



Food Discourses and Alimentary Policies in Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany: A Comparative Analysis

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journals.sagepub.com/home/ehq**Patrizia Sambuco** 

Independent scholar, Dundee, UK

Lisa Pine

Institute of Historical Research, University of London, UK

Abstract

This article adds to the growing literature on the history of food in the European dictatorships by examining and comparing the alimentary policies of Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany and their application, paying particular attention to the relationship between class, gender, and the nation. It expands our knowledge and understanding of the mechanics of these dictatorships and of the impact of their food policies on their populations in a comparative way. The Fascist regime took initiatives related to food consumption from the mid-1920s, and women were at the centre of their food propaganda; Nazi Germany – in a similar manner to the Fascist regime – between 1933 and 1939, put in place food policies to encourage people to change their eating habits, even before the outbreak of the Second World War. The analysis of alimentary policies and strategies adopted by the Fascist and Nazi regimes, in the first part of their governments, illustrates the similarities in the populist construction of their food discourses and their efforts to galvanize their citizens. With the consolidation of the two regimes, national specific food initiatives, which were culturally bound and linked to economic and political choices emerged and delineated the differences between the two regimes. Through a detailed account of how food consumption was addressed in particular in domestic literature in the two countries, this article examines the uneven impact of food policies on the different social classes in Italy and Germany. It shows, through its comparative approach to the Italian Fascist and

Corresponding authors:

Patrizia Sambuco, Independent scholar, Dundee, UK.

Email: patrizia@patriziasambuco.co.uk

Lisa Pine, Institute of Historical Research, University of London, UK.

Email: lisa.pine@sas.ac.uk

Nazi regimes, how food discourses and alimentary policies to control the population were similar in some respects and dissimilar in others.

Keywords

Alimentary policies, autarky, Fascist domestic literature, Fascist Italy, food consumption, food discourses, Nazi domestic literature, Nazi Germany, one-pot dish, Second World War

Introduction

This article adds to the growing literature on the history of food in the European dictatorships by examining and comparing the alimentary policies of Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany and their application, paying particular attention to the relationship between class, gender, and the nation.¹ It expands our knowledge and understanding of the mechanics of these dictatorships and the impact of their food policies on their populations in a comparative way. The Fascist regime took initiatives related to food consumption from the mid-1920s, and women were at the centre of their food propaganda; Nazi Germany – in a similar manner to the Fascist regime – between 1933 and 1939, put in place food policies to encourage people to change their eating habits, even before the outbreak of the Second World War. As Ruth Wodak and John Richardson have stated, comparisons between different European fascisms can find commonalities in the discourse strategies adopted, as ‘processes of social change are in part processes of change in discourse’, while differences are often linked to the national sphere and social domains of each state.² The analysis of alimentary policies and strategies adopted by the Fascist and Nazi regimes, in the first part of their governments, illustrates the similarities in the populist construction of their food discourses and their efforts to galvanize their citizens. With the consolidation of the two regimes, national specific food initiatives, which were culturally bound and linked to economic and political choices, emerged and delineated the differences between the two regimes. Through a detailed account of how food consumption was addressed in particular in domestic literature in the two countries, this article examines the uneven impact of food policies on the different social classes in Italy and Germany. Scholars have already demonstrated the mechanisms of food discourses to uphold and

¹ Among recent scholarship see: Frank Trentmann and Flemming Just, eds, *Food and Conflict in Europe in the Age of the Two World Wars* (New York 2006); Carol Helstosky, *Garlic and Oil: Food and Politics in Italy* (Oxford 2006); Karima Moyer-Nocchi, *Chewing the Fat* (Perrysburg, OH 2015); B. J. Griffith, ‘Bacchus among the Blackshirts: Wine-Making, Consumerism and Identity in Fascist Italy, 1919–1937’, *Contemporary European History*, Vol. 29, No. 4 (2020), 394–415; Kate Ferris ‘Consumption’ in Joshua Arthurs, Michael Ebner and Kate Ferris, eds, *The Politics of Everyday Life in Fascist Italy: Outside the State?* (New York 2017), 123–49; Diana Garvin, ‘Fascist Foodways: *Ricettari* as Propaganda for Grain Production and Sexual Reproduction’, *Food and Foodways*, Vol. 29, No. 2 (2021), 111–34; Diana Garvin, ‘The Italian Coffee Triangle: From Brazilian *Colonos* to Ethiopian *Colonialisti*’, *Modern Italy*, Vol. 26, No. 3 (2021), 1–22.

² Ruth Wodak and John Richardson, eds, *Analysing Fascist Discourse: European Fascism in Talk and Text* (Abingdon 2013), 7–8.

resist Fascist regimes.³ This article develops on this scholarship, showing through its comparative approach to the Italian Fascist and Nazi regimes, how food discourses and alimentary policies to control the population were similar in some respects and dissimilar in others.

Similarities: State Intrusion in the Kitchen

As historians have already demonstrated, rural and alimentary policies, and autarky, all played their part in the Fascist and Nazi strategies to exert their power and articulate their imperialistic policies. Carol Helstosky asserts that in Fascist Italy, food was a vital element to bind people to the regime: not only through the ideas of parsimony and sacrifice, recurrent throughout the *ventennio*, but also through the everyday tasks recommended for the preparation and purchase of food.⁴ Nützenadel underlines how autarky was part of the political project of a Mediterranean empire ruled by the Fascist regime. With a vision that saw growth in population and in food availability interconnected, access to food was to assure hegemony in the Mediterranean area and represented a step towards the regaining of national strength after the crisis of the post-war years.⁵ The Italian Fascist regime, before the Third Reich, developed a discourse on food that focused on its sacrality, on nationalism, and on healthy and powerful citizenship. The propaganda on food was always based on what were the two pillars of Fascist ideology: tradition and innovation. An appeal to the memory of simple peasant life was never separated from cutting-edge research on food. The so-called ‘Battle for Wheat’ announced in April 1925, was an ambitious and structured plan towards autarky, and displayed a whole range of Fascist propagandistic approaches.

With the intention of reducing the importation of wheat, a series of initiatives were taken, comprising: the greater productivity of Italian agriculture and its expansion; an increased number of agricultural jobs as a solution to emigration-led unemployment; and an emphasis on the rhetoric of the healthy agricultural life against the sterile and corrupt modern city life. The *Comitato permanente per il grano* (Permanent Committee for Wheat) established in July 1925, financed research on grains, established prize competitions for the best crop, awards for agricultural improvements, tax relief for farmers, and encouraged the use of fertilizers. While it was not unusual for countries to consider wheat consumption important for their economic stability, the exclusive focus on wheat production neglected other produce such as citrus and olives suitable for export, while the cost of home-grown wheat was, at that time, more expensive than the imported variety due to the fall of international

³ Helstosky, *Garlic and Oil*; Ferris, ‘Consumption’; Lara Anderson, *Control and Resistance: Food Discourse in Franco Spain* (Toronto 2020). See also, on food and power in different contexts, Jürgen Martschukat and Bryant Simon, eds, *Food, Power, and Agency* (London 2017) and Nir Avieli, *Food and Power: A Culinary Ethnography of Israel* (Oakland, CA 2018); Diana Garvin, *Feeding Fascism: The Politics of Women’s Food Work* (Toronto 2022).

⁴ Helstosky, *Garlic and Oil*, 63.

