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1-1-1982

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### Recommended Citation

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How Belgium Survived: The Food  
Supply Problems on an Occupied  
Nation.

by

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How Belgium Survived:

The Food Supply Problems of an Occupied Nation\*

Entwurf/Draft

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15 March 1982

\*The author would like to express his great appreciation of the continued financial support of the University of Missouri-St. Louis and in particular to Professor Edwin Fedder (Director of International Studies), Deans Robert Bader and Thomas Jordan, and Professor Louis Gerteis (Chairman of the History Department). He would also like to thank the staff of the Hoover Institution, especially Mrs. Agnes Peterson for having helped locate much of the documentation for this paper.

Belgium provides an especially interesting subject for the study of foodstuffs production, supply, and consumption during World War II. Of all the nations in New Order Europe, it was the least able to feed itself, that is, to survive under the conditions of agricultural autarchy imposed by the Germans in the food-dependent nations which they occupied. Prewar Belgium imported over one-half of its total consumption requirements, mainly from overseas.<sup>1</sup> But the nation's vulnerability to blockade or embargo was greater than even this round figure would suggest, since feedgrains accounted for the bulk of foodstuffs imports. Before the war, 79 percent and 75 percent respectively of national fat and protein consumption requirements depended on fodder from foreign sources. The ratio of Belgian farmland per capita, the lowest in Europe, put the nation at a second great disadvantage. In Belgium 457 persons had to be fed from 100 hectares as compared for instance with 372 in the Netherlands.<sup>2</sup> A third disadvantage was historical in character: at once a Continental outpost of Manchestertum and at the same time divided into warring language factions, Belgium lacked traditions of the sort that might have facilitated the imposition of central controls over the agricultural economy. These disadvantages were nonetheless overcome during the occupation. The Belgian public, hungry and debilitated though it was, did not experience famine in the months between June 1940 and August 1944. Nor did it suffer on a serious scale any malady worse than undernourishment. How was it in fact able to survive?

The question has a wider relevance than appears evident at first blush. It is often maintained in Belgium that economic collaboration, the so-called "Politics of Production," was the inevitable consequence of a dependence on foodstuffs imports.<sup>3</sup> To secure the agricultural goods necessary for survival, the argument holds, it was necessary to produce manufactures for the German war economy. It is, however, evident at a glance that Belgium received very little indeed in the way of foodstuffs as compensation for its sales of industrial goods to German buyers. They have been estimated at between two-thirds and three-quarters of total output.<sup>4</sup> As for the foodstuffs imports, Jean Colard in L'Alimentation de la Belgique sous l'Occupation Allemande 1940-1944 estimates that for breadgrain, the most important import product, Belgium received over the period as a whole from all sources some 870,350 tons, of which 637,988 tons came from the Reich.<sup>5</sup> Total breadgrain imports for the occupation, in other words, equalled about three-quarters of the 1935-1938 annual average of 1.28 million tons. (There were no imports of feedgrains.) Taking account of exports to the Reich, Brandt estimates net Belgian food imports, expressed in grain equivalents, at 240,000 tons.<sup>6</sup> But consideration must also be given in the food balance to consumption by Germans in the Command Area (Befehlsbereich) of Belgian agricultural products. At a minimum, this amounted to twice Belgium's food exports to the Reich. Germans, it seems, ate more Belgian food during the occupation than Belgians German! It must also be

emphasized that over the period from 1940 to 1944, the nation's food imports fell sharply, while at the same time the sale of industrial products to German buyers rose. Tonnage imports from all sources of wheat, rye, flour, and starches decreased from 434,116 in 1940-41, to 211,661 in 1941-42, to 77,140 in 1942-43, while increasing slightly to 127,453 in 1943-44.<sup>7</sup>

To be sure, such figures, estimates, and approximations as the above leave a good deal unsaid about the Belgian food supply. They do, however, point inescapably to the conclusion that during the occupation, particularly in the later years, the nation managed to feed itself largely by means of its own resources. It is, in other words, appropriate to ask whether, from the standpoint of Belgium's food requirements, it was in fact necessary for the land to become the armorer of the Reich.

Reich food policy towards Belgium, to the extent that there was one, rested with the civil affairs executive (Military Administration) of the Militärbefehlshaber in Belgien und Nordfrankreich, the occupation government in power from May 1940 to July 1944. Its task was to see to it that the approximately 6.8 million non-farm Belgians received what Berlin had arrived at as the minimum daily per capita food consumption requirements needed for human maintenance, namely 1200-1300 calories a day.<sup>8</sup> (Preference was of course to be given persons working directly in the interests of the Reich.) This figure represented about half the desirable minimum and slightly less than forty percent of average pre-war Belgian consumption. To attain even this

pitifully low ration level would, however, have required additional annual output (or importation) of some 500,000 tons of wheat, 60,000 tons of rye, and 260,000 tons of barley, to mention only the most important of imported carbohydrates. It would also have required both equitable distribution and restraints on the consumption of non-Belgians in the Command Area.

In pursuit of these aims, the Military Administration had to face huge problems, not the least of which was its own lack of power. With a staff of less than a thousand and few influential supporters in Berlin, it had little voice in European food policy and could exercise only limited control over the economic behavior of Wehrmacht units and personnel stationed in the Command Area. It also had no choice but to depend on Belgians to do the actual work of administering the agricultural economy.<sup>9</sup>

But in this respect, the nation's traditions presented real difficulties. Since responsibilities for food production and supply were divided, the Military Administration found itself having to create a new super-agency, the Corporation Nationale de l'Alimentation et de l'Agriculture (CNAA), to administer the agricultural economy. The new organization was, however, weak. As a result, the Military Administration, with Belgian administrators in tow, moved with great caution in setting policy. They did not in particular risk imposing the one fundamental measure necessary to step up agricultural self-sufficiency. It was to increase production of crops for direct human consumption by converting a portion of Belgium's surprisingly large area of

grazing land to farmland. Belgo-German farm administrators also did surprisingly little to introduce new crops into cultivation. To regulate output, the Military Administration and CNAA relied mainly on delivery quotas. These were, however, set low and made flexible enough to leave peasant cultivators with substantial surpluses to dispose of, albeit for reasons of prestige this fact could never be openly admitted.

The official food policy, while hardly adequate, cannot be described as a total failure. Supplies of agricultural goods increased steadily during the occupation. In Winter and Spring 1941, mass starvation was an imminent danger; thereafter it became increasingly less difficult to meet targeted ration levels. Even so, hunger might well have become famine had not huge amounts of unofficial output entered the market. By all odds, it was equal in amount to that distributed by the authorities. This additional production derived from the surpluses of peasant cultivators, the yields of "miniplots," home gardens and public lands, and from the traffic of smugglers. Doubtless there were enormous inequities in the distribution of this food. It is nonetheless incontrovertible that for the urban public of the occupied land the marché clandestin--the black market--provided the margin of survival.

