

in the church tower every night, rejoicing and gloating horribly, doubtless over the terrible misfortune, ruin and destruction of this town and country, according to God's threat in Isaiah 13, v. 21 et 22' (Sp.33). Plebanus believed that storm winds foreshadowed new catastrophes of war: 'battles, skirmishes, robbing, plundering, burning', adding that 'I too was not infrequently afflicted with losses' (Pl.280).

Laymen such as Heberle, Walther and Wagner also refer frequently to omens, while many of the diarists saw the comets of 1618 and 1630 as portents of the war as a whole or of the sufferings of their particular area. Even the widely travelled and highly educated lawyer Pflummer was credulous. He repeats a tale told by a Catholic priest who was captured in a Swedish raid under cover of fog. He found that many of his captors were also Catholics, including their lieutenant, who boasted that the fog was not natural but had been conjured up by one of his troop. He invited the man, a Finn, to demonstrate.

To please the priest the man agreed, whereupon he positioned himself on a particular spot. First he uttered a number of incomprehensible magic words and then he stretched out his hands and shook them. It was as though an ash fell from them, which spread out bit by bit, and like a fog covered first the magician and then the entire *compagnia*, so that they became quite invisible. (Pf.13)

After reporting further supernatural powers attributed to the Finn Pflummer adds his own comment: 'And since there are doubtless more such magicians to be found with the Swedish *armada*, one may well conclude that some of their victories are attributable more to this devilish *praestigii* than to their courage *et verae virtuti*' (Pf.63)

### Plague, famine and depopulation

War, plague and famine were commonly linked in the perception of the time, and often seen as punishments from God. The Strausberg town clerk Schuster held this view of the war, describing it as 'our Lord God's punishment, which afflicts Germany on account of her sins and vices, which have become rife far and wide in these times' (Sh.16). The pastor Minck was equally clear: 'In between, and alongside the scourge of war, God sent the pestilence here after us' (Mi.254). Another town clerk, Raph, completed the trilogy: 'Thereafter followed the third scourge of the just and angry God, namely the coal-black bitter hunger' (Ra.198).

It is not surprising that the diarists saw a link between plague and war, although this is questionable epidemiologically. The consequences where plague did strike are beyond doubt, and these accounts show that individuals were much more likely to lose relatives and that communities suffered

far more deaths from epidemics than from either famine or the direct effects of war. Central southern Germany suffered particularly badly in 1634 and 1635, when Heberle lost his stepmother, a brother, four sisters and three children among the 'many thousand people' whose deaths he attributes to hunger, war and 'the terrible sickness, the pestilence' (He.161, 152). In Hesse Cervinus lost his entire family: 'My beloved wife Dorothea, with six dear children, and Pitzl Margarete, who looked after them, departed this life in God's peace within a few days.' He himself was near death but recovered, 'perhaps to endure more misfortune than has already occurred', as he bitterly comments (C.91). He assesses deaths locally at over half the population, noting 334 burials during the month of August 1635 in the small town of Grünberg, 27 at a single ceremony. At Bietigheim Raph reports that 'over 585 people died' out of a population quoted as 1800 in 1634, 'among them 60 married couples, and quite a number of whole families and households' (Ra.191, 196). Lang, from Isny, names some 30 individuals, mostly 'close friends of mine' but including his sister and his son, who died in the plague epidemic of 1635, of which he says: 'Since July this year there have been so many deaths that the like of it has never been heard in human memory' (La.29). Minck is similarly specific, listing by name the 25 survivors of the 'over 300 souls living in Biberau before the epidemic, and noting that four of those died of hunger soon afterwards (Mi.256). He gives a horrific account of rotting bodies lying unburied before eventually being collected and consigned to mass graves. Writers who give few numbers and little detail about the war can be quite precise about plague deaths; Feilinger notes 22 in the village of Elm in an outbreak in June 1631 and another 26 in October of the same year.

