

La Capitale de la Faim: Black Market Restaurants in Paris, 1940–1944

Kenneth Mouré

Abstract *Black market restaurants thrived in Occupied Paris. German authorities castigated the French for their failure to shut them down, claiming that profiteers consumed luxurious fare in restaurants at the expense of hungry Parisians waiting in marketplace queues. Paris restaurants merit closer attention for the evidence they provide on the conflicts and relative powers in Franco-German “collaboration,” for the glaring inequities in food distribution exemplified by these restaurants that discredited Vichy food management policies, and for the creativity of Parisian restaurant owners in finding methods of alternate supply and service for their clients. The restaurants provide material for a case study to highlight the development of black markets and the frustration of control efforts, the reasons for popular sentiments of injustice in food supply, and the critically important role of German demands in the development of black market activity.*

Keywords *marché noir, restaurants, economic controls, food supply, Occupation*

Food is a weapon of war.¹ Access to food through rations, coupons, queues, friends, and black markets rapidly became the most important concern in Parisians’ daily lives during the German Occupation. Restaurants, a key part of food distribution in a city dependent on supplies from rural France, underwent acute crises. Some flourished; most struggled to survive. Restaurant experience during the Occupation provides a revealing perspective on food problems in Occupied France: how and why black market activity thrived, the structure of

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¹ See Lizzie Collingham, *The Taste of War: World War Two and the Battle for Food* (London, 2011), which focuses on Britain, Germany, the United States, and Japan. See also Gesine Gerhard, “Food and Genocide: Nazi Agrarian Politics in the Occupied Territories of the Soviet Union,” *Contemporary European History* 18, no. 1 (2009): 45–65; and Gerhard, “Food as a Weapon: Agricultural Sciences and the Building of a Greater German Empire,” *Food, Culture and Society* 14, no. 3 (2011): 335–51.

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unequal access to scarce goods and the social divisions this caused, and the prevailing German influence on how the food economy was administered. The inequities in access to food supplies show the unbalanced structure of Franco-German “collaboration” and the French complicity in serving German demands.

Germans appreciated Parisian haute cuisine. Paris had been the locus for a major transformation of the cooking, serving, and evaluation of fine dining for a paying public in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, creating the standards for a new cuisine and a new culture of dining in public that would influence culinary practice throughout Europe and the world. The concepts, the customs, and the language of haute cuisine were distinctly French, from the “invention of the restaurant” and the organization of the professional kitchen to the critical language and the standards of practice for preparing food, designing menus, and reviewing food experience.² When the Germans arrived in Paris in 1940, food and sex were foremost in the minds of many soldiers, and the German authorities had to regulate access to restaurants and brothels, including the overlap between the two kinds of service.³ Given food rationing in Germany, it is indicative of their respect for French food that a guide, translated for soldiers in 1943, told them regarding Paris restaurants that Germans could “live as God in France.”⁴

Reichsmarschall Hermann Göring found French cuisine excellent, too excellent in fact for the French. He complained in 1942 that the French were eating too well, particularly in luxury restaurants: “Mais je n’ai pas envie que les Français puissent y mettre les pieds. L’excellente cuisine de chez Maxim’s doit nous être réservé. Trois ou quatre de ces boîtes pour les officiers et pour les soldats allemands, c’est parfait, mais rien pour les Français” (But I don’t want the French to set foot there. The excellent cuisine chez Maxim’s should be reserved for us. Three or four of these places for German soldiers and officers, that’s fine, but nothing for the French). Germans dominating the most pres-

² See Priscilla Parkhurst Ferguson, *Accounting for Taste: The Triumph of French Cuisine* (Chicago, 2004); Susan Pinkard, *A Revolution in Taste: The Rise of French Cuisine, 1650–1800* (Cambridge, 2009); Rebecca L. Spang, *The Invention of the Restaurant: Paris and Modern Gastronomic Culture* (Cambridge, MA, 2000); Amy B. Trubek, *Haute Cuisine: How the French Invented the Culinary Profession* (Philadelphia, 2000); and, on the development of Michelin guides and their star rating system for restaurants in the 1930s, Stephen L. Harp, *Marketing Michelin: Advertising and Culture in Twentieth-Century France* (Baltimore, MD, 2001), 245–56.

³ Allan Mitchell, *Nazi Paris: The History of the German Occupation, 1940–1944* (New York, 2008), 14–16; Henri Michel, *Paris allemande* (Paris, 1981), 48, 82; Insa Meinen, *Wehrmacht et prostitution sous l’Occupation (1940–1945)* (Paris, 2006).

⁴ Pierre Andrieu in Dore Ogrizek, ed., *Paris, Frankreich und Provinzen* (1943), quoted in Bertram M. Gordon, “Ist Gott Französisch? Germans, Tourism and Occupied France, 1940–1944,” *Modern and Contemporary France* 4, no. 3 (1996): 288. The phrase was popularized by Friedrich Sieburg, *Gott in Frankreich? Ein Versuch* (Frankfurt am Main, 1929), published in translation as *Dieu est-il français?* (Paris, 1930).

tigious French restaurants would demonstrate the victory of German power over French culture. And their restaurants, he claimed, were full of black market *trafiquants* feeding on their gains from overcharging Germans. It reminded him of Berlin in 1919, when war profiteers gorged in fine restaurants while the people starved, “avec cette différence que le peuple français n’a pas faim” (with this difference, that the French people aren’t hungry).⁵ But French citizens were hungry. The German writer Ernst Jünger, who often dined in the best restaurants during his long sojourn in Paris, had a better sense of the inequities in access to food. He commented on a lunch at the Tour d’Argent, in July 1942: “On a l’impression que les personnes attablées là-haut, consommant les soles et les fameux canards, voient à leurs pieds, avec une satisfaction diabolique, comme des gargouilles, l’océan gris des toits sous lesquels vivent les affamés. En de telles époques, manger, manger bien et beaucoup, donne un sentiment de puissance” (You get the impression that the people at the tables up there, dining on sole and the famous ducks, look down with a diabolical satisfaction, like gargoyles, on the gray ocean of roofs under which the hungry struggle to survive. In such times, to eat, to eat well and abundantly, gives a feeling of power).⁶

The difference between luxury cuisine in the best restaurants and the quotidian fare for most Parisians was vast, and was a matter of power. For Charles Braibant, director of the Ministry of Marine’s library, Paris in 1943 was “la capitale de la faim” (the capital of hunger). In his diary he commented, “Nous sommes tous de pauvres gens en ce moment, à part des collaborateurs et les trafiquants du marché noir” (We’re all poor folk now, except for the collaborators and the black marketeers).⁷ Jean Galtier-Boissière noted rising meal prices in his journal, including a restaurant on the Rue Cherche-Midi in October 1942 where he saw a table set for twelve: “Lorsque les convives s’installent, faces épanouies de profiteurs et belles femmes au luxe voyant, nous reconnaissons dans l’amphitryon: Jacques Doriot. Nous sommes loin des campagnes du *Cri du peuple* contre le marché noir et les restaurants à cinq cents francs par tête!” (When the guests settle in, the beaming faces of profiteers and beautiful women bathed in luxury, we recognize among them: Jacques Doriot. We’re far from the campaigns in *Le cri du peuple* against the black market and restaurants at five hundred francs per person!).⁸ Police reports on public opinion noted the

⁵ Göring talk to military commanders, Aug. 6, 1942, reproduced as “Göring et la ‘collaboration’: Un beau document,” *Cahiers d’histoire de la guerre*, no. 4 (1950): 79.

⁶ Ernst Jünger, *Premier journal parisien: Journal II, 1941–1943* (Paris, 1980), 148.

⁷ Charles Braibant, *La guerre à Paris* (Paris, 1945), 262, 374.

⁸ Jean Galtier-Boissière, *Journal, 1940–1950* (Paris, 1992), 113.

frustrations of Parisians waiting in queues, with food shortages, rising prices, and an obvious flow of scarce and luxury foods to restaurants where the rich and the black market profiteers ate lavish meals. On June 16, 1941, for example, they observed that the middle and working classes saw consumers as divided in two groups: the wealthy, who could eat normally by means of the black market, and the rest, who could not afford essentials. Philippe Pétain's claims of equality in the face of restrictions were scorned.⁹

Those who could eat in the finest restaurants were visible exceptions to the "shared sacrifice" that rationing was supposed to provide: the collaborators and *trafiquants* mentioned by Göring, Braibant, and Galtier-Boissière; the German occupation forces for whom Göring wanted fine dining; and the very wealthy, whether French or foreign. Most Parisians spent long hours queuing for food and supplemented their rations by any means they could—trips to the country to buy food, packages sent by relatives and friends, barter and bargaining for extras, *le système D* (from *se débrouiller*, to improvise, to make do).¹⁰ At the Hotel Majestic, headquarters for the Wehrmacht's economic administration, German officials decried black market restaurants as a scandal, increasing the suffering of ordinary Parisians who waited for rationed food in market queues. They rebuked French officials for their ineffectual control of restaurants, where French *trafiquants* and businessmen filled their plates with no concern for ration quantities or prices. Yet these officials did little for the ordinary Parisians: much of this black market system thrived under their protection.

The Germans claimed there were black market restaurants everywhere in Paris, diverting food from public markets. French officials knew that price and rationing offenses were common practice in restaurants but disagreed on the origins of the problem and the measures needed to enforce compliance. Paris restaurants fostered a Franco-German conflict over food distribution and administrative authority that has received little historical attention.¹¹ The availability of food

⁹ Paris, Archives de la Préfecture de Police (hereafter APP), Situation de Paris, June 16, 1941.

¹⁰ Kenneth Mouré and Paula Schwartz, "On Vit Mal: Food Shortages and Popular Culture in Occupied France, 1940–1944," *Food, Culture and Society* 10, no. 2 (2007): 261–95; Mouré, "Food Rationing and the Black Market in France (1940–1944)," *French History* 24, no. 2 (2010): 262–82.