A discussion of the food problems of occupied Belgium must really begin by emphasizing the criminal indifference with which Berlin viewed the whole matter except, that is, until shortages threatened to disrupt production. The Four Year Plan simply



ordered the Military Administration to see to it that Belgium feed itself. Neither it nor any other German ministry or agency made any serious attempt to determine if such a thing were actually possible, offered assistance in raising domestic production, or support in gaining access to foreign sources of foodstuffs. The efforts of both the Military Administration and the leaders of Belgian business and the civil service to secure Berlin's recognition of Belgium's special foodstuffs needs all fell on deaf ears. Nor was the OKW particularly helpful in disciplining the economic behavior of the Wehrmacht units stationed in the Command Area. The Reich in fact deviated only once from its insistence that Belgium should take care of its own food problems. This happened as a result of the near-famine of Winter and Spring 1941, which touched off miner strikes throughout the Borinage and Liège basins, and for a time even jeopardized the "Politics of Production." The most abiding concern of the Reich with regard to Belgian agriculture was, however, to cream off any food surplusses above the minimum necessary for human maintenance. Beyond that, it simply left the Military Administration free to struggle as best it could with the intractable food problems of the occupied land.

Berlin's lack of support together with the general food shortages in Europe and disruptions due to military events are responsible for the "pitifully inadequate" results of the many attempts of the Military Administration, some of them through Belgian intermediaries, to secure a reliable foreign source of

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staple products. The first failure was the effort to organize an American food mission on the pattern of the World War I Committee for the Relief of Belgium. A general air of unreality overhangs the whole affair. In January 1941, several figures from the "Hoover circle" arrived in Brussels "to study the Belgian food situation." With the encouragement of the Military Administration, the head of the Belgian Red Cross and a pre-war diplomat, one Prince de Ligne, were dispatched to Lisbon to conduct negotiations. A representative of the delegation apparently even succeeded in gaining passage to Washington. Although discussions persisted intermittently throughout the year, nothing had been resolved when, because of the entrance of the United States into the war, contacts were broken off.<sup>11</sup>

The failure to revive Belgium's prewar exchange of industrial goods for French and Dutch agricultural products was a much more serious matter. Part of the problem with regard to France was the priority which the Franco-German Armistice Commission in Wiesbaden accorded French grain exports to the Reich and to the Wehrmacht in France, some 800,000 tons per year. Colard's figures indicate that cereal imports from France were comparatively insignificant. From mid-1940 to mid-1941 they amounted to 54,679 tons of grain and from mid-1941 to mid-1942 to 10,000 tons. In 1942-1943 and in 1943-1944 France exported to Belgium 15,222 and 15,012 tons of flour respectively.<sup>12</sup> The Military Administration's final report notes, in addition, that France consistently ran huge trade deficits with Belgium, in the end amounting to 328

million RM less than total Belgian exports to France of 842 million RM. Wine was by far the most important French export to Belgium. It reached 342,739 hl or more than twice pre-war levels and totalled some 60.5 million RM in value. Approximately two-thirds of this barrelage was re-exported from Belgium to the Reich, and most of the rest apparently consumed on the spot by Wehrmacht personnel.<sup>13</sup> In the Dutch case, the results, with one exception, were even sorer. With the exception of a critical shipment of 60,000 tons of seed-potatoes in 1941, the 80 million RM in pre-war Belgian agricultural imports from the Netherlands all but disappeared during the occupation. This was a matter of great bitterness on the part of the Military Administration. It protested to Berlin on numerous occasions the injustice of permitting stubborn Dutchmen to eat better than the more compliant Belgians.<sup>14</sup> Its final report cited numerous instances in which the Reichskommissariat Niederlande had sabotaged trade agreements.

With regard to a third possible source of staple imports, Eastern Europe, results were somewhat more ambivalent. Belgian trade with the USSR did not get past the introductory stages. After lengthy negotiations in Moscow, agreement was reached to import 120,000 tons of wheat, 55,000 tons of rye and various other commodities totalling to some 40 million RM in value. The German invasion of the Soviet Union unfortunately prevented execution of the deal, and virtually no foodstuffs reached occupied Belgium from that source.<sup>15</sup> Belgian participation in the 1942 Kriegsmesse in Budapest opened the way for the most successful trade agreement

of the occupation, one with Hungary. In exchange for the sale of certain Belgian assets in that country and additional amounts of machinery, Hungary agreed in 1943 and 1944 to send over the Belgian Winterhilfswerk some 27 million RM in goods including 15,500 tons of wheat, nearly all of which appears to have been delivered.<sup>16</sup>

The Military Administration's greatest failure was, of course, the inability to "awaken the Reich to its export responsibilities." To be sure, a certain amount of exportation was unavoidable, especially of feedgrains in the period of transition to autarchy. In the first year of occupation Germany sent 279 million tons of cereals (as compared to the 1,208.9 million tons imported annually between 1935 and 1938). This figure was soon worked down, however: to 172 million tons in 1941-1942 and 55 million tons in 1942-43. The only other significant delivery was the emergency provisionment of some 100 tons of eating and seed potatoes in 1941. Offsetting these German deliveries were Belgian ones to the Reich, which increased during the occupation. From the standpoint of nutrition, the most significant of them were fruit and vegetables (27,200 tons in 1942 and 7300 tons in 1943), meat (3900 tons in 1943) and horses (10,790 units in 1942 and 6270 in 1943). The Military Administration estimated that the value of such deliveries reduced by half the food exports of Germany to Belgium.<sup>17</sup>

The Wehrmacht units and personnel stationed in the Command Area was still a further drain on Belgian resources. Their seizures

and black market purchasing made a mockery of official regulation and created huge gaps in the Belgian food supply. It was thanks mainly to the strenuous efforts of the Military Administration that their excesses were at least partially curbed. In Belgium as presumably elsewhere in occupied Europe, the armed services were under standing orders to provision themselves locally to the maximum extent possible.<sup>18</sup> Since the many Army, Air Force, and Navy contingents scattered throughout the land had no idea as to what they could count on in the way of food supplies from home and were also quite disinterested in the impact of their purchasing on Belgian living standards, the occupation began with a mad scramble on the part of troop units and individual personnel for available food. In short, they seized or bought at wildly inflated prices as much as their powers permitted.

The Military Administration took two important sets of measures in the attempt to wrest order out of this chaos. The first of them, of September 1940, was to put Belgian growers and processors of certain products under exclusive delivery contracts. Agreements were arrived at for canned meat, sugar, chocolate, deciduous fruits, nuts, and chicory.<sup>19</sup> The Military Administration's reports for the following months provide eloquent testimony of the inadequacy of such arrangements. In the five weeks beginning 1 September 1940, for instance, various troop units were known to have seized 18,000 cattle and 12,000 pigs, more than the amounts authorized for the entire quarter. In January 1941,<sup>20</sup> German military police broke up a band of smugglers which included thirty

civilians and fifty railroad officials and was run by "Jewish emigrants." In its books appeared the names of numerous troop unit paymasters.<sup>21</sup> The report complained the following month of the common practice, so subversive of Belgian policing efforts, whereby staffs and units of the Wehrmacht used their official seals (Dienstsiegel) to "authorize" Belgian dealers to make black market purchases on their behalf.<sup>22</sup>

The Military Administration's second and more important step, taken August 1941, was to vest exclusive powers for food purchasing and distribution in Belgium with the Military Intendent.<sup>23</sup> A month later the OKW agreed to principle that the Wehrmacht should rely more heavily on provisionment from the home country. It was thought possible to announce to the Belgian public that in the future the forces of occupation would cease to draw supplies of fat, bread, meat, and potatoes from the land.<sup>24</sup> More important, however, than any announcement of intentions was the fact that by August 1941 the troops had completed the planting on seized land their first potato crop. It was expected that the 85,000 Morgen in question would yield 679,476,000 Pfund or enough to supply 5 million Belgians with five hundred grams per day for three and one-half months!<sup>25</sup>