Towns were more prone to epidemics than the countryside, and the effect of disease on a city such as Strasbourg, which escaped the worst effects of the war itself, is striking. Walther reports that during an outbreak in 1633 'within 20 weeks 4392 people died in this city' (Wl.30). Murr reports the onset of plague in Nuremberg in October 1634 and notes that by January 1635 there had been twice as many cases as in the 'great death' of 1585 (Mu.83). Infection spread even faster when cities were crowded with refugees. Pflummer makes the point in reporting an outbreak of 'Hungarian fever' in Überlingen in 1634, from which many people died, 'but for the most part only farm folk from elsewhere, or poor citizens, because of their slovenly way of living or lack of cleanliness in their housekeeping'. He links this to overcrowding arising from the war 'on account of the overwhelming numbers of country people, with their horses and cattle, who have taken refuge in the city' (Pf.138). Vincent, although also seeing such infections as divine punishment, adds a medical man's practical comment:

Besieged in the Castle of Heydelberg, I visited every day divers sicke of the Plague, and like diseases. But in neither of these two great Plagues in

London, nor in any other, that I have beene in, did I ever finde the cause so virulent, the symptomes so incorrigible, the disease so incurable. ... The divine hand and finger of God was more conspicuous in this, than in any other visitation I had seene, though I doubt not but our foode with the aire might also helpe to impoyson our bodies extraordinarily. (V.57-8)

That hunger was frequently a consequence of war is evident from the eyewitness accounts. Armies did not produce but had to be fed, and when they passed through an area sutlers and troops descended on the farms and markets. Heberle reports from Ulm: 'They have bought up all the available bread, meat and beer, as well as grain and other things, so that it has all become very dear' (He.212). What they could not buy they requisitioned or stole. Often food was cleared from an area or simply destroyed in the fields to deny it to the enemy, but well-organised raids were also made at harvest time to supply the armies' needs. Minck describes Imperialist troops descending on the corn already cut and sheaved in the fields, threshing it, taking their own requirements and 'selling what they didn't need themselves in the cities on the Rhine and Main. They made such a good job of it that within a few days no grain was to be had in the region' (Mi.257). Hagendorf was more than once employed on such work, prompting an ironic comment: 'Here we stopped over to harvest, but it wasn't for the farmers' benefit' (Ha.100). Preis describes the scale of such operations:

At that time a strong force of Swedes came, 4000 on horses and on foot, with a large number of wagons, and they threshed all the grain in the fields around our village ... and took it to their camp. They also took the hay from our village, as well as the cabbages in the gardens, the apples and the pears, the whole lot. They left us not the least thing. (Pr.120-1)

The war also affected agricultural production in other ways. Cervinus reports how repeated and prolonged flights from the countryside to the protection of walled towns prevented sowing for the next harvest. Minck laments land running wild for lack of husbandry and 'so overgrown with firs that one would take it for woods rather than fields' (Mi.261). Heberle notes the same effect and identifies a reason: 'Because things had gone so badly here and as there were virtually no horses or cattle the fields too were left wild and uncultivated' (He.167). Raph reports that in Bietigheim men yoked themselves to the plough, and Preis did much the same despite still having some draught animals: 'We couldn't bring any livestock into the village because of the soldiers, ... so I yoked myself to the harrow, together with my farm-hand and the boy, and harrowed the four acres of land' (Pr.123).

Nevertheless most local famines probably arose from natural causes. According to Raph's account drought, not war, caused crop failures at

Bietigheim in 1626, leading some people to live on 'grass, thistle heads and greenery of that kind', and others to beg, while 'those who were ashamed to do that died of hunger' (Ra.188). High prices, food shortages and hunger were common experiences for troops and civilians alike during the war but episodes of full-scale famine were exceptional, as indicated by the shocked descriptions given by the diarists. The plague epidemic of 1635 in central southern Germany was followed by such a famine, possibly at least in part as a consequence, and Heberle, Minck and Raph all provide graphic accounts of how anything and everything was eaten, 'for hunger is a good cook' (He.161). At Bietigheim Raph attributes 365 deaths 'for the most part' to hunger in the following three years (Ra.199). Plebanus describes conditions in his area in 1636:

In recent days people without care and attention have died of hunger, one here in the Dam Mill, three at Weissbach, and one at Neuwhofen. There are also quite a number of particularly poor abandoned children round here, who look more like corpses than living people, although their parents had been very rich, with cattle, money and farms. These children call on me every day, at my parlour door, and content themselves with a small slice [of bread] or an apple. They also ask for the apple or pear peelings lying under the stove. (Pl.276)

