required an unusual degree of statesmanship on several fronts. The French, for their part, viewed German recovery as a mixed blessing at best. Lacking the necessary statesmanship, and restrained by their nation's enduring wrath, France's leaders kept up their country's demand for German gold, and led everyone to believe that the resultant injury caused Germany would be of slight concern to the French.

The intensity of postwar bitterness is understandable; nevertheless, the historian must work hard to penetrate beyond the often excessive

hostility of some of the Allied leaders to see their statements and actions as the effects of the horrors of war. Certainly a victorious Germany would not have acted—indeed, could not have acted—with any greater benevolence. Of course, one is not justified in defending Allied blockade policy on the basis of a likelihood that Germany, in victory, would not have acted with greater magnanimity; such argument is at odds with the belief that the Allies were fighting for a cause higher than that of the Germans. The fact is, the blockade was maintained following German surrender, and its continued application unwittingly claimed a high toll in innocent life. This tragic episode might have been averted, without compromising the Allied position, had clearer minds than those of Marshal Foch and Admiral Browning been awarded control of the armistice apparatus. Greater benevolence certainly was not beyond the realm of possibility, regardless of what had gone before. As we have already seen, many officers assigned to observe Germany's internal situation were soon convinced that the Allies were misguided in maintaining a rigid blockade.

One final manifestation of Allied blockade policy should be discussed prior to concluding this study: the long-term psychological and physiological effects of hunger. Whereas the immediate physiological impact of the blockade has been recounted, starvation's long-term consequences have only been implied. The damage resulting from prolonged under-feeding can be permanent. August Wassermann, a celebrated bacteriologist in 1919 at Berlin's Institute of Bacteriology, stated that many who were severely underfed suffered irremediable harm.

As for the others, the needs of those which remain healthy and suffer merely from under-feeding will not be satisfied by a return to our former food ration, and, for at least a year, they will have to be overfed. Now, will the condition of our finances permit us to buy the fats, the hydrates, the starches, and so many other precious materials which a regime of overfeeding requires?⁵

Wassermann's question was, of course, rhetorical; there would be no abundance of food from which to feed the undernourished.

One aspect of the physiological effects of malnutrition that has received too little attention is the permanent consequence it may have on mental and brain development. Smiley Blanton, a medical officer with the American Army of Occupation's Department of Sanitation and Public Health, performed an extensive intelligence study of sixty-five

hundred school children in the city of Trier.⁶ His findings, which inspired similar studies after World War II, are striking. Blanton raised the likelihood that "extreme malnutrition in infancy over a long period may so injure the nervous system that feeble-mindedness may result."⁷ With respect to Trier, such conditions were widespread. In the case of almost every child, the quality of school work had declined. Between one-third and one-half of the children were so undernourished that they were unable to walk a few steps without considerable fatigue.⁸ In cases where the integrity of the nervous system had been affected, Blanton concluded that normal intelligence had been compromised. "Part of this change, we believe, will be permanent."⁹

The conclusions drawn by Blanton from his 1919 study in Trier have been strengthened by more recent findings. In 1955 M. B. Stoch and P. M. Smythe launched a long-term study upon the hypothesis that "under-nutrition during infancy may result in failure of the brain to achieve its full potential size, and it is not unreasonable to suppose that this may also predispose to inhibition of optimum intellectual and personality development."¹⁰ In the late 1950s, Joaquin Cravioto became the first researcher to demonstrate that "malnourished preschool-age children exhibited decreased mental age" and that with "increasing chronological age the gap between mental age and chronological age increased."¹¹

By the early 1960s, there was general agreement that protein-calorie malnutrition (PCM) predisposed infants and young children to subnormal psychological development, and preliminary evidence of sustained retardation had been observed in infants with PCM during the period between birth and six months of age.¹² Myron Winick and Adele Noble demonstrated through their study with rats that the restriction of food intake from birth to twenty-one days of age results in a decrease in brain DNA indicative of a decreased number of cells in the brain. Moreover, even after such animals had been nutritionally rehabilitated, the cerebrum DNA deficiency remained.¹³ In 1966 G. G. Graham validated these findings. "When near starvation occurs during a significant part of the first year, failure to grow in length and head size is so striking that even under the best of circumstances significant permanent deficits occur."¹⁴

The last twenty years have witnessed a growing concern with the effects of malnutrition in poor, over-populated regions of the world. This concern had led to extensive research, the findings of which are clearly applicable to the situation of post-World War I Germany. In 1970, for

example, Margaret Mead was able to conclude that malnutrition deprives a child of its capacity to reach full potential.

