

Martin Bruegel

“The infernal underside of the restaurant industry”

Parisian cooks, kitchen hygiene and collective action in the 1920s

Abstract: At the height of France’s gastronomic reputation in the 1920s, the union of Paris cooks – *La Chambre syndicale ouvrière des cuisiniers de Paris et régions saisonnières* – engaged in a protracted struggle to improve workplace hygiene. Theirs is an apt case to move grassroots campaigns for public health to a central place in general and working-class historiography. First, the cooks’ union articulated the importance of sanitary-related issues by using a wide repertoire of actions (fliers, newspaper articles, lobbying, meetings). Second, rather than focusing on particular ailments for which victims and their advocates sought retroactive compensation, the cooks brandished an ecological understanding of the risks that lurked in restaurant kitchens. In effect, their goal was the prevention of occupational hazards. Third, faced with governmental inertia and contrary to assertions in historical writing based exclusively on official reporting, the cooks launched a strike to promote the sanitary reform of restaurant kitchens. The historical study of cooks’ activism is beneficial for a number of reasons. It showcases the cooks’ media savvy in terms of how they brought into play issues of consumer protection and gastronomic reputation. After all, spoiled restaurant meals endangered the clientele’s health, tainted the country’s culinary prominence, and hurt tourism. The link between production and consumption proved to be a mechanism with which to obtain access to the government. The pressure exerted by the cooks’ union ultimately prompted an official investigation into restaurant hygiene, the results of which led to an unprecedented, precocious attempt at democratic industrial relations. Cooks, chefs, employers, and civil servants sat down to find technical solutions for hygienic deficiencies in restaurant kitchens. The experience was short-lived, but when the left conquered the Paris city hall in 1936, a new ordinance on sanitary regulations afforded restaurant hygiene a special section.

Key Words: cooks, restaurants, hygiene, social mobilization, Paris, Golden Twenties.

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Restaurants were a prominent feature of Paris in the 1920s. A tourist guide labelled the French capital “the city *par excellence* of restaurants.”¹ The *Annuaire du Commerce* of 1922 listed about 3500 eating places with full menus, and over 13,000 *marchands de vin* and 3200 *crèmeries* where menus were abridged or customers brought in some of the foods.² These fixtures of everyday life left two contradictory legacies, both of which are connected to gastronomy. Food was an “entrancing subject.”³ There was little question abroad about France’s pre-eminence in cooking matters: “Paris reigns supreme in the art of the cuisine,” asserted the 1925 guidebook, *How to Enjoy Paris*.⁴ And, for the *Washington Times*, Paris was the “epitome of all the good eating and drinking under the sun.”⁵ Encounters with French food bear out such assertions. Janet Flanner (1892–1978), the Paris correspondent for the *New Yorker* between 1925 and 1975 remembered “the good taste of Paris food that I was eating for the first time;” she maintained that “eating in France was a new body experience.”⁶ A student at the Sorbonne in 1926–1927 and future reporter for the *New Yorker*, A. J. Liebling (1904–1963) had chanced upon the *Restaurant des Beaux-Arts*, where he developed “eating ... into one of my major subjects.”⁷ *Jazz: A Flippant Magazine* made it a sport among English-speaking expatriates to search for unpretentious “good places to eat.”⁸ The geography of “plain bistros” and luxurious restaurants pervades Ernest Hemingway’s posthumously published recollection of Paris in the 1920s. Hemingway (1899–1961) recalled meals that underpinned literary companionship and business, rewarded writing progress and horse-betting luck, and preceded and followed lovemaking. His evocation of the conviviality among writers and intellectuals in *A Moveable Feast* was the literary consecration of commensality as a part of Parisian identity.⁹

There is a grimmer side to France’s peculiarly exalted relation to food and drink. The presumption of the country’s culinary triumph in the nineteenth century and beyond runs close to mistaking a discourse for enduring, unchanging and serene social reality. It neglects the work it took to achieve culinary prowess just as it passes over working conditions in commercial kitchens.¹⁰ The enthusiasm for restaurant meals took a blow with the publication of George Orwell’s *Down and Out in Paris and London* (1933). Orwell (1903–1950) described the preparation of meals in diminutive, dreadfully hot underground kitchens. A three-month spell in the late 1920s as a dishwasher, first at a luxury hotel in the centre of Paris and then in “a thoroughly bad restaurant” (of which there were, he said, hundreds), led to Orwell’s discovery of “a stifling, low-ceiling inferno of a cellar, [...] a filthy little scullery” where cooks – dripping with sweat, trampling food wastes – worked.¹¹

This was shocking news. It travelled fast and wide. The echo was global. After all, France provided the primary model in culinary subjects, whether they concerned taste, consumer practices or gastronomy.¹² Suddenly though, reviews were repeat-

ing Orwell's portrayal of squalid kitchen conditions. An Australian commentator noted that,

“his descriptions of the horrors hidden from the customers' eyes in such establishments, the filth in the kitchens, the disgusting way the food is handled, and so forth, make it easy to understand why Parisians themselves are so fond of those unpretentious little restaurants to which access is gained through the kitchen.”¹³

The reception of the French translation was understandably mixed. *Le Peuple*, a union newspaper, praised it as a “book of singular power.” Conservative journals accused it of Francophobia. They pegged the text as “an attempt to discredit French cuisine across the world.”¹⁴ Middle-of-the-road news print emphasized the testimony's realism. Orwell's depiction of the “infernal underside of the restaurant industry,” one reviewer remarked, “was to give a retrospective retch to Americans who had patronized such establishments.”¹⁵

Orwell disingenuously tried to exonerate himself from the blame of having indicted the lack of cleanliness in much of the Parisian hospitality sector.¹⁶ But the fact of the matter is that he wrote the *Urtext* for the study of kitchen work. He laid out the blueprint to shape subsequent newspaper commentary,¹⁷ academic research,¹⁸ rehearsals of his “timeless, legendary Parisian restaurant experience,”¹⁹ and front-line coverage intent to “spill some [kitchen] trade secrets.”²⁰ These different views share the idea that cooks have always taken their appalling working conditions in stride. Such fatalism supposedly expresses the conviction that culinary art is rooted in suffering. “Gastronomy is the science of pain,” New York chef-turned-writer Anthony Bourdain (1956–2018) asserted. “Professional cooks belong to a secret society whose ancient rituals derive from the principles of stoicism in the face of humiliation, injury, fatigue, and the threat of illness.”²¹ The assertion is overblown. Historical research exposes it as supercilious and sensational rhetoric. A look at the goings-on in Parisian restaurant kitchens in the 1920s finds cooks who united to fight for improved working conditions. The cooks' union in Paris (known as *La Chambre syndicale ouvrière des cuisiniers de Paris et régions saisonnières*) aimed to improve chronically deficient conditions of hygiene aggravated by the stress of work.²² It sought government intervention to eliminate physical, biological, and chemical risks so as to prevent injury, illness, and premature death among kitchen personnel.

An argument drawing attention to cooks' militancy runs against conventional wisdom. The historiography of the French labour movement has long concentrated on issues pertaining to the standard of living, daily and weekly working hours and, of course, salaries.²³ Moreover, specific professional diseases (*phosphorus necrosis*, saturnism, silicosis) and workers' financial compensation have attracted historians'

attention.²⁴ The cooks' case was different, however. "Without doubt," a cook declared during the union's general assembly of January 1925, "our wages are a vital question. But our deplorable, unhealthy working conditions are even more vital."²⁵ Their struggle concentrated on the prevention of workplace risks, not – in the words of historians Sellers and Menning – on "particular ailments" for which victims and their advocates requested retroactive financial reparation.²⁶ With their bodies at stake, cooks – unlike other trades – fought for an end to often implicit monetary transactions meant to offset the loss of health with higher earnings, insurance indemnities or in-kind (food) benefits.²⁷

The cooks' campaign for restaurant salubrity deployed a wide repertoire of actions.²⁸ Know-how in the kitchen sustained their claim to expertise in workplace hygiene. The initiation of a public debate clearly distinguished their union from late-nineteenth century food trades that were targets of hygienic reform. Whatever the stance of bakers and slaughterhouse personnel on working conditions and technical modernization around 1900, they did not participate in discussions on sanitary modifications of their workplace.²⁹ The cooks, however, composed pedagogical fliers, organized public meetings, relied on and promoted medical expertise, penned newspaper articles, engaged in discreet lobbying, and staged a much publicized, two-week-long strike in May 1924. Their sustained mobilization exemplifies the struggle for access to, and staying-power in the public arena where other issues competed for space. Acts and argument reveal tactical surefootedness. Union leaders knew – or learned – to play the emotions of consumers, pick the interest of entrepreneurs, and catch the ear of politicians.