Terrible though these reports are, they resemble other descriptions of famine not directly linked to war, for example in late seventeenth-century France (Williams, 1970, pp. 191-2). That the effects were localised and did not extend to everyone is indicated by Minck, who notes that 'if at that time I had not had money from my *patrimonio* [church endowment] at Giessen, and had been obliged to live solely from [the emoluments of] this post, then I would have had to suffer from hunger like others' (Mi.260). Even so the effects of famine were aggravated by war, particularly the dangers from raiding troops. Plebanus records how, after much of their population had fled as soldiers moved into the area, some villages were inhabited only by the sick or those caring for them, many of whom fell victim to starvation, and he gives gruesome accounts of unburied bodies partly eaten by hungry dogs. He describes a visit to the village of Endlichhofen, 'in which there wasn't a living person, just two big dogs in front of Michelengen's house'. He went in,

but apprehensively, for right in the front of the house I found a person whose shirt had been pulled right down to the feet, and whose neck, shoulders and arms, as well as the *pudenda* or genitals, had been eaten away. As the head was not to be found I couldn't tell whether it had been a man or a woman. In the parlour ... there were several more legs and bones of children. (Pl.259)

The substance of Vincent's description of rural depopulation matches other accounts despite the air of exaggeration: 'From Basil to Strasburg, from Strasburg to Heydelberg, from thence to Marpurg, I scarce saw a man in the Fields, or Villages' (V.34). Soon after Nördlingen Minck reports inhabitants fleeing villages, adding that 'Reinheim and Zwingenberg stood quite empty and deserted for two years' (Mi.253). Raph notes the decline in the population of Bietigheim, the number of citizens (heads of households) falling to 40 in 1638 against 350 in 1634 owing to deaths or emigration, which he attributes to the burden of military extortions. Plebanus records the decline in population at Miehlen by 1636: 'And there are just 20 married couples, quite a few of whom are now frail. *Anno 1618, anno sc. ingressus mei ad Millenses* [the second year after my arrival at Miehlen], there were 115 people occupying homes in the village, and a few years before it was 130 strong' (Pl.258). Spiegel complains of the effect of depopulation on his congregations, reporting from Eltersdorf in 1636 that 'because I didn't meet or find even three people at home here I couldn't do anything'. A month later he did hold a service there, but 'I had no more than four old people, two men and two women, and a boy. May God increase the congregation and defend them from further despoliation of the country' (Sp.52). In March 1637 he gathered seven people in Bruck, although three were children, but in October 1638 he had to abandon a service in Eltersdorf 'because no more than two men were available, and no-one who could sing'. By January 1639 he notes: 'To Bruck at New Year. From then on no services could be held because there was nobody left at home, and nor did anybody want to go home because of the soldiers' (Sp.65, 66). Spiegel also lists, house by house, the dwellings in Eltersdorf and their condition in May 1642, indicating that only 7 of 64 were occupied by a total of 27 people: 4 couples, 2 widows, 1 widower and their households.

### Signs of the times

Many of the authors include anecdotes, asides or self-revealing comments which illustrate the effect of the war on attitudes and social behaviour. Prices are a case in point. Many of the earlier writers include descriptions of the inflation of the early 1620s which bring to mind the lasting impression that inflation made three hundred years later in Germany. Freund comments sharply on the devaluation of money at this time 'on account of the accursed goings-on with the coinage'. Departing from his generally unemotive style he refers to the 'betrayers of the currency', 'cutpurse swine' and 'children of Baal' who 'have talked princes and lords into setting up a whole lot of private mints in the country' (Fr.29). Walther's account in particular foreshadows the 1920s:

On top of this misery came another misfortune, namely that all the sound coinage disappeared from the country and the money began to climb high, so that the Reichstaler was already worth 2 gulden 18 kreuzer ... and

went higher by the day. ... And although almost everyone had money enough one couldn't get anything for it. People were taking bread from the bakers still hot out of the oven. (Wl.15, 17)

The way writers describe their own experiences indicates their attitudes and expectations. The pastor Beck gives the measure of his poverty in the mid-1630s: 'I often had to eat my food without fat and without salt ... and for three whole years I drank water' (Be.84). From Hesse Ludolph adds another clerical perspective: 'In such times we held baptisms and church fairs without meat soups, roasts or boiled meats. We had to learn to eat green cabbage, dried pears, pea soup without fat – yes, I said without fat!' He is particularly vehement about his own predicament: 'Well over a year has gone by in which I, the pastor of a parish, have not been able – in a whole year – to have a dish of meat on my table'. Need changed values: 'People have sold a house or a barn for a quarter or a bushel of corn or the like. When it's a matter of saving his skin a man will give whatever he has for his life' (Lu.53). Walther makes the same point: 'In the country many people died of hunger who had 50, 60 or even up to 100 acres. An acre would be given for a loaf of bread' (Wl.32). These examples should not be taken too literally but they are indicative, as is the implied change in the social order, which Ludolph makes explicit: 'Those who were otherwise the richest and highest-ranking in Reichensachsen have become the poorest. They have carried loads of wood or a little corn over the fields for payment or for themselves, barefoot or only in stockings, and without shoes, as they had none, to earn their bread' (Lu.53). The same occurred in the man-made famine of a siege, in this case Wagner's Augsburg: 'The rich have just as little by way of provisions and to eat as the poor, and in this equality has almost been reached, while in such a famine Christian love comes to an end' (Wa.58).

