

THE AGRARIAN POLITICAL PARTY OF GREECE:
POLITICS AND PEASANTS, 1922-1936

ACADEMISCH PROEFSCHRIFT

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INTRODUCTION

The following is a Ph.D. dissertation on the politics of the Agrarian Political Party of Greece from 1922 until 1936. My study deals with the political party and the peasantry. It is a study of peasant politics, that is, a study related to issues that concerned the Greek peasants at that time. It focuses on the Agrarian Political Party of Greece and uses it to examine the politics dealing with Greek peasantry. It begins in 1922 when the Agrarian Party was established and stops in 1936 when the fascist dictatorship of Metaxas abolished all political parties and all free institutions.

The study also involves the state or the government, or the political system, which are sets of interrelated elements, and are used interchangeably. The role of the Greek State was manifold. The state politics allowed, facilitated and supported the exploitation of peasants by the large landowners, the middlemen and the moneylenders - usually middle class groups; that is, all those who shared the proceeds of the labour of peasants in the form of rent, profits, interest - all those who through the land structure, the marketing and the credit arrangements

extracted the peasant production and exploited the peasants. In addition, the state itself was another exploiter of the peasants with its tax-imposing policy. The issues that concerned the Greek peasants did not exist by accident; they existed because of the state policy. The state policy allowed, facilitated and supported the existence of the issues. The issues of land structure, taxation, credit, debts, collection of taxation and debts, prices of crops, protection of crops and animals against natural disaster as well as the social security of peasants and the way these issues were interrelated, exploited the peasants with the support and/or tolerance of the state. The state allowed them to exist in such a way as to take advantage of peasants. The Greek peasants were not protected. On the contrary, their needs were deliberately neglected.

Finally, due to the social and economic conditions of the country, the politics of the Greek State opposed the organization and participation of peasants into their own political party; the state politics discouraged peasants from acting collectively on their own interests. The state politics opposed "class parties" and the Agrarian Party. It placed obstacles to the growth and development of the Agrarian Party. These obstacles were simultaneously obstacles to the radical popular mass peasant movement. The intent was to limit the appeal of the ideology, program and politics of the Agrarian Party to the peasants. The state manipulated and further advanced its coercive power to repress and limit the growth of the Agrarian Party, simultaneously discouraging peasants from being organized, mobilized and led by the Agrarian Party to assert and claim their rights. Thus, the state was responsible for the social and economic condition of the peasants - one of exploitation and poverty. It was stated in the Constitution and Program of the Agrarian Party:

"The state should be the father for all the social classes and not an organ of pressures, exploitation and one-sided protection of individual or party interests. The 'capital' should not exploit the peasants (producers). The state should not use the taxes only to cover its financial needs but also to distribute wealth with justice. For the well-being of the country, the national production, especially agricultural production, should be supported by all means. The working people, especially the peasants, should be protected for the improvement of their condition."²

Furthermore, the state influenced and shaped to a large extent the political behavior of the Greek peasants. It was precisely within this state policy that the Agrarian Party operated and struggled for the elimination and ultimate abolition of inequality, injustice and exploitation; for the improvement of the condition of peasants and for their emancipation. The term exploitation describes any nonreciprocal relationship which gives to one or more participants systematically and continually much greater advantages and benefits than to others. Some individuals, groups, classes or institutions benefit unjustly or unfairly from the labour of, or at the expense of, others.³

For analytical purposes the study is comprised of four major parts.

Part one refers to Greece as an agricultural country and outlines the land tenure and the rural social structure. It refers to land, the owners and the peasants. Part one also refers to the economic condition of the peasants. Thus, part one gives a social and economic background, a context, a frame within which the Agrarian Party had to operate and towards which it oriented its politics in order to improve the life of the peasants.

Part two examines the origins and the identity of the Agrarian Party. The Agrarian Political Party of Greece was established in order to struggle for the solution of the

urgent and vital problems of the peasants and of the country. Peasants thought to take their lives into their own hands; to reject "fate" and "the predetermined". They realized better than at any other time the exploitation done to them by the large landowners, the middlemen and the state. For the first time in Greece, peasants who lived in prejudice started to develop an intensive and militant political perception. It was the beginning of acquiring class consciousness and political awareness. Peasants decided to struggle for their emancipation and for the improvement of their condition by participating in collective political action organized and led by their own political organization: the Agrarian Political Party of Greece.⁴

Since the principal, certainly not the exclusive concern of the Agrarian Party, was to give "the land to the tiller", part two illustrates how Greece arrived at the land status which existed at the establishment of the party. It examines the efforts which did or did not change that land status in historical perspective and in the light of the national integration of Greece. Thus, part two shows when, how and why the Agrarian Party was established.

Part two also refers to the identity of the Agrarian Party, that is, to its ideology, program and organization. The ideology of the Agrarian Party - "agrarianism" - which was included in its program, offered a total concept of the way Greek society ought to be restructured and it served as the guide for the political action of the party. Finally, the organizational structure of the party was composed of those official party organs which decided for and carried out the party politics.

Part three examines the politics of the Agrarian Party with respect to the issues of agrarian reform, taxation of peasant production, credit, debts of peasants, collection of taxes and debts by the state, prices of crops,

protection of crops and animals against natural disaster, as well as the social security of peasants. These issues were the result of state policy. Thus, part three inevitably examines and the policy of the Greek State. It was precisely this policy of the state towards those issues which determined the condition of the peasants. That policy did not support or favour the peasants, on the contrary, it was against their rights. The Agrarian Party dealt with such a state policy by supporting the rights of peasants with respect to the issues already mentioned. The Agrarian Party was an opposition party in the sense that it was not in control of government in order to be able to carry out its program. However, it made several proposals to the governments, which, if carried out, would have benefited the peasants and society as a whole.

The politics of the Agrarian Party was based on its ideology, program and everyday reality. It was consistent with its ideology and program in its struggle to support the cause of the peasants, to improve their condition and to lead ultimately to their emancipation.

Finally, part three refers to the participation of the Agrarian Party in the formation of the United Anti-Fascist Front and the Popular Front. The Agrarian Party, as a Republican political party and being consistent with its ideology and program, participated in the formation of the United Anti-Fascist Front and the Popular Front. This decision broadened its scope and scale in the struggle to preserve the civil liberties of the people, to solve the vital problems of all the working people and to prevent the imposition of a military fascist dictatorship. The participation of the Agrarian Party in those two fronts was an important contribution of the party not only, and strictly to, the peasant movement but also to the radical popular mass movement.

Part three illustrates that the politics of the

Agrarian Party struggled for and supported the rights of peasants, while the politics of the Greek State was against their rights. How did peasants respond to the Agrarian Party which, with its politics, supported the rights, demands and interests of peasants? How did peasants respond to the Agrarian Party which struggled to carry out its program in order to improve their condition and life? Did peasants support the Agrarian Party or did they support the bourgeois political parties which did not support them but on the contrary, once in government exploited them? Finally, what was the position of the Greek State towards the Agrarian Party?

Part four refers to those questions in light of the obstacles which the Agrarian Party met and confronted. Indeed, the Agrarian Party confronted three categories of obstacles related to each other: the party's own organizational weaknesses and inadequacies, those placed on it by the state and those found in the peasants themselves.

Thus, part four examines elections and electoral returns in association with the organization of the Agrarian Party. In electoral returns we can see which peasants supported and voted for the Agrarian Party and which did not. The party organization fluctuated, at times strong, at times weak - a fact that affected the voting behavior of peasants and reflected in the electoral returns.

Part four also examines the obstacles placed before the Agrarian Party by the state in order to limit the appeal of the Party to the peasants, and to prevent peasants from acting collectively as a social class on their own interests. These obstacles placed by the state to the growth and development of the Agrarian Party were the manipulation of the electoral system, the wide use of political patronage, a deliberately created political polarization, the reactionary *Edeonemo*, the slander

polarization, the reactionary *Edeonemo*, the slander against the Agrarian Party and the anti-cooperative laws.

Finally, part four refers to another obstacle; to the fact that not all peasants had the class consciousness and political awareness which could enable them to accept the Agrarian Party.

All obstacles discussed in part four were interrelated and all affected the support or lack of support to the Agrarian Party by the peasants; this support or lack of it is shown in the electoral returns.

Part four simultaneously reveals the major events and stages in the development of the Agrarian Party as an organizational entity. Furthermore, since the obstacles placed to the Agrarian Party by the state and those found in the peasants themselves were major political variables of the Greek political system, part four also reveals the political setting or context within which the Agrarian Party had to operate.



PART ONE

GREECE, AGRICULTURE AND PEASANTS



Greece at the period of this study was primarily an agricultural country; that is, a country where a large majority of the population lived off the land.¹

Agriculture, defined as the activity which supplies the society with food and those raw materials which are of vegetable and animal origin², was very important for the Greek national economy.

More than 80% of the gross national product were agricultural products. Agricultural products were 80-90% of the Greek exports. Agricultural production was also important for the Greek industry since 44-50% of the Greek industries were processing agricultural products.³

Peasants - the people who draw their living from the land and who perform the physical labour of cultivation in the fields and, to a lesser extent, feed the animals - comprised the overwhelming majority of the population. Thus, for the majority of the Greek population, agriculture was the main source of income.

According to the census of 1920 the population of the country was 5,021,000. The active peasant population was 57.5% of the total active population. According to the census of 1928, the total population of the country was 6,204,684. The active peasant population which, according

to this census, were the people involved in agriculture (1,293,398), stock breeding (167,302) and fishing (14,941) was 1,475,641; that is, 61.1% of the total active population. It should be noted that the peasant categories of shepherds and fishermen were merging and overlapping. The same peasant could be also involved in stock breeding and/or fishing and be as well a shepherd and/or a fisherman. Shepherds and fishermen in most cases were land owners who also cultivated their land. Most of the shepherds from Arcadia, who were smallholders in their mountainous villages, bought additional land in the regions of the Peloponnese located close to the sea. There, because the climate was mild, they used to spend the winter (October until March) with their flock. These regions are called *chimidia*. Thus, the active peasant population increased from 57.5% in 1920 into 61.1% in 1928. Causes of this growth were the agrarian reform, the settlement of refugees as peasants and the fact that the involvement of women in agriculture was shown in the census of 1928.⁴

This growth of the active peasant population happened despite migration to the cities of Greece and emigration to foreign countries. Because peasants were very poor and the inadequate land could not support them, some of them, especially the younger ones, used to leave their villages to find employment in the cities and in foreign countries. There are no statistics of those who moved from the villages to the cities but there is a census on the ratio of the growth of the city population. The city population increased 27% in the year 1920 and 33% in 1928. Emigration to foreign countries especially to U.S.A was considerable from the year 1900 up to 1920. It was eliminated though at the time this study is concerned because American laws restricted emigration. It should be noted, however, that several immigrants returned back to their villages, making this way the issue of inadequate land more severe.⁵

The basic cultivation in Greece was grain as TABLE 1 shows.

TABLE 1
CULTIVATION IN THE YEAR 1928

Crop	Acres	%
Grain	11,389,948	71.63
Beans	499,739	3.14
Vegetables	283,362	1.78
Industrial and aromatics	1,247,228	7.84
Tobacco	930,765	
Cotton	154,040	
Sesame	147,796	
Anise	2,281	
Others	12,346	
Animal Food	507,936	3.20
Vineyards	1,316,651	8.28
Raisins	656,624	4.13
Total	15,901,488	100.00

SOURCE: Dimitris Chajjiannis, "Agricultural Production", in *Social Research*, vol. no. 5 (July 1932), p. 7.

Agricultural work was carried out with animal and human power. Modern cultivating techniques were practically not applied in Greek agriculture. Indicators of the degree of adaptation of modern cultivating techniques were the use of machines, fertilizer, drugs, irrigation networks, drainage projects, etc. Mechanization of agriculture was very low as shown in TABLE 2.

TABLE 2

AGRICULTURAL MACHINES IN THE YEAR 1929

Tractors	700
Iron plows	241,548
Wooden plows	286,534
Harrows	20,321
Seed planting machines	181
Grass cutting machines	454
Grass pressing machines	1,061
Threshing machines	606
Combines	-
Wheat cleaning machines	1,562
Manual sprays	83,691
Corn cleaning machines	75

SOURCE: Chrisos Evelpidis, *The Agriculture of Greece*, (Athens: Logos, 1944), p. 37.

The use of chemical fertilizer was minimal. Southern parts of Greece used more chemical fertilizer compared to Central and Northern parts. Chemical fertilizer was used less for grain than for vegetables, vineyards, fruit trees, tobacco, potatoes, etc.

Drugs were used more extensively compared to fertilizer, in order to disinfect the seeds of grain and against diseases of the vineyards and olive trees. Drugs were also used to prevent or cure diseases of animals. Despite that though, crops were destroyed and animals died, diminishing considerably the income of peasants.⁶

Irrigation projects were uncommon. In the large estate regions land owners had no interest in such projects. In

the family smallholding regions, peasants themselves simply could not afford to carry out such projects on their own. The rate of capital investment in land was very minimal. Furthermore, the state showed no concern in projects which would facilitate development in agriculture and consequently national development.

Even the revealed land from the drained lakes and swamps was given to the corporations which drained them; this made the peasants of these areas dependent upon these corporations.⁷

1. LAND TENURE AND RURAL SOCIAL STRUCTURE

In Greece there were mainly two types of agricultural organization defined according to criteria of ownership and labour: the large land sharecropped estate or *tsifliki*, and the family smallholding.

In Thessaly, Macedonia, Thrace, part of Epirus, Attica, Beotia, large estates and large owners did predominate. In those regions there were family smallholdings also. In the remaining Greece large owners were not uncommon, but agriculture did rest principally in the hands of small peasant proprietors who cultivated their smallholdings with their family. In those regions of the country there were also landless peasants.

Each type of property and labour organization corresponds to a certain and distinctive rural social class.⁸

A. The Sharecropped Estate or *Tsifliki*; Land, Owners, Peasants and Sub-Categories of Peasants

The sharecropped estate was an individually owned

enterprise worked by share tenants and/or wage laborers. It was a large landed estate known in Greece as *tsifliki*.

A share tenant was a landless peasant who provided his own implements and traction power and was paid a share of the crop. In Greece share tenants are known as *colleye*, from the Latin word "collega" which means partner. The wage laborers who also worked in the sharecropped estate were called *parakededes* and *koulouktsides*. These wage laborers were also landless peasants.⁹

In this type of agricultural organization, the land owner provided his land and the share tenant (*colleyos*), the labour; they both provided seeds, animals and the necessary tools for the cultivation of the land. Depending upon the proportion of this supply, as well as on the way the crop divided after the harvest, the arrangement was called *misakariko* or *tritiriko*.¹⁰

Misakariko was the arrangement in which the owner provided, besides the land, seeds and a house for the cultivator; the cultivator on the other hand, provided, besides the labour, animals and tools. The share of the crop was fifty-fifty; sometimes, though, the owner used to take back the amount of the seeds that he had given to the cultivator at the Fall planting season. Also divided in half were the expenses of the harvest, threshing and the tax on the animals. *Tritiriko* was the arrangement in which the owner provided only the land and a house for the cultivator if he did not have one. Usually the cultivator had his own shack and a small garden. The cultivator provided labour, seeds, tools and animals. The owner after the harvest took one third of the crop and the cultivator two thirds.¹¹

It is interesting to note that while in the *misakariko* the owner periodically distributed the fields to the share tenants, in *tritiriko*, once the owner distributed the fields to the share tenants, the same fields remained for

cultivation to their children. This was the reason why the *tritarika* villages were more populated than the *misakarika*. The regional distribution, for instance, in Thessaly was as follows: *misakarika* were the estates in the areas of Larisa, Farsala, Almiros and *tritarika* in the areas of Karditsa and Trikala.¹²

In both systems however, the share tenants could raise and breed their own animals. They were allowed to have unlimited trucking animals (horses, cattle). They could also have goats and sheep, but if there were more than 25 of them, a rent per head was due to the owner.¹³

The landowner developed a kind of security mechanism through a division of his land in order to eliminate possible losses due to natural disasters. This security mechanism was the so-called *damka* system. Another aim of this system was to prevent the exhaustion of the soil. An estate was divided into three sections; one section (*damka*) would be available for the cultivation of winter grain (wheat etc.), another for spring (corn etc.) and the remaining *damka* would be left for "resting" and be rented to shepherds. It should be noted here, that the *tsifliki* was a combination of agriculture and pasture. *Tsifliki* and pasture were interrelated; the *tsifliki* was established in the plains and valleys as an extension of the pasture. This was the reason why one third of the *tsifliki* was kept for pasture and not available for cultivation. It was a basic and certain income for the landowner in the form of rent from the shepherd.¹⁴

The internal function of the *damka* security mechanism worked as follows: in the event that flood damaged the winter crops, the landowner would have some production from the spring crops. If that was destroyed too, due to hot summer wind, then he would have a certain income coming from the renting of the third of his land to the shepherd. This division in sections, was established according to

criteria of local differentiation based on a variety of crops and finally a combination of agriculture and pasture. Thus, security of the *tsifliki* was accomplished:

- a. by local differentiation of *damka* with regards to water supply for irrigation, *damka* subject to hot summer wind or not, etc.;
- b. by seasonal differentiation in winter and spring crops and
- c. by combination of agriculture and pasture.¹⁵

The *damka* security system worked out well for the landowner because his risk was minimal; a natural disaster damaged only the share tenant. He risked losing everything, while the owner lost nothing. In *misakarika*, if there were a general destruction of the crop, the owner lost only the seeds that he had given to the cultivator during the planting season. In case half or more of the crop was destroyed, the owner received half or a third of the crop. In this case, the production did not even cover the *colleyo's* expenses, but such was the exploitation; the owner would take his share.¹⁶

Usually the landowner, in case of destruction of the crop due to natural disaster (rain or lack of rain, hail, grasshopper, etc.) gave the share tenant food for himself and his animals until the new harvest. After the new harvest, the share tenant repaid the owner.¹⁷

The large land estates were not large agricultural enterprises. Most of the landowners leased their land in small plots to landless peasants. Only a few large land estates were cultivated by the landowners themselves, that is, only a few landowners were at the same time large agricultural entrepreneurs.¹⁸

Before the land reform of 1923, in the regions where large land estates were predominant, there was large landownership but small cultivation. The large land estates were divided into small parcels of land and cultivated by

share tenants and/or wage laborers. Out of the 1640 large land estates which were distributed at land reform, only 60 or 70 were cultivated by the landlords themselves. The rest were cultivated by share tenants. A manager had replaced the landlords who usually did not live on their estate. The task of the manager was to produce maximum profits for the landowner. Thus, the absentee landlordism was a common case. Landowners lived in the cities or even outside the country where they could spend their wealth. Most of the large landowners, did not depend exclusively upon their estates for their income; they had other enterprises more profitable than agriculture such as banking, shipping, trade, etc., in Greece or in foreign countries.

The basic production of the large land estates was grain, especially wheat. Of the total grain production only 5% was produced in estates cultivated by the landowners themselves; the rest was produced by share tenants. Only 4% of the large estates were cultivated by the modern machinery of the time and by wage laborers. The rest were cultivated by the simple tools, very often wooden plows. Furthermore, the number of large land estates using scientific methods (that is, modern cultivating techniques, advice of agronomists, chemical fertilizer, drugs, etc.) was at most five. This shows clearly that landowners were neither interested in agriculture nor in investing capital or energy in it. The rate of capital investment was minimal and modern cultivating techniques were almost not applied.¹⁹

Tsifliki also had a "legal" aspect; it was a kind of agreement and partnership between the landowner and the share tenant - between capital and labour. *Morté* was the "legal" relation made by mutual will of both, the owner and the share tenant. In this relationship the owner gave his land for cultivation to someone who was able to cultivate it in return for a share of crop after the harvest.

Mortetis was the cultivator who accepted the land for cultivation and who had at least one trucking animal (a cow or a horse) a plow and other agricultural tools.²⁰

The "legal" agreement was originated as an equal relationship between the owner and the share tenant, but it soon led to the exploitation and subordination of labour to capital.²¹

That contract was one sided, since only the landowner had the power to enforce his terms and, consequently, his share tended to be substantial and the position of the share tenant precarious. Share tenants had virtually no legal rights in disputes with landowners and could be dismissed at any time.²²

Landowners on the other hand, maintained that share tenants were free to leave the estate and choose a better one, or even a better job. In reality, this type of freedom was meaningless because, when the two partners signed the contract, the share tenant was under the threat that the owner could evict him and his family out of the estate; therefore, his "free will and choice" was severely limited if non-existent. The landowner took advantage of the share tenant's fear and manipulated him, simply because he was weak and unable to assert himself. Since courts usually favoured the landowners, the share tenant did not want such an arrangement. The threat, or practice, of eviction therefore, made the share tenant subordinate to the landowner; he was not a free citizen but a virtual slave of the landowner and had to accept all his terms and demands. He could not vote for example at the national or local level for the candidate of this preference; he had to vote the way his landowner instructed him or face eviction from the estate.²³

The threat, or practice, of eviction gave the landowners extreme political power. They not only exploited peasants economically, but they used to take advantage of

them politically. With the votes of those peasants, who were under constant threat of eviction, landowners themselves or candidates of their choice, were elected to Parliament. Those deputies, who were precisely elected with the votes of peasants, presented obstacles to the solution of the issues concerning the peasants, for example, agrarian reform. The government, in turn, protected the landowners who were themselves in government or had a great deal of influence over that government. The government allowed and protected the privileges of the landowners over land and labour.²⁴

Share tenants were in actuality politically disfranchised because the landowners could not survive a government dominated by the more numerous share tenants. The upper class control over the land rested on special access to the courts and extralegal maneuvers. These legal privileges of the landowners in denying practically the share tenants equal access to the courts, differentiated one class from the other. Not only courts, but the entire administrative apparatus and governmental institutions favoured the landowners at the expense of the share tenants. Such control or influence on the political system by the land owners gave the tenants no choice but to sign contracts with the landowners, by which, the limitations which existed for the landowners during the Ottoman occupation were not valid after the integration of Thessaly and Arta.

According to a Turkish decree (*firmanı*) which was valid until 1881, when Thessaly was integrated to the Greek State, cultivators had the unlimited right to leave the estate at the end of each agricultural year, that is, after the harvest. Landowners on the other hand, did not have the right to dissolve the contract unilaterally and expel the cultivators from the estate. The idea upon which the decree was based, was to support the cultivators and to protect

them against arbitrary acts of the landowners; the landowner had no right to evict the cultivator or his widow or the *parakededes*. The decree however, supported the landowner as well. In case the cultivator did not cultivate the land for one year, he received a lenient punishment. If that continued for a second year, he had to pay the damage to the landowner. Only if he did not cultivate the land for three years, could he be forced to leave his estate. Therefore, until the integration of Thessaly into the Greek State, eviction was allowed by the decree only as punishment and not in any other circumstances.²⁵

The political system supported the privileges of the landowners over land and labour. Land was a very important determinant of wealth, and any change in the distribution of income between landowners and tenants must depend on a redistribution of land. Landowners opposed it, and they used to rely on political restrictions of landownership. They enjoyed special land tenure privileges, made possible by the political system itself. Without the support of a landowner-dominated or influenced political system, special privileges would be impossible.²⁶

Landowners depended on servile or semi servile labour, since the large land estate could not compete with more efficient enterprises for labour. Landowners used to bind the share tenants to the land through a type of practical hereditary serfdom; the eviction left tenants no choice but to work for the landowner under his terms. Tenants were not permitted to have any actual economic or political rights. Only in theory tenants had such rights but they did not dare to use them because eviction was always possible and they would have no other opportunity to work. An inequitable political system supported the privileges of the landowners over labour. That political system was influenced by the landowners.²⁷

To a greater or lesser degree the landed estate was

dependent on servile labour. The labour supplied was of course, of low quality and efficient production schedules were impossible. The low quality of the forced labour required large number of laborers to compensate for the small amount of useful labour supplied by each. The landed estate was dependent on a labour force which was paid little or nothing, and worked only under compulsion. The competitiveness of the landed estate in the commodity market therefore, depended in part on the difference between the price of free and of servile labour. The fundamentally different attitudes toward labour of land and capital dependent upper classes, led to rigid and unyielding political repression. Correspondingly the tenants in a landed estate system could only protest through attempts to disrupt the workings of the (forced) labour system.²⁸

The sum of the proceeds of the sharecropped estate-type enterprise was fixed since neither landowner nor tenant had any incentive for investing in new technology. The economic characteristics of the landowner in the sharecropping system led to the pattern of intractable zero-sum conflict over landed property. Not only were tenants subordinate to the landowners, but being practically disenfranchised, they were denied the right to organize themselves. Landowners therefore, maintained their dominance over their tenants through a political system which they dominated or at least influenced and manipulated. The share tenant was bound to work the land but often had weak ties to this land. The extractions of landowners, middlemen and moneylenders usually reduced most share tenants to a very low level of income. It was impossible to accumulate property in the sharecropped system, and any property which was accumulated usually had to be used to repay debts. Whatever the share tenant produced in addition to his normal crop would be taken by the landowner. Whatever improvement he made on the land

would only raise its market value, increase his rents, and make his eviction more likely. Since they lacked security of tenure, long-range improvements would benefit the landowner and the next tenant. The only way in which economic gains could be made was by limiting the landowner's extractions.²⁹

The upper class drawing its income from the land was associated with a static agricultural product (grain) and therefore created zero-sum conflict between share tenants and landowners. As a result compromise in economic conflicts was difficult.

The profits from the landed estate depended on the price of the crop in the market. This price was of course beyond the landowner's control. The poverty and inefficiency of the landed estate made it impossible for landed upper classes to grant economic concessions even if they were inclined to do so. The only economic concession possible was the redistribution of land, and this obviously required the sacrifice of the source of upper class income and power. The upper and lower class in the landed estate were therefore locked in a zero-sum conflict over the control of the land. There was no way to increase the income of either class except by decreasing the income of the other. In such a situation compromise was difficult. When zero-sum conflict involves the only major source of wealth in a society - land -, such a compromise was almost impossible.³⁰

In addition to the share tenants, the *tsifliki* was worked by wage laborers, the so-called *parakededes* and *koulouksides*. The word *parakedes* is Turkish and means supplement or appendix. *Parakededes* were former *colleye* to whom the landowner refused to give land for cultivation. Too many *colleye* became *parakededes* at the end of the Balkan wars 1912-1913. The large landowners took advantage of the fact that land remained uncultivated because the

cultivators enlisted for the war, they dissolved the contract and evicted the *colleye*. *Parakededes* were hired by the *colleye*; in this case they were called *parayei*. They worked for wages on a day basis. Usually they had no constant employment. *Parakededes* worked in the *tsifliki* doing assistant jobs such as transportation with the cart or to cut wood or other jobs not primarily cultivation. They did not have their own implements neither trucking animals; they provided only their labour. *Parakededes* lived on the *tsifliki* in which they worked in a very small house or a room with their family and very often together with their chicken or their donkey. They paid rent 15 to 100 drachmas per year. *Parakededes* were also hired by the large landowners especially those who cultivated their land by themselves; in this case they were called *koulouktsides*.³¹

Koulouktsides were a type of *parakededes* who worked for wages on a yearly basis. They were landless peasants who used to work with their family for the landowners for a period of one year. As payment they received wages and the house they lived in. Wages were very low, enough to enable them to barely survive. The house they lived in belonged to the landowner and it was in very bad condition. Unlike the share tenants (*colleye*) they were not allowed to feed animals. *Koulouktsides* were usually former share tenants who were evicted from the estate. They used to move every year from one estate to the other. Since they moved constantly, they could not send their children to school; as a result, their children received no education. Very few *koulouktsides* became share tenants again. Most of them remained wage laborers. There is no precise statistical information about them, but they were very broadly estimated as comprising "whole villages", that is a considerable size of the peasant population.³²

Thus, the *tsifliki* was worked by share tenants

(*colleye*) and wage laborers, who were the *parakededes*, and the *koulouktsides*. They all were landless peasants and they all formed the lower rural social classes in the sharecropped estate system. The upper classes were the large landowners-*tsiflikades*, the moneylenders - *tokoylefi* and the middlemen. Very often the landowners functioned as moneylenders.

B. The Family Smallholding: Land, Owners, Peasants, Sub-Categories of Peasants

The family smallholding was the basic unit of peasant ownership, production, consumption and social life. The individual, the family and the fields appeared as an indivisible whole. Peasant property was at least *de facto* family property, worked by the whole family for their own good. The "enterprise" belonged to the peasants who also had the means of production. The head of the family appeared as the manager rather than proprietor of family land, and his function had the character of management of common family property. The family's social structure determined the division of labour, social status and social prestige; the position in the family determined the duties on the agricultural cycle, the functions and rights attached. The basic division of labour on the smallholding was closely related to that family structure and ran along the lines of sex and age. Family solidarity provided the basic framework for mutual aid, control and socialization. Forming the basic nucleus of peasant society, the life of a smallholding was associated with the agricultural cycle and determined the pattern of the peasants' every day actions, interrelations and values.³³ The family smallholding was not one continuous piece of land, but several pieces often at some distance from one another. The quality of these

pieces of land was varying. These small parcels were located near the village where peasants lived. According to the agrarian census of 1929, there were in Greece 5,356,819 parcels of land which belonged to 954,000 "agricultural enterprises". In every "agricultural enterprise" belonged an average of 5.6 parcels. The average extent of each parcel was 4.9 acres.³⁴

The family smallholding as an economic unit dealt with agriculture and pasture. It was oriented more towards self-sufficiency rather than towards production for the market.³⁵

Production for the market gave the family some money, compensatory income, necessary for its growing needs. Thus, it specialized around certain crops such as: grain, grapes, raisins, silk, tobacco, fruits, nuts, vegetables, animal food. Climate was the most important factor that allowed and facilitated that differentiation. Also, the specialization in agriculture came out of the need to pay state-taxes in money; the peasants, therefore, had to find a way of getting money. They also had to work very hard with the members of their family; family smallholders put surplus labour into their holding.³⁶

The family smallholding also had a security mechanism similar to that of the sharecropped estate; its income sources were a combination of agriculture and pasture. Land was divided in sections for agriculture, pasture and "resting" the same way as in the sharecropped estate. If the peasants didn't have animals of their own (sheep or goats), they rented their fields after harvest to shepherds for additional income. This income came in different forms: one was money, another was fertilizer; the flock slept in the peasants' fields. Also he gave wool to the peasant's wife which was needed for weaving; most woven articles ultimately went to the daughter's dowry. Frequently the shepherds gave milk or cheese to the peasants, especially

for religious or social events. When crops were destroyed due to natural disaster, shepherds sold a part of their flock and bought seeds that peasants needed to cultivate the fields. Peasants on the other hand, helped the shepherds when it was necessary. If, for instance, a heavy winter threatened the shepherds' animals, he received food from the peasant to feed his flock. This type of solidarity grew from a common interest.³⁷

The operative unit of the family smallholding-type of agricultural organization was the family enterprise; rights to the returns from the enterprise were heavily, but not exclusively, concentrated on the peasant. Land did not cost rent, and there was no advantage to the enterprise in leaving it out of cultivation. This predominance of fixed costs meant, that production did not fall with a decrease in prices. Consequently, the income of smallholders varied directly with the market price of the commodities they produced and with variability in production caused by natural disaster.³⁸

The principal concern for most peasants was to avoid financial or agricultural disaster which would have forced them to sell their land. Without land the position of the peasant was extremely precarious. Opportunities in agricultural wage labour within the village were limited by the relatively small number of medium and large owners who could afford hired help. Even this employment was usually seasonal and often unpredictable from one year to the next. Opportunities for wage labour were scarcely better outside the village than within. The bleak opportunities for laborers without land created a conservative interest in the protection of even a minimal subsistence plot and a consequent resistance of both political and technical innovation. The peasants adopted a strategy of minimizing the loss they could suffer from any possible change in their fortunes. Much of their resistance to change was a

result of the variety of risks to which they were exposed and the small margin between production and an economic disaster which could lead to landlessness and poverty.³⁹

Even when peasants had a good harvest without natural disaster to affect their crops, part of their production was taken away by middlemen and the state which shared in peasant production through interest on loans, taxes, etc. Terms of trade unfavourable to peasant producers turned the market exchange into yet another channel of exploitation of the peasantry by urban society at large. Capital generated in agriculture was in many cases absorbed into the urban sector; the "surpluses" extorted from the peasantry provided the basis for industrialization. Since surpluses were taken away by middlemen and taxation, investment in land was minimal. The capital of peasants was very limited. The entire property consisted, apart from land, of a house with the personal belongings, a few animals and some simple equipment.⁴⁰

The peasant category of the family smallholders can be redivided into sub-categories. Smallholders whose inadequate land did not enable them to survive became share tenants or *emphyteutes* or day laborers or seasonal migrant rural workers. That way, the same peasant was a family smallholder, but at the same time, because of his inadequate land, he became a share tenant or *emphyteutis* or day laborer or seasonal migrant rural worker, who is also a type of day laborer.

Those subdivisions were interrelated. Peasant sub-categories were merging and overlapping. Sometimes it was difficult to distinguish one from the other. There was by no means a clear and sharp distinction between them. Thus, a peasant proprietor - a family smallholder - often supplemented his income by renting some land from others or by hiring himself as a day laborer or as a seasonal migrant rural worker whenever his own land did not require his

presence. Many peasants then, whose tiny land usually did not produce enough to enable them to survive, rented land from others, worked as day laborers for wealthier peasants, or used to become seasonal migrant rural workers by moving to regions where the crop cycle was different from their own. These peasants are discussed below.

a. Share Tenants - *Misakarides*

These were peasants who were themselves smallholders. Because their own land was not adequate to support them, they rented land for cultivation and they paid as rent to the landowner one half or one third of the crop. The terms of this relationship were different from one year to the other.⁴¹

b. *Emphyteutes*

The *emphyteutes* were a special type of share tenants and had an "emphyteutic" relationship with the landowner. That is, they were peasants who rented infertile or semi-fertile land, usually from the monasteries and planted vineyards. Some of those peasants were smallholders whose own land did not enable them to survive. Most of them though were landless peasants who lived off the income from the rented and planted land. They paid rent to the landowner about one third of the crop. They were usually evicted at any time the landowner wanted. In the meantime, they changed with their work the infertile land into fertile and productive land.⁴²

The terms of the *emphyteutic* relationship exploited the tenants. Because of it, Law 2189 of June 1, 1920 dissolved the permanent *emphyteutic* relationship, by allowing tenants to buy the rights of the landowner, only for those lands which were cultivated personally by the

tenants for at least the past 10 years, and who had agreement with the owner for permanent cultivation. Courts determined the dissolution of the agreement as well as the amount of payment to the landowner. Furthermore, that law did not allow the formation in the future of permanent *emphyteutic* relations, only temporary. For the temporary *emphyteutic* relations, the law determined the rent as 15% of the gross production. The *emphyteutic* relationship prevailed in Crete, the islands of the Ionian Sea, parts of the Peloponnese, Attica, Epirus and Macedonia. According to the agrarian census of 1929 there were 12,131 *emphyteutes* who had temporary *emphyteutic* relationship with the landowner.⁴³

c. Day Laborers

They were very poor peasants. Their small plots did not give them sufficient income to survive. Therefore, they worked for wages for other peasants, harvesting, plowing, digging the soil in vineyards, working in the olive mills, gathering crops, woodcutting, etc. Sometimes, if they had the opportunity, they became miners or industrial workers for a short time.⁴⁴

d. Seasonal Migrant Rural Workers

The fact that the climate was slightly different in the valleys from the mountains, facilitated the move of seasonal migrant rural workers. That move was also facilitated by the fact that agriculture does not provide constant employment throughout the year. It necessitates big efforts during certain seasons and calls for little labour during the rest of the year. Wheat production for example, requires more labour during the harvest months of June and July and during the planting season of October and

November and less labour during the rest of the year. Olive trees require more labour during the harvest and pruning months (December-April) and less during the other months of the year. Vineyards and raisins require more labour during the pruning and digging the soil season (February-May) and during the harvest (August-October), and less during the rest of the year. Thus, seasonal migrant rural workers, used to leave their mountain villages in order to find work in the fertile plains, then returned to their villages in order to collect their own poor, and more slowly maturing crops. Very often these peasants used to walk for a day or two carrying tools and clothes on their back. This was common for grain harvests, olive collection and labour in olive-oil processing mills, digging the soil in vineyards, tobacco processing, etc.

Due to the great influx of labour, harvest wages never rose to a point where they compensated for the wages lost during the long periods of unemployment or for the exceptionally low wages paid for non harvest labour. The special harvest earnings of the day laborers (who were smallholders in their own village) and their family enabled them to barely survive.

The irregular seasonal distribution of the labour demand had two obvious consequences for those laborers. They could not find work during a large part of the year. Even for those who succeeded in finding employment, low wages were an inevitable consequence of the fact that many unemployed competed for the few jobs available. There often existed an informal system of cooperation among peasants based on familial or neighborly or other ties in which labour, tools and animals were pooled to accomplish the periodic tasks in the agricultural cycle that required more than a peasant's resources of animals, labour or equipment. For example, peasants who needed two horses as trucking animals for plowing the land and they had only one,

borrowed a horse from another peasant. Those peasants who borrowed horses from each other were *sembri*. *Sembri* used to take turns; one day one peasant plows with the horse of his *sembro*, the next day he gives his own horse to his *sembro* with animal food and all the necessary accessories or equipment for plowing, such as, pulling accessories (*travichta*), neckband (*Iemaria*), horse cover (*saesma*), etc. This *sembri* type of cooperation happened mainly during the planting season. Another type of mutual assistance was the so-called *danikaria*; peasants worked for a few days for other peasants and they expected the same from the peasants they had helped. This mutual assistance or cooperation lasted only a few days at planting season, harvest or threshing. Basically though peasants worked isolated; the mode of production isolated peasants from one another instead of binding them into mutual intercourse. This isolation increased with the bad means of communication and the poverty of peasants.⁴⁵

The extent of landownership can be used as a criterion for another classification of peasants.

According to the extent of landownership peasants can be classified into the sub-categories shown in TABLE 3.

This table is based on the Agrarian Census of 1929. In 1929 the agrarian reform which was initiated in 1923 was partly carried out; this means that even this classification was changing, however, it is an indicator with high degree of precision. The "large" landowners (0.15% of peasants) owned 28% of the total land, while the owners of "inadequate" land (36.9% of peasants) owned only 13.3% of the total land. The majority of peasants owned "inadequate" land (36.96%), "very small" (35.09%) and "small" (23.4%). On the contrary, very few large owners (0.15%) owned a great extent of land. The inequality of landownership is clear, even during the course of the agrarian reform.⁴⁶

"Middle peasants" were those peasants who had adequate

income from their lands, created surplus and they used day laborers for cultivation in addition to their labour and the labour of their family.⁴⁷

The sub-category of peasants who had "inadequate" land were considered "landless" peasants by the Agrarian (Reform) Law and, accordingly, had the right to receive land and be settled at the agrarian reform.⁴⁸

TABLE 3

CLASSIFICATION OF PEASANTS

% of Peasants	Extent of landownership in acres
36.96	inadequate 1 - 10
35.09	very small 10 - 30
23.45	small 30 - 100
3.87	middle 100 - 1,000
0.15	large 1,000 or more

SOURCE: Chrisos Evelpidis, *The Agriculture of Greece*, (Athens: Logos, 1944), p. 25.

Landownership and sub-divisions accordingly was very often meaningless since land or other property, houses for example, were mortgaged at usurious rates to moneylenders or the banks. Thus, peasants were only theoretically owners and not in actuality. Very often they used to loose land or houses to their creditors. Furthermore, peasants were forced to sell their land at a debased price in order to obtain sufficient liquid capital to survive. When peasants lost their land they became completely dependent on wage

labour.⁴⁹

The sub-division of the peasant class according to the extent of land ownership became meaningless also at times of economic crises, as for example at the Depression of 1929. That crisis affected all the categories of peasants, even the middle peasants and to a lesser extent the large land owners. The misery and poverty leveled all boundaries of the sub-divisions of peasants into categories. They all became very poor and impoverished.⁵⁰

In the family smallholding the peasants who owned it cultivated the land with their family. There also worked landless peasants who used to become the already mentioned sub-categories as well. Those landless peasants were broadly estimated in the "thousands".⁵¹

Smallholders and landless peasants were the lower rural classes. The upper classes were the large landowners, the middlemen and the moneylenders. Upper class sub-categories were also overlapping; a middleman - merchant - could give a loan to a peasant at a usurious rate for a short time and function as a moneylender. At the same time he used to buy before harvest the crops of the peasant at a very low price. Large landowners functioned as moneylenders as well.

In both types of agricultural organization, the sharecropped estate and the family smallholding, the lower rural classes were exploited by the upper classes. The government made this exploitation possible. With its policy supported or tolerated that exploitation of the lower rural classes by the upper ones.

TABLE 3.1

LAND TENURE AND RURAL SOCIAL STRUCTURE, 1922 - 1936

The Sharecropped Estate or *Tsifliki*

Lower Class	Upper Class
Landless peasants	Large landowners - <i>tsiflikades</i>
Share tenants - <i>colleye</i>	Moneylenders - <i>tokoylefi</i>
Wage laborers - <i>parakededes</i>	Middlemen (merchants)
- <i>koulouktsides</i>	

The Family Smallholding

Lower Class	Middle Peasants	Upper Class
Smallholders and		Large landowners
Landless peasants		Middlemen (merchants)
Share tenants - <i>misakarides</i>		Moneylenders - <i>tokoylefi</i>
<i>Emphyteutes</i>		
Day laborers		
Seasonal rural migrant workers		

2. THE ECONOMIC CONDITION

In addition to the land tenure and the rural social structure associated with it, the dimensions of taxation, credit, debts, prices, marketing, protection of crops, social security for the peasants and their interrelationship determined the condition of the Greek peasants: one of

exploitation and poverty tolerated or supported by the state.

Those conditions provided the economic context within which the Agrarian Political Party of Greece operated and towards which it oriented and directed its politics in order to improve the life of the peasants.

The Greek State imposed taxation in order to collect money for its growing needs, to maintain an extended bureaucracy, without taking into consideration the social and economic condition of the peasantry, the demographic composition of the countryside, the cost of agricultural production, transportation, the competition of export agriculture with products of other countries, the natural disasters that may occur, etc. The taxation system was structured empirically. Neither was taxation unified in all regions of Greece; different forms of taxation coexisted. Furthermore, taxation in agriculture was on the gross income from production, while in other sectors of the Greek economy, taxation was on the net income, that is, the cost of production was deducted from the total income. This taxation on gross income from agricultural production contributed 2/3 of the total immediate taxation to the State Budget. In addition, peasants contributed 5/8 of the total indirect taxation. Taxation then, was carried out beyond any notion of justice and equality. It was unbearable for the peasants.⁵²

For the first time in Greece, credit was officially given for agriculture by the National Bank of Greece in 1915. Until 1929, this bank gave credit only to those peasants who were members of cooperatives. In 1929, the Agrarian Bank of Greece was established. Before 1915 and even during the period which concerns this study, Greek peasants borrowed from moneylenders (*tokoylefi*). Peasants needed money not to invest in agriculture, but to support themselves and their families. Moneylenders were middle

class groups, sometimes wealthy peasants. Peasants were paying back an enormous amount of money for short term loans, which was by definition illegal and unjust. The interest which peasants used to pay to the moneylenders was 200% or 300%. This exploitation created for the peasants a desperate situation. Peasants, at times of economic crisis due to natural disasters, low prices for their production, increasing taxation, etc., became dependent on moneylenders. As guarantee, they used their house or their land, which was lost when repayment was delayed. This was a common occurrence.

By the year 1930, Greek peasants had debts to moneylenders amounting to approximately 4,000,000,000 drachmas. They had mortgaged for it land worth approximately 1,000,000,000 drachmas. This is only a broad estimate, since there is no official statistical information on illegal moneylending.

The dependency on moneylenders placed peasants in a precarious situation. This situation was somewhat eliminated when the National Bank and later the Agrarian Bank provided credit for the peasants. Peasants though continued to borrow from moneylenders and from the banks at very high rates.⁵³

The Agrarian Bank did not have sufficient capital to give loans to peasants. It started working by giving loans for cultivation at 50 drachmas per acre. This was nothing; it was not adequate for development in agriculture. Even the capital it gave as loans to peasants was at a rate of 11-15%, considered by the peasants as extremely high.

There was also a great difference in loans given to agricultural production and to other sectors of the economy. Most of the loans from the banks were absorbed by trade, industry and other enterprises. For example, out of the total capital which banks gave as loans, agriculture received only 1/16.⁵⁴

Another dimension which determined the economic condition of the peasants was the extent of the peasants' debts.

Greek peasants were heavily indebted. Not only did they owe money to the banks, to moneylenders, to the state for taxation or to pay the land they received at the agrarian reform, but also to the village shop where they used to buy "goods of first need" during the year.