To reach public opinion and the government, the cooks' campaign bridged the chasm between the kitchen production area and the wider world of consumption. They linked their professional environment to the quality of the dishes and the well-being of restaurant clients. Sociologist Erving Goffman famously relied on Orwell's experience in a Parisian restaurant to illustrate the claims different contexts make on the presentation of self. The stylish decor of the "frontstage" dining-hall commanded refined manners. The dirty environment of the "backstage" kitchen combined with coarse conduct. The kitchen door separated the two areas into almost discrete social spaces. Whereas waiters entered kitchens and immediately adopted its crude code of behaviour in language and bodily demeanour, cooks – sweaty, dirty, and sloppily dressed – never ventured into the guests' zone.³⁰

Meals, however, did move fluidly between these spaces. The strategy of the *Chambre syndicale* highlighted the deleterious impact of the unsanitary production process on the quality of the food. Sullied dishes presented a danger to customers' well-being. That should have been enough to get authorities to implement hygienic regulation in the hospitality sector. But such information also jeopardized France's gas-

tronomic prestige and boded unforeseeable consequences on its tourist industry.³¹ The combination pushed government to react. The state was not a monolith, however. While the Ministry of the Interior monitored the cooks' organization as working-class radicalization worried the political establishment, the inscription of their goals in the larger concern for consumer safety earned them a more sympathetic ear in the Ministry of Labour, Hygiene, Assistance and Social Prevention. As a result of the cooks' persistent pressure, the Minister of Labour precipitated an inquiry into the hygiene in restaurant and hotel kitchens in 1924. The survey's official purpose was to serve as an instrument of sanitary change. Its unstated aim was to foil blows to the reputation of French gastronomy.

This, then, is a case study of mobilization among workers to reduce the health hazards at their job.³² The movement started with the cooks' experience on the kitchen floor (section 1). The union translated such dissatisfaction into grassroots pressure on the government to enforce extant sanitary regulation (section 2). The campaign peaked with the strike of May 1924 (section 3). The walk-out prompted the authoritative investigation into restaurant hygiene (section 4). Its controversial findings (section 5) led to an attempt to work under the administration's auspices with other industry stakeholders on the amelioration of unsanitary circumstances within existing legal frames (section 6). The occasional headline notwithstanding, the drive faded out in the late 1920s when Eric Blair descended the stairways into an underground hotel kitchen in central Paris from which he would emerge on his way to become George Orwell (section 7).

The focus on the role of militancy among the cooks offers an original angle on aspects of conventional wisdom in labour history. First, quite contrary to the evidence,³³ there is still some lingering doubt as to why working-class organizations – in France as elsewhere – cared so little for health in the past.³⁴ The cooks of Paris demonstrate that the reform of their occupational environment was an important, quasi congenital motivation of their union throughout the interwar years. Second, the cooks' insistence on the prevention of dangers in the workplace adds nuance to assertions that “union claims insisted before everything else on reparation.”³⁵ Third, the union's actions invalidate the notion of health as a motive absent from strike movements.³⁶ Fourth, in establishing a link between production and consumption, the *Chambre syndicale* erased the opposition between public health and workplace hygiene, the latter often considered the owner's private realm.³⁷ The argument proved to be a kind of leverage for obtaining access to the government. Fifth, union pressure moved political authorities to intervene in the relations between restaurant owners and workers. Civil servants sat down with union officials and employers on a government commission. The goal was to find technical solutions for hygienic deficiencies in restaurant kitchens. The experiment in democratic industrial relations

was precocious and short-lived. It would take another decade and laws on working hours and collective conventions promulgated under the Popular-Front government in 1936 and 1937 for an institutionalized forum of industrial negotiations to emerge.³⁸ But the openness of progressive politicians suggested a way out of what Stanley Hoffmann called “the stalemate society” of the Third French Republic with its difficult and, at times, impossible social dialog.³⁹

1. Working in commercial kitchens

The peace after World War I roused expectations of a return to decent living conditions. Workers aspired to limit jobs to eight hours per day, to enjoy a weekly day of rest, and to receive wages that kept up with inflation.⁴⁰ Cooks were also concerned with the conditions of their work environment. The *Chambre syndicale* issued a position paper in 1919 in which workplace hygiene figured as a primary reason for joining the union.

“The cooks are the pariahs of the working-class; they spend 12, 14 and 16 hours in unhealthy, overheated rooms, where the air cube [per worker] is insufficient, defective equipment causes accidents, with emissions of carbonic acid and gas, surrounded by waste and latrines [...]. These circumstances shorten our lives and render them intolerable. There are, in Paris, about 10,000 unhappy people who work in such conditions.”

It concluded that, “only a strong union will be capable of lifting them out of the caves where they stagnate.”⁴¹ Even the conciliatory *Union fraternelle & syndicale des Cuisiniers du Département de Seine*, a blend between friendly society and union, and the owner-dominated, 4,000-member strong mutualist *Société de Secours mutuels des cuisiniers* put the struggle for kitchen hygiene on their programs.⁴² The issue figured prominently in the list of claims during the first large post-war demonstration at the Paris Labour Exchange where 2,000 cooks assembled in late May 1919.⁴³

The cooks’ union of Paris discussed kitchen hygiene regularly. They invited a physician to give a talk on the subject.⁴⁴ They compiled a report on the “deplorable conditions of hygiene in which the majority of Parisian cooks are compelled to work.” The testimony was submitted to the Ministry of Labour. It contained a list of disorders linked to “the total lack of hygiene” in kitchens. According to this material, the incidence of tuberculosis among cooking personnel appeared to be higher than in the general urban population. Bronchitis and pneumonia resulting from cooks’ alternating exposure to heat next to stoves and cold in icy storage space plagued them. Their long hours in confined spaces were said to lead to physical exhaustion, general weak-

ness, and even premature death. The union refrained from asserting that such an insidious environment existed in the majority of restaurants. But it did attribute their existence to “the recklessness, the egotism and the greed of certain owners.”⁴⁵

The cooks’ union assured the government of its determination to uphold the republican order. The reformist and the revolutionary wings of the working-class movement were locked in a fierce struggle over party and labour strategies (and their relations).⁴⁶ The cooks’ leadership came down on the moderate side. They couched the union’s claims in legal terms. Their correspondence reminded state authorities of the existing laws to regulate restaurant kitchens.⁴⁷ Executive decrees enacted before World War I stipulated that the space per kitchen worker measure 10 m³ (or 353 cubic feet), sufficient ventilation keep temperatures manageable, lighting provide a bright workspace, garbage be removed daily in airtight containers, sinks include a drain to remove used water, and waterproof floors be swept at least once a day before or after work.⁴⁸ The union invited a strict application of these regulations, while bemoaning the lack of qualified personnel to enforce the law. Its proposition to improve legal efficiency was to recruit and train workers as labour inspectors. It reasoned that the practical knowledge of jobs gave these men the skill to confront bosses tempted to circumvent legal requirements.⁴⁹

2. Consumer protection

It took more than the cooks’ health to interest public opinion. The spark would finally spring from the tension between working conditions in kitchens and their relation to France’s gastronomic reputation. After restaurateurs had lamented the difficulty of recruiting apprentices to the cooking trade and so highlighted the fragility of France’s culinary pre-eminence for lack of well-trained cooks in 1923, the *Chambre syndicale* invited the daily *L’Œuvre* to take a look behind the scene of “gastronomic excellence.” The union meant to show that the crisis of apprenticeship originated with the alarming conditions in restaurant kitchens. The gambit in the front-page feature was to take the reader down the narrow stairs through the ever-hotter circles of hell. The exploratory journey followed the footsteps of Dante’s Virgil. The descent’s literal and figurative low point – the entrails of hell – was the dishwasher’s narrow, low, humid, slippery, smelly, and sweltering space. On the way the guide and the newspaperman discussed inadequate wages in the face of inflation, long hours and exhaustion, rheumatisms, and physical deterioration.⁵⁰

