PART ONE. INTRODUCTION: HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

ORIGINS OF THE RURAL SOCIAL STRUCTURE

On the eve of the Second World War agricultural labor all over Europe was manifold in character. In the regions where large estates prevailed, it might be part of the modern working class as it emerged from the industrial revolution; wherever landed aristocracy existed, it still preserved features of the feudal servant class. On the other hand, in regions of small farming the distinction between employer and employee was not clear-cut. The small farmer was nearer to the farm worker—and could become one intermittently—than to the big farm owner. Lack of understanding of this social structure and the attempts of industrial labor to treat farm labor indiscriminately as part of the working class aroused much discontent in rural areas and, in some cases, made the small farmer inclined to associate himself with Fascist movements. No essay about farm labor, therefore, can disregard the system of land tenure.

In Germany at the end of the First World War agricultural land was owned prevailingly by powerful squires in the east and by peasants[1] in the south and west, with only a few large estates scattered in the center, south, and west. Of the land under cultivation 62.2 per cent belonged to farms ranging in size from 10 to 100 ha. The Elbe, which separated the two parts of the country, formed an agrarian and cultural frontier. A serious labor problem existed only on the estates east of the Elbe, in the territory under colonization. But the role played by these estate owners in the political and social life of Prussia, and incidentally of all Germany, made labor conditions there a matter of national importance. The big land owners who dominated the German army and bureaucracy believed that the state was obliged to protect their privileges. Most of the agricultural population, still influenced by feudal traditions, accepted the leadership of this minority group. The preponderant influence of the feudal estate owners during the Empire was the more striking since not they, but the middle-class farmers, were the backbone of German agriculture. To understand the position of the farm

[1] According to German statistics, owners of holdings up to 100 ha. were called peasants. However, owners of large estates (Gutsbesitzer) differed from peasants more by their social status, their education, and manner of living than by size of the holding. Whereas the word "farmer" connotes an occupational status, the word "peasant" indicates a class status. According to European usage the term "peasants" is applied here to those farmers who constitute a class in the society in which they live.

worker in Imperial Germany and the Weimar Republic, one must go back to the origins of this social structure.[2]

The Lord and the Peasant

Geography and climate only partially account for the differences in land ownership and types of labor constitutions in various parts of the country. Regional diversity reflects almost every phase of medieval history. During the Middle Ages many forms of peasant tenure developed which existed for a long time beside one another. With few exceptions, the peasant had early fallen into a position of dependence upon a feudal overlord. In the fifteenth century, land in the noncolonial part of the country (west of the Elbe) was held partly by the lord, partly by the peasant. The lord collected traditionally fixed rentals through feudal dues, which were paid in goods or labor, and various fees, e.g. those received in connection with a change in tenant, a transfer of inheritance, or marriage. The dues remained limited because they served only to satisfy the needs of the crown, a lay or ecclesiastical corporation, or the lord, who was a professional soldier rather than a farmer. With the exception of some peasants in the marsh lands stretching along the North Sea, peasants as a rule were bound to the soil. If one wished to withdraw, he had to appoint a successor.

In the middle of the fifteenth century the lords began to encroach upon the common lands (Allmende), i.e. meadows on which the inhabitants of the village had the right to pasture their animals, and forests from which they gathered wood for building and fuel. This process of encroachment was supported by the property conception of Roman law which was introduced into Germany in the course of the fifteenth, sixteenth, and seventeenth centuries. Peasant revolts, which reached a climax in 1525, broke out in areas where no personal serfdom existed but where dues, taxes, and services were squeezed from the peasants and where usurpation of the common pasture, prohibition of fishing in flowing waters, of hunting, and of cutting wood caused resentment. Although the peasantry lost its wars, and the rebels were exterminated, the impact in the west was relieved by colonization in the east, which created a shortage of peasants. Thus their demands could no longer be ignored.

[2] A survey of feudal conditions concentrated on a few pages cannot do justice to the vast variety of conditions. The reader who wants to get a full picture may turn to the excellent description given in Max Weber (Bibl. #84); and in J. H. Clapham and Eileen Power (Bibl. #14).

