

FORUM INTRODUCTION

# Food Shortages during the Post-Habsburg Transition in the Bohemian Lands and Slovenia

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## Abstract

This article introduces the forum on food shortages during the post-Habsburg transition in the Bohemian Lands and Slovenia. Using examples from these regions, it first outlines the food crisis that developed during World War I and contributed to the internal disintegration of the Habsburg Empire. The article then turns to Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia, successor states which, despite their victorious status and optimistic prospects for the future, had to contend with food shortages that lasted well beyond 1918. Shortages remained one of the main challenges to the consolidation of these newly formed states. Finally, and most importantly, the article provides an overview of the state of the art in Czech, Slovene, and international historiography, identifies gaps in knowledge, and presents our approach to the topic.

**Keywords:** food shortages; hunger; post-Habsburg transition; Czechoslovakia; Yugoslavia

## “The Hunger Did All the Work.” The Subsistence Crisis and the Collapse of the Habsburg Empire

The historiography on World War I has clearly demonstrated the strategic importance of nutrition for victory.<sup>1</sup> All warring parties tried to use food as a weapon and to exploit interdependencies on global food markets to undermine the morale of enemy populations.<sup>2</sup> In this regard, the Entente was more successful in blocking the Central Powers’ access to the seaways and effectively prevented them from importing foodstuff from outside of Europe. As domestic production in Austria-Hungary also plummeted, signs of a grain shortage began to emerge already by October 1914, and in 1915 restrictions on meat consumption were imposed.<sup>3</sup> During the subsequent months and years, an increasingly complex and at the same time less and less efficient system of food rationing was put in place.<sup>4</sup> Despite the government’s efforts to mitigate the developing crisis, the situation continued to deteriorate throughout the war. For significant parts of the population, this was not an entirely new challenge. Even during peacetime, the impoverished did not get enough food. Poorer peasants and industrial workers were often chronically malnourished, even when harvests were abundant.<sup>5</sup> Yet the situation during the war was far worse, and in the second half of the war, almost no one could avoid restrictions. At the

<sup>1</sup>Rick Blom, *Hunger: How Food Shaped the Course of the First World War* (Waterloo, ON, 2019).

<sup>2</sup>Alice Weinreb, “Beans Are Bullets, Potatoes are Powder: Food as a Weapon during the First World War,” in *Environmental Histories of the First World War*, eds. Richard P. Tucker, Tait Keller, J. R. McNeill, and Martin Schmid (Cambridge, 2018), 19–37; Heather Jones, “Hunger als Waffe,” in *Eine Geschichte des Krieges: Vom 19. Jahrhundert bis in die Gegenwart*, ed. Bruno Cabanes (Hamburg, 2020), 639–54.

<sup>3</sup>Manfried Rauchensteiner, *The First World War and the End of the Habsburg Monarchy, 1914–1918*, trans. Alex J. Kay and Anna Güttel, Revised and expanded edition (Vienna, 2014), 207, 208.

<sup>4</sup>Hans Loewenfeld-Russ, *Die Regelung der Volksernährung im Kriege* (Vienna, 1926). For a brief overview of various systems of rationing in Europe, see Aleksandar R. Miletić, “From Disorder to ‘the Normality’: Food Provisioning in Western, Central, and Southeast Europe, 1914–1924,” *Hiperboreea* 8, no. 1 (2021): 59–80.

<sup>5</sup>Gorazd Makarovič, “Prehrana v 19. stoletju na Slovenskem [Nourishment in Nineteenth-Century Slovenia],” *Slovenski etnograf* 33/34 (1988–89): 127–205; Jarmila Štastná, “Strava a stravování pražských dělníků [The Meals and Catering of Prague

end of 1917 and in 1918, the lack of food reached catastrophic proportions in many parts of the empire, especially in the Austrian half.<sup>6</sup>

Urban centers were affected the most. Severe restrictions, long queues, and food riots became a part of everyday life for city dwellers. In the Lower Styrian town of Cilli/Celje, people were entitled to 50 grams of meat a day, and half a kilo of flour, and up to a kilo and a half of potatoes per week in 1918.<sup>7</sup> The authorities were often unable to provide even such meager rations, so the people were left to fend for themselves. In the summer of 1918, thousands of women, children, and soldiers on leave pillaged the agrarian surroundings of Vienna, the imperial capital.<sup>8</sup> The situation was similar in Ljubljana/Laibach, the capital of the crownland Carniola. One contemporary observer later wrote that the “pilgrimage of the population with knapsacks is increasing more and more, even though the government prohibits it. Everyone rushes to the countryside to visit relatives and friends; everyone tries to procure food or exchange some goods for others. Tobacco, kerosene, sugar, and leather became valuables, because they can be easily exchanged for beans, lard, flour, and porridge.”<sup>9</sup>

The Kingdom of Bohemia and its capital, Prague, offered a similar picture. In January 1918, mayors of Prague’s suburbs wrote a memorandum to the Austrian Prime Minister opposing the further reduction of food rations, which they claimed would unleash “a hunger monster” in turn leading to “catastrophic events.”<sup>10</sup> They complained that 750 grams of sugar per month, 1,500 grams of potatoes per week, and 200 grams of flour per day—to name only some of the basic items—were already insufficient for one’s survival, especially when legal rations were delivered irregularly or not at all. In Královské Vinohrady/Königliche Weinberge, stocks of fat were so low that they could only allow the distribution of 1.64 grams of fat and 1.40 grams of pork per person per day, whereas the law set a daily ration of 17.1 grams per person. Another key animal product, milk, became incredibly scarce in Prague three years into the war. Aside from the priority groups of children and nursing mothers, there were only four milliliters of milk per person per day left in Prague in the last months of 1917.<sup>11</sup>

City mayors warned the prime minister of the terrible social consequences of hunger because “scarcity can be borne with patience, but not the hunger that destroys the physical, mental, and moral strength of man, the hunger that drives him to despair, and from despair to act without discretion and so the loss of sanity.”<sup>12</sup> More specifically, they meant the recent increase in beggary and juvenile criminality, the spread of food riots, and the deterioration of public health. Indeed, food protests across Bohemia had grown in quantity in 1917, and instead of peaceful bargaining with state authorities the crowds often resorted to violent means. While there were only 70 officially recorded food protests in 1916, of which merely 5 were classified as violent, out of 252 in 1917, 110 were violent.<sup>13</sup> On the other

Workers],” in Dagmar Klímová et al., *Stará dělnická Praha: život a kultura pražských dělníků 1848–1939* [Old Workers’ Prague: The Life and Culture of Prague Workers, 1848–1939] (Prague, 1981), 183–216.