Several authors reflect social attitudes in noting that the burdens of war were not evenly shared, the better off often making a hasty getaway and leaving the lower orders to the mercy of advancing troops. Hellgemayr describes events as the Swedes approached Munich in 1632:

There was such a fright and fear here in Munich that everyone fled. Most of the great lords and the rich took all their best things away with them; rich and poor went, in coaches, on horseback or on foot. It was a great misery. In the name of God and all the holy saints I stayed here with my wife and beloved children, waiting at home in my poverty for God's help. ... On this day the nuns also fled and almost all the clergy – the deans, canons, parish priests and their assistants – all ran away. (Hl.204-5)

Wolff gives a similar report from Schwabach, as does the nun Junius from Bamberg, the latter making clear the hostility such flights aroused amongst

the citizenry. She reports that the hierarchy were quick to leave when danger threatened:

The prince [bishop] was sitting at dinner when this cry arose, so he quickly had everything taken from the table, hurriedly got into his coach, and was driven off to Forchheim. The provost and other cathedral officers, as well as the mayor and many other leading citizens, also made off hastily to Forchheim. (J.21-2)

This turned out to be a false alarm and a spectacle which was several times repeated, causing the populace to barrack the prince-bishop on another occasion:

When he drove out the wicked people shouted: 'He's getting out again now and leaving us in the lurch; may this and that [the devil, the hangman] take you; may you fall and break every bone in your body', and they wished many other terrible things on him. (J.27)

While most writers complain about plundering by soldiers only a few recognise the inherent complicity of civilians in the system. The principal beneficiaries of the plundering were often not the soldiers but the citizens of neighbouring towns, who bought up the stolen goods for a fraction of their value from looters mainly interested in cash, either as a more portable form of booty or as the price of the next meal. Hellgemayr describes the Swedish occupation of Munich:

At this time much robbing and plundering took place, particularly in the countryside, and all kinds of things were brought in here. There was no scarcity of buyers, and in the mornings when the Swedes brought in a number of loaded wagons everything was sold out in a few hours, so then they went back out to get more booty. ... Thus you could get a horse or a cow for ten kreuzer, or for up to a gulden or a taler you could buy a really magnificent beast, if you could get fodder for it and if they didn't steal it back from you again. (Hl.209)

He also notes that after the Swedish withdrawal many of the purchasers were quick to turn a profit: 'Many of those here who had bought horses, cows or other things from the Swedes, for example a horse or a cow for 10, 20 or 30 kreuzer, afterwards sold them again for as many gulden, which was a great shame' (Hl.210). Wagner reports a similar trade in Augsburg:

Even though bringing stolen goods into the city to sell was strictly forbidden many times, it could nevertheless not be prevented because the colonels and senior officers had an interest in it, and indeed those from

here who helped introduce the prohibition bought such loot themselves. Thus it came about that a horse could be bought for a gulden and a cow for 30 kreuzer or a kopfstück, while tin, copper, linen and all kinds of movable goods were likewise given away for a song. It was pitiable to see whole herds of cattle, big and small, large numbers of horses, numerous wagons loaded with copper, tin, bedding, clothes, linen and all kinds of other things which had been plundered from the countryside or other towns offered for sale on every street and square in the city, where they were sold for miserable little sums of money. And this went on for weeks on end. (Wa.31)