From the sixteenth century on, a great change set in. "In southwest Germany . . . the rights of the lord to the land and to personal fealty, as well as the judiciary right became transformed into a simple right to receive a rental, while relatively few compulsory services and dues in connection with the transfer of inheritance remained as relics. The Rhenish and southwest German peasant thus became in fact his own master, able to sell his holding or transmit it to heirs. . . . Holdings were extremely scattered. Land holdings, judicial authority, and liege-lordship were in different hands and the peasant was able to play one against the other."[3] By the middle of the seventeenth century serfdom had largely disappeared although it was not legally abolished until much later.

In northwest Germany, where landholdings were never minutely subdivided, serfdom was abandoned as unprofitable by the landholders as soon as they saw a possibility of marketing their products after the influx of precious metals during the Crusades. They became interested in an increase in the income from the land. They emancipated their serfs and leased the land to free renters (Meier) whose property became hereditary. Services and other obligations were fixed by law or by the terms of the tenure. The lord could not dispossess the peasant except for legally demonstrable reasons.

The interest of the lords in large estates led to the law of single inheritance. Thus the land was never broken up as in the southwest and the large holding system continued. Serfdom in the northwest had disappeared as early as the fourteenth century; feudal services were displaced by money payments, while rent was paid in kind. In the northwest, west, and south, complete emancipation was the final stage in a gradual development. The lord was not interested in buying out the peasants. The Allmende (common land) remained. Emancipation was essentially restoration of unconditional property and the conversion of duties into fixed money rents. In south Germany and in the Rhineland peasant emancipation was well under way when the French Revolution and the Napoleonic government accelerated the final development. In these territories the process of emancipation was completed in 1830, with little change in the distribution of property.

In eastern Germany the land was colonized from the twelfth to the fourteenth century by peasants and squires. The peasants, originally free neighbors of the nobles, held the land on terms of a quit-rent without rendering labor services, and the native Slavs frequently had rights inferior to those of the conquering Germans. In contrast to the west with its scat-

[3] Weber (Bibl. #84), pp. 75-76.

tered estates, manorial estates of the east coexisted from the beginning with peasant villages. While serfdom disappeared in both the northwest and southwest, the position of the eastern colonist peasants deteriorated from the sixteenth century on. In this area with its poor light soil, severe climate, and long winters, towns were less numerous than in the west. The peasantry could not be used as a source of rent since there was no market near enough for their produce, but only as a source of labor. Deprived of their former occupation of fighting after the introduction of mercenary troops, the eastern nobles turned to farming and began at once to increase their territory by confiscating peasant land. Hunger for land and labor increased in this Protestant part of the country where the clergy no longer absorbed the younger sons of the nobility. The Thirty Years War hastened the process of absorption of peasant land by the lords, resulting in a system of consolidated demesne farming (estate economy, Gutsherrschaft). The fact that the rural population was decimated during the war and cultivated land turned into waste gave the lords in the east the opportunity to absorb peasant holdings into their own estates, including whole villages whose population had been swept away. When not enough waste land was available, expansion could be achieved by "relegation of obstinate peasants." With the increased extent of manorial land and the reduced number of peasants, services multiplied, and in order to secure the peasants to the land, they were made personally dependent or hereditary vassals (Gutsuntertanen). In the upheaval caused by the devastating war, earlier rights and immunities were canceled, dues increased, and menial services, which the formerly free peasants had not been obliged to render, instituted. This process of dispossessing the peasants and of transforming the free man into a vassal was greatly facilitated by the lords' prerogatives, which had been granted by the sovereigns who, in order to keep the restless knights in a peaceful occupation, sacrificed the peasants to them. The territorial rulers ceded certain rights of sovereignty to the holders of these feudal estates. Landholding, personal suzerainty, and judicial authority were identified. The landowner, who was at once sheriff, magistrate, and police chief, exercised totalitarian authority over his peasants and frequently weakened their possessory rights. Thus the peasant in the east became bound to the soil, an appurtenance of the estate. He could not marry or learn a trade without permission and his children were subject to compulsory services. There were no adequate provisions for education. At the end of the eighteenth century the amount of services varied from estate to estate, from three days a week

to six. In some parts those who could not prove the existence of a contradictory usage were bound to give unlimited services.[4] As a result they often had to work their own plots at night. Their possessory title was diversified. On the one hand there were good titles such as quit-rent with prevailing fees, and on the other hand hereditary or nonhereditary titles with prevailing services. An increasing number of peasants were reduced to nonhereditary ownership. A large proportion of the peasants had been forced to become cottage holders whose arable holdings consisted of only a small plot of ground. Above these lowest cotters (Häusler, Käthner, or Büdner) came the so-called Kossäth (in Silesia called Gärtner, or gardener) who tilled his own patch of land but who had no regular holding in the organized village fields (Flur). Above him was the peasant, who held land in the fields and harnessed his own beasts to the plough. He served with his plow oxen (spann-fähig), while most of the others did only manual labor (Handdienste).