Peasants worked endlessly to pay their debts which were always growing and increasing. Debts increased every year because production of crops and prices of those crops did not allow peasants sufficient income to pay their debts and to support themselves at the same time. Peasants were very poor and unable to pay their debts back. They were obligated to sell their animals, plows or tools in order to pay only a part of their debts, certainly not the total amount. Therefore they could not cultivate their land the following year. Many peasants whose crops were destroyed would remain indebted. Even the crops which survived natural disaster had a very low price in the market. That way, peasants had not adequate income to pay their debts.⁵⁵

By the year 1933, more than 83% of the Greek peasants were in debt. By the year 1936, the total debt was 13,000,000,000 drachmas. The delayed repayment of the loans continued to increase debts. Consequently, peasants were owners of their land in name only. In actuality, their land was mortgaged.⁵⁶

The collection of immediate taxes by the state from the peasants was done in a repressive and sometimes brutal way. In many instances public officials did not behave justly in collecting taxes. Taxes owed to the state and not paid on time by the peasants, were becoming debts. Peasants were arrested because they used to owe taxes to the state or to the Refugee Settlement Commission. Peasants did not have the money to pay their debts because they could not

sell at all their crops or sold them to extremely low prices or because natural disaster - floods, frost, hail, hot wind, grasshoppers, rats, etc. - had destroyed their crops.⁵⁷

Tax-collectors and policemen imprisoned peasants who had no means of paying their debts. Jails were filled with those peasants. At the same time, middle and upper class professionals were delaying payments of taxes to the state without suffering any consequences. Tax-collectors with policemen sought peasants with warrants of personal arrest. To avoid them, peasants used to stay overnight hiding in their fields. Other peasants used to fight with them in order to avoid imprisonment. Far too many peasants were imprisoned because of their debts to the state or to the Refugee Settlement Commission.⁵⁸

The marketing of peasant production in Greece was done mainly by middlemen who made an enormous profit at the expense of both producers and consumers. Middlemen used to determine the prices for crops. They bought at very low prices from the peasants and sold to the consumers at very high prices. The very low prices in which peasants sold their crops were one of the causes of their severe economic condition. Low prices for peasant crops created a crisis in agriculture. This affected peasant income which was decreasing; at the same time cultivating expenses were increasing.⁵⁹

Protection could be accomplished through the establishment of independent organizations for crops such as: grain, tobacco, cotton, raisins, olives, etc., and by the formation of cooperatives. For example, the protection of grain, a main crop of Greek peasants, could be done by imposing tariffs on imported grain or by purchase of domestic grain by the state. The system of purchase by the state of grain, basically wheat, would enable the peasants to know in advance the exact price at which they would sell

their crops. Thus, they could avoid pre-selling their production at an extremely low price. The phenomenon of pre-sales of crops was very common and a very sad one. Peasants used to sale their crops before harvest because they desperately needed cash. Consequently, middlemen took advantage of the desperate situation of peasants, and made a very high profit at their expense.⁶⁰

Another alternative for protecting peasants and avoiding middlemen were the cooperatives.

Cooperatives, as voluntary and free organizations based on solidarity among peasants were created as a response to the exploitation by middlemen. Cooperatives improved the economic situation of peasants in various ways. They provided low-priced materials for cultivation and other needs, better terms of credit, the common use of the land and production machinery, facility in the cultivation, the processing, and distribution of products, and better prices for those products. In addition to these economic functions, cooperatives provided a means for political action. They served as a basis for organizing the peasants to assert themselves and claim their rights.⁶¹

Most of the cooperatives had as their main purpose to provide loans to the peasants rather than the production of crops and distribution of those crops to the market. This happened because the banks used to give loans to peasants who were members of cooperatives; the cooperatives with the collective responsibility of their members served as a guarantee that the banks would be repaid.

The majority of peasants, though, were not members of cooperatives. Only 28% of peasants were members of cooperatives by the year 1933. This was partly due to the fact that the state wanted to control the activities of the cooperatives. With a series of laws, the state excluded from the administrative councils of the cooperatives politically active peasants such as candidates for the

Senate, the Chamber of Deputies, the city councils etc. The control of cooperatives by the state or by the Agrarian Bank did not serve the interests of peasants but the interests of middlemen. The state wanted the cooperatives only as purely bureaucratic entities which would more easily carry out the functions of banks.

Cooperatives eliminated only to a very small degree the profits of middlemen; certainly they did not abolish them. The cooperatives were weak in distributing to the market the whole peasant production; they distributed only a small portion while the largest part was done by middlemen.⁶²

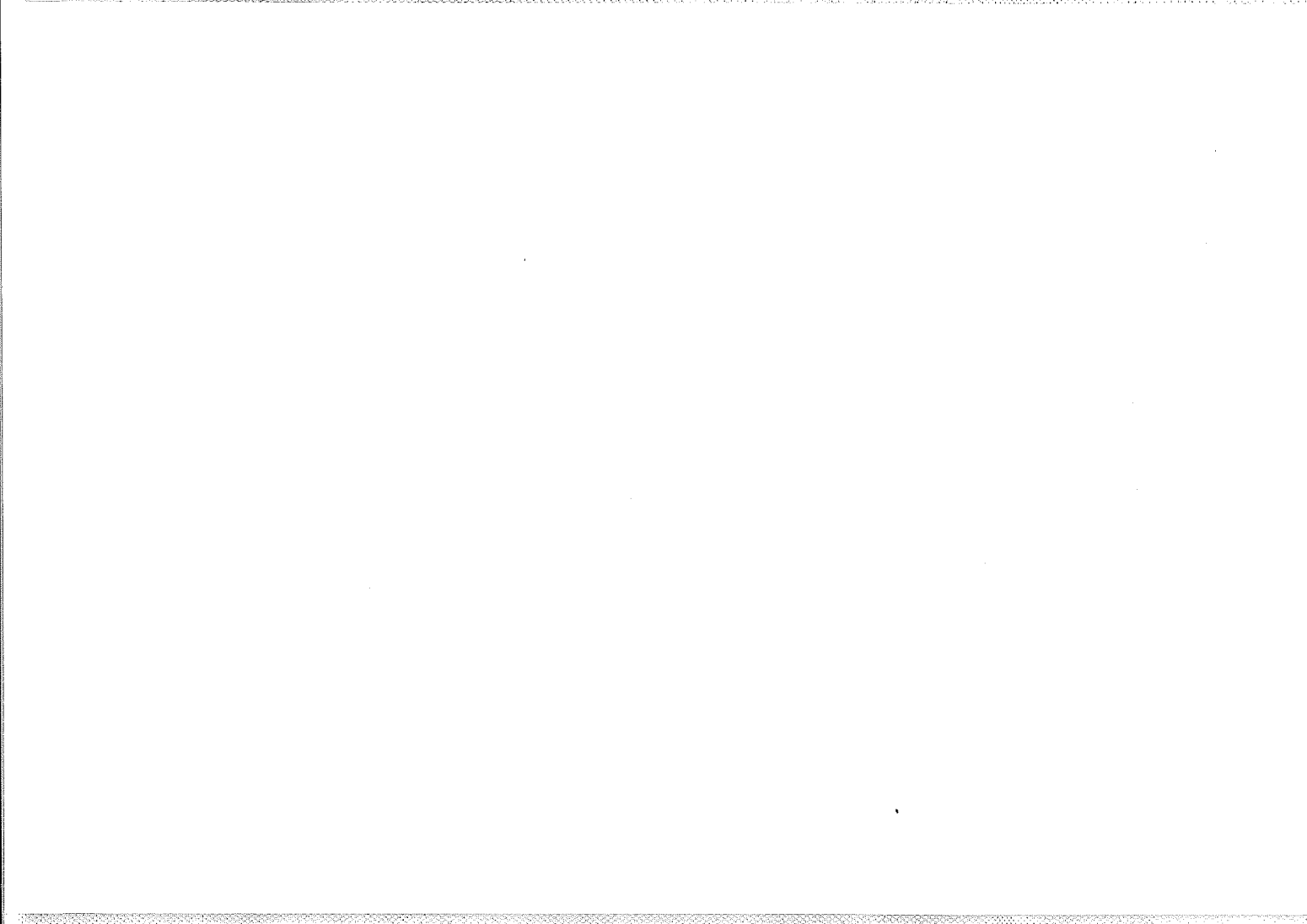
Thus, independent organizations for crops and the cooperatives helped the peasants to lessen the exploitation by middlemen.

Finally, in Greece there was neither practically any protection of crops and animals against natural disaster, nor social security for the peasants. Forms of natural disasters were frost, hail, flood, grasshopper, worms, hot summer wind, drought, various diseases, such as phylloxera (vineyard-pest) etc. Social security for the peasants, which would include protection against illness, old age, disability from accidents, mental disability, protection of pregnant women, health treatment of all peasants in general, did not exist.⁶³

The state did not practically protect the peasants and their production against natural disaster, neither made a law which would give them social security. Such a bill was postponed purposely throughout the period of this study.

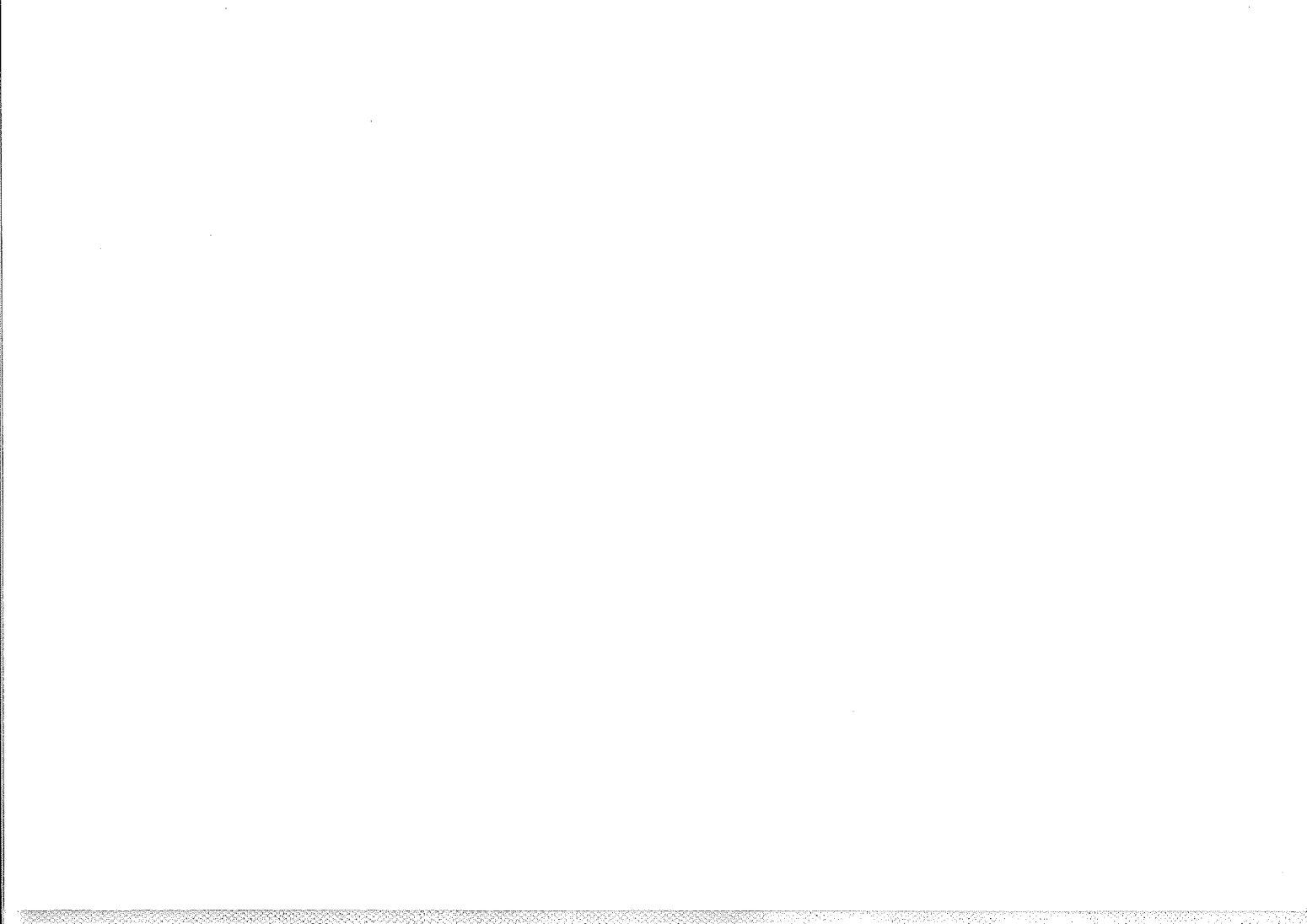
This was the economic condition of peasants. The interrelationship of these dimensions determined the condition of the peasants which resulted in exploitation and poverty. The state policy tolerated or supported that exploitation and poverty. The income of peasants was not adequate to feed them. It was estimated that the average

income of a peasant family in the year 1936 was 21,686 drachmas while the expenditure for a very basic and simple living standard was an average of 27,988 drachmas. In addition to the basic living expenses, peasants had to pay their taxes to the state, the land they received at land reform, rent for land, food for the animals, credit for loans etc. They were constantly in debt and their living level was extremely low.⁶⁴ The above mentioned dimensions determined the economic context within which the Agrarian Political Party of Greece operated and towards which it oriented its politics in order to improve the life of the peasants.



PART TWO

PARTY ORIGINS AND IDENTITY



3. THE ORIGINS OF THE AGRARIAN POLITICAL PARTY OF GREECE:
"LAND TO THE TILLER"

The Agrarian Political Party of Greece as the political organization of peasants emerged with agrarian reform as its main purpose. It was the manifestation of the political, social and economic conditions of the peasantry and Greece. The Greek State was indifferent to peasants and to issues vital to them; it was not willing to resolve the issues which concerned the peasants, primarily agrarian reform. The existing political parties expressed the interests of other social classes or strata. This situation caused peasants, as well as intellectuals of peasant background to want to be organized into their own political party.¹

After the Asia-Minor Catastrophe, the political, social and economic situation of Greece and of the peasants became very crucial. The idea of organizing peasants into their own political party was more widespread than ever. Peasants, especially those who were active members of cooperatives, being alienated from the existing political parties, realized the necessity for the creation of an agrarian political party.²

Therefore the agrarian political associations of Athens and Peania, Attica, together with other agrarian organizations, organized a meeting in Athens, inviting all the agrarian political associations and all regional agrarian organizations and cooperatives of Greece, as well as all the agrarian communities. Issues for discussion on the agenda included the establishment of the Agrarian Political Party, the formation of its program, as well as the participation of the party in the elections for the Constituent Assembly.³

Indeed, on October 17 and 18, 1922, representatives from the Unions of Agricultural Cooperatives and Peasant Associations met in Athens in the First Panhellenic Agrarian Congress. These representatives of the cooperatives and associations which were the only existing organizations of peasants, recognized that the needs of peasants could not be satisfied by the existing political system and the governments of the middle class political parties. Therefore, they resolved that peasants had to be organized into their own political party.⁴ That Congress then took the initiative and established the Agrarian Political Party of Greece. It also declared a very basic program which served as a definite set of goals for the party to achieve.

With that minimum program the Agrarian Party wanted: the immediate and throughout the country expropriation of the large land estates and pasture lands for the settlement of landless peasants; to grant to the communities-villages the pasture lands and forests; the reform of the taxation system in favour of the working classes; the organization and support of agrarian credit; the support of peasants to be organized in cooperatives; the creation of conditions necessary and favorable for development in agriculture, such as security, better health system for the peasants, communication networks, hydraulic works, planting of new

forest etc.; full and real local self-administration; education for the peasant class and reform of the educational system, and finally the simplification of court procedures.⁵

The Congress though, decided that the organization of the party would be set by the next Congress. That next Congress, which was the Second Panhellenic Agrarian Congress of the Unions of Agricultural Cooperatives and of Peasant Associations met in Athens on March 18 to 22, 1923.* The issues discussed at the Second Congress, covered all the vital and urgent problems of the Greek peasantry: agrarian reform, local self-administration, credit to peasants, marketing of peasant crops, participation in cooperatives, as well as, the organization of the already established Agrarian Political Party. Regarding the latter, the Congress voted for and accepted a temporary sixteen-member Administrative Council of the party. That Administrative Council would operate until the party would establish local organizations throughout the country. These local organizations would elect the permanent Administrative Council at a future Congress. The Congress also voted for and accepted a seven-member temporary Executive Committee, which would formulate the

* There participated as representatives of the Unions of Agricultural Cooperatives the following: D. Maryetis, D. Varelas, Chr. Evelpidis, Voutsas from Attica-Beotia; Papavasiliou from Arcadia; S. Evgenopoulos from Achaia; Chr. Vergopoulos from Aegio; G. Predaris from Korinth; Chr. Terzakis, Kolitsidas and Kefalas from Kalamata; Vourlas from Trifillia - Pelia; Th. Apostolidis from Fthiotis; Bamiias from Arta; N. Zeoyas from Drama; J. Economidis, Z. Sakellaris, Th. Kokonis and Papaekonomou from Thessaly, and S. Balos from Corfu. There also participated privately S. Chaseotis, J. Karamanos, S. Easemidis and Petritsis.

program and set the organization of the Agrarian Party.**

This is how the organization of the Agrarian Party began. Although the Agrarian Party was established in 1922, it was not organized until 1923. The development of the Agrarian Party therefore started with organization at the top; the Administrative Council and the Executive Committee were formulated first, and the regional-local organizations of the party afterwards. The temporary Administrative Council declared that the Agrarian Party was in opposition to the major middle class political parties, as well as to the other personalistic parties. Thus, the Agrarian Party emerged as a party of "principles" and not of persons, as an independent political party with its own entity and identity.⁶

The Agrarian Party then was established by pre-existing institutions; the true activities of these institutions were outside the elections and the Parliament. These institutions were the agricultural cooperatives and the peasants' associations. These were precisely the agrarian organizations which decided to establish the Agrarian Political Party at their First Panhellenic Congress. It is obvious that the Agrarian Party was not the creation of a few people, but the manifestation of the historical reality of Greece and of the peasantry. Forces, therefore, that gave rise to the Agrarian Party, as reflected by the cooperatives and the associations, were the social and

** The members of the Temporary Administrative Council were: Maryetis from Attica-Beotia, Vergopoulos from Aegio, Evgenopoulos from Patras, Vourias from Pelia, Kolitsidas from Kalamata, Deligiannis from Trifillia, Terzakis from Messinia, Kalavritinos from Sparta, Predaris from Korinth, Apostolidis from Fthiotis, Koronis from Larisa, Economidis from Volos, Avrasoglou from Thessaloniki, Dimitrakopoulos from Serres, Zeoyas from Drama and Balos from Corfu.

The members of the Temporary Executive Committee were: Chaseotis, Maryetis, Evelpidis, Vergopoulos, Predaris, Karamanos and Bamias.

economic condition of the peasantry. The Agrarian Party emerged as the political expression and representation of the peasants. As was stated in the Congress in which the Agrarian Party was established, peasants could no longer tolerate their condition; they wanted to change it by establishing their own political party. They considered the Agrarian Party and its role in solving their problems as an "absolute necessity". They had to be organized in their own political party, otherwise their problems would never be solved. If the state would not carry out land reform, peasants must take the large land estates by themselves.⁷

The principal concern, and one of the main purposes of the Agrarian Party, was to give "the land to the tiller", that is, the expropriation of the large land estates and the distribution to the landless peasants for their settlement. In addition, the party was concerned with the totality of the problems of the Greek peasantry and society.⁸

Since the principal concern of the party was to give "the land to the tiller", it is essential to know how Greece arrived at the land status that existed at the establishment of the Agrarian Party. This will be revealed through an examination of the efforts which may or may not have affected that land status, from the formation of the modern Greek State until the establishment of the Agrarian Party. Thus, it is important to examine briefly the land structure and agrarian reform in historical perspective from the liberation of Greece from the Ottoman Empire until 1922.

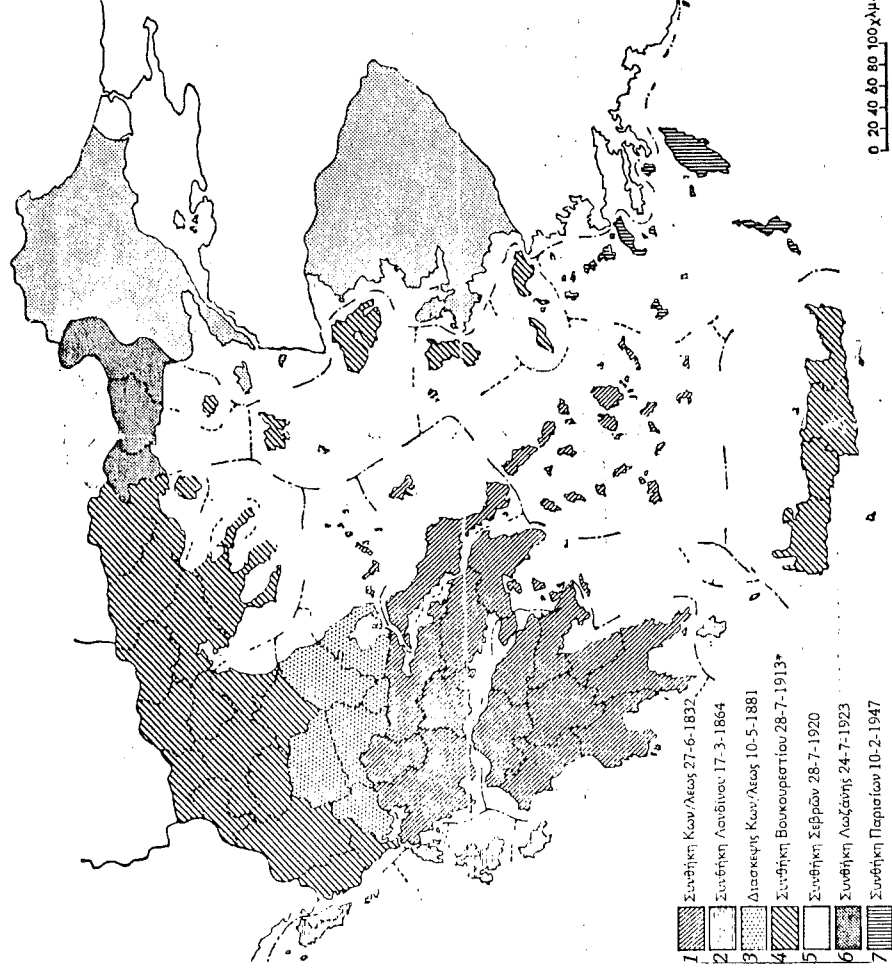
When Greece became an independent state, it inherited the land structure which existed during the Ottoman occupation, where the large land estates prevailed. National integration then, immediately presented the issue of land status and land relationships. Agrarian reform or lack of it was related with the unique Greek historical

experience of national integration, and it will be viewed from that perspective.

The national integration of Greece did not occur at once, but gradually. So did agrarian reform. For that reason, it is important to point out the stages of Greek national integration. The War of Independence of 1821 liberated the regions of the Peloponnese, Sterea Hellas, several of the Aegean islands but certainly not the entire country. This was then the modern Greek State. In 1864 the so-called Seven-islands of the Ionian Sea were integrated into the country. In 1881, Thessaly and the prefecture of Arta were integrated as well, and after the Balkan Wars of 1912-1913, Macedonia and part of Epirus, and Thrace in 1920. Every time a part of Greece was integrated into the rest of the country, the situation of the peasantry became worse. Peasants lost even the limited rights they enjoyed during the Ottoman occupation. They became renters, and they lost the "tessaruf" right. In the case of the peasants of the Seven-islands, they were no longer permitted to make lifetime contracts with the landowners. Thus, even though they won their national liberation, they did not win their social and economic emancipation from the Greek State, the middlemen and the moneylenders.⁹

Following are discussed the steps which led to the land status it existed when the Agrarian Political Party of Greece was established. Reference is made to the land structure during the Ottoman occupation and the agrarian reform since 1821, when the War of Independence started. All the attempts for agrarian reform, in the part of Greece prior to the integration of Thessaly, resulted in the agrarian reform of the government of Prime Minister Koumoundouros, in 1871. The national integration of the regions of Thessaly and Arta in 1881, and the attempts for agrarian reform since then are also discussed. Reference is also made to the integration of the rest of Epirus,

Map 1: National Integration and Disintegration of Greece



1. Treaty of Istanbul, June 27, 1832
 2. Treaty of London, March 17, 1864
 3. Conference of Istanbul, May 10, 1881
 4. Treaty of Bucharest, July 28, 1913,
and Treaty of Athens, November 1, 1913
 5. Treaty of Sevres, July 28, 1920
 6. Treaty of Lausanne, July 24, 1923
 7. Treaty of Paris, February 10, 1947
- } Old Greece
} New Lands

Macedonia, Thrace, and the effect on the land status, including the proposal of the Provisional Government of Venizelos for agrarian reform in 1917.

A. From the Ottoman Occupation and the War of Independence until 1871

Greece was occupied by the Ottoman Empire from 1453 until 1821 when the War of Independence started. Land during that occupation could be classified in the following three categories: public lands, dedicated lands, and private lands.¹⁰ This land structure was transmitted to the independent Greek State.

As in other countries which were occupied by the Ottoman Empire, in Greece, land was subject to the legal status based on the Koran and the Ottoman laws. Occupied lands, with only a few exceptions, were state owned, a type of ownership different from the Roman Law type of ownership. The relationship of the state to the land was determined by public law and not by private law; only the Sultan, the head of the Empire, could arrange land status and land relations. The Ottoman conquerors obliged the Greek peasants to cultivate the land for them.¹¹

a. Public lands in occupied Greece, were 1. the *timario* and 2. the lands of the Crown.

1. Greece was divided by the Ottoman Empire into administrative districts, the so-called *timario*.

The *timario* was granted to one or more than one military or bureaucratic official of the Ottoman Empire for service to the Empire. One *timario* could belong to one or more than one such officials. One village could coincide with one *timario* or part of the same village could be

distributed to more than one *timario*.

The *timario* was classified according to the position in the hierarchy of the Empire of its head (head of the *timario* that is), in the following three categories: the *has*, the *zeamet* and the *timario* of the *sipahi*.¹²

Heads of the *timario* were appointed by a decree of the Sultan. They were neither the owners of the *timario* nor the managers of the enterprise. They did not oversee the cultivation of the land. They were not the employers of the cultivators. Heads of the *timario* had the duty of collecting the taxes of the *timario* and using them to maintain an army which could be placed at the disposal of the Sultan. The production of the *timario* was distributed among the Empire officials and the cultivators. However, this distribution was disproportional; most of the production went to the Empire, while the cultivators took whatever was left after taxation. The *timario* therefore, was a means of extracting the maximum taxation from the peasantry rather than maximizing productivity. Consequently, the commercialization of agriculture was not at all facilitated. Peasants worked on their own initiative in order to earn the means for their own survival and to pay their taxes to the Ottoman Empire. They were nobody's property since serfdom legally did not exist; it was not allowed by the Holy Law of the Ottomans. The employer of the peasants was the Empire itself. The Sultan was head of the Empire, and heads of the *timario* were the military administrators and the local bureaucratic representatives.¹³ Even though the Holy Law of the Ottomans did not allow serfdom, the heads of the *timario* prohibited cultivators from leaving the *timario* and gradually even their children were obliged to stay in the *timario*.

2. The lands of the Crown were organized similarly to the *timario* system. The lands of the Crown were entrusted by

the Sultan not to military or other officials, but to his sons, brothers or other relatives. These lands were also administrative districts. Peasants paid taxes necessary for the expenses of the Crown. The *timario* and the lands of the Crown were the public lands in occupied Greece. The Ottoman Empire was the owner of the land and extracted heavy taxation from the peasants who cultivated it. Peasants had no political rights and could not buy or sell land.¹⁴

b. Dedicated lands, *vakoufs*, were lands which belonged to religious foundations. People granted their land to religious foundations - that is, churches, monasteries and welfare organizations - in order to avoid the taxes due to the Empire. However, these people kept the *emphyteutic* rights. Consequently the Empire lost a source of its taxation. The religious foundations took the place of the Empire, in the sense that peasants paid taxation to these religious foundations instead of to the Empire. It is important to point out here that the Sultan recognized relative autonomy to the Greek Orthodox Church. That Church was considered as a conservative force in society and it could be manipulated by the Sultan in order to keep obedience among the Christian population, that is, the Greek population of the Empire. In the Ottoman Empire, all religions - Islam, Christianity or Judaism - had legally the same status. Dedicated lands were a considerable part of the Ottoman Empire.¹⁵

c. Private lands (*mulks*). Peasants who worked in the *timario* or in the dedicated land, had the right of full ownership of their house, their garden and the plantation of trees or vineyards. In the mountainous areas of Greece there was also a small amount of private property-in-land. At the same time there was property-in-land of the community-village. That small private ownership of land and

the property of the communities-villages, comprised the so-called *kefalochoria*. Private lands also existed in the valleys and belonged to Ottomans; these Ottomans settled in those lands after military occupation. Land also belonged to Christians who presented no armed resistance to the Ottomans, but submitted to them; these Christians remained on their land. The above lands were the so-called *mulks*. Production in these private lands was in the form of the enterprise and not in the form of the *timario*. The owners of the land wanted to maximize production and eventually sell it in the market. The owners of the *mulks*, though, were under the authority of the Sultan and had to pay taxes.¹⁶

Thus, *timaria*, lands of the Crown, *vakoufs* and *mulks* were categories of land during the occupation of Greece by the Ottoman Empire. This land structure was passed to the independent state of Greece. The Greek State subsequently changed that structure. It recognized private ownership of the lands which used to belong to Greeks, as well as to those Ottomans who remained on their land even after the independence of Greece. At the same time, the Greek State confiscated the lands which had belonged to the Ottoman Crown, Moslem mosques, welfare organizations and to Ottomans who had abandoned their land in Greece. Those lands were declared "national lands", and are known as such. In addition to the Greek State, landowners were the Greek Orthodox Church, especially the monasteries and the landlords. At the same time, there were many landless peasants. Immediately after independence, the Greek State nationalized most of the land and accepted a special status for the region of Attica. The Greek State did not distribute the land to landless peasantry, neither did it put the land on auction sale. It's aim was to avoid the creation of a landowning bourgeoisie. The Greek State then became the owner of 35% of the arable land of the country

on which it worked one half to one third of the total peasant population. Being the owner of that arable land, the Greek State rented the land to peasants and collected from them the 10% tax - the so-called *decate* - plus the *epikarpia*, both types of taxation on gross production of peasants. *Decate* was a type of taxation named after the one tenth of the gross production which peasants had to pay to the state. Very often though this *decate* fluctuated from 8% to 30% of the gross production of peasants. In addition to the *decate*, the state collected another 15% of the gross production of peasants as *epikarpia* ("right of enjoyment"). Thus independence to the majority of Greek peasants meant a situation worse than the occupation by the Ottoman Empire. They became renters, and they no longer had the so-called "tessaruf" right which protected them from being evicted from the estate. Peasants became subject to exploitation by the state and the state pushed the peasants to the extreme, by collecting the *decate* (8% - 30%) plus the *epikarpia* (15%). The introduction into the Greek State of the Roman-German Law regarding land property and land relations, swept away the Ottoman tradition and made worse the condition of the peasants. The Roman-German Law which recognized small private property prevailed as the legal structure in the newly independent Greek State, and was substituted for the Ottoman legal structure.¹⁷

The Greek State, even when it rented the "national lands" to peasants, distributed only a small part of these lands to them, despite the reaction of the large land owners. During the War of Independence, the first National Assemblies decided to distribute part of the "national lands" to those people who suffered damage from the War of Independence. These Assemblies also decided to sell land and collect money for the needs of the country. However, not too many lands were distributed or sold according to the decisions of the first National Assemblies.¹⁸

John Kapodestrias, the first Prime Minister of Greece, failed to distribute the "national lands" to the landless peasants. The major reason was that the Super-Powers of that time (England, France, Czarist Russia) wanted the "national lands" as a guarantee for the loans they gave to Greece.¹⁹

Land reform in Greece actually started in 1832. From then until 1871, a series of laws determined the distribution of land to the peasant families. There were distributed about 280,000 acres of land before the agrarian reform of 1871, a negligible size.²⁰

The policy of the government of Prime Minister Koumoundouros, who supported the family smallholding and opposed the large land estate, resulted in the Law of March 25, 1871, which distributed the "national lands". According to that law, peasants who had rented "national lands", could buy that land at a very low price. This land reform, which was initiated in 1871 and completed in 1911, distributed 2,650,000 acres among 357,217 lots. The land reform of 1871, supported the family smallholding. In that way, the Greek State intended to prevent concentration of land in the lands of a few landowners and to avoid the creation of a landowning bourgeoisie.²¹

From the war of Independence in 1821 to 1911, in the part of Greece which included the regions of the Peloponnese, Sterea Hellas and some part of the islands, about 3,300,000 acres of arable land were distributed by the Greek State to peasants. In addition to that land, another 3,200,000 acres of invaded and seized land were recognized as legal to the peasants. Peasants invaded and occupied unused or underutilized lands which they did not formerly possess and brought them into cultivation. They considered such invasions and occupations as legitimate recovery of lands which had been illegally taken from them. Those invasions and occupations were sometimes peaceful; at

other times, though, when peasants used force against those who did claim ownership, were violent. They considered invasions and occupations as an appropriate and legitimate means of struggle. The action of the invasion and occupation of lands for cultivation could be interpreted as a form of civil disobedience. Land invasions, even though disapproved by the state, were tolerated and finally recognized as legal to the invader-peasants.²²

Therefore, with the distribution of the "national lands" on the one hand and the legalized status of the invaded and seized lands on the other, a major part of the arable land came into the hands of peasants. Most certainly, not all the peasants became smallholders, since the family smallholding prevailed as the type of agricultural organization. The issue of land reform was more or less resolved in that part of Greece. However, it was more vital to peasants who lived in the regions which were integrated into the country afterwards, because there remained landless peasants and large land estates which were not distributed.²³

B. From the Integration of Thessaly and Arta until 1917

The Treaties of Berlin in 1878 and of Istanbul in 1881 regarding the integration of the regions of Thessaly and Arta to Greece, did not allow the Greek State to nationalize the Ottoman large land estates. Nevertheless, Ottomans who got titles of absolute private ownership of land left for Turkey. Within three years, very rich Greeks of the diaspora (people who lived basically in Istanbul, Turkey; Odessa, Russia; Alexandria, Egypt; Bukharest, Romania; Paris, France; London, England; etc.), bought the large estates. The Ottomans sold them in a hurry, fearing that the Greek State may not honor the Treaties of Berlin and Istanbul and nationalize their land anyway. The new

landlords who replaced the Ottomans were the rich Greek bankers, merchants, shipowners and entrepreneurs of the diaspora. The Greek State protected their land estates and favored these landlords. It did not initiate land reform. It relieved the taxation of the landlords and placed the burden on the peasants. The situation of the peasants after the integration of Thessaly and Arta with Greece, became worse; the new landlords had the right to evict the peasants from the estate in which they worked as share tenants.²⁴

The first considerable attempt for land reform in Thessaly was made by Theodore Deligiannis when he became prime minister in 1896. The situation in Thessaly at that time was as follows: the total land of Thessaly (including both, mountainous areas and valleys) was 1,186,300 hectares. Large land property were 572,056 hectares, that is 50.5% of the total land of Thessaly. Of the valleys of Thessaly which were 400,000 hectares, 329,186 hectares were large land property. These large land estates were worked by share tenants; half of the peasant population of Thessaly, corresponding to 10,579 families or 103,202 people, worked in those large land estates.²⁵

The peasant population of Thessaly at that time is illustrated in TABLE 4.

This table shows the population in numbers of peasant families. It also demonstrates clearly, that over half of the Thessaly peasant population did not have their own land, but worked as share tenants and wage laborers, on the large land estates.

TABLE 4

PEASANT POPULATION OF THESSALY IN 1986

Areas of Thessaly	Smallholders	Share tenants (<i>colleye</i>)	Wage laborers (<i>Parakededes</i>) (<i>Koulouktsides</i>)
Magnesia	1,150	229	22
Larisa	2,567	2,757	555
Karditsa	4,083	3,784	182
Trikala	2,207	3,424	120
Domokos	884	385	52
Total	10,851	10,579	931

SOURCE: Kostas Vergopoulos, *The Agrarian Question in Greece: The Social Integration of Agriculture*, (Athens: Exadas, 1975), p. 176.

Prime Minister Deligiannis, realizing how serious the situation of the peasants of Thessaly was, presented to the Parliament five bills outlining a comprehensive program of agrarian reform. With these bills, Theodore Deligiannis wanted to:

- a. grant land to peasant families;
- b. establish an agrarian bank;
- c. arrange the relationships between landowners and peasants, and
- d., e. change the taxation system.

This was the first coherent, systematic, and for the time, radical proposal of agrarian reform in Thessaly. Very briefly, this proposal was as follows:

a. Theodore Deligiannis through the bills wanted the mandatory expropriation of one eighth of the arable land of every large land estate, in order to distribute it among the share tenants. Each share tenant would get 20 to 25 acres of arable land. In addition, the bills wanted the expropriation of the house in which the peasant family lived. Peasants would pay off the land and the house they would receive, in 15 years.

b. The agrarian bank which Theodore Deligiannis wanted to establish, would support the development of agriculture in Thessaly through credit.

c. These bills supported the rights of the share tenants and the status they had before the integration of Thessaly into the rest of Greece. The relationship of the share tenant to the landowner, was one of a "company" and not one of landlord and renter. The landowner had no right to dissolve the "company" unilaterally and evict the peasant from the estate. He also had no right to evict peasants unable to work because of old age, sickness, etc.; the widows of the peasants had to remain on the estate as well. d., e. Finally, the bills sought to change the taxation of the trucking animals and pasture lands. Abolishing taxation on trucking animals would enable peasants to have more trucking animals which would cultivate the land better and thus increase production. These bills also wanted to abolish taxation on pasture lands. Instead, they would put taxation on the large land estates per acre, and on the smallholdings, a 6%-tax on the gross production of grain.

In addition to the above mentioned bills, the government of Prime Minister Deligiannis planned hydraulic works, such as draining swamps and building dams. The government wanted a complete infrastructure which would facilitate development in agriculture.²⁶

However, none of these radical bills for agrarian reform passed Parliament. The reaction of the large

landowners was very strong. Also the Members of the Parliament from Thessaly, who were large landowners themselves, reacted, despite the fact that they belonged to the Party of Prime Minister Deligiannis. Share tenants on the other hand, were very weak, unorganized, and therefore could not assert their demands. The government of Prime Minister Deligiannis had no choice but to change policy. It accepted the creation of a committee which would study the bills at the local level. This committee was made up of six state officials and eleven members of the Parliament from Thessaly. From that time on, the bills were practically set aside. The creation of the committee meant that the government did not consider the agrarian reform bills as part of its program since it allowed the committee to study the situation in Thessaly and make different proposals. When that committee went to Thessaly, the landowners manipulated the share tenants by the threat of eviction to the point that the share tenants told the committee they did not support the agrarian reform bills. In a month the committee collected its information in Thessaly and formulated proposals against agrarian reform. It openly supported the landowners and their large land estates, and allowed no change at all in that structure, leaving the large land estates intact.²⁷

Neither did the governments following Deligiannis change the land structure of touch the landowners.

In 1906, Prime Minister Theotokis, for example, tried to pass a land reform law, but Parliament, including deputies from his own party, voted against it being under pressure from the large landowners.²⁸

In 1907, according to law, 1,058,700 acres of land were distributed in Thessaly to refugees from Eastern Romania and Rumania, as well as, to some share tenants of Thessaly. Thus, 4,398 families of share tenants and 2,624 families of refugees were settled. This distribution

though, was facilitated by the inheerents of the landlord Stefanovik, who sold the government 26 large land estates at an extremely low price.²⁹

The military coup d'etat of Goudi in 1909 did not carry out land reform despite promises.³⁰

In 1911, a law did not allow the landowners to evict share tenants from the estate. With the integration of the rest of Epirus, Macedonia and Thrace in 1913, the Greek State did not allow changes in the already existing relationship to the land. In these regions, Laws 138 of 1914 and 670 of 1915, did not allow the landowners to expel the share tenants from their estate and prohibited any changes in the already existing relationship between large landowners and share tenants.³¹

From the integration of Thessaly with Greece in 1881 until 1917, the Greek State bought and distributed to landless peasants and refugees of Thessaly, about 1,100,000 acres of land. In those lands, were settled about 7,100 families of those peasants and refugees. However, the majority of the large land estates, remained in the hands of large landowners and were worked by share tenants (*colleye*) and by wage laborers (*parakededes* and *koulouktsides*).³²

C. From 1917 to 1922

Another radical proposal for agrarian reform was declared in Thessaloniki in 1917, by the Provisional Government of Venizelos. That Government issued five decrees on May 2, 1917. According to these decrees, which became Law 1072 of December 29, 1917:

- a. the state would distribute the large land estates among the cultivators to obtain their own small property;

- b. would give land to people who participated in the liberation of the New Lands;
- c. would arrange land relationships according to tradition,
- d. would mandatorily expropriate the houses within the large land estates, and
- e. finally, the state would arrange the way of payment to large landowners.

The Provisional Government of Venizelos was not sincere when it declared this agrarian reform and issued these decrees; actually, it was not concerned about agrarian reform. All it wanted was to achieve popular support among the peasantry during the civil strife which was initiated in 1915. Venizélos was not interested in carrying out the agrarian reform he declared and purposely delayed doing so. Evidently, only one large land estate located in Charvati of Attica was expropriated and distributed to landless peasants, according to Law 1072 of 1917.³³

The law which was extremely complex and complicated, consequently difficult to enforce was modified and finally substituted by agrarian Law 2052 of February 28, 1920. This law, though, was not put into effect because the government changed after the elections of November 1, 1920. In July 1922, Agrarian Law 2922 passed Parliament. That law supported the landowners; however, the Asia-Minor Catastrophe prevented its enforcement.³⁴

At the time the Agrarian Party was established, in Old Greece there existed landless peasants and large land estates despite the efforts for agrarian reform which settled the majority of peasants as family smallholders.

In the New Lands, though, where land reform was purposely postponed there existed large land estates and landless peasants. This was one of the main reasons that the Agrarian Party was established: to give the "land to

the tiller".

4. THE IDENTITY OF THE AGRARIAN PARTY: IDEOLOGY AND PROGRAM, ORGANIZATION

The ideology, the program and the organization of the Agrarian Party provide the identity profile of the party.

