

The post-war BUNDLE

WHEN HUNGER SHARPENS THE WITS

“NATIONAL NUTRITION”

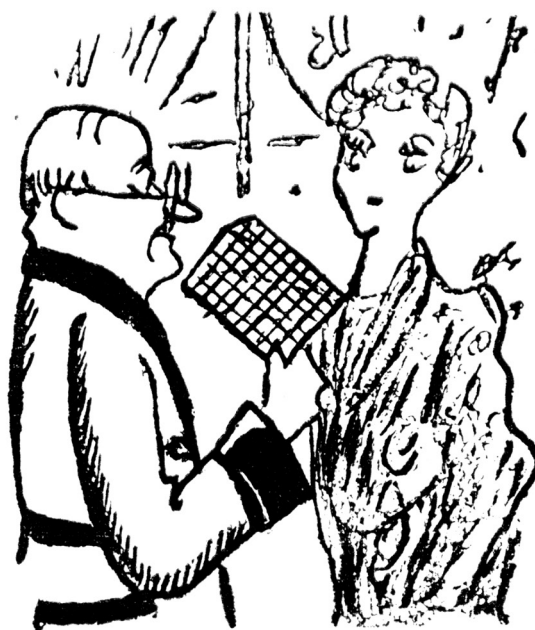
It is now almost eighty years since Franco's troops marched into Barcelona in 1939. That marked the beginning of the long post-war period, divided between conquerors and conquered, when the people of Catalonia lived through one of the harshest episodes of repression, hunger and penury. The new regime's strategy for solving the problem of hunger consisted of controlling the production of raw materials and activating a system of food rationing. Of the 750 bakeries there were in Barcelona, only 180 functioned. There were rules to be observed and there was always an opportunity to swindle: in the weight, the quality of the flour or the baking.

The fields were controlled by inspectors who supervised the harvest. The producers were under an obligation to sell their produce to the state at a fixed rate and the state, in turn, sold to the consumers at a set price and rationed by means of ration cards. That led to the emergence of a black market, also called “estraperlo” (smuggling), where cheating was the order of the day. Wheat flour was replaced by other kinds such as maize or lupin beans, which were the main ingredients of the corn bread and gruel which many people will still recall.

THE RATION CARD

On 18 May 1939 the rationing regime was officially established all over the country. Through the General Commissary of Sup-

LAS NUEVAS FELICITACIONES



—*Nuestro amigo Rodríguez es un verdadero caballero. Para felicitarnos el Año Nuevo nos ha enviado una tarjeta de abastecimiento en vez de una tarjeta de visita.*

plies and Transport, the conquerors activated a food produce intervention plan to set prices with the aim of normalising trade and fostering production. The civil governors in Catalonia took charge of controlling the supply and distribution of food. At first the ration cards were for families, divided into four categories according to the level of wages of the population: first, second and third class and children. Later on they would be replaced by individual cards in an attempt to have more control over them and prevent cheating.

For access to the supply of produce the coupons corresponding to the relevant time period and the article or group of products received were cut out. The individual card also included people living in hotels, boarding houses or residences, and for each week spent there a whole sheet of coupons was cut out. For occasional meals half of one bread coupon was cut out.

“SINGLE DISH” AND “DAY WITHOUT DESSERT”

“Single dish day” was imposed by law on the Franco side during the Civil War. The system applied to the 1st and 15th of each month at restaurants, inns and any other hotel establishment serving meals. The restaurateurs had to offer one dish of vegetables, one of meat and one of fish. The customers could choose only one of them and a dessert but they had to pay the full price of the menu. That sharpened the wits of the restaurateurs, who came up with the “mixed platter”, a single dish with a bit of everything.

A great deal of propaganda for that law was peddled on the radio, in the press and on posters. The restaurants had to pay at least 25% of the day’s take and check the customers by means of a list. Observation of “single dish day” was obligatory and the revenue obtained that way was earmarked for soup kitchens and Social As-

sistance. The campaign was extended later to the “day without dessert”, which fell on Mondays.