<sup>6</sup>For a concise overview, see Ernst Langthaler, “Dissolution before Dissolution: The Crisis of the Wartime Food Regime in Austria-Hungary,” in *Environmental Histories of the First World War*, eds. Richard P. Tucker et al. (Cambridge, 2018), 38–61. Among the Central Powers, the Ottoman Empire was the most affected, and famine devastated the population of several regions, especially so-called Greater Syria. See Tylor Brand, *Famine Worlds: Life at the Edge of Suffering in Lebanon’s Great War* (Stanford, 2023).

<sup>7</sup>Bojan Himmelreich, *Namesto žemlje črni kruh: Organizacija preskrbe z živili v Celju v času obeh svetovnih vojn* [Black Bread instead of Buns: The Organization of Food Supply in Celje during the Two World Wars] (Celje, 2001), 66–69. For an overview, see Petra Svoljšak and Gregor Antoličič, *Leta strahote: Slovenci in prva svetovna vojna* [Years of Horror: Slovenes and the First World War] (Ljubljana, 2018), 295–316.

<sup>8</sup>Maureen Healy, *Vienna and the Fall of the Habsburg Empire: Total War and Everyday Life in World War I* (Cambridge, 2004), 54–56.

<sup>9</sup>Lojze Slanovec, “Ljubljanska kronika [Ljubljana Chronicle],” *Kronika slovenskih mest* (1934), 62.

<sup>10</sup>“Document No. 10,” in *Sborník dokumentů k vnitřnímu vývoji v českých zemích za 1. světové války 1914–1918* [Collection of Documents on Internal Developments in the Bohemian Lands during World War I, 1914–1918], vol. 5: 1918, eds. Jaroslav Vrbata and Eva Drašarová (Prague, 1997), 44–49.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid., 45–46.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid., 44.

<sup>13</sup>Peter Heumos, “‘Kartoffeln her oder es gibt eine Revolution’: Hungerkrawalle, Streiks und Massenproteste in den böhmischen Ländern 1914–1918,” in *Der Erste Weltkrieg und die Beziehungen zwischen Tschechen, Slowaken und Deutschen*, eds. Hans Mommsen, Dušan Kováč, Jiří Malíř, and Michaela Marková (Essen, 2001), 255–86, here 261.

hand, despite the spread of diseases such as tuberculosis and an increase in the mortality rate from 13.9 deaths per 1,000 people in 1914 to 18 deaths per 1,000 people in 1918,<sup>14</sup> the people of Prague, as well as other inland districts of Bohemia, were to a large extent spared from the hunger edema common elsewhere. In the worst-supplied border districts of western and northern Bohemia, hunger edema became a scourge that claimed 1,028 lives in 1917 alone.<sup>15</sup>

All of this had consequences beyond the physiological. A few months after the proclamation of Yugoslav and Czechoslovak independence and the collapse of the Habsburg Empire, when the villagers of Grahovo in Inner Carniola celebrated the unification of the State of Slovenes, Croats, and Serbs with Serbia, and so the creation of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes, one of the local politicians praised US president Woodrow Wilson for his role in these events. The parish priest turned to another member of the jubilant crowd and tersely remarked that Wilson should not be given any credit for the imperial collapse, because “hunger did all the work.”<sup>16</sup> This snarky comment was an exaggeration—Wilson’s policies, internal developments in the empire, and many other factors were all important—yet the subsistence crisis certainly was a major contributor to the erosion of legitimacy that led to Austria-Hungary’s collapse.<sup>17</sup>

The shortages did not end with the proclamation of independence and the end of the war. On the contrary, shortages were one of the many continuities that marked the post-imperial transition, a process not only defined by ruptures.<sup>18</sup> Food shortage is an important but under-researched topic, which is why we focus on the postwar subsistence crisis in this forum. In this introduction to the forum, we will first lay out a brief overview of the situation in the immediate postwar era, and then focus on the relevant historiography, aiming to identify gaps in the existing research that the articles in this forum will try, in part, to fill.

## The Crisis Continues

As the defeat of the Austro-Hungarian armies became inevitable in October 1918, and as the collapse of the empire drew ever closer, the civilian population in some regions of the empire paradoxically enjoyed a brief respite from their daily struggle with food. As hundreds of thousands of soldiers began to withdraw from northern Italy, they brought their supplies with them, and the units stationed in the immediate hinterland often left supplies behind as well. In Bohinjska Bistrica, an Alpine village in Upper Carniola, the prices of some foodstuffs dropped dramatically in early November because a

<sup>14</sup>Jaromír Nečas, “Několik poznatků o zdravotním stavu v Praze za světové války [Some Observations on the State of Health in Prague during the World War],” *Sborník lékařský* 24 (1923): 86–93, here 89.

<sup>15</sup>Rudolf von Jaksch, “Das Hungerödem,” *Wiener Medizinische Wochenschrift* 23 (1918): 1029–36, here 1029.

<sup>16</sup>Arhiv Republike Slovenije (Archives of the Republic of Slovenia, hereafter ARS), AS 61, box 17, folder 1908pr, report by the chief of district captaincy branch office in Cerknica, 2 January 1919.

<sup>17</sup>Pieter M. Judson, *The Habsburg Empire: A New History* (Cambridge, MA, 2016), 385–428; Pieter M. Judson, “Where Our Commonality Is Necessary . . .”: Rethinking the End of the Habsburg Monarchy,” *Austrian History Yearbook* 48 (2017): 13–17. On Wilson, see Larry Wolff, *Woodrow Wilson and the Reimagining of Eastern Europe* (Stanford, CA, 2020). On internal political developments, see inter alia Mark Cornwall, “Escaping a Prison of Peoples? Exits and Expectations at the End of Austria-Hungary,” in *Nationalisms in Action: The Great War and Its Aftermath in East-Central Europe*, ed. László Szarka and Attila Pók (Komárom, 2023), 62–83; and John Deak and Jonathan E. Gumz, “How to Break a State: The Habsburg Monarchy’s Internal War, 1914–1918,” *The American Historical Review* 122, no. 4 (2017): 1105–36.