The peasant of the east, a prey to the arbitrary will of his lord, had become "gloomy, discontented, coarse, slavish . . . a hapless missing link between a beast of burden and a man."[5] Thus a contrast had developed between the large produce-yielding estates of the eastern lords (Gutsherrschaft) and the rent-yielding estates of the landlords in the south and west (manorial economy, Grundherrschaft). Moreover, there was less church property in the prevailingly Protestant east than in the west where the Catholic church remained a landowner. The ecclesiastical domain showed more consideration to the peasant than did the nobleman.

After the middle of the eighteenth century a series of reforms was initiated by the Prussian kings who wished to check the process of eviction in order to protect their source of taxes and recruits.[6] Gradually they succeeded in preventing further confiscation of peasant land, but not in improving the personal status of the vassals on private estates. They helped the peasants to maintain a balance of ownership according to numbers and area and at the same time increased their numbers by means of inland colonization. Peasants on Prussian crown lands, which comprised about one-fifth of the entire area of Prussia, were granted the right to hereditary ownership in 1777, were freed from compulsory services in 1799, and became entitled to

[4] Georg F. Knapp (Bibl. #42), Vol. 1, pp. 39-43.

[5] *Ibid.*, p. 77. See also Thaer's description in 1806: "Present conditions let the peasant become constantly poorer, lazier, and more stupid," *Annalen des Ackerbaus*, IV, 55, quoted by Knapp (Bibl. #42), p. 75.

[6] "The fiscal interest of the state speaks in favor of the peasants, long before humanity is allowed to speak." Knapp (Bibl. #43), p. 169.

buy full proprietary rights for moderate sums. Compulsory services of children on crown lands had been prohibited as early as 1763. By a series of acts between 1799 and 1806, the freedom of domain servants was practically accomplished. On the estates of the lords, however, serfdom continued until after Prussia's defeat in the Napoleonic War, when a program of reconstruction was conceived which included the abolition of serfdom. Liberation had to come because it was overdue. In the interest of increased efficiency a change in the agricultural system was clearly necessary, but it could not be achieved with exploited and degenerated peasants. New ideas of enlightenment and of human rights, which penetrated from France, tended in the same direction. The peasant needed a threefold liberation—agricultural, personal, and political.

The Stein-Hardenberg reform, named for the two statesmen whose ideas are embodied in it, emancipated peasants and land in Prussia. It denied the monopolistic privilege of the nobility to possess large estates (Edict of October 9, 1807)[7] and proclaimed the liberty to divide estates and abrogate entails. The personal caste system was abolished.[8] Nobles were allowed to engage in civilian occupations, citizens to engage in the pursuits of peasants, the latter to choose their occupation. As a result of the Edict of 1807, hereditary serfdom was completely abolished by November 11, 1810.[9] This meant the disappearance of binding to the soil, compulsory services of children, the right of the lord to determine the heir of the holding among the children or to agree to marriage and choice of occupation. The regulation of property rights was less simple. Liberal economists who believed in the results of free ownership of land quarreled with conservatives who were afraid of possible disintegration. The first group, adherents of Adam Smith, wished to abolish state interference; the second clung to the tradition of the state supremacy in all citizen relations. The liberals carried the day. The Edict of September 14, 1811,[10] regulated peasants free owners of their land: They

[7] Bibl. #137 Supplement, p. 170. Heretofore noble estates could be held only by nobles and could be acquired by persons of civic origin only by express permission of the sovereign. In the same way peasant land could, as a rule, be held by only peasants.

[8] The strict caste system of nobles, peasants, and burghers restricted the noble to vocations within his caste. Only by special permission could he go into trade, industry, or other bourgeois pursuits. The burgher was to carry on trade and industry, the peasant to till the land.