⁵ Alexander Nützenadel, ‘Dictating Food: Autarky, Food Provision, and Consumer Politics in Fascist Italy, 1922–1943’, in *Food and Conflict in Europe*, 92.

prices.⁶ However, at that time and in the 1930s, Mussolini's agricultural reforms attracted interest also from international spectators, as a 1933 article on the *American Journal of Farm Economics* demonstrates.⁷

Far from being a mere economic undertaking, the 'Battle for Wheat' involved an extensive and variegated propaganda campaign to galvanize the Italian population. This comprised no less than the poetic skills of Mussolini himself. As in his private life he penned poems for his lover, Jewish art critic Margherita Sarfatti, so in public life, as part of the 'Battle for Wheat', he made use of his poetic skills. In 1928, on the occasion of the newly created celebrations, the National Bread Day, he presented a talk in the structure of a poem, which later was referred to as *Preghiera del pane* (Prayer for Bread). This simple poem exhorts people to 'love', 'respect', 'honour', and not to 'waste' bread, seen as a symbol of hard work, sacrifice, life, homeland, and a gift of God. As Falasca-Zamponi shows, bread captured, then, nationalistic and religious connotations, constructing a sense of sacrality that was very much exploited in the propaganda around the 'Battle for Wheat'. The posters for the VIII National Competition for the Victory of Wheat for example, portrayed children in a wheat field, holding bread, and an upper caption that replicated a verse of the Catholic prayer *Pater Noster* ('Give us our daily bread'): a perfect example of the religious connotations of the propaganda.⁸ The *Preghiera del pane* was used in schools as a text for writing and reading exercises, and also as an inspiration for essay compositions which were part of national competitions held during the National Bread Day.⁹ Days dedicated to specific foods important for the Fascist autarkic regime, such as bread and rice, as well as food festivals dedicated to bread, rice and grapes were fundamental in the propaganda to promote food seen as traditionally Italian.¹⁰ The consumption of fish was also encouraged by a specific propaganda office, and, like in Germany, through the publicity of the new industry of frozen food, dominated in Italy by the company Genepesca.¹¹

Research was at the forefront of the 'Battle for Wheat'. Experiments with wheat genetics were integral to the work of the scientists of the *Comitato permanente del grano*. Scientist Nazareno Strampelli, nicknamed the Grain Magician, acquired national fame for his creation of a particularly successful wheat, aptly called 'Ardito'.¹² The daring courage of the Fascist Arditi would become an ingredient available to all in the

⁶ Carol Helstosky, 'Fascist Food Politics: Mussolini's Policy of Alimentary Sovereignty', *Journal of Modern Italian Studies*, Vol. 9, No. 1 (2004), 5.

⁷ N. W. Hazan, 'The Agricultural Program of Fascist Italy', *Journal of Farm Economics*, Vol. 15, No. 3 (1933), 489–502.

⁸ S. Falasca-Zamponi, *Fascist Spectacle: The Aesthetics of Power in Mussolini's Italy* (Berkeley, CA 1997), 155–6.

⁹ Anna Ascenzi and Marta Brunelli, 'Accomplishing the "Silent Mission of Italian Women at War". The Fascist Pedagogy of War for Women. From the Kitchen Front to the War Garden', *History of Education and Children's Literature*, Vol. 11, No. 2 (2016), 511.

¹⁰ Ferris, 'Consumption', 125.

¹¹ See Cesare Aldani, *Dall'Atlantico alla vostra tavola. Ricettario Genepesca* (Rome 1937).

¹² Tiago Saraiva, *Fascist Pigs: Technoscientific Organisms and the History of Fascism* (Cambridge, MA 2016), 27–40.

construction of a strong, resilient nation. Moreover, by advancing research on wheat germ and fertility, science contributed to make bread the prodigious food that transformed and united Italians. National Research Council scientist and Parliamentary Deputy Giuseppe Tallarico published extensively on the correlation between fertility and wheat germ, to 'scientifically' prove that the wheat germ in wholemeal bread helped human fertility.¹³ This was scientific research that fitted perfectly with the regime's aims to bring the Italian population to 60 million, as Mussolini expressed in his 1927 *Discorso dell'Ascensione* (Ascension Day Speech), as well as with its late 1930s directives to give up white bread for its less refined version. Protecting wheat consumption meant also diverting people's consumption towards other grains, such as rice. While specific initiatives were taken to facilitate and improve the cultivation of rice, including welfare policies for the *mondine* (rice pickers), the propaganda to increase rice consumption was focused on the main pillars of the Fascist food consumption campaign as a whole: healthy and strong bodies, virility and fertility.¹⁴ By the time Hitler came to power in January 1933, Fascist Italy had already experimented successfully with a number of initiatives around the 'Battle for Wheat'.

Similarly to Fascist Italy, from the outset, once in power, 'achieving nutritional autarky' became a priority of the Nazi regime.¹⁵ In October 1936, Rudolf Hess made a speech about how women should shop:

Hardworking and efficient housewives know what they have to do in the service of this great German family – the German people – if it has to overcome temporary small shortages. They simply do their shopping in accordance with the interest of the great German family! They do not attempt to buy expressly that which is in short supply at the time, but instead buy those things which are available in abundance and prepare them in such a way that they look really good and taste really good to their husbands and children. No good German housewife particularly mourns the quarter-pound of pork which, from time to time, she now fails to get.¹⁶

In September 1938, a newspaper editorial criticized 'those who pretend starvation stares them in the face unless they have their regular supply of vol au vents and whipped cream'.¹⁷

One key aspect of Nazi policy-making in relation to consumption was the 'whole-grain bread campaign', instigated by Reich Physicians' leader, Gerhard Wagner. Wagner attacked 'the recent shift from natural whole-grain bread to highly refined white bread' and advocated a return to whole-grain bread.¹⁸ In 1935, he ordered

¹³ Helstosky, 'Fascist Food Politics', 12.

¹⁴ Garvin, 'Fascist Foodways: Ricettari as Propaganda', 111–34.

¹⁵ Corinna Treitel, *Eating Nature in Modern Germany: Food, Agriculture and Environment, c. 1870–2000* (Cambridge 2017), 189–90.

¹⁶ Speech by Rudolf Hess, cited from the *Völkischer Beobachter*, 13 October 1936, in Norbert Frei, *National Socialist Rule in Germany: The Führer State, 1933–1945* (Oxford 1993), 165.

¹⁷ *Schwarzes Korps*, 22 September 1938.

¹⁸ Robert Proctor, *Racial Hygiene: Medicine under the Nazis* (Cambridge, MA 1988), 235.

German bakeries to change over their production to whole-grain bread and launched a campaign to promote this as *Volksbrot* ('people's bread'). It was a purposeful attempt to change consumption and production patterns and to galvanize the population. The German whole-grain bread campaign was also partly about strengthening the health of the German *Volk*. Hence, the other significant aspect of Nazi food policies was that eating was not a private matter and the regime was concerned about what people ate in terms of their fitness and health. Individual Germans, *Volksgenossen* ('national comrades'), as building blocks of the nation had a duty to be healthy in order for it to be great, healthy and strong. In 1937, Hans Reiter, President of the Reich Health Office, banned the bleaching of flour. Whole-grain bread was regarded as the food of the *Volksgemeinschaft* ('national community') and consumption of the patriotic loaf increased by 50 per cent by 1939.¹⁹

Furthermore, the 'patriotic' diet was also linked to German *Blut und Boden* ('Blood and Soil'), another favourite theme of the Nazi administration. The regime wanted to bring German women, especially those in the cities, back to a way of thinking that was connected to the German soil. The annual harvest festival, held from 1933 onwards at Bückeberg in Lower Saxony, also had its part to play in influencing German society under National Socialism, and the theme of *Blut und Boden* was strongly presented in this context. This was indeed an annual event at which food and power closely converged. Goebbels carefully selected the location for the festival, with a simple design intended to 'emphasize the peasant character of the event'.²⁰ Two stages were connected by a long path, with a large circular space surrounded by flagpoles. The harvest festival was held each year from 1933 to 1937 inclusive, with minute attention to detail and staging. For example, villages that surrounded Bückeberg and that would be visited by people on their way to the festival were decorated. Gerhard notes that: 'The 1937 festival was one of the biggest events ever held by the Nazis'.²¹ Official figures stated that more than 1 million visitors attended that year. Entertainment was provided over the whole weekend, with shows and recitals, featuring folk songs and traditional dress, with Hitler arriving at midday on Sunday. In order to reach the main stage at the top of the hill, Hitler had to walk on the path through the people, greeting them along the way. This took him 45 minutes. Once he arrived on the stage, a peasant woman handed him the 'harvest crown'. There were further festivities, including speeches given by Nazi leaders and culminating in a speech from Hitler. There was no harvest festival in 1938, with the prospect of war, and once the war broke out in 1939, no further harvest festivals were staged as the regime's priorities changed. The similarities between the two regimes in the propagandistic manipulation of food consumption then became less marked.