¹¹ See Eric Alary et al., *Les Français au quotidien, 1939–1949* (Paris, 2006), 259–64; Alfred Sauvy, *La vie économique des Français de 1939 à 1945* (Paris, 1978), 132–33; and Hervé Le Boterf, *La vie parisienne sous l'Occupation, 1940–1944 (Paris bei Nacht)*, vol. 2 (Paris, 1975), 107–50, with many factual errors. Fabrice Grenard treats food supply scandals with no specific attention to the black market restaurants in *Les scandales du ravitaillement: Détournements, corruption, affaires étouffées en France, de l'Occupation à la guerre froide* (Paris, 2012) and gives minor attention to restaurants in *La France du marché noir (1940–1949)* (Paris, 2008), 37–39. See also the limited coverage in Paul Sanders, *Histoire du marché noir, 1940–1946* (Paris, 2001), 140–43; and Richard Vinen, *The Unfree French: Life under the Occupation* (New Haven, CT, 2006), 216. Restaurants receive only passing men-

and the consumer practices to find, buy, and consume (or hoard) food are fundamental to “the practice of everyday life” and the politics of consumer purchases and use of goods.¹² Food acquisition, politics, and everyday life are particularly important in the popular responses to shortages, challenging the authority and the legitimacy of the state in situations of conflict and war.¹³ In Occupied France food scarcity, consumer strategies to obtain food in addition to ration quantities, and popular protests against shortages, particularly by women, have been significant in regional studies attentive to the politics of everyday life.¹⁴ Restaurants played an important role in urban food culture for the numbers they served, their visibility, and their priority for official supplies. In black market restaurants, with their daily practices structured to evade state controls, the prices they charged excluded most Parisians.

Paris restaurants merit closer attention for four reasons. First, restaurant controls were a matter for recurrent conflict between German authorities and French administrators and demonstrate the power imbalance and the hostility in negotiating “collaboration.” Second, the complexity of restaurant regulation and enforcement shows the difficulties, indeed the near impossibility, of managing an effective regulatory regime for food in Occupied France. Third, the importance of food for survival, the inequities in access, and the differences between the luxury menus in the best Paris restaurants and the paltry fare available to ordinary Parisians illustrate how food was a cause for deep economic discontent, discrediting the Vichy regime. Social tensions increased, support for Vichy eroded, and the shortages and inequities incited powerful resentments. Fourth, the menus and the systems for alternate supply in black market restaurants show the importance of German

tion in Mitchell, *Nazi Paris*. Restaurants in other European countries in wartime have received little attention but did offer privileged access to scarce food supplies and functioned as important venues for black market activity.

¹² Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, trans. Steven Randall (Berkeley, CA, 1984).

¹³ This is true particularly for World War I. For Germany, see Belinda J. Davis, *Home Fires Burning: Food, Politics, and Everyday Life in World War I Berlin* (Chapel Hill, NC, 2000); for Austria, Maureen Healy, *Vienna and the Fall of the Habsburg Empire: Total War and Everyday Life in World War I* (Cambridge, 2004). Russia during the war and the early years of the Bolshevik Revolution has been well covered; see esp. Mary McAulay, *Bread and Justice: State and Society in Petrograd, 1917–1922* (Oxford, 1991). For later experience in the Soviet Union, see Sheila Fitzpatrick, *Everyday Stalinism: Ordinary Life in Extraordinary Times; Soviet Russia in the 1930s* (Oxford, 1999); and Julie Hessler, *A Social History of Soviet Trade: Trade Policy, Retail Practices, and Consumption, 1917–1953* (Princeton, NJ, 2004).

¹⁴ Dominique Veillon, *Vivre et survivre en France, 1939–1947* (Paris, 1995); Robert Zaretsky, *Nîmes at War: Religion, Politics, and Public Opinion in the Gard, 1938–1944* (University Park, PA, 1995); Miranda Pollard, *Reign of Virtue: Mobilizing Gender in Vichy France* (Chicago, 1998); Lynne Taylor, *Between Resistance and Collaboration: Popular Protest in Northern France, 1940–45* (London, 1999); Robert Gildea, *Marianne in Chains: In Search of the Occupation of France 1940–45* (London, 2002); Shannon Fogg, *The Politics of Everyday Life in Vichy France: Foreigners, Undesirables, and Strangers* (Cambridge, 2009).

demand and the resourcefulness of Paris *restaurateurs* in finding food and evading controls, for motives ranging from practical strategies for survival to unprincipled greed for profit.

The Restaurant Control Regime

Paris restaurants before the war served four to five hundred thousand meals per day. In February 1940 the state limited the number of servings and the quantities of meat and butter served in restaurants, but it was in the summer and autumn of 1940 that restrictions became essential to manage food shortages. Meat deliveries to the Paris slaughterhouse at La Villette fell precipitously after the French defeat. A November 1940 evaluation stated bluntly with regard to meat supplies that “les Restaurants ne peuvent plus s’approvisionner, doivent ou simplifier dangereusement leurs menus ou s’adresser au marché noir” (Restaurants can no longer get provisions and must either severely restrict their menus or resort to the black market).¹⁵ The invasion and the German occupation disrupted the harvest, imports, transport, and storage. Fixed prices in Paris in 1940 were lower than those that farmers could get in other markets or by selling the food they produced at the farm. The ministry of industrial production suggested a regime of higher prices in Paris, but this would have required a huge price control staff. Price and enforcement policy developed on an ad hoc basis, dealing with problems as they became obvious, with limited resources. The key issues were the purchase and transport of food to cities, price inequities, and departmental authorities hoarding supplies to meet local needs.

French officials assumed that shortages would be temporary. The national food rationing system imposed in September 1940 acquiesced to German demands in exchange for a promise to restore French authority over food stocks and distribution.¹⁶ Shortages, fixed prices, transport difficulties, and the German requisitions and purchases from a declining output fostered an extensive black market. Direct purchases by German soldiers in the first months of Occupation were encouraged as a form of victory celebration and to buy up French consumer amenities that had become rare in Germany. German purchasing benefited from a deliberate undervaluation of the franc (twenty francs per mark when its purchasing parity was twelve) and charging tribute as “occupation costs”—initially four hundred million francs (twenty mil-

¹⁵ Paris, Archives Nationales (hereafter AN), AJ 41 2147, “Situation des restaurants à Paris,” report by Colonel de Mazerat, sent by Minister of Industrial Production to Minister of Agriculture and Food Supply, Nov. 8, 1940.

¹⁶ Mouré, “Food Rationing,” 265–68.

lion marks) per day. German soldiers received forty francs per day to spend on French goods; shopkeepers and farmers were required to sell to them.¹⁷ Prefect reports and diaries in 1940 tell of massive purchasing of meat, dairy products, and clothing scarce in Germany: stories of twelve-egg omelets and of lingerie stores having their shelves stripped bare.¹⁸

Initial measures in June 1940 froze prices and limited restaurant meals to three courses, with set days on which no meat or alcohol could be served.¹⁹ Fresh cream and butter could be served in cooked foods only; coffee could not be served after three p.m. To clarify the differences in the prices, quantities, and qualities of menus offered in restaurants, a decree of May 2, 1941, established four categories of restaurant and fixed the prices, the content, and the quality of courses in all meals. The prices ranged from a maximum of eighteen francs for the lowest-quality, category D restaurants, to a maximum of fifty francs in category A establishments. Better than A, a category “exceptionnel” (E) was added on July 25 at German demand, to allow menus charging up to seventy-five francs.²⁰ In addition, a few select Paris restaurants were designated as “hors catégorie” (HC), with no limits on their menus and prices; these restaurants were supposed to serve both German and French customers.²¹ All restaurants (except HC establishments) were required to post their menus in advance of the meals, to keep a record of each day’s menus, and to provide customers with written bills specifying the content and the cost of the meal they had consumed. This would provide written proof for the clients and the controllers that the rules had been observed. All restaurants were required to collect tickets for the rationed foods consumed.²²

Obtaining food was the major problem for all categories of restaurant. Official supplies offered little choice. A restaurant owner

¹⁷ Louis Franck, *French Price Control from Blum to Pétain* (Washington, DC, 1942), 54.

¹⁸ In AN, AJ 41 388, Oct. 19, 1940, for example, the prefect talks of massive purchases of meat and dairy goods; comments in diaries on German soldiers buying all they can include Gitou Vallotton and Annie Vallotton, *C’était au jour le jour: Carnets (1939–1944)* (Paris, 1995), 100.

¹⁹ APP, BA 1806, decree of June 18, 1940.

²⁰ Savigny-le-Temple, Centre des Archives Economiques et Financières (hereafter CAEF), B 49757, records Ministry of Finance discussions of the restaurant categories with German officials. The price ranges permitted for each class were for class D, up to 18 frs; class C, 18 frs 10 to 25 frs; class B, 25 frs 10 to 35 frs; class A, 35 frs 10 to 50 frs; and class E, 50 frs 10 to 75 frs. The German request for category E restaurants is in “Extrait du résumé des pourparlers de 6 au 12 juin,” AN, AJ 41 184. On January 31, 1942, twenty-six restaurants in Paris were classed as *exceptionnel*, including the Ritz; AN, AJ 40 784, Guillard and Serre to Gerhardt, Feb. 3, 1942.

²¹ AN, AJ 41 184, and AN, AJ 40 785, for the documentation on creation of this category of restaurant.