It is true that the starving adult, his efficiency enormously impaired by lack of food, may usually be brought back again to his previous state of efficiency. But this is not true of children. What they lose is lost for good . . . [since] deprivation during prenatal and postnatal growth can never be made up.¹⁵

And Mead's conclusions were later corroborated by the research of Elie Shneour. Writing in 1974, Shneour stated that it "is the children of the poor, those who have failed to receive a diet adequate for normal brain development, who may be condemned to a substandard level of intelligence, unable to compete effectively for survival and meaningful life for themselves and their progeny."¹⁶

The significance of such medical findings for historical research was indirectly established by Peter Loewenberg. In 1971 Loewenberg, a historian, published an article in which he proposed that a generational relationship existed between the period encompassing World War I (including the months immediately following the armistice) and the rise and ultimate triumph of National Socialism.¹⁷ Loewenberg observed that the adults who became politically effective after 1929 were the children and youth socialized and conditioned by the war and postwar experiences. Although he did not incorporate recent evidence demonstrating a physiological connection between malnutrition and substandard mental development, Loewenberg's assertion that prolonged and extreme hunger and privation had a deleterious psychological impact on the German children of World War I is amply supported by the evidence of investigations tying inadequate diet to subnormal brain development. Whether one espouses the psychoanalytical argument that childhood deprivation fostered irrational behavior in adulthood or the physiological assertion that widespread malnutrition in childhood led to an impaired ability to think rationally in adulthood, the conclusion remains the same: the victimized youth of 1915–1920 were to become the most radical adherents of National Socialism.¹⁸

It is self-evident that conditions bringing about physical deterioration can also lead to personality disruption. It is not so obvious, although it seems logical, that those factors lending themselves to personality breakdown—for example, economic depression, foreign invasion, and fam-

ine—may, if widespread enough, lead to political revolution. The evidence indicates that this is precisely what happened in post-World War I Germany. And in combination with economic disfunction, a lost war, and famine—conditions that in and of themselves were enough to subvert the moral and religious predispositions of many of the people—the Germans were forced to endure the harsh circumstances of the armistice. These few months were especially significant in subverting any hope that German actions might ultimately conform to the plan that many of the Allies had devised for Europe.

Some historians have been struck by the Weimar era's generalized loss of confidence in omnipotent justice serving to regulate the course of human life. To be sure, the consequences of the Paris Peace Conference, embodied in the Versailles Treaty, were significant in creating a predisposition to doubt the abstract principle of justice. But if one is to understand the further course of German history, the events occurring during the eight months that preceded Germany's "acceptance" of this treaty are at least as important as the treaty itself. As Albrecht Mendelssohn Bartholdy noted, the relationship between cause and consequence, having been fixed in the thinking and planning of every sane individual, became "uncertain and fallacious. . . . Success was a piece of luck, failure an error of Providence which entitled those suffering from it to curse Providence to their last breath."¹⁹ Finally, the tragedy of the German experience—and it was a tragedy shared by all of Europe—is poignantly embodied in the following words, written by one of the British officers sent to Germany during the period of armistice:

The most uncomfortable hours for me as an Englishman were those spent in observations and conversations among the humbler people, the more so in that among those who were suffering most I found the least traces of truculence or a desire for revenge. The larger number of these people had apparently before the Revolution the sincere belief: "We are suffering under the regime that the Allies are fighting. If we oust our Militarists, nothing will stand in the way of an immediate peace." The subsequent course of events has bewildered the simpler. It must be remembered that the bulk of the German people have never been trained to think politically.²⁰