A. Ideology and Program

Ideology has been variously defined in political science literature. Even though the concept of ideology is one of the most elusive in the political science vocabulary, it tends to specify a set of values that are more or less coherent, and it seeks to link given patterns of action to the achievement or maintenance of a future or existing state of affairs. If an ideology wants to achieve or maintain desired ends, considered to be superior for some reason, and, therefore, desirable for a collective entity (a social class or even the whole society for instance), a public authority is expected to intervene. An ideology, may or may not be dogmatic: a relative lack of dogmatism, does not necessarily make a given set of cognitions, preferences, expectations and prescriptions, any less ideological. A commitment to pragmatism, can itself be a principle that can be conceived as ideological in the broad sense of the concept. An ideology may or may not be utopian; it may or may not have congruence with reality. An ideology may well reflect a concern for consistency and it seeks its application to the world; it wants, though, to change this world according to its own explanation for political life. An ideology may be rationally formulated; as such, it can be a useful and even

necessary device to the extent that it provides some basis for choice among political alternatives. An ideology, then, explains what is wrong in society, describes how the society ought to be restructured and provides the means of changing the old order and creating a new one.³⁵

The ideology of the Agrarian Political Party of Greece was agrarianism. For the Greek reality, agrarianism was a "sui generis", that is, a uniquely peculiar type of socialism. It had to do with the political awakening of the Greek peasantry, and its struggle for emancipation from exploitation and repression. Its ultimate objective was to abolish exploitation of men by men and create a society with social equality and social justice.³⁶

Agrarianism was this particular set of beliefs, attitudes, cognitions, values, preferences, expectations and prescriptions, regarding Greek the peasantry and society. The perception of agrarianism of political issues was not doctrinaire, but realistic. It had an action program of immediate pragmatic policy proposals designed to improve the life of the peasants, the working people, and to develop the country. These proposals were coincidentally the beginning of the restructuring of society as a whole. Agrarianism gave a new orientation to Greek peasantry. It was a new situation in modern Greek history. It appeared as a unique, popular, radical left ideology. It emerged from the Greek reality - the concrete Greek social, economic and political conditions - and it had a pragmatic approach to this reality. It was adapted to the peculiarities of the Greek peasantry. Agrarianism was not the creation of a few people; it was the popular movement of the peasantry; it had its roots in the peasant masses, and was believed and shared by these peasant masses.³⁷

Agrarianism, as already pointed out, was a uniquely peculiar type of socialism with respect to class struggle, revolution, the road to state power, small private property

in land and the socialization of means of production. It was democratic, in the sense, that it wanted to achieve social justice through peaceful means; however, if necessary, it accepted revolution as the way to bring social change for the benefit of the peasantry and the working people in general. Agrarianism supported small private property because this was what the Greek peasants wanted, who were attached to their piece of land. They wanted their small property. Therefore, peasants felt comfortable with that ideology which kept their private property in land. The appeal and the prestige of agrarianism grew among the peasants. Agrarianism appealed to peasants, and they accepted it, especially at a time when the conflict of peasants with the state and the upper and middle class was growing.³⁸

In sectors other than the agrarian economy, such as banks, big industry, communications, transportation, etc., agrarianism strongly supported socialization. It believed in the transformation of the society and the socialization of the means of production according to the Marxist theory. This transformation of the society, though, would occur at a later stage. This was the ultimate objective of agrarianism.³⁹

The Marxist theory of class struggle served as the foundation of agrarianism.⁴⁰ In agrarianism the peasants formed their own social class in so far as they were in hostile opposition with other social classes and there was a political organization among them as well as community of interests.⁴¹ Even though some peasants were conservative, i.e. wanted to consolidate their smallholding and represented superstition and prejudice, other peasants could be revolutionary or politically active; they could strike out beyond the condition of their social existence; they could overthrow the old order through their own energies.⁴² Agrarianism also accepted that every class

struggle was a political struggle.⁴³ Thus, the organization of peasants into a political party would carry out the struggle against the middle class and the government. Those who established the Agrarian Party and actively participated in it, challenged the statement of Karl Marx that the industrial proletariat alone was the only revolutionary therefore politically active class.⁴⁴

The leadership of the Agrarian Party was convinced that, in order to create better living conditions for the peasantry and, furthermore, to change the Greek society as a whole, they would have to rely on the peasantry as the main force to carry out the struggle against the bourgeoisie and the government. Given the specific Greek conditions, that leadership realized that if peasants, who were the most numerous class in Greece, wanted their emancipation, they had to be organized into their own political party. The Agrarian Party, with agrarianism as its ideology, showed them a new orientation, a new way for their "class emancipation". The industrial working class in Greece did not comprise the majority of the population. The Communist Party of Greece underestimated the potential of the Greek peasants. Shortly after the successful Russian Revolution of October 1917, the Communist Party believed that only the industrial-urban proletariat would change Greek society after the conquest of state power. Peasants were considered conservative by the vanguard of the revolutionary urban proletariat, the Communist Party.⁴⁵

The founders of the Agrarian Party realized and believed that the peasant class would lead the struggle for the transformation of society, the abolishment of exploitation of men by men, and their emancipation. For that reason, peasants had to be organized into their own political organization which was the Agrarian party. The Agrarian Party, with agrarianism as its ideology, also asked for the support, of those people who had common and

interrelated interests with the peasantry, and who knew that their problems could not be resolved in the existing order. These people were the working class and the lower middle class (artisans, craftsmen, small manufacturers, shopkeepers, public officials, other professionals, etc.).⁴⁶

Agrarianism, did not seek the well-being of the peasants at the expense of the urban working people; that is, workers, artisans, craftsmen, small manufacturers, shopkeepers, public officials, other professionals, etc. Agrarianism therefore, did not reflect only the interests of the peasantry, but also those of the urban working people, who had similar or even common interests with the peasantry. Thus, their interests could be supported within the framework of agrarianism. Agrarianism then, had a broad base; it carried out primarily the struggle for the interests of the peasants, but also for the interests of the urban working people, who were repressed and exploited by big capital as well.⁴⁷

It is obvious that agrarianism accepted the fact that free enterprise created social and economic inequality; that is, the classes of the privileged and the non-privileged. Thus for agrarianism, the non-privileged, besides the peasants, included those working people who were subject to exploitation by big capital.⁴⁸

To create a society in which there would not be exploiters and exploited, agrarianism sought to abolish the pre-conditions which created exploitation. Thus it reflected the willingness of the Greek peasants and those working people who had common or similar interests to overthrow, in the long run, the existing order of exploitation.⁴⁹

The ideology of agrarianism, used the dialectical method in order to study the problems of the peasants and the working people in their dynamic process; it proposed

radical solutions for the benefit of the peasants, for the working people, and for the change of the country as a whole. Its clear anti-capitalistic orientation wanted social changes that were actually revolutionary for Greece at that time. It proposed, not only to eliminate the economic interests of the money-oligarchy in order to improve the lives of the peasantry and the working people, but also to bring changes in the structure of the political system and eliminate the political power of the "establishment". With agrarianism, peasants were emerging fully into history, not simply as victims, but as political actors. They were becoming a promising historical force.⁵⁰

Agrarianism, the theoretical basis of the Agrarian Party, as a new ideology, was in process of improvement. Initially, some of its aspects were vague, not well clarified. Because of the special position of the Agrarian Party, between the conservative middle class political parties, and the Communist Party, a theoretical work was necessary in order to avoid misunderstandings. The Agrarian Party, which had agrarianism as its ideology, was a "class party" with socialist orientation. It believed in Marxism with some deviations or adaptations, as already pointed out. As a "party of principles", it had the ambition to build the socialist classless society and abolish the exploitation of the existing order. It realized, however, that this was extremely difficult to do in a democratic way, that is, without violence, because the existing order had its own means of defense and limited the activities of the popular movement; for that reason, it accepted revolution, as a way to restructure society and benefit the working people.⁵¹

As a "class party", which supported and expressed the interests of the peasants and the working people, the Agrarian Party was simultaneously a movement for politicizing the peasantry. The political action of the

Agrarian Party, therefore, was broad and not limited into the strict reflection of the economic interests of the peasants. The Agrarian Party organized the peasants against the existing social, economic and political system; in this way class struggle became political action led by the Agrarian Party. The role of the Agrarian Party as a "class party", was to support the interests of the peasants and the other working people and to struggle against exploitation. That role could not be carried out by the middle class political parties, because these parties never actually represented the peasantry; they may have granted piecemeal concessions to peasants, but only in order to keep them as their electoral clientele.⁵²

Even though agrarianism emerged with agrarian reform as the main purpose, that is, expropriation of the large land estates and the settlement of landless peasants, it was concerned with the totality of the problems of the Greek peasantry, as already pointed out. It proposed not only solutions to those problems, in order to create better living conditions for the peasants, but it also wanted to create, in a later stage, a society without exploitation of one social class by another.⁵³

In summary, agrarianism was a uniquely peculiar type of socialism because of its challenges to and deviations from Marxism, as well as its adaptations to the Greek reality. These challenges, deviations and adaptations were determined by the concrete Greek social, economic and political conditions of that time. Agrarianism was the ideology of the Agrarian Political Party of Greece. The Agrarian Party, was a "class party" and a "party of principles", which did not want the well-being of peasants at the expense of the urban working people. Agrarianism gave a new orientation to Greek peasantry and society. It presented an alternative value structure to what prevailed in the Greek society. These values appealed to the peasants

because they promised a solution to their problems, and they guided the actions of the Agrarian Party leaders. Agrarianism then, worked on two levels: at the mass level it was accepted and believed by most of the peasants, and at the leadership level, it was a "blueprint" for political action.

The Agrarian Political Party of Greece, had a coherent and comprehensive program of action. At the same time, it had fundamental principles and values, which were basic for that program, determined it and were included in it.

Having a program of action, the Agrarian Party could be called a "programmatic party" in modern political science terminology, in clear distinction from the middle class political parties, which were parties of expediency or interest and had an electoral platform rather than a program which they usually changed just before elections.⁵⁴

The program of the Agrarian Political Party of Greece was designed to improve the life of the peasant class, to develop agriculture and the national economy. Even though it gave priority and emphasis to peasantry and agriculture, it did not exclude the other working people of the society, nor the other sectors of the economy. It did not want the well-being of the peasants at the expense of the other working people. On the contrary, it was concerned about the whole society and it offered a total concept of the way society ought to be structured.

Even though the Agrarian Party emerged with the principal concern of giving the "land to the tiller", it concerned itself with the totality of the problems of the Greek peasantry and society. Not only did it have its own conception about peasantry and agriculture with respect to the issues of agrarian reform, taxation, credit, debts, collection of taxes and debts, prices, social security and protection against natural disaster, but also it included in its program its own ideas about local

self-administration, education, justice, social welfare and public health, military service and foreign policy.

The program included immediate policy proposals which would benefit the peasant class, the other working people and the country as a whole. It was a dynamic and brave program with new ideas which were revolutionary for Greece at that time. With its clear anti-capitalistic orientation, it opposed the middlemen, the moneylenders, the anti-peasant and repressive policies of the Greek State.

The constitution and program of the Agrarian Political Party of Greece was published for the first time in 1923, a few months after the establishment of the party. It was formulated by the party activists together with Alexander Svolos, a university professor. In 1929 though, the Third General Congress of the Party clarified and modified some details of the program of 1923. These changes, which made the party program more complete, emerged from the experience of the every-day political events that occurred from 1923 to 1929. This new version of the party program was published in 1931, and was valid until 1936, that is, to the time period concerning this study.

Taken together with the ideology, the fundamental principles and values which were included in the program provide the identity profile of the Agrarian Political Party of Greece.⁵⁵ In addition, part of this identity profile was the organization. The organizational structure of the Agrarian Party was composed by the official party organs which decided and implemented the party politics. This formal organization is described below.

B. Organization

Those who started to organize the Greek peasants into their own political party, knew that organization was the

weapon of the weak in their struggle with the strong, therefore, an absolutely essential condition in the struggle for the emancipation of the peasant masses. Thus, the Agrarian Party developed as an organization with its own structure, in order to carry out the struggle of the peasants against the Greek Government and the middle upper class.

The constitution of the Agrarian Party published in 1923 determined how the party would be organized. The organization included the branch, the provincial center, the prefecture committee, the general congress, the central executive committee and the general council. The branch was the very basic unit of the party, very often named after the village in which it was located. The provincial (county) center and the prefecture committee followed the administrative division of Greece into provinces (counties) and prefectures. The body with the highest authority was the general congress of the party. The central executive committee and the general council had well defined executive and administrative functions. The party tried to organize the young people into the Agrarian Youth Clubs. Finally, the party had its own newspaper. The first official newspaper of the Agrarian Party was the *Agrarian Flag*, published in Athens, weekly. Afterwards official newspapers were the *Agrarian Herald* and the *Agrarian Tribune*, published in Thessaloniki. These newspapers were not published continuously because the party did not have the financial means for their regular publication. In several cases, activists of the Agrarian Party sold part of their own land and contributed the money for the party newspaper. Newspapers with daily nation-wide circulation which served the Agrarian Party without being its official organs were the *Free Man* and the *Independent* (1933-1936) directed by Dimitris Pournaras in Athens. There were also several local newspapers which supported the Agrarian

Party. *Sinenoesis* was such a local newspaper published in Serres by the Deputy of the Agrarian Party Socrates Anthrakopoulos. It reported the activities of the party at the regional as well as the national level. Other local newspapers were the *Agrarian Flag of Patras*, the *Mailman of VoLos*, the *Neologos of Drana*, etc. This organizational apparatus of the party operated in a formal, bureaucratic and due process method. The organization, though, was modified by the party congress of 1929.⁵⁶

a. The Branch

The branch was the basic unit of the organization of the Agrarian Party. It had a local geographic basis. It was only a part of a whole and its separate existence was inconceivable. The branch provided an excellent way for the politicization and enrollment of the peasants. It tried to enroll members, to multiply their number and to increase its total strength; quantity was a very important consideration. The branch was wide open to attract and enroll members since it appealed to the peasant masses and it tried to be in touch with them. In small or larger towns, branches tend to multiply and be based on the quartier or ward. The branch had a permanent nature. Even though its activity was very important at election times, it remained important in the periods between elections as well.

With the branch the Agrarian Party wanted to organize the peasants, to politicize them, and to recruit from them the peasant class leadership. More than ten members of the party could form a branch. The branch had an internal organization with definite hierarchy and a precise division of duties. The assembly of the branch used to elect the Local Committee; that committee consisted of five members and their three substitutes. The Local Committee in turn, could elect among its members president, vice-president,

secretary, treasurer and trustee of the library. The election of Local Committees was done annually by secret ballot. It could also take place at the request of one third of the branch members. The branches had to meet at least once a month, on Sunday; peasants were not supposed to work on Sundays, so they had free time for participation in party affairs.

The Local Committee of the party branch, was there to ensure the day-to-day affairs of the organization. It was completely free to act upon issues of internal administration and finance, always within the framework of the party program and the decisions of the General Congress. For national political and social issues though, the Local Committee had to follow the decisions of the General Council and the Central Executive Committee. On other issues, not specifically defined by the party constitution, the Local Committee had to follow the decisions of the Provincial Council. Every branch had to subscribe to the party newspaper. In case a branch violated the party constitution, the Central Executive Committee called the branch to avoid the violation; if the branch insisted the Central Executive Committee with the Provincial Council, had the right to dissolve the branch and create a new one. That could be reconsidered only by the General Congress of the party.⁵⁷

b. The Provincial Center

The Greek State, for administration purposes was divided into administrative areas called prefectures, which in turn were divided into provinces (counties). The branches of the Agrarian Party in every province, formed the Provincial Center. The Provincial Center in other words, had its administrative counterpart; it corresponded to the administrative division of the Greek State.

The organs of the Provincial Center were the Provincial Congress and the Provincial Council. The Provincial Congress was made up of representatives of the branches of the province. Every branch sent a representative, regardless of its members. The purpose of that Congress was to decide on local affairs, to elect the Provincial Council, to appoint the representatives for the General Congress of the party, and to nominate the candidates for the elections for the Parliament. The Provincial Congress met every year, at least one month before the General Congress of the party. Before elections for the Parliament, an "ad hoc" Provincial Congress met in order to nominate the candidates. Such an "ad hoc" Congress also met when there was an emergency, or upon request of one third of the province branches. The annual election of the Provincial Council was by secret ballot. That Council was responsible for the party affairs in the province and was accountable to the General Council and the General Congress of the party.⁵⁸

The candidates of the party for the Parliament, as already pointed out, were nominated by the Congress of the Provincial Center by secret voting, and were confirmed by the Central Executive Committee, which determined whether the nomination was done according to regulations. The Provincial Center had a great deal of autonomy in nominating the candidates. This shows that the party organization was decentralized and that it followed a democratic process at its very basis.⁵⁹

c. The Prefecture Committee

The Provincial Councils of a prefecture had to communicate with each other and coordinate their actions. For that reason, every Provincial Council president participated in a committee which met in the capital of the

prefecture and was called the Prefecture Committee. That committee could call an "ad hoc" Prefecture Congress to which the branches sent representatives.⁶⁰

d. The General Congress

The General Congress was that body of the Agrarian Party with the highest authority. It had the authority to decide upon all issues according to its judgement. It could arrange the principles of the party, its program and organization as well as its political trends. The General Congress met annually and was called by the Central Executive Committee of the party. That committee informed the Provincial Centers and send them the agenda two months in advance. The Branches and the Provincial Centers commented upon the agenda of the General Congress and sent their suggestions one month in advance. Their suggestions were published in the party newspaper. Every Provincial Center sent a representative. The members of the Central Executive Committee participated in the Congress with one vote each. Non-voting participants included the members of the Parliamentary Group, the party press and those who presented issues on the agenda to the Congress. The General Congress decided on issues of principle, organization, tactics, and finance. It evaluated the reports of the Central Executive Committee and the Parliamentary Group, as well as the actions of their members. It pointed out the trends for the future activities of the party. The Congress elected the members of the Central Executive Committee. Finally, the Congress could confirm a decision of the Parliamentary Group to stop someone from being a deputy. An "ad hoc" General Congress could be called by the Central Executive Committee for extraordinary needs, or upon request of one third of the Provincial Centers of the party.⁶¹

e. The Central Executive Committee

This was the highest administrative and executive organ of the Agrarian Party. It operated within the framework of the party constitution and the decisions of the General Congresses. It consisted of seven party members and was elected annually by the General Congress, by secret ballot. The General Congress also elected three substitute members of this committee. The Central Executive Committee elected among its members the president, the secretary and the treasurer. It had to meet once a week in order to take care of party affairs, for example, to look after the activities of the local organizations, of the Parliamentary Group, etc.⁵²

The Central Executive Committee appointed the director, the manager and other officials of the party newspaper. It controlled the material that had to be published, the basic editorials, as well as the tendency of the newspaper. It also controlled the publications of party members or local party organizations if they were to appear on behalf of the Agrarian Party.⁵³

f. The General Council

The General Council was made up of the presidents of the Prefecture Committees. It had to meet at least twice a year after a call of the Central Executive Committee or upon request of one third of its members. The General Council had to oversee the function of the Central Executive Committee, to substitute for the General Congress and to decide about urgent issues when the General Congress could not convene. It also evaluated possible violations of the party constitution, the party program or the decisions of the General Congress by the representatives of the

Agrarian Party to the Parliament. In that case, it could call to session the General Congress to decide about the violations.⁶⁴

Finally, the Agrarian Party, for the better politicization of the young people to its principles, wanted to organize into groups, those young people who did not yet have the right to vote, but who accepted the principles of the party. Those Youth Groups provided an excellent opportunity for spreading the party propaganda and they were under the supervision of the Branch.⁶⁵

The constitution which was accepted by the General Congress of the Agrarian Party in 1929 modified the party organization. With the new constitution emerged the sub-branch as the sub-category of the branch. A sub-branch could be formed by seven party members. The sub-branches formed the Provincial or Prefecture Branch of the electoral district and not of the administrative division or the Greek State, as it used to be under the constitution of 1923. The council of the Provincial Branch was elected by representatives of the sub-branches. These branch councils had to meet once a month and were free to decide upon economic and internal administration affairs, always within the framework of the party program and the decisions of the General Congresses. For issues, however, of general and national interest, they had to follow the decisions of the Executive Committee and the General Council. Branches, in a general meeting of their members, nominated the candidates of the Agrarian Party for the elections to the Chamber of Deputies and the Senate. The other functions of the sub-branches and branches remained as they were under the constitution of 1923.⁶⁶

The party constitution of 1929, made more important the electoral district which substituted the administrative division of the Greek State as the basis of the organization of the Agrarian Party. That way, the

Provincial Center as such was eliminated. As a result, the composition of the Prefecture Committee and the General Council changed. The three-member Prefecture Committee, according to the new constitution, was elected by representatives of the Branches. It was located in the capital of the prefecture and had to meet at least once a month in order to coordinate the actions of the branches.⁶⁷

That change in the Prefecture Committee resulted in a change in the composition of the General Council. The General Council of the party was no longer composed of the president of the Prefecture Committees as it used to be under the constitution of 1923, but rather was elected directly by the General Congress by secret ballot and for a two-year term. It had twenty members and was the highest administrative organ of the Agrarian Party. It had to meet at least every four months and it was within its authority to elect among its members the seven-member Executive Committee of the party. In case a deputy did not follow the party line, the General Council could expel him from the party.⁶⁸

The Executive Committee, which was elected for two years by the General Council, was the highest executive organ of the Agrarian Party. It ran party affairs according to the constitution and the General Congress resolutions as well as the General Council decisions. The seven members of the Executive Committee, had to be party members for at least one year. They elected a secretary and a treasurer, but not a president, as formerly under the constitution of 1923. The Executive Committee had to meet once a month. It ran the party affairs, looked over the actions of the local organizations and the Parliamentary Group of the party. The Executive Committee also ran the party press, which had to be written in the simple language of the people (*demotike*) and not in the sophisticated language of the intellectuals (*katharevousa*). The other functions of the Executive

Committee, remained as they were under the constitution of 1923.⁶⁹

The General Congress remained that body of the Agrarian Party with the highest authority. And under the constitution of 1929, it identified the principles of the party, its program, organization, political trends and tactics.⁷⁰

Finally, and under the new constitution, the Agrarian Party wanted to organize the young people into the Agrarian Youth Groups in order to facilitate the peasant politicization and the party propaganda. These groups were also supervised by the Branch, as they were under the party constitution of 1923.⁷¹

The Agrarian Party, as discussed, had a formal organization determined by the party constitution of 1923, as well as, the constitution which was accepted by the General Congress of the party in 1929, but published in 1931.

The elements which composed the party organization were linked horizontally and vertically.

The horizontal link was the way which joined two bodies of the party on the same level. Branches were linked with other branches of the party. For example, the branches of a region were in contact with one another. They informed the central party organs about the specific problems and expected the party to act upon these problems. They expected for example a Deputy to take their issue to the Chamber, or to ask the government about its policy on such a specific issue, etc. The Prefecture Committee was also a coordinating institution; it coordinated the actions of the Provincial Councils of the Agrarian Party.

The vertical link joined two bodies subordinate to one another, for example, the Branch with the Central Committee of the party.

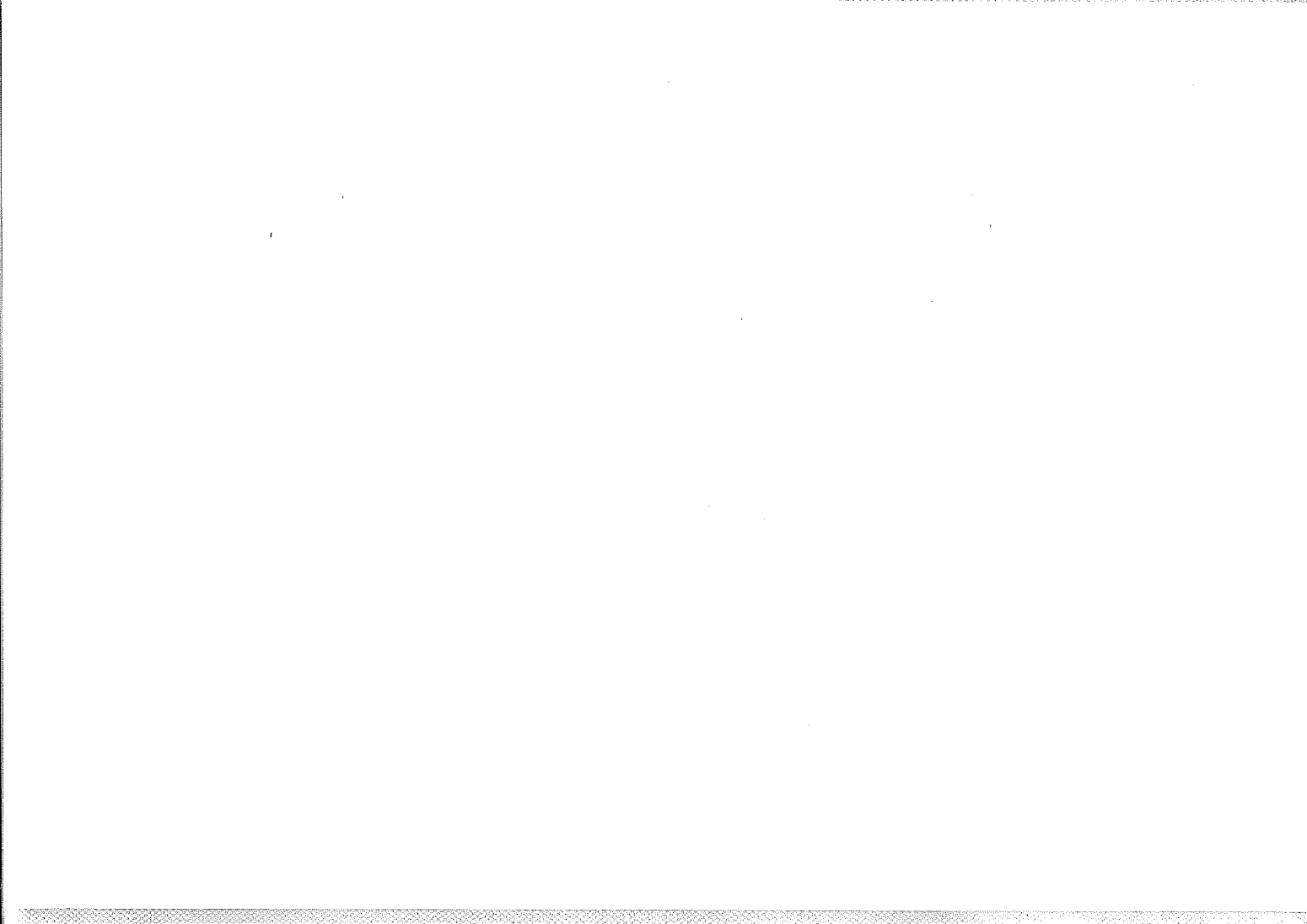
The power structure of the Agrarian Party was

decentralized, that is, the power was distributed among different levels. All the decisions were not made by the central organs of the party, the General Council, for example. Regional organs had power as well. The Provincial Congress for example, had the authority to nominate the party candidates to the Parliament. That fundamental decision was taken by the Provincial Congress without influence of the central organs.⁷²



PART THREE

POLITICS AND PEASANTS



5. THE POLITICS OF THE AGRARIAN PARTY ON AGRARIAN REFORM: "LAND TO THE TILLER"

A. The Asia-Minor Catastrophe and the Necessity for Agrarian Reform and Settlement

The Asia-Minor Catastrophe in August 1922, which followed the victory of the Turkish army under Mustafa Kemal meant the end of the so-called "Great Idea" - the idea that the Greek State would include within its borders that Greek population of Turkey living in the geographical regions close to the Aegean and Black Seas. The adventurist Greek foreign policy forced the surviving Greek population of Asia-Minor to come to mainland Greece and to the Aegean Islands as poor and homeless refugees. That expansionist war against Turkey, ended with the Lausanne Conference and Treaty (November 1922 - July 24, 1923).

In January 1923, Greece and Turkey agreed on the exchange of the Greek and Turkish population, as well as the exchange of war captives and political prisoners. In this way, 1,069,957 people of Greek origin, came to Greece and 388,000 of Turkish origin, went to Turkey. Exempted from this exchange were the Greek who lived in Istanbul

before the year 1918, and the Moslems of Western Thrace. The so-called "honorable peace treaty" between Greece and Turkey, which also defined their borders, was signed on July 24, 1923, and included the above two accords.¹ The Ankara Treaty, which was signed between Greece and Turkey on June 10, 1930, complemented the Lausanne Treaty. After long debate, that treaty determined that land which was left back to Turkey by the Greeks who came to Greece belonged to the Turkish state; the same happened to the land of Turks who returned to Turkey, granted that both lands were of equal value.²

Of the 1,069,957 refugees who came to Greece after the Asia-Minor Catastrophe, 589,226 came from Asia-Minor, 164,641 from Pontus (the Black Sea coast of Asia-Minor), 229,578 from Thrace, 35,349 from Istanbul, 28,050 from Bulgaria, 14,670 from the Caucasus Mountain area of the Soviet Union as well as others from the Soviet Union, Serbia (Yugoslavia) and Albania. In addition to those refugees of Greek origin, foreigners such as Armenians, Soviets and others, also came to Greece.³

Thus, after the dramatic failure of the Greek expansionist foreign policy of the bourgeois political parties, and the influx to Greece of over 1,000,000 refugees from Asia-Minor, the agrarian reform became inevitable. The refugees who desperately needed settlement were added to the landless peasants of mainland Greece who desperately needed land. The political social and economic situation of the country became more critical and more explosive than ever. The leadership of the military coup d'état, realized that situation and in an effort to prevent rebellion and maintain "order" introduced the compulsory expropriation of the large land estates and their distribution to the landless peasants and refugees. A relatively effective land reform program would neutralize peasant radicalization and would prevent peasant

rebellion. It would divert the strong demand of peasants and refugees for land and settlement into controllable channels. Thus, the main consideration of the leadership of the military coup d'etat was stability; the preservation of the existing social, economic and political system. The creation of peasant smallholders would prevent the growth of radicalism among the peasantry. The process of land reform was accelerated by the situation which was created in the country after the Asia-Minor Catastrophe. On February 14, 1923, the leadership of the military coup d'etat, made a "decision" for the settlement of the landless peasants, as well as the refugees, and distribution to them of the large land estates, even before the payment of the landowners. It considered article 17 of the Constitution of 1911 invalid, and introduced the compulsory expropriation and distribution of the large land estates to the landless peasants and refugees. On March 5, 1923, it issued a decree "on the settlement of landless peasants". This decree was the basis for the agrarian reform. Various laws made afterwards, modified that decree. Because the process of the expropriations was very complicated all laws and decrees from 1923 to 1926 were compiled into the simplified Agrarian (Reform) Law of October 15, 1926. That law was modified in favour of the landowners and at the expense of peasants; it was valid until 1936, that is, up to the end of the period concerning this study.⁴

B. The Agrarian (Reform) Law

What was this Agrarian (Reform) Law all about? Which land had to be expropriated and who had the right to receive land in lots? Finally, how was the agrarian reform carried out according to that law? Let us very briefly

outline it.

The Agrarian (Reform) Law allowed the land of the state, cities and communities-villages to be granted to landless peasants, for their settlement; it also arranged the compulsory expropriation of land which belonged to other persons for the same purpose, that is, for the settlement of landless peasants. As landless peasants were also considered the cultivators who had inadequate agrarian property. Subject to full expropriation and distribution were the estates of the state, cities, monasteries, all religious foundations and public organizations. In addition, the estates which were cultivated with the *morté* type of arrangement that is, by share tenants as well as the buildings within these estates. Finally, those estates which used to be cultivated by share tenants and had changed into cultivation by wage laborers.⁵

From the expropriations were exempted:

- a. Lands cultivated personally by the owners and/or by members of their families.
- b. The houses of these owners within the estate with land equal to one lot of every owner of the commonly owned estate up to three lots at the most, or land equal to 300 acres instead of land equal to one lot, valid for all regions of Greece with the exception of Thessaly including the Domokos county, Macedonia, Thrace, Epirus and the Arta prefecture. To every owner of the commonly owned estate was granted in addition to 300 acres one to two lots.
- c. Land of owners who did not have other land was also exempted from the expropriations, unless the land was cultivated by share tenants and those share tenants could not be settled in neighboring estate. These lands were estates of less than 300 acres located in *kephalochoria* in all regions of Greece and estates of 100 acres located in Thessaly including the Domokos

county, Macedonia, Thrace, Epirus and Arta prefecture.⁶

Also exempted from the expropriations were parts of estates equal to 300 acres which belonged to agronomists or to agricultural school graduates. These people had the obligation to cultivate this land by themselves in a model way. Furthermore, vineyards and tree plantations planted by July 1, 1924, were exempted as well as pasture lands which could not be cultivated and woods unless small extensions of these woods were included in the estate and presented obstacles to the expropriation.⁷

According to the Agrarian (Reform) Law, self cultivation was considered not the cultivation by share tenants but the cultivation by the landowner himself and by wage laborers at his own cost and his own risk. The self-cultivated estate was similarly defined. Even these self-cultivated estates were subject to expropriation when a large number of landless peasants needed settlement. It was exempted, though, from the expropriation one third of such an estate - from 500 up to 2,000 acres - in order to be established, under a special contract, an industry processing agricultural products aiming for the "common good".⁸

Right to receive land had the cultivators who lived within the estate. These were male married cultivators, widows with their children, orphans of cultivators and those children whose father was old or unable to work, unmarried male cultivators. Furthermore, refugees and those who lived in one estate and worked in another estate. Finally, cultivators who lived on an estate but there was no adequate land to be settled in this estate.⁹

Every peasant who had the right to receive land was granted a lot determined by the expropriations' committee. Such a lot ought to include a house or land necessary to build a house and other buildings such as barns, stables,

etc., adequate land to support a family composed of the parents and at least three children who would work this land. For every additional child to those three it was granted land equal to one fifth of a lot. The land though which was given to every family could not be of more than two lots. Peasants who had inadequate land, were granted the necessary land to form one lot.¹⁰

The peasants who had the right to receive land in every estate formed an agricultural cooperative. Participation in this cooperative was compulsory. In case peasants did not want to participate in it, they were evicted from the estate. These cooperatives, named after the estate to be distributed, could not be dissolved before the estate was distributed to peasants and before peasants paid for it to the state.¹¹

In addition to peasant-cultivators, the right to receive land and be settled had the professionals whose profession was useful to the village. To those was granted a house or land to build a house, or a store or workshop and land up to five acres. As professionals were considered also the stockbreeders who lived in the estate. An agricultural lot was also granted to the village priest. Refugees who had profession other than agriculture could receive a lot up to ten acres the most, in order to form refugee settlements.¹²

An expropriations' committee was formed in every court district composed of three members: the president or a member of this court and two public officials, if possible agronomists. This committee had the duty to settle definitely the peasants in land, to point out the extension of lots and to give advice on the price to be paid to the ex-landowners. Generally, the committee decided on every issue related to the expropriation of the estate and distribution to peasants. The decisions of that committee were final and definite. This committee which was paid by

the peasants carried out the actual work of the land reform.¹³

The price of compensation to be paid to the ex-landowner was definitely determined by the court of the area in which the estate was located. The state paid the ex-landowners in "bonds of expropriations". The decision of the court was published in the "Newspaper of the Government". Then, the estate was transferred by the Minister of Agriculture to the cooperative of peasants. The final sale price of the estate was determined by the Minister of Agriculture which included in addition to the compensation, all the expenses for the expropriation done by the state, estimated at the amount of 5%-20% of the compensation of the estate. This capital would be used for the establishment of an agrarian bank. The estate was mortgaged to the state until it was paid by the peasants. The price ought to be paid by the cooperative in 20 annual installments; there was also a charge of 8% interest per year. The estate was transferred to the cooperative and there was distributed to the peasants. Peasants had to cultivate their lots personally and with the members of their family. In case they did not cultivate for two years at least a part of their lot, they could lose the land. Peasants were not allowed to sell the lots they received for ten years, but they were allowed to mortgage the land as guarantee for loans by the state or the National Bank to be used for agricultural equipment. Seizure and compulsory auction sales were allowed in order to pay overdue debts to the state, to the National Bank or to the cooperative.¹⁴

The agrarian reform, though, as will be illustrated was not carried out as the Agrarian (Reform) Law determined, nor as the Agrarian Political Party of Greece nor the Greek peasants themselves expected.

Agrarian reform in Greece, then, involved the expropriation and distribution of the large land estates to

the landless peasants of mainland Greece, as well as the settlement of the refugees who came from Asia-Minor. In recent Greek history, when we talk about agrarian reform, we refer precisely to that reform which was initiated in 1923 and is, until today, incomplete.

For analytical purposes, let us examine the state policy towards agrarian reform for the peasants of mainland Greece in a separate but related way to the policy on the agrarian settlement of the refugees and then the politics of the Agrarian Party towards the reform.

C. The Agrarian Reform Regarding the Peasants of Mainland Greece

That reform was not carried out in every region of Greece with the same intensity; it was more widespread in some regions than others. Until 1932, the expropriated lands in different regions of the country, used for the settlement of landless peasants of mainland Greece, were shown in TABLE 5. As this table demonstrates, 11,420,542 acres of land were expropriated for the settlement of landless peasants of mainland Greece; however, only 7,650,746 acres were definitely granted to them.¹⁵

The agrarian reform for the peasants of the mainland was carried out by the Greek Ministry of Agriculture. As already indicated, land was divided into lots and distribution was done according to the number of members of each peasant family. The average size of lots in acres per region was as follows: Thessaly 82.2, Macedonia 60.1, Arta 28.4, Epirus 28.2, in the rest of Greece 46.4.

It is obvious that lots differed in size in those regions, because there were many peasants who had to be settled. The lots were not adequate to support a peasant family, especially in the areas of grain cultivation. By

TABLE 5

AGRIAN REFORM REGARDING PEASANTS
OF MAINLAND GREECE

Regions	Number of estates declared to be expropriated	Expropriated land in acres	Distributed land to landless peasants in acres
Thessaly-Arta	535	4,553,499	3,041,334
Macedonia	430	3,224,213	2,250,568
Epirus	391	2,040,151	1,600,333
Thrace	10	9,690	5,123
Rest of Greece	260	1,592,542	753,388
Total	1,626	11,420,542	7,650,746

SOURCE: Babis Alivizatos, The Post-War Evolution of the Greek Agrarian Economy and the Impact of Agrarian Policy On It, (Athens: Moesiadis, 1935), p. 29.

the end of 1931, the courts decided that 1,035 estates should receive 789,582,514 drachmas as payment. Cooperatives of peasants had to pay 573,000,000 drachmas and the Greek State 216,000,000 drachmas. The average payment per acre was set at 146 drachmas by the courts but at 83 suggested by the expropriations' committee. The courts determined high payments; peasants protested and asked the decisions to be invalidated but without success. The settled peasants also had to pay for the expenses of the expropriation process as already pointed out.¹⁶

In addition to the arable land expropriated and distributed to landless peasants of mainland Greece, there was given to every "compulsory cooperative" for the

settlement of the landless peasants, pasture land, which could be used commonly by the peasants. These peasants could breed 25 small animals (sheep, goats, etc.) and 5 large ones (cattle etc.).¹⁷

D. The Agrarian Settlement of Refugees

As already pointed out, with the Asia-Minor Catastrophe, 1,069,957 refugees came into mainland Greece. According to the Geneva Protocol of September 29, 1923, between Greece and the League of Nations, the settlement of the refugees had to be done by the Refugee Settlement Commission, an autonomous organization run by a commission composed of two Greek representatives appointed by the Greek Government and two foreigners appointed by the League of Nations. The purpose of the Refugee Settlement Commission was to settle the refugees in order to be productive and not out of philanthropy. The Greek State put at the disposal of the Refugee Settlement Commission 14,800,000 British pounds which came out of three foreign loans, and 8,390,444 acres of land. TABLE 6 shows where these lands came from.¹⁸

TABLE 7 shows the "settlement or colonization" districts, upon which refugee families were settled, as well as the land distributed to them. Land shown in this table was in addition to the land distributed to landless peasants of mainland Greece, as already indicated. This table also shows that the settlement of the refugees took place mainly in Macedonia and Thrace. It should be noted here that the "settlement or colonization" districts, in which the Refugee Settlement Commission had divided Greece, did not correspond to the geographical regions. For example, the "settlement or colonization" district of Thrace included the areas-prefectures of Macedonia, Drama

TABLE 6

LAND PUT AT THE DISPOSAL OF THE REFUGEE
SETTLEMENT COMMISSION BY THE STATE

Land of exchanged Bulgarians	940,207
Land of exchanged Turks	4,981,095
Land of not exchanged Turks	199,598
Expropriated land	588,452
Confiscated land	367,363
Public land	536,393
Land of foreign citizens	295,953
Other land	481,383
Total	8,390,444

SOURCE: Xenophon Zolotas, *Agrarian Politics*, (Athens: Tjakas, 1934), p. 94.

and Kavala. Also, Old Greece, was one "settlement or colonization" district. Data exist, though, only for the "settlement or colonization" districts, in which the Refugee Settlement Commission divided the country, and those are used in TABLE 7. Therefore, the "settlement or colonization" district used in TABLE 7, is different from the "regions" of TABLE 5.¹⁹

According to the last report of the Refugee Settlement Commission on August 21, 1930, 145,127 refugee families were settled in land distributed to them. The lot given to each of those refugee families, varied according to the quality in terms of fertility and, therefore, productivity of the land, the composition of the population, the type of cultivated crops, etc. For example, in the grain producing

TABLE 7

THE AGRARIAN SETTLEMENT OF THE REFUGEES

Settlement or Colonization Districts	Arable land in acres	Not arable land in acres	Total
Macedonia	3,350,074	2,137,791	5,487,865
Thrace	1,250,514	1,009,676	2,260,190
Epirus	44,598	36,240	80,838
Old Greece	282,630	79,822	362,452
Aegean Islands	16,375	28,190	44,547
Crete	91,206	63,346	154,552
Total	5,035,379	3,355,065	8,390,444

SOURCE: Babis Alivizatos, The Post-War Evolution of the Greek Agrarian Economy and the Impact of Agrarian Policy On It, (Athens: Moesiadis, 1935), p. 31.

areas of Macedonia, Thessaly and Epirus, the lot was 40 to 100 acres, while in the tobacco producing areas, as well as in some parts of Macedonia, the Peloponnese and the Islands, it was 9 to 20 acres. Distribution of land to each refugee family was done on the following basis: A family of two people took one lot, a family of three to four people took one and one fourth of a lot, a family of five to six people took one and one half a lot, and a family of more than eight people took two lots. Craftsmen took part of a lot. Lots were not one continuous piece of land; they were dispersed according to the different quality of the land. The settlement of refugees was done in groups of ten

families at least within the estate distributed to them or in neighboring settlements. Lots were given to refugees by lottery on a temporary basis until the topography of the estate would be done.²⁰

Pasture land was also given to the refugees. That land belonged to the community-village and was used commonly by the peasants. Each peasant refugee family could breed up to 25 small animals and 4 large ones.²¹

For the settlement of the 145,127 refugee families, and from January 1924 to December 1930, when the Refugee Settlement Commission was dissolved were spent, by the Refugee Settlement Committee, 3,336,635,706 drachmas in cash, and by the Greek State, 526,680,064 drachmas in cash. The estimated value of land was 3,227,774,500 drs, and the estimated value of buildings was 822,369,398 drachmas. The total expenditure of both the Refugee Settlement Commission and the Greek State was 7,913,459,715 drachmas. This expenditure per region was: Macedonia 66.32%, Thrace 21.83%, Old Greece, Islands, and Epirus 11.85%. Out of this money, 40.79% was the value of lots in land that the refugee families got, 25.51% for their housing, 20.15% for credit and tools, and 13.55% general expenses. Thus, the money spent for housing, credit, agricultural tools, seeds, animals, land improvement, recording of the lots, transportation, water networks, health etc. was inadequate. The Refugee Settlement Commission gave to the refugees the minimum tools and animals that would allow them to cultivate the land on which they were settled. It was much less than the necessary equipment needed. Most of the refugees, with the exception of those who came from Eastern Thrace and Bulgaria, did not have tools and animals which could be used for agriculture. The Refugee Settlement Commission built 51,718 small houses and repaired 63,886 houses, which were left behind by the Turks and Bulgarians. The Greek State built 13,477. Corruption,

though, and waste by the Refugee Settlement Commission officials was very common. In addition to the peasant refugees settled by the Refugee Settlement Commission, 109,612 people were settled in the cities. However, 10,000 refugee families were not settled. The Refugee Settlement Commission was dissolved in December 1930; the Greek State took over all the rights and obligations of that Commission. The peasant refugees owed 18,000,000 British pounds to the Greek State. They were unable to repay the state because their lots were small, inadequate, and the market price of their crops very low.²²

The criterion used for the Greek agrarian reform was the family smallholding as the type of agricultural organization. This philosophy was based upon the beliefs that every peasant family should receive sufficient land to live off, to maintain order and to prevent rebellion. The expropriations then, and the distribution of land in lots, was oriented initially towards self-sufficiency, and eventually towards growth of agricultural production. Therefore, Greece became a country where small land private property and small scale cultivation prevailed. With the agrarian reform, land was distributed into many lots. That distribution, which solved to a certain extent but not completely, the issue of the settlement of landless peasantry, resulted in land fragmentation.²³

Lots were made out of small pieces of land. These pieces were 2, 3, 4, 5 to 10 acres each, and sometimes were widely separated from each other. In other words, lots were usually not one continuous piece of land. The large land estates had different quality in terms of the fertility of the land, so peasants were given part of lots of varying quality.²⁴

The agrarian reform which emphasized small property worked by the peasant family, eliminated considerably the large land estates and settled most of the formerly

landless peasants. These peasants became smallholders; immediately after their settlement, their debt to the state or ex-landowners was an average of 70,000 drachmas (the price of the land, trucking animals, animal food, tools, etc.). In order to repay their debts, peasants got more loans, thus increasing their dependency on credit capital. Creditors, that is banks and moneylenders, provided credit at very high rates and for a short period of time. These creditors, became a mechanism which absorbed the surplus labour of the peasantry. By 1933, more than 83% of the Greek peasants were in debt. By 1936, the total agrarian debt was 13,000,000,000 drachmas. The delayed repayment of the loans only increased the debt. Therefore, peasants were only typically owners of their land; actually, their land was mortgaged. The Greek State was responsible for that pressure on the peasantry.

Thus, the expropriations and the distribution of the estates alone, to the extent that it was carried out, did not mean the emancipation of peasants. Even those peasants who received land through the land reform remained dependent on creditors for capital which they needed in order to make their land efficient and productive.²⁵

As pointed out, the agrarian reform meant the distribution of the large land estates into smallholdings worked by the peasant families. This type of agricultural organization was gradually integrated into a capitalist system by market and credit mechanisms. The state on the other hand, eliminated the large land estates and played an increasing role in the economy through taxation etc. Giving priority to industrialization allowed the transformation of resources into industry at the expense of agriculture, since prices for agricultural goods were cheaper than the industrial ones. Consequently peasants paid the price of the state policy to industrialize the country.²⁶

The agrarian reform though was incomplete. About

1,600,000 acres of arable land which could have been expropriated and distributed to landless peasants, was not. That land could have been distributed into lots averaging 50 acres among 32,000 families of landless peasants. The same was true of pasture lands; there were approximately 1,340,000 acres of large private pasture lands, and about 1,000,000 acres which belonged to monasteries. Upon these pasture lands could be settled 8,000 families. Thus, there was a total of 4,000,000 acres which could have been expropriated and used for the settlement of 40,000 families of landless peasants.²⁷

Even though the agrarian reform eliminated large land property, there remained large land estates which were not distributed to landless peasants. Those estates belonged to large landowners, corporations, monasteries and the state. At the same time, there were landless peasants.²⁸

This happened because the agrarian reform in Greece was not carried out according to the Agrarian Law of October 15, 1926, nor as the Agrarian Party and the peasants expected. The Agrarian Law was modified by other laws in favour of the landowners and at the expense of the peasants. The various governments violated the Agrarian Law in many cases; they did not apply it in the same way all over Greece.²⁹

These governments, when they did attempt agrarian reform made compromises on behalf of the landowners and at the expense of peasants. They preserved to a considerable extent several large land estates or parts of them, the land of the monasteries, as well as the land of big corporations. Peasants though who wanted land and consequently freedom, wanted no compromise between themselves and the landowners.³⁰

Thus, despite the land distribution through the agrarian reform, there remained with the land owners a great extent of land and at the same time landless families

of peasants which needed land for their settlement. Several large land estates were not expropriated or were only partially expropriated. Other estates were exempted from the expropriations; the land of the monasteries remained practically untouched, big corporations which drained lakes kept the revealed land. Finally, arable land and pasture lands remained with the state itself. Even after the time that the state considered the agrarian reform as completed, large land estates coexisted with landless peasants. The policy of the Agrarian Party was the expropriation of all estates and their distribution to the landless peasants and small shepherds, for their settlement.

E. Non-Expropriated and Undistributed Lands

The land which was not expropriated and remained undistributed despite the agrarian reform, was as follows:

a. Land Estates which were not Expropriated or Partly Expropriated

A considerable number of large land estates were not expropriated or were partly expropriated. Each one of those estates had more than 300 acres of land which was the highest limit put by the Agrarian Law for self-cultivation. The total extent of this land was 863,317 acres. These estates were located in the regions shown in TABLE 8.³¹

b. Land of the Monasteries

Only a part of the land of the monasteries was expropriated and distributed to landless peasants. A considerable size of the land of the monasteries though, was not expropriated and not distributed to landless

TABLE 8

ESTATES PARTIALLY EXPROPRIATED
OR NON-EXPROPRIATED IN ACRES

Region	Estates	Acres
Peloponnese	75	59,100
Sterea Hellas and Euvea	156	155,103
Thessaly	226	222,958
Epirus*	unknown	77,745
Macedonia	223	246,651
Thrace	78	50,000
Crete	2	2,200
Aegean Islands	21	27,140
Ionian Islands	25	22,420
Total	806	863,317

* The majority of these estates were located in the prefecture of Thesprotia. If Varvaresos is correct that 1,410 estates were not expropriated of partially expropriated, then the number of these estates in Thesprotia should be $1410 - 806 = 604$.

