

noting that it took about 90,000 calories of grain to produce 9,300 calories of pork. Göring in his Four Year Plan labeled as “traitors” farmers who fattened cattle on grains that could be used instead to make bread, and his claim was widely repeated. Wirz argued for a reduction in the acreage devoted to the cultivation of grains for livestock, and for an increase in land for growing fruits and vegetables.²⁹

The campaign against meat also has to be seen, though, as part of the campaign against overindulgence. Meat was a luxury that, like whipped cream or bananas, had to be forgone as part of the sacrifice individual Germans made for the nation. A Viennese Nazi pamphlet cautioned against the gluttonous consumption of meat, cream, and fruit:

There are people who have made their bellies their god, who in their greed want both goulash and a big helping of whipped cream before they feel they have had enough. But we industrious German racial comrades know what is at stake! We know that the serious and hardworking German does not live on whipped cream and bananas. This is not the time for gormandizers and hysterics who must have a new dainty every day.³⁰

The *Deutsches Ärzteblatt*, the nation’s leading medical journal, came close to branding overzealous consumerism as treason:

The person who, in his greed for food, eats—or rather gobbles—more meat and fats than he needs for the maintenance of his health and working capacity, robs other racial comrades of these foods; he is a debauchee and a traitor to his land and his country. . . . Thus, for example, the Frenchman does not eat half as much butter as the German. Even in Paris it is forbidden to serve butter together with cheese, but in every German restaurant this is the accepted practice.³¹

Martin Gumpert, an émigré physician, cited these passages in a book published at the beginning of the war (*Heil Hunger!*) as evidence of the poverty of Nazi food policy. The campaign to dissuade Germans from eating so much meat and fat was callous, he maintained, given the food shortages caused by military stock-

TABLE 5.1
Gumpert’s Data on Germany’s
Changing Food Supply

	1928	1932	1936
Meat	100	96	91
Fats	100	104	96
Eggs	100	99	83
Potatoes	100	113	100

piling and the misguided goal of agricultural self-sufficiency. Gumpert offered as proof of the decline of Germany’s food supply the chart reproduced here as table 5.1, standardized arbitrarily at 100 for the year 1928.³² How strange for us today, though, to see this put forward as evidence of a dangerous trend, harmful to public health! Gumpert took the decline in meat and eggs as proof of a precipitous collapse of nutritional values, though we today might as easily take it as evidence of a successful shift from meat and fats to healthier foods. He was surely right to suggest that militarism and agricultural autarky were causes of the pullback from meat and fat, but his mockery of imperatives to reduce fats for health reasons—“health administration hyenas who proclaim to the public that butter is poison”³³—sounds curiously out of synch with what we today know, and the Nazis thought they knew, about diet-health links.

Gumpert no doubt was correct in his overall assessment, though, that health was only one of several concerns when it came to food policy—the overarching one being the remilitarization of the Germany economy. Health was not the point when Rudolf Hess urged “guns instead of butter,” which leads us to believe that health was not the primary reason meat and fat became scarce even for the privileged “healthy” elements of the German populace. And when the war started going badly, of course, Nazi leaders began to worry more about Germans’ getting too little meat than about their getting too much: Goebbels, at least, had reached this point by February of 1942, cautioning that “no one will listen to well-reasoned arguments if butter and meat are taken away from him.”³⁴