[9] "From Martinmas 1810 every remaining villeinage in all our dominions shall cease and from that date there shall be none but freemen in our dominions." The emancipation soon followed in other German states. The main feudal right which remained was the lord's patrimonial justice, which was completely abolished only by the local government law of 1891.

[10] Bibl. #137, p. 281.

received their holdings as property, and were no longer required to furnish services or payments. But as a condition to such ownership, they had to surrender to the squire—if their land was regarded as heritable—one-third of all possessions. Those whose property was not heritable, and they were the majority, turned over one-half. The enforcement of this edict considerably restricted the liberation.

Originally it was intended to confer upon the peasant immediately the full ownership of his holding. Such settlement, however, was delayed by the resistance of the landed nobility who claimed that their economic existence was imperiled by the abolition of the forced labor system. They succeeded in getting the postponement of the small holders' emancipation, while the Edict of Frederick the Great,[11] preventing the confiscation of peasants' land, was repealed. A Declaration of May 29, 1816, which was intended as executive order to the Edict of 1811 but which changed it considerably, provided that only peasants owning teams and those of long established ownership who were registered as peasants in the tax rolls, were subject to regulation. This excluded those who rendered only manual labor, those whose land was not in the village fields, and those who had been settled during the period of peasant protection.

The redeemed peasants lost the use of the common pasture and woodland and other rights on the estate, such as assistance in emergencies and in repairing buildings. The lord sold labor and bought land, the peasant sold land and bought the freedom to work his own land. Many peasants who were unable to make a living after the reduction of their property and abolition of rights to the estate sold their entire land and became hired laborers. The lord gained considerably thereby. He consolidated his holdings, was freed from the peasants' pasture and from all obligations to help, and at the same time retained the manual labor. The team service had long proved uneconomical since the distances were too far and the animals were too wretched for productive work. It was not much more expensive for the lord to provide his own implements and teams and use merely the nonregulated peasants' labor.

Great harm was done by the wholesale enclosure of common land,[12]

[11] Edict of August 12, 1749 (Novum Corpus Constitutionum Marchicarum, Bibl. #137, Vol. I, Part IV, p. 182). Another Edict of September 14, 1811 (Edikt zur Beförderung der Landkultur, *ibid.*, p. 300) and the Declaration of May 29, 1816 (*ibid.*, p. 154) removed this protection.

[12] Edict of June 7, 1821 (Gemeinheitsteilungsordnung, Bibl. #137, p. 53) provided for consolidation of farm land, in connection with division of the common pasture

which made it difficult or impossible for the peasant to keep livestock, deprived him of the free supply of turf and wood for fuel, and made many peasants inclined to sell their land to a lord.

The peasants who were liable for manual labor and not subject to regulation continued personally free, but burdened with services and dues. Where their tenures were not hereditary, peasants could be summarily evicted. When on March 2, 1850,[13] the liberation of the small holders was effected by declaring all dues and services commutable, it was too late. Most of their holdings had already been appropriated by the estate owners whose lack of capital only had prevented the complete disappearance of small holders. A class of landless agricultural laborers had been created,[14] and landholdings had become concentrated in fewer hands between 1818 and 1850. Even then many of the finally regulated landholders disappeared because they were unable to pay the compensation for their regulations which was imposed on them in the form of rent.

According to Gustav Schmoller only 45,493 farmers became independent from 1811 to 1848 in the four provinces of East and West Prussia, Brandenburg, Pomerania (without Stralsund), and Silesia.[15] About 100,000 small holdings with more than a half million ha. disappeared; 420,000 ha. were yielded as compensation; and 230,000 were bought by large estate owners. Thus more than a million ha.—one-third of the agricultural area—were transferred from peasants to large estate owners.[16]

Even then the process of encouraging large estates did not stop. In order to extend the political influence of the feudal lords who boasted that they were responsible for the greatness of the Prussian state and were its most solid foundation, the founding of entails was encouraged by the government.[17] Later, industrialists who were ambitious to become feudal lords

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and Allmende. The peasant thus was forced into an individualistic economy. Under the same date a Prussian edict regulated the conditions of peasants with better ownership rights.

[13] Bibl. #137, p. 77. Rent banks (Rentenbanken) were set up to which the peasants paid their rent. These banks in turn gave to the estate owner a bond for the value of the capital charges. In this way the peasants could pay off their indebtedness. Law of March 2, 1850 (Bibl. #137, p. 112).