<sup>18</sup>Magdalena Baran-Szołtys and Jagoda Wierzejska, eds., *Continuities and Discontinuities of the Habsburg Legacy in East-Central European Discourses since 1918* (Vienna, 2020); Marco Bresciani, “Trasformazioni e transizioni imperiali sulla scia della Grande guerra (1917–1923),” *Passato e presente* 37, no. 106 (2019): 18–19; Gábor Egrý, “The Leftover Empire? Imperial Legacies and Statehood in the Successor States of Austria-Hungary,” in *Postwar Continuity and New Challenges in Central Europe, 1918–1923: The War That Never Ended*, eds. Tomasz Pudłocki and Kamil Ruzsala (New York, Abingdon, 2022), 81–102; Paul Miller and Claire Morelon, eds., *Embers of Empire: Continuity and Rupture in the Habsburg Successor States After 1918* (New York, Oxford, 2019); Filip Šimetin Šegvić, “Što je ostalo od Habsburške Monarhije nakon 1918. godine? Rasprava o kontinuitetima i diskontinuitetima [What Was Left of the Habsburg Monarchy after 1918? Continuities and Discontinuities Discussed],” *Radovi Zavoda za hrvatsku povijest Filozofskoga fakulteta Sveučilišta u Zagrebu* 50, no. 1 (2018): 59–80; Iryna Vushko, “Habsburg Empire and Successor-States: Breaks and Continuity across 1918,” *Passato e Presente* 37, no. 106 (2019): 20–27.

supply unit stationed in the valley left large amounts of food behind on its departure. The village mayor reportedly suffered a huge financial loss as he tried to sell the fat and pork he had bought in Croatia at a much higher price some weeks before.<sup>19</sup> The retreating military was also accompanied by thousands of horses and other animals, which the soldiers often let loose at the first opportunity. For the civilians, this was an opportunity to grab hold of some much-needed sustenance. Toward the end of October, well-respected middle-class men from Ljubljana milked deserted cows and tried to catch freely roaming horses; in Upper Carniola, horse sausages and horse goulash were core components of the daily menu.<sup>20</sup> The partial collapse of public order was also an opportunity to rob shops and warehouses—even if their stores were meager at best. In the valley of Mežica, for instance, hundreds of armed miners and other workers robbed stores in local towns and attacked isolated farms, and in the vicinity of Ptuj, a Lower Styrian town, the local population plundered the Sterntal refugee camp. They were all after food that is until an armed detachment, organized by the local national council, stopped them.<sup>21</sup>

Yet the respite was short-lived. The military and their livestock were soon gone and some semblance of order quickly returned. After all, most of the police and the gendarmerie stayed in their posts and quickly accepted the new National Government for Slovenia. Besides, not everyone could buy or barter food from the withdrawing military, lasso a horse, or rob a nearby convenience store. If there was any improvement in late October and early November, it was temporary and only affected parts of the population. For the rest, nothing much changed, and the situation remained dire. Food supply was, as one contemporary remembered, “the most complicated problem of that time,” and the hope that so-called national liberation would solve all of society’s problems, the subsistence crisis included, proved futile.<sup>22</sup>

This did not come as a surprise to everyone. In his October 1918 *Osnutek slovenskega narodnega gospodarstva* [Concept for a Slovene National Economy], Milko Brezigar, a lawyer and economist, warned that the productivity of Slovene agriculture was below average and that about a third of the country’s grain needed to be imported. He proposed a thorough state-led modernization and hoped that imports from Croatia-Slavonia would cover the needs for foodstuffs and agricultural raw materials in the first few years after the war, before the reforms would take effect.<sup>23</sup> Many other protagonists, including ministers in the newly established National Government, also hoped that grain and other foodstuffs from the southeast would at least alleviate, if not resolve, the acute food crisis. Additionally, the National Government expected shipments of grain, fats, and canned meat from

<sup>19</sup>Peter Ribnikar, ed., *Sejni zapisniki Narodne vlade Slovencev, Hrvatov in Srbov v Ljubljani in Deželnih vlad za Slovenijo: 1918–1921* [Records of Sessions of the National Government of Slovenes, Croats, and Serbs in Ljubljana and the Provincial Governments for Slovenia 1918–1921], vol. 1: Od 1. nov. 1918 do 26. feb. 1919 (Ljubljana, 1998), 171, 172. On the retreat of the Austro-Hungarian troops from Italy, see Matjaž Bizjak, “Umik avstro-ogrske vojske skozi slovenski prostor novembra 1918 [The Withdrawal of the Austro-Hungarian Army across the Slovene Territory in November 1918],” *Prispevki za novejšo zgodovino* 43, no. 1 (2003): 25–36.

<sup>20</sup>Nataša Budna Kodrič, “Prva svetovna vojna iz župnijskih kronik (Leto 1918) [World War I in Parish Chronicles (1918)],” *Loški razgledi* 45, no. 1 (1998): 164, 165; Josip Jerič, “Narodni svet [National Council],” in *Slovinci v desetletju 1918–1928: Zbornik razprav iz kulturne, gospodarske in politične zgodovino* [Slovenes in the Decade 1918–1928], ed. Josip Mal (Ljubljana, 1928), 154; Slanovec, “Ljubljanska kronika,” 70, 71. See also Andrej Studen, “O ‘ferdamanih babah in dedih’: Odras vsakdanjika v zapisih okrajnega sodišča Konjice v prevratni dobi [On ‘Damned Women and Men’: Reflections of Everyday Life in the Records of the Konjice Local Court during the Dissolution of the Dual Monarchy],” *Zgodovina za vse* 27, no. 2 (2020): 40, 41.

<sup>21</sup>Lev Centrih, “Govorile so celo strojnice! Boljševizem v prevratni dobi na Slovenskem: Med preprostimi ljudskimi uporništvom in vplivi ruske revolucije [‘Even the Machine Guns Spoke!’ Bolshevism in Slovenia in the Revolutionary Period: Between Popular Unrest and the Influence of the Russian Revolution],” in *Slovenski prelom 1918* [The Slovene Break 1918], ed. Aleš Gabrič (Ljubljana, 2019), 315, 316; Lojze Ude, *Boj za severno slovensko mejo 1918–1919* [The Fight for the Slovene Northern Border, 1918–1919] (Maribor, 1977), 141.

<sup>22</sup>Albin Prepeluh, *Pripombe k naši prevratni dobi* [Comments on Our Revolutionary Era] (Ljubljana, 1938), 188.

<sup>23</sup>Božo Repe, “Vsakdo mora imeti priliko, da udelevi vse svoje telesne in duševne moči!”: *Milko Brezigar in prvi slovenski program narodnega gospodarstva* [‘Everyone Must Have the Opportunity to Exercise All Their Physical and Mental Strengths!’ Milko Brezigar and the First Slovene Program of National Economy] (Ljubljana, 2023), 95–97. Attempts at self-sufficiency and even autarky were a common reaction to wartime developments in Central Europe. For Germany and Austria, see the articles by Carolyn Taratko and Tara Zahra in the *American Historical Review’s* June 2023 History Lab. Tara Zahra et al., “A World of Contradictions: Globalization and Deglobalization in Interwar Europe,” *The American Historical Review* 128, no. 2 (2023): 703–881.

the Entente—“for free, as had happened in Belgium.”<sup>24</sup> The deputy mayor of Ljubljana and a minister in the National Government, Karel Triller, warned that in the absence of foreign aid people would die from hunger in March and April of the following year.<sup>25</sup> Even the always optimistic former mayor of Ljubljana, Ivan Hribar, acknowledged that “the transition will be hard” in his otherwise enthusiastic article about the future, published just before the declaration of independence.<sup>26</sup> Given the situation in 1917 and 1918, one did not have to be a clairvoyant to make such predictions. On the contrary, it was more than obvious that feeding the citizens of the new state was going to be a major challenge.