SOURCE: Anastasios Varvaresos, The Completion of the Agrarian Reform, (Athens: Ministry of Agriculture, 1949), p. 15.

peasants. Official data about the agrarian property of the monasteries, do not exist. However, A. Varvaresos examined the decrees which described and classified the property of the monasteries into "lands to be kept" and "lands to be sold", and he concluded the following TABLE 9, which has a high degree of precision. This table demonstrates clearly, that an enormous size of land, remained in the possession of the monasteries, even after the distribution for the

TABLE 9

LAND OF THE MONASTERIES IN ACRES

Arable land	260,928
Plantation	29,092
Pasture lands	1,004,212
Woods	655,094
Land with olive trees	143,738
Uncultivated land	56,692
Other land	6,676
Total	2,156,332

SOURCE: Anastasios Varvaresos, The Completion of the Agrarian Reform, (Athens: Ministry of Agriculture, 1949), p. 17.

The Government of Liberals passed Law 4082 of 1929 in the Chamber of Deputies, which did not allow the expropriation of the land of the monasteries for the settlement of landless peasants. This changed article 2a of the Agrarian Law of October 15, 1926, according to which the lands of the monasteries were subject to full expropriation and distribution. Those peasants who were settled in the lands of the monasteries prior to Law 4082 of 1929 had to pay for their land at prices determined by the National Bank, which used to run the land of the monasteries as enterprise. Those prices were extremely high.³³

The Government of Liberals and the Popular Party, did

not expropriate the land of the monasteries while there were 30,000 landless peasant families which desperately needed land for settlement. Thus, the non expropriation of land of the monasteries happened at the expense of the landless peasants. Monasteries had traditionally obtained their land by donations of people.³⁴

The policy of the Agrarian Party towards the land of the monasteries was the expropriation of this land for the settlement of the landless peasants.³⁵

c. Land of Corporations

Swamps and lakes which were drained and made into arable land, were given by the Greek State to the corporations which drained them, with full ownership rights and/or rights of enjoyment. The swamps of Lecemachea and Trichonia, Lesini and the lakes Xeneas and Kopaeas were given by contracts of the Greek State and the companies which drained them to these companies.³⁶

According to a contract between the state and a company in 1925, the company would drain the swamps Lecamachea and Trichonia located in Sterea Hellas and reveal 30,000 acres of land. The company would receive with full ownership rights 45% of the drained land, the state 50% and the surrounding villages 5%.

According to another contract between the state and a company in 1930, the company which would drain the swamp Lesini would take 60% of revealed land with full ownership rights and the remaining 40% with rights of enjoyment for 99 years. Of the 64,782 acres total extent of the swamp, only 19,000 acres were drained. The National Bank of Greece participated in that company.

In 1929, according to a contract between the state and a company, the company would drain Lake Xeneas. The total extent of the lake was 31,025 acres; the company would take

with full ownership rights 45% of the land and the rest with rights of enjoyment. The National Bank also participated in this company.

The politics of the Agrarian Party was that the revealed land from the drained swamps and lakes must be given to the landless peasants and not to the banks which used to run these lands as enterprises.³⁷

The Kopaeas Valley, located between Thebes and Livadia in Sterea Hellas, used to be a lake. A British company dried that lake in 1892 and revealed 240,000 acres of arable land. The valley included 60 villages. The terms of the contract between the Greek State and this British company were the following:

- a. The company would have, use and enjoy all the dried land for a period of 99 years.
 - b. After these 99 years, 160,000 acres of land including all works such as irrigation works, drainage networks, roads etc. and all the buildings in it would be given to the Greek State; 80,000 acres located in the Eastern part of the valley would remain in the ownership of the company.
 - c. The water of the Lakes Eliki and Paralimni which would receive the water of the lake Kopaeas, would be used half for irrigation of the Kopaeas Valley and half for irrigation of the Thebes Valley.
- Law 982 which modified Law 173 determined that disputes between the state and the company with respect to the application of the contract were going to be settled by the Supreme Court of Greece.
- In 1924, though, the company demanded:
- a. The 80,000 acres which it held with ownership rights in the eastern part of the valley, to change and take them into the western and more fertile parts.
 - b. To have the exclusive use of the lakes Eliki and Paralimni in order to produce electric power, for 99

years.

- c. To receive compensations for 28,427 acres located at the edge of the valley. This land used to be covered with flood waters and was owned by peasants.
- d. Finally, the company demanded the formation of an arbitration court to set the dispute instead of the Supreme Court of Greece.

Law 3242 of 1925, of the government of Prime Minister Michalakopoulos, determined the formation of an arbitration court composed of two arbiters, one Greek and one English, and in case of disagreement of these two arbiters, the appointment of another arbiter by the International Court of the Hague.

On July 4, 1925 the decision of the Arbitration Court was the following:

- a. The Greek State had to pay to the company 60,000 pounds for 13,000 acres of land located at the edge of the lake. The state paid that money.
- b. The company would keep 30,000 acres of the most fertile land.
- c. The state could buy within a year 160,573 acres of land for 980,000 British pounds or the peasants within 6 months for 1,190,000 British pounds. In case the state or the peasants do not buy that land within the given time limits, all this land and the buildings in it would remain forever to the company with full ownership rights.
- d. It was granted to the company the right for the drainage works and the distribution of water for the irrigation of the valley.
- e. Finally, the right to use the waters of the lakes Eliki and Paralimni to produce electric power was granted to the company for 99 years.
The price set by the Arbitration Court was extremely high. The state or the peasants did not buy the land. As a

result, the company became the owner of all the Kopaes Valley since August 1928. This came as a shock to everybody.³⁸

The rent paid by the Kopaes peasants to the British Company was very high, for example 32% of the total production for grain, 32-35% for corn, 24% for beans and chick-peas, 30-37 oka (1 oka is equal to 2.82 pounds) per acre for cotton (*yeoboro*), which was the main crop of the valley. Peasants who worked in the valley, used to pay the company 37 oka of cotton per acre as rent. Very often, average per acre production of cotton was 50-75 oka, extremely low; diseases, worm for example, used to damage the cotton. In case peasants produced less than 37 oka per acre, they had to pay the company back the next harvest season. Furthermore, peasants had to pay the company a 1% transportation fee on the production paid to the company as rent. Also another 1% of the production left to the peasant after the rent was paid to the company for transportation to his own house with his own means; even though the company was not involved in this transportation and it was done by the peasants alone, peasants had to pay the company the transportation fee. Such was the exploitation.³⁹

Because of the very high rent, the peasants of the Kopaes Valley went on a general strike in 1930. They wanted to change their condition. The government arranged the issue only temporarily by eliminating the rent which the peasants had to pay to the company at a rate of 2%. The company, though demanded compensations by the government; the government with Law 5498 of 1932 gave the company 3,000,000 drachmas for compensation for the elimination of the rent rates for the years 1930-1932. After the year 1932 high rents became valid again. The government of Prime Minister Venizelos supported the foreign capital. It did not initiate expropriation and distribution of the land of the valley to peasants.⁴⁰

The Agrarian Party presented an inquiry to the Chamber of Deputies and wanted to know why the government gave away the national wealth of Kopaes and made the cultivators practically slaves to the British company.

The Party pointed out the desperate situation of these peasants and criticised the Greek State which gave away the rights of the peasants and of the state itself. The British company became the owner of the land and everything on it, such as houses, works, etc. In addition, the company received from the Greek State 60,000 British pounds equivalent to 22,500,000 drachmas for compensation. The Agrarian Party considered this scandalous. Finally, the Agrarian Party proposed to the state the expropriation of the Kopaes Valley and the settlement there of peasants according to the Agrarian Law.⁴¹

d. Land Estates Exempted from the Expropriations

The Government of Liberals passed a law in the Chamber of Deputies which did not expropriate those large land estates which the landowners would cultivate on their own. This was an excuse though which the Government used in order to cover its favoritism for the landowners. It was very well known that most, if not all the landowners, did not themselves cultivate their land, they did not even live in the country. In Greece the phenomenon of absentee landlordism was very common.⁴²

That law violated the Agrarian Law. According to the Agrarian Law only parts of estates up to 300 acres which belonged to agronomists and agricultural school graduates were exempted from the expropriations under the condition of model cultivation. However, according to contracts between landlords and the Greek State, several large land estates were not expropriated on the condition that landlords had the obligation to cultivate their land as a

model under the advice of the Greek Ministry of Agriculture. These estates included 22,215 acres of land. In practice though the landlords did not fulfill their obligations to the Greek State.⁴³

The Agrarian Party supported the expropriation of all large land estates, including those which were not going to be expropriated with the excuse of cultivation by their owners. This favoured these landlords who were at the same time important figures of the middle class political parties. The party also criticized the government for the fact that it exempted from expropriation and distribution large estates (among others the Topsisin, the Bakrena in the Karditsa area, the Kilindir and others in Kilkis, Attica, Lamia, Lagada, Larisa, Lazarina etc.), while at the same time landless peasants desperately needed land for their settlement.⁴⁴

The government passed a law in the Chamber of Deputies according to which those peasants who were settled in unexpropriated estates, had to pay their land in prices of the market. Also peasants who were settled in land which used to belong to foreign citizens, had to pay in gold the difference between the market price and the price of the expropriations. Finally, peasants who used to cultivate land of the exchanged Turks had to pay to the National Bank which used to run that land as an enterprise 3,000-10,000 drachmas per acre. The Agrarian Party considered the amount as extremely high and denounced that policy of the government.⁴⁵

e. Pasture Lands

In addition to the arable land which was not expropriated and distributed to landless peasants, many pasture lands were not expropriated and distributed as well. Out of a total of 10,073,808 acres of pasture land,

only 7,346,266 acres of this land were expropriated and distributed to the settled peasants for common use in animal breeding. The rest remained as private pasture land of the state, the monasteries and other people.⁴⁶

The Agrarian Party supported strongly the settlement of small shepherds in estates especially designed for animal breeding. The party also proposed to the government to protect the "nomadic" shepherds, who were broadly estimated to be 100,000 people.⁴⁷

The state did not take intensive action in order to carry out the land reform. Expropriations and land distribution were not definite. Even estates declared to be expropriated were not evaluated by the year 1932, by which the land reform had to be completed. At the mean time, landlords demanded higher price for their land or non expropriation at all.⁴⁸

Land reform could not be efficient because the distribution was not definite. Peasants cultivated land in lots granted to them by the cooperatives on a non permanent basis. For that reason, could not be done irrigation works, draining works, planting of trees, etc. The Agrarian Party urged the government to make the land distribution permanent.⁴⁹

The Agrarian Party wanted to complete the expropriations and the distribution of land to the landless peasants and small shepherds. It wanted to drain the swamps and give the revealed land not to the banks in order to run it as enterprise, nor to the new-landlords with the excuse of model-prototype cultivation, but to the landless peasantry. It also wanted to make available to the peasants scientific methods. For that reason it proposed the establishment of agronomic offices in the countryside. In that way, the communication of the state with the peasants would be easier. The science of agronomy would be available to the peasants and would help them to increase

their production. The creation of "experimental" fields would facilitate the growth of production.⁵⁰

The agrarian reform in Greece changed the majority of landless peasants into family smallholders. However, the expropriations and the distribution of the majority of the estates alone, did not mean the emancipation of peasants. Even after the land reform which was incomplete anyway, peasants were not emancipated to the extent they wanted. They were still dependent on the Agrarian Bank and on the moneylenders for loans. Peasants needed more loans for cultivation expenses. The Agrarian Bank which had a shortage of capital used to give inadequate loans at a very high rate.⁵¹

Only those peasants who had capital, tools, livestock, machinery, stocks in seed, or money in general, would be able to cultivate independently their smallholdings. What can a poor peasant achieve without tools, animals, machinery, seed, fertilizer, credit, irrigation works, public works, infrastructure which would facilitate agricultural production? What can a poor peasant achieve without protection against middlemen and moneylenders? Those who had nothing but their hands to work with would inevitably remain slaves of the capital, regardless of to whom the land belonged.⁵²

The agrarian reform in Greece remained incomplete despite the opposite assertions of the various governments, because there were landless peasants who were not settled in non-expropriated estates, and because the settled peasants needed more capital to make efficient the land they received through land reform. The Agrarian Party estimated with a high degree of precision, that for the settlement of peasants 800,000,000 drachmas were needed, and for tools, animals, seed, irrigation works, draining works, etc., another 350,000,000 drachmas. However, the government considered the settlement of peasants as

completed; it did not provide additional money for it, nor money necessary for development in agriculture, that is, to make efficient and productive the land distributed into lots.⁵³

As already illustrated, the process of land reform in recent Greek history was accelerated by the pressure of the 1,069,957 refugees who came from Asia-Minor and who desperately needed settlement, and of the landless peasants of mainland Greece who needed land. The leadership of the military coup d'etat introduced the compulsory expropriation of the large land estates and their distribution to the landless peasants and refugees, realizing the critical and explosive situation created in the country after the Asia-Minor defeat and catastrophe on the one hand, and in an effort to prevent rebellion and maintain "order" on the other.

From February 14, 1923, when the leadership of the military coup d'etat made the "decision" for the compulsory expropriations and distribution of the estates to the landless peasants and refugees, up to October 15, 1926, when the Agrarian Law was put in effect, the process of land reform was carried out very slowly and with several setbacks. For example, it stopped during the term of the Government of Michalakopoulos and the dictatorship of Pagalos.⁵⁴

The Government of Th. Sofoulis ignored the peasants, as reflected in its programmatic declaration to the Chamber of Deputies, on July 30, 1924. For that reason, the Agrarian Party which supported the cause of peasants did not give a vote of confidence to this government.⁵⁵

The Agrarian Party wanted a radical solution of the agrarian issue with immediate expropriations and land distribution. It considered the settlement of the refugees as a national issue, that is, one of the most important, if not the most important, issue of the country.⁵⁶

The party urged the government to solve the issue and not to fool around the peasants. The government though did not take any action to improve the life of the peasantry. Peasants who could be settled did not receive land; on the contrary, non peasants received land and in turn rented their land to the shepherds.⁵⁷

The Agrarian Law of October 15, 1926, included all the laws and decrees from 1923 up to 1926, in an effort to make the process of land reform less complicated, more simple and faster. This law, though, was violated and modified. The various bourgeois governments compromised favoured the landlords and disregarded the rights of the peasants. Several estates were not expropriated at all or were partially expropriated, the land of the monasteries remained practically untouched, big corporations kept their land; at the same time were landless peasants who desperately needed settlement.

Despite the efforts of the Agrarian Party, the state violated and modified its own law. It favoured the landowners at the expense of peasants, delayed public works such as roads, dams, irrigation works, draining works, etc., tolerated continuous and systematic corruption of Greek officials who worked for the Refugee Settlement Commission and took advantage of their position in order to benefit themselves, made illegal exemptions of estates from expropriation and distribution, even changed the definite distribution of land to peasants by the Refugee Settlement Commission.⁵⁸

The agrarian reform in Greece had its weaknesses and remained incomplete. It remained incomplete because it did not settle neither all the landless peasants nor all the small shepherds; it did not expropriate all the large land estates. Several large land estates, or parts of them, remained in the hands of landlords. Land also remained in the possession of the monasteries, the corporations and the

state. Many acres of land, which could have been distributed to landless peasants, were not. The agrarian reform also remained incomplete because it did not provide the peasants with the necessary means to make their land efficient and productive. Peasants remained dependent for loans on the capital of the Agrarian Bank and on the moneylenders. The land reform then, to the extent it took place, did not mean the emancipation of the peasantry.

The term "land reform" fits the Greek experience better and is more precise than the term "agrarian reform"; the term agrarian reform signifies reform of the whole agrarian sector, not simply land distribution. The Agrarian Party, in addition to the land distribution, made propositions for the creation of a whole infrastructure that would make the distributed land efficient and productive, in order to benefit the peasantry and society.

The agrarian reform in Greece then, was not carried out as peasants and the Agrarian Party expected, nor as the Agrarian Law of October 15, 1926, determined. The state violated its own law in favour of the landlords and at the expense of the peasants. The Agrarian Party which was established in order to give "the land to the tiller" struggled with its policy for it throughout the period of this study, being consistent to its ideology and program.

6. THE POLITICS OF THE AGRARIAN PARTY ON TAXATION OF PEASANT PRODUCTION

The state imposed very heavy taxation on peasant production in order to collect money for its growing needs, most of all to support a huge and inefficient state apparatus. In imposing taxation, it did not take into consideration the social condition of the peasantry, the demographic composition of the countryside, the cost of

agricultural production, transportation, competition of exports with products of other countries, natural disasters - the economic condition of peasants in general.⁵⁹

The taxation system of peasant production was made empirically. Taxation was neither the same nor unified in all regions of Greece. There co-existed different forms of taxation. There were immediate taxes paid in kind and indirect taxes included in the consumers' goods.

A type of immediate taxation paid in kind to the state by the peasants was the 10% tax, the so-called *decate* named after the one tenth of the gross production which peasants had to pay. It was an extremely heavy type of immediate taxation. This so-called *decate*, the 10% tax, was collected by state officials, or by people who had rented the collection of taxation from the state. At harvest time those tax-collectors or "tax supervisors" or *decatestes*, were taking 10% of the crop as tax in the most brutal and violent way, and then turn it over to the state. The 10% tax on gross production became invalid in 1927 after a strong mobilization of peasants who participated in protests, rallies, demonstrations and mass hunger strikes, and whose demand was "down with the *decate*". In 1932, though, the 10% tax became valid again. The extension though of taxation on exports became even heavier than the 10% tax. For example it was 12% for olive oil and 15% for raisins. The Independent Raisin Organization used to withhold 15% of the raisins for export which in turn gave it to the state.⁶⁰

As indicated the taxation system was made empirically. One way of taxation could be valid for one region and not for another for the same crop. The taxation on olives and olive oil, for example, was applied to some regions but not to others. Furthermore, different rates of taxation of the same crop were valid in different regions.

The state imposed distributive taxation on the

communities-villages. Every community-village distributed the taxation to its peasant members according to their total annual production. This taxation was 5% according to the Law of June 3, 1927, and it was reduced to 2.5% according to Law 3408 of September 23, 1927. In addition, there was taxation on land per acre and on the peasants' capital (houses, animals, etc.). The taxation system was changing and taxation rates were fluctuating. Some taxes were reduced and others were increased. Sometimes immediate taxation was eliminated but more indirect taxes were imposed. Very often, old processes of taxation were put in effect again.⁶¹

State taxation of peasant production was extremely burdensome, absorbing most of the production and leaving very little or nothing for the peasants. It was also discriminatory and disproportional.

Taxation in Greece was not equal for all social classes. Peasants paid more immediate taxes than other social classes. In addition, peasants who were the majority of the population paid more indirect taxes than others, that is, taxes which were included in the consumers' goods.⁶²

The social condition of peasants, as well as peasant production, did not justify the heavy taxation on them. It was beyond their strength. The bourgeois governments although realizing that taxation on peasants was overburdensome, did not tax the profit of "big capital", that is, industries, banks, big companies, etc. The treatment of peasants was unequal. Prime Minister Venizelos crossed out the overdue payment of taxes of 300,000,000 drachmas to the advantage of the merchants while refusing the same privilege to the peasants. The Prime Minister also eliminated the taxation of big companies for 20,000,000 drachmas. Those companies on 5,135,000, 000 drachmas of capital did not pay taxes with the excuse that

the profit was added to their deposit capital. It is obvious that the bourgeois governments favoured "big capital" at the expense of the peasantry.⁶³

Another aspect of unequal taxation was the fact that peasants paid taxes on gross production. Other social classes or strata, the city-professionals for instance, paid taxes on the amount which remains after deduction of the cost of living. Obviously injustice and exploitation was done to peasants.⁶⁴ For example, tobacco producers paid a tax of 65% on gross production; on net income, based on the price of the year 1931, it was 77%. In 1932 it was 92%, that is, almost all the income of the tobacco producers went into taxation. The international economic crisis was responsible for 30% of the drop in price, the remainder was due to middlemen and the government. That way, tobacco producers could survive only by getting new loans.⁶⁵

Taxation in agriculture then was on the gross income from production, while in other sectors of the economy, taxation was on the net income. The taxation rate was 12% on the net income for other sectors of the economy, in agriculture, it was 15% on the gross income of peasants which usually absorbed most of their total production. This did not happen for any other immediate tax and it was extremely heavy on peasants.⁶⁶

While shopkeepers, for instance, did not pay taxes on expenses for keeping their store or supporting their family, peasants paid taxes on the estimated amount that they would receive, when they would sell their production. The state did not take into consideration cultivation costs or natural disasters that may occur; taxation on the peasantry was determined beyond any notion of justice. Thus, the state itself, exploited the peasants. Discrimination on taxation favoured the urban population at the expense of the peasantry: for example, 301,519 city-professionals paid 235,000,000 drachmas in taxes,

while 170,000 tobacco producers paid 400,000,000 drachmas. It is obvious that taxation was unequal and unjust.⁶⁷

Peasants regularly had to pay for a State Budget which was usually deficient. Instead of creating an infra-structure necessary to facilitate agricultural development and national development, the state would use the money from the peasants for distribution among anti-productive activities; to continue, for example, a huge inefficient bureaucracy. In the budget for the year 1927-1928, peasants paid 43% of the whole budget; out of this budget, only 1.11% was spent back in agriculture. The state transferred funds from peasants and agriculture to the urban population and activities other than agriculture.⁶⁸

It was the constant policy of the Greek State since the independence from the Ottoman Empire, to put heavy taxation on agricultural production. Taxation on agricultural production was the most convenient way for the state to collect money, being itself the exploiter of the peasantry, leaving the peasants at starvation level. Very often it was practically impossible for the peasants to pay their taxes; their production enabled them to barely survive. There was nothing left that could be used to pay their taxes. In this case, they were imprisoned as I will point out.⁶⁹

The Agrarian Party realized the heavy taxation on the Greek peasants. It wanted to relieve them of that burden and to increase taxation on the middle and upper-middle class. The Agrarian Party presented to the government a series of proposals but the government refused to consider them. The Agrarian Party wanted taxation on the net income of peasants and not on their gross production. Such taxation was within the principles of justice and equality. The Agrarian Party wanted the elimination of taxation on some peasant crops and the abolishment of others. It was

also against the taxation on land per acre.⁷⁰ Even the elimination or abolishment of taxation on peasant crops would allow peasants only a very basic income to live on. The government should have transferred the taxation from the poor to the rich.⁷¹

The Agrarian Party proposed the elimination of indirect taxes on goods of "first need", such as, bread, drugs, sugar, fish, light, etc. Finally, the Agrarian Party proposed the change of the taxation system (immediate and indirect taxes) in such a way, as to benefit not only the peasants but all the working people.⁷²

In addition to the state, the cities could impose taxes on peasants. One tax was the 10% tax, *decate*, another was the *diapilia*, a special tax to enter the "gates of the city" for those peasants who wanted to sale their crops in that city. Tax-collectors used to be in a shed, - the so-called *barracka* - at the main roads entering the city and from there they collected the taxes from the peasants. The 10% tax that the city charged the peasants was on gross production and not on net income. The city, though, did not put such a taxation on other professionals. The Agrarian Party considered taxation by the city as very heavy, unjust and anachronistic; it wanted the abolishment of that taxation.⁷³

The middle class governments followed the same tax-imposing policy. They all increased taxation on peasants and on the working people. They all favoured the middle and upper-middle class at the expense of the peasantry. This was reflected in their legislation, in the making of the State Budget and in their overall political action.

The bourgeois political parties in electoral campaigns promised not to increase taxes. Once they were elected in government, however, the existing taxation increased considerably. The Popular Party, for example, which had as

its electoral symbol "down with the tax-imposers", within fourteen months in government increased taxation 17%, an incredible rate for the starving people.⁷⁴

This was also true for the so-called Ecumenical Government which was composed of the major middle class political parties.⁷⁵

In the making of the State Budget those governments followed the same policy with respect to taxation. The State Budget for the year 1934-1935 was only slightly different from former budgets. That budget increased taxation on consumption which all people had to pay regardless of their income and decreased taxation on the transfer of property which was a tax paid mostly by the rich. It continued the same economic policy of the former government and made worse the existing injustice due to taxation. The Popular Party which had the majority in the Chamber of Deputies, passed the budget without considering the needs of the starving people. The next year, the Government of the Popular Party imposed new taxation and increased the State Budget from 7,350,000,000 drachmas to 9,150,000,000 drachmas.⁷⁶

Peasants and the working people in general, paid more taxes than the "rich" (industrialists, bankers, etc.).

Thus, taxation in Greece was carried out beyond any notion of justice and equality. It was unbearable for the peasants. The state itself exploited them.

The Agrarian Party consistent to its ideology and program, wanted the elimination (lower tax rates) or abolishment of the heavy taxation on peasants in order to relieve them. It proposed that the government change the overall taxation system and tax the net income of the peasants while increasing the taxes of the middle and upper-middle classes.

7. THE POLITICS OF THE AGRARIAN PARTY ON CREDIT AND DEBTS

A. The Agrarian Bank, Moneylenders-Tokoylefi, Debts

In 1915, for the first time in Greece, credit for agriculture was given officially by the National Bank of Greece, after an agreement between that Bank and the Greek State, on December 6, 1914. This Bank gave credit only to those peasants who were members of cooperatives.⁷⁷

The National Bank provided credit to peasants at very high rates. Despite these high rates of credit peasants were increasingly borrowing money from that Bank. This way, the exploitation done to peasants by moneylenders was to a small extent eliminated but certainly not abolished.⁷⁸

On June 27, 1929, the Agrarian Bank of Greece was established after an agreement between the state and the National Bank. The Agrarian Bank started its activities in 1930. At the same time the National Bank, as well as other small private banks, were providing credit to the peasants. The Agrarian Bank was not a private enterprise. It was an autonomous organization whose main purpose was the "common good". By providing credit to peasants it would eventually develop agricultural production and accelerate the national development. More specifically, the purpose of the Agrarian Bank was to provide credit to the peasants, cooperatives, or other agricultural organizations, and to provide agricultural tools, machinery, chemical fertilizer, as well as, other chemicals, needed in agriculture. The Agrarian Bank would also facilitate the cooperatives to store, to process and to sell crops in the market, to introduce modern methods of cultivation, to improve exports and, finally, to overlook the functions of the cooperatives. The Bank, though, did not work in that manner.

The Agrarian Bank started operating with total capital of 1,950,000.000 drachmas. This capital was provided to the

Bank by the state 950,000,000, by the small local banks of Macedonia, Thrace, Epirus, Crete and the islands 90,000,000 drachmas, by contributions 20,000,000 drachmas and by the National Bank 890,000,000 drachmas.

Nevertheless, this capital was not sufficient for the needs of peasants, nor adequate for the development of agriculture. Lack of sufficient capital in turn, necessarily limited the activities of the Agrarian Bank. Actually that Bank provided only one fourth or less of the capital needed in agriculture. The year 1931, credit designated for agriculture was only 11%, compared to the total credit given in other sectors of the Greek economy. The activities of the Agrarian Bank were also limited by the influence and interference of the state.⁷⁹

The Agrarian Party proposed that the Agrarian Bank must be completely independent with no interference from the state; the National Bank must not participate in the administrative council of the Agrarian Bank. The Party wanted the administration of the Agrarian Bank to include the representatives of peasant organizations such as the cooperatives and the chambers of agriculture. In this way, the Agrarian Bank would really be a bank of the peasants which could provide low-rate credit necessary for the development of agriculture and, at the same time, would eliminate moneylenders.⁸⁰

Thus, lack of sufficient capital meant very high interest rates for the available credit and an extremely high production cost. This inadequacy in capital for credit by the Agrarian Bank allowed moneylenders to operate. The establishment, as well as the way the Agrarian Bank functioned, failed to abolish moneylenders, but it eliminated some of them.

The Agrarian Party considered the loans to peasants not as a profit making enterprise but as a social function. The banks, on the other hand, wanted to make the maximum

profit on loans to peasants and to absorb the surplus labour of peasants.

The Agrarian Party proposed to the Chamber of Deputies the need for the support of the Agrarian Bank by the state. The Agrarian Bank should have more capital in order to give more loans to peasants. For that reason, the deposits of the Public Organizations, Institutions, Foundations and Inheritances, about 3,100,000,000 drs. must be given to the Agrarian Bank instead of to the National Bank. The Agrarian Bank, having that money would give loans to peasants at low rates and would facilitate development in agriculture. However, these money did remain at the National Bank which paid interest at 2%, 3% or 4% to the Public Organizations, Institutions, Foundations and Inheritances; in turn, the National Bank granted loans to the Agrarian Bank at 8% interest and to other sectors (trade, industry, other professions) at a 15%-18% interest rate.

The Agrarian Party denounced the fact that the banks from 1922 until 1931 gave loans with higher interest rate than the legal 8% and made an extremely high profit 5,240,000,000 drachmas at the expense of the Greek people. This way, the shareholders of the banks became rich. The Agrarian Party expected the state to intervene in order to rearrange the distribution of capital and to prevent the banks from absorbing the surplus labour and "suck the blood" of peasants.⁸¹

Before 1915 when the National Bank started giving loans to peasants, and even during the period of this study and despite the creation of the Agrarian Bank in 1929, Greek peasants, whenever they needed money, borrowed from moneylenders. Peasants needed that money most of the time not to invest in agriculture, but to support themselves and their families. The moneylenders were middle class groups, sometimes rich peasants. Peasants were repaying their moneylenders an enormous amount of money for a short term

loan, which was illegal by definition. This exploitation created for the peasants a desperate situation. At times of economic crises due to natural disaster, low market prices for their production, increased taxation, etc., peasants became dependent on moneylenders. This dependency on moneylenders for loans put peasants in a precarious condition.⁸²

Banks and moneylenders asked assurances from the peasants that they would repay the loans. Those assurances were the mortgage, the warrant and the personal guarantee. Peasants mortgaged their land or house which they would lose in case they did not repay the money on time. That way capitalists made a profit from the peasants. Peasants were not actually owners of their land or house if these were mortgaged. Peasants could also take loans using as warrant their property that is, their land, house, tools, animals or even their crops which were not yet collected or harvested.⁸³

Greek peasants were heavily indebted. They owed money to the banks, to moneylenders, to the state for taxation or to pay the land they received through the agrarian reform, and finally to the village shop where they used to buy goods of first need during the year.

Peasants worked constantly to pay their debts which were always growing and increasing. Debts increased every year because the production of crops and the prices of those crops did not allow sufficient income to peasants in order to pay their debts and to live on. Peasants were very poor and unable to repay their debts. They had to sell their trucking animals, plows or tools in order to pay part of their debts certainly not all of them. That way they could not cultivate their land the following year. Many peasants whose crops were destroyed would remain indebted. Even the crops which survived natural disaster had a very low price on the market. Consequently, peasants did not

have adequate income to pay their debts. Producers of grain who owed money to the Agrarian Bank gave their production to the bank; the bank held what peasants owed to it and returned the rest to peasants in cash. This bank, though, began seizures against peasants who used to owe money to it and who were unable to pay back.⁵⁴

Their situation became worse during the severe economic crisis of 1929-1933, when crop prices were very low and goods for the peasants' needs were extremely expensive. Not only were the peasants unable to repay their loans, but they were forced to take additional loans for living expenses and to cultivate their land. Their situation was desperate and became worse when the banks and the moneylenders put heavy pressure on peasants to get back their money. Very often peasants, being unable to repay their loans were arrested. There are no precise statistics as to the amount of money peasants were indebted. A very rough, vague estimate was that Greek peasants owed 6 to 8,500,000,000 drachmas, that included loans from the banks and the moneylenders, as well as the money owed to the state for the land taken in land reform and the settlement of refugees. This extremely high amount was impossible to repay because production barely allowed for survival. There was no production to sell in the market for the income needed to pay debts. Peasants could not work under the psychological stress that debts created on them. Agrarian debts were a very serious issue that middle class governments refused to deal with, despite the protests of peasants. The Agrarian Party considered the debts of peasants to moneylenders as unjust and illegal, since peasants used to pay interest of 200% or 300% for a very short term. By the year 1930, Greek peasants had debts to moneylenders of about 4,000,000,000 drachmas. They mortgaged land for it worth approximately 1,000,000,000 drachmas. This is only a broad estimate, since there is no

official statistical information on illegal moneylending.⁸⁵

In 1930, the Agrarian Party suggested the unification of all debts to moneylenders through the Agrarian Bank and repayment in ten years, in order to relieve the peasants. The government of Prime Minister Venizelos, though, could not follow the proposal of the Agrarian Party because it supported the exploiting capital. On the other hand, the Agrarian Bank needed additional capital for the unification of the old debts and the granting of new loans to the peasants. The Government took away the coverage-capital deposits from the Agrarian Bank and gave it to the National Bank shareholders. The capital of the Agrarian Bank was sufficient neither for the unification of all debts, nor to facilitate development in agriculture. The National Bank added a 13% fee-credit to delayed debts, which was thievery. That way peasants could not take other loans from the banks except for seeds and fertilizer. The Agrarian Party denounced this policy of the banks.⁸⁶

The issue of debts to moneylenders, to the state and to the banks remained vital for the peasants. The government continued to support the moneylenders and the banking capital. The Agrarian Party presented an inquiry to the Chamber of Deputies and asked the government for a precise policy to solve the important issue of the debts of peasants and the city-professionals. The Agrarian Party proposed the "crossing out of debts" of peasants to moneylenders and to the state as a permanent solution. For the debts of peasants to the Agrarian Bank, the party proposed facilities such as, lower credit rate, longer time for repayment, etc. That way peasants would pay their debts back. However, all the bourgeois governments followed the same policy and left the issue of debts as it was. Debts of peasants to moneylenders - illegal by definition - became valid by law; that law obliged the peasants to pay those illegal debts.⁸⁷ The Agrarian Party policy expressed by the

symbol "sponge in all debts", that is, crossing out of all debts; this symbol was widely accepted by the peasants who were in a desperate situation.

Most important of all, the Agrarian Party in order to solve the issue of debts at its root, that is to solve the cause which generated the issue, suggested the protection of crops from natural disaster as well as better prices for crops in the market. For that reason, the state policy would have to change in order to take peasants out of their desperate situation.⁸⁸

Regarding the debts of the peasant refugees, the government deceived these refugees when it said that it was crossing out their debts. Peasant refugees never received more than 1,000,000 British pounds; loans that should have gone to them were wasted on illegal commissions and high salaries of officials. The property of the Turks left behind in Greece was given for the most part back to the boys who became Albanian citizens. The Prime Minister Venizelos insisted that the peasant refugees received 22,000,000 British pounds. This was not true though. They received only 4,500,000 drachmas. Peasant refugees should not pay interest on the capital estimated that they owed to the state. The houses of the exchanged Bulgarians and Turks were part of the land and were to be evaluated as such. The value of the land according to the Agrarian Law and the International Agreements was from 70 to 150 drachmas per acre, while Prime Minister Venizelos estimated it at more than 400 drachmas per acre. With a tricky way he made the debts of the peasant refugees 22,000,000 British pounds. He crossed out the 4,000,000 pounds and deducted 8,500,000 pounds as equal to the property which peasant refugees left in Turkey. On the remaining amount, peasant refugees, who were starving and simply unable to pay, had to pay. Even in 1934, a year of a relatively good harvest, they paid only 35% of their debts to the Agrarian Bank. The

Agrarian Party made it clear to the Chamber of Deputies that the debts were not more than 4,500,000 pounds. The value of the land together with the houses was 2,500,000 pounds at most. Therefore peasant refugees did owe 7,000,000 pounds. In addition, they left in Turkey property evaluated of at least 20,000,000 pounds. Therefore, peasant refugees owed 7,000,000 pounds. The state owed them 8,500,000 pounds. Thus, the state owed to the peasant refugees 1,500,000 pounds. The Agrarian Party declared that the money which the state was going to take from the peasant refugees was state thievery. When the Agrarian Party would be in government, it would abolish the debt of 8,500,000 pounds which the government with unfair estimate placed on them. The party also declared that the 1,500,000 pounds which peasant refugees were to receive, would be used to settle the yet unsettled peasant families.⁸⁹

Finally, the Agrarian Party proposed for the permanent solution of the issue, the "crossing out" of all debts of peasant refugees to the Greek State and the Refugee Settlement Commission and the banks, since the property of those refugees left behind in Turkey was of more value than their debts. It should be noted here that the cost of keeping officials to look after the collection of debts of peasant refugees to the Agrarian Bank was very high; it was 31,357,830 drachmas in the year 1935. Therefore, it was to the advantage of the Agrarian Bank to permanently cross out the debts of refugees.⁹⁰

To relieve the peasants who were heavily indebted, the Agrarian Party proposed to the government the unification of debts to the moneylenders through the Agrarian Bank with repayment in ten years. Later on, it proposed the "crossing out" of debts of peasants to moneylenders and to the state as a permanent solution. For the debts to the Agrarian Bank, the party proposed facilities for repayment. Finally, the party wanted protection of crops from natural disaster

and better prices for crops in the market. With these proposals, the Agrarian Party wanted to deal with the cause which generated the issue of debts. The bourgeois governments, though, did not consider the proposals of the Agrarian Party. As for the debts of peasants to the state and the Agrarian Bank, the government did nothing to relieve the peasants. Regarding the debts of the peasant refugees, the government deceived the peasants when it said it crossed out their debts. Only the Agrarian Party proposed actual "crossing out" of the debts of peasant refugees to the Greek State and the Refugee Settlement Commission.

B. Collection of Taxes and Debts by the State

The collection of immediate taxes by the state from the peasants was done in a repressive and sometimes brutal way. In many instances public officials did not behave well in collecting taxes. This fact was acknowledged even by conservative politicians. Taxes to the state which were not paid on time by the peasants, became debts. Peasants were arrested because they used to owe taxes to the state or to the Refugee Settlement Commission. Peasants did not have the money to pay their debts because they could not sell their crops at all or sold them at extremely low prices, or because a natural disaster - flood, frost, hail, hot wind, grasshoppers, rats, etc. - destroyed their crops.⁹⁷

Tax-collectors and policemen put peasants in jail if they did not have enough to pay their debts. Jails were filled with those peasants. At the same time, middle and upper-middle class people used to delay payments of taxes to the state without suffering any consequences. Tax-collectors with policemen were after peasants with warrants for personal arrest. To avoid them, peasants used

to hide in their fields overnight. Other peasants used to fight with them in order to avoid imprisonment. Too many peasants were inside jails because of their debts to the state or to the Refugee Settlement Commission.⁹²

Peasants who did not have money to pay their debts sold jewelry, furniture, cooking appliances, trucking animals, plows, tools, etc., in order to pay only a small part of their debts. State tax-collectors with policemen on horseback pursued peasants who tried to hide in their fields because they did not have the money to pay their taxes. Usually peasants were captured and put in jail as if they were criminals. Their debt could be 100 or 200 drachmas.⁹³

Tax-collectors and policemen used to beat peasants who did not have enough to pay 100 drachmas to the state. Peasants could not pay because they could not sell their crops or sold them in extremely low price. This happened in the villages of Limnochori, Aedonochori, Aetovouni, etc., in the Serres region.⁹⁴

In the collection of debts there were several incidents of police brutality. In the village of Petromagoula, Beotia, policemen were after the peasant B. Pagouras and they killed him; he had a debt to the state of 1,000 drachmas. In Drama, after being tortured by police Panagiotis Amigdalas died; he had a debt of 800 drachmas to the state. Peasants of the villages Aravastidia and Gerli, Elasona, refused to pay taxes to the tax-collector; policemen shot at the peasants and wounded several of them. In the village of Kineta, Megara, policemen killed in his shack the poor peasant Christopoulos or Moraitis and then set fire and burned him, because of his debt to the state.⁹⁵ In the year 1932, eight peasants were killed by the police because they owed money to the state.⁹⁶

According to data of the Ministry of Interior, in the areas of Epirus, Thessaly and the prefecture of Messologi,

were issued 282,124 warrants for the personal arrests of peasants who owed taxes to the state. In the area of Almiros were issued 5,000 warrants, in the area of Thebes were issued 20,000 warrants for personal arrest of peasants who had debts to the state. In the Drama area where 2,500 warrants were issued, the amount of overdue taxes to the state was about 100,000,000 drachmas. Those peasants could not sell their crop, mainly tobacco, therefore they had no money to pay their taxes.⁹⁷

The Agrarian Party denounced the fact that peasants were put in jail because they used to owe money to the state or to the Refugee Settlement Commission. The state knew that peasants could not pay their debts to it because natural disaster destroyed their crops; those peasants did not even have bread to eat or the means to cultivate their land. The party demanded the immediate release of the peasants who were imprisoned because of debts to the state. Furthermore, it called on the government to stop the imprisonment of peasants for debts.⁹⁸

The Agrarian Party presented to the government as an immediate and urgent demand the delay of collection of peasants' debts whose crops were destroyed by natural disaster.⁹⁹

The Party also wanted the tax-collector with the policeman to be abolished as a means of collecting taxes. It proposed that the collection of taxes be conducted by the agricultural cooperatives or by the communities-villages.¹⁰⁰

The Agrarian Party organized mass rallies of peasants against tax-collection in Thessaly and in other areas. Peasants asked for a delay in the repayment of their debts because frost destroyed 70% of their grain production. Peasants knew that the government had arranged a delay of repayment of debts of other social classes, for example the city-professionals. Those professionals, in the year 1930,

were paying debts for the year 1925 and peasants demanded the same treatment.¹⁰¹

There were several incidents which demonstrate the reaction of peasants against the way taxes were collected. Peasant women in the village Neochori, Drama, pushed away tax-collectors and policemen who went to their villages in order to seize the property of 185 peasants for debts to the industrialist Baltas. Peasants of the village Lanthi, Pyrgos, liberated from the police-station 20 fellow-villagers who were held for debts to the state.¹⁰² Those are only two examples.

In summary, the collection of overdue taxes by the state from the peasants was done in a repressive and sometimes brutal way. Peasants who could not pay their taxes in time and had a few hundred drachmas debt to the state, were arrested and put in jail. Peasants were unable to pay their taxes because the extremely low prices for their crops in the market did not allow them sufficient income even to live on. Another reason was the natural disasters which used to destroy their crops and lack of protection by the state for these crops. Peasants reacted against the way taxes were collected. They used to hide in their fields in order to avoid the tax-collectors with policemen who had warrants for their personal arrest. In some cases, policemen killed poor indebted peasants.

8. THE POLITICS OF THE AGRARIAN PARTY ON PRICES OF CROPS

A. Protection of Prices

One cause for the economic condition of the Greek peasants were the very low prices for which they used to sell their crops. Low prices for peasant crops created crisis in agriculture. This affected the income of peasants

which decreased at the same time cultivating expenses increased. Peasants were in a very bad situation. In the Drama area alone, 70% of the tobacco production of the years 1929-1930, and 1930-1931 was not sold; the rest was sold at an extremely low price.¹⁰³

The Agrarian Party considered the protection of crops and their prices by the state, as a necessity in order to achieve social justice. Protection could be done by the establishment of independent organizations for crops, such as grain, tobacco, cotton, raisins, olives, etc., in order to avoid exploitation by middlemen, since the marketing of peasant production was done mainly by these middlemen. Middlemen used to make an enormous profit at the expense of both producers and consumers. Another alternative to protect peasants and avoid middlemen was the cooperative. Protection of grain for example, a main crop of Greek peasants, could be done by imposing tariffs on imported grain or by purchase by the state of domestic grain. The system of purchase by the state of grain, basically wheat, would enable the peasants to know in advance the exact price at which they would sell their crops. That way they could avoid to pre-sell their production at an extremely low price. The phenomenon of pre-sales of crops was very common and a very sad one. Peasants used to sell their crops before harvest because they desperately needed cash. That way middlemen used to take advantage of the desperate situation of peasants, and made a very high profit at their expense.¹⁰⁴

The agrarian policy of the Government of Liberals with respect to prices for crops was against the interests of peasants. In December 1928, the elimination of tariffs on imported wheat by that Government decreased the income of every peasant family for the amount of 1,250 drachmas per year. The elimination of tariffs from 1.80 to 1.40 per oka, decreased the price of domestic wheat, since there was no

demand for it, to 5 drachmas per oka. Peasants lost within a few months of the year 1929, 480,000,000 drachmas from their income. At the same time, people in the cities paid a higher price for bread which was made of imported wheat; domestic wheat remained unsold in the deposits of peasants, because the flour merchants and the mill industry did not pay even 5 drachmas per oka. The cost of wheat though to the peasant producer was 6-6.5 drachmas per oka. The price offered to peasants then, was below cost. The Government of Liberals also eliminated the tariff on imported flour. In April 1930, a law was passed in the Chamber of Deputies which eliminated the tariff on imported flour. The Agrarian Party considered that as against the interests of the Greek peasants and strongly criticised it. Imported flour from abroad would drop the price of domestic wheat, with all the worse consequences for the income of Greek peasants and the unemployment that would result for the mill workers.¹⁰⁵

The Agrarian Party policy supported the establishment of the committee for the purchase of domestic wheat which would buy from the peasants and would sell to the mills. However, the purchase of domestic wheat which would eventually avoid the involvement of middlemen - flour mill industrialists who used to have a monopoly over the grain trade - did not happen as the peasants and the Agrarian Party expected. The government, with various excuses - once it did not have bags to put wheat in, the other time it had no trains for transporting the wheat - deceived the peasants. For propaganda purposes the government said it was going to purchase most of the wheat production but never did. The purchase of wheat by the state was very low. In the year 1927 the state purchased 1% of the total wheat production of the country, in 1928 3%, in 1929 4%, in 1930 10%, in 1931 14%, in 1932 30%, in 1933 30% and from 1934 to 1936 nothing at all. Since the purchase of wheat by the state was very low, middlemen took advantage of peasants.