¹⁹ Lizzie Collingham, *The Taste of War: World War Two and the Battle for Food* (London 2011), 354.

²⁰ Gesine Gerhard, *Nazi Hunger Politics: A History of Food in the Third Reich* (Lanham, MD 2015), 42.

²¹ *Ibid.*

Differences: Cooking Strategies and Domestic Literature

Pervasive attention to frugality and self-restraint dominated public discourses and women's magazines in Italy, while several cookery books were published, creating a corpus of domestic literature, non-existent in Italy at an earlier time.²² A close reading of a selection of domestic literature illustrates class differentiation in the kitchen and provides a point of comparison with Nazi Germany. The year 1935 was a turning point in the development of Fascist alimentary policy: Italy's invasion of Abyssinia, and the embargo that followed, opened another period of autarky,²³ and marked, as Nützenadel puts it, the end of the general perception 'that the burden of depression was distributed fairly evenly across society'.²⁴ A reading of domestic literature not only highlights this unevenness, but also sheds light on the international aspirations attached to Italian cuisine at that time, unlike what was happening in Germany.

A suitable starting point is Ada Boni's successful *Il Talismano della felicità* (*The Talisman for Happiness*) which, first published in 1925, was destined to go through several editions during the Fascist period and was amended throughout the decades. It is still in print today. This detailed and rich recipe book of more than 1300 pages, particularly addressed women of the upper classes. Acknowledging that the modern young woman was able to drive fast cars and speak foreign languages, the book, as declared in the Preface, aimed at providing women with the skills they would still need to have a happy marriage. In this sense, the book presented itself as 'the talisman for happiness'.

The updated editions published in the 1930s, when autarkic policies and nationalistic plans had taken a more drastic turn, offer an insight into the publication's support of the Fascist policies of self-restraint, economy and bodily health ('practicality ... economy, but still maintaining good and healthy cooking, source of well-being and health'),²⁵ and its concomitant reshaping of those same policies for an upper-class audience. The upper classes were familiar with French cuisine, which had signified for decades refinement and exclusivity, yet autarky in the kitchen first of all implied Italian ingredients and Italian recipes and food. *Il Talismano* embraced nationalistic ideas, transforming them into gastronomic knowledge. As a consequence, Fascist attention to local and regional entities – which had always been the basis on which the regime had been building its nationalistic aspirations – translated into an increased number of traditional regional recipes. The aim of this, as stated in the Preface, was the desire to correct a false, common impression of Italian cuisine, as one of limited repertoire and, in a more nationalistic tone, to fully liberate Italian gastronomy from foreign influence.²⁶ Yet even a cursory look at this voluminous book, would be sufficient to understand that there was

²² Carol Helstosky, 'State of Meatlessness: Voluntary and Involuntary Vegetarianism in Early Twentieth-Century Italy', in C. Hanganu-Bresch and K. Kondrlik, eds, *Veg(etari)an Arguments in Culture, History and Practice* (New York 2021), 12.

²³ In 1935, after Italy invaded Abyssinia, the League of Nations sanctioned Mussolini's government by applying an embargo of war-related products and by prohibiting any bank credits to Italian institutions and individuals.

²⁴ Nützenadel, 'Dictating Food', 98.

²⁵ Ada Boni, *Il Talismano della felicità* (Rome 1937), 5.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 17.

not much of a sense of self-restraint in the book (starting from the sheer number of pages), and not even a resolute good-bye to French influence.

Ada Boni herself came from a wealthy family and could mention among her acquaintances the renowned French chef Auguste Escoffier.²⁷ Founder, in 1915, of the women's magazine *Preziosa*, Boni was certainly a key figure in the gastronomic culture of the time, but her accomplished and researched cooking had very little in common with the religious and sacral connotations of Mussolini's prayer to bread. Despite the claimed intent of emancipation from foreign cuisine, explicitly stated in the 'Praise to Italian cuisine' commentary that appeared in the 1937 edition (but not present in the 1931 publication), the 1930s editions still listed foreign products and recipes such as Montpellier butter and Mornay sauce. More to the point, in the 1937 edition, Boni rejects the adoption of Italian translations of well-accepted culinary vocabulary such as 'menu' and 'soufflé', preferring the foreign words modified by an accent in the Italian style ('menù', 'souffflè'). This was in contrast with the regulations imposed by the *MinCulPop* (Ministry for Popular Culture), which would require for 'menu' the Italian word 'lista', and for the word 'soufflé' the translation 'soffiato' (literary 'blown'). It seems that the Italian upper classes were not only eating different food, but also speaking a different language.

For middle-class families, language and food culture were sensibly more in line with Fascist policies. A comparison between two recipe books published respectively in 1936 and in 1935, clarifies the different dynamics taking place on the Fascist plate. Emilia Zamara in her *La cucina italiana della resistenza* published in 1936, unlike Boni, never uses foreign words in any of her 194 recipes. She presents a wide variety of food and many recipes reflect regional traditions, but all are fully respectful of autarkic policies. Fish dishes are given space while meat dishes are substituted by a section titled 'Dishes that Substitute Meat Made of Cheese and Vegetables'.²⁸ Zamara's book, like Lidia Morelli's 1935 cookbook, topically titled *Housewives Against Sanctions (La massaie contro le sanzioni)*, addressed middle-class housewives rather than newly-wed young modern women able to drive and speak foreign languages.²⁹ Morelli, a well-known writer of books of manners and school textbooks, in her book provided specific shopping advice to dutifully substitute any foreign products.³⁰ Gin and whisky were to be completely banned; Spanish and Portuguese anchovies and tuna were to be substituted with Sicilian and Sardinian products; while *Marmite* was replaced with the now obsolete Italian vitaminic extract *Este*. English pickles had to be swapped with a specific brand of Italian pickles and tomato sauces, *Cirio*, while the Italian tea brand *Ati* was presented as the only one in place of all foreign tea varieties – the only possible alternative was the

²⁷ Renzo Dall'Ara, *Petronilla e le altre. Il mestolo dalla parte di lei* (Mantua 1999), 93.

²⁸ Emilia Zamara, *La cucina italiana della resistenza* (Milan 1936).

²⁹ Yet Morelli does not consider the middle-class families she is addressing as a homogenous unicum; in fact, she suggests the additions of extra and tasty ingredients, according to what each family desires and can afford. Lidia Morelli, *Le massaie contro le sanzioni* (Turin 1935), 69.

³⁰ Lidia Morelli's successful book of manners, *Dalla cucina al salotto* originally published in 1905, was republished in 1925 with the addition of a section of recipes. At that time, she started contributing to the writing of school textbooks (Ascenzi e Brunelli, 515).

karkadè tea from the Italian colonies.³¹ In the difficult times of sanctions, Lidia Morelli, like alimentary scholar Elisabetta Randi,³² embodied the role of educator of middle-class housewives, but evidently she was also aware of their role within the tertiary industry sector, hence, the naming of specific Italian brands, with which she clearly went beyond the recommendation of national products.