It is impossible to arrive at better than crude estimates of Wehrmacht consumption of Belgian foodstuffs, since so much of it went on outside of the purview of the Military Administration. Figure I provides a list of official Wehrmacht seizures in September 1940 to January 1941. The Leistungsberichte of 1942/1943 and

Figure I  
Wehrmacht Requisitions  
(September 1940 - January 1941)

Pork	12,000 heads	(9/40 - 1/41)
Cattle	18,000 heads	(9/40 - 1/41)
Butter	1,500,000 kg	(9/40 - 1/41)
Beans	3000, tons	(9/40 - 11/40)
Sugar	10,000 tons	(9/40 - 11/40)
Potatoes	50,000 tons	(9/40 - 11/40)
Rice	1000 tons	(9/40 - 11/40)
Jams	8000 tons	(9/40 - 11/40)
Chocolate	3000 tons	
Oats	30,000 tons	

(from Fernand Baudhuin, L'Economie Belge sous l'Occupation allemande, Brussels, 1945, p. )

1943/1944 estimate official delivers to the Military Intendent at 199,300 tons (37,760,000 RM) and 304,400 (45,560,000 RM) the following year, about four-fifths the amount of Belgian agricultural exports to Germany for the years in question. These estimates include, however, only a few specified items, notably hay (20,000 tons for both years), straw (95,000 and 135,000 tons), potatoes (25,000 and 40,000 tons), and sugar (5000 and 6000 tons).<sup>26</sup> According to Colard, these figures contain important omissions. He claims to have seen 1941 and 1942 bills of lading for Belgian goods from the office of the Military Intendent for 62,540 tons of sugar, 64,263 tons of flour, 6570 tons of barley, 9157 tons of beans, and 303,510 tons of straw.<sup>27</sup> Colard, however, also considers these figures too low, even for the years in question, and, in a comparison between CNAA food collections and distributions to Belgians arrives at the following figures for "probable" Wehrmacht consumption of foodstuffs raised in Belgium during the first half of the occupation.

Figure II  
Probable Wehrmacht Consumption

	Total Belgian Production	<u>Wehrmacht</u> Consumption
<u>Potatoes</u>		
1941	1,874,000 tons	221,754 tons
1942	2,159,000 tons	141,264 tons
<u>Margarine</u>		
1941	21,054,867 kg	3,954,000 kg
1942	11,424,157 kg	1,974,000 kg
<u>Meat</u>		
1941	138,795 tons	21,795 tons
1942	147,271 tons	52,771 tons

(From Jean Colard, L'Alimentation de la Belgique sous l'Occupation Allemande 1940-1944, (Louvain, 1945), pp. 161-66.)

Whether the second half of the occupation brought a reduction in consumption by the armed forces cannot be determined. The same is true as concerns the extent of Wehrmacht reallocations to Belgians employed in armaments factories. Nor do these estimates include black market purchasing. Data concerning it is scarce indeed. In September 1942, the Military Administration claimed great success in having reduced resort to unofficial markets in the year since centralizing procurement.<sup>28</sup> On the other hand, Wehrmacht allowances for food shipments to the Reich were raised in April 1942 (to compensate for a reduction in German rations) to the generous level of 5 kg per man/week.<sup>29</sup> It seems plausible to conclude, then, that a shift occurred midway through the occupation from unit to individual purchasing. It



did not, however, effect volume significantly. There is general agreement that throughout the occupation Germans in uniform, or their representatives, paid twice as much on food black markets as Belgians.<sup>30</sup>

Production control was, of course, the most important component of food policy in the occupied country. To put it into effect, the Military Administration had to begin from scratch. The Belgians took on their own almost none of the steps essential to prepare the country for the contingency of German occupation. This is a very puzzling fact, and the usual explanation--belief that a World War I-type food mission would solve all problems--is not very persuasive. Nor is a plea of ignorance. Methods for achieving self-sufficiency were well-understood, indeed already demonstrating their efficacy in another nation which depended on foreign sources for one-half its food consumption requirements, Switzerland.

The Swiss began preparing for the contingency of war with the appointment of a Delegierter für Kriegswirtschaft in April 1937. Conversion to self-sufficiency in foodstuffs production was a central part of the overall planning effort. The task, undertaken by a commission headed by Friedrich T. Wahlen, called above all for the conversion of some 183,479 ha of grazing land in order to increase farmland to 504,812 ha. The importation of feedgrains could thereby be eliminated without causing a corresponding reduction in livestock which, on its part, would be fed on feedlots rather than grazed. Wahlen expected to provide

the average Swiss with 3000 calories per day including 80 grams of protein and 50-70 grams of fat. The first stage of the plan was introduced in September 1939. It was not put fully into effect during the war itself in part because Swiss authorities discovered that a ration level of 2400 calories per day was better for health than the planned 3000. Still, thanks to the Wahlen Plan, which added over 1000 calories to the daily diet, Switzerland found it possible to live without either grain imports or rationing of vegetables and potatoes during the war.<sup>31</sup>

In August 1939 the economist Fernand Baudhuin proposed a plan for agricultural autonomy based on the Swiss model. If adopted, it might well not only have increased the supply of food but changed the political climate of the occupation. Baudhuin argued that it would be possible to provide an average per capita diet of 2500 calories by putting 240,000 ha of grazing land into cultivation, raising cattle only for milk, making use of low fat milk products normally fed only to cattle, and encouraging the consumption of pork as a source of protein. In September and October 1939 the Belgian government published the decrees necessary to begin the conversions but "because of a bad winter. . .and the resistance of the Defense Ministry to releasing the necessary labor. . .the plan remained a dead letter."<sup>32</sup>

Indeed, the only Belgian food decrees to have taken effect were rather modest ones ordering an increase in stocks. One, providing for a special tax to cover storage costs, required importers of grain to double amounts in storage. By May 1940

they had risen to 330,000 tons, enough for two months consumption. Another decree ordered margarine producers to constitute oil reserves sufficient for three months output. A third ordered an increase in stocks of frozen meat (insignificant as a percentage of overall meat consumption) to cover six months normal requirements.<sup>33</sup> These, however, were the only measures to increase the food supply enacted by the Belgian government prior to the occupation which, in addition did nothing to set up an organization capable of administering a food policy for the nation.