[14] The encyclopedia of Johann Georg Krünitz does not mention the word Landarbeiter (farm laborer) but speaks of Bauer, Fröner, Gesinde, Häusler (Bibl. #47, 1793).

[15] Gustav Schmoller, Bibl. #74, 1919, p. 623.

[16] Hans Jürgen Seraphim, "Neuschaffung von Bauerntum," Bibl. #160, 1937-1938, Vol. 98, p. 626.

[17] Act of June 5, 1852 (Bibl. #137, p. 319). The entailed area increased in Prussia from 1,249,300 ha. in 1850 to 2,299,800 ha. at the end of 1907. Only 44,900 of the latter

created new entails. Thus the plan of the Stein-Hardenberg Reform to displace holders of large estates by a larger number of independent peasants, was defeated. Large estates grew both in number and in size. Feudalism was legally abolished, but no social revolution achieved. The position of the aristocracy was strengthened. Later, mechanization and the introduction of cheap seasonal labor helped the big estate to retain its dominant position. The historical development explains the rural social structure of the East Elbian territory with its sharp differentiation of large estate owners and wage earners, and thus the existence of an agricultural labor problem in Germany.

Types of Labor Constitutions

I. REGIONAL DIFFERENTIATION

As the result of German agrarian history, labor conditions differed regionally, although the various labor types were not completely segregated into very definite areas. There was no uniform labor problem in Germany. The landowning worker in the west and south, the Heuerling in the northeast, the East Elbian Instmann and the Bavarian farm hand had very little in common. The Silesian deputant was far below the standard of the East Prussian deputant, the Instmann of East Holstein higher than the East Prussian, and the Heuerling higher and more independent than both. The parts chiefly to be differentiated were East Elbia (East Prussia, Pomerania, Brandenburg, Mecklenburg, Silesia), northwest (Oldenburg, Hanover, Westphalia), the west (especially the Rhineland), central Germany (especially Saxony), and the south.

Sandy soil, inhospitable climate, sparse population, and the predominance of large estates characterized the structure of the east. Estates of 100 ha. and more owned 53.4 per cent of the farmland in Mecklenburg in 1933, 44.3 per cent of the farmland in Pomerania, 33.4 per cent in East Prussia, 31.7 per cent in Brandenburg, 27.7 per cent in Silesia.[18]

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were not owned by the nobility (F. Kühnert, "Die Fideikommisse in Preussen im Jahre 1907 und die Wanderungen in den Kreisen mit besonders ausgedehnten Fideikommissbesitze im Zeitraume 1875 bis 1905" [Bibl. #162], 1909, pp. 303, 327, 330).

[18] Bibl. #260, 1945, p. 40. Until 1937 the census gave no true picture of the concentration of ownership since it gave only the size of farms by entity but not by ownership. There was no indication of multiple ownership. According to the 1937 census 19,000 owners of estates of 100 ha. and over controlled 29,000 estates or 20 per cent of the area owned by individuals in Germany (*Statistik des Deutschen Reichs*, 1941, Vol. 549, pp. 4-5). Members of the ruling princely houses owned large estates scattered over the Reich. Prussia and some of the other states owned large demesne lands. While these estates frequently were leased, the eastern squires used to manage their estates themselves.

In northwest Germany with its favorable conditions for grassland as a basis for livestock farming, the peasant holding was maintained, but since a larger size was necessary to ensure economic independence, the larger peasant holding became the predominant type, protected in its size by undivided inheritance. While most of the peasant holdings in Germany were located in villages, a region in which isolated farmsteads (Einzelhöfe) prevailed, extended from the Weser west to Westphalia and the lower Rhine. Each family lived on its own holding separate from its neighbors. Another part of northern Germany, Lower Saxony (Niedersachsen) between the Weser and the Elbe, had a sound mixture of medium-sized and small peasant holdings. In these parts peasants were classified as full peasants, half-peasants, quarter-peasants, and cotters. The larger holdings could easily secure as workers the small owners from nearby villages.

Central Germany, the main seat of sugar-beet culture, had in its northern part large estates and large peasant farms, and in Thuringia many dwarf holdings.

In South Germany holdings of 5 to 20 ha. prevailed, the proportion of small and smallest holdings being larger in Württemberg and Baden than in Bavaria. Farming was based predominantly upon family labor. Many small farms were divided into tiny, widely scattered strips—a division which was enormously wasteful of land, time, and energy, and which consequently handicapped the best utilization of farm machinery and draft power.