La donna fascista, magazine of the women's organization of the Italian Fascist Party, fully promoted the autarkic policies of the regime with its exhortation to substitute meat consumption with rice, or to consume bananas from the colonies. Among the promotion of autarkic initiatives, *La donna fascista* also gave regular space to the work of the Fascist organization of peasant women, *Massaie rurali*, as for example, with reports on their successful chicken-raising activities.³³

Yet, it was at the moment of crisis, at the beginning of the war, that a united and classless spirit of sacrifice was invoked again through that same food that had provided an appeal to sacrifice in the mid-1920s, that is, bread. The issue of *La donna fascista* published on 30 June 1940, 20 days after Italy entered the war, informed of the introduction of a new type of bread made with 80 per cent sifted flour, therefore no longer the refined white four. This was the so-called '*pane unico*' (the only-type bread). The magazine reassured readers that bread quality was not going to be lowered to the brown bread type, and that the initiative should not be considered a war sacrifice, especially because Italians were mainly a frugal population. In fact, the magazine continued, at the basis of the new regulation there was an idealistic motivation:

[I]t brings even closer all the social classes. Same type of flour, same type of bread on all tables, from the most sumptuous to the most humble; it may be different in shapes but is identical in the substance. This is another step forward in the social justice of Fascism.³⁴

Deprived of the Catholic and poetic trait that bread propaganda had during the 'Battle for Wheat', the rhetoric on bread was coming closer to the sense of community spirit that *Volksbrot* represented in Nazi Germany at that time, but still with a remarkable difference. The Italian consumers' refusal of brown bread is in stark contrast with the Germans' compliance to whole-grain bread as the food of the 'national community'. Italian gastronomy on the contrary had clearer international aspirations. Ada Boni had the freedom to list ingredients and words that clashed with Fascist impositions, but her book would still accomplish the nationalistic project. The skills and social connections of the upper-class Boni were still advantageous to the Fascist regime because the book put Italian cuisine in dialogue with well-known foreign traditions and raised it to an

³¹ Lidia Morelli, *Le massaie contro le sanzioni*, 64–6.

³² Elisabetta Randi, scholar of nutrition, penned articles for women's magazines and was the author of the 1942 book *La cucina autarchica* (Florence).

³³ In the attempt to reach rural communities, the Fascist government took other initiatives, such as the establishment of the *Ente Radio Rurale*, to provide radio facilities to rural areas. In 1934 their programmes included the 'Farmer's Hour', with advice for agriculture. However, due to the high cost of the radio, the project never reached the success hoped for.

³⁴ *La donna fascista*, No. 15, 30 June 1940, 7.

international level. In the home market, it projected a rich image of Italian cuisine to which people of different classes could aspire. In this sense, the thriving of a publication like *Il Talismano* – the third edition ran to 25,000 copies – followed a pattern similar to the consolidation of press advertising of luxury goods. As Bianca Gaudenzi demonstrates, the advertising of luxury goods remained widely present in the Fascist (and Nazi) press up to the war period, in order to project an image of wealthy future times.³⁵

Further confirmation of how refined cuisine was used to show Italian prestige at the international level can be found in a book that appears as the forerunner of the contemporary gastronomic travel books. Paolo Monelli's *Il ghiottone errante*, published in 1935, is an entertaining account of the journalist author's travels and meals all around Italy. It is remarkable that this book came out at the time of the sanctions, and not long before Zamara was suggesting no-meat dishes made of cheese and eggs. Originated in a series of pieces written by Monelli for a Turin newspaper, the book recounts the pleasure of drinking and eating in small restaurants and 'osterie'. This responded to the Fascist goal of promoting local traditions. On one occasion, Monelli narrates a story about the restaurant 'Il Pappagallo' in Bologna, which, according to a friend of his, a diplomat, had embarked on what was defined as a fine diplomatic mission, representing Italy in London.³⁶ The owner of the Bolognese restaurant was invited by the owner of the *Quo Vadis* restaurant in London to teach its chefs a series of their dishes; in Monelli's words, that episode signalled the importance of Italian cuisine in the world. Among the dishes mentioned on this occasion, there is the '*maccheroni alla Rossini*', a type of pasta filled with liver, beef bone-marrow, game and white truffles. The significance of the Italian cuisine at the international level was, therefore, happily attributed to rich, traditional dishes that had little in common with Mussolini's adage, reported by John Dickie, that ten minutes a day was all what was needed for eating.³⁷

The skilful manipulation of alimentary policies by the Fascist regime in ways that suited each social class is also demonstrated by the testimonies collected by Karima Moyer-Nocchi for her oral history project on Italian foodways during the *ventennio*. An interviewee of noble heritage, Countess Betta, describes her meals as a child and adolescent during the Fascist period in the city of Bologna, as typical of what everyone else was eating. This appears unrealistic as soon as she tells of meals always composed of a first course pasta dish followed by a meat dish and two vegetables, with fruit to conclude the meal, and desserts only on Sundays.³⁸ In contrast, Giulia, who during Fascism was living in Milan in poor conditions, adamantly describes Mussolini as 'a defender of the poor', merciless with those Italians who would violate food restrictions, and with Fascist '*squadristi*' bursting into people's homes at mealtimes to check that they were not eating more than allowed.³⁹

³⁵ Bianca Gaudenzi, 'Press Advertising and Fascist Dictates', *Journalism Studies*, Vol. 14, No. 3 (2013), 663–80.

³⁶ Paolo Monelli, *Il ghiottone errante. Viaggio gastronomico attraverso l'Italia* (Milan 1935), 242.

³⁷ John Dickie, *Delizia!* (London 2007), 265.

³⁸ Karima Moyer-Nocchi, *Chewing the Fat: An Oral History of Italian Foodways from Fascism to Dolce Vita* (Perrysburg, OH 2015), 42.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 9.

In Nazi Germany, autarky was defined as *Nahrungsfreiheit* ('nutritional freedom'), and German housewives and consumers were urged to support German farmers in this effort. In similar ways to Fascist Italy, the Nazi regime had to change the nation's eating habits and suppress demands for imported goods such as oranges and coffee, as well as foods dependent upon the import of fodder for their production, such as butter and meat, as Germany did not produce enough fodder internally. The Hitler government used propaganda and 'education' to this end. German civilians were asked to develop a 'political stomach'.⁴⁰ Grocers, from 1935 onwards, introduced 'coupling transactions' that compelled customers who asked for items in short supply to purchase additional items. Grocers were castigated by the regime for being grumblers and constantly bemoaning unavoidable shortages, instead of re-educating the 17 million housewives with which they had daily contact. To be sure, the alimentary policies of the Nazi regime were directed primarily at women, who were the ones making the decisions about what to buy and what to cook. Unlike Fascist Italy that aimed at revaluing the variety of local cuisine, Nazi Germany focused housewives' cooking task by promoting one national dish: the *Eintopf* 'one-pot dish'.