CNAA was created to fill the vacuum in food policy. At first, the Military Administration attempted to work through existing structures. On 4 June 1940 it described as "good" cooperation with the two Ministries of Food and Agriculture.<sup>36</sup> As of 1 August, however, it had been decided to combine them under Secretary General De Winter, then recently returned from a flight to the South of France, in order to make it possible to deal in comprehensive fashion with problems of production, processing, and rationing.<sup>35</sup> It soon became apparent, however, that the bases for a food policy simply had not been laid. The land cadaster dated from 1929 and was completely inadequate. It was well-nigh impossible to arrive at meaningful estimates of available foodstocks, a situation due to Wehrmacht seizures as well as the inadequacies of the Belgian administration. Price controls and rationing existed only on paper. Above all, nothing had been done to prepare the cultivators for the introduction of production controls.<sup>36</sup>

On 27 August 1940, amidst great fanfare, the Corporation nationale de l'Agriculture et de l'Alimentation was created as a Belgian analogue to the Reichsnährstand (the German Food Estate). The new organization was presented to the public less as the product of the emergency conditions of war than as something that would put the agriculture of the country on a new footing in the period of peace to follow it. Vast powers were bestowed on the new entity. It could not only regulate production but abolish existing associations of producers, suspend or shut down the operations of processors, regulate sales and consumption, and impose dues and penalties on enterprises. Membership was compulsory for all producers and processors who, as in the Reich, were obliged to market through so-called Commodity Group Authorities. There were ten CGAs: Grain and Feed; Milk, Fat and Eggs; Livestock and Meat; Horticulture, Vegetables, and Fruit; Seeds and Fertilizer; Sugar and Commercial Specialty Crops; Potatoes; Fish and Fish Products; Breweries, Malt Factories, Distilleries, and Beverages; and Groceries. While some CGAs, for instance for fish, appear to have had little more than a shadow existence, others established depots at the major market centers for crop and livestock collection. Representatives of producers and processors served as "honorary trustees" of the CGAs at the provincial level but professional staff of CNAA performed the administrative labors. Policy was of course made at headquarters in Brussels. It soon mushroomed into a huge apparat with the full panoply of "functional departments" for personnel and legal

questions, press and public relations, statistics and research, production technique, production goals, production supplies and means of production, and professional organization and arbitration. But while the new organization employed thousands of paper shufflers, data gatherers, snoopers, "controllers," official ideologists, and p.r. men, it was woefully short of technical personnel. The chief of CNAA, De Winter, was a mining engineer by training and among his deputies was to be found not a single figure with a background in agriculture.<sup>37</sup>

All Belgian commentators who endured the occupation agree in condemning the CNAA. Baudhuin's scathing remarks are representative. He judged it necessary "To put M. De Winter before the pillory in the face of history as a means of providing an example to all those who are entrusted with responsibilities for which they are not suited and to all persons in power (dirigeants) who because of. . .incompetence. . .and presumption accept high office only to plunge their country into unutterable misery."<sup>38</sup> In short, the CNAA has become the scapegoat for the food problems of the occupied nation. While admittedly difficult to defend, the Corporation deserves this role only in part. In fact, it lacked the power to act more constructively than it did.

The first count in the Belgian indictment of CNAA concerns price policy. But while it points to the existence of a real evil, it misplaces blame for it. The main culprit was the overall system of wage and price controls instituted by the Military Administration and supported by the authors of the "Politics of

Figure III  
Retail Food Prices During the Occupation

Official Prices						Black Market Prices		Index(Aug.1939=100)				
		15 Aug.1939		15 Apr.1940								
		7/42	7/43	7/44	7/42	7/43	7/44	7/42	7/43	7/44		
Bread	K	1,82	2,41	2,88	2,88	2,90	K 37,54	37,95	34,82	2.063	2.085	1.913
Potatoes	K	0,60	0,83	2,45	2,44	2,77	K 10,89	6,79	10,45	1.815	1.132	1.741
Cheese	K	14,22	16,64	28,50	29,13	28,81	K 191,34	269,34	301,57	1.346	1.896	2.118
Whole milk	L	1,58	1,79	2,83	2,75	2,80	K 6,61	8,48	10,44	418	537	661
Eggs	P	0,64	0,57	1,60	1,61	1,62	P 7,56	8,83	8,31	1.181	1.380	1.298
Farm butter	K	19,94	26,77	41,51	41,60	41,82	K 221,12	254,29	236,50	1.109	1.275	1.186
Creamery butter	K	21,73	28,61	44,73	44,89	45,43	K 226,73	265,21	262,78	1.043	1.220	1.209
Salmon*		4,67	5,53	7,00	7,00	7,00	B 60,00	120,00	120,00	1.285	2.570	2.570
Santos coffee*		18,90	20,95	29,00	29,00	29,00	K 734,81	1.675,60	2.035,61	3.888	8.865	10.770
Chicory	K	4,06	4,62	5,81	8,87	8,46	K 18,41	37,80	45,35	453	931	1.117
Rice*		2,84	3,50	3,50	3,50	3,50	K 170,05	251,09	274,32	5.987	8.841	9.660
Sugar	K	4,45	5,24	7,90	7,90	8,18	K 66,43	120,51	101,67	1.493	2.708	2.285
Beans	K	3,02	4,79	6,32	6,65	6,53	K 42,29	33,31	31,55	1.400	1.103	1.045
Peanut Oil	L	5,82	8,77	9,00	9,00	9,00	L 286,97	411,04	480,65	4.930	7.062	8.259
Table salt	K	0,62	0,71	1,18	1,17	1,28	K 7,55	4,65	3,20	1.218	750	516
Margarine	K	10,39	11,20	13,66	27,00	40,00	K 109,80	178,00	173,58	1.057	1.713	1.671
Cocoa*		18,81	21,07	30,83	28,44	28,44	K 441,01	861,55	1.149,20	2.345	4.545	6.110
Chocolate*		10,58	11,83	16,00	16,00	16,00	K 404,15	816,34	1.054,75	3.820	7.745	9.969
Shelled peas	K	3,52	4,53	5,33	5,42	5,42	K 33,86	27,69	24,35	962	787	692
Macaroni	K	7,22	7,89	9,00	9,00	9,30	K 74,93	82,33	77,94	1.038	1.140	1.080
Sardines		4,49	5,17	5,17	5,17	18,50	B 38,37	58,35	62,30	855	1.300	1.388
Beef fat		5,57	6,72	15,00	15,00	15,00	K 231,21	342,04	334,68	4.150	6.140	6.008
Steak	K	24,91	25,67	36,16	34,63	35,04	K 116,96	175,54	184,76	470	705	742
Hamburger meat	K	12,55	12,93	21,56	21,65	21,96	K 87,41	132,41	152,30	696	1.055	1.214
Soup bones	K	11,83	12,38	21,58	23,88	24,15	K 85,94	138,47	154,37	726	1.170	1.305
Pork cotelette	K	21,47	20,96	27,58	32,00	34,19	K 167,52	199,49	196,73	780	929	916
Lard*		13,31	13,92	20,75	26,45	29,79	K 219,96	284,38	284,84	1.653	2.092	2.140
Shortening*		10,75	11,97	25,00	25,00	25,00	K 240,60	346,06	346,42	2.238	3.219	3.223

\* Unobtainable at official prices

(from Fernand Baudhuin, L'Economie Belge sous l'Occupation allemande  
(Brussels, 1945) pp.408, 410)

Production." CNAA played merely a supporting role in maintaining it. The economic facts in the case against CNAA price policy are indisputable. Food prices, it is argued, were set so low that cultivators, who were obliged to buy seed and fertilizer on black markets, had no choice but to sell on them as well.<sup>39</sup> As Figure III indicates, a huge gap existed between official prices, which roughly doubled during the occupation, and black markets prices, which skyrocketed. It is also evident that if some approximation of the market clearing price had been adopted additional farm output would have flowed into official channels, ration levels could have been raised, and food distributed on a more equitable basis. To have increased prices to such levels would, however, have destroyed the employee incentive to report for work. Wages and salaries were raised only 10 percent during the occupation. Even at the artificially low official levels, food costs--as numerous studies of the sociologist Jacquemyns attest--absorbed over sixty percent of the budget of typical working class families.<sup>40</sup> The Military Administration and the directors of Belgian finance and industry both opposed the obvious corrective to this situation, a wage increase, on the grounds that it would raise production costs. As a matter of policy they preferred to feed workers at the plant and force their wives, children and retired parents to deal on the black market even though such activity was forbidden by strict penalties. CNAA deserves censure for having enforced this policy--for serving as the corrupt and hypocritical contrôleur on an "illegal" market whose existence was nearly as essential for the success of German policy of economic exploitation as it was for the survival of the Belgian public.