Too many rigorously analyzed and extensively researched studies point to the long-term cultural and social antecedents of National Socialism for anyone to make the blanket assertion that the foundations of

Hitler's Germany lay exclusively in the period 1914–1920, particularly within those months witnessing the postwar blockade.²¹ The “roots of National Socialism,” to paraphrase the title of one study on the intellectual origins of the Third Reich, are significantly deeper than the World War I blockade. At the very least, these roots extend back to late nineteenth-century conceptions found in the writings of Paul de Lagarde and Julius Langbehn; perhaps they go back to the early nineteenth-century romanticism of Friedrich Ludwig Jahn and his nationalistic adherents.

By the same wisdom, however, one cannot intellectually dismiss the important possibility that blockade-induced starvation was a significant factor in the formation of the Nazi character. The defeat of Germany, the failure of the kaiser's military machine, the disillusionment and misery evoked by the war—these factors combined to undermine the naive faith which the greater part of the German people had traditionally placed in their autocratic, militaristic social structure. During the chaos of November 1918, the Germans overthrew their rulers and began a process of self-scrutiny. But the process was thwarted. At the same time that the Germans expected a harsh peace, they also anticipated just treatment. It should be kept in mind that Woodrow Wilson, hero of the world in 1918, was also the hope of the Germans. It was a role that Wilson was neither prepared to play nor capable of playing, but it was a role that Ebert and Scheidemann nevertheless needed him to play. Article 26 of the armistice demonstrated to the simple and war-weary German people that justice à la Wilson was not to be expected. In fact, developments at the peace conference made it manifest that the president's proclamations of high principle, representing his faith in humanity and law, did not rest upon a foundation of European reality. Wilson's new order was based instead upon the myth of international morality, a myth that many Germans seemed prepared to embrace.²² Retention of the hunger-blockade symbolizes the great lost opportunity of postwar Europe. The new reality was founded not upon Wilson's high principle but upon unnecessary starvation.

Within Germany, the enmity inspired by a tragic war combined with the disillusionment engendered by starvation. A collapse of moral and legal principle, an impairment of physical and mental well-being, and a general conviction that the policies of the allies would be based on might rather than right quickly followed. The ominous amalgamation of twisted emotion and physical degeneration, which was to presage considera-

ble misery for Germany and the world, might have been prevented had it not been for the postwar policy of the Allies. The immediate centerpiece of that policy was the blockade.

NOTES

1. Quoted in Klemens von Klemperer, *Germany's New Conservatism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957), p. 77. None of this is to deny that serious problems for the future were already germinating in this period. The famous Friedrich Ebert-General Groener pact of 10 November 1918, and the failure of the new Social Democratic government to purge the national bureaucracy, represent an underlying insecurity on the part of the Republic's early leadership. But it is wrong to assume that these problems preordained the political events of 1930–1933. In this instance hindsight is as much the bane of historians as it is their benefit.

2. The best overview of Germany's transformation can be found in Feldman, *Army, Industry, and Labor in Germany*.

3. Hoover, *American Epic*, 2: 249–250.

4. This was one of the fundamental points made by John Maynard Keynes in his magnificent polemic *The Economic Consequences of the Peace*. Although the major thrust of his argument was directed against the Versailles Treaty, Keynes was equally disheartened and angered by the Allied actions preceding the treaty. Late in his book Keynes made the following remark: “The ungrateful Governments of Europe owe much more to the statesmanship and insight of Mr. Hoover and his band of American workers than they have yet appreciated or will ever acknowledge. The American Relief Commission, and they only, saw the European position during those months in its true perspective and felt towards it as men should” (p. 274).

5. Quoted in Berger, *Germany after the Armistice*, pp. 209–210.

6. Blanton, “Mental and Nervous Changes in the Children of the *Volkschulen*,” pp. 343–386.

7. *Ibid.*, p. 361.