Promoted by the Winter Relief Agency charity, beginning in October 1933 onwards, with this initiative Germans were asked to eat a one-pot dish or stew on one Sunday each month, and to donate the money they saved against their usual Sunday meal to the state-sponsored charity. Gesine Gerhard notes that: 'many housewives responded favourably to the campaign'.⁴¹ One-pot Sundays came to be observed, with magazines publishing recipes and regions developing their own particular variants. One common recipe was a split pea soup, made from dried peas, bacon cubes and potatoes. The Nazi women's magazine *NS-Frauenwarte* included features on and recipes for the *Eintopf*, such as 'fish one-pot dish' and 'macaroni one-pot dish'.⁴² The *Eintopf* was intended to symbolize the *Volksgemeinschaft* ('national community'). It was reified as 'the meal of sacrifice for the nation'. It inspired an array of new cookery books as well – one of them with an added subtitle to suggest that if the *Eintopf* was prepared with German vegetables and fruit, the person preparing it was helping 'twice' (first by preparing a 'meal of sacrifice' and second by using home-grown produce).⁴³ *Eintopf* Sundays changed the drive for autarky into a social ritual that aimed to unite the 'national community' through sacrifice. The Nazi Party leadership was photographed eating the *Eintopf* too. In addition, *Eintopf* meals held in communal settings, such as town squares, further appealed to the Germans to support the campaign.

'Guns before butter' meant that food shortages were already present from the mid-1930s onwards. As Nancy Reagin has shown, preparations for war 'led to economic policies that often worked against civilian consumers' interests'.⁴⁴ The quality of butter

⁴⁰ Richard Grunberger, *A Social History of the Third Reich* (London 1991), 263.

⁴¹ Gerhard, *Nazi Hunger Politics*, 34.

⁴² *NS-Frauenwarte*, 1935–36, Issue 16, 525.

⁴³ For example, E. Horn, *Der Eintopf: Das deutsche Spargericht* (Munich 1933) and A. Richert, *Bereite dein Eintopf-Gericht aus deutschen Gemüse und Obst, dann hilfst Du doppelt* (Berlin 1935).

⁴⁴ Nancy Reagin, 'Tischkultur: Food Choices, Cooking and Diet in Nazi Germany', in Lisa Pine, ed., *Life and Times in Nazi Germany* (London 2016), 22.

and cheese declined, and there was an increase in the use of inferior vegetable fats to create new fat compounds. By the winter of 1936–1937, shopkeepers sold butter only to their regular customers.⁴⁵ Eating patterns changed. For example, fish consumption increased by 40 per cent between 1932 and 1938. The regime subsidized the fishing industry at all levels, as Reagin notes, ‘encouraging investments in fish processing ships, new rail schedules to distribute fresh fish even to inland communities and new technologies to flash-freeze fish fillets’.⁴⁶ In conjunction with the fish cookery courses offered by the Nazi women’s organizations, this policy contributed to the marked rise in fish consumption. The amount of imported fruit decreased by one eighth in the first five years of Nazi rule. White cabbage and potatoes became increasingly important components of the German diet, whilst the use of meat in cooking decreased. To be sure, Hitler was well-known as a vegetarian and he talked about the benefits of vegetarianism at great length, but that most Germans ended up eating an increasingly meat-free diet during the Third Reich was mainly not the result of personal desire or choice. Fascism too promoted a meatless diet, but vegetarianism as a philosophy was not fully supported by the Fascist government, which, for example, contrary to vegetarian precepts, promoted wine drinking.⁴⁷

Alcohol was frowned upon by the Nazi regime, which equated the use of alcohol with degeneracy. At the 1935 Party Congress at Nuremberg, Hitler’s speech had referred to the idea that in the past, ‘the ideal German was the man who could handle his beer and hard liquor’. This was no longer the ideal under Nazism. The production of non-alcoholic fruit drinks increased fivefold during the mid-1930s, although people still drank alcohol as well. In 1938, Reiter declared a fruit drink called ‘sweet cider’ as the official *Volksgetränk* (‘people’s drink’). Something very different was happening in Italy, where in the same period, the Industrial Wine Lobby, using the Fascist mantra of healthy and national food, managed to transform the wine industry into a wealthy market, and wine into a national drink.⁴⁸ Hence whilst the regimes both wanted to influence their nation’s drinking habits, they did so in different ways and with distinctive outcomes.

Ultimately, as Hartmut Berghoff argues, Nazi policies towards German consumers consisted of a combination of ‘enticement and deprivation’, in order to achieve the regime’s ideological and political goals.⁴⁹ Personal purchasing decisions were closely linked to the needs of the national economy. The Nazi regime utilized the agencies of its two women’s organizations, the *Reichsmütterdienst* (National Mothers’ Service), which was part of the *Deutsches Frauenwerk* and the *Volkswirtschaft/Hauswirtschaft*

⁴⁵ Grunberger, *A Social History of the Third Reich*, 264.

⁴⁶ Reagin, ‘*Tischkultur*: Food Choices, Cooking and Diet in Nazi Germany’, 28.

⁴⁷ Helstosky, ‘State of Meatlessness’, 6.

⁴⁸ B. J. Griffith, ‘Bacchus among the Blackshirts: Wine-Making, Consumerism and Identity in Fascist Italy, 1919–1937’, *Contemporary European History*, Vol. 29, No. 4 (2020), 394–415.

⁴⁹ Hartmut Berghoff, ‘Enticement and Deprivation: The Regulation of Consumption in Pre-war Nazi Germany’, in M. Daunt and M. Hilton, eds, *The Politics of Consumption: Material Culture and Citizenship in Europe and America* (Oxford 2001), 165–84.

(National Economy/Home Economy), which was part of the *NS-Frauenschaft*, in order to educate women about which provisions to buy and how to cook frugal meals in times of national shortage. Housewives were responsible for making sure their families were getting healthy nourishment, even with the limited availability of some foodstuffs. The National Economy/Home Economy division particularly promoted Quark, dark bread and fish. It mounted large campaigns to disseminate its position to German housewives and shoppers. It suggested weekly and monthly menus that reflected the availability of foodstuffs. As Reagin has noted, 'these menus and lists were then printed in newspapers and magazines, publicized on radio programs, posted in factory floors and marketplaces, and inserted in female workers' pay envelopes'.⁵⁰ In addition, the National Economy/Home Economy had 148 advice centres for housewives, which advised women on issues such as recycling, how to use ersatz products and how to preserve foods. The centres had all different types of educational material on view, in the windows, in display cases, on tables and on the walls. Books on display treated topics including the economy, agriculture, home economy, nutrition and cookery, household management, gardening and health. The centres also had educational films on topics such as 'All Kinds of Things from Quark', 'German Grain in the Household', 'Preservation of Fruit and Vegetables' and 'The Preparation of Fish'.⁵¹ In addition, many millions of cookery leaflets were distributed and more than 1.8 million women attended the cookery courses mounted by the National Economy/Home Economy organization in 1938.⁵² Hence, the Nazi regime put considerable effort into such campaigns to influence German consumers.

Women's magazines – which were subject to state censorship and effectively run by the Party – included sections filled with 'practical tips' for 'the clever housewife', such as how to open glass jars and how to clean empty bottles.⁵³ One Nazi women's magazine gave advice about how to use fresh fruit in winter, including making jams and preserves.⁵⁴ Recommendations were given on a wide variety of topics that related to cookery or the household, with a great emphasis on features such as 'Healthy – Tasty – Economical'.⁵⁵ For example, there was advice on how to store potatoes correctly and how to peel potatoes properly in order to prevent waste. One magazine gave suggested recipes for lunch and dinner for every day of the month⁵⁶ – a typical example was fish soup with potatoes and celery for lunch, followed by semolina and compote, with a spinach bake for the evening meal. Some of the recipes were also offered along with suggestions of what products were especially good to buy each month – for example, beef,

⁵⁰ Nancy Reagin, 'Comparing Apples and Oranges: Housewives and the Politics of Consumption in Interwar Germany', in Charles McGovern, Susan Strasser and Mathias Judd, eds, *Getting and Spending: European and American Consumer Societies in the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge 1998), 256.