Figure IV  
Cereal Acreage in Cultivation (in hectares)

	1929	1938(1)	1940(2)	1941	1942	1943	1944
<b>Breadgrains</b>							
Wheat	154.000	174.000	146.000	178.000	193.000	203.000	198.000
Rye	184.000	154.000	115.000	126.000	137.000	158.000	141.000
Spelt, Maslin	<u>10.000</u>	<u>12.000</u>	<u>10.000</u>	<u>10.000</u>	<u>14.000</u>	<u>14.000</u>	<u>14.000</u>
Breadgrains Total	348.000	340.000	271.000	314.000	344.000	375.000	353.000
<b>Non Breadgrains</b>							
Barley	25.000	31.000	24.000	30.000	51.000	77.000	74.000
Oats	226.000	213.000	172.000	17.000	142.000	125.000	127.000
Other	<u>1.000</u>	<u>1.000</u>	<u>1.000</u>	<u>2.000</u>	<u>3.000</u>	<u>2.000</u>	<u>1.000</u>
Non Breadgrains Total	252.000	245.000	197.000	199.000	196.000	204.000	202.000
<b>TOTAL</b>	600.000	585.000	486.000	513.000	540.000	579.000	555.000

(from Fernand Baudhuin, L'Economie Belge sous l'Occupation allemande  
(Brussels, 1945) p. 245)



The second count of the indictment against CNAA concerns the failure to undertake the necessary large-scale conversions from pasturage to farmlands. The Corporation's record in this respect was indeed a dismal one. As indicated in Figure IV, cereal acreage in cultivation increased from 468,000 ha in 1940 to 555,000 in 1944, but never reached the 600,000 of 1929 or even the 585,000 of 1938. It is nonetheless somewhat shortsighted to condemn these results à la Baudhuin as if they were due solely to the technical incompetence of CNAA policy-makers. More important considerations were in play, above all the questionable ability of the organization to impose policy on a farm population unused to controls, suspicious of central authority, divided into two language blocs, and, above all, operating in a seller's market. Both the Military Administration and CNAA believed, in short, that a policy of conversion ran unacceptable political risks. While recognizing its desirability, even necessity, neither one was willing to do the job. This, at any rate, was the outcome of protracted discussions between the two in September and October 1940. The opportunity, once missed, would not, however, return.<sup>41</sup> The near-famine situation of Winter 1940-1941 undermined the confidence of the Belgian public in the Military Administration's competence in matters of food policy to such an extent that the imposition of conversions on a large scale was never a serious possibility thereafter. The matter did not come up again.

Whether intentionally or not, the production controls set up by CNAA and the Military Administration worked in such a way

as to provide the cultivator with generous surpluses to sell on grey or black markets. They may not in fact have had much choice in the matter. First, they faced political problems which undermined the attempt to lay the basis for comprehensive planning on the Reich model. Initially, the Military Administration entertained high hopes of winning over the volkstümlich and conservative peasantry, particularly in Flanders,<sup>42</sup> to the New Order. Instead, they encountered constant foot-dragging which, at times, broke out into open resistance. The land surveys taken each spring, for instance, invariably resulted in gross underestimates of cropland and were worthless as planning tools. The attempt of summer 1942 to introduce the Hofkarte (described by Brandt as the essential source of the raw data for the compilation of running surveys of the national food supply situation) touched off armed resistance among the peasantry of the Ardennes, necessitated Gestapo intervention and exemplary punishment (deportation to KZs), and had to be dropped.<sup>43</sup> The uncertain supply situation also militated against the imposition of quotas which were too high or rigid. Several times, for instance, Berlin seized without warning large amounts of fertilizer, a normally abundant commodity. In 1940-1941 this amounted to 43,000 tons of Thomas slag, and in the following year, 30,200 tons. In late 1942, the Reich also requisitioned 11,500 tons of pure ammonia for the production of nitrogen fertilizer.<sup>44</sup> Transportation problems also created headaches for planners. In Spring 1942 a railroad tie-up prevented delivery of 24,000 tons

of seed potatoes. For the same reason, a major deal of December 1943 with Roumania for 100,000 tons of wheat could never be executed.<sup>45</sup> Under the circumstances, then, it probably made good sense not to attempt to control planting but merely to impose delivery quotas which, while high enough to meet ration requirements, were low and flexible enough to guarantee the profitability of farming.

These principles in fact governed the "plans de culture" adopted for the successive crop years of the occupation. At first planned outputs were based on excessively low estimates of farm acreage and yields. Later, as more land entered cultivation, delivery quotas were made more flexible. The farmer was, in other words, left to dispose of either free land or free crops. The gradual increase in land under cultivation has been noted above. As for the quotas, in 1941-1942 the so-called "production unit" was adopted as a delivery standard. It corresponded to any of the following: 1 kg of breadgrains; 1 kg of barley; 7 kgs of potatoes; .8 kg of dried beans; 10 kg of sugar beets; .7 kg of winter colza (for which additional incentives were provided); .55 kg of summer colza; 10 kg of chicory roots; 2 kg of straw.<sup>46</sup> In the same year, so called "contract deliveries" were introduced for potatoes. They permitted the consumer to purchase up to 120 kgs per year directly from the grower.<sup>47</sup> In 1942-1943, moreover, it became possible for the farmer to dispense with delivery quotas by agreeing to plant 70% of his land in rationed crops. The amount of the marketable surplusses left after required deliveries

naturally depended on assumptions concerning yields as well as amounts of acreage under cultivation. Colard estimates, based on prewar yields and official 1941 acreage under cultivation, that 1 million tons of potatoes were raised in addition to the 2,080,000 tons called for by the delivery quotas. He estimates 1940 cereal production at 533,000 tons instead of the 445,000 tons targeted for that year. And in the case of easily-concealed poultry, he notes that the 1941 quota, set at 345 million eggs, assumed a laying-hen population of 3 million, as compared to a prewar population of 18 million, which he estimates would produce between 510 and 765 million eggs per year.<sup>48</sup>