L’Œuvre disclosed uncomfortable facts about a central place of Parisian life. Its publication also bestowed an idea on the story’s protagonists. The cooks’ union gazette, *Le Réveil des Cuisiniers*, ran a commentary on the exploration of “the lam-

entable settings in which cooks have to work.” It saw a campaign in the press as the best way to “improve their well-being and to guarantee a future to French cuisine.”⁵¹ The timing was thus no mere coincidence when, in September 1923, the Federation of Food Workers decided to boost the cleanliness file. It resolved to launch a campaign that targeted hygiene in restaurant and hotel kitchens.⁵² They set out to turn that single newspaper report into a widely received public argument. The reproduction of the kitchen workforce was not the only issue at stake, though this, too, was hotly contested terrain. The question concerned the relation between labour and gastronomy or, to be more precise, the recognition and reward of the work it took to assure France’s continuing reputation as the world’s beacon of the culinary arts.

Victory in 1918 had left France with the fear of decline in the post-war world. Discussions on gastronomy echoed the general mood. The right-wing *Action française* sustained efforts to “resuscitate, re-animate the culinary profession and its reputation.”⁵³ *Comœdia*, a cultural daily, claimed that “the golden age of food is past.”⁵⁴ The *Figaro*, a generalist newspaper, ran an editorial in which it pinpointed the contemporary fragility of French cuisine.⁵⁵ *Le Réveil des Cuisiniers* noted that “our bosses and even some colleagues bemoan, maybe rightly so, that our cuisine deteriorates, that it is no longer artistic, is no longer the old French cuisine.”⁵⁶ In its response to the *Figaro*, however, it did not link the perceived threat to a regression in ingenuity and talent or – as employers seemed to imply – to the faintheartedness of French youth reluctant to take up strenuous jobs. The union tied the lack of qualified cooks to the lamentable kitchen conditions. “Journalists of the general press do not stop repeating that our cuisine is dying. They do so without giving the cause,” the union paper wrote. “We answer that our cuisine is dying because of the absence of salubrious kitchens.”⁵⁷

The *Chambre syndicale* had earlier decided to abstain from the ceremonies organized to celebrate author and culinary critique Brillat-Savarin (1755–1826). Culinary entrepreneurs, among whom the owner-led *Société des Secours mutuels* played an active role, aimed at aggrandizing the international standing of French gastronomy with the inauguration of a monument to the author of *The Physiology of Taste*.⁵⁸ Their principal goal was to boost tourism. The holiday industry proclaimed that “he who, in France, says tourism, says cuisine.” It actively participated in fundraising for a statue.⁵⁹ Widely distributed journals welcomed the idea. They argued that the love of good food was the only non-divisive passion in France. Others, located on the political fringe to the right of the political spectrum, saw it as a means to retrieve something akin to the French soul. The cooks’ union declined to participate in the festivities. It held that, “the glorification of our cuisine is not the union’s business. The kitchen kills us.”⁶⁰

The union linked working conditions, food quality and customer well-being. Meals connected production and consumption. The argument transformed res-

restaurant hygiene into a public-health issue. Union leaders once again wrote to the administration. Yet this time, they not only addressed the report to the head of the labour bureau, they published the letter in their monthly magazine. Their take on working conditions remained the same. They compared the job of cooks to “physical punishment.” The conclusion, however, added another dimension. The situation, the union said, was “not only detrimental to the health of the cooks, but also of the consumers.”⁶¹

The meetings of the cooks’ union now attracted attention. Events that put Paris in the fulcrum of international happenings whetted the curiosity among journalists. Two thousand cooks debated salary raises and kitchen hygiene on April 10, 1924. A police report noted – and newspapers from the right to the left confirmed – that the participants “considered a general movement during the Olympic Games” (set to open on May 4 and to last through July 27, 1924).⁶² The widely-circulated *Journal* disapproved of the threat but endorsed the hygienic reform of restaurant kitchens, some of which “were so monstrous, work there should be prohibited.”⁶³ It belonged to the communist *L’Humanité* to highlight the link between production and consumption, between cooks and clients. The daily brushed the mention of the Olympics aside as bourgeois elusion to avoid focusing on workers’ concerns. Clean kitchens obviously benefitted the health of the cooks. But the campaign against the “filthy dumps in which the food of Paris is prepared” also aimed, it contended, at guaranteeing consumer well-being.⁶⁴

L’Humanité reiterated the argument in a sequel in which it featured a number of renowned, if unnamed restaurants. The description of the “inconveniences and dangers of the cook’s job” contained the usual elements. The heat climbing up to 60°C (or 140°F), the extreme variations of temperatures between stoves and cold-chambers, the low ceilings, the dangerous utensils from hot pans to trenchant knives, slippery floors, the terrible smell in the dishwasher’s corner with its open garbage cans, the lack of toilets and washbasins, and “dust and microbes floating in through the street-level window.” The inventory was so long and shocking that the reporter feigned incredulity in the face of the clients’ indifference to their own self-interest in clean kitchens. The article concluded on an ominous note. It hinted at the coming of more forceful public action.⁶⁵

3. Strike

The cooks’ union sought contact with two interlocutors. It appealed to state authorities in order to move ahead on the hygiene question. At the same time, it tried to negotiate wages with their employers’ organizations. The government’s response was

tepid, the employers' temporizing. According to a letter that the union leadership addressed to the Minister of Labour, the owners' delaying strategy had lasted for over a year by late April 1924. The unions devised a ploy to divide chefs, cooks, seconds, sauciers, dishwashers, waiters, and other restaurant personnel.⁶⁶ The stragem tried the cooks' patience, and the lack of progress on both sanitary and financial matters left the union with few bargaining chips.⁶⁷

Mainstream newspapers such as *Le Journal* and *Le Petit Parisien* wondered whether a general strike in the food sector was imminent.⁶⁸ *L'Humanité*, too, held its breath but made sure to highlight the distinctiveness of the cooks' demands. Like Orwell a few years later, it insisted on the pride most – not all – cooks took in their work. It then made a point of citing a union leader on the “ever continuing filthiness, narrowness, stuffiness of restaurant kitchens.”⁶⁹ *Le Gaulois*, a conservative newspaper, mentioned a “monster meeting of kitchen personnel” but reported the owners' indifference to the threat in spite of the expected Olympic rush.⁷⁰ If employers adopted a relaxed attitude, the Ministry of the Interior kept an eye on the happenings at the cooks' meetings. It took their mood seriously but also registered the prudence with which the union edged toward a strike. Its agents duly recorded the *Chambre's* determination to inform the public at large. One among them even transcribed the hand-out that union members distributed and posted in the streets of Paris.⁷¹

The historiography on strikes suggests that cooks were more likely to leave a job than to engage in industry-wide collective action. Cooks had walked out on their employers only once in the union's forty year existence. They had joined the food workers' movement in 1907 to demand the legal enforcement of all workers' right to one day of rest per week. Even on that occasion cooks added workplace hygiene to their list of grievances.⁷² The *Chambre syndicale* explained to the people of Paris that a strike was the cooks' weapon of last resort. Protracted negotiations with the government and the employers had led nowhere. The tract asked the public to show sympathy with the cooks' struggle in spite of the inconveniences it might bring about. Hygiene proved the central concern. Insalubrious kitchens threatened the health of restaurant customers. The pamphlet alluded to a medical opinion that signalled the dangers the appalling conditions in kitchens presented for public health. The union alleged that gastrointestinal disorders were not infrequent among the clientele. Their protection from food poisoning imperatively required to outlaw filthy, noxious production areas. A startling sketch depicted rats, insects and microbes in sculleries, pantries, work stations, pots, and pans as vectors of sickness. Finally, the union invited restaurant customers to inspect kitchens to form their own opinion (and thus put pressure on owners to change things). In any case, the solidarity of consumers with kitchen workers was to strengthen a campaign whose ultimate goal was to improve everybody's health.⁷³