Indeed, after the collapse of Austria-Hungary and the end of the war, food continued to be scarce, and some regions stood on the verge of famine. In January 1919, the Slovene gendarmerie reported that the villagers in one of the municipalities along the Yugoslav line of demarcation with Italy were last given sugar in August 1918, when each got half a kilo. According to the local mayor, it was actually July when that sugar was distributed.<sup>27</sup> Even in Ljubljana, the seat of the National Government for Slovenia, things were not going well. In November 1918, the mayor informed the municipal council about the shortage of fats, and in February 1919, the town hall had to notify the government that its stock of flour was down to ten days, and that its sugar had run out entirely.<sup>28</sup> The situation elsewhere was not that different. In January 1919, *Nova doba* [New Era], a Celje paper, published an anonymous rumination, illustrating the situation in the country well: “You get up in the morning and go onto the street . . . and see something that looks like a Feast of Corpus Christi procession, and all your good spirits vanish in an instant. In front of a couple of stores stand the masses, waiting for bread or flour, just as they did one or two years ago.”<sup>29</sup> The situation did not look much better from the top either. In its 13 January 1919 session, the National Government was in a panic mode. The minister for food supply, Ivan Tavčar, had to admit that the stock of flour in Ljubljana was down to fifty railway wagons and in Maribor to only twenty-four, which was enough for about a week.<sup>30</sup>

As the miserable first post-independence winter ended, the situation in the Slovene part of Yugoslavia improved, but only very slowly and unevenly. The spring of 1919 brought some relief, mainly because some 2,000 railway cars of US flour arrived through Trieste. Bread rationing was temporarily abolished in May; in June, the American Relief Administration started to help poor children. Flour from the US kept coming.<sup>31</sup> Yet the problems were far from solved, as reports from the police, the gendarmerie, and district captains—but also newspaper articles—show. Especially among the urban and rural poor, shortages were still noticeable. Contrary to the widespread belief that rural populations had better access to food during and immediately after the war, poverty, and wealth seem to have been the most important factors determining access to food and other necessities, similar to what Mary Elisabeth Cox has persuasively argued for Germany.<sup>32</sup> In Slovenia, the very poor struggled even when shortages of food ceased to be a major problem for most. In October 1920, the captain of the Ptuj district reported that the poor still lacked food, and that “children in many poor households

<sup>24</sup>Mojca Šorn, *Pomanjkanje in lakota v Ljubljani med veliko vojno* [Shortages and Famine in Ljubljana during the Great War] (Ljubljana, 2020), 153, 154.

<sup>25</sup>Slanovec, “Ljubljanska kronika” (1934), 69.

<sup>26</sup>Ivan Hribar, “Kvišku srca! [Lift Up Your Hearts!],” *Slovenski narod* (27 October 1918), 2.

<sup>27</sup>ARS, AS 61, box 4, folder 1816/pr 1919, reports by the mayor of Rovte and the Vrhnika gendarmerie, 29 January 1919.

<sup>28</sup>Slanovec, “Ljubljanska kronika” (1934), 71, 76.

<sup>29</sup>Quoted in Janez Cvirn, “Meščanstvo v Celju po razpadu Avstro-Ogrske [The Bourgeoisie in Celje after the Dissolution of Austria-Hungary],” in *Iz zgodovine Celja: 1918–1941* [From the History of Celje, 1918–1941], ed. Marija Počivavšek (Celje, 1996), 202.

<sup>30</sup>Ribnikar, *Sejni zapisniki Narodne vlade*, vol. 1, 263, 264.

<sup>31</sup>Bojan Himmelreich, “Preskrbljenost Celja z živili v kriznih časih: Mikroštudija razmer v času po prvi in pred drugo svetovno vojno [Celje’s Food Supply in Times of Crisis: A Micro-Study of the Situation After the First World War and Before the Second World War],” *Zgodovina za vse* 7, no. 2 (2000): 53; Himmelreich, *Namesto zemlje črni kruh*, 90; Slanovec, “Ljubljanska kronika,” 148. The US’s humanitarian assistance to Yugoslavia had to overcome several hurdles, of which the terrible state of transport infrastructure and the political instability were the most important. See Gary Dean Best, “Herbert Hoover’s Technical Mission to Yugoslavia, 1919–20,” *The Annals of Iowa* 42, no. 6 (1974): 443–59.

<sup>32</sup>Mary Elisabeth Cox, *Hunger in War and Peace: Women and Children in Germany, 1914–1924* (Oxford, 2019), 135–69.

are literally naked and cover themselves with straw.” Months later, in February 1921, his colleague from Maribor informed Ljubljana that war invalids and widows were protesting in front of his office every week, demanding more support. “You can see hunger and cold on their faces,” he added.<sup>33</sup> In cases like these, money was the issue, not scarcity, something that several other state officials pointed out too. An August 1920 report from Maribor noted that “even though Yugoslavia has an abundance of food, a part of the population is starving because prices are too high.”<sup>34</sup>

Several hundred kilometres north of Slovenia, in the Czech-speaking parts of Bohemia and Moravia, the sudden improvement of food supply was noticeable at about the same time in late October and early November 1918. The municipal administration of Prague tried to get as much food as possible from warehouses and suppliers to meet the expectations of consumers in the new capital city. Basic weekly rations of flour increased in November and December 1918 by nearly 100 percent, from 1,150 g to 2,100 g per person.<sup>35</sup> Expecting changes in the future, retailers dropped prices on various basic foodstuffs and put more goods on the shelves to prevent an even bigger loss in the future when standard market conditions would prevail.<sup>36</sup> These efforts coincided with a widespread feeling of national euphoria among Czechs when Czechoslovakia was declared independent on 28 October 1918. In this elevated atmosphere, many believed that it was a new sense of Czech national solidarity that made retailers and other people in the food supply chain put more food on the market and drop prices regardless of profit. One eyewitness later recalled that Czech farmers offered their hitherto hidden stocks of food to the now *Czechoslovak* state administration, “out of joy for our liberation,” at the maximum official prices—and in some cases for less or even for free.<sup>37</sup> Another contemporary author, Alois Žipek, went even further in his nationalist explanation when he retrospectively claimed that the success of the improved food supply was not based on a single universal cause, but on non-transferable Czech national morale.<sup>38</sup>