Doubtless in part thanks to such relative liberality it was possible to increase output and supplies-on-hand, raise rations slightly and, above all, distribute them more reliably. Statistics on Belgian farm output, even the official portion of it, are very approximate for the war years. According to data from the Ministère des Affaires Économiques bread grain production rose from 685,000 tons in 1941 to 721,000 tons, 879,000 tons, and 819,000 tons in the following years of the occupation period, rising in the end to 92 percent of the 1935-1938 average. Potato output increased from 1,609,000 tons, to 2,086,000 tons, 2,212,000 tons, 2,120,000 tons, and 2,007,000 tons over the same period, in the final year reaching, however, only 64 percent of the 1935-1938 average.<sup>49</sup> The available official data concerning livestock simply do not make much sense. In short, the population did not decrease to the extent that one would estimate on the basis of the feed and

fodder supply. It is clear, first, that no feedgrain imports (1.2 million tons prewar average) occurred during the occupation and, second, that a portion of feed and fodder land was shifted to crops for direct human consumption. Domestic feedgrain production declined from an annual average of 640,000 tons from 1935 to 1938 to 434,000 tons during the occupation, that of fodder beets from 5,538,000 tons and 4,206,000 respectively. (The increase in oilseed output between 1940 and 1944 was not significant enough to have affected the overall fodder supply.) At the same time, however, the official livestock population remained at a relatively constant high level. The number of horses actually increased from 246,000 in 1939 to 278,000 in 1944; the number of cattle fell only slightly from 1,600,000 to 1,440,000 over the same years--although a shift occurred from livestock to dairy; there was actually an increase in the sheep population, 153,000 to 199,000, and of goats from an official zero to 119,000.<sup>50</sup> One finds substantial declines only in two species: the fecund and omnivorous pig, from 856,000 to 635,000, and the laying hen, which, improbably below even official statistics concerning egg output, officially declined in number to 2,376,000 during the occupation.<sup>51</sup> Increases in rations reflect only partially the general improvement in the food supply. The most significant change was the increase of the bread ration in 1943 from 225 gr/day to 300. The potato ration remained until June 1944 at 500 gr/day; meat declined gradually after 1940 from 35 gr/day to 20 gr/day by June 1944, but the resumption in Spring 1942 of fishing in the

Channel somewhat offset the fall; butter and margarine remained at about the initial level of 14.9 gr for most of the period. More important than such nominal changes, authorized rations gradually became more easy to obtain.<sup>52</sup> From mid-Summer 1942 until the end of the occupation, consumers seem to have had comparatively little difficulty in securing what was officially their due. Until then, however, there were only three months during which more than one-half of the authorized potato ration could be supplied.<sup>53</sup> Not surprisingly, the Military Administration's first annual report described the food supply situation as its greatest single worry, indeed ". . .the key to the production problem."<sup>54</sup> And well it might have: the food shortages of 1941 caused the most direct challenge it would face during the occupation.

It stemmed from two groups, the coal miners and the business leaders in Brussels. At stake were questions of fundamental importance for Belgium's lot in Hitler's Europe: Would Belgian industry work for the German war effort even without food compensation for the nation? and would the Military Administration succeed in asserting the power to favor in food allocation those persons working directly for the interests of the Reich at the expense of those who were more expendable? Although the outcome hung for a time in the balance, the Military Administration emerged triumphant in both cases.

The food crisis of Winter 1941 came with plenty of notice. The military events of May and June 1940 disrupted Spring plantings, particularly of potatoes. In Summer numerous and often unauthorized

seizures of Wehrmacht troop units depleted foodstocks.<sup>55</sup> By the end of August, stocks of both cereals and fat were reported to be at an end.<sup>56</sup> In the following months the Military Administration reported that food shortages were undermining the effectiveness of the campaign to win the goodwill of the population. It warned Berlin specifically that housewives were standing in line for hours in vain attempts to secure the meagre authorized rations, Belgians blamed shortages of foodstuffs on Wehrmacht confiscations, the black market in foodstuffs was growing at an alarming rate, and factory workers were not eating enough to do a full day's work. By December potato rations had become all but unobtainable in many parts of the country: throughout Wallonia, coal miners had appeared in front of city halls, waving empty potato sacks in silent protest. It was also reported that "pro-German" industrialists were beginning to harbor second thoughts about collaborating.<sup>57</sup>

Serious miner strikes broke out in the Southern Basin and lasted through mid-April 1941. Figure V provides a list of outbreaks including the numbers of strikers and days struck. These strikes were not "political," that is directed at changing either the work situation or national policies. Those who struck did so only in order to get enough to eat. With the exception of the final group of strikers, the Military Administration therefore dealt with the work stoppages not as if they were acts of defiance but as "objectively justified" (sachlich begründet) responses to the food shortages. Repressive measures were avoided

Figure V  
The Coal Strikes

Date	District	Number of Strikers	Number of Days Struck
11 Sept. 1940	Liege	311	1
7 Oct. 1940	Charleroi	120	1
14 Oct. 1940	Liege	103	1
26 Oct. 1940	Charleroi	280	2
29 Oct. 1940	Liege	180	1
13 Dec. 1940	Liege	116	1
19 Dec. 1940	Liege	150	1
21 Jan. 1941	Liege	65	1
22 Jan. 1941	Liege	303	1
11 Jan. 1941	Liege	166	1
27 Jan. 1941	Liege	2.809)	
28 Jan. 1941	Liege	3.898)	7
29 Jan. 1941	Liege	3.437)	
13 Feb. 1941	Mons	2.950	2
11 Mar. 1941	Liege=1 Pit	not regis)	
14 Mar. 1941	Liege=1 Pit	not regis)	1
27 Mar. 1941	Mons	330	1
29 Mar. 1941	Mons	400	1
31 Mar. 1941	Mons	860	1
3 Apr. 1941	Mons	5.000	1
4 Apr. 1941	Mons	8.200	1
5 Apr. 1941	Mons	4.000	1
10 May 1941	Liege	1.736	1
12 May 1941	Liege	10.000	1
17 May 1941	FK Hasselt	7.000)	
20 May 1941	FK Hasselt	10.672)	

(from Jahresbericht der Militärverwaltung für das erste Einsatzjahr. (Anlage C17) (T501/104/1012)

where possible. Instead, the Military Administration enticed the miners back to work with food. During these weeks, something called Hilfszug Bayern ("Relief Train 'Bavaria'") was shunted from mine siding to mine siding. From it, striking workers were issued at the pithead food from Belgian stocks by the men of the Wehrmacht. At the same time, the district governors of the Military Administration, the Kommandanturen, began to set up works-kitchens (Werksküchen) to insure that armaments workers



received the full allotment of their "heavy-" and "very heavy labor" rations (Schwer- und Schwerstarbeiterrationen.)<sup>58</sup> These actions brought to a head the festering crisis in relations between the Military Administration and the leaders of Belgian business. It was bad enough, they felt, that no assurances had been received regarding food imports as compensation for their contribution to the Axis. Was the Occupying Power now to give food only to those working in its behalf, in the meantime allowing the rest of the population to starve?

Fear of this possibility triggered a number of serious protests from within the business community, set in motion a serious attempt to circumvent the authority of the Military Administration, and brought about a reconsideration of the "Politics of Production" at the top-levels of finance and industry, which for a time even seemed to betoken an end to economic collaboration. The first indication of the new mood was a 7 March 1941 letter of protest from the industrial associations for coal, steel, manufacturing, textiles, and construction to the Secretaries-General (career chiefs of the Belgian civil service). It demanded that the public be guaranteed a minimum standard of nutrition before any additional allocations be made to armaments workers. By the middle of the month, manufacturers had begun to annul orders on the grounds that employees were too undernourished to work. CNAA Chief De Winter even delivered a speech blaming the Wehrmacht for food shortages. Coal operators protested an inability to step up mine output. Vice-Governor