On May 14, 1924, a meeting of roughly 1,700 cooks voted to go on strike.⁷⁴ Starting on May 17, the action lasted through May 30. On its thirteenth day, *L'Humanité* exulted that the mobilization and its duration were “a tour de force in a profession little given to this kind of conflict.”⁷⁵ The government report tallied roughly 2,000 cooks on strike in 500 establishments, affecting the work of about 5,000 cooks.⁷⁶ (Without citing its source, the *New York Times* announced 4,000 cooks on strike on May 18).⁷⁷ The day-to-day observations of the police registered the distribution of 3200 strike cards on Tuesday, May 20.⁷⁸ From then on, the number of workers on strike regularly declined. By May 29, the note from the Prefect of Paris to the Minister of the Interior announced that the union’s strike fund had run into a deficit.⁷⁹ The falloff in participation did not prevent authorities from qualifying the strike as “a partial success.” The cooks’ wages got indeed increased but not to the extent demanded. Nor did the employers sign a collective contract fixing a pay roster across the trade (rather than by establishment).⁸⁰ Nevertheless, the rally was a remarkable achievement. It united cooks across the numerous small-scale businesses of the hospitality sector in an economy accustomed to collective action on the level of individual establishments.⁸¹ It also brought together three of the four unions representing kitchen personnel (cooks, dishwashers, and service employees).

The official record said nothing about kitchen hygiene. Restaurant owners used the mutualist *Revue culinaire* to report, barely and disapprovingly, on the tensions around wages.⁸² The general press, however, responded to the union’s pedagogy. Newspapers welcomed the focus on cleanliness. *Le Populaire* played on the discrepancy between the luxury in restaurant dining rooms and the poor hygiene in their kitchens.⁸³ *Le Journal* emphasized common sense. “It is impossible to cook healthy food in unhealthy circumstances,” it stated. “The topic is thus of a very general order.”⁸⁴ *Le Matin* concurred: “there is still too great a number of restaurant kitchens [in Paris] of which the least one can say is that they are unpalatable.” The article concluded that the elimination of such kitchens was not only beneficial to the health of kitchen personnel but necessary to ensure the well-being of restaurant clients.⁸⁵

4. Inquiry

The talk about a possible strike among cooks instantly reverberated with the Ministry of Labour. On April 28, 1924, a “Note” and an “Urgent Letter” arrived on the desk of the Ministry’s director. Their telegraphic style betrayed the urgency. It spelled out an immediate concern: “Movement among the cooks. One of their demands: improvement of sanitary conditions. Absolutely necessary that our inquiry take off in May.”⁸⁶ Two days later, the Minister turned to the labour inspectors. Mainstream newspa-

pers relayed a communiqué in which Charles Daniel-Vincent (1874–1946) publicized the coming inquiry into restaurant kitchens. All of them welcomed the initiative.⁸⁷ Except the communist *L'Humanité*. It smelled a rat. It surmised that the Minister aimed at stymieing the cooks' mobilization. The discoveries would end up collecting dust in the Ministry's archives (not so! Unfortunately, they've disappeared).⁸⁸

The survey was carried out by the *Inspection du Travail*, an arm of the Ministry of Labour whose main task it was (and still is) to ensure the application of labour laws. In less than a month's time, twenty inspectors investigated 749 restaurants in Paris. The inquiry's thirty items focused on the kitchen's architectural aspects and physical environment (location, surface, space, equipment, source of light), comfort and amenities (presence of water closets, lavabos and a locker room, aeration, temperature), and cleanliness (periodicity of cleaning, garbage disposal, used-water drain). Its goal was to arrive at an appraisal of working conditions. Its criteria centred on the volume of air allocated to each worker, the danger of accidents due to exiguity, the heat level during the most intense cooking spells, and the evacuation of smoke, vapours, and odours.⁸⁹ The verdict concerning the well-known restaurant *Drouant* enumerated "a lack of air, very hot – 20 men in the kitchen – exiguous space, stoves never farther than 50 centimeters." At the *Brasserie de l'Observatoire*, it detailed "insufficient ventilation – passable cleanliness – walls impossible to clean."⁹⁰

The inquiry did not alarm the Union of Restaurant Owners. On the contrary, its spokesman argued that employers had an interest in doing everything to maintain the good reputation of French cuisine.⁹¹ Reputation was indeed the inquiry's top-most concern as gastronomy sustained tourism.⁹² Headlines such as "Paris Cooks Call a Strike for the Olympic Opening Day" threatened to harm business at a time when "the French capital [was] filled with visitors wholly dependent on restaurants for their food."⁹³ Chief inspector Martin began the presentation of the results with a remark on what motivated the investigation. He mentioned "the existence of rather overhasty generalizations to level somewhat critical remarks at Paris restaurant kitchens and their sanitary settings." The rumour mill on the state of Parisian restaurants was, Martin declared, a "threat to the good reputation of French cuisine." He used an euphemism when he declared the "continued diffusion of insinuations on the operations in Parisian kitchens an infelicity." Martin summarized the official take on the survey's findings. According to the government, the review of 749 restaurant kitchens in central Paris set the record straight. The collected data authorized the "formal conclusion that the restaurant kitchens in Paris are clean and very correctly run." Overall, Martin concluded, respect for the law of hygiene and security characterised the hospitality sector.⁹⁴

The message got through.⁹⁵ Newspapers repeated the official synopsis. Property and progress formed the elements of press language. Both seemed to stem from the

“owners’ constant desire to keep the working area impeccably clean and to improve working conditions.” Undoubtedly there were a few establishments with shortcomings. But the media were reassuring, reporting that flawed restaurants had received notifications to remedy their poor hygienic situation.⁹⁶

5. Dispute

Two factors disturbed official serenity with regard to kitchen hygiene in Paris. For one, the report listed the problem of cellar kitchens. One sixth (or 130) of the 749 kitchens in the survey were situated below street level (remember that both of Orwell’s jobs were in cellar kitchens). Their location induced difficulties with the evacuation of smoke, water, and garbage. The survey positively noted the wide observance of the legally mandated cube of air per worker and the kitchens’ overall cleanliness. The inquiry prompted labour inspectors to broach a few suggestions. Architecture, comfort, and cleanliness deserved improvements. The inspectors encouraged the regular coating of kitchen walls with water-proof paint, the covering of kitchen floors with impermeable building material. Cooks ought to benefit from the presence of, and easy access to, water-closets, locker-rooms, and sinks. Trash disposal apparently cried out for improvement as garbage attracted cockroaches and rodents. And temperatures were the thorny problem *per se* in kitchens. Its solution required efficient ventilation, an expensive investment.⁹⁷

Union outrage greeted the Minister’s upbeat communiqué on the survey’s findings. Cooks did not recognize their gloomy working conditions in the Ministry’s optimistic summary. Official communication was, according to the union’s executive committee, “window-dressing in front of consumers.”⁹⁸ The discrepancy between the Panglossian press release and the undisclosed list of desirable and regulatory improvements in hygienic set-ups spurned a fierce response from the union base and its leadership. They expressed bewilderment in front of the Minister’s irresolution to seize the problem of infectious kitchens. They puzzled over the failure to come up with a government plan that would transform Parisian kitchens “into places less prejudicial to the health of cooks and customers.” The union threatened to go on strike again or to picket establishments where working conditions were unhealthy. Its secretary asked for a meeting with the Minister himself.⁹⁹

The press on the left reiterated the union’s ire. *L’Humanité* labelled government communication a bluff. Its purpose was to conceal the lack of political determination in the application of labour laws. The Labour Ministry’s communiqué was fanciful at best, mendacious at worst. It insulted kitchen personnel. The newspaper invited the Minister to a guided tour of several restaurant kitchens in the centre of Paris. He

would then receive a first-hand experience of temperatures as high as 120°F, the stink of fermenting detritus, and the lack of toilets, locker room, and washbasins. It also announced the organization of workers' rallies to fight for better kitchen hygiene.¹⁰⁰ The *Moniteur des Syndicats* opposed the insalubrious cellar kitchens to the luxurious dining-halls reserved for the rich clientele. The divergence threw an astonishing light on the Ministry's optimism as "much remained to be done to improve restaurant hygiene."¹⁰¹ *La Toque blanche*, the gazette of the chefs' association, supported the struggle for clean, aerated, and healthy kitchens.¹⁰² The rather mainstream *Tribune de Paris* cast doubt on the seriousness of the inquiry. Providing names of establishments that apparently disregarded regulations, the journal accused the labour inspection of carelessness.¹⁰³ *Le Peuple*, too, questioned the inquiry's credibility. In December 1925, it went over the history of workers' safety in the food industries. It recalled the numerous aspects of kitchen insalubrity (exiguity, filth, heat, odours...). An interview with the secretary of the Federation of Food Workers provided background intelligence and union takes on public policies (or the lack thereof). Antoine Savoie regretted the mystery surrounding the inquiry's findings as they were never published. He accused the Labour Ministry of whitewashing. The reason was simple: "It would have been ill advised to repel all those Americans who were to visit, and eat in, our country."¹⁰⁴ The outcry had built up pressure around the Ministry. Its head sought a way to appease cooks.