From the revolutionary naive to the business-savvy, all were certain that food would be a decisive resource in the coming period of peacemaking. A public ordinance from Moravia dated 9 November 1918, appealed to the representatives of municipalities to hand over agricultural products to the state. The ordinance put what was at stake in plain terms: “There can be no doubt that the preservation of peace and order, on which the further successful development of our national cause depends, lies in proper nourishment.”<sup>39</sup> In the first place, the ordinance explained, workers in big industrial plants and masses of returning soldiers should be cared for. Without efficient workers and a disciplined military, the ordinance warned, “confusion and perhaps civil war and turmoil” was possible inside the new state, or even an “invasion from hungry Vienna” over the new borders could endanger the development of Czechoslovakia and create anarchy like in Russia.<sup>40</sup>

Yet, after some fleeting glimpses of bygone better times, things soon went back to the way they were before 28 October 1918. A local newspaper from Písek in southern Bohemia bitterly assessed the first month of Czechoslovak independence and the state’s only minor impact on the food supply situation, characterized by a lack of goods and exorbitant prices: “The holy elation of our liberation soon wore off. And at the same time a gross egoism showed how little we had entered the new state transformed,

<sup>33</sup>ARS, AS 60, box 4, unit 43, folder 1939/preds., Ptuj district captain’s report, 30 October 1920, and box 6, unit 58, folder 442/preds. 1920, Maribor district captain’s report, 19 February 1921.

<sup>34</sup>ARS, AS 60, box 4, unit 41, folder 442/preds. 1920, Maribor district captain’s report, 21 August 1920.

<sup>35</sup>*Aprovisace obce pražské za války a po válce 1914–1922* [Provisioning the Prague Municipality during and after the War, 1914–1922] (Prague, [1923]), 194–201.

<sup>36</sup>Národní archiv (National Archives, hereafter NA), Prague, Předsednictvo ministerské rady, Praha (1918–1945), box 3269, Ministry of Justice to the Ministry of People’s Supply, 7 January 1919.

<sup>37</sup>August Hašek, “Počátky našeho zásobování [The Origins of Our Supply],” in Alois Žipek, ed., *Domov za války (svědectví účastníků)* [Home during the War (Testimonies of Participants)], vol. 5: 1918 (Prague, 1931), 643.

<sup>38</sup>Alois Žipek, “Zásobování Prahy v r. 1918 až do převratu [Supplying Prague in 1918 until the Coup d’État],” in Žipek, ed., *Domov za války*, 387–98.

<sup>39</sup>Státní okresní archiv Olomouc (State District Archives Olomouc), Okresní úřad Litovel (1850–1945), number 812, Pořádek a klid v rukou venkova (9 November 1918), 1.

<sup>40</sup>*Ibid.*, 2.

how in the new republic we remained old people: old people, spoiled by the spirit of slavery, had passed into a free country.”<sup>41</sup>

Food riots had become a frequent collective protest by consumers in the last two years of the war and were feared by the new political elite as a sign of bad governance. But these did not disappear after 28 October 1918, either.<sup>42</sup> On the contrary, the independence of Czechoslovakia seemed to provide new impetus to settle scores with local merchants or innkeepers, often of Jewish origin, by destroying and stealing their property in an act of “people’s justice” for what they allegedly did during the war and might keep doing in peacetime too.<sup>43</sup> The authorities did not believe that people rioted spontaneously, and suspected that the wave of plundering that washed over Bohemia and Moravia in November and December 1918 must have been organized by a coordinated movement.<sup>44</sup> This could not be ruled out, since organized bands of thieves as well as individuals did carry on stealing and reselling field crops, poultry, sugar, or wood for heating. In fact, they did so at even higher rates after 1918 than during the war, in large part due to increased unemployment after the demobilization of soldiers.<sup>45</sup>

Yet, the situation in the Czech-speaking center of Bohemia was, in general, still better than in its German-speaking fringe which, as German Bohemia (*Deutschböhmen*) and other provinces, declared itself part of the Republic of German-Austria.<sup>46</sup> In a meeting of the Czechoslovak government on 14 November 1918, the Czechoslovak Minister of People’s Supply and member of the Czech National Socialist Party, Bohuslav Vrbenský, declined the idea of blackmailing Bohemian Germans by cutting them off from food supplies coming from the Czech-controlled agricultural areas of Bohemia. Likewise, he refused to distinguish between Bohemian Czechs and Germans consumers in the rationing system. Still, Vrbenský did stress that “the people’s supply can be a good political weapon for us.”<sup>47</sup> Rather than weaponize food against the enemies of the Czech cause, Vrbenský meant to project new republican ideals and state qualities onto the regular and reliable supply of food, showing that the Czechoslovak state could prove its economic viability and moral superiority over its competitors. However, a precondition of using food as a weapon against Bohemian Germans was that the Czechoslovak government had to control sufficient stocks of food. It did not.<sup>48</sup>

A similar idea appeared in the Czechoslovak army. Czechoslovak armed forces slowly advanced from the centers to the peripheries of Bohemia and Moravia to occupy the territories of separatist provinces. An idea was proposed that wagons with food for Czechs living in German-speaking areas could be hitched to Czechoslovak military trains for propaganda purposes, showing that Czechoslovakia did not only come with force but also had something to offer its people.<sup>49</sup> However, in some places, such as Znojmo/Znaim in southern Moravia, denying access to food and other necessities was used by both sides on a tactical level before the confrontation ended and the city was occupied by Czechoslovak forces.<sup>50</sup>

<sup>41</sup>*Písecké listy*, 30 November 1918, 1.

<sup>42</sup>Ota Konrád, “Two Post-War Paths: Popular Violence in the Bohemian Lands and in Austria in the Aftermath of World War I,” *Nationalities Papers* 46, no. 5 (2018): 759–75; for a different dynamic of plundering in Slovakia at the end of World War I, see Milošlav Szabó, “‘Rabovačky’ v závere prvej svetovej vojny a ich ohlas na medzivojnovom Slovensku [‘Looting’ at the End of the First World War and its Resonance in Interwar Slovakia],” *Forum Historiae* 9, no. 2 (2015): 35–55.

<sup>43</sup>Václav Šmidrkal, “Fyzické násilí, státní autorita a trestní právo v českých zemích 1918–1923 [Physical Violence, State Authority and Criminal Law in the Czech Lands 1918–1923],” *Český časopis historický* 114, no. 1 (2016): 89–115.

<sup>44</sup>NA, Ministerstvo spravedlnosti, Praha (1918–1953), box 917, Výtržnosti protižidovského rázu. Opatření k jich zamezení a potlačení, 29 December 1918.