Cattier of the Société Générale de Belgique, the largest Belgian holding company, stated openly his further opposition to any stock-swaps (Kapitalverflechtungen) with German firms. The Chairman of the construction steel cartel, Joassert, resigned in opposition to the effort to organize an official business association (Wirtschaftsgruppe) for his industry; the Chambers-of-Commerce, after having cooperated in this effort, now also expressed objections. Tragically, a M. Jottrand of the Mons chapter of "Sycobel," the cartel for construction steel, was arrested by the Gestapo for having advised the directors of his organization to oppose the demands of the Occupying Power "with all the means at their disposal."<sup>59</sup> The unauthorized trip of Governor Galopin of the Société Générale to Berlin in the last week of March, which in fact Military Administration Chief Reeder tried to prevent, culminated the "passive resistance" of the businessmen. Thanks apparently to the good offices of Director Abs of the Deutsche Bank, Galopin managed to present the Belgian case for special treatment in food matters to the senior officials of several ministries. Although the details of the Galopin mission are not known, it was an obvious failure.<sup>60</sup>

Belgian capitulation followed in short order, at a meeting convoked by Galopin for 1 April 1941 at the corporate headquarters of la Générale. Some twenty-four dignitaries from the world of business participated, bankers and industrialists mainly but also a few powerful lawyers and at least one well-known economist. Several of them expressed grave reservations about the course

followed, in particular as regards the lack of German reciprocity in foodstuffs. In the end, however, there was unanimity that a break with the "Politics of Production" could not be considered.<sup>61</sup> As concerns the second issue, namely opposition to the Military Administration's "favoritism" of armaments workers in respect to food allocation, employers had little choice but drop the insistence on "equal rations for all Belgians" and follow the German example. In short, they set up their own food dispenseries, supplied from the black market, in order to provide the necessary incentives to keep employees reporting for work. This "food paternalism" became nearly universal in Belgian industry, taking on truly massive proportions. Firms supplied not only prepared meals to "heavy" and "very heavy" laborers, but eventually also goods in kind that could be taken home to feed families. The Military Administration estimated that food supplements added 36 percent to wage and salary costs. The various Kontrolldienste had orders specifically not to interfere with black market food procurement by firms, in part because the highly profitable big firms could easily bear the expenses involved.<sup>62</sup> More importantly, as even the official history of the Military Administration's price control unit admits, "without such illegal employer supplements the situation of the worker would have been unbearable."<sup>63</sup>

While it is evident that Belgian employers no less than the Occupying Power and the Belgian public depended on the black market in food, the thing itself must remain something of a mystery. For obvious reasons the evidence concerning it is

scanty. Still, a few conclusions can be reached with regard to supply and distribution. The "unofficial farm output," that is the surplusses left for cultivators to dispose of, was surely one important source of supply. The amounts involved can only be guessed at. One must begin with mention that during the occupation neither official outputs nor acreage for cereals reached 90 percent of the 1929 total. Even this figure represents only <sup>thirty</sup> percent of total farm and grazing land. It is unclear how much of this additional land was actually in cultivation. Colard's estimate, the only one available, sets wheat acreage in cultivation at no less than twice the official figure.<sup>64</sup> It must also be assumed that cultivators were able to dispose freely of a portion of the output from registered cropland. The rule in effect after 1942 that cultivators could dispense with quotas by planting 70 percent of their official holdings with rationed crops indicates that CNAA was prepared to permit unofficial sale, or consumption, from 30 percent of the total. The "miniplots" provided a second important source of supplementary food. Before the war, there were some 838,883 "midget farms" of less than one hectare. Normally non-commercial units and too small to supervise, they totalled some 130,000 hectares or slightly more than 7 percent of total farm area.<sup>65</sup> The addition of parks, lawns, gardens and vacant lots probably added another 1.5-25 percent to total land in cultivation. There was, finally, a huge traffic in goods smuggled into the country from France and the Netherlands. Statistical evidence concerning it is most scanty of all. It is

therefore worth mentioning that agricultural officials in the two Departments of France attached to the German military government in Brussels believed that in 1941 no less than 80,000 tons of breadgrain was smuggled from their territory into Belgium.<sup>66</sup> If so, it would have added ten percent to the Belgian supply for that year. In sum, it is reasonable to conclude that food from "unofficial" sources may well have equalled official domestic output.

The data available concerning consumption confirms this supposition. The OSS estimated average Belgian 1943-1944 consumption at 2020 calories; the League of Nations, "average worker family consumption" at 2335 calories per capita.<sup>67</sup> If Colard is correct in stating that the average Belgian received only about 1000 calories per day from official rations, then the importance of the black market in the Belgian diet is self-evident. Even the Military Administration had to admit that it indeed provided the margin of survival. Its report of June through September 1941 related that a German inspector of the Louvain federal prison had recently discovered that its inmates, who received official rations and presumably nothing more, had begun to starve en masse.<sup>68</sup> They too had to be provided with supplements.

Because of the lack of any systematic study of food distribution by class and region, little more can be said about the matter at this point than what has been suggested above, except that access to black market food, or providers of it, was a more important determinant of how one ate than professional

rank or earning power. The power to obtain food, in other words, depended less on the amount one was able to spend than on proximity to stocks, the political power of one's employer, the amount of time one could spend in dealing on the black market, regional differentials in prices, and only in the final instances on earnings which were, in any case, both frozen and eroded by inflation. Certain groups, it is obvious, fared relatively well, while others languished. The distinction between the two, not to mention those within each group, is, however, by no means always clear.

It was simply taken for granted by all concerned that the cultivators of Belgium's 300,000 farms would be allowed to maintain prewar levels of consumption. All commentators on the food problem agree that they did. Baudhuin believes that they consumed, among other things, the bulk of the phantom pork population.<sup>69</sup> Another fortunate group consisted of those owning the 800,000 plots of less than one hectare. To it belonged the members of one out of every 2.5 Belgian families. It should be emphasized that many of the "midget farms" were owned by artisans, factory workers, and miners and worked on a part time basis by their families. "Heavy" and "very heavy workers" also fared better than average, although hardly well. According to a League of Nations report, they consumed at 82 percent of the prewar rate as compared to 74 percent for other workers.<sup>70</sup> Even though the total amounts involved were not significant, it should be added that members of the Belgian SS, miscellaneous political

Figure VI

<u>Loss or Gain in Weight*</u>	May 1939- end of 1941	Beginning of 1942- end of 1943
-Number of cases of weight loss greater than 1.5 kg	75%	11.8%
-Number of cases of weight gain	13%	54.3%
Average amount of weight loss	7,000 kgs	----
Average amount of weight gain	----	1,780 kgs

\*Based on studies of 10,000 workers.

(From Jacquemyns, La Societe Belge sous l'Occupation Allemande  
1940-1944. Privations et Espoirs (Brussels, 1946)

collaborators, and favored officials also received "very heavy labor" rations. And the obvious point must also be made that those persons and professional groups well-positioned to traffic on the black market ate better than those who were not. It may also be true, as Jacquemyns suggests, that inhabitants of regions bordering France and the Netherlands generally had more to eat than those of the interior.<sup>71</sup> The one general category not benefiting from any of these advantages was the residents of the big cities--Brussels, Antwerp, Ghent, and Liege--especially workers in the service industries, government employees, office workers, pensioners, and their dependents. (Children and pregnant women received modest food supplements.) All descriptions confirm the impression that this group bore a disproportionate share of the suffering.