6. Collective bargaining

The chief of the Labour Bureau Charles Picquenard (1873–1940) met union representatives in November 1924.¹⁰⁵ It is significant that a centre-left government hatched the idea. The Minister of Labour in the *Cartel des Gauches*, Justin Godart (1871–1956), was well-known for his progressive ideas on sanitary measures, workplace accidents, the eight-hour day as well as workers' participation in policy decisions.¹⁰⁶ He thought collective bargaining a viable path to conflict resolution and directly contacted the different professional organizations in the restaurant business to organize a meeting. Its purpose was to establish a mutually endorsed list of shortcomings in restaurant hygiene. State officials would then guide – or stir – the participants toward acceptable solutions of these problems.¹⁰⁷

The cooks thought it wise to keep up pressure while the labour inspectors worked. A general assembly decided to drum up support. "Consumers cannot but be interested in them [clean restaurant kitchens] and it is a good strategy to bring public opinion on our side."¹⁰⁸ It diffused information in the *Réveil des Cuisiniers* to mobilize the cooks, members and non-members of the union (membership hovered

between 650 and 1,000, and the union reckoned that there were at least 4,000 non-unionized journeymen cooks in Paris).¹⁰⁹ The journal published a manifesto. It distributed 7,000 copies so as “to touch public opinion.” Its content belittled the upbeat interpretation of the 1924 survey as mirror-dressing. Handouts described the filthy, overheated kitchens where rodents gnawed on tainted food at night. References to earlier newspaper reporting were to corroborate such descriptions. The point was to highlight the shared interest between cooks and clients.

The Ministry organized a meeting on April 7, 1925. Employers assured workers, labour inspectors, and civil servants of their goodwill in improving kitchen hygiene.¹¹⁰ Union representatives in turn vowed to search for common intelligence rather than sanctions. The head cooks (*chefs*) had their own delegation. They were adamant about the need for spacious, aerated kitchens to maintain culinary standards.¹¹¹ These respective positions comforted government officials. They insisted on the necessity to apply extant rules, a proposition with which everybody agreed. The participants had no difficulty concurring on principles while leaving discretionary power to labour inspectors. They agreed on the advantages of electricity to keep temperatures tolerable but acknowledged the slow-paced extension of an electric grid in Paris. The consensus came down to inspectors visiting particular businesses in order to make the call on the heat in their kitchen according to proximate circumstances (hour of the day, exiguity, location). Participants also saw eye to eye on the advantages of tiles over paint when it came to clean kitchen walls and to mop their floors. Cellar kitchens proved particularly difficult to scrub and scour because draining toward sewers was often impossible. Whatever the difficulties and the high cost of tiling, the commission was unanimous in urging the application of the law. It encouraged the labour inspection to make sure kitchens got thoroughly washed at least once a day. Unison prevailed with regard to garbage disposal. Metal containers with a lid were to serve as garbage cans. Kitchen personnel were to empty and wash such receptacles on a daily basis. Control of compliance fell to labour inspectors. No one contested the desirability of water-closets, locker rooms, and washbasins for use by kitchen personnel only. Here, too, inspectors were to prod employers to install these facilities by taking into account the space available to do so.¹¹²

The government scored two points. First, employees and employers sat at the same table less than a year after a bitter strike. The meeting came close to collective bargaining over workplace conditions. The discussion arrived at a consensus on a few criteria to guide kitchen hygiene. Second, the talks aggrandized the authority of the Bureau of Labour Inspection. Adversaries on the kitchen floor, workers, and employers agreed on an arbiter. Labour inspectors gained legitimacy. It surely proved useful that the parties reiterated their respect for the representatives of the law.¹¹³ The cooks’ union, the chefs’ association, and restaurant owners settled on a

template of rules. These coordinates framed the inspectors' common sense when distinguishing spurious criticism from sound complaint, extraneous detail from pertinent observation. The dialog remained short on practical advice. Nevertheless, it offered a blueprint to leave the social stalemate behind. And it reinforced the part of the state in economic relations.

7. End of cycle

The political context explains the end of the experiment in collective negotiation. Instability had characterized governments throughout the 1920s.¹¹⁴ Seven Ministers of Labour handled the hygiene question between 1924 and 1930. Access to the political system was predicated on the parties in power. In May 1924, the progressive *Cartel des Gauches* had created a space of communication with unions. The centre-right reclaimed government in July 1926, and the *Union Nationale* promptly abandoned this platform of interaction. The decision narrowed the political opportunity structure for the union.¹¹⁵ The goal to add inspectors to the 24-head-strong staff of the Labour Inspection moved out of reach. Any efficient control of the conditions in over 20,000 Parisian eating places proved unrealistic.¹¹⁶

Restaurant hygiene continued to receive sporadic attention in the press. Union activity seemed to ebb, too. But that configuration of circumstances alone should not explain the “Orwell Legacy” concerning the cooks' putative resignation in the face of the circumstances in which they worked (and continue to work). At the very moment in the summer of 1929 when Eric Blair decided to take a job as a dishwasher, the *Cuisinier-Pâtissier* ran an instalment dedicated to insalubriousness in kitchens and pastry shops on the one hand, and the health of cooks on the other. It denounced the appalling working conditions in restaurants: the exiguity, the dirt, the heat, the stench. It detailed their effects on the well-being of the staff: exhaustion, illnesses, accidents, premature death. And, it also described the potential consequences for restaurant clients: sullied dishes and food poisoning. It lamented that laws and regulations remained “dead letters.”¹¹⁷ To be sure, the activity around restaurant insalubrity was muted in the late 1920s when compared to its all-time high during the strike in 1924. But it carried so much empirical credibility that a participant observer as keen as Orwell ought to have noticed. (The *Revue culinaire* upbraided Orwell for ignoring the dishwashers' union).¹¹⁸

Public discussion of cleanliness in food handling happened elsewhere. But as Anne Hardy has shown for England in the 1930s, handwashing in private and professional circumstances to avoid contamination amounted to an educational project. Health officials aimed to instill a change in hygienic routines among homemakers,

grocers, and kitchen personnel. Their endeavor tripped over general skepticism and an insufficient number of lavatories.¹¹⁹ In Paris, on the contrary, the *Chambre syndicale des cuisiniers* took restaurant hygiene seriously. Rank-and-file union members rode the claim as a battle horse through the 1920s. They showed a great deal of savvy. Their social movement mobilized legal, material, and symbolic resources to promote the cause of up-to-date kitchen sanitation. They diagnosed occupational hazards. They described the dangers meals produced in dirty kitchens represented for restaurant customers. In doing so, they transformed a job-related issue into a public-health problem. They offered solutions. They pointed out the risks a damaged gastronomic reputation posed to the country's tourist industry. They assigned blame without closing out negotiations. They participated in a government-led roundtable with other stakeholders to determine industry-wide rules and their enforcement. In other words, they framed their concern in ways that were empirical, combative, and pragmatic.¹²⁰ They played their hand well. By any measure, resignation did not weigh them down. Social mobilisation paid in the longer term. With an increase in influence of the progressive forces in 1935, the Paris city council overhauled sanitary regulations in a new ordinance. Restaurant hygiene received a special section.¹²¹