²² In Britain restaurant meals did not require ration tickets and until March 1942 were not subject to price controls. They offered an important supplement to the rations in Britain, as well as opportunities for black market profit. Ina Zweinger-Bargielowska, *Austerity in Britain: Rationing, Controls, and Consumption, 1939–1955* (Oxford, 2000), 166–67.

explained the difficulties in detail in 1943, using the example of a category A restaurant that served one hundred dinners each day, thus twenty-six hundred dinners in the month. In May 1943, official supplies would provide one hundred kilos of potatoes, sixty eggs, one hundred kilos of cauliflower, ten kilos of *conservé de tomates*, two allotments of fifteen kilos of fish, and nine kilos of meat per week. This would be sufficient to feed nine hundred diners; the owner would need to find other sources to feed the remaining seventeen hundred.²³ The price controls made it impossible for owners to raise meal prices when their food costs increased, a matter about which they made frequent complaint.²⁴ Restaurant survival required purchasing from unofficial sources, at black market prices, and then disguising the extra charges needed to cover costs. The most common practice was to give two bills for each meal, an official bill charging the legal price, and a second bill with additional costs and extra-to-menu supplements. Some restaurants gave a two-part bill with the extra charge portion destroyed after payment. They also overcharged for alcohol to cover the higher costs of the food.²⁵ Liliane Schroeder, dining with her mother in a category A restaurant in 1941, was able to order extra *haricots blancs* with her meal; the bill charged them for liqueurs, and they were told, “Les liqueurs, c’est les haricots” (The liqueurs, that’s the beans).²⁶ Controls were ignored or evaded from the start. In February 1941 the contrast was already stark between the unrestricted meals served to the nouveaux riches in black market restaurants and the meager rations handed to housewives after standing in queues for hours.²⁷

Restaurant owners had to find food outside official supply depots and develop methods to circumvent the legislation on menus, quantities, and prices.²⁸ The most frequent restaurant offenses were for overcharging, serving food not listed on the menu, serving larger portions than allowed, possession of food stocks with no bill of sale (meat, sugar, and butter were the most common), and serving meat on days and at times not permitted. An extended restaurant control operation

²³ CAEF, B 49756, exposé de M. René Laffin, 1943.

²⁴ CAEF, B 49756, contains many notes on this in 1943 and 1944.

²⁵ AN, AJ 40 784, De Saily to Directors, July 2, 1942, Annexe IV.

²⁶ Liliane Schroeder, *Journal d’Occupation: Paris, 1940–1944* (Paris, 2000), 94.

²⁷ Galtier-Boissière, *Journal*, Feb. 13, 1941. He noted that for Germans and their friends there were no restrictions: “Les beefsteaks interdits sont dissimulés sous des œufs sur le plat. Clientèle de nouveaux riches. . . . Le richard triomphe dans l’*Ordre nouveau*. Avec du fric, beaucoup de fric, on peut toujours s’en fourrer jusque là, pendant que les ménagères font des heures de queue sous la neige, pour décrocher un tronçon de rutabaga” (Forbidden beef steaks are hidden under eggs on the plate. A clientele of nouveaux riches. . . . The fat cat triumphs in the New Order. With dough, lots of dough, you can stuff yourself to the gills, while housewives spend hours in line in the snow to get a chunk of turnip).

²⁸ CAEF, B 49516, “Rapport mensuel sur l’activité du Service départemental de Contrôle Economique de la Seine pendant le mois de décembre 1943.”

in early 1941 found infractions in nearly half the restaurants checked. Most were restaurant owners trying to satisfy their clients by offering foods “necessary to their commerce,” bought on the black market. They charged extra to cover their increased costs and often drew little profit.²⁹ Paris police observed in November 1941 that if rationing measures were strictly observed, many restaurants would have to close.³⁰ Illicit practices were widespread, but proof for most offenses was difficult, as restaurants did not keep accurate records of commerce for which they could be fined or shut down and learned to store black market supplies off restaurant premises.³¹

Responsibility for restaurant supervision was shared by three agencies. The Paris police (*r pression des fraudes*) paid increasing attention to price and ration violations, noting of their increased surveillance in April 1941 that they had found 2,176 infractions in recent weeks and would pay particular attention to *restaurants de luxe*.³² The Service des Contr le des Prix, an arm of the Ministry of Finance that became the Contr le Economique in 1942, monitored prices and rationed quantities.³³ The Ravitaillement G n ral held responsibility for food supply and ration infractions. The staff available for verifications was not large: there were more than ten thousand restaurants in Paris and its suburbs, and the police and the Contr le Economique normally had only a few agents attending to restaurant controls.

The restaurant owners, staff, and clients shared a common interest in providing meals that violated price and rationing rules and resisted the enforcement of controls. Routine failure to post accurate menus or to keep record of meals served and supplies purchased meant that controllers often fined owners for the poor state of their record keeping rather than for the offenses they had failed to document. Owners and staff developed strategies to protect their commerce: to stall controllers when they arrived, to hide black market purchases, to take meat from customers’ plates or remove kitchen supplies from the premises. At least one restaurant kept a guard at the door to delay the entry of controllers. Because infractions for serving controlled items and for overcharging for the meals happened sequentially, controllers found they

²⁹ CAEF, B 49757, note dated 1941 on control operations in the Paris region beginning Mar. 31.

³⁰ APP, BA 1808, note of Nov. 29, 1941.

³¹ CAEF, B 49598, contains reports on the difficulties in finding evidence in known black market restaurants in 1943.

³² APP, Situation de Paris, Apr. 21, 1941.

³³ On the history of the Contr le Economique, see Fabrice Grenard, “L’administration du contr le  conomique en France, 1940–1950,” *Revue d’histoire moderne et contemporaine* 57, no. 2 (2010): 132–57. I use the name Contr le Economique as shorthand for its changing official titles (it was the Direction G n rale du Contr le Economique [DGCE] from June 1942 to February 1944 and from November 1944 to April 1946).



Figure 1 “Today, I’d advise sticking to the regular menu.” *Devant le marché noir* (Paris, 1943), collection of Dominique Veillon

could catch only one or the other category of offense. By sudden entry into a restaurant they could catch some offenses in the act, but evidence was needed for the menus offered, the quantities of food served, and the prices charged at the end of the meal. The full range of offenses could be observed and punished only if the controller was present as a seemingly legitimate customer during the entire meal (fig. 1).

Although German authorities demanded tight control of Paris restaurants, they provided little support and resisted enforcement in establishments serving German diners. They insisted on the cate-

gory “exceptionnel” for restaurants authorized to charge from fifty to eighty francs per meal, as well as that the category of luxury restaurants be exempt from controls in serving high German officials and their distinguished guests.³⁴ In May 1941 Elmar Michel, head of the Wehrmacht economic administration at the Hôtel Majestic, proposed the creation of ten to fifteen such restaurants, which he claimed would be in the interest of both French and German clients. The proposal was contested throughout the summer, with French officials objecting to the lack of controls and asking how these restaurants could be supplied without increasing the demands on insufficient food supplies and encouraging the growth of the black market. They finally agreed to allow six luxury restaurants exempt from quantity and price controls to serve Germans and their guests. The initial list included Maxim’s, Lucas Carton, Lapérouse, La Tour d’Argent, Drouant, and the Ritz.³⁵ Controllers’ duties would be limited to verification that each restaurant reported the number of clients it served and that ration tickets were collected.³⁶ The two sides argued over who would supply these restaurants to prevent an increase in black market activity. The French finally agreed to do so on a trial basis. They insisted that high profits in these restaurants in the absence of price controls should be compensated by a “special contribution” of 10 percent of the restaurants’ receipts to the Secours National.³⁷

HC restaurants served meals that could run to more than one thousand francs per person, made available a wide range of luxury foods, and showed contempt for the control regime.³⁸ Maxim’s customers were said to consume more than ten thousand bottles of champagne per week. The Ritz played host to Table Ronde lunches that brought together German and French economic elites once every three weeks from February 1941 to October 1942, intended to foster economic collaboration (and known to Ritz staff as “dèjeuners de la collaboration”—collaboration lunches). French and German guests were seated alternately at two round tables; they were charged 200, and later 250, francs for the meal (for “simple fare,” according to one guest), and they were expected to give ration tickets for the food they consumed.

³⁴ AN, AJ 41 184, discussions of May 28 and 30, 1941. Initially Germans wanted one hundred to two hundred restaurants in the E category; at the end of June they had reduced this request to fifty, and the French were willing to allow twenty-five; they compromised at forty: “Compte-rendu: Réglementation des prix des restaurants,” June 27, 1941. Likewise the Germans, who at first had asked for a maximum price per meal of eighty francs, compromised at seventy-five.

³⁵ AN, AJ 41 184, Michel to Barnaud, Oct. 7, 1941.

³⁶ CAEF, B 49757, Secrétaire d’Etat de Ravitaillement to Président du Comité d’Organisation Professionnelle de l’Industrie Hôtelière, Nov. 10, 1941.

³⁷ AN, AJ 41 184, first discussed in conversations on Oct. 18, 1941.

³⁸ AN, AJ 40 785, contains prices for menu items and wine in the HC restaurants in July 1943.

French guests were often unwilling or unable to do so, and the organizers arranged for the necessary coupons to be supplied by the Hôtel Majestic.³⁹

Beyond these six, the Germans shielded many well-known restaurants and clubs whose service they wanted, and which they permitted to remain open beyond normal restaurant hours. One such was Marcel Jamet's renowned brothel, the One Two Two. Although not requisitioned by the Germans, it was patronized by them and by the French Gestapo. Jamet had no trouble obtaining German permits for vehicles, fuel, and the transport of rationed food and alcohol: "Le capitaine (Radecke), qui adorait la bonne cuisine, n'était que trop heureux de nous rendre ce service qui lui permettrait de venir gueuletonner au 122" (Captain Radecke, who adored good food, was only too happy to do us this favor, which would allow him to come and eat to his heart's content at the 122). Food and liquor were abundant. Fabienne Jamet claimed she never drank so much "real" coffee as during the Occupation.⁴⁰ The Hotel Claridge, off-limits to French clients until July 1942, was found on July 30 to serve meals averaging three hundred francs per person, to serve butter and desserts not permitted in restaurants, and to have nearly seven hundred kilos of meat lacking the health stamp provided in state slaughterhouses. The German official who accompanied the French inspectors informed them the next day that there would be no penalties and no report written on the control operation.⁴¹ At La Coupole on the Boulevard du Montparnasse, the dining rooms upstairs served four hundred Germans a day, with a separate entrance and provisioning by German services.⁴²

The exemption for the six HC restaurants ended in June 1942. It had been criticized from the outset, particularly by other restaurants.⁴³ French authorities complained that in addition to these six, another eleven Paris restaurants escaped their control because Germans obstructed French control efforts and allowed open violation of

³⁹ AN, F 12 9559, report by Sûreté inspector René Gatel, June 14, 1945; report by Bellec, Feb. 28, 1946; and interviews with guests who had attended the lunches. See also Annie Lacroix-Riz, *Industriels et banquiers sous l'Occupation: La collaboration économique avec le Reich et Vichy* (Paris, 1999), 438–41; and Philippe Burrin, *France under the Germans: Collaboration and Compromise*, trans. Janet Lloyd (New York, 1996), 258–59.