BLACK MARKET AND SMUGGLING PRODUCTS

The black market, or smuggling, consisted of illegally trading in products on the fringes of what was stipulated by rationing and at a far higher price. That led to rocketing prices and the accumulation of capital in a few hands. Meat and eggs were the scarcest products, milk and oil the most adulterated. In the villages permission from the authorities was required to slaughter the animals. Many people, mainly women, travelled from the city to the country to lay their hands on any of the farmers’ products. There was a famous train that ran from El Prat to Barcelona, known as “the smugglers’ train”, which slowed down as it reached the city. The passengers seized the opportunity to throw the bundles containing food through the window and jump off the train to avoid the controls of the toll collectors and the Guardia Civil.

The toll collectors were customs officers of a kind who worked at the entrances to cities. Their purpose was to confiscate any illegal products and collect taxes for the transport of merchandise, basically food supplies. In 1948 bringing a hen into Barcelona cost 50 cents.



THE CONQUEST OF HEALTH

The problems involved in finding quality food and the lack of hygiene triggered an intensive campaign to try to raise awareness among the population of the serious health problems they were suffering. Typhus, tuberculosis and smallpox were the order of the day. Many food and pharmaceutical products companies took advantage of that to create low cost concentrates and restoratives. Those were the days of eating powdered food, concentrates

and formulae for diverting attention from hunger: stock cubes, powdered milk and crème caramel, lithium salts (“lithium water”), liquorice sticks, chewing gum and condiments of all kinds to disguise the meals.

Recobra su optimismo



PARA QUE SU OPTIMISMO Y ALEGRÍA RENAZCAN, ALEJE TODOS LOS SÍNTOMAS DEL ANORMAL FUNCIONAMIENTO DE SU ORGANISMO, COMO SON LA PERDIDA DE ENERGÍAS, EL MALESTAR, LA SENSACIÓN DE CANSANCIO, ETCÉTERA.

LAS SALES **ALTER**, POR SUS PROPIEDADES SALUDABLES, PROPORCIONA GRAN BIENESTAR FÍSICO Y HACE POSIBLE DISFRUTAR DE EXCELENTE SALUD.

TÓMELAS DIARIAMENTE; SE SENTIRÁ MÁS OPTIMISTA Y RECUPERARÁ SUS ENTUSIASMOS.

Sales ALTER
producto nacional garantizado

SOCIAL ASSISTANCE AND THE NEW ROLE OF WOMEN

Social Assistance, founded in 1936, was the official organism of the new regime in charge of attending to the neediest and spreading the new educational model. It was divided into different departments: the Central Winter Assistance Department; the Protection for Mothers and Children Department; the Learning Homes and School Shelters Department; and the Central Directorate of Middle and University Education. In the first days of the occupation the main concern was the distribution of food to the starving population. To that end Social Assistance installed the first canteens in Palau Moja on the Rambla and part of the SEPU department stores. Later on the Brotherhood Kitchens appeared; they supplied the neediest people with food and their “poor man’s soup” became famous. In 1939 Social Assistance distributed a monthly average of more than a million and a half meals in the province of Barcelona. Their doctrine was based on religious and national-syndicalist training, as well as the instruction of women in performing household tasks. Women were wives, mothers and a store of spiritual values.

THE HOUSEHOLD ECONOMY

During the post-war, sweet potatoes, carobs, vetch, salted sardines and soups became key foodstuffs for survival. Given the scarcity of potatoes, sweet potatoes were eaten even fried, stewed or for dessert. The salted sardines, of large size and poorer quality and popularly known as civiles or guardias civiles, were the queens of mealtimes. When they were ready to eat they were wrapped up in newspaper and placed on a door frame, which was closed to crush them and thus separate the skin from the flesh. Excessive eating of vetch caused a kind of paralysis for which there was no cure. The authorities themselves made mention of that potentially lethal toxicity in the press. Over the long years of penury a beefsteak was ox heart, tongue or gizzard. The housewives of the time knew how to cook and were familiar with the secrets for making tripe less tough and removing the unpleasant smell from testicles. Chicken was a luxury set aside for Christmas.