8. *Ibid.*, p. 371.

9. *Ibid.*, p. 381.

10. M. B. Stoch and P. M. Smythe, “Does Undernutrition during Infancy Inhibit Brain Growth and Subsequent Intellectual Development?” *Archives of Disease in Childhood*, 38 (1963): 546.

11. Joaquin Cravioto, “Application of Newer Knowledge of Nutrition on Physical and Mental Growth and Development,” *American Journal of Public Health*, 53 (1963): 1807.

12. Richard H. Barnes, “Reflections on the Study of Malnutrition and

Mental Development,” in David A. Levitsky, ed., *Malnutrition, Environment, and Behavior* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1979), p. 22.

13. Myron Winick and Adele Noble, “Cellular Response in Rats during Malnutrition at Various Ages,” *Journal of Nutrition*, 89 (1966): 300–306.

14. G. G. Graham, “Growth during Recovery from Infantile Malnutrition,” *Journal, American Medical Womens Association*, 21 (1966): 740.

15. Margaret Mead, “The Changing Significance of Food,” *American Scientist*, 58 (1970): 176.

16. Elie Shneour, *The Malnourished Mind* (New York: Anchor Press, 1974), p. 6.

17. Peter Loewenberg, “The Psychohistorical Origins of the Nazi Youth Cohort,” *American Historical Review*, 76 (December 1971): 1457–1502.

18. This assertion remains accurate, I believe, notwithstanding recent studies overturning previously held positions regarding the class and regional backgrounds of Nazi Party voters. (See especially Thomas Childers, *The Nazi Voter: The Social Foundations of Fascism in Germany, 1919–1933* [Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 1984]; John Hamilton, *Who Voted for Hitler?* [Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982]; Michael H. Kater, *The Nazi Party: A Social Profile of Members and Leaders, 1919–1945* [Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1984].) Although there was opposition to the Nazi movement among young people, the years 1930–1933 nonetheless witnessed significant movement toward the NSDAP among young adults, irrespective of family background and economic circumstances.

19. Mendelssohn Bartholdy, *War and German Society*, p. 19.

20. Great Britain, War Office, *Further Reports by British Officers on the Economic Conditions Prevailing in Germany: March and April 1919* (London: H. M. Stationery Office, 1919), p. 8.

21. See especially the following: Hans Kohn, *The Mind of Germany: The Education of a Nation* (New York: Scribner, 1960); George L. Mosse, *The Crisis of German Ideology: Intellectual Origins of the Third Reich* (New York: Grosset and Dunlap, 1964); and Peter Viereck, *Metapolitics: The Roots of the Nazi Mind* (New York: Knopf, 1941).

22. Count Brockdorff-Rantzau claimed in a 15 January 1919 press interview that what “we care about is democracy’s ultimate victory in the world. . . . This victory will not be attained by intrigues and lobby gossip. Just as little . . . as by spreading confusion in the ranks of our enemies. . . . The most vital requisite for membership of the League of Nations is moral conviction!” Quoted in Harry Kessler, *In the Twenties* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1971), p. 57. Kessler’s reaction to Brockdorff-Rantzau’s remark was very cynical, and he accused the diplomat of “unscrupulous intrigue.” But this does not imply that a widespread attachment to Wilsonian doctrines did not exist. Even Kessler confessed, later in his diary, that “the three protagonists of our day are the Pope,

Wilson, and Lenin, each of them with enormous, elemental power and human potential behind him” (p. 65).