<sup>45</sup>Vladimír Solnař, *Zločinnost v zemích českých v letech 1914–1922 s hlediska kriminální etiologie a reformy trestního práva* [Crime in the Czech Lands in 1914–1922 in Terms of Criminal Etiology and Criminal Law Reform] (Prague, 1931), 46.

<sup>46</sup>Zdeněk Kárník, *České země v éře první republiky. Vznik, budování a zlatá léta republiky (1918–1929)* [The Czech Lands in the Era of the First Republic. The Origin, Building, and Golden Years of the Republic (1918–1929)] (Prague, 2017), 37–38.

<sup>47</sup>NA, Předsednictvo ministerské rady, Praha (1918–1945), Zápisy ze schůzí, Zápis o I. schůzi ministerské rady, konané dne 14. listopadu 1918, f. 11.

<sup>48</sup>Walter Reichel, *Selbstbestimmungsrecht im Widerstreit: von der nationalen Kontroverse zum militärischen Kräfteressen: der Grenzkonflikt zwischen Deutschösterreich und der Tschechoslowakei 1918/1919* (Innsbruck, 2021), 73–92.

<sup>49</sup>Vojenský ústřední archiv-Vojenský historický archiv (Military Central Archives-Military Historical Archives), Prague, Výbor Národní obrany, box 1, Zápis o schůzi V.N.O. konané dne 8. listopadu 1918.

<sup>50</sup>František Coufal, *Osvobození jižní Moravy: vzpomínky a dokumenty o převratu na jižní Moravě roku 1918* [The Liberation of South Moravia: Memories and Documents about the 1918 Coup in South Moravia] (Prague, 1937), 89–96.

Fatigue from hunger and the low morale that spread among Bohemian Germans played into Prague's hands. It was clear that without proper nutrition the chances for a German Bohemia were slim; the appeal of "Czech bread and Czech sugar" appeared a greater threat to this state project than the force of Czechoslovak "bayonets."<sup>51</sup> Carl Tinn, a Bohemian German national journalist from Aš/Asch in northwestern Bohemia, bitterly wrote in his diary from early November 1918 about the brutality of those who returned to his region from the war and their lack of ideals: "They didn't care about the form of the state or whether their homeland would be part of a Czech or German state. They had only one goal—to find subsistence."<sup>52</sup>

In such a situation, the patriotic exhortation of people to stand up for German-Austria had missed the mark. On the contrary, the looting that was relatively manageable in Czech-speaking districts went to such an excessive extent in German-speaking ones that the local German authorities seemed to capitulate. During a particularly excessive outbreak of looting in Ústí nad Labem/Aussig on 10 December 1918, the local German representatives even went so far as to call Prague to send in the Czechoslovak army to take control in the city. Order was restored on the next day, but the food shortage continued.<sup>53</sup>

In short, all indications were that the first winter of Czechoslovak independence would not be much better than the previous one under Austria-Hungary, and many people would have to spend it in unlit and unheated houses with half-empty stomachs. Even after the first food supplies arrived from the Entente and neutral countries in spring 1919, and after a new harvest in summer 1919, rations remained insufficient and could not always be replenished. The prices of food were prohibitive, and while some people enjoyed abundance, others still suffered from malnutrition and poverty.<sup>54</sup>

For the population of both regions, Slovenia and the Bohemian Lands, the inadequate supply of food and some other basic necessities meant that they continued to struggle to feed themselves and their families. The improvement of their nutritional status was not linear, but depended on the agricultural cycle and food imports, but also on the diverging "food entitlement" of various social groups.<sup>55</sup> Scarcity and queues, but also food riots and food criminality of any kind were regular occurrences well after the war had ended and the Habsburg Empire ceased to exist. This presented a challenge not just for the population, but also for the new authorities of Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia, who tried to stabilize their newly established states. Food scarcity was not just a logistical problem, it had a destabilizing effect and added to the liminality in which both these states and their populations found themselves. That is why the governments in Prague and Ljubljana had to prove that they could feed their respective populations—if possible, better than their predecessor, the Habsburg Empire—at a time when borders were not yet fixed, when important parts of their inhabitants refused to acknowledge their legitimacy, and when an outbreak of a Bolshevik-type revolution seemed imminently possible. In the coming months and years, the question of food supply was nearly as important for successful peacemaking as it was for victory and defeat: the war left Central Europe economically ruined, politically disrupted, and socially shattered.

### The Postwar Subsistence Crisis in Historiography

When it comes to the regions and period in question, despite the obvious importance of the developments that we have just described, food supply, scarcity, and the survival strategies of the population

<sup>51</sup> *Egerer Zeitung*, 26 October 1918, 1.

<sup>52</sup> Cited in Petr Karlíček, "Zavři hubu, pse, taky ty budeš pověšen! Carl Tins a obsazení nejzápadnějších Čech ['Shut Up, Dog, You'll Be Hanged Too! Carl Tins and the Occupation of Westernmost Bohemia]," in *Vznik Československa a provincie Deutschéböhmen* [The Establishment of Czechoslovakia and the Province of Deutschéböhmen], eds. Pavel Jakubec and Jaroslav Pažout (Litoměřice, 2019), 137–54, here 148.

<sup>53</sup> Jan Bouček and Jiří Jelínek, "Události na Ústecku na konci roku 1918 [Events in Ústí nad Labem at the End of 1918]," in *Vznik samostatného Československa a severní Čechy* [The Establishment of Independent Czechoslovakia and Northern Bohemia] (Ústí nad Labem, 1968), 30–33.

<sup>54</sup> *American Relief Administration a Československá péče o dítě v republice Československé 1919–1920* [The American Relief Administration and Czechoslovak Child Care in the Czechoslovak Republic 1919–1920] (Prague, 1920), 82–95.