⁵¹ Lisa Pine, *Nazi Family Policy, 1933–1945* (Oxford 1997), 84.

⁵² *Ibid.*

⁵³ *Völkische Wacht*, August 1939, 234.

⁵⁴ *NS-Frauenwarte*, 1935–1936, Issue 3, 86.

⁵⁵ *NS-Frauenwarte*, 1935–1936, Issue 20, 652.

⁵⁶ *Ewiges Deutschland*, October 1937, 30–31.

spinach, tomatoes, mushrooms, apples and pears were recommended in October. Cooking instructions – for instance, in a magazine feature titled ‘A Vegetarian Week’ – demonstrated how meals without meat were not only satisfying, but also cheaper and healthier.⁵⁷

Even before the war, housewives were encouraged to substitute fancy potato dishes for traditional meat ones. In the winter of 1938–1939, for example, a series of pamphlets and radio programmes called ‘The Potato in Holiday Dress’ featured festive potato recipes and dishes. Potatoes were especially promoted by the National Socialist regime in broadcasts, magazines and training courses directed at German women, who were advised how to prepare them in the most economical way possible. As Rebecca Earle has argued, eating potatoes was regarded as ‘a patriotic gesture’.⁵⁸ Yet middle-class housewives were not always willing to forego luxury or unseasonal items, while they were still available and while they could still afford to buy them. They also sometimes found the advice of the National Economy/Home Economy unpalatable, superfluous or condescending. Overall, the variety of dishes promoted in Nazi Germany was more restricted than that in Fascist Italy, where the autarkic cuisine was enriched by regional traditions.

Food and Power: Hunger and War

At the outbreak of the Second World War in Italy, in June 1940, some decisions on food rationing had already been taken by the Fascist government. From 1939, the sale of meat was not allowed on two days of the week, which was extended to three days in July 1940. Coffee was among the first items to be rationed in 1940, as were alimentary fats, the consumption of which was further reduced a few months later, in February 1941. Bread was rationed in October 1941. It was at this time, that the situation of food provision started to deteriorate. Underfeeding started to be a national problem in the winter of 1941–1942, became a general problem in 1943 and reached a very serious level in the period 1944–1945.⁵⁹ As Massimo Legnani has established, it was in 1942 that the majority of the population began to resort to the black market as a regular source of supply rather than a supplementary one.⁶⁰

The rapid decline in living conditions was demonstrated also by the type of cookery advice available on the pages of *La donna fascista*, which continued its rhetoric to make the Italian housewives responsible for the food consumption of the whole family. In July 1940, an article on family cooking exhorted housewives to welcome without complaining, the ‘few’ imposed food restrictions, while encouraging them to use eggs, pulses and vegetable as substitutes for meat, instead of looking at ways to conserve meat in the fridge.⁶¹ This clearly signified the need to intervene on the fast disappearance of meat

⁵⁷ *NS-Frauenwarte*, 1935–1936, Issue 9, 288. See also *Ewiges Deutschland*, February 1937, 27.

⁵⁸ Rebecca Earle, *Feeding the People: The Politics of the Potato* (Cambridge 2020), 184.

⁵⁹ Massimo Legnani, ‘Consumi di guerra. Linee di ricerca sull’alimentazione in Itali nel 1940–43’, in Dipartimento di Discipline Storiche Università di Bologna, ed., *Guerra vissuta, guerra subita* (Bologna 1991), 110.

⁶⁰ Legnani, ‘Consumi di guerra’, 111.

⁶¹ *La donna fascista*, No. 16, 14 July 1940, 13.

from the market. A few months later, in November 1940 an article titled 'Welcome Autarky' advised the use of the residual fat obtained by the cooking of meat as a pasta sauce.⁶² This first appeal to the saving of cooking fat scaled up to more drastic restrictions when, in April 1942, the advice was to first cook meat for only a few minutes in order to take out the residual fat – to be destined for further recipes – and then complete its cooking with a spoonful of water.⁶³ This rapid decline of the availability of food appears even starker if compared to the 1939 issues of *La donna fascista* when, the general autarkic discourse was presented together with advertising for luxury goods.

While women's ingenuity produced recipes such as the mayonnaise made out of a boiled potato,⁶⁴ or presented advice such as using the water of boiled potatoes to wash cotton, woollen clothes and also silver,⁶⁵ science and history played their role in shaping the highly moral values of the Fascist woman. In March 1941, in an article discouraging hoarding, meat was presented as a non-indispensable food, proof of which had been given by 'the most renowned doctors, hygienists, paediatricians and biologists', hence, the long queues in the attempts to get some meat, were seen as inexplicable.⁶⁶ In 1942, an article on the history of rationing from the Renaissance to the eighteenth century in France aimed at demonstrating that history repeats itself, and as a consequence, at easing the negative emotions caused by rationing. Among the moral duties of the housewives – and one of the ways to contribute to Italy's victory – there was also the rejection of the black market.⁶⁷

The alimentary discourse in *La donna fascista* is evidence of the progressive loss of economic power of the middle-class in the first years of the war. The sense of moral duty and dignified poverty that the magazine imparted through its alimentary recommendations are not dissimilar from those of other publications of the time. In 1942, Lunella De Seta published *La cucina in tempo di guerra* with recipes such as 'The Mixed Fry of Despair' which consisted of only fried batter with no meat, fish or vegetables; or 'Winter ... Strawberries' made of grape must and beans.⁶⁸ A booklet titled *Surrogati*, entirely dedicated to ersatz products was also published in 1942. German as a foreign language was certainly allowed at this time: words like *ersatz*, *Kaffeewicke* and *Feigen Kaffee* are used to illustrate the various types of ersatz coffee available, and evidence German influence on Italian food habits. In 1942 then, these publications directed to the wider middle-class were still trying to maintain an appearance of normal life thanks to the use of ersatz products and food language of imagination. However, as is deducible from the articles of *La donna fascista*, queues, black market and hoarding were clear evidence of worry and disquiet about the availability of food. In real life, 'wild hoarding' by angry women had already started in January 1940.⁶⁹

⁶² *La donna fascista*, No. 22, 3 November 1940, 15.

⁶³ *La donna fascista*, No. 13, 30 April 1942, 11.

⁶⁴ *La donna fascista*, No. 1, 30 October 1941, 15.

⁶⁵ *La donna fascista*, No. 3, 30 November 1942, 15.

⁶⁶ *La donna fascista*, No. 32, 30 March 1941, 15.

⁶⁷ *La donna fascista*, No. 4, 15 December 1941, 12.

⁶⁸ Lunella De Seta, *La cucina del tempo di guerra* (Milan 1942).

⁶⁹ Legnani, 'Consumi di guerra', 243.

Effectively, the government was paying for petrol, technology and other war materials with agricultural resources, and, as a consequence, subtracting food available to its own population,⁷⁰ or at least to the ones who did not have access to the products of the land, like people living in the countryside, and the more privileged classes that could still afford to resort to the black market when prices became prohibitive for most of the population. Food was therefore a crucial knot of the home front; publicizing the Nazi government's food donation to Italy was then a way to show the steadiness of the home front, the independence of the Italian agricultural supply and the solidarity of the Nazi Ally. It neutralized people's complaints about food deliveries from Italy to Germany. Emblematic in this sense, was the news about the distribution of potatoes given in the Fascist newspaper, *L'Adriatico*, in November 1942, when the dynamics of the war started changing and the Nazi troops were losing ground. It announced the distribution, in urban centres, of 10 kg of potatoes per person imported from Germany.⁷¹ A few months later, the same newspaper dedicated an article to wheat supply during wartime, to underline that Italy had been responding to its needs thanks to its national production, having returned wheat borrowed from Germany.⁷² The confirmation of the validity of the alliance, and showing that Italy was not dependent on Nazi Germany were important elements that proved the stability of the home front. However, the Nazi Alliance certainly brought changes to the Italian economic and social panorama. Workers were sent to Germany to alleviate the level of Italian unemployment,⁷³ with ambivalent results, because if unemployment was eased, the male workforce diminished more than planned due to the attraction of better pay in Germany. A consequence of this work policy was that working-class women became protagonists in the Italian economy.