Appendix

Appendix 1

Memoranda on Agricultural Conditions in Germany

. . . After suffering for years from an insufficient supply of food, and of a quality which the palate is weary of, the desire is now so great on the part of everyone who can possibly afford to purchase any luxury or dainty, that it is not possible to expect a better form of control. I should say for all ordinary foods the Food Ministry deserves great credit for efficiency. . . . Probably the best example of the real condition of food supplies in Germany which we came across was at a railway terminus in the Berlin slaughterhouse. There many of the cattle sheds are being used for potato and vegetable stores. Where we were passing a truck of potatoes was being unloaded. I can only describe them as being rotten and in a putrid state; yet all these potatoes were carefully sorted out, washed, allowed to dry and were sold in the poorer districts of Berlin. No farmer in Britain would dream of attempting to give this load of potatoes to any animal on his farm. There is no question of classifying potatoes in regard to size, small and big are all used. When we consider that even with this care the allowance per head per week only amounts to 3 lbs. then this in itself must be conclusive evidence of the real condition of the food supply of the German people. It was with difficulty that one could believe the potatoes I referred to could be eaten by any human creature; only the pangs of direct hunger would make their consumption possible.

It was interesting while in the Berlin slaughterhouse to note the great care which was taken to make use of every particle of offal; for instance, skin off heads of cattle and pigs was all carefully boiled, the hair scraped carefully off, and then everything (gristle, ears, and all included) was used for sausage manufactory. Every ounce of blood is carefully treasured and used and also all other parts of the animal such as the womb, etc. . . .

In her present state of lack of essential foodstuffs, especially for pregnant women and young children, it is easy to understand how public opinion in Germany is so keenly resentful of and deplores the demand included in the Peace Terms for the immediate delivery of 140,000 cows.

The shortage of milk has already told heavily on the children, as shown by the great increase in mortality, deformity and sickness, and the parents are already driven to distraction in their efforts to provide food which will keep life in the bodies of their children.

SOURCE: A. P. McDougall, Chief Livestock Commissioner for Scotland, *Memoranda on Agricultural Conditions in Germany* (London: H. M. Stationery Office, 1919), p. 22.

Appendix 2

Report on Food Conditions in Germany

. . . The "average man" expends about 3,000 calories in a day on keeping himself alive and on doing work. To maintain his health and efficiency he therefore has to take food equal to about 3,300 calories in value, allowing for about 10 percent loss in digestion. The average woman needs about 2,650; a man in sedentary occupation about 2,500. On the other hand a heavy worker may expend and require in the form of food 4,000 or even 5,000 calories in the day. . . .

We have seen that since the summer of 1916, the German population has had to live on a ration per head of about 1,500 calories with about 200 calories more available in the form of vegetables.

In consequence . . . of the large proportion of vegetable food in the diet, and the large proportion of bran in the bread, the food is much less digestible than normally, and there must be a loss of at least 15 to 20 percent in digestion. . . . The food, moreover, was seriously deficient as regards quality. For the normal repair of the wear and tear of the tissues, especially the muscles, a certain amount of protein must be taken. The minimum figure to which this can be safely reduced, according to the Royal Society, is 70 grammes per man per day. In the German rations, the amount varied from 30 to 40 grammes and even with other possible purchases, did not exceed 45 grammes. This amount might have been sufficient if it had been animal protein, and had formed part of a diet sufficient in all other respects. It was, however, for the most part, vegetable protein of little more than one-half the value of animal protein, and was therefore absolutely insufficient for the maintenance of health. As regards fat, 70 grammes per man per day has been accepted by the

Allied countries as the necessary minimum for the average man. The rations contained only 15 to 20 grammes of fat per day, and the food obtainable outside the ration was almost entirely deficient in fat. A diet thus restricted in quantity and defective in quality signifies slow starvation. . . . In Germany a number of deaths have actually occurred as a direct result of this slow starvation. . . . It was found in these cases that death occurred when the body weight had been reduced by 30 percent.

Since a very large number of the population have lost since 1916 from 15 to 25 percent of their original weight, it is evident that their condition must be seriously affected. . . .

In a great city such as Berlin, it may be stated that two-thirds of the population are living on a low level of vitality; they are much wasted, and when stripped, they are seen to have no fat, the neck being hollow and the ribs distinct. They move slowly, are dull and apathetic. . . . The loss of physical resistance is shown by the increased incidence of disease and by the increased mortality. The death rate in Prussia, as a whole, from tubercle of the lungs has increased two and one-half times, and is now equal to what it was 40 years ago. . . . The number of deaths from pneumonia has also largely increased. . . .