<sup>55</sup> For the entitlement approach to the study of famine, see Amartya Sen, *Poverty and Famines: An Essay on Entitlement and Deprivation* (Oxford, 1981); for a discussion of this and other approaches in the social sciences to the study of famine, see Olivier Rubin, *Contemporary Famine Analysis* (Cham, 2016).



have not yet been systematically studied. In Czechoslovak historiography, food shortages were an ingredient of master narratives in both the early historiography of the interwar period as well as the communist historiography of 1950s and 1960s, all of which paid close attention to the crossroads of 1918. Despite their mutually exclusive claim on historical truth, they were in fact complementary to each other in their teleological instrumentalization of history for the purposes of legitimation. For both approaches, food shortages, causing suffering but also igniting revolutionary fervor, served not only as an economic and social problem, but also as an accelerator on the road to their respective goals: an independent nation-state or a Bolshevik-style dictatorship.<sup>56</sup> Despite the post-1989 consensus that food shortages were to blame for alienating the state and its citizens and opening the way to the fall of the Habsburg monarchy in the first place, a detailed analysis of this phenomenon and its importance for the postwar transformation is missing.<sup>57</sup>

In Slovene and Yugoslav historiography, the master narratives of World War I did not altogether ignore the subsistence crisis. However, they focused on political and diplomatic developments and the situation at the fronts in their analysis of the imperial collapse. The Slovene historians Petra Svovljšak and Gregor Antoličič devoted more space to the home front in their recent synthesis, but even in their narrative food scarcity did not assume a central role.<sup>58</sup> Historians of the post-imperial transition and the early Yugoslav era also devoted some space to the politics of food supply, but it was only dealt with tangentially if it was brought in.<sup>59</sup> Scarcity, rising prices, and their destabilizing influence were given more attention in the historiography of the workers' movement and economic history, yet even here other developments received more emphasis.<sup>60</sup> Just a few scholars have focused

<sup>56</sup>Of timeless value—despite its ideological framing—is the multivolume edition of sources *Prameny k ohlasu Velké říjnové socialistické revoluce a vzniku ČSR* [Sources on the Response to the Great October Socialist Revolution and on the Establishment of the Czechoslovak Republic] compiled in the late 1950s and in the 1960s, especially Alois Kocman et al., eds., *Boj o směr vývoje československého státu* [The Struggle for the Direction of the Development of the Czechoslovak State], 2 vol. (Prague, 1965–1969).

<sup>57</sup>Ivan Šedivý, *Češi, české země a velká válka, 1914–1918* [The Czechs, the Bohemian Lands, and the Great War, 1914–1918] (Prague, 2001), 326; see also Étienne Boissier, *Les Tchèques dans l'Autriche-Hongrie en guerre (1914–1918): "Nous ne croyons plus aucune promesse"* (Paris, 2017); for Slovakia, see a recent study on everyday life in Bratislava during World War I: Gabriela Dudeková Kováčová, *Človek vo vojne: stratégie prežitia a sociálne dôsledky prvej svetovej vojny na Slovensku* [People at War: Survival Strategies and Social Consequences of the First World War in Slovakia] (Bratislava, 2019), 181–94; for Slovakia after 1918, see Étienne Boissier, "Autumn 1918–Spring 1919: Six Months of Postwar Material and Political Uncertainty in Slovakia," *Hungarian Historical Review* 9, no. 1 (2020): 26–50. For detailed overviews of historiography on the Bohemian Lands in World War I and interwar Czechoslovakia respectively, see Ota Konrád, "Von der Kulisse der Nationalstaatsgründung zur Europäisierung der Forschung. Die tschechische Historiographie zum Ersten Weltkrieg," in *Die Habsburgermonarchie 1848–1918*, vol. XI/3, *Bewältigte Vergangenheit? Die nationale und internationale Historiographie zum Untergang der Habsburgermonarchie als ideelle Grundlage für die Neuordnung Europas*, ed. Helmut Rumpler and Ulrike Harmat (Vienna, 2018), 201–26; Ota Konrád and Ines Koeltzsch, "From 'Islands of Democracy' to 'Transnational Border Spaces': State of the Art and Perspectives of the Historiography on the First Czechoslovak Republic since 1989," *Bohemia* 56, no. 2 (2016): 285–327.

<sup>58</sup>Walter Lukan, *Die Habsburgermonarchie und die Slowenen im Ersten Weltkrieg* (Vienna, 2017); Andrej Rahten, *Od Majniške deklaracije do habsburške detronizacije: Slovenska politika v času zadnjega habsburškega vladarja Karla* [From the May Declaration to Habsburg Dethronement: Slovene Politics in the Era of Charles, the Last Habsburg Ruler] (Celje, 2016); Janko Pleterski, *Prva odločitev Slovencev za Jugoslavijo: Politika na domačih tleh med vojno 1914–1918* [The First Decision of Slovenes for Yugoslavia: Domestic Politics during the War of 1914–1918] (Ljubljana, 1971); Svovljšak and Antoličič, *Leta strahote*. For an overview of historiography on present-day Slovenia in World War I, see Petra Svovljšak, "Prva svetovna vojna in Slovenci: Oris slovenskega zgodovinskega, publicističnega in spominskega literaturnega o prvi svetovni vojni [The First World War and Slovenes: An Outline of Slovene Historiography, Journalism, and Commemorative Literature on the First World War]," *Zgodovinski časopis* 47 (1993): 263–87; Petra Svovljšak, "Prva svetovna vojna in Slovenci: 1994–2014 [The First World War and the Slovenes, 1994–2014]," *Prispevki za novejšo zgodovino* 55, no. 2 (2015): 143–71.

<sup>59</sup>Aleš Gabrič, ed., *Slovenski prelom 1918* [The Slovene Break 1918] (Ljubljana, 2019); Jurij Perovšek, "Die Slowenen in der Umbruchszeit und im neuen jugoslawischen Staat (1918–1929)," in *Region und Umbruch 1918: zur Geschichte alternativer Ordnungsversuche*, ed. Harald Heppner and Eduard Staudinger (Bern, 2001), 69–85; Jurij Perovšek, *Slovenski prevrat 1918: Položaj Slovencev v Državi Slovencev, Hrvatov in Srbov* [The Slovene Revolution of 1918: The Position of Slovenes in the State of Slovenes, Croats, and Serbs] (Ljubljana, 2018).

<sup>60</sup>Centrih, "Boljševizem v prevratni dobi na Slovenskem"; Franček Saje, "Revolucionarno gibanje kmečkega ljudstva v Sloveniji 1917–1919 [The Revolutionary Movement of the Peasant Population in Slovenia 1917–1919]," *Prispevki za zgodovino delavskega gibanja* 7, no. 1–2 (1967): 141–50; Miroslav Stiplovec, *Razmah strokovnega-sindikalnega gibanja na Slovenskem 1918–1922:*

on food—but not always on its scarcity—in the immediate postwar period and they did so at the local or regional level.<sup>61</sup>

There is, however, an important exception which also differs from the rather methodologically conservative scholarship so typical of most Czech and Slovene historiography because of its novel approach. In their book on physical violence in the Bohemian Lands and Austria during and after World War I, Ota Konrád and Rudolf Kučera foregrounded food riots as a form of collective violence and interpreted them as a political language and action of the unprivileged masses.<sup>62</sup> In this, they were influenced by an innovative research stream in English-language historiography that has looked at the thorough changes caused by World War I in Central Europe through the agency of individuals and their subjective attributions of meaning to big events rather than through elite or collective actors and big structures that risk weaving “inevitable” causal chains typical of metanarratives. Pioneering in this approach were the works by Belinda J. Davies on everyday life in wartime Berlin and by Maureen Healy on everyday life in Vienna.<sup>63</sup> Similarly conceived research on Prague, on the Ostrava mining region, or on the Czech working class during the war followed suit.<sup>64</sup>