Peasants used to sell their wheat either at extremely low prices or not at all; in this case their wheat was wasted in their deposits. The Agrarian Party believed an proposed several times to the government the nationalization of wheat mills and the state monopoly of wheat. In that way, the government would protect the production of peasants and at the same time, the consumers would eat bread at a reasonable price. That system wanted to satisfy the wheat producers who could sell wheat for 8 drachmas per oka and would guarantee consumers the price of 5-5.5 drachmas per oka for bread. Otherwise, the price of wheat was 4-5.45 dr. per oka and the price of bread 7.5 and 6.4 drachmas per oka. Obviously, the merchants and flour industry, were making a very high profit; they bought the production very cheaply and sold it at very high prices. For the Agrarian Party, the purchase of wheat should work together with the nationalization of wheat mills and state monopoly of wheat. Such a state organization would run not only wheat but also other grain and corn in order to provide satisfactory prices for both, producers and consumers. Peasants who used to sell their crops at extremely low prices, protested in mass rallies for better prices for crops and demanded purchase by the state of their grain. These mass rallies though, were classified by the state as anarchic incidents, that is, as being against the order, and the demands of peasants were not satisfied.¹⁰⁶

The Agrarian Party also wanted to protect the production of domestic animal food. While domestic animal food remained unsold in the stocks of peasants, the government imported animal food from Egypt and Serbia (part of Yugoslavia now). The Agrarian Party proposed to the government not to import animal food and prefer instead domestic animal food for use in the Greek army.¹⁰⁷

The very low prices, then, at which peasants used to sell their crops, were one cause for their economic

condition. Low prices were determined by the government, and the middlemen who were tolerated by the government; during the world's economic crisis, international factors were responsible for 30% of the downfall of the prices.¹⁰⁸

The Agrarian Party considered the protection of crops and their prices by the state as a necessity in order to achieve social justice. It criticised the government for being responsible for the extremely low prices and presented several proposals in order to solve the problem.¹⁰⁹

The Agrarian Party then, had a coherent policy to protect not only peasants and the prices of their crops but also the consumers of goods produced by the peasants. Within the framework of this policy the Party urged the peasants to participate in the cooperatives.

Cooperatives as voluntary and free organizations based on solidarity among peasants presented another alternative to peasants in their effort to avoid the exploitation of middlemen. Thus, the cooperatives had an economic and a political aspect.

B. Cooperatives

a. The Economic Aspect

Cooperatives tend to improve the economic condition of peasants in various ways: they provide goods at low prices for cultivation and other agricultural needs; they obtain loans on good terms; they use commonly means of production, mainly machinery; they facilitate peasant-members to cultivate, process and distribute their crops to the market, at better prices.¹¹⁰

In Greece, the primary goal of the cooperatives was to take credit from the National Bank and distribute it to

their peasant-members. The bank gave credit only to those peasants who were members of cooperatives. Only a very small number of cooperatives concentrated on agricultural production and distribution of that production to the market. The method though in which credit was originally distributed by the cooperatives to the peasants was corrupt. People friendly to the government obtained the loans for themselves without investing those loans in agriculture but rather in other sectors and for purposes other than agriculture. The cooperatives, then, were weak in production and the distribution of this production to the market in order to avoid middlemen and to offer a service to the society by providing crops at lower prices. Thus, because of their very position between production and consumption, middlemen had the opportunity to take advantage of both producers and consumers.¹¹

Cooperatives developed very rapidly every year after 1923. By 1924, there were 24 regional unions of cooperatives; by 1926, 39, and by the end of 1931, 85. By the same year 1931, there were 5,888 cooperatives. The average number of members per cooperative increased from 40 to 50 in 1929, to 68 in 1931. From 1930 until 1936, several anti-cooperative laws though, as I will point out, limited the activities and the growth of the cooperatives.¹²

A central reason which accelerated in process of the development of cooperatives was the family smallholdings, which were created with the land reform initiated in 1923, and needed for operation, agricultural tools, animals, especially trucking animals, credit, etc. Peasants wanted to solve those problems through the cooperatives.

Cooperatives whose main purpose was to provide credit were the most prevalent form; other categories were only a small percentage of the existing cooperatives. Cooperatives whose main function was the production, which was more to the interest of the peasants, were only 4.7% of the active

cooperatives, and they did not even cover all the productive sectors. Out of the 342 existing cooperatives for production, 137 were for wine making, 75 for olive oil, 57 for dairy, 50 for citrus, and a very small number for silk, rice, honey, animal breeding and processing wood from the forest. The same was true for the cooperatives aimed at the marketing of crops; from the total number of cooperatives for marketing, 61.8% were for marketing of raisins and 29.8% for the marketing of tobacco. The majority of cooperatives had as main purpose to provide credit because the National Bank up to 1930, and afterwards the Agrarian Bank, used to give short term loans, which were the most profitable for the banks, through the cooperatives. Cooperatives through the collective responsibility of their members were a guarantee that the banks would get back their money.¹¹³

Despite the growth of cooperatives and their peasant memberships, the majority of peasants were not members of cooperatives. By 1933, only 28% of the peasants were members of cooperatives. Membership in a cooperative was granted only to the head of the peasant family.¹¹⁴

The economic activities of cooperatives eliminated only to a very small degree the profits of middlemen such as merchants and moneylenders; certainly, they did not abolish middlemen. Cooperatives were weak in marketing peasant production; they could not completely control all the marketing of peasant production, only a small portion. The largest part was left to middlemen.

b. The Political Aspect

In addition to the economic aspect, cooperatives had a political side. They were important in organizing the peasants to assert and claim their rights, and to present their demands to the state.¹¹⁵

Cooperatives were also units for political participation. They participated actively, trying to solve the problems of peasants. For example, cooperatives wanted the state to complete the land reform, to eliminate taxation, to protect their production, to abolish their debts, etc. Cooperatives were concerned with the totality of the problems of peasants.

Peasants as members of cooperatives, demanded their rights through the cooperatives. The political activities of cooperatives, in asserting and claiming the rights of peasants were not favourable to the bourgeois governments since they tried to eliminate the profits of middlemen. Both the state and middle class reacted to the progressive development of cooperatives and tried to keep them only as bureaucratic organizations which would carry out their interests. With a series of laws, the state limited the activities of cooperatives, in order to control them. Law 4640 of 1930 limited considerably the functions and the growth of cooperatives.

That law was anti-constitutional. According to that law, a Senator, a Deputy or a Mayor, even a candidate for those offices was not allowed to run as a candidate for the administrative council of a cooperative or a union of cooperatives, unless three years had passed from the time these terms of office had expired. In addition, they were not allowed to be appointed as paid or non-paid directors or employees of such an agricultural organization (cooperative or union of cooperatives). In case such an appointment had taken place, it was declared as invalid. This meant for the already elected members of the administrative councils of cooperatives or unions of cooperatives, directors and employees whose office was declared invalid had to resign. The same was true for the administrative councils of the "agrarian union-associations" which were established and were

functioning according to Law 231 on trade unions. The Agrarian Party protested against this anti-constitutional law and denounced it as amoral. The party urged the administrative councils of cooperatives and unions of cooperatives not to resign. The government could not forcefully remove these councils because this law was anti-constitutional. It was anti-constitutional because the Constitution of Greece provided suffrage for all men. The Agrarian Party would appeal to the Court which most likely would declare that law as anti-constitutional. Since most of the active members of cooperatives were at the same time active members of the Agrarian Party, the anti-cooperative laws were directed not only against the cooperatives but also against the Agrarian Party.¹¹⁶

Law 5289 of 1931 severely limited the economic activities of cooperatives and excluded young people from the cooperatives. Members of cooperatives could be crossed out by decision of the administrative council and not by the General Council. Also excluded were those who violated the so-called *Edeonemo*, that is, the law on the security of the state. It, therefore, excluded active members of the Agrarian Party and the Communist Party. In addition to those laws, from 1930 to 1932, Laws 5277, 5420 and others, stopped the progress of cooperatives and put them under the guidance and control of the Agrarian Bank and, through that bank, the state itself. The Agrarian Bank became a "watchful eye" over the activities of the cooperatives. Supervisors of the Agrarian Bank had the right which allowed them to interfere in the functions of cooperatives. In this way, cooperatives served the interests of middlemen, industrialists and banks. Those anti-cooperative laws were not accepted by the Agrarian Party, by the majority of the peasantry and by most of the progressive intellectuals of peasant background. Elected councils were abolished and new ones were appointed by the

dictatorship of Metaxas. Thus, cooperatives became totally dependent on the dictatorship of Metaxas and served as means of his propaganda.¹¹⁷

As indicated, cooperatives as organizations aiming at political participation were concerned with the totality of the problems of the peasants. The state, however, and the middle class which had interests opposite to the peasants, and especially to those who were members of cooperatives, reacted to the progressive movement of cooperatives. The state wanted to control the cooperatives. Thus, the political activities of cooperatives were limited considerably originally by the way cooperatives emerged with Law 602 of 1914 and later through a series of anti-cooperative laws.

Law 602 of 1914 which had allowed the formation of agricultural cooperatives for the first time in Greece reflected the interests of the middle class. It was designed to facilitate the expansion of capitalism in the agrarian economy. It included reactionary articles which placed obstacles to the cooperative movement since it made "political neutrality" an absolutely necessary condition for the cooperatives. It was extremely difficult, if not impossible, for a cooperative to be "politically neutral"; a cooperative as an organization had a political entity by definition. As such, it was concerned for the social problems of peasants which became political when the state was involved. Therefore, it was impossible for the cooperatives which were political organizations by definition to be "politically neutral" as the state wanted them to be. Cooperatives were concerned with the totality of the social problems of the peasants and demanded political solutions to these problems.¹¹⁸

The constant policy of the middle class governments favoured middlemen who were middle class groups. As a result cooperatives were too weak to fulfill their purpose

and to effectively do their own marketing; they could not avoid middlemen. Thus, marketing of peasant production was done mainly by middlemen and only to a small extent by the cooperatives.

The Agrarian Party, being consistent with its program, wanted the cooperatives to organize the production of crops and the distribution of these crops to the market; this was to the advantage of both, producers and consumers. The party favoured the development of cooperatives aimed at the production and distribution of crops and supported the participation of peasants in them. Such a participation of peasants in cooperatives offered them not only economic advantages but also political, as already illustrated.¹¹⁹

9. THE POLITICS OF THE AGRARIAN PARTY ON PROTECTION OF CROPS AND ANIMALS AGAINST NATURAL DISASTER AND ON SOCIAL SECURITY OF PEASANTS

In Greece there was practically no protection of peasant crops and animals against natural disaster, nor social security for the peasants. Peasant crops were exposed to forms of natural disaster such as frost, hail, flood, grasshoppers, worms, rats, hot summer wind, lack of rain for a long period of time - drought - various diseases, phylloxera (vineyard-pest) for example etc. Social security for the peasants would include protection against illness, old age, disability from accidents, mental disability, protection of pregnant women, health treatment of all peasants in general.¹²⁰

Throughout the period of this study, the various bourgeois governments virtually did not protect the peasants and their production against natural disaster, nor passed any laws which would give them social security. Such a bill was purposely postponed.

The policy of the Agrarian Party was the protection of peasant crops and animals against natural disaster and social security for the peasants. The party made several proposals to the various governments in that direction, but none of them was carried out.

A. Protection Against Natural Disaster

Peasants who had crops destroyed by natural disaster, did not have even the very basic means for their survival. In the island of Corfu for example, 100,000 peasants lost their olive production because of a disease and were in a desperate situation. Olives and olive oil were their main production. Because these were destroyed, they lost their main source of income. Consequently, they had no money to support themselves, neither to pay their taxes, their debts, nor to cultivate their land the next year. The Agrarian Party proposed the delay of repayment of their debts. It also urged the government to give additional loans to these peasants in order to maintain themselves and cultivate their land. The party proposed the relief of those peasants.¹²¹

The party also supported the goat shepherds of Kiparisia, Peloponnese, who lost all their animals and demanded health treatment for their families as well as, not to pay taxes.¹²²

In the year 1926, 6,000,000 kilograms of tobacco were destroyed by grasshoppers. This was a damage to peasants and consequently to the national economy. Peasants were discouraged from cultivating tobacco again, and they used to leave parts of their land uncultivated. The Agrarian Party called on the government to protect production from natural disaster with the appropriate policy.¹²³

The party also pointed out the destruction of peasant

production in the areas of Peloponnese, Thessaloniki and Serres. The government issued warrants of personal arrest for those peasants whose crops were destroyed and who were therefore unable to pay their taxes. The party urged the government to see it as a social problem and to cope with it as such. Those peasants simply had no production and therefore no source of income which would allow them to support themselves and pay their taxes.¹²⁴

Peasant production in the Serres and Thessaloniki areas was destroyed because of lack of rain for a long period of time. The Agrarian Party urged the government to protect those peasants. Seizures against peasants who could not pay their debts had to stop. The government also had to stop the warrants of personal arrest for those peasants. They could not pay their debts because natural disaster destroyed their production, and they lost their main, if not the only, source of income.¹²⁵

Despite the existence of various laws for the protection of peasant crops, and the Central Treasury of Insurance Against Hail and Frost from 1926, which became in 1930, the Treasury of Agrarian Insurances, compensations to peasants whose crops were destroyed by natural disaster, and whose animals were damaged or died, were very minimal, if existed at all. If peasants, wanted insurance for their crops and animals, they had to pay for it; they were unable, though, because they were very poor. For that reason the number of peasants who were insured was very low. For example, in the year 1930 4,501 peasants were insured by the Treasury of Agrarian Insurances, in 1931 9,042 and in 1932 11,711. Thus the majority of peasants were not insured because such insurance was very expensive for them.¹²⁶

The same was true for the insurance of the animals of peasants, such as horses, cattle, pigs, goats and sheep. In July, 1934, when the Treasury of Agrarian Insurances

started to insure animals, only 584 animals were insured. Peasants were too poor to pay insurance for their animals; most of the time they could not even afford to substitute a dead or a sick animal. In addition, credit given by the Agrarian Bank for animals was very low and at very high interest rates. On the other hand, the state did not give sufficient capital to the Treasury of Agrarian Insurances which could be used for compensations. Peasants had to pay for it through additional taxation and contributions. That way, the protection of peasants was only institutional, that is there were laws that determined protection against forms of natural disaster (hail, frost, etc.) but in reality these laws were not carried out; peasants never received adequate compensations for the damages they suffered. Peasants were too poor to pay high rates for security fees and contributions. Even the ones who paid for their insurance were not covered all the time against frost for example, nor did they receive adequate compensations for the disaster they suffered. The insurance of raisin producers by the Independent Raisin Organization was compulsory and unsuccessful since peasants paid very high rates for insurance fees; that is why it lasted only a few years. The Agrarian Party proposed the state to provide full protection to peasants who suffered natural disasters.¹²⁷

B. Social Security of Peasants

The Agrarian Party considered the health of peasants as a very important issue and it wanted social security against illness for them.

The very bad economic situation of the peasants and consequently the very bad living conditions, often to the extent of starvation, were the main cause of diseases. It

was estimated that 30% of peasants had tuberculosis, another 30% were in a stage before tuberculosis, and 90% had malaria. Peasants with tuberculosis transmitted their illness to their family. Most of them could not be operated and died in their homes, because there were only 3 sanatoriums in Greece, that is, special hospitals for tuberculosis, and the country needed at least 30. There were no means of therapy for most of the people. The government dissolved the agrarian clinics and appointed instead crews who distributed quinine, that is the drug against malaria. This was inadequate though. The Agrarian Party proposed the government to organize health treatment on a regional basis, that is, to create hospitals or clinics in the villages, in the provinces and in the big cities. Nothing existed. In the policy of the bourgeois governments, health protection and health treatment of peasants practically did not exist.¹²⁸

During electoral campaigns, the Party of Liberals as well as the other bourgeois political parties, promised social security to all the people. However, they deceived the people with these promises, because when they were elected and formed a government, they forgot all about it and indefinitely postponed action on social security. Peasants were excluded even during discussions for the bill for social security.

The Government of Venizelos voted a law on social security for the salaried employees and wage laborers of the cities (basically industrial workers and other employees) not for the small professionals with low income.

Peasants were not included in that law, even though they were the majority of the population, the poorest, with the lowest living standards and the ones who needed social security more than anyone else. Despite that, they were excluded from the social security law.¹²⁹

The Agrarian Party denounced that policy of the

government and wanted social security for the peasants who were neglected from that bill. It protested against the exclusion of the peasants from such a law and wanted peasants to be included in the law on social security. The party strongly believed that peasants who were exploited and worked hard must be included in the law on social security. Social security would include protection against illness, old age, disability from accidents, mental disability, treatment of peasant women giving birth to children (and who used to die at delivery at a rate of 22%-27%), and health treatment of all peasants in general.¹³⁰

The policy of the Agrarian Party was the protection of peasant crops and animals against natural disaster and social security for the peasants.

The Agrarian Party, in order to relieve the peasants who suffered natural disaster, proposed that the governments delay the collection of their taxes and debts, and give them more loans necessary to maintain themselves and to cultivate their land the next year. In addition, the party urged the governments not to issue warrants of personal arrest and to stop seizures against them. The Agrarian Party also expected the state to provide more money for the Treasury of Agrarian Insurances in order to give more compensations to peasants. The Agrarian Party, which considered the health of peasants as a very important issue, wanted social security for them. It denounced the policy of the governments to indefinitely postpone action on social security and wanted the peasants to be included in the bill on social security.

10. CONSISTENCY OF THE POLITICS OF THE AGRARIAN PARTY WITH ITS IDEOLOGY AND PROGRAM

It is important to examine the relationship between the politics of the Agrarian Party with its ideology and program.

In Part Three, I illustrated the politics of the Agrarian Party towards the issues of agrarian reform, taxation of peasants, credit, debts, collection of taxation and debts, prices of crops, protection of crops and animals against natural disaster, as well as, social security for the peasants.

At the same time, this examination revealed the treatment of the peasants and their affairs by the state. The politics of the state was against the rights and interests of the peasants, while the politics of the Agrarian Party was oriented towards improving the condition of peasants.

The state policy on agrarian reform had as a result an incomplete agrarian reform with several weaknesses. Even though the agrarian reform eliminated large land property, there remained large land estates which were not distributed to landless peasants. That way, despite the land distribution at the agrarian reform, there remained with the large land owners, the monasteries, corporations and the state, a great extent of land and simultaneously landless peasant families who needed land for their settlement. Large land estates coexisted with landless peasants even after the time that the state considered the agrarian reform as completed. Obviously, the agrarian reform in Greece was not carried out according to the Agrarian (Reform) Law of October 15, 1926. The various governments modified this law by other laws in favour of the large landowners and at the expense of the peasants. In many cases these governments also violated the Agrarian

(Reform) Law, again in favour of the large landowners and at the expense of the peasants.

The fundamental principle included in the program of the Agrarian Party was that "land must belong to its tiller". This meant the abolishment of the large land estates. The Agrarian Party wanted the immediate, complete, compulsory and throughout the country expropriation of the large land estates and pasture lands for the settlement of the landless peasants, shepherds and refugees.¹³¹

The policy of the Agrarian Party on agrarian reform was based on the party program which included the party ideology and it was consistent with it. The Agrarian Party struggled for the expropriation and distribution of all large land estates and pasture lands throughout the country for the settlement of all landless peasants, shepherds and refugees. The party policy was also consistent with its ideology of agrarianism.

For the Agrarian Party, the struggle for agrarian reform was at the same time a struggle for freedom; settlement of the landless peasants into their own land which, would come out of the distribution of the large land estates, would also mean the emancipation of these peasants from exploitation by the large landowners. Were these peasants, in fact, emancipated though? Did the distribution of the majority of the large land estates in itself mean the emancipation of peasants? Even those peasants who received land and became family smallholders did not win their emancipation; they remained dependent for capital on the Agrarian Bank and on the moneylenders. Those peasants needed, in addition to land, more loans for cultivation expenses; they needed capital to make the land they received productive. The Agrarian Bank had a shortage of capital and gave inadequate loans at very high rates. Therefore, even the settled peasants were not emancipated because they remained dependent on creditors for capital.

The ones who were not settled at all, remained dependent on the large landowners suffering all consequences of working for these owners as illustrated in Part One.

Together with the land reform, the policy of the Agrarian Party advocated the creation of a whole infrastructure which would facilitate agricultural and national development. Thus, even though land reform was an essential aim for the party to achieve, it was only one of its aims. The Agrarian Party conceived it in conjuncture with a whole infrastructure necessary for agricultural development and consequently for national development. Such an infrastructure would be the building of dams, the creation of irrigation works, drainage of swamps, transportation and communication networks carried out by the cooperatives and the services of local self-administration. Furthermore, the party proposed the elimination of taxation on peasant production, more loans to peasants at lower rates, the expunging of peasants' debts, the elimination of middlemen through the protection and the active involvement of cooperatives in the marketing of peasant production, the protection of crops and animals against natural disaster and social security for the peasants.

State taxation of peasant production was extremely burdensome, absorbing most of the production and leaving very little or nothing for the peasants. It was also discriminatory and disproportional in the sense that it was not equal for all social classes. Peasants paid more immediate taxes than other social classes. They also paid taxes on gross production, while other social classes paid on net income. The social and economic condition of the peasants did not justify the heavy taxation placed upon them. It was beyond their strength. The state itself was the exploiter of peasants.

The program of the Agrarian Party supported a radical

reform of the taxation system. It sought the abolishment of indirect taxation on goods of "first need" and the abolishment of taxation on crops for export. Furthermore, it sought the taxation of people with "big income" and it wanted additional privileges for goods used by the agricultural cooperatives. Finally, the party program advocated taxation on the net income of peasants, that is, the living expenses of peasants must be deducted from their taxable income.¹³²

The policy of the Agrarian Party was based on its program and it was consistent with it. The Agrarian Party struggled to relieve the peasants from the unbearable taxation. Elimination or abolishment of such taxation would allow peasants a very basic income on which to live. The party policy was to change the entire taxation system, to increase the income taxes of the middle and upper middle class and to tax the net income of peasants instead of their gross income. The policy of the Agrarian Party was oriented towards emancipating the peasants from the exploitation of the state itself, which by imposing heavy taxation was the exploiter of peasants.

The National Bank since 1915 and the Agrarian Bank since 1929 were the official organizations which gave credit to peasants. The capital of the Agrarian Bank was neither sufficient for the needs of peasants nor adequate for the development of agriculture. The activities of the Agrarian Bank were limited by this shortage of capital and by the interference and influence of the state. This allowed the operation of moneylenders who gave loans to peasants with 200% or 300% interest for a short term. Banks and moneylenders asked for assurances from the peasants that they would return the loans. Those assurances were the mortgage, the warrant and the personal guarantee.

Peasants were heavily indebted to banks, moneylenders and the state. They worked constantly to repay their debts

which were continuously increasing. Production of crops and prices did not allow peasants sufficient income to pay their debts and their living expenses.

The program of the Agrarian Party stood for an agrarian bank which would not only provide credit to peasants but which would solve permanently the issue of agrarian credit. It also urged the prohibition of private moneylending, which it viewed as illegal.¹³³

The policy of the Agrarian Party considered the loans to peasants not as a social function. It also considered the private moneylending as illegal. To ease the debts of peasants to the Agrarian Bank, the policy of the party sought lower credit rates and longer repayment periods. As for the debts of peasants to moneylenders and to the state, the policy was to "cross out" these debts. The party also wanted the "crossing out" of all debts of peasant refugees to the state, to the Refugee Settlement Commission and to the banks.

The Agrarian Party wanted the abolishment of the tax-collectors and policemen as a means of collecting taxes. It proposed, instead, tax collection by the cooperatives and the communities-villages.

As illustrated, the policy carried out by the Agrarian Party was based on and consistent with its program.

The marketing of peasant production in Greece was done mainly by middlemen who made an enormous profit at the expense of both producers and consumers. Middlemen used to determine prices for crops. They used to buy at very low prices from the peasants and sell it to the consumers at very high prices. Low prices affected the income of peasants who were in a severe situation.

A fundamental principle of the Agrarian Party was that the state should not exploit but help, support and protect peasants and their production. The state should also intervene in order to arrange the economic life. The

production and consumption should be organized by the cooperatives.¹³⁴

The policy of the Agrarian Party was based upon its fundamental principles. The policy of the party considered the protection of crops and their prices by the state as necessary in order to achieve social justice. Protection of prices would avoid the exploitation of peasants by middlemen. Such protection could be accomplished through the establishment of independent organizations for crops and by the cooperatives. The Agrarian Party policy supported the active participation of peasants in cooperatives for the economic and political advantages such cooperatives offered peasants, as already illustrated. The state though, with a series of anti-cooperative laws limited the activities of the cooperatives despite strong protest by the Agrarian Party. The state supported or allowed middlemen to operate; it did not encourage the participation of peasants in cooperatives. The Agrarian Party wanted to protect the peasants through their active participation in the cooperatives.

In Greece there was practically no protection of crops and animals against natural disaster or social security for the peasants. The Agrarian Party included in its program agrarian insurance, that is, the insurance of peasants' crops and animals against natural disaster.¹³⁵

The party considered protection against natural disaster as a social problem because peasants very often lost the main, if not the only, source of income they had. The party policy was based on its program. The party made several proposals to the government for the relief of peasants whose crops were destroyed by natural disaster.

In regards to social welfare and public health, the Agrarian Party included radical measures in its program. It urged the establishment of public clinics in the countryside, the appointment of visiting doctors who would

travel and visit villages, and the free distribution of quinine in districts having malaria. The party also proposed using the monasteries as hospitals and sanatoriums for the peasants. It argued for the medical treatment of war victims, for the financial support of the soldiers who completed their service, for loans for the settlement of refugees, for the establishment of orphanages for the children of peasants, for professional education and settlement of disabled veterans, for pensions to old people or to people unable to work, for the nationalization of the medical services for better health service for the "popular classes", and for social security for peasants, equal to that of the other classes or strata of the society.¹³⁶

The policy of the Agrarian Party was based on the party program. It made several proposals for the health treatment and health protection of peasants.

While the state did not include peasants in the social security bill, the Agrarian Party insisted peasants be included because they were the majority of the population, - the most poorest, with the lowest living standards and the ones who needed social security more than anyone else.

As illustrated, Greek peasants were in a precarious situation due to the state policy towards their issues. In response to this state policy, the Agrarian Party presented a coherent plan and policy to improve the life of peasants and take them out of their precarious situation. At the same time it would improve the life of the other working people and benefit society as a whole. Again, the policy of the Agrarian Party was based on its program and it was consistent with it. It was also consistent with agrarianism, the ideology of the party. This ideology had congruence with reality and it guided the action of the party. Furthermore, the Agrarian Party being a republican party, and in consistence with its ideology and program,

participated in the formation of the United Anti-Fascist Front and the Popular Front. In this way the Party broadened its scope and scale in its struggle to preserve the civil liberties of the people, to solve the vital problems of all the working people and to prevent the imposition of a military fascist dictatorship. The participation of the Agrarian Party in those two fronts was an important contribution of the party, not only, and strictly to, the peasant movement, but also to the radical popular mass movement. In addition, it was an essential event in the development of its own identity.

The formation of the United Anti-Fascist Front came as the response of the working people to the repressive policy of the Greek State which was taking away all acquired rights and liberties of the working people, and in order to prevent the imposition of a military dictatorship.

The Popular Front was an alliance of the Agrarian Party with the Communist Party, the party of the working class, with the main purpose of struggling against "reaction" for freedom, democracy, and of supporting the rights and interests of the working masses. It should be noted that capitalism is "reactionary" when it no longer succeeds in coming to terms with the productive forces of the country. In both cases the Agrarian Party took the side of the working people. It intended to cooperate and form an alliance only with the working people of the cities and not with the middle class, because it had priorities in common with the working people and not with the middle class. The Agrarian Party as a class party and a party of principles which wanted to create a society with justice, equality and without exploitation, was different in many aspects from the personalistic bourgeois political parties. The Agrarian Party was against all that those political parties stood for and represented. Those parties represented the bourgeoisie, the ruling class which created injustice and

inequality in the Greek society. As a result, it refused to cooperate with them. The only cooperation that was possible was with the political party of the workers and the working people of the cities. Peasants shared common political, social and economic aims with the working class of the cities. Both social classes were exploited and both wanted to achieve the same objectives. Both classes were victims of the capitalist system and both had the same enemy: the capitalist system. The city working people, that is, workers, intellectuals, public officials, petty professionals, employees and all those who struggled to make a living (*viopalestes*), were exploited by the capitalist system which forced extremely low wages upon them. They were squeezed by capitalism to the extreme point. Those social classes realized the things they had in common with each other. They understood that the well-being of one social class depends on the well-being of the other. The collective support of their rights and demands would facilitate their satisfaction, while separate struggle could lead nowhere, since the "reaction" was very strong. Only the united masses of working people could be emancipated and could create a more just and humane society.¹³⁷

Both classes were involved in a common struggle against the exploitation of man by man, against the poverty of the masses, against the rule of the capital. Both classes were waging a fight for socialism, fight against the rule of the capital. Their most important goal was the fight for socialism, for the complete abolition of the rule of the capital, for the emancipation of all working people from every kind of exploitation in a future stage.¹³⁸

It was absolutely impossible for the peasants to achieve their demands in alliance with the capitalists, without breaking completely with them, without waging the most determined and ruthless struggle against the

capitalists, without overthrowing their rule.¹³⁹

These were the attitudes and beliefs of the Agrarian Party which led to its participation in the formation of the United Anti-Fascist Front and the Popular Front.

A. The United Anti-Fascist Front

Fascism is conceived as the capitalist struggle against the most elementary needs at the proletarian class. Fascism is the illegal aspect of capitalist violence; the state legalizes that violence which becomes repression through "legal" means. At the time the United Anti-Fascist Front was formed, the policy of the government was against the achievements of the working people. The organizations of the working people were dissolved. There was a climate of terror; militants or politically active peasants, workers, civil servants and others were arrested, put in jail or sent into exile. In Kavalla for example, the government, after a series of authoritarian actions, arrested and sent into exile the elected Communist Mayor D.Partsalidis. Fascist organizations were very active, and the reactionary section of the Greek military threatened to establish a military fascist dictatorship, in order to take away all the liberties and all the acquired rights of the working people. Capitalism had reduced all the branches of the executive power to the instruments of its own preservation. The working people of the country would have to be mobilized in mass rallies, mass protests, strikes, etc., if they were to try to prevent the anti-popular actions of the government and the danger of fascism. For this reason they would have to ask for:

- a) respect for civil liberties;
- b) freedom to all anti-fascist political prisoners and exiles;

- c) dissolution of the fascist organizations;
- d) abolishment of the anti-popular laws such as the *Edeonemo*, etc.

Only united action of the working people against fascism could defend and preserve their rights.¹⁴⁰

The Agrarian Party, the Communist Party, the Socialist Party, the Labour Social-Democratic Party, the General Confederation of Workers, the Unifying General Confederation and the Independent Labour Syndicates, realizing that the danger of a military coup d'etat and imposition of a military dictatorship was immediate, made an agreement to take common action against such a dictatorship on October 5, 1934, in Athens. According to this agreement, these political parties and trade unions would struggle against a military coup d'etat which could take place because of the critical political, social, and economic situation of the country. They would mobilize their organization in mass rallies and protests in order to be ready to confront such a possibility. They would call on the same day a nation-wide general strike. They would also organize mass marches of peasants into the towns to demonstrate for the protection of civil liberties. The political parties and labour unions which participated in the agreement for common action against fascism, would keep and maintain their own identity and independence; they were united in the common action against fascism.¹⁴¹

These political parties and labour unions issued the following declaration to the working class, peasants, civil servants, professionals, all the working people and every democratic citizen:

" The ruling class (the rich', bankers, landlords, and others) and their political parties, because of the economic crisis on the one hand and the growth of the popular movement on the other, try to find a way out of the crisis with the imposition of a military dictatorship. The conflict between the two major bourgeois

political parties and the sections of the military favourable to these parties, would take away the democratic liberties of the people. This together with the severe economic situation would result in the misery of the working masses of the country. The political parties and the labour unions which represent the totality of the working people of the country, had unity in action against the possibility of a military coup d'etat and denounce to the working people such a possibility as an immediate danger. They would call all the workers, peasants, professionals and employees to come together to the United Anti-Fascist Front and struggle with all means to prevent any military coup d'etat and dictatorship. In case a coup d'etat would occur they would go on a nation-wide general strike and peasants would march into towns."¹⁴²

The Agrarian Party, which considered the creation of the United Anti-Fascist Front as a necessity in order to support the civil liberties, the rights and the interests of the people, called all its branches, all the working people and all democratic citizens to work and support the Front.¹⁴³

The appeal of the agreement and the declaration for a common struggle against the possibility of the imposition of a military dictatorship was very widespread. It created enthusiasm among the working people. There was a widely recognized need for union into one body of all progressives, liberals and leftists in order to confront the military dictatorship which was on the horizon and perceived as coming.¹⁴⁴

However, the United Anti-Fascist Front did not go far beyond the agreement and the declaration of October 5, 1934; it did not call a nation-wide mass mobilization. For example, at the abortive coup d'etat of Platiras-Venizelos on March 1-12, 1935, the agreement was not put into action. During those 12 days, some people of the political parties and the labour unions who participated in the Front took the side of the government others the side of those who

tried to do the coup.¹⁴⁵

While their central organizations delayed taking any action, the local organizations mobilized their people, as for example in Thessaloniki, Drama, Xanthi, Katerini, Livadia and other areas. At the same time the economic situation of the working people was getting worse and the fascist organizations more active. In Athens, there were armed fascist organizations. The fascist "Organization of National Sovereign State" worked systematically to unite all the fascist organizations and create a mass fascist political party. On November 18, 1934, they planned to call, in Athens, a Congress of all fascist and nationalistic organizations in order to form a "common national front".¹⁴⁶

Despite the fact that terms of the agreement of common action against fascism were not fully realized, the appeal of the agreement to the working people was widespread and the local organizations of the political parties and labour unions were more active compared to their central organizations.¹⁴⁷

B. The Popular Front

The United Anti-Fascist Front, as pointed out, had a wide appeal among the working people. It was not effective though to the extent that those who created it had hoped. It did not go beyond the October 5, 1934 agreement and in any case it did not prevent the abortive military coup d'etat on March 1-12, 1935. However, its most important contribution was the realization that the struggle against exploitation, "reaction" and fascism could not be carried out and lead to victory without the participation in the common struggle of the working masses of the city and of the countryside. Thus, was opened the way for the formation

of the Popular Front. In the formation of the Popular Front the Communist Party considered as potential ally the so-called "middle strata" of the cities. For the countryside, the Communist Party decided on the integration of the Communist agrarian organizations with the Agrarian Party, into one united mass Agrarian Party on the basis of the struggle for immediate demands of peasants, the struggle against fascism and the alliance with the working class.¹⁴⁸

The Communist Party called upon all its members active in the countryside to work hard in the establishment of united branches of the Agrarian Party, to join the Agrarian Party and work together with its organizational committee which was to call a General Congress of the Agrarian Party in September 1936.¹⁴⁹

On June 18-20, 1936, the Communist Party pointed out that only the union of all democratic, anti-fascist popular forces could mobilize the people, prevent the imposition of a fascist military dictatorship and open the way for the people to achieve the solution of their problems. The communists would do their best for the creation of a popular front. The basic forces of that front would be the organized working class in the Communist Party, and the political organization of peasants, the Agrarian Party. The popular front would lead to the formation of a government which would set the basis for a popular democracy, would have a policy which would support the rights and interests of the working people and would prevent fascism.¹⁵⁰

Indeed, on July 22, 1936, the two political parties, the Agrarian and the Communist, decided to form the Popular Front in order to struggle on behalf of the interests of the people, for the creation of a more just society for a popular democracy and against fascism.¹⁵¹

The two political parties which composed the Popular Front maintained their identity, and their independence.

They wanted to achieve an immediate solution of the vital problems of the Greek people by common political action inside and outside the Parliament. Both political parties would participate in the future general election with a common ticket and sign. The Popular Front would attempt to come to power by politicizing the people to its principles and program in order to win the majority. If people would trust the Popular Front, the Popular Front would try to carry out its program, which was a minimum program of claims and demands. The program of the Popular Front concerned itself with all the problems of all popular strata of the society. It professed that only the struggle of the working people under the flag of the Popular Front could lead to the realization of its program. Such a program would give a new life to the country and a state for all the working people. The Communist Party agreed to try to achieve certain political aims within a legal framework, that is, through legal means. However, both political parties, having maintained their individual identity, continued to harbor their long-term objectives such as a revolutionary road to power, dictatorship of the proletariat, etc. Such goals were merely postponed in order to achieve the more immediate objectives of protesting civil liberties against authoritarian action (a military coup d'etat) and the creation of a popular democracy. The Popular Front called on all the anti-fascist and democratic political parties and political forces in a common struggle for the defense of the civil liberties and the realization of popular democracy. The countryside cells of the Communist Party were integrated with the Agrarian Party, because even the poorest peasants wanted their private property; peasants who were communists were very few. That led to the low membership appeal of the Communist Party in the countryside. The Popular Front wanted to include the vaguely revolutionary, radical but non-communist peasant

masses.¹⁵²

The minimum program of the Popular Front pointed out the political scope of the Front as well as its policy. The Popular Front had a coherent and precise policy for the workers, peasants and petty bourgeoisie encompassing education, health, athletics, the national economy, defense and foreign policy. In its political scope the Popular Front included:

1. constitutional assurance of popular liberties (freedom of speech, freedom of press, freedom to strike, freedom to participate in unions and mass meetings, etc.) and support against violations of these liberties;
2. full freedom of consciousness and respect of religious freedom;
3. the equality of men and women;
4. the abolishment of Law 4229 or *Edeonemo* and its modifications as well as the abolishment of the Security Committees;
5. dissolution of the fascist organizations;
6. the granting of general amnesty to all political prisoners, exiles and all those people being sought by police;
7. making permanent the electoral system of proportional representation;
8. the decentralization and local self-administration by elected organs,¹⁵³

The policy of the Popular Front with respect to agrarian issues was the following:

1. the immediate and full expropriation of all large land estates, the estates of the monasteries and of the state, for the benefit of the peasants, the expropriation of uncultivated pasture lands for the settlement of the shepherds, the reclamation of land with bushes and wood for the settlement of landless

- peasants;
2. the consolidation of the property of peasants;
 3. the creation of roads, dams, drainage works;
 4. the reorganization of the Agrarian Bank and the transfer of money of the bequeaths from the National Bank;
 5. loans to peasants with interest rate at 3.5% - 4.5%;
 6. expunging the debts to moneylenders;
 7. the rearrangement of the debts of peasants to banks and private persons according to the existing economic situation;
 8. the crossing out of all debts of landless and homeless peasants which came from the expropriation of land for their settlement;
 9. a deep and radical renewal of the taxation system including the elimination of the taxation of peasants, workers, petty bourgeois and the imposition of more taxes on the wealthy strata of the population;
 10. financial support of cooperatives to better serve the peasants;
 11. the protection of peasant production;
 12. social security for the peasants;
 13. abolishment of personal arrest for debts to the state up to 50,000 drachmas; general abolishment of arrest for debts to banks and moneylenders;
 14. the purchase and trade of major crops by the cooperatives (tobacco, raisins, grapes, cotton, olives, olive oil, silk, grain) and the gradual nationalization of the industry processing those crops.

This was the minimum agrarian program of the Popular Front. It wanted to give a solution to the problems of peasants which had remained unsolved for generations.¹⁵⁴

It is important to note that the formation of the Popular Front was made possible and facilitated by two

events: the change in the policy of the Communist Party on the so-called "Macedonian Issue", which paved the way to the willingness of the Agrarian Party to cooperate in an alliance with the Communist Party, and the influence of the Communist International upon the Communist Party of Greece. Before the agreement for the formation of the Popular Front, the Communist Party abandoned its policy on national self-determination of Macedonia and Thrace and recognized full sovereignty of Greece and the Greek State.

Prior to that, the Communist Party considered Macedonia as divided between Greece, Yugoslavia and Bulgaria, and Thrace as divided between Greece, Turkey and Bulgaria. For the Communist Party, Greece occupied a part of Macedonia and Thrace, the Greek sections of Macedonia and of Thrace. The other parts were occupied by Yugoslavia and Bulgaria. The Communist Party supported a united and independent Macedonia and Thrace. It considered the right of self-determination for the people of Macedonia and Thrace and their separation from the Greek State. Together with the other occupied people of Macedonia (by Yugoslavia and Bulgaria) and of Thrace (by Bulgaria and Turkey) they would create their own independent states.¹⁵⁵

After March 1935 the Communist Party wanted full "equality of honors and privileges" for the minorities. It considered Macedonians as a national minority, just like the other minorities such as Turks, Albanians, Jews, etc., who also lived in Greece.¹⁵⁶

Since the obstacle of the "Macedonian Issue" was removed by the recognition of full sovereignty of the Greek State by the Communist Party, the process for the formation of the Popular Front was accelerated. The Agrarian Party always believed in the integrity of the Greek State and never doubted that Macedonia and Thrace were Greek.

Another event which facilitated the process for the formation of the Popular Front was the Seventh Congress of

the Communist International in July-August 1935.

Georgi Dimitrov, as the Secretary General of the Communist International (1935-1943) and head of the Communist Party of Bulgaria, explained to the Congress of the Communist International the necessity for the creation of broad popular fronts for the struggle against fascism. His position was based partly on the Bulgarian experience of the military coup d'etat of May 19, 1935, which established a military fascist dictatorship which, at the end of 1935, became a monarchy-fascist. Another influence was the declaration of the Communist Party of Bulgaria in January 1935 of the need to create a broad popular front with the Agrarian Party of Bulgaria as its main ally. In that anti-fascist struggle, the active participation of peasants was very important. The necessity for such an alliance and common struggle was very obvious; common participation on a platform for the satisfaction of basic demands was necessary. The support of the interests of the working masses became a common affair for the two political parties, the Agrarian and the Communist. The proletariat had to act in such a way as to support the rights and interests of the peasants and the Communist Parties ought to have a "correct" policy towards the organizations of peasants. Georgi Dimitrov wanted to overcome dogmatism and left wing secretarianism; this would facilitate the organization of a popular front.¹⁵⁷

Following the Seventh Congress of the Communist International, the Communist Party of Greece reconsidered its policy with respect to the formation of alliances. In September 1935, the Central Committee of the party met and decided that it could form alliances on a minimum program, with the Socialist Party, the Agrarian Party and with all political parties considered as Republican in the struggle against fascism.¹⁵⁸

The Greek Popular Front presented a threat to the

existing political system and promised a new way for the working people. The first considerable achievement of the Popular Front, which was the election of its candidate Kostas Gabrielidis as Mayor of the city of Kilkis on July 26, 1936 by an absolute and clear majority, unfortunately had no continuation. The alliance of the peasantry with the proletariat, the Agrarian Party with the Communist Party, had no time to grow and be active; neither did it prevent the fascist dictatorship. Only a few days after the formation of the Popular Front, on August 4, 1936 the Monarchy-Fascist dictatorship of Metaxas was imposed and put an end to all democratic institutions of the country.¹⁵⁹

Metaxas, in cooperation with the King who signed the relevant decrees, imposed martial law on the country, dissolved the Chamber of Deputies and declared the Constitution as invalid. The excuse for imposing the dictatorship was the danger of a communist take-over. The dictatorship of Metaxas was a totalitarian regime. All the political parties were abolished, as well as all political organizations such as trade unions and cooperatives of peasants. Political freedom and civil rights did not exist. People who opposed the dictatorship were arrested, tortured and imprisoned or sent to exile. Metaxas organized a police-state by appointing his own people in police, security services and in public services. Censorship on the press was very strict. Books were burned, including classic works by the poet Sophocles, the historian Thucydides and others. The dictatorship never received popular support. The policy of the dictatorship increased the dependency of Greece on the foreign countries, especially Germany and Britain. It was strongly in favour of the Greek upper class. The Agrarian Party, as well as the Greek Left were openly against the dictatorship.¹⁶⁰

As illustrated, the politics of the Agrarian Party was

consistent with its ideology and program.

PART FOUR

OBSTACLES AND THE AGRARIAN PARTY



OBSTACLES PRESENTED TO THE GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT OF
THE AGRARIAN POLITICAL PARTY OF GREECE

There were three categories of interrelated obstacles which limited the growth and development of the Agrarian Party. The Agrarian Party's own organization, those placed by the state and those found in the peasants themselves.

Elections are a very important institutionalized process by which public opinion can influence the political decision-making process.¹ Thus, in the electoral returns we can see whether or not the peasants supported the Agrarian Party. The elections and electoral returns will be examined in the light of the organization of the Agrarian Party. This is important because the party organization fluctuated at times it was strong and functioned well, at times it was weak and its functions severely limited. When the party organization was weak, its weakness became an obstacle to the party's own development and was reflected in the elections and the electoral returns as we shall see. The state, on the other hand, reacted strongly against the Agrarian Party. The state tried very hard to prevent the Agrarian Party and peasants from acting collectively as a social class on their own interest. The political

representatives of the bourgeoisie were terrified by the identity, politics and appeal of the Agrarian Party to the peasants. The bourgeois political parties which did not show concern for the peasants and the workers were under fear and panic because the Agrarian Party represented the rights of peasants.²

Despite its organizational weaknesses the Agrarian Party had an appeal to peasants, it was a political reality which the bourgeoisie could not afford to ignore since peasants comprised the majority of the population. The leaders of the major bourgeois political parties, Eleftherios Venizelos of the Party of Liberals and Panayis Tsaldaris of the Popular Party were openly against the Agrarian Party, against class parties, and against the class struggle led by the Agrarian Party on behalf of peasants.