⁴⁰ Fabienne Jamet, *One Two Two* (Paris, 1975), 125, 132.

⁴¹ AN, AJ 40 784, Secrétaire d'Etat de Ravitaillement to Dr. Reinhardt, Sept. 2, 1942.

⁴² Françoise Planiol, *La Coupole: 60 ans de Montparnasse* (Paris, 1986), 143–44.

⁴³ AN, F 37 5, Comité Economique Interministériel, Dec. 19, 1941; and APP, Situation de Paris, Nov. 24, 1941, where the police noted that restaurant owners complained that these would increase inequities and black market activity. The police also reported that the Parti Communiste Français urged women to demonstrate in front of these restaurants and to take food from them for their children, but I have seen no reports of such demonstrations taking place. APP, BA 2093, note of Jan. 20, 1942.

the laws governing restaurant service.⁴⁴ The Germans proposed adding three restaurants to the HC group, now referred to as *restaurants libres* (free restaurants). The French feared that ending the HC privileges would simply diffuse German patronage, rendering control of other restaurants impossible. Facing strong French opposition, Michel decided that the six HC restaurants should return to the *catégorie exceptionnelle* effective July 15, 1942. He had refused to allow any public notice of the creation of the HC restaurants in October 1941. Now he required that the press give special attention to the end to their special HC status, well aware of the strong popular discontent caused by the privilege it accorded.⁴⁵ The dispute shows the appreciation on both sides that restaurant consumption demonstrated too visibly the privileges and the inequities that structured access to food.

The HC restaurants had received priority in the allocation of food arriving in Paris, causing resentment from other restaurant owners, as well as the public. In exchange for ending the HC category, Michel insisted that *catégorie exceptionnelle* restaurants be allowed to increase their maximum price to one hundred francs per meal. French authorities opposed this measure unless it would allow increased prices in all restaurants, as the rising food costs hurt all. Michel was interested in facilitating dining by Germans in the higher-quality restaurants, not French consumption.⁴⁶ Exceptional status under German control was restored to four restaurants in October 1942⁴⁷ and suspended again in April 1943. But their privileges did not need official exemption: German interference took place whenever controllers tried to enforce the rules being broken in serving Germans. The HC restaurants were the most visible sign of a deeper problem. Rations and price controls were adjusted to facilitate German exploitation and privilege rather than to promote equitable access to food.

The contrast between the lavish fare in black market restaurants and the miserable yield from official rations after long hours in queues added to public discontent with the Vichy regime. Police reporting on conversations in market queues in 1942 and 1943 regularly detailed the negative impact of inequities in access to food and the visible privileges in restaurants. Collective enterprises providing some public service

⁴⁴ CAEF, B 49757; DGCE, "Note pour Monsieur l'Administrateur," Aug. 20, 1942; and DGCE, "Rapport au ministre sur les vérifications opérées par les Services de Contrôle Economique dans les restaurants parisiens," Aug. 28, 1942.

⁴⁵ AN, AJ 41 184, summary of talks on May 4–6, 1942, and Michel to French authorities, June 18, 1942.

⁴⁶ AN, AJ 41 184, Michel note of Aug. 4, 1942; Barnaud opposed increasing the category E prices in a letter to Michel on July 16, 1942.

⁴⁷ CAEF, B 49757, Michel to Ministers of National Economy and Agriculture, Apr. 6, 1943. The four were Maxim's, La Tour d'Argent, Lapérouse, and Au Caneton.

were given priority in allocations of food that arrived in Paris. Hospitals, factory canteens, and restaurants all received their food allocations before supplies were delivered to markets for retailers and individual consumers. Police reports on the resentments this caused include, for example, comment on June 1, 1942, that consumers were unhappy with the way in which collectivities benefited from priority in distributing food supplies. Canteens, cooperatives, hospitals, and restaurants were serving meat, tripe, or fish at every meal, while the latter were *quasi-introuvables* (all but unfindable) from most retailers. “De sévères critiques sont toujours formulées contre les services du Ravitaillement et les Autorités Allemandes que l’on tient pour responsables, de la pénurie de produits alimentaires” (They consistently voice harsh criticisms of the food supply service and the German authorities, which they hold responsible for the food shortages).⁴⁸

Evading Control

Which restaurants would be subject to control verifications, initially a matter of reputation and chance, was decided increasingly by evidence of black market traffic, as well as by denunciations submitted by a public angry about inequities and injustice.⁴⁹ Even the diners in black market restaurants were not necessarily happy customers, discontented with the shortages (increasingly seen as a result of poor state policy) and restaurant controls. The customers wanted better meals, were willing to pay, and resented state interference. The Germans demanded increased surveillance in 1942; it was implemented with full awareness that owners had become adept at hiding illicit traffic and that customers, if they were not German, should be subject to harsh penalties for their part in the “intolerable abuses” of the rationing system.⁵⁰

The restaurants at the lowest price levels, categories C and D, had neither the resources nor the customer affluence to afford substantial black market activity, but they were nonetheless found to violate their price limits to cover food costs.⁵¹ Their small-scale contraventions

⁴⁸ APP, Situation de Paris, June 1, 1942.

⁴⁹ Denunciations were an important part of state efforts to suppress black market activity. On denunciations under authoritarian governments, see Robert Gellately and Sheila Fitzpatrick, eds., *Accusatory Practices: Denunciation in Modern European History, 1789–1989* (Chicago, 1997). For France, see Laurent Joly, ed., *La délation dans la France des années noires* (Paris, 2012), esp. Fabrice Grenard, “La dénonciation dans la répression du marché noir,” 139–61.

⁵⁰ CAEF, B 49888, Note de service no. 297, “Contrôle des restaurants,” May 31, 1943.

⁵¹ CAEF, B 49723, contains cases from 1943 for C and D class restaurants, charging from 120 to 300 francs for meals in C class restaurants authorized to charge up to 25 francs; CAEF, B 49757, “Rapport sur les vérifications effectuées dans les restaurants de Paris et de sa banlieue,” July 13, 1942, explains that the limited means of their clients meant that these restaurants used the black market rarely and on a small scale.

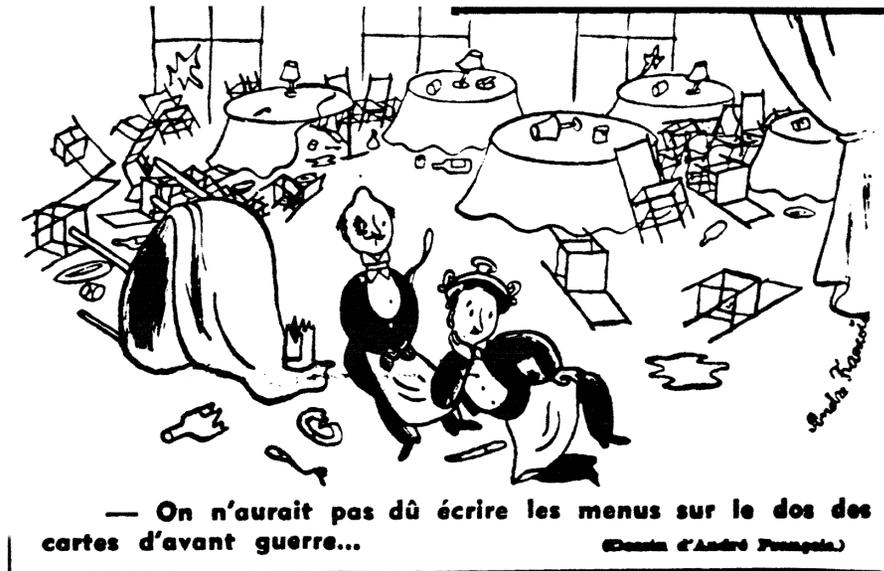


Figure 2 “We shouldn’t have written the menus on the backs of ones from prewar.” *Ric et Rac*, Mar. 5, 1943. © The British Library Board, MF247N, 1943, p. 29

had little visibility and little impact. The better restaurants had greater potential for profit through the quality and quantity of black market foods they could offer, and some prided themselves on maintaining a “prewar menu.” The phrase evoked an abundance and a quality desired by all, affordable by few, and prewar standards were a recurrent point of reference for wartime deprivation, from restaurant tables to school classrooms to newspaper cartoons (fig. 2).⁵² Controllers caught only a fraction of the black market traffic, but enough to make clear the most common strategies for maintaining a prewar menu through black market purchasing. Those in favor with the Germans obtained access to food supplies through German officials, as had the Table Ronde lunches at the Ritz. Many restaurants purchased direct from producers to obtain sufficient meat, vegetables, dairy products, and alcohol to serve their clients. Transport was essential: many businesses, factories, and trucking firms used their vehicles for direct purchase, buying for their own kitchens, selling to their own staff and to restaurants.