In short, when it comes to two important successor states, Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia, food, its scarcity, and the wider implications of precarious supply for post-1918 developments have largely remained on the margins of scholarly interest. Narratives of victory overshadowed the fact that under the surface victory coexisted with defeat or indifference in this part of Europe.<sup>65</sup> Statistically, food shortage might not have been that severe, but it was the overriding public as well as private concern for at least the first few postwar years.<sup>66</sup> It seems that this lack of historiographic interest was intrinsically connected to Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia positioning themselves as victorious states, which steered the attention of historians and other scholars to different topics. Conversely, historians of the so-called defeated states of Central Europe have traditionally put more emphasis on the subsistence crisis that continued and sometimes even worsened after the war. Most recently, food shortage and hunger moved into the center of analysis in Mary Elisabeth Cox’s book on the changing nutritional status of civilians in Germany between 1914 and 1922 while postwar international humanitarian relief plays a central role in Friederike Kind-Kovács’s study on international help for destitute children in Budapest after 1918.<sup>67</sup>

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*Pregled razvoja in delovanja strokovnih organizacij v jugoslovanskem delu Slovenije od prevrata 1918 do ponovne utrditve revolucionarnih strokovnih organizacij konec 1922* [The Expansion of the Professional Trade Union Movement in Slovenia, 1918–1922: An Overview of the Development and Functioning of Professional Organizations in the Yugoslav Part of Slovenia From the Revolution of 1918 to the Re-Consolidation of Revolutionary Professional Organizations at the End of 1922] (Ljubljana, 1979); Jože Šorn, *Slovensko gospodarstvo v poprevratnih letih 1919–1924* [The Slovene Economy in the Revolutionary Years 1919–1924] (Ljubljana, 1997).

<sup>61</sup>Miran Aplinc, “Morda bodo prišli še taki časi, ko boste morali jesti tak kruh, kjer bodo špice ven gledale”: Odmev velike vojne skozi organizacijo preskrbe v Šoštanju v času prve svetovne vojne in prevratne dobe [“Perhaps There Will Be a Time When You’ll Have to Eat Bread with Spikes Sticking Out”: Echoes of the Great War through the Organization of Provision in Šoštanje during the First World War and the Revolutionary Era] (Šoštanj, 2019); Maja Godina-Golija, *Prehrana v Mariboru v dvajsetih in tridesetih letih 20. stoletja* [Food in Maribor in the 1920s and 1930s] (Maribor, 1996); Himmelreich, “Preskrbljenost Celja z živili v kriznih časih.”

<sup>62</sup>Ota Konrád and Rudolf Kučera, *Paths Out of the Apocalypse: Physical Violence in the Fall and Renewal of Central Europe, 1914–1922* (Oxford, 2022).

<sup>63</sup>Belinda J. Davies, *Home Fires Burning: Food, Politics, and Everyday Life in World War I Berlin* (Chapel Hill, 2000); Healy, *Vienna and the Fall of the Habsburg Empire*.

<sup>64</sup>Claire Morelon, “Street Fronts: War, State Legitimacy and Urban Space, Prague 1914–1920” (Ph.D. diss., University of Birmingham, 2014); John Robertson, “Calamitous Methods of Compulsion: Labor, War, and Revolution in a Habsburg Industrial District, 1906–1919” (Ph.D. diss., University of North Carolina, 2014); Rudolf Kučera, *Rationed Life: Science, Everyday Life, and Working-Class Politics in the Bohemian Lands, 1914–1918* (New York, Oxford, 2016).

<sup>65</sup>On victory and defeat as a dividing category after 1918, see e.g., Adam Luptak and John Paul Newman, “Victory, Defeat, Gender, and Disability: Blind War Veterans in Interwar Czechoslovakia,” *Journal of Social History* 53, no. 3 (2020): 604–19.

<sup>66</sup>For a qualitative approach to historical research on hunger, see e.g., James Vernon, *Hunger: A Modern History* (Cambridge, 2007); Cormac Ó Gráda, *Famine* (Princeton, 2010); Thomas Keneally, *Three Famines: Starvation and Politics* (New York, 2011).

<sup>67</sup>Cox, *Hunger in War and Peace*; Friederike Kind-Kovács, *Budapest’s Children: Humanitarian Relief in the Aftermath of the Great War* (Bloomington, 2022). Among recent publications, see also Alice Weinreb, *Modern Hungers: Food and Power in Twentieth-Century Germany* (New York, 2017). Further see Franz Adlgasser, *American Individualism Abroad: Herbert*

Filling this void therefore seems necessary, and the articles in this forum try to do just that by drawing attention to the topic of food shortage and its role in the postwar transformation in the Bohemian Lands and in Slovenia, those parts of the newly established states that previously belonged to the Austrian part of the Habsburg Empire and thus had very similar administrative structures, legal systems, and were in similar predicaments when they achieved independence. For us, food supply works as a lens through which we can focus more closely on the process of the break-up and reconstitution of state and society in this part of former Habsburg Central Europe. By paying attention to food, a commodity that everybody needs, its production, distribution, and consumption, but also practices and discourses around food, we can pin down abstract concepts such as legitimacy, justice, or trust and contribute to our understanding of the complexity of changes after the fall of the Habsburg Empire in 1918.

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Hoover, *die American Relief Administration und Österreich, 1919–1923* (Vienna, 1993); Franz Adlgasser, “The Roots of Communist Containment: American Food Aid in Austria and Hungary after World War I,” in *Austria in the Nineteen Fifties*, eds. Günter Bischof, Anton Pelinka, and Rolf Steininger (New York, 2020), 171–88; Michael Burri, “Clemens Pirquet: Early Twentieth-Century Scientific Networks, the Austrian Hunger Crisis, and the Making of the International Food Expert,” in *Remaking Central Europe: The League of Nations and the Former Habsburg Lands*, eds. Peter Becker and Natasha Wheatley (New York, 2020), 39–71; Patricia Clavin, “The Austrian Hunger Crisis and the Genesis of International Organization after the First World War,” *International Affairs* 90, no. 2 (2014): 265–78; Ernst Langthaler, “Hungernde Stadt, sattes Land? ‘Volksernährung’ in Wien und Niederösterreich nach dem Ersten Weltkrieg,” in *Wien und Niederösterreich – Eine untrennbare Beziehung? Festschrift für Willibald Rosner*, eds. Elisabeth Loinig, Stefan Eminger, and Andreas Weigl (St. Pölten, 2017), 281–87.

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