In the Senate, in a meeting brought about after the electoral achievement of the Agrarian Party in the Senatorial by-election in Thessaloniki on February 8, 1931 and because of it, Prime Minister Venizelos said:

"The social evolution of Greece does not justify the creation of neither the Agrarian Party nor a labour party, nor class parties in general. The best interest of Greece is to stay with national parties; that is, parties which include several social classes related in some general direction. If there is going to be an agrarian party, it should be real and serious (!), not a revolutionary, not a class party. It should not rely on class struggle. An agrarian party which will rely on class struggle will not accomplish anything for the peasants.

The same is true for a labour party, the working class party; it should not rely on class struggle. A national party of general interest will serve more efficiently the interests of the working class because it will achieve consensus among the bourgeois political parties with respect to the issues concerning the working class."³

Venizelos favored the creation of an agrarian party of

"middle class character" not relying on class struggle but in consensus with the rest of the middle class political parties. Furthermore, the leadership of such an agrarian party ought to consist of friends of Venezuelos in order to use them and manipulate them. For him it could not be the collective leadership by militant and radical peasants of the existing Agrarian Party.

Panayis Tsaldaris said:

"Class struggle is useless (no good). The Agrarian Party as a class party will go against the other classes; such a class party will bring destruction to the country! The Popular Party as a national party of general interest has a program, cares for the peasants and other working people; it will help everybody to be in harmony, to be pleased and happy! The Agrarian Party on the other hand is subversive, does not like 'order', and it will eventually lead to the collectivism and the paradise of the Bolshevik State!"⁴

The state placed serious obstacles to limit the growth and development of the Agrarian Party, to prevent peasants from acting collectively on their own interest. These obstacles were the electoral system, the manipulation of the already existing political patronage and political polarization, the *Edonemo*, the slander against the Agrarian Party, and the anti-cooperative laws.

Another obstacle which the Agrarian Party had to face was the fact that not all peasants had the class consciousness and political awareness which would enable them to accept the party.

All these obstacles were interrelated and all affected the support, or lack of it, by the peasants to the Agrarian Party. The Agrarian Party identity and politics would lead us to expect that all peasants would support the party when they were called to do so. Unfortunately this was not the case. The obstacles explain the seemingly paradox fact that, while the Agrarian Party supported the

TABLE 10

CLASSIFICATION OF OBSTACLES INTO CATEGORIES

Agrarian Party	State	Peasants
Organizational weaknesses and inadequacies	Electoral system Political patronage Political polarization <i>Edeonemo</i> Slander Anti-Cooperative laws	A lack of class consciousness and political awareness

rights of peasants, and given their social-economic condition, a considerable number of these peasants voted and supported the bourgeois political parties which in turn did not support their issues; parties which once in government, exploited the peasants.

The support or lack of it to the Agrarian Party by the peasants is shown in the elections and the electoral returns. These returns were associated with the party organization and fluctuated with it. When the party organization was strong and effective, the party was victorious in elections. On the contrary, when the party organization was weak, the party was defeated. To demonstrate this, elections and electoral returns will be examined in a chronological order in the light of the organization of the Agrarian Party. Such an examination will reveal simultaneously the major events and stages in the development of the Agrarian Party as an organizational entity. Furthermore, the obstacles aimed at the Agrarian Party by the state and those found in the peasants will reveal the political setting and context within which the Agrarian Party had to operate.

11. ELECTIONS AND THE ORGANIZATION OF THE AGRARIAN PARTY:
UNITY AND VICTORY, SPLIT AND DEFEAT

A. From the Establishment of the Agrarian Party Until the
Unifying General Congress: 1922-1929

Originally, the Agrarian Party did not have a nation-wide organization; it did not have branches throughout the country. It was however the strongest and most solid as compared to other local groups from Macedonia and Thessaly which claimed for themselves the title of the Agrarian Political Party of Greece. Those very small groups were regional and parochial in character. Their political activities were limited to the regional and local level.

In addition, some of the peasants who established the Agrarian Party did not see very clearly the differences between the peasant class and the other social classes, nor the differentiation within the peasant class itself. They were romantic idealists who believed that "good administration" could solve the vital problems of the peasantry. They thought that a reconciliation could be made with respect to agrarian reform, prices for crops, taxation, credit, and other agrarian issues. Radical changes were left for a later stage. Those peasants had a rather vague conception of the ideology and the scope of the party.

Despite these inadequacies and limitations which the Agrarian Party had at its start, it set the basis for the agrarian movement in Greece which created a nation-wide form within a few years. The contribution of the Agrarian Party to the political awakening of the Greek peasantry was very important. Greek peasants began mobilizing through the Agrarian Party and participated in political actions such as mass rallies, protests, congresses, etc., in order to assert and claim their rights. At the very beginning that

mobilization was limited to the local level but gradually it grew to the national level.⁵

Agricultural cooperatives served as one basis for the Agrarian Party to begin its activities. Most of the peasants who were active in the cooperatives were at the same time active members of the Agrarian Party.

Another organized group which worked together with the Agrarian Party and which contributed to the mobilization of peasants were the "Unions of Old Veterans". These unions were strong among the peasant population. Peasants who came back from the Balkan Wars, the First World War, and especially after the Asia-Minor adventure, were active in these unions. They were very well organized and militant in asserting their rights and demands. Their demands were agrarian reform and the settlement of the war veterans and the war victims, such as orphans and cripples, the elimination of taxation, the abolishment of moneylenders, etc. These veterans were in a desperate position; the government despite promises for settlement and assistance, had done nothing for them. Their activities were against the possibility of a new war and at the same time they wanted the solution of the vital agrarian issues. The unions mobilized the peasantry in that direction. The unions used the publish and weekly newspaper *The Old Veteran*, with 20,000 copies circulation; this was considerable for the time.

The "Unions of Old Veterans" were very active especially after the 1922 Asia-Minor Catastrophe until their dissolution by the dictatorship of Pagalos, on June 25, 1925, as were all free institutions. The contribution of the unions to the peasant movement was positive since they wanted peace, they wanted to prevent a new war and at the same time to solve all the vital problems of the veterans. For example, in Crete, old veterans organized mass rallies with main demand the agrarian reform. They

also invaded and occupied lands. In Macedonia and Thessaly landless old veterans and peasants invaded and occupied lands of the monasteries or large land estates as for example, in Litochoro of Olympus, Steveniko of Kalambaka, Kazaklar, Skribou etc. Notable was the land invasion and occupation by the peasants of the Kastraki. At the end of January 1925, the Union of Old Veterans of the village Kastraki, Trikala, decided to occupy the land of the monasteries of Meteora. Indeed, all the peasants with their women and children gathered together when they heard the church bell and they invaded and occupied arable and pasture land of the monasteries. The police asked the peasants to leave the occupied land, but they refused. Then, the army came and it encircled the village. On February 2, 1925, the Union of Old Veterans and the Labour Union of Trikala called for a mass rally with two main purposes: solidarity of the landless old veterans of Kastraki and protest against a possibility of a new war with Turkey. The appeal for the participation to the rally was widespread. Peasants, workers, city professionals from Trikala and the nearby villages participated in the mass rally. All those people declared that the "army has to go out of the Kastraki village", to "leave the old veterans alone", "down with the war", "not another war" and, most of all, "land to the landless peasants". On the black banner of the Union was written the slogan of all the Unions of Old Veterans "war against war". A committee of demonstrators tried to give a resolution to the prefect of the prefecture of Trikala. The prefect refused to meet the committee and called the army to dissolve the demonstration. The soldiers refused to fire at the demonstrators who at that time had also occupied the building of the prefecture. It was the head of the army assisted by some officers as well as policemen who fired at the demonstrators. Twenty five people were killed and

seriously injured; among them the workers M. Rados, G. Dallas, N. Davaras, N. Staikos and the peasants K. Voutselas, D. Koutras. Thirty seven people were arrested and faced court-martial in the city of Larisa. However, the peasants were not discouraged by this bloodshed; they insisted on agrarian reform. The peasants occupied large land estates in Neochori, Yoryogiri and Varibobi. None of those land invasions and occupations were successful indeed. Anew the peasants were expelled from those lands by the force of army and police.⁵

At the very beginning the vague ideology held by some party members gave rise to differences in tactics and policy that the Agrarian Party should follow. That way, within the newly established party, there coexisted active members with radical, conservative, even reactionary ideas. This heterogeneity and discrepancy together with the lack of a nation-wide party organization were obstacles to the mass appeal and political action of the Agrarian Party. The political activities of the party were not as intensive as one would expect. Only a small number of party members were very enthusiastic militants who carried out the struggle for the peasants and their rights.⁷

The Agrarian Party participated for the first time in the election for the Fourth Constituent Assembly, on December 16, 1923. The party received 45,000 - 50,000 votes out of 694,548 total votes and won 4 seats in a 398-seat Assembly. Deputies were D. Maryetis - the most active deputy and head of the Parliamentary Group of the party - D. Valeras and P. Tsitsilias elected in Attica and G. Rodopoulos elected in Turnavos, Thessaly. They all were active in the struggle for agrarian reform and with the agricultural cooperatives. The party symbol was "land to the tiller". It should be noted here that the party did not run in all electoral districts of the country; it did not have candidates in all districts. The electoral system used

was the "narrow-wide" plurality system. A discussion on electoral systems is dealt with in a separate section of this part. It is also important to note that women did not vote during the entire period of this study. They obtained the right to vote, for the first time in Greece, in elections for city and village councils by Law 959 of 1949. Law 2159 of June 7 - July 2, 1952 granted the right to vote in elections for the Chamber of Deputies to those women who were 21 years old or older. The same law granted women the right to be candidates for Deputies if they were 25 years old or older.

After this election the Agrarian Party split into two groups. One group composed of Chr. Evelpidis, G. Bamias, D. Avrasoglou, and others, which also kept the direction of the official party newspaper *Agrarian Flag*, and another group-surrounding Sp. Chaseotis. That split happened before the party could develop any activity and nation-wide organization and greatly damaged the party by considerably limiting its activities.

In Thessaly, people active in the local struggle for agrarian reform and in the local agrarian movement established in Trikala on December 6, 1926, the Agrarian Radical Party. Among the active members in that party were Meros, Chajiyiannis and Pagoutsos. Before the election for the Chamber of Deputies on November 7, 1926, the Agrarian Party and all the small agrarian groups which claimed to be agrarian parties, were in contact with each other but none had a nation-wide organization. Their activities were local or regional. They were not yet unified and did not attempt to create organizations all over the country. However, they participated in that election on a common ticket and with a common sign.

Despite the lack of a broad mass organization, the Agrarian Party received 28,318 votes out of total 961,226 votes and won 5 seats in a 286-seat Chamber. The elected

deputies were Sp. Chaseotis in the district of Giannena, Epirus; D. Chavinis and M. Tsarlambras in the district of Preveza, Epirus, and the island of Lefkada; A. meros in the district of Larisa-Volos, Thessaly, and Ph. Dragoumis in the district of Florina, Macedonia. Chaseotis, Meros and Dragoumis passionately and aggressively presented and supported the issues of peasants; Chavinis and Tsarlambras were not only passive but even ignored the party ideology.

Again the Agrarian Party did not run in all electoral districts. Even in the districts it ran, its candidates were not the most appropriate ones. For example, D. Chavinis who was elected in the district of Preveza-Lefkada was a deputy in a bourgeois political party in the previous election of 1923, who had switched to the Agrarian Party. It was a mistake of the party to allow him to be one of its candidates because D. Chavinis ignored even the party ideology. The electoral system in this election changed to a proportional representation.

At a conference in December 1927, the Agrarian Radical Party realized the need to be unified with the agrarian group from Macedonia. In the following election for the Chamber of Deputies on August 19, 1928, the Agrarian Party received 17,042 votes out of 1,017,281 total votes, but it did not elect deputies. One reason was the change in the electoral system from proportional representation to the plurality system. This did not favour the small political parties such as the Agrarian Party. The plurality electoral system deprived the Agrarian Party seats that it could have won with the 17,042 votes it received. Under proportional representation, and compared to the previous election of 1926, these 17,042 votes could have given the Party about 5 seats in a 250-seat Chamber.⁸

A very important event in the development of the Agrarian Party and the agrarian movement, was the victory of the Party in the senatorial election on April 21, 1929,

in the district of the Drama prefecture and the by-election for the Chamber of Deputies in the electoral district of the Drama prefecture. All the agrarian groups agreed to participate in one ticket as the Agrarian Party. After an intensive political mobilization of peasants, two Senators were elected, Lefkopoulos and Constantinidis, and one Deputy, Jeyas.

For the Senate, the Agrarian Party received 13,720 votes out of 825,655 total votes. In addition, and this is very important to notice, Spiros Chaseotis, one of the founders of the Agrarian Party and a pioneer of the agrarian movement, was elected Senator of the "professional organizations", more specifically Senator of the Chamber of Agriculture. This was another achievement of Spiros Chaseotis and of the Agrarian Party.

It should be noted here that the Constitution of 1927, created the Senate as another Legislative Body in addition to the Chamber of Deputies. Law 3786 of January 1929, described the details of its composition. Thus, the Senate was composed of 120 Senators; 92 of whom were elected directly by the people, 18 by the "professional organizations", and the so-called 10 "par excellence" senators, were elected by both the Chamber of Deputies and the other 110 Senators convening together. The term of the Senators was 9 years, but one third of them had to be renewed every three years. The term of the 18 Senators of the "professional organizations" was 3 years, while the "par excellence" Senators had the same term as the members of the Chamber of Deputies. The electoral district for the election of the 92 Senators was the prefecture (*nomos*). In addition, there were 2 separate minority colleges, one for the Moslems of Thrace and one for the Jews of Thessaloniki. The total number of districts in 1929 was 37. In the 26 districts with one or two seats, the electoral system was the plurality system. In the remaining 11 districts with 3

or more seats, the electoral system was practically the proportional representation system. Voters could cast only party lists. The preference sign for the candidate was the cross which determined who would fill the seats won by each list. That victory of the Agrarian Party in Drama was the result of the mobilization of peasants by the Agrarian Party and the systematic work and organization in the district. The Party presented itself to peasants as an alternative to the existing political parties and peasants voted for it. That victory had a positive impact on the Party and the agrarian movement; it gave courage and confidence in the struggle of the peasants. The achievement of the Agrarian Party was at the same time a great defeat for the Government of the Party of Liberals. The government was almost certain to win the election because the district of Drama was until then the fortress and stronghold of Venizelism.⁹

The electoral victory of the Agrarian Party in Drama accelerated the process for the unification of all the agrarian groups with the Agrarian Party. Peasants were very enthusiastic with the results of the election in Drama and demanded the union of all agrarian groups into one strong organization with national appeal. The active members of the agrarian groups on the other hand, realized that only united they could overcome the strong reaction against the Agrarian Party, continue the struggle for the benefit of the peasants and obtain nation-wide party organization. The Agrarian Party, as one strong political organization, would put together all the political forces of the peasantry.

Another event which pushed forward the unification was the world's economic crisis. That crisis, known as the Depression, prevailed in all sectors of the economy. In the agrarian economy, the peasant production was not sold, that is, it was not absorbed by consumption. Over production and sub-consumption made the crisis more severe. This

international crisis had an impact on the Greek agrarian economy. Prices of Greek export crops dropped. The price of tobacco for instance, dropped 70% compared to its price before the economic crisis. The same happened to prices for raisins, olive-oil, etc. Low prices were extended to crops which were not for export but for internal consumption. The result of the economic crisis was poverty and misery for the peasants. With most of their problems unsolved, peasants mobilized to seek solutions. They participated in mass meetings, mass rallies, marches into towns, etc., demanding agrarian reform, abolishment of the 10% tax on gross production (*dekate*), the elimination of tax collectors, protection of their production, more credit for agriculture, and the satisfaction of other social and economic rights. That mobilization was not concerned only with economic demands; it provided an excellent forum and opportunity for politicization of the peasants. The improvement of the economic situation of the peasants was a matter of political action. Given that the government did not demonstrate the expected concern for the solution of their issues, peasants realized that collective political action, led by a strong and united Agrarian Party and their participation in it, could be to their advantage.¹⁰

B. Unification and Split: 1929-1936

The Third Panhellenic General Congress of the Agrarian Party, on May 10-11, 1929, in Thessaloniki, decided the unification of all agrarian political groups with the Agrarian Party.

On May 10-11, 1929, the Third General Congress of the Agrarian Party was called by the Organizing Committee, which was appointed by a party meeting on March 31, 1929. Issues on the agenda were:

- a. modification of the party constitution and program;
- b. principles and trends of the party;
- c. economic and political situation of the country;
- d. organization of peasants;
- e. election of the Executive Committee of the party.

In that Congress could participate party members from all the branches, candidates of the party in previous elections, as well as, agrarian organizations such as associations and cooperatives.¹¹

Indeed, representatives of peasants from all regions of the country and all party branches participated in the Congress. The majority of those peasants were, at the same time, active members of agricultural cooperatives.

The active members of agricultural cooperatives played a decisive role. They had already acquired class consciousness and political awareness through the struggle in the cooperatives. These were the most active and militant members of the Agrarian Party. Another group were the intellectuals of the village, that is, lawyers, doctors, pharmacists, agronomists, teachers, university students, etc. They were children of peasants who wanted to contribute to the emancipation of the peasants.

There were also dynamic peasants who had influence over others and played the role of the *commatarche*, the mediator, between the peasant-voter and the politician as we shall see, limited the growth and development of the Agrarian Party and the peasant movement.

There were also people who wanted to use the Agrarian Party for their own personal advantage. Those were unsuccessful politicians of the bourgeois political parties who wanted to develop an electoral base among the peasantry.

Another group consisted of the reactionary peasants. They did not endorse the abolishment of the 10% tax or other forms of taxation; they were not in favour of

agrarian reform and distribution of the large land estates to landless peasants, etc. They believed that such a position of the Agrarian Party was subversive communism, against religion, against tradition, against the order in which their grandparents and parents had lived. They wanted the Agrarian Party to obey the existing laws, to operate within the framework of the bourgeois society and be blessed by God because without the blessing of God there is no progress! They wanted the Agrarian Party to oppose neither the bourgeois governments, nor the big capital (banks, industrialists, moneylenders, etc.) but cooperate with them to try to improve the lives of the peasantry. They looked with suspicion at class struggle, revolutionary appeals, strikes of workers who, according to them, were ungrateful to their boss; peasants could not be unappreciative to those who gave them jobs. Those peasants were misled by anti-socialist propaganda. Nobody could dare even refer to the word socialism. It was considered as atheism, anarchism, and was identified with Soviet communism after the distortion and propaganda by the conservative and reactionary forces of the Greek society. That made extremely difficult the task of the Agrarian Party to organize and mobilize the peasantry.

Finally, in the Congress were enemies of the peasants and the Agrarian Party. They opposed the interest of peasants and they supported big capital. They favored a distortion in the orientation of the Agrarian Party to serve the interests of the middle upper class.

Such was the composition of the Congress, with groups of people having different purposes. Ideologically the Congress reflected the structure of the peasant society as a whole, as well as, the class differentiation within the peasantry. There were, then, peasants who wanted radical solutions to the agrarian problems. Those reflected the class interests of the majority of peasants who did not

have a source of income other than the income coming from their crops. Those peasants wanted a strong Agrarian Party which would be organized all over Greece to support their cause. Others, the conservatives, represented the petty-bourgeois strata: the rich peasants, the moneylenders, the local agents of the banks, the shopkeepers of the village etc. Even though they represented a small percentage of the peasantry, they had an appeal to those peasants who did not want change in the existing social, political and economic system; they thought their problems could be solved within the existing order. Finally, there were the reactionary peasants who opposed any change. Participants of the Third General Congress of the Agrarian Party, then, could be classified into three broad groups, the radicals, the conservatives and the reactionaries.¹²

It was obvious that in the Congress different ideas reflected different interests. As a result, several proposals were presented for the solution of the agrarian issues. Despite all these differences, the common point of view was the desire for the growth of the Agrarian Party. All wanted the Agrarian Party to become a nation-wide organization and entity. All tendencies -radicals, conservatives, reactionaries - wanted a strong party within which to express their different views.

The General Congress in its session discussed and proposed solutions for all social, economic and political issues of the peasantry and the country. The longest and most intense debate was about the identity of the Agrarian Party, that is, as to whether or not the party was a "class party". The left wing of the party, the radicals, accepted the classical Marxist theory with respect to the division of society into different classes and to the class struggle.¹³

The left wing believed that capitalist society was

composed of different classes; those classes had conflicting interests with one another and a class struggle was going on; therefore, the Agrarian Party, as the political party of the peasant class, was a class party. The right wing of the Agrarian Party - conservatives, reactionaries - accepted neither the division of the society into classes nor the class struggle. The acceptance of the class struggle, they believed, put the party within the Marxist theory; for them this was classified as subversive, therefore, unacceptable.

The debate on that issue was very strong and very intense. Finally they reached a compromise by a proposal by Sp. Chaseotis and D. Chajiyiannis. The Congress agreed that the Agrarian Party was a class party without precise definition of its class character. Such a precise definition would be determined by the next General Congress of the party, which after a detailed study would identify the class character of the party - thus enabling each wing to give its own interpretation: for the left wing the Agrarian Party was a class party in the classical Marxist sense, for the right wing it was a class party because it was composed of peasants but it did not accept the class struggle.

While the General Congress conceded that the Agrarian Party was a class party even in a not clearly and precisely defined way, at the same time, it accepted that the party was against communism.¹⁴ Clearly it was an anti-communist position which placed, at that stage, the Agrarian Party against the party of the working class, an important ally of the peasants. That position prevailed in the Congress despite the efforts of the left wing to prevent it. Strong supporters of that position were those who had been expelled from the Communist Party and became members of the Agrarian Party. Being against communism seemed a reactionary position of the Agrarian Party. It had to deal

with the Bill for the *Edeonemo* which was then discussed in the Chamber of Deputies and shortly became Law. Precisely because of the *Edeonemo*, the Agrarian Party could not openly support the violent overthrow of the existing capitalist system. This issue was raised again in the Sixth General Congress of the Party and a revision was proposed. It was subsequently removed when the Agrarian Party and the Communist Party formed the Popular Front as we will see.

The most important contribution of the Third General Congress of the Agrarian Party was the unification of all small agrarian groups into the Agrarian Party. Since then, the party started to develop an organizational apparatus all over the country. The peasant struggle took a more coherent and systematically organized form.

The General Congress was that organ of the party with the highest authority and with clearly defined functions. As such, it determined the principles and values of the Agrarian Party and revised its program. The Agrarian Party with its program was a "party of principles", as opposed to the personalistic bourgeois political parties, that is, to the parties which did not have a program but rather an electoral platform designed by their leader, shortly before elections. Their leader was a strong and dominant personality; hence the term "personalistic" political parties. Very often they were splinter groups or fractions of the two large bourgeois political parties - the Party of Liberals and the Popular Party. They used to form an electoral alliance with these large parties or they participated in coalition governments. Usually they were dissolved when the leader left the party.¹⁵

The delegations which participated in the Congress, elected a twenty-member General Council, a seven-member Executive Committee and D. Chajiyannis as the General Secretary of the Agrarian Party. The delegations and the elected members of the administrative party organs who were

from the New Lands, were more radical compared to those who came from Old Greece, and who were inclined to be more conservative. One explanation for this had to do with the land structure, the class structure associated with it and the respective political behavior because of it. Moderates such as Sp. Chaseotis, Ph. Dragoumis, and others, believed that if the Agrarian Party would go all the way to the Left, it had no chance of success, especially in Old Greece. Peasants in Old Greece became family smallholders long before those of Thessaly, part of Epirus, Macedonia and Thrace. Peasants from Old Greece were also tired from the Balkan wars, the First World War and the Asia-Minor adventure. As a result, they wanted some kind of stability and peace. Peasants from the New Lands were more radical because the struggle for agrarian reform was ongoing; within that struggle they acquired and strengthened their radicalism. Different tradition, therefore, resulted in different political attitudes, values, beliefs and, furthermore, different political action. The radicals from the New Lands were the majority in the party administrative organs.¹⁶

In the Congress, there participated Deputies of the party of the "Democratic Union": S. Anthrakopoulos and A. Lazaridis, both from the Serres prefecture. They announced that they had joined the Agrarian Party. Those two Deputies, together with Jeyas, who was elected in the by-election in the electoral district of the prefecture of Drama, made up the Parliamentary Group of the Agrarian Party. The two Deputies who had joined the Agrarian Party contributed positively to the Party.¹⁷

The electoral victory in Drama and the unification of the Agrarian Party gave enthusiasm to the peasants. The party started to develop a nation-wide organization by establishing branches in most, if not all, provinces of the country. It was very active inside and outside the

Parliament. It worked very closely with the agricultural cooperatives and the agrarian political clubs-associations, especially those from Attica, Thessaly, Macedonia and Thrace. A wide mobilization was going on among the peasantry. The Agrarian Party took the initiative and organized mass rallies, demonstrations, etc. Peasants were emancipating themselves from the reactionary policies of the bourgeois governments. They moved away from their attachment to the bourgeois political parties, supporting and actively participating in the Agrarian Party. The Agrarian Party and the agrarian movement in Greece reached a promising stage of development. The party appealed to the peasants and they responded positively.

However, a serious setback in the development of the Agrarian Party was the intra-party conflict at the leadership level which ended in a party split.

In a broad conference of party members in Thessaloniki, the Agrarian Party decided to call its annual General Congress on December 14, 1930. Issues on the agenda were:

- a. the reports of the Executive Committee and the Parliamentary Group;
- b. the economic and political situation of the country;
- c. the general policy of the government;
- d. the party organization;
- e. the resignation of the General Council and the election of a new one.¹⁸

The outcome of that Fourth General Congress of the Agrarian Party in Thessaloniki, in which participated peasants from all party branches, was the split of the party into two groups. One group comprised by Chatjiyiannis, Avrasoglou, Tanoulas, Gabrielidis, Tsiaras, Fidas, and others, and the other by Sofianopoulos, Anthrakopoulos, Matousis, Pagoutsos, and others.¹⁹

The split came as a surprise and disappointment to the

mass of peasants. The two groups started polemic against each other which damaged the struggle and the cause of the peasants. The reasons for the split were the personal ambitions of some active members for the leadership of the party and ideological differences which resulted in disputes over the tactics and policy the party ought to follow in order to achieve its objectives.

Some active members of the party, such as Pagoutsos, Matousis, Anthrakopoulos, and others, believed that the Agrarian Party should have an experienced politician as leader. Lack of such a leader made the party less strong and militant. That is why they started negotiations with people such as, A. Alexandris, A. Vamvetos, J. Sofianopoulos. Finally, they accepted John Sofianopoulos, a well educated man, as the most appropriate person for the party leadership. However, another group of party members such as, Chatjiyiannis, Tanoulas, Gabrielidis, and others, did not trust J. Sofianopoulos and rejected the idea of his even being a party member. Consequently in the Fourth General Congress of the Agrarian Party on December 14-17, 1930, in Thessaloniki, the group of Chatjiyiannis and others, realizing that the Pagoutsos' group would receive the majority of votes in the election of the new General Council, and through that General Council could carry out its policy, left the Congress and denounced the other group. The Agrarian Party then split in two groups; each one claimed for itself the title and the tradition of the party. Chatjiyiannis was the Secretary General of the Agrarian Party, Pagoutsos of the other opposing agrarian group.²⁰

Besides the personal ambitions for the party leadership there were also ideological and political differences. The left wing wanted a pure "class party" with anti-capitalist orientation and revolutionary appeal. At a certain point it could form an alliance and cooperate with

the working class and the poor of the cities, those who had to struggle for a living - the *viopalestes*. Only with those exploited classes could the Agrarian Party develop a solidarity - not with the middle class; the interests of the peasants were opposite those of the middle class. The left wing was confident that the Agrarian Party would play a leading role in the emancipation of the peasants and the other working people. Thus, the party should have a socialist character. The left wing considered the right wing as authoritarian and undemocratic which tried to personify the party, in other words, identify it with one person, on the model of the middle class political parties. This was very dangerous for the Agrarian Party which had collective leadership according to its constitution.

On the other hand, the right wing believed the Agrarian Party should not be a class party but a party of "general content". If the party would go all the way to the left, it would be extremely risky for the whole future of the party. It would give arguments to the "reaction", to accuse the Agrarian Party as willing to abolish small property in land, something that peasants did not want.

The two wings did not compromise; their stand led to the party split.

Although in this organizational condition the Agrarian Party participated in the Senatorial by-election in the prefecture of Thessaloniki on February 8, 1931. The candidate of the Agrarian Party Kostas Gabrielidis, received 9,382 votes out of 59,253 total votes. He received 158 of these votes in the city of Thessaloniki and the rest in the countryside of the prefecture. He was not, however, elected as Senator despite the mobilization of peasants by the party activists; the split had seriously damaged the party at the mass level. The splinter group of Anthrakopoulos, Sofianopoulos, Pagoutsos, Matousis, and others, did not support Kostas Gabrielidis, the candidate

of the Agrarian Party, but Philip Dragoumis, who was elected deputy of the Agrarian Party in the election of 1926 and who had electoral cooperation with the Popular Party for that Senatorial by-election. Philip Dragoumis received 14,502 votes, including votes of peasants who otherwise could have voted for the Agrarian Party. The same peasants who voted for Philip Dragoumis, when he was the candidate of the Agrarian Party and had elected him as deputy. Having two agrarian candidates, Kostas Gabrielidis of the Agrarian Party and Philip Dragoumis, former deputy of the Agrarian Party and candidate for the Senatorial by-election for the splinter group who cooperated with the Popular Party, prevented the candidacy and eventual victory of only one candidate of the Agrarian Party. The party split and the polemic of the splinter group against the Agrarian Party and vice versa, confused some peasants and helped the opponents of the Agrarian Party. However, the vast majority of peasants of the prefecture voted for their own political organization, for the Agrarian Party. The government lost its strength in the district. If there had been only one candidate of the Agrarian Party, the Party could have won one seat in the Senate.²¹

On March 25-28, 1931, after the electoral achievement of the Agrarian Party in the Thessaloniki Senatorial by-election of February 8, 1931, an extraordinary Party Congress assembled in Thessaloniki. Peasants, after the electoral achievement, were very enthusiastic and the majority of the party branches participated. That extraordinary Congress declared as invalid the resolutions of the Fourth General Congress, when the right wing group had tried to distort the identity of the Agrarian Party and to change its orientation, especially with respect to the return of the refugees to where they came from and the authority of one man leading the party. For that reason, the left wing group which was the minority in the Fourth

Congress felt no obligation to follow its resolutions. It also expelled from the party the active members of the right wing (Pagoutsos, Sofianopoulos, Anthrakopoulos, Matousis and others) and it did not allow them to use the title of the Agrarian Party, nor to speak on behalf of the party.²²

On the other hand, the agrarian group of Pagoutsos etc., denounced the extraordinary Congress as a farce and the participants (Chatjiyiannis, Gabrielidis, Tsiaras, Tanoulas, Fidas, Tsiklirtiras, and others), as opportunists and fractional. In addition, they called upon the peasants to support their group because this was the Agrarian Party. Finally, they expelled the active members of the left wing group.²³

The party split had very sad consequences which damaged the party. It provided the enemies of the party with arguments to use against the Agrarian Party and the peasant movement. The successful Senatorial by-election of February 1931, had inspired the masses of peasants but there still remained discord and hatred among the active members of the Agrarian Party and of the opposing agrarian group. Mistakes in tactics damaged the party's image.

Despite these problems the peasant movement was growing throughout the country. The economic condition of the peasantry, that is, poverty and misery, as well as the repression by the government, facilitated the growth of the mass peasant movement.

The Agrarian Party's influence though, was not always present in the peasant unrest. Its organization was inadequate. Certainly it played a leading role, but in some cases and in some areas the Agrarian Party was absent. In those situations it did not engulf the entire peasant movement precisely because of its inadequate organization. Although it did lead the peasant struggle at the national level, its inadequate organization limited the activities

of the party in organizing and mobilizing the peasants or even giving direction to the already existing unrest. The party split resulted in mutual hate and passion which undermined systematic organizational work. This practice created serious obstacles. It became more obvious in the winter of 1931-1932 when starving peasants spontaneously marched on their own into the cities; the Agrarian Party, because of its inadequate organization, was unable to lead further the peasant masses who were under famine, poverty, misery, who actually were in a revolutionary situation. For two years (1930-1932), practically no directions were sent from the party administration to the branches. The Agrarian Party lost a unique and a golden opportunity to take advantage of the crisis for the benefit of the peasants. Inadequate party organization, lack of financial means and poverty of the active party members, damaged the party.²⁴

The polemic between the Agrarian Party and the agrarian group created confusion among the masses of peasants who wanted a united and strong party. The conflicting active members of the Agrarian Party and the agrarian group, realized the need for a new unification and on October 18, 1931, started negotiations to end the split and reunite the party. On March 6, 1932, the agrarian group which had Ap. Pagoutsos as Secretary, signed a declaration recognizing the necessity of an ideological and organizational unity of the Agrarian Party and the peasant class. Furthermore, the unification of the party was accomplished on the basis of the constitution of the Agrarian Party which had been accepted by the Third General Congress on May 10-11, 1929. Only the principles written in that party constitution were the basic principles of the Agrarian Party; anything else published in the newspapers as program and principles of the party represented neither the program nor the principles of the Agrarian Party. The agrarian group finally denounced as unacceptable the

article "The Programmatic Principles of the Agrarian Party" by John Sofianopoulos published in the newspaper *Akropolis* on January 24, 1931. This article represented only and strictly the personal opinions of Sofianopoulos. The reunification of the Agrarian Party was a fact. The Agrarian Party was again unified in a broad conference in Thessaloniki, on June 15, 1932. The participants in that conference included the General Council of the party, the Parliamentary Group and the Secretaries of the party branches. Sofianopoulos was rejected even as a party member; only shortly before the election of September 1932, he did declare that he had accepted the principles of the Party and was allowed to run as a party candidate.²⁵

The unified Agrarian Party participated in the election of September 25, 1932. Simultaneously with the election for the Chamber of Deputies there took place an election to renew 30 seats of the Senate in the 11 electoral districts of Thessaloniki, Messinia, Larisa, Evros, Kavala, Aetolia-Akarnania, Argolis-Korinth, Chania, Chios, Zakynthos and the electoral college or association of the Jews of Thessaloniki. The electoral system was the same used in the Senatorial election of 1929. In addition, the election of the Senators of the "professional organizations" was held at this time. For the Chamber, the Agrarian Party received 72,311 votes out of a total of 1,171,637 and won 11 seats in a 250-seat Chamber. For the partial renewal of the Senate, the Agrarian Party received 29,000 votes out of 361,111 total votes, but did not elect a Senator.

The Agrarian Party participated in most electoral districts of the country, certainly not in all. Even though it had better organization this time, it could not avoid mistakes. It permitted ineligible candidates to participate on its tickets, people who were not even members of the party, as for example, in the districts of Elia,

Etolea-Akarnania, Attica-Beotia, Piraeus, Evros, Lakonia, Giannena, Preveza, Arta and elsewhere.

For ideological reasons, the Agrarian Party had an electoral cooperation but not an alliance with the Socialist Party in four electoral districts. The candidates of the Socialist Party who participated on the ticket of the Agrarian Party, as well as the electoral districts, were as follows: for the Chamber of Deputies: Dimitrios Stratis, Thomas Economou, Christos Chomenidis and Dimitrios Xianoyiannis in the district of Thessaloniki-Kilkis, G. Laskaris in the district of Evros and Efstratios Someritis in the district of Rodope; for the Senate, George Zaecos in the district of Larisa-Volos. None of those candidates were elected; the Socialist Party had no serious influence.

In the election of September 25, 1932, the Agrarian Party achieved its best and biggest victory. The party accomplished its highest point of electoral support from the peasants: 72,311 votes for the Chamber and 29,000 for the Senate, 101,311 votes for both Legislative Bodies. At no other time did the party receive such support.

The party participated united in that election and came out very strong. It elected 11 deputies in the following electoral districts: Tsiklittiras in the district of Pelia, Messinia; Sofianopoulos and Anthrakopoulos in the district of Serres, Macedonia; Gabrielidis in the district of Thessaloniki-Kilkis, Macedonia; Chajiyiannis and Riziotis in the district of Larisa-Volos, Thessaly; Milonas in the district of Giannena, Epirus; Garoufalas in the district of Preveza-Arta, Epirus; Agelidakis in the district of Heraklio, Crete. This was the highest achievement of the Agrarian Party in terms of electoral support by the peasants during the period concerned in this study.

Those 11 Deputies and the 2 Senators, Lefkopoulos and Constantinidis, composed the Parliamentary Group of the

Agrarian Party. Sadly enough even this Parliamentary Group did not remain united and coherent. The Executive Committee of the Party elected Sofianopoulos as leader of the Parliamentary Group. In so doing, it violated Article 11 of the party constitution, according to which the leader of the Parliamentary Group could be elected only by that group. Therefore, the election of Sofianopoulos was in violation of the party constitution. On the other hand, the Executive Committee made that decision on the basis that all party Deputies had to obey the decisions of the party administration and in order for the Agrarian Party to be united within the Parliament. Only four members of the Parliamentary Group agreed with the decision of the Executive Committee (Sofianopoulos, Anthrakopoulos, Pagoutsos and Liapidis); Gabrieliadis was undecided. Nevertheless, Sofianopoulos acted within the Parliament as the leader of the Parliamentary Group of the Agrarian Party.²⁶

Even though the Executive Committee violated article 11 of the party constitution in electing the leader of the Parliamentary Group, all Deputies and Senators had to obey that decision in the name of party unity. Only the General Congress of the Party had the authority to control the Executive Committee and its decision. The decision of the Executive Committee wanted to prevent the split of the Parliamentary Group which had no homogeneity, given that Agelidakis left the Agrarian Party after the election for the Party of Liberals, Garoufalias never belonged to the party, Milonas was a friend of Kafandaris, and Chajjiannis was untrustworthy. For this reason the Executive Committee could not allow the election of the leader of the Parliamentary Group to those Deputies. In fact, the Executive Committee elected a three-member Administrative Committee of Sofianopoulos, Pagoutsos and Gabrieliadis; those three elected Sofianopoulos as leader of the

Parliamentary Group and the General Council confirmed that decision.²⁷

Those who did not accept the decision of the Executive Committee called the Fifth Congress in Larisa, on November 27, 1932. They appointed an administration of the party until the crisis was ended. The temporary administrative council was comprised of Pournaras, Rendis, Constantinidis, Riziotis, Avrasoglou and Intjesiloglou. The Congress in Larisa, though, was not successful. Only a fraction of the Deputies, members of the General Council and branches participated. Most of the branches and the active party members were not present there. That Congress in other words, did not represent the entire party, but only a small splinter group.²⁸

These events, though, were very destructive to the Agrarian Party. All the enthusiasm of the peasants and the active members after the September 1932 election was taken away. Most of them hoped that the non-disciplined splinter group would finally obey the party administration for the benefit of party unity.²⁹

A new, the Sixth General Congress of the Agrarian Party, met in Volos, on January 21-23, 1933, whose main purpose was to resolve the party crisis and achieve unity.

The Sixth General Congress tried to achieve unity but without success. A small group of active party members did not participate at all in the Congress. Some Deputies were crossed out from the party by the Congress and even the active members who did participate did not stay together afterwards; they split again.

It is important to outline the session of the Sixth General Congress of the Agrarian Party because the political, social and economic conditions under which it met were very critical for Greece and the party itself.

The government of Prime Minister Tsaldaris had resigned and the political situation was chaotic. The

world's economic crisis continued; prices for crops and industrial goods were falling. Living conditions were severe; some people did not even have bread to eat. The vital issues of the peasants still existed. The agrarian reform was incomplete; peasants were exhausted by the tax-imposing policy of the governments as well as the way taxes were collected, and by the exploitation of moneylenders, banks and middlemen. The latter used to buy a peasant's production very cheaply - "for a piece of bread" - or pre-buy, that is, buy in advance of the harvest, taking advantage of the desperate need of peasants for cash.

Peasants who participated in the Congress, clearly presented all their problems and made proposals with respect to agrarian reform, taxation, credit, etc. In addition to the problems of the peasants, there were presented to the Congress issues concerning the party affairs, such as unity of the party, tactics the party should follow, possible alliances with other political parties, election of new organs, critique of the party policy, etc.

Participants in this Congress included 6 Deputies, 3 Senators and over 200 representatives of 30 party branches. They represented the majority of the active members of the Agrarian Party. Those participants represented different and sometimes conflicting ideological and political tendencies.

One group of peasants centered around Sofianopoulos, Anthrakopoulos, Matousis, and others. They were representatives of the branches of Serres, Trikala, etc., and they used to wear their traditional costumes and shoes. They were not the poorest section of the peasantry; in a very broad sense they could be called middle peasants.

Another group was centered around Gabrielidis, Tanoulas, Tsiaras, and others. They were representatives of

the branches of Macedonia. The majority of these were peasants who were at the same time active members of agricultural cooperatives. They were very militant. In that group were also professionals - intellectuals and scientists such as lawyers, doctors, pharmacists, agronomists, teachers, and others, whose parents were peasants.

Finally, there was a group led by Tsikliras. Representatives in that group were from the branches of Pelia, Kavalla, Veria, Edessa, Kozane, Lamia, and other areas, mostly young peasants, intellectuals, university students, and others. They were very active in the Congress. This was the most conscious, the most militant, the most extreme left group.³⁰

The leader of the Parliamentary Group of the Agrarian Party, John Sofianopoulos, proposed his personal opinion as a solution of the so-called "demographic problem" the return of the refugees to where they had been before they came to Greece. To achieve this, he proposed negotiations with the Soviet Union and Turkey.

The "demographic problem", as presented by Sofianopoulos, Tsikliras said, could not be carried out without war and was rejected. Such a policy also violated the party constitution, Karagiozis said, who was against the remigration of the refugees. The "demographic problem" was the personal opinion of Sofianopoulos; indeed, it was never discussed and approved by the party organs. It was utopian since it did not consider the Turkish side and Turkish nationalism which wanted "Turkey for the Turks". Refugees on the other hand, had no illusions of going back to where they had come from. They realized that they had to stay in mainland Greece. The massive remigration of the refugees was out of reality; it disappointed and alienated the refugees from the Agrarian Party, at least some of them.

The following example shows the response of the peasant refugees to such unrealistic ideas, as well as, the damage done to the party. In a mass meeting of the Agrarian Party during the electoral campaign of September 1932, landless peasants wanted to hear from the party speaker, Matousis, how the party would solve the burning issue of land reform and their settlement. They heard, instead, the speaker explain to them the personal opinion of Sofianopoulos for their remigration back to Asia-Minor. The poor landless peasants said: "Well, how about that. We came to hear if we could receive land and they are telling us to start a new war". Groups of those peasants left the mass meeting. Certainly, they were not expected to vote for the Party.

The Congress discussed and rejected the proposition of Sofianopoulos for the remigration of the refugees in order to solve the "demographic problem". For the Agrarian Party, the basic cause of misery of the Greek people was the capitalist system and not the refugees. The capitalist system had to be replaced by socialism. Until then, the Agrarian Party without war-like symbols would try to develop the resources of the country.

Sofianopoulos also presented to the Congress the response he had given as the leader of the Parliamentary Group of the Agrarian Party, to the programmatic statement of the government of Prime Minister Tsaldaris in the Chamber of Deputies, on November 12, 1932, after the September 1932 election. At that time, the Agrarian Party asked for improvement of the income not only of peasants but also for the city wage laborers. It asked for elimination of the extremely heavy taxation on gross production and the monopolization by the state of the main agricultural products. Furthermore, it wanted the cancellation of the debts of peasants. For the city wage laborers, workers and employees, the Agrarian Party asked

for an 8-hours workday, a minimum wage and social security. The burden of social security should be upon the employers and not upon the employees. The Agrarian Party also proposed the Government not pay back its foreign creditors, not even 30% of the amount of the loans, simply because the country did not have the money for it. Furthermore, it proposed the reevaluation of the old debts of the country. Instead, the Government repaid 30% of the loans to its foreign creditors and imposed new taxes. Worst of all, the Government did not have a coherent and systematic plan to take the country out of the crisis.

The Agrarian Party in the Chamber of Deputies, made propositions primarily for the peasants but also for the city working people such as workers, employees, civil servants, and others, with respect to their income, taxation, debts, minimum wages, limit of 8-hours workday, social security, monopolization by the state of main agricultural crops.³¹

Some speakers of the Congress criticized the statement of Sofianopoulos in the Chamber. Tsiklitis said, that the statement of Sofianopoulos was not the program of the Agrarian Party as approved by the General Congress, but the personal program of Sofianopoulos. The personal opinions of Sofianopoulos as published in his article in the newspaper *Akropolis* on January 24, 1931, were not the principles of the Agrarian Party, because they were never discussed nor approved by the party organs. With that article Sofianopoulos tried to change the class orientation of the party and turn it into a party of "general content". Furthermore, as authoritarian personality he wanted to use it for his own personal advantage. The General Congress, Tsiklitis suggested, should take action on the effort of personification of the Agrarian Party by Sofianopoulos who was called by the reactionary press, *Akropolis* and *Alaye* the leader of the Party while he was only the leader of the

Parliamentary Group. The leader of the Party was its General Congress, the party organ with the highest authority. The Agrarian Party did not need leaders just like the bourgeois political parties; it was a party of principles and as such it functioned and appealed to the peasants.

Sofianopoulos was also criticized because he gave a "vote of sufferance or tolerance" to the government, since he knew from the programmatic statement the policy which the government was going to follow. The Agrarian Party, as a class party, should have voted against that government, a bourgeois government.

Tsiklitis finally proposed the election by the Congress of a committee which would make up the principles of the party and review certain points of the party constitution which were open to revision since the Third Congress, especially the article in which the Agrarian Party took a stand against capitalism and communism.

Tsiaras, in his speech to the Congress, agreed with Tsiklitis, proposition about the election by the Congress of a committee which would work out the principles of the party as well as a new constitution. His argument was that the existing constitution, even though it was approved by the Third General Congress in 1929, was updated and drafted by people no longer belonging to the party. Tsiklitis insisted that it was absolutely necessary that the Congress point out even in general the program, trends and scope of the party, especially before the election of March 1933. Thus, peasants who would be asked to vote for the party would know what the party was and what it wanted to achieve. The confusion created about the party after its split, hopefully would be avoided.