The Banque de France was caught in such activity in July 1943. A Banque de France truck with authorization to transport used currency

⁵² Pierre Audiart, *Paris pendant la guerre* (Paris, 1946), 244; Roger Vailland, *Playing for Keeps*, trans. G. Hopkins (Boston, 1948), 54; Benoîte Groult and Flora Groult, *Journal à quatre mains* (1962; Paris, 2002), 149, 418. For comparisons of wartime shortages with prewar abundance in schools, see Lucie Aubrac, *Outwitting the Gestapo*, trans. Konrad Bieber (Lincoln, 1994), 24–25; and Raymond Ruffin, *Journal d'un J3* (Paris, 1979), 70–72, 96–97.

notes back to Paris was stopped near Poitiers and found to be hauling 10 tons of sugar and 864 liters of eau-de-vie. The transport papers had been signed by the director of the Banque's staff buffet, which was now serving more than three times its prewar number of staff lunches. The press suggested that the Banque de France regularly purchased food in the countryside to sell at a huge profit in Paris. According to one account, the Banque was "l'une des plus importantes organisations de marché noir en France" (one of the most important black market organizations in France).⁵³ The central bank did not deserve this status, but the use of its trucks indicates a pervasive practice in French business. Canteens to serve office staff were common in many government administrations; René Laffin claimed the Banque was typical of a stream of illicit traffic supplying canteens for government offices that included the Ministry of Finance and the Prefecture of Police in Paris.⁵⁴ Truck drivers carrying food for cooperatives and canteens had the access to vehicles, fuel, and permits to buy and transport food that they could easily divert to destinations other than those authorized.⁵⁵

Such transport was easier for the restaurants with a German clientele in the Occupation administration, the Wehrmacht, the SS, or the Organization Todt. They could obtain scarce goods, meat in particular, often purchased by military personnel and delivered by army trucks. A post-Liberation analysis of the vehicles and methods used to carry black market food to Paris noted that the new methods employed since the Liberation were the successors in supplying a black market "autrefois alimenté en grande partie par les camions allemands" (previously supplied mainly by German trucks).⁵⁶ Because the German trucks were not subject to French control, they left little trace in the records of the control administration. In April 1942 four controllers stopped a German truck carrying fifteen hundred kilos of pork and nine hundred kilos of mutton from the illicit slaughter of thirty hogs and twenty-eight sheep in the Seine-et-Marne. Although driven by a German soldier, the truck had been rented by French *trafiquants* to transport meat to Paris for distribution to restaurants.⁵⁷ A restaurant on the Rue de Berri was found to have 1,400 kilos of beef, 480 kilos of veal, and 11,000 eggs on

⁵³ Paris, Archives de la Banque de France, 1060200101/71, and extensive press reports in CAEF, B 49602; quotation from *Aujourd'hui*, July 5, 1943.

⁵⁴ CAEF, B 49756, exposé de René Laffin. For Vichy ministries' use of the black market to supply their staff, see Grenard, *Les scandales du ravitaillement*, 99–113.

⁵⁵ Paris, Institut d'Histoire du Temps Présent, ARC 091, Fonds Victor Guillermin. Agendas and brief reference to this traffic are in Anne Thomazeau, "Un ingénieur français et son entreprise: Les hauts fourneaux de La Chiers pendant la Seconde Guerre mondiale" (mémoire de maîtrise en histoire contemporaine, Université de Paris X, 2001).

⁵⁶ CAEF, B 57660, Cruse, "Note pour le ministre," May 5, 1945.

⁵⁷ CAEF, B 49503, Commissaire Tissot report of Apr. 20, 1942.

the premises; the restaurant was closed for six months. The owner was interned by French authorities but then released by the Germans.⁵⁸ In January 1944 the gendarmerie stopped an army truck carrying three thousand kilos of meat in Aubervilliers, north of Paris. The driver was a French butcher delivering meat to Paris restaurants.⁵⁹ Restaurants were rarely mentioned in arrest records for the illegal transport of meat through the Department of the Seine-et-Oise, which encircled Paris (the Department of the Seine). The low numbers reflect the protection this traffic obtained from German authorities, not an absence of such traffic.⁶⁰ Officials estimated that 30 percent of the meat supply in France was slaughtered illicitly and sold on the black market by 1943; the Germans were major purchasers on the black market in addition to their official requisitions. In the intensified sweep to catch restaurant violations in the summer of 1942, the majority of the infractions involved meat consumption, the meat acquired illegally, most often with help from the German army.⁶¹ Restaurants took advantage of the opportunities offered. When Parisians went without meat rations because markets were empty in September 1943, it took two weeks for meat to disappear from some restaurants.⁶²

Most Paris restaurants in categories A, B, and E obtained substantial food supplies on the black market.⁶³ Although German connections were the most useful, French suppliers were employed in several ways, including sending family parcels, direct purchases in the countryside, and restaurant connections to rural producers. The use of *colis familiaux*, parcels to supply “family” needs, was widespread.⁶⁴ The parcels transported tons of food each day from rural producers to the cities, including to urban restaurants, using a variety of ruses to disguise the contents, volume, and purpose of the traffic: mislabeling contents, sending parcels from different post offices and train stations,

⁵⁸ CAEF, B 49508, report of the Gouvernement Militaire de Paris, fifth bureau, June 27, 1945.

⁵⁹ CAEF, B 49516, “Rapport mensuel sur l’activité du Service départemental du Contrôle Economique de la Seine pendant le mois de janvier 1944.” Similar cases are cited in CAEF, B 49757, “Rapport sur l’action du Service dans le contrôle des restaurants,” May 1, 1943.

⁶⁰ On meat traffic in the Seine-et-Oise, see Noémie Fossé, “Les acteurs du trafic et de la répression: Le marché noir de la viande et du bétail en Seine-et-Oise, 1940–1944” (mémoire de master 2 recherche en histoire, Université Paris VIII, 2008), 129–32.

⁶¹ CAEF, B 49757, “Rapport sur l’action,” May 1, 1943. Of 2,895 restaurants found in violation, there were 1,504 food supply infractions, of which 1,479 were for serving meat or purchases of meat without proper receipts.

⁶² Braibant, *La guerre à Paris*, 285–86.

⁶³ CAEF, B 49516, “Rapport mensuel . . . décembre 1943.”

⁶⁴ Sylvain Leteux, “Le commerce de la viande à Paris sous Vichy: Qui tire profit de la situation?” in *Les entreprises de biens de consommation sous l’Occupation*, ed. Sabine Effosse, Marc de Ferrière le Vayer, and Hervé Joly (Tours, 2010), 94–96; for more information on family parcels, see Veillon, *Vivre et survivre*, 173–76; Grenard, *La France du marché noir*, 111–13; Fogg, *Politics of Everyday Life*, 32–39.

and addressing them to restaurant employees or to residents in the restaurant's neighborhood.⁶⁵ The volume of traffic was immense. Alfred Sauvy estimated that 13.5 million *colis* sent in 1942 transported 279,900 metric tons of food;⁶⁶ his estimate appears to have been for *colis* of three to fifty kilos. Half as much again was shipped in smaller *paquets* of up to three kilos, mailed from rich agricultural regions.⁶⁷ The parcel traffic by post mainly carried food, with little regard for the rules (butter, in particular, was often shipped in this way).⁶⁸ Post office statistics show Paris receiving forty-five million such parcels in 1942 and seventy million in 1944.⁶⁹ Most were addressed to individuals, but they could serve as conduits to restaurants, as in the case of a restaurant on the Rue du Bac supplied by parcels from Saint-Saviol containing twenty to thirty kilos of meat, addressed to several of the café's waiters.⁷⁰ The Contrôle Economique noted in 1942 that parcels addressed to restaurant owners and their staff often supplied restaurants rather than feed the families of the addressees. Closer supervision was deemed essential to avoid "les abus constatés chez les restaurateurs" (the abuses recorded in restaurants).⁷¹

The examples from traffic caught by controllers provide a fragmentary glimpse of the variety of means employed. A woman arrested in August 1945 as the likely carrier of goods abandoned at the train station in Brive admitted to having made trips each month between Paris and Brive since 1941, and although she claimed the food she transported was for her personal consumption, her past record of carrying packages and her denial that the suitcases and packages that triggered her arrest belonged to her convinced the police that she was "une habituée du trafic clandestin" (a regular in illicit traffic), particularly for tobacco and pork.⁷² An official working for the egg and poultry dis-

⁶⁵ CAEF, B 49510, letter of Oct. 17, 1943.

⁶⁶ Sauvy, *La vie économique des Français*, 134–35.

⁶⁷ Kenneth Mouré, "The Antechamber of the Black Market': *Colis familiaux* in Occupied France" (paper presented to the Western Society for French History, Banff, AB, Oct. 2012).

⁶⁸ Sending butter by mail was forbidden in October 1942 but continued on a large scale. Some wrapped butter in cabbage leaves or packed it in ceramic pots surrounded by vegetables to insulate it; in hot weather, melting butter from parcels made a mess in rail and post office sorting depots. André Paul, "Histoire des PTT pendant la Deuxième Guerre mondiale (1939–1945)," 285–86 (manuscript, Bibliothèque Historique des Postes et Télécommunications, Paris); and Xavier de Guerpel, 1939–1945: *Une certaine vie de château au bocage Normand; Témoignage d'un agriculteur* (Condé-sur-Noireau, 1973), 118.

⁶⁹ AN, F 90 21627; in the last three months of 1943, *colis familiaux* received in Paris train stations numbered 5,444,358; CAEF, B 57659, letter to Taittinger.

⁷⁰ CAEF, B 49529, Contrôle Economique notes, Aug. 1943; restaurant provisioning also reported in B 49511.

⁷¹ AN, AJ 40 784, Chef du Service de Contrôle Economique to MM. les Directeurs régionaux et départementaux, July 2, 1942.

⁷² Tulle, Archives Départementales de la Corrèze, 550 W 635, Commissaire de Police de Brive to the Directeur Départemental du Contrôle Economique, Aug. 10, 1945. The goods seized

tribution system was investigated in March 1942 for having used his position to divert eggs to restaurants, including having shipped 58,680 eggs (since the previous June) to one Paris restaurant on the Boulevard des Capucines.⁷³ A restaurant on the Rue de Sèvres relied on the family connections of its proprietress in Brittany for its meat supply.⁷⁴ A butcher on the Rue Marbeuf who supplied meat to Paris restaurants and to hotels requisitioned by the Germans had a farm in Calvados and German transport papers to authorize the transport of meat to Paris.⁷⁵ The scale of traffic evident in the cases of those caught suggests this traffic was very large and that much went undetected.