The deterioration of living conditions from 1943 is apparent through different sources. More products were being rationed year after year following a regional scheme;⁷⁴ in the last years of war, the average calories obtained by rationed food dropped to about 950, similar to the levels of the eastern European population subjected to the Nazi Hunger Plan.⁷⁵ The number of crimes for breaking rationing legislation was also becoming substantial. Paola Zagatti reports that between 1940 and 1948, 34.5 per cent of the verdicts of the Bologna courts were related to crimes against food rationing,⁷⁶ and 17.3 per cent of them were related to the illegal trade of rationed food.⁷⁷ The succession of dramatic events, the ambiguous armistice of the King, the sense of disarray of the Italian army,

⁷⁰ Alberto De Bernardi, 'L'alimentazione di guerra', in Luca Alessandrini and Matteo Pasetti, eds, *1943: guerra e società* (Roma 2015), 135.

⁷¹ *L'Adriatico*, 2 November 1942, 1.

⁷² *L'Adriatico*, 'Il grano e la guerra', 25 January 1943, 4.

⁷³ Legnani, 'Consumi di guerra', 241.

⁷⁴ An example of the regional rationing is given by the rationing of fats, that as Helstosky reports were rationed by the end of 1940 ('Fascist Food Politics', 15) but in Bologna were rationed in February 1941 (Paola Zagatti 'Il problema dell'alimentazione', in Brunella Della Casa and Alberto Preti, eds, *Bologna in Guerra 1940–1945* (Milan 1995), 223–52, 229).

⁷⁵ De Bernardi, 'L'alimentazione di guerra', 130.

⁷⁶ Zagatti, 'Il problema dell'alimentazione', 256.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 263.

the Nazi occupation of the North of Italy could only generate more arduous daily living conditions.

At this time, food also became a means of retaliation. Consistent scarcity of salt in the north of Italy, especially from April 1944 when it was rationed, led the Nazi troops, who had access to their own Austrian salt production, to exploit it as currency to obtain information on the Italian Resistance and the Allied troops.⁷⁸ Responding in similar ways, the partisan Resistance dealt with the distribution of food among the population and its sharing with the Nazi troops in ways to support civilians and damage the Nazi-Fascist alliance. An emblematic case in this sense is the story of the Cervi family, modest farmers in the area around Reggio Emilia. After the 8 September armistice and the Nazi-Fascist occupation, the Cervi brothers created a system of 'loans', which aimed to sabotage Nazi war production. They would provide meat and flour to workers who were producing the German dive-bomber Stuka in a local factory, in exchange they asked for small pieces of the Stuka, effectively slowing down its production.⁷⁹

In the last two years of war, the most dramatic situation was experienced in the cities, while anyone living in the countryside and able to cultivate land would have been assured of food that was not covered by the rationing system. War gardens appeared in urban areas and wherever small parts of uncultivated land were available. The advantage of cultivating war gardens was that there was no requirement to allocate part of the produce for the *ammassi*, the centralized food collection that had been established by the Fascist government already in the 1930s.⁸⁰

While the middle class was progressively losing its status, working-class women were becoming much more visible by protesting against rationing. Already in the summer of 1942, in the Southern region of Apulia, women rebelled against flour rationing and the prohibition against grinding their own corn.⁸¹ Women took part in the factory strikes that broke out in the north of Italy in the spring of 1943; generated by the need for better pay at a time when food prices were raising rapidly, these strikes were not dissimilar to the many food protests led by women in several parts of the country, from Piedmont to Emilia Romagna, to Tuscany and Lazio. Food protests were often spawned by contingent factors linked to local policies – such as the irregular distribution of fat and other rationed food – or the demand for increased rations.

Whilst food provision became difficult for the lower classes in Nazi Germany during the war, because of its policy of exploitation of the occupied territories it did not cause the serious problems of underfeeding faced by Italy. Propaganda was intensified as housewives were stigmatized as 'selfish' if they failed to take into account 'the good of the nation'. German women were instructed on the use of ersatz or substitute products. Recipes and meal plans aimed to show how meals without meat were not only satisfying,

⁷⁸ Bruna Bertolo, *Donne e cucina in tempo di guerra* (Sant'Ambrogio di Torino 2017), 81.

⁷⁹ Lorena Carrara and Elisabetta Salvini, *Partigiani a tavola. Storia di cibo resistente e ricette di libertà* (Bologna 2015), 51. This was one of several antifascist actions carried out by the Cervi family, whose seven brothers were later arrested and killed in December 1943.

⁸⁰ De Bernardi, 'L'alimentazione di guerra', 133.

⁸¹ Bertolo, *Donne e cucina in tempo di guerra*, 84.

but also cheaper and healthier, and people were urged to grow their own fruit, to forage for herbs and to preserve fruits in the winter months.

The 'whole-grain bread' campaign was stepped up during the wartime period. On 21 March 1941, Reich Health Leader Leonardo Conti made a radio address to the nation, asking people to turn from white bread to whole-grain bread 'for the good of their health and the strength of the nation'.⁸² In 1939, only 2,420 German bakeries produced the *Volksbrot*; by 1943, 27,454 bakeries were making whole-grain bread.⁸³ In addition, the Nazi regime continued to discourage the drinking of alcohol, both by supporting the production of fruit juices and mineral water and by restricting the sale of beer and wine.⁸⁴

In comparison with the *NS-Frauenwarte* issues from the pre-war period, by 1941, almost all the recipes in the Nazi women's magazine were entirely meatless. In 1941, there were just a handful of recipes among several hundred that featured any kind of meat, for example, *Wurstgulasch* (sausage goulash) and an *Eintopf* recipe with rabbit meat, neither of which utilized prime meat.⁸⁵ The main emphasis was almost entirely on vegetables and fruits, as well as on the encouragement of frugal cooking habits, such as tips on how to make 'jam with less sugar'.⁸⁶ Featured 'recipes in keeping with the times' included cauliflower soup, spinach roast and vegetable *Eintopf* with noodles.⁸⁷ And so, over time, even the *Eintopf* became meatless. Recipes in one edition in 1941 gave advice on using 'vegetables and fruits from the forest and garden', followed, in the subsequent edition, by recipes for 'all kinds of things from small mushrooms', including mushroom schnitzel and stuffed mushrooms.⁸⁸ By the end of 1944 and the start of 1945, the recipes became even more austere.

The aim of the regime was to distribute a limited amount of food across the population without losing the loyalty of the working classes, in particular. The exploitation of forced foreign labour was a tactic used by Nazi Germany to support farming. By 1941, 1.3 million forced labourers from Poland and Ukraine were working in Germany, as well as over one million Soviet and French POWs.⁸⁹ As rationing became more widely applied, everyone was supposed to make the same sacrifices for the nation, although pregnant women and nursing mothers, as well as workers in heavy industry, and of course soldiers, did get more provisions, while, not surprisingly, foreign workers and prisoners of war fared worst. Soldiers routinely ate well and could even supplement their rations with items looted from occupied areas, including fine wines from France.⁹⁰ Nazi food policies meant a redirection of food resources to the Third Reich and near-starvation (or starvation) for other populations,

⁸² Proctor, *Racial Hygiene*, 237.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 237.