On the last day of the session of Congress, a committee was elected which would work out the principles and the trends of the Agrarian Party. Members in that

committed were Tanoulas, Meros, Petalotis, Avtjis and Sliomis. They would cooperate with the Parliamentary Group, which would have an advisory vote. Finally, that committee presented to the Congress the following statement:

"The Agrarian Party was a class party, based on the class struggle and through the organization of the working classes endeavored to achieve its socialist principles".³²

The issue of party unity was central to the Congress. The mass of peasants wanted the unification of the party. They urged the party members to work for this unity and to put aside their personal differences. They insisted that only united could the party grow, become strong and struggle for the benefit of peasants. The split had made the party very weak and confused the peasants. The Congress however, did not achieve party unity.

Another issue presented to the Congress was the tactics the party should follow. Given the division of society into the classes of the exploiters and the exploited, Tsiklitis said, only the class "line" (orientation) should guide the policy of the Agrarian Party. The party should follow the "correct" (orthodox) Marxist theory. He used as an example the Russian Revolution of 1917 to get experience and "teachings" for the construction of the socialist society. He proposed to the Congress, that the main concern of the party should be how to accelerate the overthrow of the existing capitalist system.

Another speaker also proposed to the Congress that the party should organize the peasant struggle in such a way, that it would lead to the fall of the capitalist system. For that reason it should be better organized, make its constitution more definite, stay above personal conflicts and control the rights of the Executive Committee, in order to avoid mistakes in the future.

One speaker pointed out that the party gave more emphasis to the quantity of members rather than to their quality. This weakened the party organization. If a revolution were necessary, it would be made by the few educated peasants. For that reason, the duty of the Agrarian Party would be to educate and politicize the peasants in that direction. At that point the president of the Congress noticed a policeman taking notes on what the speaker Tsonis was saying. The Congress would not tolerate any kind of "police terrorism", the president of the Congress said, and he gave the floor to another speaker. Revolution, as a means of overthrowing the existing capitalist system, was then discussed in the Congress. However, it was neither voted nor accepted that the Agrarian Party was a revolutionary party in that sense, that is, one that advocated the overthrow of the capitalist system by violent revolutionary means. This was due to the *Edeonemo*, which was against not only the "communist danger" but any radical agitation. *Edeonemo* was used to send into exile or jail people of the Left. (For details see following section on *Edeonemo*.)

Another proposal dealt with the reorganization of the party branches and their replacement by "cells" in every village. Those cells would help the Agrarian Party to take over the government by peaceful means or, if necessary, by revolutionary ones. One speaker opposed that proposition of Tsiaras; he pointed out the difficulties in organizing peasants by the same means as city workers. Unlike workers whose work is concentrated in industry, peasants were dispersed throughout their fragmented land. This is by definition an inherent organizational problem. Active party members used to walk from village to village to make their speeches to peasants. This was an obstacle to mobilization. It was also suggested that the Deputies of the party go to the villages, let the peasants know the party ideology and

explain to them the party policy. This was necessary for the politicization and political participation of the peasantry.

One speaker reported to the Congress that public tax-collectors helped by policemen arrested 20 peasants for old debts to landlords. All the arrested were put in the Velestino jail. The Agrarian Party would protest to the government for such arrests, especially in mid winter.

Finally, Tsikliritas called upon the Congress to decide on the issue of electoral cooperation of the Agrarian Party with other political parties. He proposed that the party should not cooperate with other bourgeois political parties in the next elections. This was an important issue; such a cooperation would confuse the peasants. The Congress concluded by voting that this would be up to the General Council of the party to decide, and it rejected the proposal of Tsikliritas.

The Sixth General Congress of the Agrarian Party, elected a twenty-member General Council, a seven-member Executive Committee and N. Matousis as Secretary General. In the new General Council, fourteen members were in the group of Sofianopoulos and six in the group of Tsikliritas. On the Executive Committee, six were in the group of Sofianopoulos and one close to Tsikliritas.

The Congress did ban from the party and denounced the Deputies Chajiyiannis, Milonas, Garoufalias and Agelidakis. It also "felt sorry" for Riziotis and his opportunistic activities, but it did not ban him from the party. It should be noted that Deputies Milonas, Garoufalias and Riziotis had never been members of the Agrarian Party. They cooperated and ran on the ticket of the party in the elections of September 1932. They participated neither in the Fifth nor in the Sixth Congresses.³³

The Sixth General Congress of the Agrarian Party was the last Congress in the period of this study. In its

session were discussed all the problems of the peasants and all the party affairs. Even this Congress did not reach an agreement on the unity of the Agrarian Party.

Those who were crossed out from the party by the Congress, the right wing, Milonas, Evelpidis, Garoufalias, Papastavrou and others, cooperated in the election of March 5, 1933, with the Party of Liberals and later on, Milonas formed the Agrarian Democratic Party. The left wing, which was the Agrarian Party from then on, did not agree on the way the party would participate in those election. Matousis, Sofianopoulos, Anthrakopoulos and Gabrielidis wanted to participate as the Agrarian Party. Tanoulas, Tsikliritas, Chajyiannis and others, wanted electoral cooperation with the Popular Party and they did not recognize the elected by the Sixth Congress party administration. They thought that by cooperating with a large party such as the Popular Party, they would overcome the obstacles which the electoral system placed on the small parties. The electoral system which changed from proportional representation to plurality, did not favour the small parties.

Thus, some activists cooperated with the Popular Party, others with the Party of Liberals and only a small group composed by Sofianopoulos, Anthrakopoulos, Gabrielidis, Matousis, Pagoutsos, Tavmeazis and others, as the Agrarian Party. This happened despite the fact that the General Council of the Agrarian Party had decided that the party would run in the election as the Agrarian Party without cooperating with the bourgeois political parties. Under those conditions of organization, the Agrarian Party, in the election for the Chamber of Deputies of March 5, 1933, received 22,985 votes out of 1,141,331 total votes and won 2 seats in a 248-seat Chamber. The Deputies elected were Pagoutsos and Tarbazis, both in the electoral district of Trikala-Karditsa. Once again the split at the

leadership level created confusion among the peasants and resulted in the party defeat. From the 101,311 votes for the Chamber and the Senate which the party received in the election of September 25, 1932, its strength was reduced to 22,985 votes half a year later.

The group of Milonas who cooperated with the Party of Liberals received 14,301 votes out of a total of 1,141,331 votes and won 5 seats in the Chamber. The manipulation of the electoral system here is obvious. The group of Milonas with 14,302 votes won 5 seats while the Agrarian Party with more votes - 22,985 - won fewer seats - 2. The electoral system deprived the Agrarian Party of seats in favour of the large bourgeois political parties.

Finally, the agrarian group of Tanoulas, Tsikliritas, Chajiyannis and others, who participated in the ticket of the Popular Party and cooperated with it, received 20,200 votes and won 1 seat in the Chamber; the Deputy elected was Athanasios Tanoulas. However, it is important to notice that Athanasios Tanoulas who was elected on the ticket of the Popular Party remained loyal to the ideology of the Agrarian Party. He chose electoral cooperation with the Popular Party to overcome the obstacle of the plurality electoral system. This did not mean that he became a member of the Popular Party nor that he acted as if he were one of its Deputies. On the contrary, in the Chamber of Deputies, he supported the rights and demands of peasants very strongly and very actively. In addition, Athanasios Tanoulas together with Apostolos Voyiajis and E. Pagouras signed, on behalf of the Agrarian Party the agreement of common action against military fascist dictatorship, as well as the common declaration for the creation of the United Anti-Fascist Front of the Working People. It is also important to notice, that Loulis Tsikliritas, one of the most conscious ideologues and radical, militant activists of the Agrarian Party, committed suicide because he could

not forgive himself for his electoral cooperation with the Popular Party. This was against his principles in general and against what he said to the Sixth General Congress of the Agrarian Party on the issue of electoral cooperation, in particular.³⁴

In the by-election (repetitious) for the Chamber of Deputies on July 2, 1933, in the electoral district of Thessaloniki, the Agrarian Party participated in the ticket of the Venizelist National Coalition. The National Coalition received 47,182 votes out of 93,535 total votes and won all 20 seats of the district. The electoral system helped the National Coalition to win those 20 seats. The Agrarian Party won 3 of those 20 seats; the deputies elected were Kostas Gabrielidis, Tasos Tsiaras and John Sofianopoulos. The mobilization of peasants by the candidates of the party in the district was very strong and with the electoral system favoring the National Coalition which came into the district first, the Agrarian Party won 3 seats.³⁵

In the election for the Fifth Constituent Assembly on June 9, 1935, the Agrarian Party did not participate because of the situation created in the country after the Venizelist coup of March 1, 1935. The government crushed the military coup d'etat and imposed a state of siege until May 14. It also took several emergency measures, such as the abolition of the Senate, the abolition of the privileged electoral districts of the islands of Hydra, Spetsae and Psara, a massive purge of Venizelist military officers, a massive dismissal of public officials, and repression in general. Given this political situation in the country and the Agrarian Party's weak organization at that time, the Party chose not to participate in that election.³⁶

It did participate, though, in the election of the Chamber of Deputies on January 26, 1936, which was the last

election before the imposition of the dictatorship of Metaxas. The Agrarian Party received 13,006 votes out of 1,274,002 total votes and won 1 seat in a 300-seat Chamber. Pagoutsos was elected as Deputy. The party was defeated because the split had confused the peasants. The party administration and organization did not function well. It hardly presented itself to peasants; it did not have the organization to go to peasants in the villages and mobilize them. There was no contact between the party activists and the peasants, at least not to the extent it was when the party was united as in the election of 1932.³⁷

The successive series of schisms and unification which were associated with the General Party Congresses, damaged the party and disappointed the mass of peasants who wanted a strong and united party. At times, the peasant masses were left practically with no direction; there was not an organization to channel the already existing peasant unrest. Peasants were not informed about the activities of the party. There was no personal contact between the active members of the party and the peasants. Branches stopped functioning, consequently the politicization of peasants by the party organization also stopped. The split eventually led the Agrarian Party to the practical dissolution of its organizational base. There was no party discipline. The distance between the peasants and the party was growing because peasants lost confidence in it. This meant that peasants left the party, as for example in the elections of January 26, 1936, when the party was defeated. The middle class political parties took advantage of the split. They did not want a united and strong Agrarian party nor a massive and strong agrarian movement. The split gave them an excellent opportunity to distort the image of the party and mislead the peasants.

The split of the Agrarian Party created a sad situation and a confusion among the mass of peasants.

Division, personal conflicts and hatred and ideological differences did not allow the leadership of the right wing splinter group to achieve anything serious in the elections and in the mobilization of peasants to assert and claim their rights. Damage was done to the party as an entity and to the mass of peasants.

Peasants wanted and expected a new unification of the splinter group with the Agrarian Party, as well as reorganization of the party. From all over Greece peasants sought a united and reorganized party. All members had to work hard to overcome the party crisis. The party should have remained a united massive class party.³⁸

The intra-party conflict at the leadership level was a serious setback to its development, especially after the unification in 1929. It also affected the political and voting behavior of the peasants towards the Agrarian Party.

Thus, the growth of the Agrarian Party, its appeal to peasants, its accomplishments or failures were associated and fluctuated with a weak or strong party organization. When the party organization was strong and efficient, the party rallied mass peasant support and was victorious in elections. When the party organization was weak, the party could not mobilize the peasants. In addition, peasants, confused by the party split, lost confidence in the party and did not vote for it. Notable examples were the elections of 1923, the election in Drama in 1929, the elections of 1932 and the by-election in Thessaloniki in 1933. The systematic work in organizing and mobilizing the peasants resulted in the victory for the Agrarian Party. On the contrary, in the Senatorial by-election of Thessaloniki in 1931 and the elections of March 1933 and January 1936, when the party had its most serious organizational problems, it was defeated (see TABLE 11).

When the Agrarian Party organizers went to the

TABLE 11
THE AGRARIAN PARTY AND ELECTIONS

Elections	Valid	%	Seats	Electoral	System	Electoral	Locations of	Names of Deputies
						District	Electoral	and Senators
						Districts		
Constituent Assembly, December 16, 1923	50,000		4	Plurality	narrow-wide	Attica (3), Tyrnavos	Maryetis, Varelas, Tsitstillias, Rodopoulos	
Chamber of Deputies, November 7, 1926	23,318	2.95	5	Proportional	wide	Gianena, Florina, Preveza-Iefkada (2), Larisa-Volos	Chaseotis, Chavinis, Tsarlambas, Dramonis, Meros	
Chamber of Deputies, August 19, 1928	17,042	1.68		Plurality	narrow-wide	-	-	
Senate, April 21, 1929	13,720		2	"Senatorial"	wide	Drama	Iefkopoulos, Constantinidis	
Senate, April 21, 1929 "Professional Organi- zations" - Chamber of Agriculture			1	"Senatorial"	-		Chaseotis	
By-Election for the Chamber of Deputies, April 21, 1929			1	Plurality	narrow-wide	Drama	Jeyas	
Senate, By-Election in Thessaloniki, February 8, 1931	9,382		-	"Senatorial"	wide			

TABLE 11-Continued

72,311	6.17	11	Proportional wide	Seres (2), Thessaloniki- Kilkis, Larisa- Volos (2), Trikala- Karditsa (2), Giannena, Preveza- Arta, Heraklio, Pella	Sofianopoulos, Anthrakopoulos, Gabrielidis, Chaji- Yiannits, Riziotis, Pagoutsos, Lia- pidis, Milonas, Garoutalias, Age- lidakis, Tsikliti- ras	Chamber of Deputies, September 25, 1932
29,000	-	-	"Senatorial" wide	-	-	Senate (partial renewal (September 25, 1932)
22,985	2.01	2	Plurality	narrow-wide Trikala-Karditsa	Pagoutsos, Tarbartzis	Chamber of Deputies, March 5, 1933
47,182		3	Plurality	narrow-wide Thessaloniki	Gabrielidis, Tsitaras, Sofiano- poulos	Chamber of Deputies By-election (repeti- tions) in Thessaloniki, July 2, 1933 (National Coalition
						Constituent Assembly, June 9, 1935
						The Agrarian Party Plurality did not participate
13,006	1.02	1	Proportional wide	Trikala-Karditsa	Pagoutsos	Chamber of Deputies, January 26, 1936
860		1		Kilkis	Gabrielidis, Mayor (Popular Front)	City-village councils

SOURCES:

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- Chamber of Deputies of Greece, *Records of the Sessions of the Fourth Constituent Assembly*, (Athens: National Printing Office, 1924) 1: 534, 3: 577.
- Chamber of Deputies of Greece, *Records of the Session of the Chamber of Deputies*, Period D, Session A, (Athens: National Printing Office, 1934), p. 153.
- Gregory Daphnis, *Greece Between Two Wars* 1: 194, and 2: 13, 152.
- The Agrarian Political Party, "Public Statement of the Executive Committee for the Senatorial By-Election in the Prefecture of Thessaloniki on February 8, 1931", in *Macedonian News*, February 12, 1931, p. 1.
- The Agrarian Political Party of Greece, *Programmatic Principles and Constitution*, (Athens: Edition of the Agrarian Party, 1945), pp. 6, 7.
- Melictios Roes, "The Unification of the Agrarian Party", in *Anexartitos*, February 11, 1936, p. 1.
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- Republique Hellenique, Ministère de l'Economie Nationale, *Statistique Générale de la Grèce, Statistique des élections des députés du 7 novembre 1926* (Athènes: Imprimerie Nationale, 1928), quoted in George Mavrogordatos, *Stillborn Republic: Social Coalitions and Party Strategies in Greece, 1922-1936*, (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1983), p. 35.
- Republique Hellenique, Ministère de l'Economie Nationale, *Statistique Générale de la Grèce, Statistique des élections des députés du 18 août 1928* (Athènes: Imprimerie Nationale, 1931), quoted in *Ibid.*, p. 38.
- Republique Hellenique, Ministère de l'Economie Nationale, *Statistique Générale de la Grèce, Statistique des élections des députés du 25 septembre 1932* (Athènes: Imprimerie Nationale, 1933), quoted in *Ibid.*, p. 42.
- Republique Hellenique, Ministère de l'Economie Nationale, *Statistique Générale de la Grèce, Statistique des élections sénatoriales du septembre 1932 et de celles supplémentaires jusqu'à la fin de 1933* (Athènes: Imprimerie Nationale, 1934), quoted in *Ibid.*, p. 43.
- Republique Hellenique, Ministère de l'Economie Nationale, *Statistique Générale de la Grèce, Statistique des élections des députés du 5 mars 1933* (Athènes: Imprimerie Nationale, 1933), quoted in *Ibid.*, p. 45.
- Royaume de Grèce, Ministère de l'Economie Nationale, *Statistique Générale de la Grèce, Statistique des élections des députés du 26 janvier 1936* (Athènes: Imprimerie Nationale, 1938), quoted in *Ibid.*, p. 52.
- Rizospastis*, July 27, 1936, p. 1.

peasants, explained the party ideology, program and day-to-day policies, the peasants accepted it because they realized it stood for their cause. When the party organizers abandoned the peasants and left them with no direction, peasants in turn did not support the party. If the party organization had functioned more smoothly and regularly, its appeal to peasants could have been broader; in turn, the support of peasants to the party could have been larger and stronger, despite the obstacles encountered in mobilization, the financial deficiencies and even state manipulations.

The isolation of peasants due to mode of production and the geographical and social dispersion were decisive factors in organizing the peasants. Agrarian Party organizers used to walk from village to village to explain the party program. They did not have even the very basic financial and technical means of propaganda. The Agrarian Party was very poor, it did not have the financial means necessary for its organization. Nor did it have the financial supporters that the bourgeois political parties had. It relied exclusively on the support of peasants and on the party members, who also were poor.³⁹

Despite the organizational weaknesses and inadequacies, the appeal of the Agrarian Party to peasants was broad. It could have been broader though, if the party organization had functioned better.

12. STATE INITIATED OBSTACLES TO THE AGRARIAN PARTY

A. The Electoral System

The electoral system was used by the state as an obstacle to the Agrarian Party. It was manipulated to discourage peasants from voting for the Agrarian Party and

to deprive the party of seats.

There were two electoral systems used in the elections for the Chamber of Deputies: the plurality system with "narrow-wide" district and the system of proportional representation. The two systems were used alternately and were manipulated in order to serve the purposes of the major bourgeois political parties: to prevent and discourage people from voting for the small political parties, especially the "class parties" such as the Agrarian and the Communist Parties, to deprive seats from those parties in order to exclude them from representation in the Legislature. The electoral system with the electoral districts, as well as the seats in the Chamber of Deputies, was constantly and deliberately changing to serve and favour the major bourgeois political parties at the expense of the small political parties especially the class parties.

The "narrow-wide" plurality system was used in the elections of 1923, 1928 and 1933. The "narrow" electoral district corresponding to *eparchia* (county) applied in Old Greece; the "wide" electoral district corresponding to the lower court district, usually to the prefecture (*nomos*), was applied in the New Lands. In addition to these two types of districts there were created separate minority colleges, two for the Moslems of Thrace and one for the Jews of Thessaloniki. There were also the three privileged districts of the small islands of Hydra, Spetsae and Psara which, since 1844 had been permanently granted three, two and two seats respectively regardless of the size of their population due to their special contribution to the War of Independence of 1821 against the Ottoman Empire.

For the election of the Constituent Assembly in 1935, the plurality system was used in combination only with the "wide" electoral district (*nomos*), and not with the "narrow". The privileged electoral districts of the islands

of Hydra, Spetsae and Psara were abolished. Also abolished were the minority colleges of Moslems and Jews.

The system of proportional representation was first introduced in Greece in 1926. It was used again in 1932 and in 1936. The electoral district was only the "wide" one, mostly the prefecture (*nomos*). Prefectures were the administrative divisions of the country; prefectures were sub-divided into counties, as pointed out.⁴⁰

The goal of the proportional representation electoral system was the percentage of seats each party acquires in the legislature to approximate the percentage of votes that the party received in the general election. Thus, a party that received about ten percent of the total vote should be allotted about 20 seats in a 200-seat legislature.

In the plurality electoral system, the candidate in each district with the most votes - irrespective of whether or not he received a majority of votes - wins the election. There was no reward for coming in second or for being close; therefore, an unequal distribution of voting preferences would not be of much benefit to the third, fourth, etc., strongest parties. Only rarely would they be first.

The votes cast for all but the winning candidate in an electoral district in a plurality system did not have any effect on the composition of the legislature. It matters not if a candidate lost his district by one vote or a million votes. Hence, votes for losers were in a sense wasted.

This so-called "theory of the wasted vote" was manipulated by the major bourgeois political parties at electoral campaigns in order to prevent people from voting in favour of their opponents. Every vote to the Agrarian Party will be a wasted vote, was the message given to peasants. Indeed, this was effective to some extent. Peasants preferred not to vote for a candidate under a

plurality system who was unlikely to win the election; if they voted for a loser candidate they wasted their vote; their vote, in other words, did not count at all.

The tendency among supporters of small parties not to waste their votes on candidates unlikely to win further prejudiced the plurality system against the electoral success of small parties. The imperatives of proportionality work to overcome this wasting effect so as to produce some impact for every few votes and hence shade of opinion.

Thus, it is easy to see how proportional systems tend to maximize the representation of minor parties while the plurality system works to minimize such representation.

The imperatives of proportional representation encourage a multiparty system while the imperatives of the plurality system encourage a two-party arrangement and political polarization. Two political parties alternate in control of a parliamentary government. The political system did have the option of what election system was adopted: in this case it did choose to present obstacles to the representation of minor political parties in the legislature, to practically exclude those small parties from legislature.

It is doubtful, though, that proportional representation can cause an increase in the number of parties; it certainly increases the representation in the legislature of the existing small political parties which are not represented in a plurality electoral system.

It seems reasonable to infer, therefore, that proportional representation permits and even encourages the existing ideological trends and cleavages in a society to be expressed in the party system and ultimately in the legislature, but it will not lead to the formation of more cleavages than already exist. A proportional system will faithfully reflect the existing ideological trends and

cleavages, while a plurality system will encourage a greater aggregation of existing diverse ideological trends and cleavages. A plurality system discriminates against minority interests and it seeks to aggregate the diverse interests of the people into two political parties, the major bourgeois political parties.⁴¹

Very often those diverse interests were reflected by minor bourgeois political parties which cooperated with a major party, as for example the Popular Party or the Party of Liberals. As the plurality system encouraged such an aggregation, the government of Prime Minister Venizelos changed the plurality system into proportional representation for the election of September 25, 1932, hoping to break the coherence of his opponents - mainly the Popular Party. He estimated that, if the minor political parties which cooperated with the Popular Party would run independently, they were unlikely to win, while being in the ticket of the Popular Party they would reinforce it. Once Venizelos had weakened his opposition, he hoped to win the elections.

The Agrarian Party's advocacy of the proportional system over the plurality was based upon a normative conception of fairness and justice and a conception of democracy defined in terms of the accuracy of the representation of interests in the national decision-making process. The Agrarian Party's concern was that the plurality system, by allowing a single party to obtain a majority and govern, effectively disfranchises all who did not support that majority party. Otherwise stated, the all-or-nothing results of plurality elections is unfair in that it distorts the distribution of opinion in society with the respect to the institutionalized influence of those opinions on the national decision-making process. Every significant body of opinion should thus have effective representation in that decision-making process.

This advocacy of proportionality was based upon the assumption that democracy is solely a function of the accuracy with which the composition of the legislature mirrors the distribution of opinion in the electorate, rather than the conception of democracy as a function of the extent to which the policy output of a government is relatively responsive to public opinion; a conception which was held by the major bourgeois political parties. These parties which favored the plurality system and manipulated it according to their calculations so that this system would help them win elections. The plurality system became very useful to these political parties because it further facilitated the already existing polarization in the Greek society (see section on political polarization). Simultaneously, it prevented small class parties from growing. The bourgeois political parties expected benefits from it while it remained an obstacle to the Agrarian Party.⁴²

The obstacle of the plurality system to the small political parties was twofold. The so-called "theory of wasted vote" discouraged people from voting for candidates of the small political parties under the plurality electoral system. In addition, the manipulation of the plurality electoral system denied representation to these small political parties, which received votes in an electoral district though not enough votes to come first in that electoral district. Furthermore, the major bourgeois political parties considered the plurality system as providing governmental stability. Very often though it provided a stalemate in which a minority government governed as a result of this plurality electoral system.⁴³

For the Agrarian Party, the system of proportional representation did not facilitate governmental instability. The proposition and the excuse of the bourgeois political parties that the proportionality makes stability more

difficult to maintain was based to a large extent upon the assumption that this electoral system results in a proliferation of the number of parties such that no one party can obtain a majority. Stable parliamentary government clearly requires the support of a stable majority in the legislature in as much as the cabinet only continues to govern at the sufferance or tolerance of such a majority. This majority must be sufficiently disciplined to insulate the government from accountability to the shifting day-to-day currents of public opinion, thus enabling the government to govern. A single party holding a majority of seats in the legislature seems much more capable than a coalition of relatively autonomous parties of insuring that the support on which the government relies remains stable and reliable from issue to issue.⁴⁴

The Agrarian Party though, strongly believed that the proportional representation system further facilitates the development of class parties and parties of principles and permits the formation of a coalition government in which parties with similar principles would participate. The Agrarian Party declared that the government should not be afraid of the class struggle and that all ideological and political trends must be inside the legislature. The party considered the proportional representation system as the most appropriate for the real and actual representation it allows to all classes of the society. The legislature must be the mirror of society; all social classes and trends must be represented. This happens only with the proportional representation system and not with the plurality system. The plurality system facilitates political polarization while the proportional representation system discourages polarization because it allows all social trends to have their political expression and, ultimately, to be represented in the legislature. The plurality system, with the manipulation of the electoral

districts, allows adulteration of the electoral returns; proportional representation does not allow such adulteration. Proportional representation does not deprive the small political parties of seats in favour of the larger ones which come first in the electoral district.⁴⁵

The Agrarian Party, to overcome this obstacle clearly favored the electoral system of proportional representation, as already pointed out. This policy was based on the party program and was consistent with it. Indeed, the Deputies of the Party in the Chamber, passionately and continuously from 1923 until 1936, supported the application of the proportional representation system. They considered this issue as being of great national importance and exerted themselves to insert the electoral system of proportional representation in the Constitution of the country.⁴⁶

B. Political Patronage

Political patronage, deeply rooted in Greek society, was another obstacle to the development of the Agrarian Party. It already existed long before the period of this study. Certainly, the bourgeois political parties manipulated it for their own advantage against the Agrarian Party.

In political science, patronage is understood as a power relationship. It is precisely in this sense that it concerns us here - what is political patronage and how did it affect peasants, political life, and the Agrarian Party? More specifically, how and why did some peasants vote for the middle class political parties and not for the Agrarian Party.

The concept of political patronage is one way of explaining the political activity and behavior of the

peasants with respect to favoritism, mobilization, organization, participation and voting.

Patronage in political science refers to the ways in which party politicians distribute public jobs or special favours in exchange for electoral support. Political parties exchange jobs and favours in their quest for support at election time. Political party leaders seek to turn public institutions and public resources to their own ends, thus patronage, as a feature of government and political parties becomes very intensive in election campaigns. Peasants used the political parties and other connections seeking favours and assistance in dealing with various governmental bureaus. Elected officials and party-linked administrators played a significant role in it.⁴⁷

Political patronage involves the interchange of non comparable goods and services between actors of unequal socio-economic ranks. It manifests itself within the political system and it has to do with three essential factors:

- a. The patron-client tie develops between two interested parties unequal in status, wealth and influence or power.
 - b. The formation and maintenance of the relationship depends on reciprocity in the exchange of goods and services. The balance of benefits usually favours the patron.
 - c. It rests on face-to-face contact between the two parties. The exchanges depend upon such proximity.⁴⁸
- Political patronage is a power relationship because an official power-holder is involved in order to carry out the favour or benefit of the peasant-client in his dealing with the state. It is a relationship between those who have influence and others who wish to benefit from its use. This relationship between the political patron and the client is

a private, unwritten, informal and highly personalistic agreement. There is no public institution to enforce such an agreement; enforcement is bound up in, and limited to, the face-to-face relationship. It rests upon private accountability.⁴⁹

Political patronage occurs and operates where and when there are no institutional guarantees for an individual's security, status and wealth. It functions as a personal security mechanism when personal security is in jeopardy and when impersonal social controls are unreliable. In this context, direct personal ties based on reciprocity substitute for law and strong institutions. It is in this situation where public law cannot guarantee adequate protection that the patron-client relation is the most useful and beneficial especially to the client. Greek peasants, as peasants in other countries, were poor and lived in a dangerous environment of scarcity where competition for wealth, power or even subsistence was perceived in zero-sum terms as for example, seeking employment in the public sector for their children; in this case, political patronage did occur very often. The survival of peasants was constantly threatened by natural disaster and by social and political forces beyond their control. In such a hostile environment, protection could be gained by depending on someone having a superior status and power at the cost of the peasants' independence.⁵⁰

An important aspect of the patron-client relationship is that the needs of the client tend to be essentially critical while the needs of the patron tend to be marginal. The bargaining power of the patron is by definition greater than that of the client. The patron is in a strong position while the client is in a weak one. The client is dependent upon and manipulated by the patron.⁵¹

The political patron expects loyalty from his client; he expects his client to vote for him in elections

continuously, in exchange for an immediate favour. In exchange for an expedient benefit the client is obligated to a lifelong support in elections by voting for the patron. This obligation being a strong moral force helps to bind the client to the patron. This obligation of the client to the patron leads to manipulation and exploitation of the client by the patron because the exchange is unbalanced and unequal. Clients have virtually no choice but to follow the patron who directly controls important and vital resources. The degree of dependence of peasants on a person who supplies valued services is a function of the differences between their value and that of the second best alternative open to them. The patron usually exercises a monopoly over distribution of resources; this makes clients more dependent on him. Because the patron-client linkage is a power relationship, a certain stability in power positions is best for this relationship. A patron retains his clients as long as he continues to dominate the supply of services they need.⁵²

It is practically impossible one political patron to carry out services for all clients or potential clients. Political patrons promise services to clients but very often do not fulfil their promises; they promise more services than they can carry out. In this way clients are manipulated by the political patron. Thus, political patronage excludes a large number of people from a number of their social and political roles because of their low status.⁵³

Very often the political patron was the *coumbaros* of a peasant, that is the godfather of his child. The godfather was a friend to the parent, protector of the godchild and the whole family. When the godfather was a politician, a deputy or a candidate etc. for example and used his office for favours or benefits the patronage was political. The politician expected his *coumbare*-clients to vote for him in

elections; the coumbare-clients expected favours and protection from their *coumbaro*-patron. This type of nepotism and the letter of recommendation associated with it, were considered by the peasants as an imperative in seeking public employment. On the other hand, peasants were considered certain voters by the politicians. It is worthy of note that only the politician J. Rallis alone had baptized more than 1,000 children.⁵⁴

Theoretically, clients did not need patrons' services. If the state apparatus had functioned according to the existing laws and regulations, clients would not have needed the mediation of patrons who usually carried out services which laws determine for all the people. In other words, all the people had the same rights which were not applied to them on purpose. The political patron was involved in "selling" to the clients as a favour what already belonged to them if the laws were equally applied to all; the patron "sells" the favour in order to bind clients to him, to obligate them and in return vote for him. This was heavily if not exclusively facilitated by the political system, which emphasized personalistic criteria as opposed to qualifications. It did so counting on reciprocity, that is, expecting votes for election and re-election.

Very often, local political party leaders the so-called *commatarches*, acted as mediators between the peasant and the party politicians or officials usually deputies or candidates. These mediators largely dominated the linkages of the village to the political system. *Commatarches* served as mediators to arrange an exchange between two parties who were not in direct contact. They functioned as agents because they themselves did not control the service transferred. Usually peasants were brought in contact with the politicians; the politician would carry out the service for the peasant, for example,

employment, loan, license, assistance, etc. At election campaigns, *commatarches* would remind the peasant of the favour in order to repay his obligation by voting for the politician.

Party patronage gains great importance as state power expanded by the establishment of new national or regional organizations, the initiation of new development or other programs of capital funds etc. These new resources of jobs and funds are typically administered or controlled by political party members or by persons designated by the parties. Recruitment for the jobs and distribution of funds is done through patronage. Political parties established extensive control over patronage. Through the use of patronage, the party leaders served as a link between the peasant and the complex governmental machinery. The close association, if not the identity, of the political party with the government opens new possibilities for patronage; once having gained control of these resources the parties use them to serve their own electoral ends. This situation tends to magnify the importance of political party leaders since they provide access to the resources of persons a peasant wishes to reach and influence. They also have the ability to deal effectively with the wider system which gives them their power.⁵⁵

Government and the political parties in government though being theoretically two separate systems, actually they were closely intertwined, if not overlapping. The parties which formed a government after national elections took over control of the state administrative apparatus and public organizations and became major lines of contact and communication since they were closely associated with the state which state had numerous activities. The parties in government tried to influence the flow of patronage to their clients and, very rarely to their potential clients, while the parties outside government focused on the

defense of their peasant clients.⁵⁶ Greece had a multi-party system in which more than one political party has competed for a peasant base of support through the elaboration of political patronage. All the bourgeois political parties practiced political patronage.

Bureaucracy, then, and political parties were penetrated by informal patron-client linkages which undermined the formal structure of authority. *Meson* is the Greek word for the mediator or the mediators who are involved between the peasant's request for the benefit or favour or even his right and its outcome. *Meson* can be the patron himself or the broker or the official power holder who carried out the favour. *Meson* equaled to corruption since connections counted and favoritism prevailed in dealings with state bureaucracy regardless of qualification criteria.

In fact, the *meson* practice even excluded qualified applicants from obtaining the public employment they deserved. The outcome of the use of *meson* called *rousfeti*. It emphasized particularistic criteria and served those having *meson* that is good connections, in their dealings with bureaucracy. For those having no *meson* - no good connections - bureaucracy was to a large extent impassive and unresponsive.⁵⁷

Politicians and/or administrators who exploited their public office to reward clients violated the formal norms of public conduct; in doing that, they acted corruptly.⁵⁸ Favours were distributed by the political party to the party's supporters irregardless of qualifications. This favoritism was based upon highly personal ties rather than upon universal and qualifications' criteria, since powerholders intervened in seeking benefits for themselves and for their supporters. It emphasized personal motives and greed in contrast with politics based on ideology or with public-spirited administration in which connections

become irrelevant. Thus, favoritism existed within the state structure and/or large scale organizations.⁵⁹

In the very nature of political patronage between the government and the peasant there is no ideological or programmatic content. Principles, ideals, values which ought to be included in a party ideology were reduced to the level of bargaining and pay-offs.⁶⁰

Consequently, the peasants were linked to the authority structure - hence power relationship - through personal ties of obligation and loyalty and not as members of the same ideological or social group. They did not struggle through that group, organized, for the representation of their broad interests and demands. This type of politics lacks ideology. Ideological political parties, such as the Agrarian Party, did not favour political patronage. The Agrarian Party did not see any principle in political patronage. It did not support favoritism. On the contrary, it wanted universal and achievement criteria to prevail in public life. Most important, it did not want to see peasants being deceived by the unfulfilled promises of the bourgeois politicians. The Agrarian party wanted peasants to assert and struggle for their rights instead of developing personalistic ties with the bourgeois politicians.⁶¹

It became evident that political patronage was of central importance at electoral campaigns in the periodic mobilization of peasant voters.⁶² The village *commatarches* competed for peasant votes for their party candidate. Competition occurred in terms of the number of peasant votes, very often for the votes of the same peasant. Each *commatarche* tends to influence peasants over whom he has some kind of critical leverage and peasants, on the other hand, had some kind of obligation. The same peasant, if he were obligated to more than one person, was approached by more than one *commatarche* to vote for his candidate.

Political parties at electoral campaigns took advantage of the patron-client relations, the favours bestowed in order to maximize their votes.⁶³ They also tried to attract more clients by promising them jobs, tangible benefits or other patronage. This was done in addition to the clients they already had through old favours and obligations. Before elections politicians and *commatarches* activated any possible link that might have given them votes.

Loyalties and obligations were personal and very often shifting.⁶⁴ Voters followed a candidate when he often moved from one bourgeois political party to the other. Party supporters were largely members of the "personal following" of the candidate rather than a disciplined ideological cadre. They were faithful clients to their political patron; they were even named after their political patron. They were not called conservatives, or progressives, or democrats, etc., but took the name of the politician they supported and followed. Thus, loyalty, obligation, intensity, persistence and scope of the relationship varied and fluctuated; it could be strong or weak.

However, a growing number of peasants were no longer at the disposal of the *commatarche* of the bourgeois political parties. The more conscious they became of their condition the more they moved away from the middle class political parties and everything these parties represented. Those peasants looked at both Venizelism and Anti-Venizelism as two corrupted political blocs.⁶⁵

Political scientists agree on the fact that political patronage is an obstacle to the participation of peasants in broad and mass organizations since it is based upon personal benefits and expectations as opposed to ideology. Clientelism is the opposite of large-scale organizations. With the successful establishment of a state-supported patronage system which provided personal favours and

benefits to peasant-clients, peasantry became "demobilized". The state with political patronage carried out basically by the politicians of the middle class political parties, tried to keep peasants indefinitely dependent on them and directed by them. These political patrons, favoured the organization of peasants from above, in order to prevent peasants from obtaining collective power. They also distorted the real nature of the problems of the peasantry - again in order to exclude peasants from having a voice of their own and participating in politics supporting their collective interests.⁶⁶

This state-supported patronage was one of the most serious obstacles to the growth of the Agrarian Political Party of Greece. Peasants who were linked to bourgeois politicians through patronage ties - tangible favours or promises for future favours - were reluctant to organize and give their electoral support to the Agrarian Party, an ideological party which supported their class interests. However, some peasants crossed that line and moved away from patronage networks. They were mobilized by the Agrarian Party, became organized and voted for it. This was the most class conscious and ideologically solid part of the peasantry.

We can, as well, infer that political patronage and political action based on ideology are mutually exclusive. People with an ideology and principles included in it would presumably not be involved in a patronage relationship, no matter how strongly they may desire a benefit; they consider it as a corruption and as against their principles. Those people would choose not to be obligated to the corrupt politicians of middle class parties but would assert themselves and their rights by other means, for example, being members and/or vote for a party which reflects and supports their class interests.

Political patronage was popular among the political

parties that formed a government or participated in a coalition government. The Agrarian Party, never participated in such a government. Even if it had, we can infer that it was not likely to use its power for political patronage, favouring some people and simultaneously doing injustice to others. The Agrarian Party advocated a public life of principles as opposed to personalistic favours, *rousfetia*, which were the outcome of the use of *meson*. And this was a whole new orientation for peasants and public life in general.⁶⁷ It takes a long time for peasants to move away from a deeply rooted patronage established in Greece over the decades since its independence. For that reason it was an extraordinary achievement for the Agrarian Party to attract the peasants it did with only its ideology, program and policy. It was also an achievement for these peasants who accepted the party appeal, trusted it and supported it the way they did - basically by voting for the Agrarian Party. If patron-client relations were less predominant in Greece, the appeal of the Agrarian Party to the peasants would have been greater. It was precisely these relations which limited the growth and development of the Agrarian Party and presented serious obstacles to it, despite the fact that the Agrarian Party supported the problems and the cause of peasants, while the middle class parties did not.

C. Political Polarization

The term polarization refers to the extent to which a population is divided politically into two antagonistic camps. Polarization contains the idea of bipolarity, of dualism. The population is divided in two large categories. There is a distance between those two categories. The greater the distance, the more polarized the society. The

political characteristic of polarization is measured by the extent to which a population is divided into groups or camps or blocs by differences in political behavior - political goals, party identifications, voting etc. One political group or bloc or camp views the other differently, very often in a negative or hostile way. Attitudes, aspirations, loyalties reflect the political differences, the political polarization.⁶⁸

The political polarization was an additional obstacle to the growth and development of the Agrarian Party, because it intensely involved and affected the peasants and/or the potential adherents of the Party. The peasants and/or the potential adherents were divided into two hostile camps mainly over the regime issue and not over real agrarian or other socio-economic issues.

The polarization between the two major political camps or blocs or worlds - Venizelism and Anti-Venizelism - influenced politics in interwar Greece, since the National Schism-Division. This schism was the result of the conflict between the King and Prime Minister Venizelos over the participation of Greece in the First World War. The conflict also involved the fate of the Greek population living outside the Greek borders, especially in Turkey.

The policy of the King was neutrality which favored the Central Powers. Venizelos wanted Greece to take the side of England and France, thinking that this was in the best interest of the country. King Constantine did not accept the policy of the elected Prime Minister Venizelos. Venizelos resigned and won the following elections of May 1915. The King did not accept this victory of Venizelos and again forced him to resign; he also dissolved the Chamber once again and called for new elections in December 1915 in which the Liberals did not participate.⁶⁹

During the year 1916 this conflict practically escalated into a civil war which lasted until the summer of

1917. On August 17, 1916 occurred the so-called "Movement of Thessaloniki" by the "National Defense", a group of Venizelist military officers and civilians. Venizelos became the leader of the "National Defense" and formed a Provisional Government in Thessaloniki, in addition to the government friendly to King Constantine in Athens, the capital of the Greek State. King Constantine had already abandoned Eastern Macedonia to Bulgaria which had occupied it. The "Movement of Thessaloniki" was not purely a Greek affair but was supported by the French military then stationed in Thessaloniki. The Allies, England and France, recognized the Provisional Government, granted it a loan of 25,000,000 golden drachmas, and stopped contact with the Government of Athens. Greece was divided into two states, the "State of Athens" and the "State of Thessaloniki". The "State of Thessaloniki" entered the war against the Central Powers.⁷⁰

The split became irreconcilable and escalated into actual civil war with the "November Days" in Athens. At that time, the Anti-Venizelist regime supported mob violence, terror and a program against Liberals which was never forgotten nor forgiven by the other side. In the following months, both sides massively persecuted opponents in the areas under their control. This hatred was transmitted throughout the interwar period. The blockade of the Entente Powers against the "State of Athens" (December 1916 - June 1917) resulted in a severe winter famine and massive hardship. People, especially in Old Greece, hated the Entente and Venizelos for it, also for the attempted and unsuccessful military intervention of the Entente.⁷¹

The British and the French, with brutal interference decided to overthrow King Constantine when they realized that they could not come to terms with him. In June 1917, the King resigned, left the country for Switzerland and his son Alexander succeeded him. The Provisional Government of

Thessaloniki resigned and Venizelos formed a new Government in Athens. He started a massive military recruitment and declared war against Germany and Bulgaria, taking the side of the Entente. He recalled the Chamber chosen by the May 31, 1915 elections and dissolved by King Constantine. The political opponents of Venizelos were sent into exile to the Aegean islands or were deported by the French to Corsica. Thus, he weakened the position of the King who favored the Central Powers and made Greece an excellent base for the strategic and/or imperialist interests of the Entente in the area.⁷²

This Government of Venizelos involved Greece in the Asia-Minor aggression with the occupation of the area of Smyrna in 1919, as well as Thrace. The Treaty of Sevres, July 28, 1920 brought about the so-called "Greece of the Two Continents and the Five Seas". Though Venizelos seemed successful due to the Treaty of Sèvres, he was defeated in the November 1920 elections mainly because the people from Old Greece who carried out the heavy burden of the Balkan Wars and were still suffering, wanted peace. Those people responded positively to the appeal of Anti-Venizelists "to bring their children back home from Asia-Minor". From 1920 to 1922 the Liberals were again subject to Royalist violence. In August 1922 the Greek army was defeated; it was the beginning of the Asia-Minor Catastrophe.