In June 1942 German authorities insisted that the French crack down on black market restaurants. German officials had suspended restaurant checks in Paris for six weeks in May–June 1942, probably because of conflict between French controllers and German diners. When controls resumed, the French were instructed to follow a German model of “massive” verifications, checking all restaurants in specific neighborhoods. Elmar Michel insisted on this in conjunction with the end to privilege for HC restaurants. In recent months, he claimed, black market offenses in restaurants had increased in number and severity. This could no longer be tolerated. With the ending of HC privileges, French authorities must act “avec la plus grande énergie” (with the greatest vigor) against all restaurants violating price and rationing regulations.⁷⁶

The German method used massive sweeps through particular neighborhoods, checking all restaurants, using teams of controllers who would descend without warning on the targeted quarter, hoping to catch staff and clients off guard. Regions were divided into sectors with about thirty restaurants in each; teams of three agents would be deployed to check two or three restaurants. Each team would have a policeman, an economic controller, and a food supply official. To prevent collusion among agents and warning of restaurant owners, team composition would change each time, and the lists of restaurants to be checked were issued in a sealed envelope an hour before the operation was to begin, to be opened thirty minutes before the first inspection. The operations could involve up to two hundred agents.⁷⁷ The initial

included one rabbit, eight kilos of fresh meat, twenty kilos of lard, thirty liters of wine, nine kilos of oil, and fifteen kilos of tobacco.

⁷³ Rennes, Archives Départementales d’Ille-et-Vilaine, 118 W 74, Secrétaire d’Etat de Ravitaillement to Préfet Régional in Rennes, Mar. 9, 1942, and “Enquête” to investigate charges.

⁷⁴ Paris, Archives de Paris, Perotin, 3314/71/1/8 16, case no. 339.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, case no. 342.

⁷⁶ CAEF, B 49757, Michel to Délégué Général aux Relations Economiques Franco-allemandes, June 18, 1942.

⁷⁷ CAEF, B 49757, DGCE note, n.d. [likely June 1942].

results, checking nearly 700 restaurants in Paris and its suburbs, found 190 in violation of regulations, mainly food supply offenses, particularly serving meat on days it was forbidden, serving larger quantities than permitted, and charging higher prices. Most infractions were in A and B category restaurants. These restaurants had wealthier clients, including commercial travelers who could locate, purchase, and deliver goods to the restaurants, and thus had better connections to sources of supply, as well as higher revenue. Given the high proportion of meat offenses (25 to 30 percent of restaurants served meat on *jours interdits*), the control service concluded that the black market offered great opportunities for purchasing meat.⁷⁸ News of the crackdown was published to broadcast the range and importance of the enforcement measures, as well as the names of the restaurants found in violation.

The initial results demonstrated widespread black market activity. Dr. Gerhard, an administrator under Michel, criticized French control efforts in August: abundant food for the rich in Paris restaurants, in contrast to the meager supplies available to the working classes waiting in market queues, was “scandalous” and had reached the ears of the Führer and Reichsmarschall Göring. If the French could not end these abuses, the German police would take charge.⁷⁹ Jean de Sailly, director of the *Contrôle Economique*, replied that the difference between respect for regulations in the Unoccupied Zone and the abuse in the Occupied Zone indicated that the problem was one of enforcement. The suspension of restaurant inspections in Paris by German order from May 4 to June 28, 1942, had caused an immediate surge in black market practice from which it was difficult to recover. German interventions obstructed French controllers and protected the networks of supply and the practice of abundant servings in restaurants known for their “bon repas,” setting a poor example for the rest of Paris. De Sailly cited twenty recent examples, including Maxim’s and the Hotel Claridge, and the impact of German protection in encouraging other restaurants to imitate the control violations, upsetting public opinion. To restore order, de Sailly proposed reducing the number of restaurants in Paris and its environs, tightening the requirements for provisioning, and establishing clear authority for enforcement by French officials.⁸⁰ Gerhard agreed, and Michel issued a memo to German authorities on August 31 to emphasize the need for cooperation with French authori-

⁷⁸ CAEF, B 49757, “Rapport sur les vérifications,” July 13, 1942.

⁷⁹ CAEF, B 49757, “Rapport au ministre,” Aug. 28, 1942.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*; his recommendation of restaurant closures and tougher sanctions repeated those suggested to him by the *Contrôle Economique* chief administrator for the Department of the Seine in July.

ties in tightening control and reporting and punishing the abuses in black market restaurants.⁸¹

The massive sweeps increased. From July 1942 to April 1943 French teams conducted seventy-four such sweeps to punish violations in Paris-area restaurants. They visited 17,569 restaurants. Nearly 3,000 were found in violation of controls, and 649 were punished with closures for periods ranging from one to three months (555 cases), with only 6 for longer than nine months. The initial results had been promising, with more than 30 percent of the restaurants checked in July and August found in contravention of rules. This rate fell off sharply as the number of restaurants checked increased. They had checked 342 restaurants in July and 450 in August. In September they checked 2,263; in October, 2,043; in November, 3,054. The percentage of restaurants in violation fell to 16–19 percent.⁸² This decline reflected the scale of operations and the tactics restaurants found to resist control. No one claimed these results to be a success. Rather, black market supply to restaurants was recognized as extensive in response to customer demands that could not be met with official supplies. The sweeps could identify contraventions but did nothing to solve problems in the systems of supply.

The *Contrôle Economique* concluded that selective targeting of suspect restaurants was more effective in terms of the manpower deployed, public relations, and restaurant practice. The massive sweeps required calling in agents unfamiliar with restaurant controls and practices and training inexperienced agents and resulted in inept fieldwork and difficulty in concealing the impending sweeps. The interference in restaurants where regulations were observed gave controllers a bad public image. And the restaurants developed tactics to resist. Restaurant owners and staff quickly alerted customers and neighborhood cafés and took action to hide violations. “Il suffit qu’un seul restaurateur soit prévenu pour qu’immédiatement il alerte par téléphone tous ses collègues, et le contrôle massif s’avère inopérant” (It just takes one restaurant owner being warned for him immediately to warn all his colleagues by telephone, and the massive sweep is no longer effective). Some owners closed their restaurants if black market supplies could not be removed or concealed. The controllers reported 2,676 restaurants closed when they arrived, often with a sign posted on the door to claim: “Fermé pour manque de ravitaillement” (Closed for lack of food). All manner of actions were used to conceal infractions: delaying the con-

⁸¹ AN, AJ 40 784, Michel memorandum, Aug. 31, 1942.

⁸² CAEF, B 49757, “Rapport sur l’action,” May 1, 1943.

trollers upon their entry into the restaurant, destruction of bills and receipts, hiding of supplies including moving them out of the restaurant (agents unfamiliar with the premises did not know how or where to guard against this), and concealing or rapidly consuming illicit helpings, with black market steaks gulped in haste or pocketed to eat later.⁸³

In place of *contrôles massifs*, the Contrôle Economique advocated a return to targeted interventions in suspect restaurants. These had proved more successful when both practices were in use in early 1943; it had saved on manpower and increased the rate of violations found.⁸⁴ Rather than erupt into restaurants to catch infractions in progress, they suggested that controllers eat in the restaurants to observe what was served and how it was billed and paid. They also recommended requiring complete bills (inviting clients, via the press, to insist on this) and measures to punish the restaurant staff and customers, not just the owners, as they were complicit in the violations.⁸⁵

Despite these recommendations, black market restaurants prospered. The German commitment to retreat from large-scale black market purchasing in 1943 reduced military purchases of supplies and luxuries without having a discernible impact on their restaurant use. Michel tried to link the German shift away from black market purchasing to harsher repression by the French, but closer coordination between French and German authorities and an end to German protection were essential to curb the restaurant activity. German authorities used their change in purchasing to blame the French for the continuing black market activity. There were at least two hundred restaurants in Paris, they asserted in April 1943, where one could eat as much as one wished. It was unacceptable for French civilians to violate controls with impunity when the German military would be subject to strict penalties. French controllers, they claimed, routinely warned the restaurants subject to control.⁸⁶ They insisted that their crackdown on German traffic must be matched by increased penalties for French offenders, including the death penalty for serving meat from the clandestine slaughter of livestock. In Paris restaurants “le marché noir est pratiqué sur une grande échelle” (the black market is practiced on a grand scale), and it was scandalous that this had not been suppressed.⁸⁷ After ten months of action by German design to suppress this activity, these complaints tes-

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ For the period surveyed, the large-scale sweeps checked 764 restaurants and found 134 in violation (17.5 percent); targeted raids checked 54 restaurants, with 15 found in violation (27.8 percent).

⁸⁵ CAEF, B 49757, “Rapport sur l’action,” May 1, 1943.

⁸⁶ AN, F 37 4, “Entretien du 2 avril 1943 à l’Hôtel Majestic.”

⁸⁷ AN, AJ 41 98, “Entretien au Majestic du 6 mai 1943,” and “Entretien du 29 avril 1943 au Majestic.”

tified to the persistence of German demand for quality restaurant meals and to the role of continuing shortages and the inequities in wealth and privilege that sustained the black market restaurants.

The Disintegration of Control

The difficulties in controlling restaurants increased as official supplies contracted, black market networks grew, and rations were reduced in late 1943 and early 1944. As the *Contrôle Economique* observed in May 1943, the black market restaurant problem was fundamentally one of access to food: “Tous se plaignent de ne pouvoir satisfaire leur clientèle en raison des difficultés rencontrées pour leur ravitaillement” (All complain that they cannot satisfy their clients because of the difficulties in getting supplies). Category C and D restaurants often closed in evenings for lack of food and asked for higher allocations of potatoes, dried vegetables, and pasta. Category A and B restaurants relied on black market purchases to meet their customers’ needs. All categories lied about the number of meals they served to increase their official allocations, which were never sufficient to feed the number of diners they reported. To collect more supplies, restaurants routinely claimed to serve more meals than they actually did. Those claiming to serve 400, 220, and 450 meals had in fact served 120, 80, and 95.⁸⁸ Owners agreed that only greater equity in supply and the ability to charge prices to cover their costs would allow them to function legally. Those serving the Germans continued to benefit from better access to supplies and protection from French controllers. Prefecture of Police reports showed violations caught and punished in about 30 percent of the restaurants they checked, demonstrating their continued success in targeting likely offenders.⁸⁹

Below the category D restaurants, there was a notable effort to feed working-class Parisians. The state encouraged the development of workplace canteens that received permission for direct purchasing in the countryside and priority in food allocations. Abuse of these privileges was usually not in the canteens themselves, which were tightly controlled and provided minimal fare for workers, but in the opportunity for their drivers and managers to use their food access for additional black market activity. In December 1942 the state created *restaurants communautaires* to feed workers unable to afford restaurants. Thirty-two “rescos” opened in the Paris region in December 1942 and eight in Paris suburbs; by July 1943 there were three hundred rescos,

⁸⁸ CAEF, B 49757, “Rapport sur l’action,” May 1, 1943.