⁸⁴ On alcohol in Nazi Germany, see Jonathan Lewy, 'Vice in the Third Reich? Alcohol, Tobacco and Drugs', in Lisa Pine, ed., *Life and Times in Nazi Germany* (London 2016), 50–4.

⁸⁵ *NS-Frauenwarte*, 1941–1942, Issue 11, 173 and *NS-Frauenwarte*, 1941–1942, Issue 12, 188.

⁸⁶ *NS-Frauenwarte*, 1941–1942, Issue 1, 13.

⁸⁷ *NS-Frauenwarte*, 1941–1942, Issue 2, 28.

⁸⁸ *NS-Frauenwarte*, 1941–1942, Issue 5, 76–7 and *NS-Frauenwarte*, 1941–1942, Issue 6, 92–3.

⁸⁹ Gerhard, *Nazi Hunger Politics*, 57–8.

⁹⁰ On this, see Reagin, 'Tischkultur: Food Choices, Cooking and Diet in Nazi Germany', 38–9.

mainly in the lands occupied in the east, but also including the Italians. Germany looked to its occupied territories to make up for the food deficit, with Goering insisting that hunger should be exported outside the Reich. Reich Minister for Food and Agriculture, Herbert Backe, was architect of what was known as the Hunger Plan, which was designed to extract as much as possible out of the eastern occupied territories. The Nazis exploited conquered lands, confiscating food supplies to feed the German army, which in turn, as Reagin has argued, 'reduced the demands for foodstuffs placed on the German domestic economy'.⁹¹ The relentless plundering of occupied nations, in both the east and the west, was a significant characteristic of Nazi wartime activities. Between 1941 and 1943, occupied Soviet land provided Nazi Germany with 7 million tonnes of grains, 2.7 million tonnes of potatoes and 325,000 tonnes of edible fat.⁹² Yet, as Alice Weinreb has shown, ultimately the Nazi regime 'decreased Germany's available food supplies both by diverting food to industrial and military segments of the population and by reducing food imports', despite its promises of plenty to the German people.⁹³ And, further, as S. Jonathan Wiesen states, 'as wartime consumption withered, the consumer, in effect, ceased to exist'.⁹⁴

Jill Stephenson has noted that 'hoarding and bartering became punishable offences, along with profiteering, black marketeering and the illegal slaughter of livestock'.⁹⁵ But a black market did burgeon, nevertheless. Malte Zierenberg has shown, especially in regard to Berlin, that 'unlawful trading was already visible in the middle of the 1930s, and it became a mass phenomenon when the war began'.⁹⁶ Many small farmers, who had in any case felt let down by the regime's overall policies, retreated into their own form of self-sufficiency, producing what they needed for themselves and their families, and not producing surplus food for the state. In addition, urban women bought and hoarded up non-perishable items for use in bartering, for example, exchanging soap products for food from farmers. They swapped children's toys and table linen for potatoes, milk, vegetables or fruit. Collingham notes that 'the growth of a black market of barter in Germany indicated the seriousness of food shortages within the industrial cities'.⁹⁷ Urban women made 'hamstering trips' by train from the cities to the countryside to look for food or to exchange goods for food. They also kept 'war gardens' to supplement their rations, producing a small but very important amount of extra vegetables.

Conclusion

As in almost all other areas of life – such as leisure, health or family life – in Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany food was not a private matter, but another aspect of state control of the

⁹¹ Reagin, 'Tischkultur: Food Choices, Cooking and Diet in Nazi Germany', 38.

⁹² Alice Weinreb, *Modern Hungers: Food and Power in Twentieth-Century Germany* (Oxford 2017), 69.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 86.

⁹⁴ S. Jonathan Wiesen, 'National Socialism and Consumption', in F. Trentman, ed., *The Oxford Handbook of the History of Consumption* (Oxford 2012), 433.

⁹⁵ Jill Stephenson, *Women in Nazi Germany* (London 2001), 98.

⁹⁶ Malte Zierenberg, *Berlin's Black Market: 1939–1950* (New York 2015), 2.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 378.

population during peacetime and war. Since the beginning of the implementation of their food policies, both Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany adopted strategies aimed at uniting the population through the sense of individual sacrifice. Mussolini's Prayer for Bread, the propaganda for the annual wheat events, the *Volksbrot* and the annual harvest festival exemplified this rhetoric and provide a useful and significant illustration of the close relationship between food and power in the two regimes, as the sacrality of these propaganda features and events bestowed power on both leaders. In the mid-1920s, the Fascist regime led the way to an alimentary discourse that linked health with the strength of the nation and its expansion. However, having begun their policies before the 1929 international economic crisis, the Fascist government did not base its propaganda on the risk of shortages of food. Up to the outbreak of the war, at the announcement of the adoption of a new national bread, as we have seen reported in an article of *La donna fascista*, the idea of restraint determined by the war was denied in favour of the myth of a classless society. On the contrary, in Nazi Germany, already in 1936, Rudolf Hess addressed German housewives, appealing to their sense of duty when facing possible shortages. Moreover, the Fascist regime aimed at promoting the richness and diversity of Italian regional cuisine to build up national prestige and attain international reputation. It tried then, on one hand to promote autarkic policies and on the other to develop a rich and prestigious Italian cuisine. Nazi Germany was more focused in the promotion of unifying initiatives such as the '*Eintopf*'.

However, in both countries, specialty food and less stringent food habits were a privilege of the upper classes and the Party leadership. This in spite of the fact that the food policies of both regimes had a racial basis, which referred to the superiority of the peasant-like life of the Mediterranean race in the case of Fascism, and to the strong connection of people and land in the case of the Nazi *Blut und Boden* ideology. To be sure, the distinctions between the classes in both perceptions and lived experiences became much starker during the Second World War. This created tensions as those in the German working class wondered if this really was a classless *Volksgemeinschaft* ('national community') as the Nazis had promised. On the other hand, Hitler was concerned not to repeat the unpreparedness in terms of lack of foodstuffs that Germans had experienced during the First World War, with the last 'turnip winter' of 1917–1918 particularly dire. In this, the export of hunger to the occupied territories played its part, as did the utilization of millions of foreign workers in Germany, who worked on farms to keep up agricultural production as much as possible. Quite the opposite happened in Italy, where underfeeding started to become a problem in 1941, although it continued to be covered up by the paternalistic Fascist propaganda that in women's magazines resorted to 'scientific' evidence to prove the irrelevance of meat. By the last two years of the war, the average calorie intake in Italy became similar to the levels of the eastern European countries subjected to the Hunger Plan. In both Italy and Germany, the class differentiation was very much present. Domestic literature evidenced the rhetoric of the regimes but underlined the uneven effect of food policies on the population.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

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ORCID iD

Patrizia Sambuco  <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7892-0614>

Author Biographies

Patrizia Sambuco has just completed a monograph on food imaginaries in Italian women's writing from the Fascist period to the present day. She is the editor of *Transmissions of Memory: Echoes, Traumas, and Nostalgia in Post-World War II Italian Culture* (2018) and *Italian Women Writers 1800–2000: Boundaries, Borders, and Transgressions* (2015). She is the author of *Corporeal Bonds: The Daughter-Mother Relationship in Twentieth-Century Italian Women's Writing* (2012).

Lisa Pine is Associate Fellow of the Institute of Historical Research, University of London, UK. She is the author of *Nazi Family Policy, 1933–1945* (1997), *Hitler's 'National Community': Society and Culture in Nazi Germany* (2007, 2017), *Education in Nazi Germany* (2010) and *Debating Genocide* (2018). She is the editor of *Life and Times in Nazi Germany* (2016), *The Family in Modern Germany* (2020) and *Dictatorship and Daily Life in Twentieth-Century Europe* (2022).