SUBSISTENCE RECIPES

In the first years of the Franco regime economic autarky also ruled in the world of publishing, specifically in recipes. Cooks and publishers with experience before the war chose to republish books and magazines that had not been censored by the regime. That was the case of the master chefs Ignasi Domènech, Josep Rondissoni and Joan Vila who, with their names Hispanicized, made a comeback with the republication of many of their works adapted to the new times. Domènech chose to include women’s names in the titles of his books, such as Marichu. La mejor cocinera española (Marichu. The Best Spanish Cook) and Claudina sabe guisar. Platos de cocina fáciles (Claudina Can Cook. Easy dishes). Rondissoni published his masterpiece, Culinaria. Nuevo tratado de cocina (Culinaria. New Treatise on Cooking), and collaborated with the food products company Gallina Blanca whilst giving classes to the FET y de las JONS (Spanish Tra-

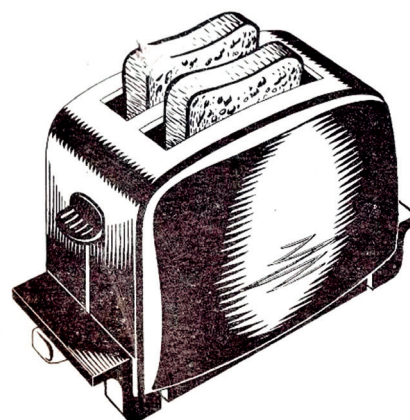
ditionalist and National Syndicalist Offensive Committees Phalanx) Women's Section, and Joan Vila gave cookery classes at the Women's Cultural Institute in Passeig de Gràcia and republished the Fichero Vila (Vila File) with the sponsorship of the Dos Leones ironmongers in Barcelona.

THE LARDER, TINS AND CANS

Long before the fridge became an indispensable piece of household equipment the working classes had been worried about the conservation of food, with the winter season especially in mind. People began to apply the first natural forms of conservation: cold (in zones where there was snow and ice) and drying (elimination of water through exposure to the sun, pressure and smoke). During the post-war period preserved food and tinned products also became a resource for surviving and stocking the larder. New pieces of cooking apparatus appeared and leading Catalan engineers such as Enric Berrens, who began to import Turmix products from Switzerland under the name of Comercial Hispano Helvética, made the household tasks of many women easier. In 1945 the PIMER company (Pequeñas Industrias Mecánico-Eléctricas Reunidas) was founded and Gabriel Lluelles ended up as one of the outstanding figures in the design of small electrical household devices in Catalonia with the Minipimer mixer.

1950, A CHANGE OF DIRECTION

The measures taken by the new government in 1951 brought about a change in the Spanish economic situation, which took the shape of an improvement in trade, the supply of basic products and the stabili-



**TOSTADOR
DE PAN**

Adag

Tipo americano

SEMI-AUTOMATICO

DE VENTA:

Manhattan

AVDA. GENERALÍSIMO FRANCO, 490

CONCEBIDO PARA CUALQUIER FORMA DE PAN

zation of prices, which led to the abolition of rationing and the disappearance of the black market. Wages and pre-war levels of production were gradually recovered. The disappearance of restrictions, particularly on electricity, reduced the harshness of the conditions of life to a certain extent. Gas began to replace coal-fired stoves for cooking in all homes. Tourism arrived, as did American products accompanied by a barrage of advertising messages about happiness. Thanks to the Marshall Plan, state schools, called "National Schools", received aid in the shape of tins of powdered milk, Cheddar cheese and butter. There was a sharp growth of the urban population as industry developed and people from all over the country came to the cities in ever-increasing numbers to work in factories and domestic service.