⁸⁹ APP, B 1810, Direction de la Police Economique, weekly reports, Jan.–July 1944.

servicing more than half a million meals a week and providing nearly 1.4 million cooked meals to take away.⁹⁰ They were intended for workers earning up to three thousand francs per month and charged on a sliding scale according to income, with dinners ranging from eight to sixteen francs.⁹¹ They were closely watched to prevent abuse of their purchasing privileges.⁹²

In the meantime, the state's attitude toward the restaurants, treating owners as crooks, turned commerce against the state. The Contrôle Economique in particular was despised, frequently criticized in the press, and denounced by restaurant owner René Laffin as "un véritable repaire de Racketters, de souteneurs, et de maître chanteurs" (a veritable den of racketeers, procurers, and blackmailers).⁹³ The public and the press, confused by the variety of control agencies, believed that controllers benefited from preferential treatment in restaurants. Food supply fraud by state officials, particularly in the Ravitaillement Général administration and in restaurant controls, was widely suspected and often reported in the press.⁹⁴

Restaurants and controllers faced greater challenges in 1944. The German war effort on the Eastern Front increased demand for French resources. Allied bombing disrupted domestic supply and transport; black market networks increased their ability to pull supplies from official markets, and control efforts faltered with fewer resources to contain increasing black market activity.⁹⁵ In March 1944 most Paris restaurants closed for two or three days a week because of shortages. In April meat supplies to Paris were virtually nonexistent, fuel shortages threatened to close restaurants for three days a week, wood supplies were sufficient for only one-third of Paris bakeries, and municipal distress plans were developed to feed the millions of Parisians who would have no fuel to cook food in their homes.⁹⁶

The Allied invasion on June 6 further disrupted food supply. The railways and the post office could not move food supplies from Normandy and Brittany, and rail and road traffic was endangered through-

⁹⁰ APP, BA 1808, notes of May 11, 1943, and July 17, 1943; numbers of meals from note of Apr. 20, 1943. Audiart cites slightly lower numbers based on daily averages in *Paris pendant la guerre*, 243.

⁹¹ APP, BA 1808, "Comment fonctionnent les restaurants communautaires." The three-thousand-franc limit was for a single worker, with the limit raised by five hundred francs for each dependent.

⁹² CAEF, B 49888, Note de service no. 315, July 1, 1943; and APP, BA 1808, Apr. 22, 1943, note of seven rescos losing their status in Paris for having trafficked in food intended for clients.

⁹³ CAEF, B 49756, "Exposé de M. René Laffin."

⁹⁴ See Grenard, *Les scandales du ravitaillement*.

⁹⁵ Grenard characterizes the Vichy administration as "totalement débordée" in *La France du marché noir*, 227–29.

⁹⁶ APP, BA 1807, "Plan de détresse," and APP, Situation de Paris, Apr. 3 and 17, 1944.

out northern France. Trucks used to haul food were requisitioned for military use, as were fuel supplies (the city of Paris emergency plan for maintaining its food supply needed four to five thousand trucks to replace rail supplies). Family parcels that supplemented official rations could no longer be sent from departments in northern and western France.⁹⁷ Parisians did benefit from goods bought in the countryside and resold at black market prices in Paris by retreating German forces.⁹⁸ The city's distress plan called for the suspension of control enforcement; the director of the *Contrôle Economique* argued against this.⁹⁹ But controls were impossible to enforce; the need for food took precedence over following rules designed to distribute an organized food supply.¹⁰⁰ Black market restaurants continued their commerce, particularly when supplied and protected by German officials or the French Gestapo, who ignored controls and threatened the few controllers who interfered with their meals.¹⁰¹

Liberation

Within days of Liberation, the Paris restaurants that benefited from German protection were targeted for closing. Enforcement had been virtually impossible through the summer; *Contrôle Economique* director Jean de Sailly wanted to reassert control and to track down and punish traffickers and profiteers. Controls were particularly important for food and necessities. He urged that every effort be made to gather evidence on wartime offenders protected by the Germans.¹⁰² The price control administration for the Department of the Seine (the Paris region) began compiling a list of persons and establishments that had worked for German services, with details on the infractions and the German protection that shielded them from French prosecution. De Sailly sent the minister for the national economy an initial list of *trafiquants* who had German protection, urging rapid action, as it would become more difficult to punish them in the future. Those who had benefited financially from the Occupation, particularly in serving the Germans, were disguising their commerce and hiding their profits. Given the number of such cases and the need for prompt action, de

⁹⁷ CAEF, B 57659, "Note sur les prix au marché noir dans la région parisienne entre le 1er mai et le 25 juin 1944," June 29, 1944.

⁹⁸ Edmond Dubois, *Paris sans lumière, 1939–1945: Témoignages* (Lausanne, 1946), 197.

⁹⁹ CAEF, B 57659, "Note pour le ministre," July 1, 1944.

¹⁰⁰ CAEF, B 9860, Direction Générale du *Contrôle Economique*, *Rapport sur l'activité de la DGCE au cours de l'année 1944*.

¹⁰¹ CAEF, B 49508, case of Restaurant Maury, Feb. 1944.

¹⁰² CAEF, B 57659, Directeur Général de *Contrôle des Prix* to Directeurs régionaux de *Contrôle des Prix*, Aug. 31, 1944.

Sailly proposed that he send successive lists, beginning with those who were “indiscutablement coupable ou dont l’attitude peut être considérée comme particulièrement scandaleuse” (indisputably guilty or whose attitude was particularly scandalous).¹⁰³

On September 2 he sent the first in a series of lists of restaurants and businesses guilty of black market infractions and protected by the Germans. Because most of the restaurants had paid fines for ration infractions but had not been closed thanks to German interference, new legislation was needed to inflict a second penalty for the same offense.¹⁰⁴ The restaurants were closed for periods ranging from three months to two years, effective immediately. Some reopened under different auspices, as restaurants and clubs serving Allied soldiers or refugees. By the end of the year, de Saily had cited more than one hundred restaurants and businesses for closure in the Paris region. The luxury restaurants that had briefly been *hors catégorie* were not included. These restaurants under German control, de Saily explained, had been out of bounds to French controllers and thus had not been charged with black market offenses. While it might seem unfair to close restaurants over whom German authority had been indirect while leaving open those under official German control, these restaurants enjoyed a certain notoriety and contributed “à assurer la réputation de la capitale” (to assure the reputation of the capital).¹⁰⁵ The minister of food supply claimed the restaurants offered visitors “le témoignage du goût français” (the evidence of French taste) and would play the same role in food as did *maisons de grande couture* in the recovery of French fashion.¹⁰⁶

Reestablishing control brought new problems, as supplies did not improve much, while public expectations rose and the salary increases to compensate workers for wage stagnation under Vichy (by 40 percent in September 1944) raised consumer demand.¹⁰⁷ De Saily emphasized the importance of the controls on food transactions and warned of the need to resume controls gently, with tact and attention to the educational role of price controls.¹⁰⁸ Closing the restaurants protected

¹⁰³ CAEF, B 49477, head of Contrôle des Prix in the Department of the Seine to Director of Contrôle des Prix, and the first list of forty restaurants, cabarets, and cafés to be closed, listing their offenses and the German protection provided; B 57659, DGCE, “Note pour Monsieur le Secrétaire Général à l’Economie Nationale,” Aug. 30, 1944.

¹⁰⁴ CAEF, B 49477, Jean de Saily, “Note au ministre,” Sept. 16, 1944, and decree to close restaurants issued Sept. 23, 1944.

¹⁰⁵ CAEF, B 57659, “Note pour le ministre,” Sept. 29, 1944.

¹⁰⁶ Angoulême, Archives Départementales de la Charente, 2 W 95, Ministère du Ravitaillement, “Bulletin d’information no. 5,” Dec. 27, 1944.

¹⁰⁷ Michel-Pierre Chélini, *Inflation, état et opinion en France de 1944 à 1952* (Paris, 1998), 312–18.

¹⁰⁸ CAEF, B 57659, Director General of Contrôle des Prix to regional directors of Contrôle des Prix, Aug. 31, 1944.

by the Germans had the support of the provisional government. More difficult was the need to control who could eat in restaurants. Allied servicemen had their own supply system and were not supposed to eat in French restaurants. But restaurants and cafés were a common destination for troops and the locus for a new black market in US Army goods.¹⁰⁹ The ban was widely violated, and controllers attempting to enforce it were ignored or threatened. The director of price controls in Paris and the director of the Police Economique both reported they were powerless to enforce the ban. The best they could do was notify the Allied command of the restaurants where abuses were common and hope that military police would intervene.¹¹⁰

Black market restaurants thrived in the post-Liberation circumstances of continuing shortages, restricted access to food and transport, and state controls weakened by reduced staff and resources. In the food economy, the Ravitaillement Général and Contrôle Economique were seen as creations of Vichy, now trying to sabotage the Liberation. The continued price, rationing, and control regimes were characterized as “Vichy continues.”¹¹¹ This view, and the expectations that food availability would return to normal after the Germans were gone, increased conflict between controllers and those buying and selling goods. In a long analysis of restaurant supervision in August 1945, the Police Economique noted that the most common offenses had not changed: price infractions, unauthorized transport, and coupon and billing violations. But the black market restaurants were more difficult to catch, as they were suspicious of customers they did not know, admitting only customers they knew and trusted.¹¹² Traffic in meat, sugar, and wine continued with new opportunities to divert imported goods, creating scandals when abuses by officials were publicized in the press. By mid-1946 controls on restaurants had become all but unenforceable, although price and portion controls remained on the books. Price controls, even modified to allow supplements that raised the licit price for category A restaurant meals to two hundred francs, could not accommodate the rapid rise in food prices during the postwar inflation.¹¹³ A slow improvement in food supplies, less emphasis on routine price vio-

¹⁰⁹ Noémie Fossé, “Les trafiquants de la Libération: Le commerce illégal des produits *US Army* en Seine-et-Oise; Vols, recels et marché noir” (paper presented to the Western Society for French History, Banff, AB, Oct. 2012).