Official statistics of the German Empire, as a whole, show an increased number of deaths of about 760,000 amongst the civil population for the four years 1915 to 1918, as compared with the number to be expected from pre-war statistics.

The increase in the civilian death rate was as follows: 1915, plus 9½ percent; 1916, plus 14 percent; 1917, plus 32 percent; 1918, plus 37 percent.

The workers in factories are on the whole better off than most of the population. . . . [Yet], they also were much wasted. In all the works inspected the men complained that they were always hungry, that they did not get enough to eat, and that they rapidly became tired. In contrast to the workers in large factories, the isolated workman is much worse off, and it is especially among these and in their families that one finds the worst state of nutrition and the greatest incidence of sickness. . . .

[The middle-class] lives for the most part in small flats, prides itself on its respectability and on the proper and healthy up-bringing of the children. . . . This class . . . is profited only to a slight extent by the importation of American food, since the price of this food in marks is entirely beyond their means. It is thus especially among the children in

this class that we meet with fulminating cases of tubercle, proving fatal within three months of its first appearance. In one case inspected, in which the mother had died and the father had been seriously ill from under-feeding, the family were augmenting their scanty food supply by drawing on the savings put aside by the head of the house as provision for his old age. I found, similarly, among all classes of the population that savings were being spent to buy food to meet the instant needs of the family.

As the result of the absence of a large proportion of the adult male population at the Front, the birth rate in Germany, as in other belligerent countries, has largely diminished. Contributory to this diminution is the decrease in fertility of the population resulting from the chronic under-feeding of both sexes. . . . Before the war Berlin received 1,250,000,000 litres of milk per day; it now receives about 225,000 litres per day, a quantity insufficient to maintain the milk ration. . . . This lack of milk has serious effects on the health of the children. . . . The almost complete withdrawal of milk at 3 years, and the small amount of butter available for the family, cause rickets to be prevalent in practically all classes, this disorder no longer being confined to the poorer and ignorant classes. As a result, not only is the resistance to infection greatly diminished, but the coming generation will be marked by the presence of numerous cripples from the deformities of bones induced by this disorder.

In the schools many of the children look fairly healthy, their cheeks being rounded with some colour. . . . When stripped, however, they are seen to be very thin, except so far as concerns their abdomens, which are swollen in consequence of the large amount of indigestible vegetables in their diet. The teachers complain that the children become tired and inattentive after the first hour. All the children, even in the lower class schools, were clean and neatly dressed. It is stated that the mortality among school children from 6 to 15 has risen 55 percent in 1918 as compared with 1913. . . .

Three years on a diet insufficient both as to quantity and quality, indigestible, tasteless and monotonous, has not only reduced to a low level the vitality and efficiency of the great bulk of the urban population, but has also had, as might be expected, a marked influence on the mentality of the nation. Among the lower and middle classes the chief defect noted is the general apathy, listlessness and hopelessness. . . . Their point of view is that things cannot be worse than they are now, that

they have no hope of recovering from present conditions, and therefore that no change, even death itself, can be for the worse.

This description does not apply universally. There are men of tougher fibre, men who served throughout the war and have been well fed while with the Army, who are undisturbed by the troubles of their country and who will by any means keep themselves alive in the coming struggle. . . . But in their present state they are fit for subjection to any forceful personality, and would accept willfully any sort of dictatorship if it were combined with provision of food.

This is the condition of Germany at the present time, her supplies of food and raw material exhausted, and her spirit broken. But the social machine is still intact; her factories and a great part of her coal mines, with many hundreds of years reserves, are intact, and she possesses not only trained scientific foremen of industry, but also the most industrious, docile and skilled workmen in Europe. . . . There is in fact in Germany a magnificent business paralysed for lack of working capital, and to be controlled by anyone who will supply this working capital.

SOURCE: Ernest H. Starling, M. D., *Report on Food Conditions in Germany* (London: H. M. Stationery Office, 1919), pp. 7–16.

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