Ironically soldiers themselves were sometimes the victims, and Walther indicates the eventual fate of many. After the defeat of Goetz's Bavarian army at Wittenweier in 1638 the dead were buried and looted by peasants, who 'found so much stuff that many did well out of it. For weeks afterwards people were bringing all sorts of weapons and other plunder here to sell, which became popularly known as Goetz's housewares' (Wl.34). When the losers were soldiers or strangers the usual victim class had no compunction about gaining a little benefit, as at Albertshausen when 'on the 24th of June the cavalry who were quartered here sold hat strings, gold braid and other things cheaply, which they had taken from Nördlingen merchants on the Hetzfeld bridge' (Ge.31). On the other hand Thiele, from Beelitz, near Berlin, complains that plunderers sold booty taken from his town in neighbouring Treuenbrietzen, commenting sarcastically that 'when they were asked afterwards if they were prepared to give them up again they were all holy folk in the town of Brietzen, and they denied everything. But my wife recognised her own bonnet and took it from a Brietzen woman' (Th.15). Some writers report more direct complicity. Thus when Dressel's monastery was raided by Weimar troops the humbler servants helped the plunderers: 'Certain specific items such as silver jewellery ... were disclosed by the monastery's vassals, namely the son of Thomas the gardener and the lake overseer's boy, who was brought up and has fed for years off monastery alms, and various other scoundrels' (Dr.27. 379). The pastor Renner angrily claims that one of his parishioners gave details of his alleged wealth to Imperialist troops, as a result of which he was captured and held to ransom. He adds a venomous note to the record of the funeral of the wife of the man, Caspar Nagel, 'the slanderer who so shamefully informed on me to the Imperialists, making out that I had 6000 Reichstaler deposited on interest in Nuremberg, 300 bushels of grain stored in the same city, and that I ate off silver dishes. As a result I was held to ransom for 400 Reichstaler' (Re.30).

A few anecdotes contribute something of the feel of the times. Celebrations normally taken for granted carried a risk, as in Feilinger's report of the experience of a wedding group: 'While this groom was having his bride escorted from Haybach, on the way back they encountered some cavalry, who robbed

the festive procession of their money and clothes, as well as taking three horses out of their harness' (Fe. 241). Spiegel likewise mentions a party raided by soldiers: 'At Gremsdorf they came across the guests at a wedding breakfast, who all ran away, whereupon the cavalymen ate the lot' (Sp.66). Gerlach laconically indicates that a christening fared no better: 'Croats in Albertshausen for winter quarters. Behaved badly. Broke into a christening; ate, drank, and desecrated everything' (Ge.30). Zader reports how Imperialist troops treated Naumburg's womenfolk in 1633: 'Their soldiers took more than 140 servant girls as wives, but when they had gone a few leagues from here they stripped the whores and chased them away' (Za.28-9). More poignantly, Spiegel adds a later marginal note to a register entry of a wedding: 'They parted from each other, he to the war and she off somewhere else, and since dead' (Sp.32). Gerlach tells a sad story of the misdeeds and misfortunes arising from an illicit affair between people whose lives had been disrupted by war; 'She had a husband, who was at the war; he had no wife':

On the 16th of May soldiers searched the cellars of Fuchstadt for buried money, but they found a buried child which had been interred by Salveter and his maid the previous Christmas. He was a customs official and councillor. On Friday the 19th of May he was taken from Eibelstadt and she from Winterhausen to Ochsenfurt, where they were imprisoned. ... On the Monday after Repentance Day they were both beheaded at Ochsenfurt. (Ge.24)

## 7 Counting the Cost

Money is a recurrent theme in accounts of the war. Some of the record the value of their plunder and the civilians often put a losses, whether it be the value of items taken by soldiers or the cash they were obliged to hand over, the sums levied as cover their expenses for troops billeted on them. In many cases the quite precise and for some of the writers the opportunity to value appears to be a way of authenticating the account, a relief which can be seized almost with relief, while for others money is to their perception of the burdens of war. The figures they give, indicated by the varied units of money and abbreviations they use, readily be converted into modern equivalents, but the significance authors themselves attached to them is clear.

A number of the diarists kept careful financial records, an example the baker Strampfer, who concludes his account with the final that '*summa*, all my contributions to the war from *anno* 1634 cost me 2895 rx. 8 1/2 k.' (S.36). Earlier he describes his record-keeping calculations:

When I made an estimate of the costs after the departure of these troops I found that to my certain knowledge I had given the soldiers 417 Reichstaler in cash alone. I am also sure that the food and drink they had cost as much again, as I had to feed 18 people for several weeks, real soldier riff-raff. Such expenses could mount up to 1000 rx. (S.33)

Strampfer adds pious thanks that things were not worse: 'Although I was stretched to the limit by this unbearable and all too heavy garrisoning... with God's help I have lived to see the end of it. May God mercifully protect us further from the like' (S.33).

The pastor Freund also kept a record of his losses in raids. On the first occasion, in September 1631, he notes: 'In this plundering I suffered losses in money, silverware, linen and household goods of 97 R. 15 g. at the lowest