¹¹⁰ CAEF, B 57659, “Note pour Monsieur l’Administrateur,” Nov. 20, 1944, and “Note pour le ministre,” Nov. 25, 1944.

¹¹¹ Jacques Debû-Bridel, *Histoire du marché noir (1939–1947)* (Paris, 1947), 85; Grenard, *La France du marché noir*, 266–73.

¹¹² CAEF, 5 A 28, “Activité de la Direction de la Police Economique pour la période du 1er au 15 août 1945,” Aug. 16, 1945, and CAEF, B 49757, “Rapport au ministre,” Aug. 28, 1945.

¹¹³ CAEF, B 49756, “Rapport sur la réglementation des restaurants,” Aug. 20, 1946, and new regulations in a decree of Sept. 19, 1946, DGCE note no. 31.2414, Oct. 18, 1946.

lations, and the removal of the German layer of official interference all reduced the need for controls and enforcement. Increasing food supplies moderated inequities and in that way lessened the visibility of restaurants as a symbol for injustice in food allocation.

Conclusions

In a Paris that was for most citizens “the capital of hunger,” black market restaurants allowed a privileged elite to eat very well. This elite included not just the Germans but the rich, the *nouveaux riches*, and the influential, including French officials, collaborators, and black market profiteers. The best restaurants offered sumptuous fare to those with money and power. German connections were a vital part of restaurant supply networks and protection from French controllers. Restaurants exempted from controls charged high prices and bought black market goods without concern for the law. The handful of restaurants where controllers had no power had been exempted to avoid disturbing their German clientele, but their diners were often French. In one of the short periods when these restaurants’ immunity from control was suspended, French controllers visited several. They found that Maxim’s, in particular, paid no attention to restaurant rules and that clients were predominantly French; “des gens qui paraissent appartenir à ce monde des affaires, né des circonstances économiques de l’heure présente” (people who seem to belong to the world of business born of the current economic circumstances).¹¹⁴

The “current economic circumstances” were German domination and an economy of exploitation. The people belonging to this business world were the collaborators and *trafiquants* evoked by many French observers, and by German officials all the way up the hierarchy from Paris-based administrators like Gerhard and Michel to Hermann Göring in Berlin. These luxury restaurants thrived under German protection from the controls the French were rebuked for failing to enforce. They were often supplied by German army purchasing and transport when they served German clients, and by a range of improvised supply systems for French clients who could afford to pay for better menus. A *Contrôle Economique* check on dinners served in Maxim’s, Lapérouse, and La Tour d’Argent in October 1942 found the clientele to be mostly French. The menu at La Tour d’Argent followed rationing rules for menus and tickets and charged higher prices for alcohol. At Maxim’s, customers rarely consulted a menu: “Chaque consommateur commande selon son désir, sans considération du nombre de plats, ni de la

¹¹⁴ APP, BA 1808, report of Oct. 30, 1942.

nature des mets servis; c'est ainsi que les enquêteurs ont vu apporter à certains clients du gigot de mouton, des steaks et de la volaille" (Each consumer orders what they wish, with no consideration for the number of courses or the nature of the food served; investigators have seen some clients be served leg of mutton, steaks, and poultry). Cheese and desserts followed, with liqueurs (on a day *sans alcool*), and the meal finished with pure coffee, unadulterated, and sugar.¹¹⁵ Another Contrôle Economique report noted that clients did not patronize Lucas Carton for the *menu affiché*; the official menu had "nothing in common" with the meals served to customers eating partridge, poultry, and trout.¹¹⁶

But it is the restaurants below this level, the A and B restaurants serving a French clientele, that provide the more interesting perspective on restaurant experience, the black market, and adaptation in an economy of penury. Clients included not just collaborators and profiteers but *résistants* as well, who needed food as badly as others and often used restaurants for rendezvous. Jean Moulin authorized Daniel Cordier to use Resistance funds for the food they needed when Cordier observed that his men could not afford black market prices.¹¹⁷ Most of these restaurants bought food and liquor on the black market and charged higher prices to cover their costs, with opportunities to add significant profit. Rationing did not allow adequate supply; price controls did not allow increased prices. The most common violations reflect the combined impact of black market prices and consumer demand in conditions of inadequate supply: higher prices by any means that might escape control, meat in greater quantities than rationing allowed, and food stocks purchased from unknown sellers without receipts. The combination of controls and German interference created a hierarchical system that relied on black market activity, ran without risk at the highest levels, and increased inequities in a system intended to provide equal access to scarce supplies. Food diverted from official channels by black market prices went to the wealthy and the privileged, leaving ordinary citizens to share greater sacrifice. This structural inequity was the product of German exploitation and French collaboration in a hierarchy based on prices, wealth, and privilege.

That privilege is evident in diaries from the period. Those without enough to eat were obsessed by the food they needed and craved, an obsession that "'occupied' minds and bodies."¹¹⁸ The contrast between

¹¹⁵ CAEF, B 49508, report by Contrôle Economique inspector Savarit, Oct. 30, 1942.

¹¹⁶ CAEF, B 49598, Contrôle Economique "Enquête effectuée," Apr. 19, 1944.

¹¹⁷ Daniel Cordier, *Alias Caracalla* (Paris, 2009), 536. *Résistants* enjoyed black market restaurants when they could; for examples, see *ibid.*, 579, 1010; and Roger Vaillant, *Drôle de jeu* (Paris, 1944).

¹¹⁸ Mouré and Schwartz, "On Vit Mal," 273.

the diaries of ordinary Parisians and those of German visitors like Ernst Jünger and Gerhard Heller, who moved comfortably between the best Paris restaurants and private functions offering menus worthy of prewar cuisine, is striking. Heller commented of the Thursday receptions hosted by Florence Gould, wife of Frank Jay Gould, that “sa table ignorait les restrictions” (her table paid no attention to the restrictions) and that some French guests “supportaient mal, étant donné leur régime habituel, ces copieux repas, ces vins excellents, le champagne et cette rareté, le vrai café” (could not tolerate, given their usual diet, these copious meals, these excellent wines, the champagne, and this rarity, real coffee).¹¹⁹ Parisians regularly reported on food shortages and restaurant meals for their composition and price, whereas the privileged, who could take for granted their access to sufficient food, dropped the names of restaurants and hosts with rare comments on just what and how well they ate. Parisian *lycée* student Micheline Bood, who often recorded her food concerns, captured this difference inadvertently. Returning from the countryside in December 1942, where she had eaten well, and bringing thirty kilos of food over which her mother and sister exclaimed with delight, she observed, “C’est curieux, mais quand on mange bien, on ne fait plus du tout attention à la nourriture” (It’s strange, but when you eat well, you no longer pay any attention to the food).¹²⁰ Those short of food, whether in conversations in market queues or recording the lives they observed around them in diaries, were acutely conscious of what they ate, what it cost, and what they lacked. The disappearance of desired foods from markets, the access to extras through friends, the prices in restaurants, and the abundance and luxury in black market restaurants were part of the culture of penury and the daily sense of deprivation that occupied their lives. Ernst Jünger’s casual observation that eating well gave a feeling of power was particularly apparent to those without.

The black market restaurants in Paris serving “prewar menus” to Occupation authorities and to the French economic and political elites were the highest and most powerful tier in a system of restaurant supply based on the control system imposed by the Germans and run by the French. The visibility and cultural significance of restaurants made them targets for control, dispute, and popular discontent. The German program to ration French food and create restricted access to fine dining for their officials and collaborators structured a hierarchy

¹¹⁹ Gerhard Heller, *Un allemand à Paris, 1940–1944* (Paris, 1981), 62; Jünger, *Premier journal parisien*; Arno Breker, *Paris, Hitler et moi* (Paris, 1970).

¹²⁰ Micheline Bood, *Les années doubles: Journal d’une lycéenne sous l’Occupation* (Paris, 1974), 179.

of privileges based on power. French officials protested but nonetheless collaborated in running a system that built inequality and corruption into the organization of food distribution.

Black market restaurants were the most visible and provocative embodiment of this inequality. Popular anger with hunger in proximity to abundance is clear in Marcel Aymé's 1943 story "En attendant," in which customers queuing for food outside a grocery store in Montmartre tell their stories of hardship. One mother laments that the rich are eating more than ever:

Ils se forcent même à manger, peur d'en laisser aux malheureux. J'invente pas. . . . Tous assassins, tueurs d'enfants, voilà ce que c'est. Marchez, la guerre, ça durera pas toujours. Quand les Allemands ils partiront, on aura des comptes à régler. Tous ceux qui auront la gueule fraîche et le ventre sur la ceinture, on aura deux mots à leur dire. Pour chacun de mes gosses qu'ils m'auront assassiné, il m'en faudra dix. A coups de galoche dans la gueule, que je les ruerai, et je mettrai du temps, je veux qu'ils souffrent.

[They even force themselves to eat, for fear of leaving anything for the unfortunate. I'm not making this up. . . . They're murderers, child killers, that's what they are. Well, the war, it won't last forever. When the Germans leave, we'll settle scores. All of them with fresh faces and paunches hanging over their belts, we'll show them. For every one of my children they've killed, I'll get ten of them. With boots to their faces, that's how I'll do them in, and I'll take my time; I want them to suffer.]¹²¹

For the many Parisians who could rarely afford black market food, the contrast between the black market abundance in select restaurants and the ordinary citizens' hunger in the street displayed the failure of Vichy's promise to provide "equality of sacrifice." They saw the Germans, the collaborators, and the rich eating better than ever.

¹²¹ Marcel Aymé, "En attendant," in *Le passe-muraille* (Paris, 1943), 213.