Notes

- 1 Sommerville Story, *Dining in Paris. A Guide to Paris à la Carte and Table d'Hôte*, New York 1924, 5.
- 2 *Annuaire du Commerce Didot-Bottin*, 125^e Année, Paris 1922, 568, 719–728, 1385–1389, 3595–3601, 3829, 4171–4208. Paris *intra-muros* counted somewhat less than 3 million inhabitants in the 1920s.
- 3 A New Aspect of Paris. Paris à la Carte by Sommerville Story, in: *Yorkshire Post and Leeds Intelligencer*, 27.9.1922, 4.
- 4 How to Enjoy Paris: A Guide-Book of a New Kind for the Discriminating, Paris 1925, 69.
- 5 *Gourmet's Guide for Parisians to Eliminate Cuisine Chaos*, in: *The Washington Times*, 11.6.1922, 11; *A Dinner in Paris*, in: *ibid.*, 10.7.1922, 20.
- 6 Janet Flanner, *Paris Was Yesterday 1925–1938*, ed. Irving Drutman, New York 1988, xii–xiii.
- 7 A. J. Liebling, *Between Meals. An Appetite for Paris*, New York 1986, 53. On John Dos Passos (1896–1970) and Sherwood Anderson (1876–1941), see Robert McAlmen, *Being Geniuses Together 1920–1930*, Baltimore 1997, 164.
- 8 *Restaurants of the Boulevards*, in: *Jazz: A Flippant Magazine*, 15.5.1924, 13; and *Recipes and Ragout*, in: *ibid.*, 1.5.1924, 13.
- 9 Ernest Hemingway, *A Moveable Feast*, London 2004, 4, 21–23, 30, 32–33, 36 (quote), 41–42, 57, 91. As the expression of a cultural ideal, the book returned to the bestseller list in the wake of the terror attacks on restaurant customers in November 2015, see 'Paris est une fête' d'Hemingway, le roman du moment, in: *Le Monde*, 20.11.2015; Hemingway's Paris Memoir Rises to N° 1 in France Following Terror Attacks, in: *The Guardian*, 20.11.2015.
- 10 An example of such spontaneous self-understanding is Pascal Ory, *La gastronomie*, in: Pierre Nora (ed.), *Les lieux de mémoire*, Paris 1997, vol. 3, 3743–3769; for a sociology of "cuisine" tied to discourse analysis that abstracts from work in the kitchen and its claims on the body, see Priscilla Parkhurst Ferguson, *Accounting for Taste. The Triumph of French Cuisine*, Chicago 2004.

- 11 George Orwell, *Down and Out in Paris and London*, 1933, London 2003, 56–58, 62–71, 82–83. On Orwell's time in Paris, Peter Stansky/William Abrahams, *The Unknown Orwell*, London 1972, 200, 210–213; Michael Shelden, *Orwell. The Authorized Biography*, London 1991, 134–147.
- 12 Jürgen Osterhammel, *Die Verwandlung der Welt. Eine Geschichte des 19. Jahrhunderts*, München 2009, 346–351.
- 13 *Realities of Poverty*, in: (Hobart, Australia) *Voice*, 22.4.1933, 6. Other reviews in Jeffrey Meyers (ed.), *George Orwell: The Critical Heritage*, New York 1975, 42–49.
- 14 *La Vache enragée*, *Le Peuple*, 18.4.1935, 4; *Les romans*, in: *Revue des lectures*, 15.10.1935, 1183–84; *Bas fonds de Paris et de Londres*, *Gringoire*, 27.9.1935, 4.
- 15 *Le livre de la semaine*, in: *Marianne: grand hebdomadaire littéraire illustré*, 7.8.1935, 4; *Notes et échos*, in: *ibid.*, 14.8.1935, 4; *„La Vache enragée“* par George Orwell, in: *Le Monde illustré*, 26.10.1935, 936; *Les lettres*, in: *L'Intransigeant*, 24.1.1934, 8.
- 16 For Orwell's contention to have presented only one particular case, see George Orwell, *Hotel Kitchens*, in: (London) *Times*, 11.2.1933, 6. He responded to *Down and out*, in: *Times Literary Supplement*, 12.1.1933, 22, and to a letter from Humbert (Umberto) Possenti, *Hotel Kitchens*, in: (London) *Times*, 31.1.1933, 6. For a judicious reading concerned with the literary presentation of the reporter's experience, see *Down and out*, in: *The Yorkshire Post*, 25.1.1933, 6.
- 17 Christopher Driver, *Memoirs of a Modern Stomach*, in: (London) *Times*, 23.1.1971, 12.
- 18 Gary Alan Fine, *Kitchens: The Culture of Restaurant Work*, Berkeley 2009, 20–21, 54, 75.
- 19 Edward Chisholm, *Notes from a Paris Kitchen*, in: *International Herald Tribune*, 1.3.2013 [<http://www.nytimes.com/2013/03/01/opinion/global/>, accessed 22.5.2016].
- 20 Anthony Bourdain, *Don't Eat Before Reading This*, in: *The New Yorker*, 19.4.1999, 58–61.
- 21 *Ibid.*, 58.
- 22 Founded in 1884 with the legalisation of professional organisations, the *Chambre syndicale ouvrière* ran a union newspaper – *Le Progrès des cuisiniers*, then *Le Progrès culinaire* – which one contemporary observer considered “a powerful instrument of propaganda” (*Office du Travail, Les associations professionnelles ouvrières*, vol. 1: *Agriculture, Mines, Alimentation, Produits chimiques, Industries polygraphiques*, Paris 1894, 529). Membership hovered between 500 and 1,000 men; in 1923, it stood at 650. Its leadership applied their nous to connecting with unions representing other restaurant workers, and to building bridges to civil society and politicians. Numbers show that meetings succeeded in mobilising cooks beyond union membership.
- 23 Gérard Noiriel, *Les ouvriers dans la société française XIX^e–XX^e siècle*, Paris 2002, 145–152.
- 24 Marie-Hélène Zylberberg-Hocquart, *Les ouvrières d'État (Tabac-Allumettes) dans les dernières années du XIX^e siècle*, in: *Le Mouvement social* 105 (1978), 87–107; Bonnie Gordon, *Ouvrières et maladies professionnelles sous la 3^e République: la victoire des allumettiers français sur la nécrose phosphorée de la mâchoire*, in: *Le Mouvement social* 164 (1993), 77–93; Judith Rainhorn, *Le mouvement ouvrier contre la peinture au plomb. Stratégie syndicale, expérience locale et transgression du discours dominant au début du XX^e siècle*, in: *Politix* 91/3 (2010), 7–26; Jean-Claude Devinck/Paul-André Rosental, *Une maladie sociale avec des aspects médicaux: la difficile reconnaissance de la silicose comme maladie professionnelle dans la France du premier XX^e siècle*, in: *Revue d'histoire moderne et contemporaine* 56/1 (2009), 99–126; for a comparative perspective, Paul Weindling (ed.), *The Social History of Occupational Health*, London 1985.
- 25 *Archives Départementales Seine-Saint-Denis (AD SStD)*, 46 J 16, *Chambre syndicale ouvrière des cuisiniers de Paris. Procès-verbaux*, vol. 3, *Assemblée générale*, 29.1.1925.
- 26 Christopher Sellers/Joseph Menning, *Towards a transnational industrial-hazard history: charting the circulation of workplace dangers, debates and expertise*, in: *British Journal for the History of Science* 45/3 (2012), 404, 417.
- 27 Lars Bluma/Karsten Uhl (ed.), *Kontrollierte Arbeit – disziplinierte Körper? Zur Sozial- und Kulturgeschichte der Industriearbeit im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert*, Bielefeld 2012.
- 28 Charles Tilly/Sidney Tarrow, *Contentions Politics*, Boulder/London 2007, 16–17.
- 29 Marcel Streng, *Subsistenzpolitik im Übergang. Die kommunale Ordnung des Brot- und Fleischmarktes in Frankreich 1846–1914*, Göttingen 2017, 235–283; François Jarrige, *Le travail de la routine: autour d'une controverse sociotechnique dans la boulangerie française*, in: *Annales HSS* 65/3 (2010), 663–665.