Following the Asia-Minor Catastrophe in September 1922, the military intervened in Greece. The so-called "Revolution of September 1922", under Colonel Plastiras came to power in order to bring unity back to the country and to consolidate political normalcy. The declaration of September 25, 1922, emphasized that the "Revolution" was above political parties and came to reorganize the army. It was also a transitional period, in the sense, that it would end, as soon as the present crisis was resolved. The action the military undertook was to court-martial the

Anti-Venizelist leaders, who were held responsible for the Asia-Minor Catastrophe. After conviction six were sentenced to death. That same day, November 15, 1922, they were executed, despite the pressure and influence on the government by the super-powers to save their lives. A day before these events, the Government of Krokidas resigned in order to avoid responsibility for this so-called "execution of the Six"; immediately, Piastiras declared himself leader of the "Revolution".⁷³

When the September 1922 military "Revolution" realized, that it no longer had a reason for being, since its purpose was fulfilled, it declared that elections for a Constituent Assembly would be held in December 1922. On October 22, 1922, a "counter revolution", actually a military counter coup d'etat occurred all over Greece, with the exception of the cities of Athens and Thessaloniki. It was attempted by pro-royal military officers, who were dissatisfied with the "Revolution of September 1922". Their attempt to seize power was not successful because Plastiras, Pagalos and Gonatas, the leadership of the "Revolution", had control over the Army and the Navy. Martial law was imposed on the country. A court-martial pronounced the death sentence to the leadership of the unsuccessful counter coup but it was never carried out. Several military officers, had to leave the army being involved in the counter coup. With this counter coup began the type of active military involvement in politics, which has ever since opposed the popular movement and the democratic institutions.⁷⁴

It should be noted here, that even though it is known in modern Greek history as a revolution, in actuality, the events of September 1922, were an example of a typical military coup d'etat. A revolution is a rapid, fundamental, and violent domestic change in the dominant values and myths of a society, in its political institutions, social

structure, leadership, government activity and policies. Revolution aims to remake society. Revolutions are thus to be distinguished from insurrections, rebellions, revolts, coups and wars of independence. A coup d'etat in itself, changes only leadership and perhaps policies, a rebellion or insurrection may change policies, leadership and political institutions, but not social structure and values. A war of independence, is a struggle of one community against rule by an alien community, and does not necessarily involve changes in the social structure of either community. Notable examples of revolutions are the French, Mexican, Russian, Chinese, Cuban, etc.⁷⁵

The Monarchy did fall and the Republic was declared by law in the Chamber of Deputies on March 25, 1924 - the Agrarian Party voted for the Republic - and was ratified by a plebiscite on April, 13, 1924. The returns of the plebiscite were 69.95% in favour of the Republic and 30.05% against it. The Royalists did not recognize the Republic until nine years later, in 1933. The above mentioned events and the attached memories caused the extreme polarization in political life of Greece which was very obvious during the period concerned in this study.⁷⁶

Polarization over the National Schism, the regime issue and their consequences was kept alive on purpose; to keep bloc and party cohesion at the leadership and at the mass level to achieve electoral victory. Repression by both sides was always reminded. "Fanaticism" divided most of the Greek people into two conflicting camps. It was in the interest of the two major bourgeois political parties to fanaticize the masses, distort the image of each other as well as the rest of the political parties. It was to the advantage of the Party of Liberals and the Popular Party to involve all the people in the two major trends, Venizelism and Anti-Venizelism. Polarization was intentional; it sought to present obstacles to the appeal and growth of the

Agrarian Party and keep peasants from leaving the bourgeois political parties.⁷⁷

Indeed, Venizelos focused his campaign for the elections on September 25, 1932, on the regime issue more than at any other time in the past. He manipulated the regime issue against his opponents in order to receive the electoral support of those Greek people who wanted to keep the Republic as their regime. His themes and symbols that "the Republic was in danger" and that there was a "threat of civil war" were created artificially to make people vote for him. In a joint statement, though, Tsaldaris, Zavitsianos, Papanastassiou and Kafandaris, all political party leaders, assured the Greek people that the Republic was, in fact, not in danger. In addition, P. Tsaldaris, the leader of the Popular Party from which, according to Venizelos the danger for the Republic was coming, assured A. Zaemis, the President of the Republic, that in case his party won the election it would not overthrow violently the Republic. He personally, did not care for the Monarchy and he added finally that the King, himself, did not want to come back to Greece unless all the Greek people wanted him to do so. Despite the above assurance of P. Tsaldaris, Venizelos, probably knowing that his messianic image and charisma were routinized and no longer reliable, insisted and emphasized throughout his electoral campaign that the Republic was in danger, that the military would intervene and that a new civil war was most likely to reoccur. On the contrary, it was the "Military Association", that is, the Venizelist military officers who threatened to intervene in case "the regime was in danger", actually in case people did not elect Venizelos again. This was terrorism by the state itself. It should be noted here that sections of the military were closely associated with the Party of Liberals or with the Popular Party. These sections used to intervene in Greek politics openly, or to exercise

influence behind the scene.⁷⁸

What were Anti-Venizelism and Venizelism all about? Let us point out their very basic characteristics.

Anti-Venizelism was a conservative, if not a reactionary bloc. It identified with Monarchy; for that reason, Anti-Venizelists were also called Royalists. The social base of Anti-Venizelism were class fractions, groups, strata and areas affected by efforts for change. It was a heterogeneous alliance defending traditional and particular interests, especially those of the bourgeoisie. The political expression of Anti-Venizelism was the Popular Party, the "party of all the people". The Popular Party was the major political party of the bloc or camp of Anti-Venizelism. Several other small parties and splinter groups existed which often were short lived. The Popular Party was established by Demetrios Gounaris in 1915 when the King appointed him Prime Minister after the first resignation of Venizelos. After the execution of Gounaris with the other five as being responsible for the Asia-Minor Catastrophe, Panayis Tsaldaris led the party. Very active within the Anti-Venizelist bloc was General John Metaxas, leader of the Free Opinion Party, who became a fascist dictator, on August 4, 1936. Very broadly, Anti-Venizelism was predominant in Old Greece.⁷⁹

Venizelism identified itself with the Republic. It was basically, but not exclusively, the political expression of the rising entrepreneurial bourgeoisie. Venizelism, it was also an inter-class alliance; it represented class fractions, groups and strata. In this inter-class alliance the entrepreneurial bourgeoisie that is, the bankers, the shipowners, the industrialists and the merchants predominated. Venizelos was the leader and the most influential person of the bloc and of the Party of Liberals who had established it. For a long time he was perceived by a considerable portion of the Greek population

as a charismatic leader. Venizelism was a coalition of smaller middle class political parties with the Party of Liberals which was the major political party of the bloc. Venizelism consisted of the following smaller middle class political parties: the Republican Union of Alexander Papanastassiou, which changed its name into Agrarian-Labour Party, was the so-called "Venizelist Left". It was considered by the Agrarian Party as a petty-bourgeois political party; the so-called "Venizelist Right" was Andreas Michalakopoulos with his Conservative Liberals and later Conservative Republicans; the so-called "Center-Right" of Venizelism was George Kafandaridis with his Progressives; another leader of a small Venizelist group, the National Republicans, was the General George Kondilis who later became an Anti-Venizelist, and finally, Themistocles Sofoulis, who succeeded Venizelos to the leadership of the Party of Liberals. The several small middle class political parties which composed not only the Venizelist bloc but also the Anti-Venizelist one, aimed to attract the various strata of the middle class, as well as the workers and the peasants. Indeed, the middle class was composed by different strata which had different origin and tradition and at times were conflicting with each other.⁵⁰

Given the political polarization, party, bloc or camp identification was strong and widespread in Greece during the interwar period. A considerable number of the Greek people were either Venizelists or Anti-Venizelists and usually Liberal or Popular Party identifiers respectively. Their ideology was diffuse and vague. For those parties on the other hand, "program" meant an electoral platform including the basic issues and promises put together for a specific election and often announced only a few days in advance.

The Agrarian Party was clearly against the Monarchy and very strongly and actively supported the Republic.

Indeed, it voted for "the fall of the Monarchy and for the declaration of the Republic" in the Chamber of Deputies on March 25, 1924. In addition, it urged the peasants and the working people to preserve their liberties by voting for the Republic again in the plebiscite on the restoration of the Monarchy, on November 3, 1935, where the Monarchy received 1,494,992 out of 1,524,446 total votes and the Republic 32,452 or 97.87% and 2.13% respectively. This plebiscite is known as "farcical" because of the adulteration of the results in favour of the Monarchy; there were even more votes than the registered voters!¹⁵

For the Agrarian Party, all the bourgeois political parties were the same, i.e. they represented all those who exploited the peasants; they represented corruption of the money-oligarchy. Despite possible inner antagonisms, all these political parties had the same social content, the same tendencies - they all served the exploitative big capital. The internal and foreign policy of both political blocs reflected and represented the interests of the Greek bourgeoisie. For example, the Popular Party and the Monarchy continued the same foreign policy Venizelos had started even though they promised to the Greek people to bring their children-soldiers back home from Asia-Minor and were elected upon a peace-making platform. The result of this policy was the Asia-Minor Catastrophe; both Venizelism and Anti-Venizelism were responsible for it. Precisely because they did not have essential social and economic difference, they thrust the regime issue before the people to arouse their fanaticism, to further advance polarization and to make them forget the real, vital and burning issues upon which the election ought to be decided. The Agrarian Party considered itself as the only serious opponent of both Venizelism and Anti-Venizelism. As a party of principles, the Party advocated the unity and the reconciliation of the Greek people; not the hatred and

revenge which caused the extreme political polarization^{s2}, which - polarization - was an obstacle to its growth and development.

D. The *Edeonemo* and the Slander

A severe obstacle imposed by the state in order to limit the growth of the Agrarian Party as well as the Communist Party, was the Law 4229 of 1929, "On security and protection of the existing social regime-order", known as *Edeonemo*. *Edeonemo* was used purposely to limit the party development by terrifying the peasants and discouraging them from supporting the party. According to this law, those whose ideas aimed at the violent overthrow of the existing social system or at the detachment of a part of the state, or at the proselytizing of those ideas, would be sentenced to imprisonment for at least six months and/or to displacement-deportation up to two years. The same was valid for those who in case of strike provoked agitation or clashes. Military officers or civil servants who made press publications and violated that law, were punished severely. Trade unions or associations which violated the *Edeonemo* were dissolved by court decision.^{s3}

This was the response of the government of Prime Minister Venizelos to the popular movement. It was continued by all the governments which succeeded Venizelos until the end of the period of this study and not only by the government of Venizelos who created it. It was used by all the bourgeois governments as it was designed to limit and punish revolutionary social and political ideas.^{s4}

Therefore, the *Edeonemo* became practically the official state ideology in its effort to defend the bourgeois order and crush radicalism. The Left was perceived as a threat; therefore, it had to be limited and

punished. The *Edeonemo* was also used for partisan purposes. It was an effort to keep voters within the bourgeois political parties instead of loosing them to the Left, to the Agrarian Party and to the Communist Party, which suffered the most from *Edeonemo*. The politicization of peasants, the growth of the Agrarian Party and the appeal of the party to peasants caused a great deal of anxiety among the bourgeois political parties. Peasants were the clientele of these parties; they were associated with them through political patronage. Peasants were victims of the demagogue of these parties which used various means to keep them as their electorate and to prevent the growth of the Agrarian Party. They used dishonest means to influence the peasants and to damage the image of the Agrarian Party.^{es}

The *Edeonemo* effectively carried out the terrorism of the state. Let us give an example of this climate of terrorism by the state: from July 1929, when the law was put in effect until the end of December 1932, 12,000 people of the Left were arrested, 2,203 received sentences for a total of 1,936 years of imprisonment and 785 years of exile; 1,462 peasants and workers were tortured and injured by the police. Finally, 120 soldiers were sent to the "disciplinary camp" in Kakpaki, Epirus, especially created for soldiers of the Left.^{es}

Together with the *Edeonemo*, slander was used against the Agrarian Party. The accusations and the slander against the Agrarian Party were very strong. The bourgeois political parties were telling the peasants that the activists of the Agrarian Party were merchants, therefore, against the interests of peasants or that they were Royalists or Anarchists or Communists or that the Agrarian Party was an anti-nationalistic party. For all those reasons, peasants should ignore the Agrarian Party. This slander and the subsequent polemic against the Agrarian Party was oriented to distort its image, prevent its mass

appeal and growth and, ultimately, to dissolve the party.⁸⁷

Activists of the Agrarian Party were classified as communists and were put in jail or sent into exile on small islands, especially on the island of Yavdos. An example of a party activist who was exiled was Eaeocles Foteadis from Kavala; this was done according to the *Edeonemo*. The "marches into towns of the starving peasants" which were supported by the Agrarian Party, were classified "illegal" by the government and therefore had to be punished. It was precisely the policy of the government towards the issues illustrated in Part Three which put peasants in that desperate situation and justified their marches. Obviously, there was a climate of terrorism.

Very strong pressure on the Agrarian Party activists was intended to terrify the people and prevent party growth. The bourgeoisie, using *Edeonemo* achieved its purpose to a certain extent. It limited considerably the growth and development of the Agrarian Party. That climate terrified some peasants who feared imprisonment or deportation. Activists on the other hand, instead of being intimidated and stop the party activities, became even more militant in supporting the cause of the peasants. Nevertheless, the climate of terror damaged the party. The polemic against the Agrarian Party was very effective and the use of *Edeonemo* widespread. For this reason, the party asked for the abolishment of the *Edeonemo* and for the general amnesty of all political prisoners and exiles. The Agrarian Party never officially declared that it intended a violent overthrow of the existing order, or to give away a part of the country. Therefore, it had never violated the *Edeonemo*.⁸⁸

E. The Anti-Cooperative Laws

Another obstacle of the state in preventing peasants from acting collectively on their own interest were a series of anti-cooperative laws. As already pointed out, the Agrarian Party wanted the cooperatives to organize the production of crops and the distribution of these crops to the market. The party supported the participation of peasants in cooperatives for the economic and political advantages cooperatives offered to them as already discussed.

The cooperatives eliminated the profits of the middlemen and the moneylenders, and supported peasants in claiming their rights. This was not favorable to the bourgeois governments which supported these groups. Therefore, these governments did not favour a mass, popular and radical cooperative movement led by the Agrarian Party. The state reacted strongly with a series of anti-cooperative laws. These laws were directed not only against the cooperatives but also against the Agrarian Party, because most of the active members of cooperatives were at the same time active members of the Agrarian Party, and because the Agrarian Party supported the activities of cooperatives.⁸³

These anti-cooperative laws included: Law 4640 of 1930 which was anti-constitutional. As already pointed out, according to this law, a Senator, a Deputy, a Mayor or even a candidate for those offices was not permitted to run as a candidate and to be a member of the administrative council of a cooperative or a union of cooperatives, unless three years had passed from the time his term of office had expired. In actuality though, this law applied only to the Agrarian Party, as it was designed, and not to the bourgeois political parties. Evidently, at the electoral campaign for the Senatorial by-election in the prefecture

of Thessaloniki on February 8, 1931, Prime Minister Venizelos himself wrote a circular to the presidents of the agricultural cooperatives of the prefecture encouraging them to work very hard together with the members of their cooperatives to insure the election of the candidates of the Party of Liberals. Such was the hypocrisy of the government; it prohibited the political involvement of only those cooperative administrations who were "friendly" to the Agrarian Party but not those favoring bourgeois political parties.⁹⁰

Another anti-cooperative law was Law 5389 of 1931. This law excluded from the cooperatives young people and those who had violated the *Edeonemo*, that is, members of the Agrarian and the Communist Parties. In addition to those laws, Laws 5277, 5420 and others, from 1930 until 1932, stopped the progress of cooperatives and put them under the guidance and control of the Agrarian Bank and through, that Bank, the state itself, as already pointed out.⁹¹ The anti-cooperative laws were not acceptable to the Agrarian Party nor to the peasants. They functioned, nevertheless, as a serious obstacle in preventing the growth and development of the Agrarian Party, by preventing the politicization of peasants and discouraging them from claiming and asserting their rights.

13. PEASANTS, CLASS CONSCIOUSNESS AND POLITICAL ACTION

Another obstacle to the growth of the Agrarian Party was the fact that not all peasants believed that they belonged to a social class which by itself could act on its own interest; not all peasants had the class consciousness which would enable them to accept the appeal of the party.

Karl Marx gave an account of the special position of the proletariat in society and in history, and the stand

point from which it can function as the identical subject-object of the social and historical process of evolution. "When the proletariat proclaims the dissolution of the previous world-order it does no more than reveal the secret of its own existence, for it represents the effective dissolution of that world-order." The self-understanding of the proletariat is, therefore simultaneously the objective understanding of the nature of society. When the proletariat furthers its own class aim, it simultaneously achieves the conscious realization of the objective aims of society, aims which would inevitably remain abstract possibilities and objective frontiers but for this conscious intervention.⁹²

The historical knowledge of the proletariat begins with knowledge of the present, with the self-knowledge of its own social situation. Above all, the worker can only become conscious of his existence in society when he becomes aware of himself as a commodity; in the commodity the worker recognizes himself and his own relations with capital.⁹³

The growing class consciousness that has been brought into being through the awareness of a common situation and common interests is by no means confined to the working class. Consciousness is important to initiate political action. There is a practical interaction of the awakening consciousness and the objects from which it was born and of which it is the consciousness. It is important to know how the people themselves judge their situation and how they will react.⁹⁴

Karl Marx sees consciousness as a practical, critical activity with the task of changing the world. This is what is important about consciousness: to serve as the basis for the type of political action aimed to change the world. When knowledge, cognition of existence in society, cognition about the political system as well as orientation

of the role of the self in this political system, feelings, judgements, opinions - information in general - become useful for political participation aimed to change a condition, then class consciousness has an important practical manifestation.⁹⁵ Peasants were expected to do something politically once they realized their situation, once they became aware of their existence. These peasants, for Karl Marx, are the ones who form a class, the ones who realize identity of interests among each other and in opposition to other classes.

Peasants form a class to the degree that they live under economic conditions of existence that separate their mode of life, their interests, and their culture from those of other classes, and put them in hostile opposition to these classes. In so far as there is merely a local interconnection among these (smallholding) peasants, and the identity of their interests begets no community, no national bond and no political organization among them, they do not form a class.⁹⁶

For Karl Marx, those peasants who belong to and participate in a political organization, and who are aware of the identity of interests, the "community" and the "bond" with each other - those form a class. The peasant class is understood only with respect to hostile opposition to other classes and the identity, community, bond and political organization among the peasants themselves. Social class is a position of interrelationship, that is, conflict with other classes, community of interests and political organization among the very same class. These politically organized peasants are the radical ones.

The misery of peasants contributed the most to their political awakening. The social and economic condition of the peasants which, instead of improving, was becoming worse, attributed to their political awakening. Those peasants realized their condition, and knew who their

enemies were: capital in the form of banks, the moneylenders, the middlemen, and the state itself. "Thousands" of peasants acquired a consciousness of being a separate class, developed a solidarity among each other, they identified their enemies and exploiters and considered the repressive state, which favored their exploiters as also being their exploiter. Those peasants were in a situation of class struggle against their exploiters, against those who "sucked their blood and sweat". They participated in mass rallies, mass protests and hunger marches into the cities. During these mass rallies and protests they further crystallized their class consciousness. Thus, it was an interaction between class consciousness and mass protests and/or other forms of political action which made consciousness more intense and political action more militant. The peasants blamed responsibility for their condition not only on the government but on all middle class political parties. Once the peasants became aware of their condition, they moved away from those political parties and supported the Agrarian Party. This awareness in turn was enlarged by the Agrarian Party. Peasants moved away from the traditional political patrons. They no longer yielded to the insistence of those political patrons to vote or support the candidates of the middle class political parties and they alienated themselves from those parties. Furthermore, the peasants no longer believed in charismatic appeals. A change had occurred. Peasants who became conscious of their existence and realized which road they ought to follow in order to achieve their emancipation, supported the Agrarian Party. This could be considered as an indicator of the class consciousness and the political awakening of the peasants. The party moved them from the stage of passivity or action associated with the bourgeois political parties into the stage of political action directed to struggle for

their rights.⁹⁷

In this way voting and political participation are considered as indicators of class consciousness. In leftist voting and radical political participation, class consciousness has a concrete expression and a manifestation aimed to change a situation.⁹⁸

Unfortunately, not all peasants believed that a social class, by itself, could act on its own interests. Not all peasants had class consciousness. Those who had gave it a concrete expression. They were the ones who participated in mass rallies, protests and other forms of political action on their own interest. They were the most politicized and the most radical peasants. They were the ones who confronted the obstacles placed by the state, asserted themselves, claimed their rights in order to improve their condition and ultimately achieve their emancipation. Those were the ones, who supported the Agrarian Party and voted for it; the party in turn, with its policy based on its ideology and program, supported all the peasants.⁹⁹

The electoral returns shown in TABLE 11 clearly demonstrate that the Agrarian Party received more votes in some electoral districts than in others. The issues, however, which concerned the Greek peasants were vital and urgent throughout the country. Everywhere in Greece peasants lived under the same poverty and exploitation. The politics of the Agrarian Party with respect to these issues was the same for all the peasants of the country. Furthermore, the structural isolation due to the mode of production was the same; all peasants worked dispersed and isolated, consequently hard to be mobilized by the Agrarian Party.

The electoral support was due to the Party's capacity in mobilizing and organizing the peasants. In other words, it was more a matter of degree of mobilization and organization of peasants by the Agrarian Party and less an

extent of regional peculiarities and uniqueness. Agrarian Party organizers explained to the peasants the ideology, program and politics of the party. They showed to the peasants that the Agrarian Party supported their rights while the various bourgeois governments and the bourgeois political parties suppressed them.¹⁰⁰

Peasants in these areas were more easily mobilized by the Agrarian Party. The struggle for agrarian reform was more intense there and peasants were more receptive to the ideology, program and politics of the Agrarian Party. The legacy of Marinos Antipas who struggled for agrarian reform and was subsequently assassinated by John Keriakos, a paid organ of the *tsiflikades* on March 9, 1907 in Peryetos, Larisa, and of the Kileler and Tsoular events, where peasants were killed and injured by the army on their way to a mass rally whose main demand was the agrarian reform in Larisa on March 6, 1910 were more recent to them and still remembered.¹⁰¹

There may be attributed a conservatism to peasants in areas where the Agrarian Party received less or even no votes. This was not the case though. Peasants there, especially in some parts of Old Greece, carried out the heavy burden of the national integration of the country; the liberation of Macedonia and a part of Epirus during the Balkan Wars of 1912-1913. They also suffered the most from the First World War and the Asia-Minor adventure. The peasants from these areas of Old Greece were tired of war. They wanted peace, tranquility and stability; consequently, they were harder to mobilize by the Agrarian Party.

In those areas, however, there were radical peasants who had acquired class consciousness and political awareness during the wars¹⁰², or in the struggle for vindication, or through other experiences. Those peasants were more receptive to the appeal of the Agrarian Party and therefore more easily to be mobilized.

Even though the majority of the peasants, especially in most areas of Old Greece, became smallholders through the agrarian reform prior to the formation of the Agrarian Party, they also had vital and urgent problems with respect to agrarian reform, taxation, credit, debts, prices, protection of crops and animals against natural disaster, as well as, social security. When and where the Agrarian Party was present, that is, it had local organizations, made itself known to the peasants and mobilized them, peasants supported the party and they voted for it. Such an example is the election of September 25, 1932 in the district of Pelia, Messinia in which Loulis Tsiklitis was elected Deputy of the Party. His election was due to the intense campaign and work of Party activists and organizers with the peasants. On the other hand, the Agrarian Party did not elect always Deputies in all districts in which the sharecropped estates prevailed and the struggle for agrarian reform was more intense, as for example in Thessaly, or in Macedonia, or in the area of Kopae, or in several other areas. The issue was not only land reform. Certainly it was very important, but of equal importance were the issues of taxation, credit, debts, prices, protection of crops and animals against natural disaster and social security of peasants. All those issues were vital to all peasants everywhere in the country. When and where the Agrarian Party had active and dynamic organizations it was possible indeed to build up a following of voters and supporters. One should note not only the districts in which Party candidates were elected, but also all the districts in all elections in which the Party received votes not sufficient though to elect deputies. It was therefore, a question of actual organizational work in mobilizing the peasants at the mass level.¹⁰³

One possibly should have expected sweeping victories

of the Agrarian Party under social conditions of injustice, inequality and exploitation; however, social conditions by themselves do not necessarily generate class struggle and collective political action aimed at social change. Social structures and economic forces are merely the preconditions for political action and not their determinants. Certainly they provide the basis for it, but this is not sufficient. A political organization is necessary to play a leading role in the mobilization.¹⁰⁴

Peasant political radicalism does not derive from structural social and economic characteristics by itself; it is not the necessary result of those characteristics. The role of the political party is central to the explanation of peasant political radicalism and should be stressed. The ideological appeal, the program and the politics of the Agrarian Party were significant in seeking to improve the condition of peasants and in organizing them. The Party was an imperative in giving direction and meaning to the struggle for the elimination and ultimate abolition of injustice, inequality and exploitation.¹⁰⁵

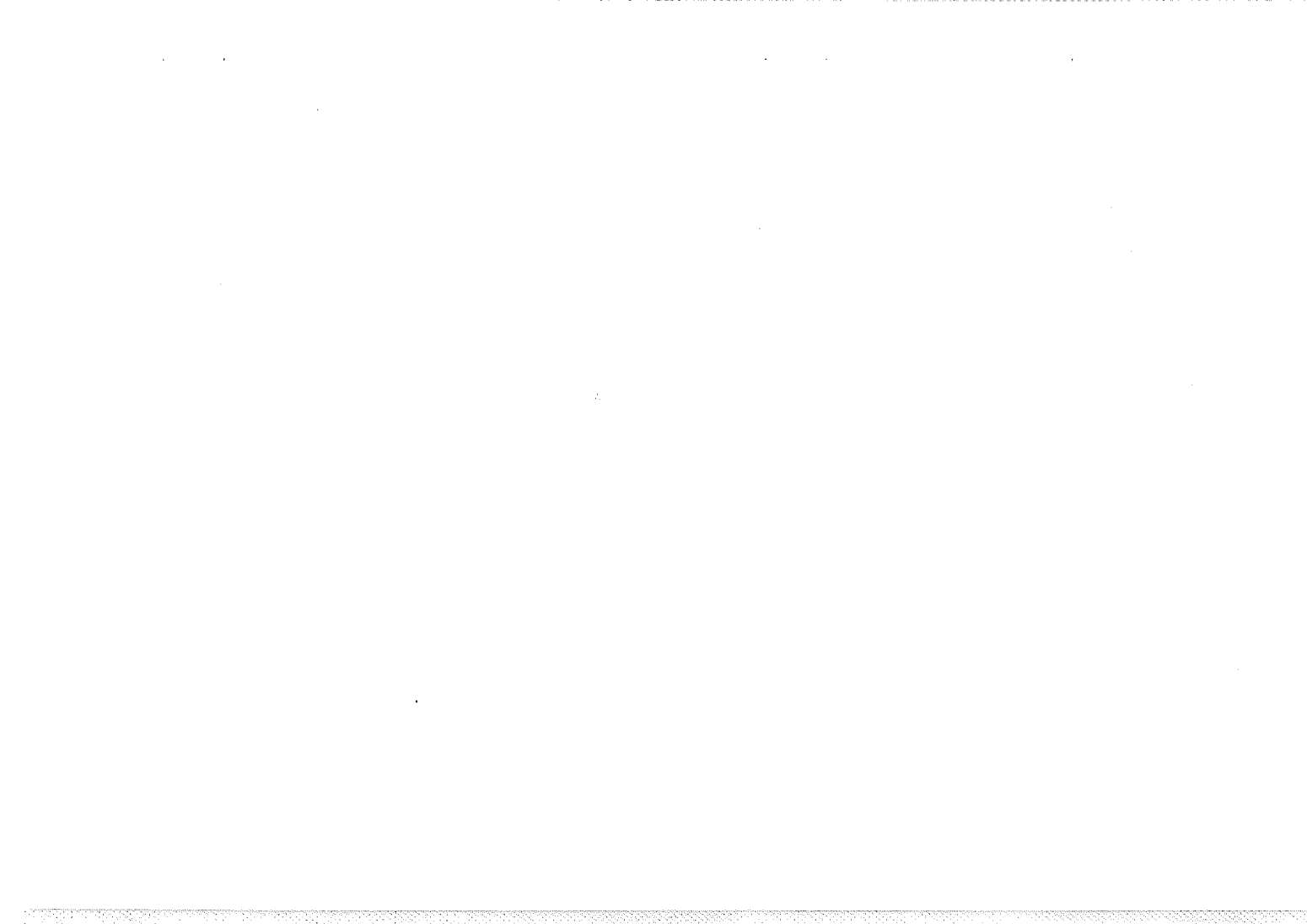
The activity of the Agrarian Party shows that Greek peasants, as peasants in other countries, had potential power for political action. Even though they were passive or submissive at times, when the Agrarian Party provided the needed political organization and leadership, peasants mobilized and moved, despite obstacles, from the stage of passivity or inaction into political action aimed at social change. So, passivity was not a permanent state of affairs. The Agrarian Party revealed - to the extent it did - the potential of peasants to support their own rights, as well as their own political party.¹⁰⁶

Evidently, the Agrarian Party did not have candidates and tickets, in all elections throughout the country; it did not participate in all electoral districts. When and where the Party participated in elections, peasants being

mobilized by it, supported and voted for it. On the contrary, when and where the party organization was weak or inadequate or even absent, the peasants did not have their own political party to support and vote; they were not called to vote for their own political party - the Agrarian Party. Thus, political organizations such as the Agrarian Party provide the key to understand peasant politics and agrarian social movements; political organizations also provide fundamental explanations as to whether or not these social movements are successful.¹⁰⁷

The Agrarian Party in addition to its own weaknesses and inadequacies encountered the severe obstacles which were deliberately placed by the state to limit its growth and development, as well as those found in the peasants. Indeed, these obstacles were too many and too strong for the Party to overcome. The state power effectively discouraged peasants, especially those who had no class consciousness and political awareness from voting and supporting a political party of their own. This occurred despite the fact that the ideology, program and politics of the Agrarian Party supported the rights of all peasants and defended the civil liberties of all Greek people. The peasants who supported and voted for the Agrarian Party were the ones who acknowledged the fact that the Party was contributing the most to their cause by struggling to improve their condition and ultimately achieve their emancipation.

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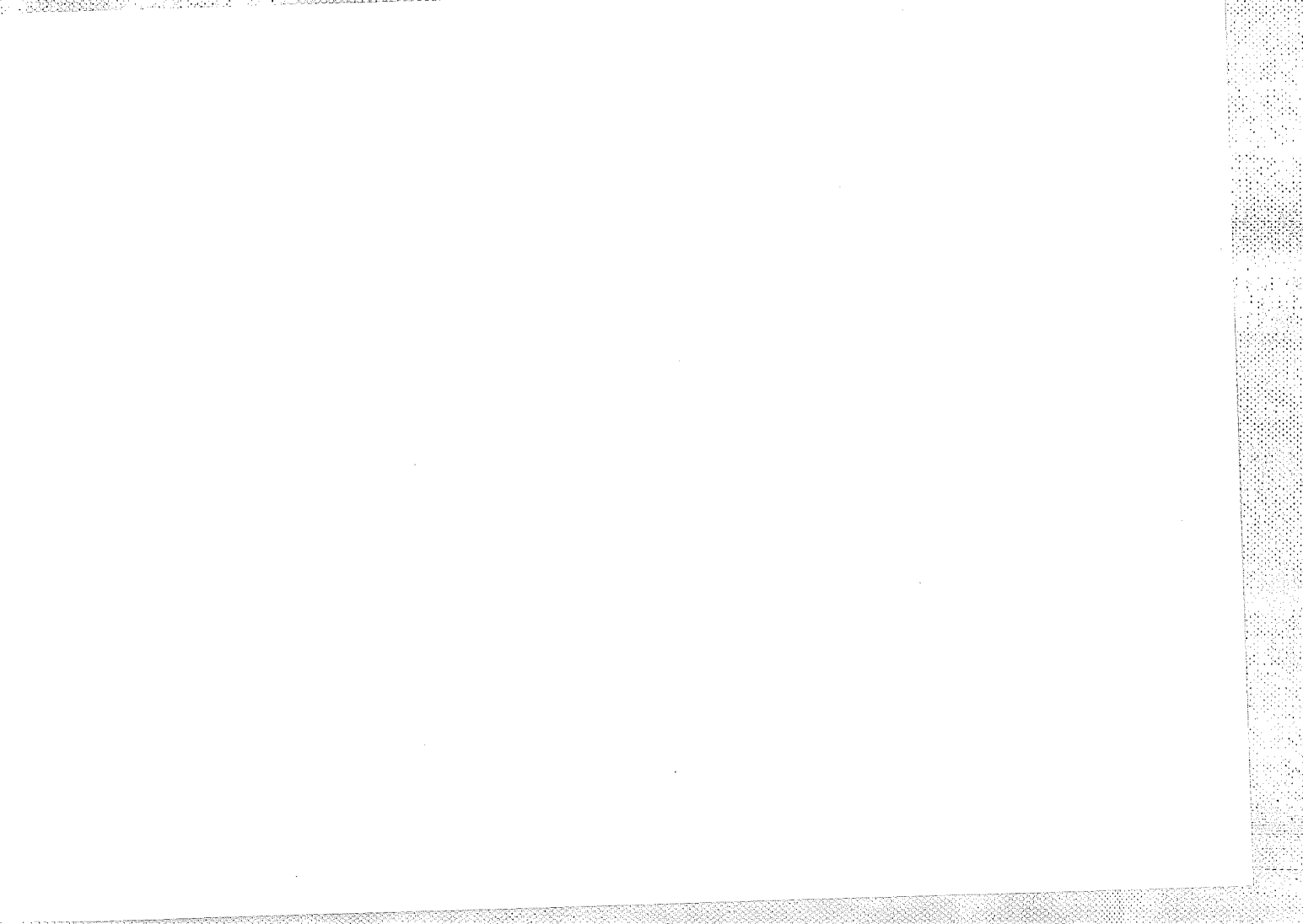
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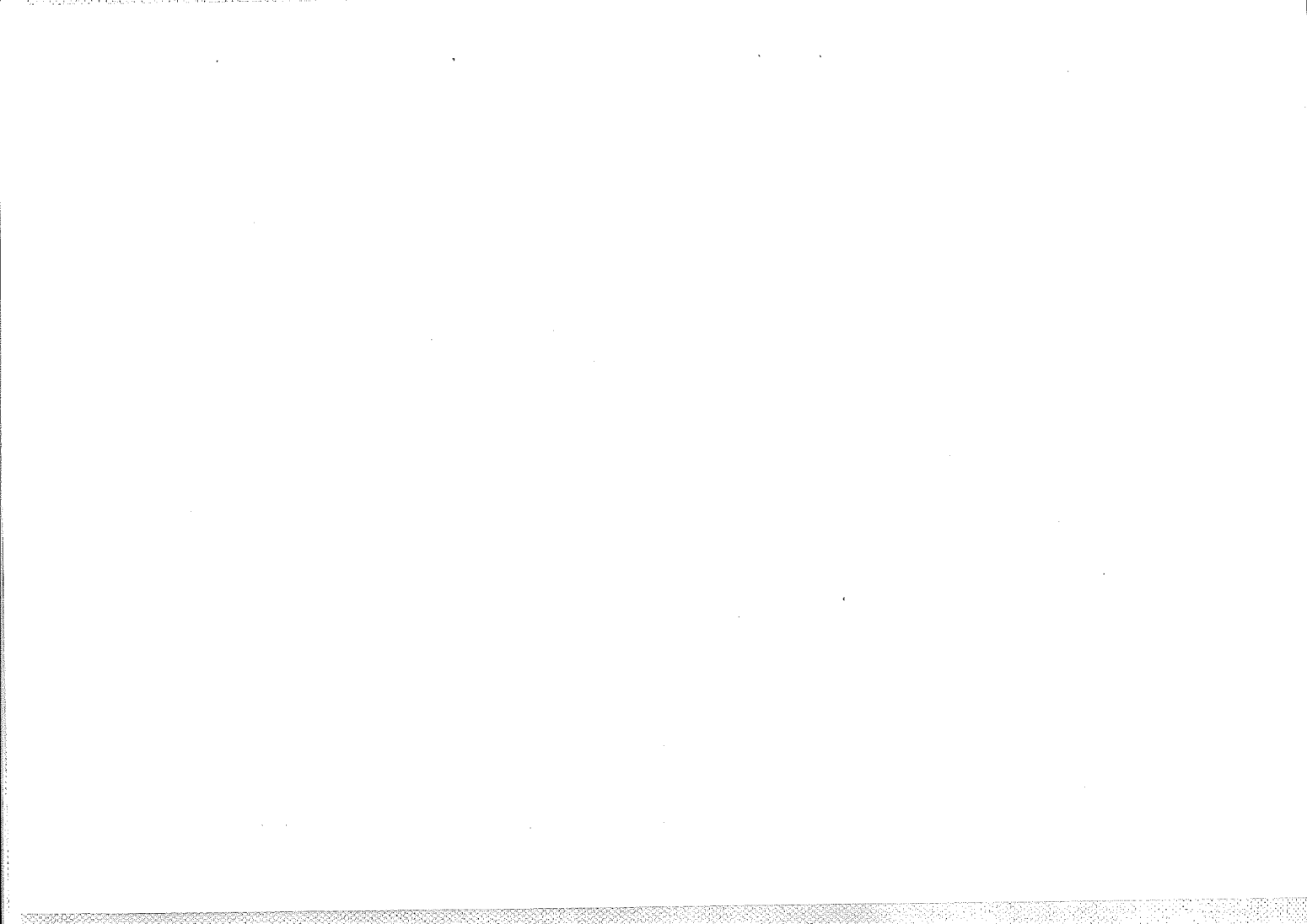
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SAMENVATTING IN HET NEDERLANDS

De Agrarische Politieke Partij van Griekenland heeft tegen veel verzet in bestaan van 1922 tot 1936. Zij stelde zich de politieke organisatie van de boerenstand ten doel. Haar problemen hangen dus ten nauwste samen met kwesties die van belang zijn voor de kleine Griekse boeren.

Van de grootste betekenis hierbij is bovendien de rol van de overheid, het heersende politieke systeem en de manier waarop de staatsmacht uitgeoefend wordt. Hoe ook de samenstelling van de diverse regeringen was, altijd ging hun politiek beleid als vanzelfsprekend uit van de uitbuiting van de kleine boeren door grootgrondbezitters, makelaars en geldschieters. Dat zijn dus zowel zij die een aandeel kregen uit de arbeidsopbrengst in de vorm van pacht, winst of rente, als zij die konden profiteren van de schulden nood ontstaan door de eisen die de vaak slechte grond stelde, alsook zij die profiteerden van de handel in agrarische produkten en dus de opbrengst van de grond: allemaal meest groepen uit de middenstand. Bovendien participeerde de staat zelf in de uitbuiting van de boeren door het belastingstelsel.

De problemen waarmee de Griekse boeren geconfronteerd

werden stonden niet alleen: zij waren het gevolg van een maatschappelijke structuur die door overheidsbeleid overeind gehouden werd. De overheid duldde op zijn minst, maar ondersteunde ook vaak de problemen die tot deze problemen leidden. Effectieve bescherming bestond bovendien van overheidswege niet wanneer misoogsten, veeziekten en natuurrampen de boeren troffen. Hun noden werden veeleer opzettelijk veronachtzaamd, zodat voor hen elke sociale zekerheid ontbrak.

Daar komt bij, dat op grond van de sociale en economische machtsverhoudingen in het land de overheid steeds zoveel doenlijk de boeren belemmerde om aan de organisatie van een eigen politieke partij deel te nemen. Het algemene beleid van de landsoverheid was immers gekant tegen "klassepartijen"? Ja, tegen iedere vorm van een radikale boerenvolksbeweging werd vijandig aangekeken. Zo was alle streven van regeringswege erop gericht de aantrekkingskracht, die de ideologie, het programma en de politiek van de Agrarische Partij op de boeren zou kunnen uitoefenen, te beperken. De staat benutte en vergrootte haar gezag met het doel de groei van de Agrarische Partij te belemmeren.

De studie is onderverdeeld in vier hoofddeelen.

Deel 1 omvat een studie van Griekenland als agrarisch land en geeft een beschrijving van het pachtstelsel en de sociale structuur op het platteland. Aan de orde komen het land, de eigenaren en de boeren. Ook de economische omstandigheden van de boeren zijn hier behandeld. Dit deel bevat dus de sociale en economische achtergronden, het kader waarbinnen de Agrarische Partij moest functioneren. Het geeft de materiële omstandigheden van de boeren, op de verbetering waarvan het beleid van de partij gericht was.

Deel 2 betreft het ontstaan en de identiteit van de Agrarische Partij. Zij werd opgericht om te strijden voor het oplossen van de dringende en essentiële problemen van

de kleine boeren. Deze, zo was de redenering, zouden daarmee hun bestaan in eigen hand kunnen nemen en zich niet langer onderwerpen aan "het lot" en "de voorbestemming". Meer dan op enig ander tijdstip leefde in de eerste vredesjaren het bewustzijn omtrent de uitbuiting door de grote landeigenaren, de makelaars en de overheidsorganen. Toen begonnen voor het eerst in Griekenland kleine boeren, levend met beperkte visies, een intensief en militant politiek perspectief te ontwikkelen. Bij hen ontkiemde iets van klassebewustzijn en politiek besef.

Aangezien het belangrijkste, hoewel geenszins het enige, oogmerk van de Agrarische Partij was om "het land aan de akkerman" te geven, illustreert dit deel hoe in Griekenland de vorm van landbeheer tot stand gekomen is die gold ten tijde van de oprichting van de Agrarische Partij. Ingegaan is op de inspanningen die al dan niet leidden tot een wijziging daarin na de hergrieking van het Noorden die na de eerste wereldoorlog plaats vond. Hier liggen de algemene achtergronden die verklaren wanneer, hoe en waarom, de Agrarische Partij werd opgericht. Tevens worden de identiteit en de organisatiestructuur van de Agrarische Partij aan de orde gesteld, namelijk haar ideologie, programma en werkwijze. De ideologie van de Agrarische Partij - de "agrarische hervorming" - die deel uitmaakte van haar programma, bood een totaalconcept voor de wijze waarop de Griekse samenleving geherstructureerd zou moeten worden en diende als leidraad voor de politieke actie van de partij. Maar hoe die actie gevoerd moest worden en- algemener - hoe geopereerd moest worden tussen andere partijen en instellingen, dat blijkt enigermate omstreden. De beschrijving van de organisatiestructuur van de partij toont de betekenis van congressen en besturen voor de besluitvorming in de partij en het effect daarvan: in hoeverre kon ze aan de eerst uitgezette programmatische koers vasthouden in een politiek systeem dat eigenlijk

nauwelijks principiële partijen kende?

In deel 3 is aandacht besteed aan de politiek van de Agrarische Partij met betrekking tot de agrarische hervorming, de belastingheffing op de produktie, de kredietverlening en schulden. Oogstprizen, het beschermen van oogst en vee tegen natuurrampen, en de sociale zekerheid komen hier aan de orde. Deze kwesties hangen samen met overheidsbeleid. Het overheidsbeleid ten aanzien van deze kwesties was bepalend voor de leefomstandigheden van de boeren. De Agrarische Partij ging daarop in door ten aanzien van bovengenoemde kwesties de door haar gestelde en onder de boeren levende eisen te ondersteunen. Zij was een oppositiepartij in die zin dat zij nooit regeringsmacht bezeten heeft om haar programma uit te voeren. Wel presenteerde ze voorstellen aan de regeringen, die, indien uitgevoerd, ten goede zouden zijn gekomen aan de boeren en de samenleving als geheel. De politiek van de Agrarische Partij was gebaseerd op haar ideologie, haar programma en de alledaagse werkelijkheid. Zij hield vast aan haar ideologie en programma in haar strijd voor ondersteuning van de belangen van de boeren ten einde hun bestaan te verbeteren en uiteindelijk hun emancipatie te verwezenlijken.

Ten slotte heeft deel 3 tot onderwerp de deelneming van de Agrarische Partij aan de vorming van het Verenigd Antifascistisch Front en het Volksfront. De Agrarische Partij was een republikeinse partij en het was in overeenstemming met haar ideologie dat zij deelnam aan deze vorm van een links democratisch bondgenootschap. Dit besluit verbreedde haar reikwijdte in de strijd voor het behoud van de burgerlijke vrijheden, voor het oplossen van de essentiële problemen van alle werkenden en voor het verhinderen van de komst van een militaire fascistische dictatuur. Hieruit blijkt waarvoor in haar meest directe politieke stellingname de Agrarische Partij stond: een

democratisch regime.

Hoe reageerden ondertussen de boeren op de Agrarische Partij? Steunden zij haar werkelijk of hingen zij de bourgeois partijen aan, wier parlementskandidaten niet echt voor hen opkwamen zodra ze deel uitmaakten van de volksvertegenwoordiging en/of de regering? En hoe is de vijandige positie van de Griekse staat ten opzichte van de Agrarische Partij nader te preciseren?

In deel 4 is ingegaan op deze vragen en worden de hinderpalen die de Agrarische Partij op haar weg vond, beschreven. Zij had te maken met drie onderling samenhangende categorieën obstakels:

1. de organisatorische zwakheden en tekortkomingen van de partij zelf;
2. de belemmeringen opgeworpen door de staat;
3. de weerstanden die hun oorsprong hadden bij de boeren.

Het resultaat van deze veelvuldige weerstand uit het politiek bestel blijkt telkenmale bij verkiezingen. Na iedere verkiezingscampagne is het duidelijk dat bovendien verband te leggen is tussen de uitslagen en de organisatie van de Agrarische Partij. Districtsgewijs zijn er grote verschillen, die op het eerste gezicht op incidentele punten terug te voeren lijken - bij nader inzien getuigen ze ervan, hoezeer het al of niet bestaan van een partijorganisatie met actieve aanvoerders en een goed werkend propaganda-apparaat de doorslag gaf. De organisatie fluctueerde, soms was zij hier sterk en daar zwak, soms ook was dat andersom.

Hier manifesteren zich bovendien het duidelijkst de obstakels opgeworpen door de Griekse staat, die dienden om de aantrekkingskracht van de Agrarische Partij op de boeren te beperken en om hen te verhinderen collectief op te treden als een sociale klasse. Deze inmenging van de staat in de groei en ontwikkeling van de Agrarische Partij bestonden uit:

- A. manipulatie van het electorale systeem;
- B. veelvuldig gebruik van politieke begunstiging;
- C. opzettelijk gecreëerde politieke polarisatie met behulp van de reactionaire "Edeonemo", propagandistisch uitgebuite laster tegen de Agrarische Partij, en de anti-coöperatiewetten.

Daarnaast steekt de laatste maar niet minste belemmering in het feit, dat niet alle boeren kwamen tot het klassebewustzijn en het daarmee verbonden politieke besef dat hen in staat had kunnen stellen de Agrarische Partij als hun eigene te herkennen. Alle in dit deel besproken obstakels waren aan elkaar verwant en alle beïnvloedden de steun of het gebrek daaraan voor de Agrarische Partij.

Aan de hand van de verkiezingsresultaten, de congresbesluiten (vooral ten aanzien van eventuele coalitievorming) en de diverse obstakels wordt ten slotte de eigenlijke geschiedenis van de partij geschreven: de belangrijkste gebeurtenissen en de fasen waarin deze elkander opvolgen. Hiermee komen tevens naar voren de belangrijke politieke variabelen binnen het Griekse politieke systeem, dat wil zeggen de context waarbinnen de Agrarische Partij moest opereren en die haar werkzaamheden zo bemoeilijkt heeft.