

## Occupation Sources Packet: Source Four

### *M. Thill, Milly's Story, A Young Girl's Memories of the Second World War, Luxembourg 1940-1945 (excerpts)*

"Living under German occupation during the war was indeed hard, but Luxembourgers couldn't complain about being short of money. We had plenty of German Deutschmarks, but there was very little to spend it on, and anything worth buying was soon snapped up."

"On top of that was rationing. Ration tickets were issued each month and the German authorities kept us on a very strict quota. The weekly ration per person was 500 grams of black army bread, 100 grams of white bread, 200 grams of meat, 125 grams of butter, sugar, flour, pasta and coffee substitute. For bread weighing 1 kilogram, for instance, we had to hand over two tickets of 500 grams."

"As the war went on, food and goods became more and more scarce. The reserves slowly ran out, with soap, coffee and flour, tobacco, nails and leather, yarn and wool, shoes and clothing gradually disappearing from the shop shelves. I well remember how the shortages affected my own family. It wasn't much fun for my mother having to wash clothes with some sort of soap substitute."

"Then suddenly, as the seven o'clock train thundered by, the kitchen door opened and in came the man they were waiting for, Mr. Birebam. His job was to weigh the slaughtered animals, note their weight and pass on the information to the food office, where the weights were registered. This office would then issue meat tickets according to the weights of the meat submitted, with fewer tickets being given for animals weighing a lot and more tickets for animals weighing less. It didn't pay to register too much meat. If you did, you could end up with no meat tickets for months on end, sometimes even up to a year. We all ended up playing a sort of game, trying to trick the weighing master."

"My father placed the first quarter on the scale. Mr. Birebam peered over his glasses, counted the kilos and noted the weight. And so it went on until all four quarters had been weighed. The front quarters weighed about 18 kilos and the hind 20 kilos. The man from Roods shook his head. He couldn't understand why the pig wasn't heavier with those lovely big hinds. He looked at my father suspiciously and asked him to weigh the head."

"Father was taken aback and tried to take Mr. Birebam's mind off the pig's head, explaining that the head was only meant for aspic anyway and wasn't worth the trouble. But the weighing master became suspicious and insisted on the head being weighed. Father added the weights in a hurry: one, two, three kilos, but nothing happened, not even a flicker of the needle. Then, almost in a panic, he added another kilo, which made it four, far too much anyway for a pig's head, but still the scale didn't register. The head weighed nothing!"

"'What the devil is the meaning of this?' screamed Mr. Birebam. Father, clearly rattled, started again, even more hurriedly than before, but with no more luck."

"The weighing master slowly removed his glasses and looked straight at my father: 'You're cheating, aren't you?'"