- 30 Erving Goffman, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*, New York 1959, 106–140, esp. 121–122.
- 31 Paris, Capitale du tourisme mondial et de la gastronomie, in: *Comoedia*, 9.5.1925, 4; *Tourisme et gastronomie*, in: *ibid.*, 14.3.1926, 5; *Tourisme et gastronomie*, in: *La Revue culinaire* 36, Sept. 1923, 214.
- 32 See for helpful bearings, Kim Christian Priemel, *Heaps of Work. The Ways of Labour History*, in: *H-Soz-Kult*, 23.01.2014, www.hsozkult.de/literaturereview/id/forschungsberichte-1223, esp. 47.
- 33 Stéphane Sirot, *Les conditions de travail et les grèves des ouvriers à Paris 1919–1935*, Ph.D. thesis, Université Paris VII, 1994, 18–195, provides much evidence of workers' concern for hygiene in Parisian industries from textile shops to typography, and from slaughterhouses to sugar refineries.
- 34 Michelle Perrot, *Les ouvriers en grève, 1871–1890*, Paris 1974, 259–261; Madeleine Rebérioux, *Mouvement syndical et santé, 1880–1914*, in: *Prévenir* 18 (1989), 15–30; Caroline Moriceau, *Les perceptions des risques au travail dans la seconde moitié du XIX^e siècle : entre connaissance, déni et prévention*, in: *Revue d'histoire moderne et contemporaine* 56/1 (2009), 19–22.
- 35 Laure Machu, *Entre prévention et réparation: les syndicats ouvriers face à la question des risques au travail pendant l'entre-deux-guerres*, in: Catherine Omnès/Laure Pitti (ed.), *Cultures du risque au travail et pratiques de prévention au XX^e siècle*, Rennes 2009, 190.
- 36 Sirot, *Conditions*, 280.
- 37 Patrick Fridenson, *Le conflit social*, in: Jacques Julliard (ed.), *Histoire de la France*, vol. 5: *Les conflits*, Paris 2000, 479; Nicolas Hatzfeld, *Forces sociales et politiques publiques: Esquisses en trois temps de la santé au travail (France, XX^e siècle)*, in: Nicolas Hatzfeld/Michel Pigenet/Xavier Vigna (ed.), *Travail, travailleurs et ouvriers d'Europe au XX^e siècle*, Dijon 2016, 326.
- 38 Alain Chatriot, *La démocratie sociale à la française. L'expérience du Conseil National Économique*, Paris 2002, 286–291.
- 39 Stanley Hoffmann, *Paradoxes of the French Political Community*, in: Stanley Hoffmann et al. (ed.), *In Search of France*, Cambridge MA 1967, 3–9, 14–17; Richard Kuisel, *Capitalism and the State in Modern France. Renovation and Economic Management in the 20th Century*, Cambridge 1981, 59–82.
- 40 Jean Charles/Jacques Girault/Claude Willard, *Les années vingt*, in: Claude Willard (ed.), *La France ouvrière. Histoire de la classe ouvrière et du mouvement ouvrier français*, vol. 2: *De 1920 à 1980*, Paris 1995, 13–55; James E. Cronin, *Labour Insurgency and Class Formation. Comparative Perspectives on the Crises of 1917–1920*, *Social Science History* 4/1 (1980), 125–152; Roger McGraw, *Paris 1917–1920: labour protest and popular politics*, in: Chris Wrigley (ed.), *Challenges of Labour. Central and western Europe 1917–1920*, London 1993, 125–148.
- 41 *Aux camarades du Conseil syndical*, AD SStD, 46 J 16, vol. 1, 8.5.1919.
- 42 AD SStD, 46 J 18, *Alimentation, Union fraternelle & syndicale des cuisiniers du département de Seine*, Procès-verbaux 19.7.1904–12.8.1919, Assemblée générale, 23.5.1919; *L'hygiène des cuisiniers et des cuisines*, in: *La Revue culinaire. Organe officiel et propriété de la Société de Secours mutuels des cuisiniers de Paris* 5, Feb. 1921, 162; *L'hygiène des cuisines*, in: *ibid.* 55, April 1925, 99.
- 43 *Chez les cuisiniers*, in: *L'Humanité*, 27.5.1919, 4; *Chez les cuisiniers de Paris*, in: *Le Populaire*, 28.5.1919, 2.
- 44 AD SStD, 46 J 16, vol. 1, *Conseil syndical*, 1.10.1919 (invitation of Dr. Thieu); *Réunion préparatoire*, 13.6.1919; *Assemblée générale*, 25.6.1919.
- 45 Archives Nationales (AN), F/22/573, *Travail et sécurité sociale, Chambre syndicale ouvrière des cuisiniers de Paris et régions saisonnières, Rapport à Monsieur le Ministre du Travail et de la Prévoyance*, 10.7.1919.
- 46 Jean-Michel Guieu, *Gagner la paix 1914–1929*, Paris 2015, 188–200.
- 47 All information in this paragraphe from *Rapport à Monsieur le Ministre du Travail et de la Prévoyance*, 10.7.1919; and AD SStD, 46 J 16, vol. 1, *Conseil syndical*, 3.7.1919.
- 48 For a summary of the regulatory instruments, see *Hygiène du travail. Lois des 12 juin 1893 et 11 juillet 1903 et décret du 29 novembre 1904 modifié par celui du 6 août 1905, suivi des décrets relatifs à l'emploi de la céruse, couchage du personnel, ateliers de blanchissage*, Paris 1906, 8–11.
- 49 *L'hygiène dans les cuisines*, in: *Le Réveil des Cuisiniers*, May 1921, 4.
- 50 *On demande du monde à la cuisine mais il y fait bien chaud*, in: *L'Œuvre*, 26.7.1923, 1.
- 51 *Première visite aux cuisines-taudis*, in: *Le Réveil des Cuisiniers*, July–Aug. 1923, 4.