Public health fell catastrophically during the first nine months of the occupation, stabilized, then improved slightly over the remaining months prior to Liberation. As indicated by Figure VI weight losses of five to ten kg were not uncommon during the first period but soon after made up thanks to both changes in physical metabolism and improvements in the food supply. An increase in the incidence of only one malady has been traced back to the austere diet of the occupation years, the number of deaths from which rose from 4415 in 1939 to a wartime maximum tuberculosis, which rose from ~~20~~ of 6414 in 1941 and which afflicted the Charleroi area with special severity. The much-feared "hunger edema" did not put in a significant appearance. The dietary situation also had negligible effect on rates of birth and death for the occupation period.<sup>72</sup>



The history of Belgian food supply problems during World War II, sad though it is, has a hopeful side as well. Even without benefit of planning, the nation proved able to feed itself. It disposed, in short, of resources and strengths of which it was not fully aware. Planning on the Swiss model might well have made it possible to have raised output somewhat and surely would have provided the basis for more equitable distribution than that which took place. It is also possible, however, that better organization and additional production would only have profited the Occupying Power. The real difference in having or not having a policy for agricultural self-sufficiency was felt on the export side. The "Politics of Production" was at least in part a response to the belief that Belgium could not live without food imports. If Belgians had enjoyed the same confidence as the Swiss that they could indeed grow enough to provide for their consumption requirements it might well have been possible for their land not to have served as an arsenal of fascism.

1. T501/107/129 "Einführung in das Gebiet der Wirtschaft (Teile 9-17)."

2. Karl Brandt, Management and Food in the German-occupied and other Areas of Fortress Europe. (Stanford, 1953) p. 438f.

3. Fernand Baudhuin, "La Politique de Production de l'Industrie Belge durant l'Occupation Nazie. . .Une réplique. . ." Revue belge d'Histoire contemporaine, pp. 265-8.

4. John Gillingham, Belgian Business in the Nazi New Order (Ghent, 1977) p. 190.

5. Colard, op.cit., p. 55.

6. Brandt, op.cit., p. 468.

Ibid., p. 35.

7. Colard, op.cit., p. 55; Brandt, op.cit., p. 467 notes that from Germany Belgium received the following quantities (in thousand tons) of agricultural products: 279 in 1940-1941, and 172, 55 and 90 respectively in the remaining years of the occupation.

8. T501/105/11220 TB22, 1 September - December 1942 contains a clear policy statement as well as the remarkable admission that the Military Administration doubted initially that Belgium was capable of supplying even the minimum ration levels set by Berlin.

9. T501/102/246. Reeder, Eggert, "Die Militärverwaltung in Belgien und Nordfrankreich. Grundsätze und politische Zielsetzung. (Sept., 1943)" Sonderdruck aus Bd. VI Reich-Volksordnung-Lebensraum.

10. Colard, op.cit., p. 57; T501/107/414 "10. Teil. Auswärtiger Warenverkehr." notes that a Handelspolitische Ausschuss resolution (Beschluss) that Belgians not be allowed any commercial contact with third party nations. Those that did occur were either tolerated or encouraged by the Occupying Power.

11. T501/107/340f. "8. Teil. Das Fürsorgewesen."

12. Colard, op.cit., pp. 58, 55.

13. T501/107/474f. "10. Teil. Auswärtiger Warenverkehr."

14. Ibid., T501/107/437f.

15. Ibid., T501/107/452f.

16. Ibid., T501/107/456.

17. T501/106/12686, T501/107/0206 "Leistungsberichte. . . 1942, 1943."

18. T501/102/407 "10. Tage Bericht (Na. 3)."

19. T501/103/102 TB 10, October 1940.

20. T501/103/101 TB 10, October 1940.

21. T501/103/941f. TB 13, January 1941.

22. T501/104/45 TB 14, February 1941.

23. T501/105/38 TB 17, June-September 1941.

24. T501/105/40 TB 17, 1 June-1 September 1941.

25. T501/105/524 "Allgemeine Übersicht für die Zeit vom 1 Dezember 1941- 15 März 1942."

26. "Leistungsberichte," op.cit.

27. Colard, op.cit., p. 152.

28. T501/105/1300 TB 22, 7 September-December 1942.

29. Colard, op.cit., p. 169.

30. R. Miry, Zwarte Handel in Levensmiddelen (Brussels, 1945) p. 70f.
31. Friedrich T. Wahlen, "Das schweizerische Anbauwerk im Zweiten Weltkrieg." in Innen- und Aussenpolitik. Primat oder Interdependenz? Festschrift zum 60. Geburtstag von Walther Hofer. (Bern, 1980).
32. Fernand Baudhuin, L'Economie Belge sous l'Occupation (Brussels, 1945) p. 239f.
33. Ibid., p. 56f.
34. T501/102/147 TB 1, 4 June 1940.
35. T501/102/792 Reeder to Delmer, 1 August 1940; T501/102/805f "11. Teil. Gewerbliche Wirtschaft."
36. TB501/102/805f TB 7, 4 August 1940.
37. Baudhuin, op.cit., pp. 242f, 1576; Brandt, op.cit., pp. 434f.; T501/102/959 TB 8, December 1940.
38. Baudhuin, op.cit., p. 10.
39. Miry, op.cit. ChV "Prijsproblemen."
40. Jean Jacquemyns, La Société belge sous l'Occupation allemande (V.I, II) (Brussels, 1950). in passim.; T501/106/288 "Löhne und soziale Lage der Arbeiterschaft in Belgien, 2 Juli 1943."
41. Brandt, op.cit., p. 450.
42. Gillingham, op.cit., p. 42.
43. T501/105/78 TB 20, 5 March-1 June 1942.
44. Colard, op.cit., pp. 148f.; T501/105/675 "Allgemeine Übersicht für die Zeit vom 1.12.41-15.3.42."
45. T501/108/470,442 "10. Teil. Auswärtiger Warenverkehr."

46. Colard, op.cit., p. 47.
47. Ibid., p. 75.
48. Ibid., p. 140f.
49. Brandt, op.cit., p. 461.
50. Ibid., p. 466.
51. Ibid., p. 41.
52. Ibid.
53. Colard, op.cit., p. 73.
54. T501/104/65 "Jahresbericht der Militärverwaltung für das erste Einsatzjahr."
55. T501/103/99f. TB 10, October 1940; T501/102/473 TB 5, 7 July 1940.
56. T501/102/ TB 7, August 1940.
57. T501/103/375f TB 11, November 1940; T501/103/650f. TB 12, December 1940; T501/103/ De Winter to von Falkenhausen, 14 October 1940.
58. T501/104/166f. TB 15, March 1941.
59. T501/104/3141 TB 16, April 1941.
60. T501/105/1175 TB 22, 1 September-December 1942.
61. "Réunion du 1 er April 1941 à la Société Générale de Belgique (Confidentiel)."
62. T501/107/977f. "11. Teil. Wirtschaftslenkung und Wirtschaftskontrolle."
63. Ibid., f. 1073-4.
64. Op.cit., p. 140.
65. Jean Jacquemyns, La Société belge sous l'Occupation allemande 1940-1944. (II) (Brussels, 1950) p. 49.

66. Colard, op.cit., p. 53.
67. OSS, "R & A Report 3026.1. The Food Situation in Belgium."; Brandt, op.cit., p. 471.
68. T501/105/36, TB 17.
69. Op.cit., p. 215
70. Brandt, op.cit., p. 471.
71. Op.cit., p.
72. Jacquemyns (v. I), op.cit., pp. 138, 451f.; H. Durieu, "La tuberculose en Belgique pendant la Guerre dans les Rapports avec la Sous-Alimentation" in E J. Bigwood (ed.), Enseignements de la guerre ~~deux~~ dans le Domaine de la Nutrition (Liege, 1947) p. 385.