- 52 Fédération confédérale des Travailleurs de l'Alimentation, in: *Le Populaire*, 21.9.1923, 4; AD SStD, 46 J 16, vol. 2, Conseil syndical, 6.10.1923, and Assemblée générale, 11.1.1924; AN, F/22/573, Fédération Nationale Confédérée des Travailleurs de l'alimentation à Monsieur Peyronnet, Ministre du Travail, 27.9.1923.
- 53 La semaine Brillat-Savarin commence aujourd'hui à Paris, in: *L'Action française*, 5.12.1921, 2.
- 54 La vie en joie, in: *Comœdia*, 15.12.1921, 1.
- 55 Mérite culinaire et gastronomie, in: *Le Figaro*, 26.1.1922, 1.
- 56 Organisation syndicale, in: *Le Réveil des Cuisiniers*, April 1920, 2.
- 57 Bonjour Figaro !, in: *Le Réveil des Cuisiniers*, March–April 1922, 2.
- 58 Un monument à Brillat-Savarin, in: *La Revue culinaire* 13, Oct. 1921, 362–363; Special Issue on Brillat-Savarin, *La Revue culinaire*, Dec. 1921.
- 59 Un monument à Brillat-Savarin, in: Bulletin officiel de l'Union des Fédérations des Syndicats d'Initiative de France, Colonies et Protectorats 3/10–12(1921), 330. See also *Le Tourisme et la Cuisine*, in: *Revue mensuelle du Touring-Club de France* 29 (1919), 168.
- 60 AD SStD, 46 J 16, vol. 2, Conseil syndical, 5.10.1921; La statue du gastronome, in: *Le Petit Journal*, 20.4.1921, 2; Brillat-Savarin, in: *La Lanterne*, 28.8.1921, 1; Ni plage, ni ville d'eau. Au pays de Brillat-Savarin... où l'on mange, in: *Le Petit Parisien*, 2.9.1921, 1–2; À la gloire d'un art éminemment français, in: *Le Journal*, 7.11.1921, 4; En l'honneur de Brillat-Savarin, in: *L'Action française*, 5.11.1921, 1–2.
- 61 AN, F/22/573, Chambre syndicale ouvrière des cuisiniers de Paris à M. le Monsieur le Ministre du Travail et de la Prévoyance sociale, 30.1.1924; the letter was published in *Le Réveil des Cuisiniers*, Feb. 1924, 1.
- 62 AN, F/7/13633, Police Générale, Notes et presse sur l'activité de la Fédération Nationale des travailleurs de l'alimentation, 1924–1925, Meeting des Cuisiniers, 10.4.1924. For press reporting, see *Les cuisiniers revendiquent à leur tour*, in: *Paris-Soir*, 11.4.1924, 3; *Les cuisiniers des restaurants sont mécontents de leur sort*, in: *Le Quotidien*, 11.4.1924, 4; *Le plus beau meeting que nous ayons vu*, in: *Le Réveil des Cuisiniers*, May 1924, 2.
- 63 *Les cuistots parisiens sont mécontents*, in: *Le Journal*, 28.4.1924, 2.
- 64 *Lesclavage des cuisines. Une visite aux sous-sols des grands restaurants*, in: *L'Humanité*, 29.4.1924, 2; *Streik der Pariser Köche*, in: *Neues Wiener Journal*, 17.5.1924, 10, considered the strike during the Olympic Games “untimely.”
- 65 *Lesclavage des cuisines. Une visite aux sous-sols des grands restaurants*, in: *L'Humanité*, 3.5.1924, 3.
- 66 AD SStD, 46 J 16, vol. 3, Conseil syndical, 7.5.1924; *Cuisiniers – Grand meeting*, in: *L'Humanité*, 29.4.1924, 4. See *Chez les cuisiniers de Paris*, in: *Le Journal*, 9.5.1924, 6.
- 67 AN, F/22/186/B, Travail et sécurité sociale, Fédération des Travailleurs de l'Alimentation, Le Comité intersyndical des cuisiniers à Monsieur le Ministre du Travail, 24.5.1924.
- 68 *Aurons-nous le 13 mai une grève générale de l'alimentation ?*, in: *Le Journal*, 9.5.1924, 2; *Aurons-nous une grève des cuisiniers ?*, in: *Le Petit Parisien*, 16.5.1924, 2.
- 69 *L'alimentation bouge. – Lundi, les cuisiniers voteront-ils la grève ?*, in: *L'Humanité*, 11.5.1924, 5; Orwell, *Down and Out*, 79–82.
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- 71 AN, F/7/13843, Police Générale, Grèves 1924, Dossier Alimentation, Transmission au Ministère de l'Intérieur, 13.5.1924.
- 72 Edward Shorter/Charles Tilly, *Strikes in France 1830–1968*, London 1974, 207; Martin Bruegel, ‘The Martyrs of the Saucepan.’ *Parisian Cooks, French Gastronomic Reputation, and Occupational Health around 1900*, in: *International Labor and Working-Class History* 94 (2018), 95–96.
- 73 AN, F/22/186/B, Chambre syndicale ouvrière des cuisiniers de Paris, *Les Cuisiniers de Paris à la Population parisienne*, May 1924.
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- 75 *La grève de cuisiniers*, in: *L'Humanité*, 29.5.1924, 2.
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- 77 *4000 Paris Cooks Are Now on Strike – Midday Luncheon of Citizens May Be Imperiled if Trouble Spreads*, in: *New York Times*, 19.5.1924, 20.

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- 79 AN, F/7/13843, Grèves. Alimentation, 1924, Préfet de la Seine à Monsieur le Ministre de l'Intérieur, 29.5.1924.
- 80 Office du Travail, Statistiques des grèves et des recours à la conciliation et à l'arbitrage survenus pendant l'année 1924, Paris 1924, x, 16–17.
- 81 Hartmut Kaelble, Eine europäische Geschichte des Streiks, in: Jürgen Kocka/Hans J. Puhle/Klaus Tenfelde (ed.), Von der Arbeiterbewegung zum modernen Sozialstaat. Festschrift für Gerhard Ritter zum 65. Geburtstag, München 1994, 44–70; Petra Weber, Gescheiterte Sozialpartnerschaft – Gefährdete Republik? Industrielle Beziehungen, Arbeitskämpfe und der Sozialstaat. Deutschland und Frankreich im Vergleich 1918–1933/39, München 2010, 1112.
- 82 Deux méthodes, in: La Revue culinaire 48 (Sept. 1924) mentioned in: *ibid.*, 49 (Oct. 1924), 261; Nous ne sommes pas de la même paroisse, in: *ibid.* 54 (mars 1925), 67. The leaders of the Mutual Insurance were, or had been, chefs but now identified as entrepreneurs. In spite of its commitment to the reform of kitchen hygiene, *La Revue culinaire* ran a scathing review of Orwell's *Down and Out*, see *La Vache enragée*, in: *ibid.* 182 (Nov. 1935), 257.
- 83 Les cuisiniers parisiens répondent en grand nombre à l'ordre de grève, in: *Le Populaire*, 18.5.1924, 2.
- 84 L'hygiène à la cuisine, in: *Le Journal*, 15.5.1924, 4.
- 85 Les toques blanches, in: *Le Matin*, 26.5.1924, 1.
- 86 AN, F/22/573, Direction du Travail, 3^e Bureau, Hygiène et sécurité, cuisines des hôtels et restaurants. Note du 28.4.1924; and Director du Travail au Ministre du Travail, Lettre urgente, 28.4.1924. The file contains quite a few press clippings.
- 87 Un tour à la cuisine, in: *La Lanterne*, 11.5.1924, 1; On va inspecter les cuisines des restaurants, in: *Le Populaire*, 11.5.1924, 2; L'hygiène des cuisiniers, in: *Le Petit Journal*, 11.5.1924, 2; L'hygiène des cuisiniers d'hôtels et restaurants, in: *Le Matin*, 11.5.1924, 2; L'hygiène des cuisines d'hôtels et restaurants, in: *L'Écho de Paris*, 11.5.1924, 2; Hygiène et cuisine, in: *L'Intransigeant*, 11.5.1924, 3; L'hygiène des cuisiniers d'hôtels et restaurants, in: *Le Temps*, 11.5.1924, 4.
- 88 Une enquête sur l'hygiène des cuisines parisiennes. Daniel-Vincent fait semblant de mettre le nez dans la sauce, in: *L'Humanité*, 12.5.1924, 4.
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- 90 Reconstructed from AN, F/22/573, Inspection du Travail, Note pour Monsieur le Directeur, 22.11.1924.
- 91 L'hygiène et les cuisines des restaurants, in: *Journal des Restaurateurs*, 1.7.1924, 1. See also Une enquête générale sur l'hygiène dans les cuisines de restaurants, in: *Le Journal*, 11.5.1924, 2.
- 92 On gastronomy and tourism, see Evelyne Cohen, *Paris dans l'imaginaire de l'entre-deux-guerres*, Paris 1999, 112–121.
- 93 Paris Cooks Call a Strike for the Olympic Opening Day, *New York Times*, 14.5.1924, 1.
- 94 AN, F/22/573, Inspection du Travail. Enquête sur l'hygiène des cuisines des hôtels et restaurants. L'inspecteur divisionnaire de la 1^{ère} Circonscription à Monsieur le Ministre du Travail, de l'Hygiène, de l'Assistance et de la Prévoyance sociale, 17.9.1924.
- 95 The draft is in AN, F/22/573, Inspection du Travail, Note à la presse (undated).
- 96 L'hygiène des cuisines, in: *Journal des Débats*, 1.10.1924, 3; Les cuisines parisiennes sont bien tenues – Une inspection satisfaisante, in: *Le Radical*, 30.9.1924, 2; L'amélioration de l'hygiène dans les cuisines, *L'Homme libre*, 30.9.1924, 3; L'enquête du ministère du Travail dans les cuisines, in: *Le Petit Journal*, 30.9.1924, 3; L'hygiène dans les cuisines, in: *La Lanterne*, 30.9.1924, 3; L'hygiène des cuisines, in: *Le Temps*, 1.10.1924, 4.
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