Western Germany was divided into two distinct parts: an area of small peasant farms in the industrial districts (Upper Rhine to Thuringia), with prevailing holdings below 10 ha., many owners of which combined agricultural with industrial work, and a larger and middle farm area with holdings from 10 to 100 ha.

The fact that big farms were scarce in the southern and western parts was to a certain extent a consequence of natural and economic conditions, favorable climate, fertility of river valleys, and the mountainous character of the area. The smallest holdings were to be found in the western mountain regions (Eifel, Taunus, Westerwald, Sauerland) and those in the center (Thuringia and Eichsfeld). These mountain peasants had special difficulties to overcome—terrain, distance from the market, and lack of transportation. They were unfamiliar with marketing conditions and, due to irregular contact with the market, could command only low prices. In these mountain regions, far away from industrial centers, the size of farms was reduced to uneconomical units and the farm population came to depend on home

industries. In the plains, on the other hand, with their good climate and soil, crowded with smaller and larger towns, the good markets for dairy products, fruit, and garden products in the vicinity favored peasant farming. Such conditions increased the number of the smallest holdings in the industrial areas and around the large cities in the Rhineland and in Southwest Germany.

Other factors which explain the diversity of land tenure were the methods of descent, inheritance, or divisibility of the land among several heirs. In some parts (Schleswig-Holstein, Mecklenburg, Baden, Lippe, and other regions) the custom, dating back to earliest times of the manorial system, prevailed in which only one son or daughter, the principal heir (der Anerbe), took over the farm and settled his brothers and sisters according to his capacity to do so. The extent to which closed inheritance prevailed in the Reich was estimated at four-fifths of all farm land.[19] Subdivision as the result of inheritance—a custom of the central and upper Rhine provinces where vine-growing made small holdings economically sound, and of Swabia (except the Alps) and Thuringia—spread by the Code Napoleon in the western territories which had been brought under French control and increased in the era of liberalism after the peasants' emancipation.[20] Due to the freedom with which land could be transferred and subdivided, the units of cultivation in some parts of the country shrank to such small proportions that they could no longer support the owner and his family. Consequently, members of the family had to find supplemental work. The labor supply thus available acted as a magnet to industry while conversely the possibility of obtaining earnings in industry proved a further incentive to the subdivision of land. In Württemberg, where the tradition of single inheritance was not widely maintained, the possible disadvantage of free division had been largely compensated by the countrywide spread of industry. This combination of farming and industry strengthened the resistance of farms to the economic depression after the First World War.

[19] Max Sering, quoted by Karl Grünberg (Bibl. #31), 1922, p. 156. Closed inheritance did not always prevent a reduction in the size of farms. See Karl Rogge, "Die Gestaltung der geschlossenen Vererbung in Westdeutschland," in Bibl. #149c, 1930, pp. 301ff.

[20] Only in some parts of the country (Braunschweig, Baden) was closed inheritance maintained by statute. The farmer himself decided whether or not his farm should become an entail even where it was provided for by statute. The introductory law to the Civil Code denied the States restriction of free decision of the testator. In some parts (Hanover, Brandenburg, Silesia, Württemberg, and others) the peasant could accept undivided inheritance by registering his farm in a farm register (Höferolle).

Division of inherited farms did not always result in disintegration. It frequently stimulated increased intensity and efficiency. Many heirs to small holdings succeeded in enlarging them by shrewd marriages or by additional leases and purchases.[21] Other heirs kept the farm undivided or paid off the co-heirs with cash or mortgage. On the basis of an inquiry, von Dietze drew the conclusion that there was a tendency in regions of free inheritance to transfer the holding intact, even if great sacrifices were involved.[22]

2. TYPES OF LABOR[23]

Any discussion of farm labor in Germany should start with the peasant,[24] the hardest working laborer. However, no generalizations can be made. There was a great range in status among peasants due to traditions, size of property, and fertility of the soil. At the one end of the scale were the proud, dignified peasants of the Schleswig-Holstein alluvial land (Marsch) who had succeeded in remaining relatively free in the period of feudalism and whose fertile soil made them prosperous. At the other, were the proletarian peasants of the sandy Geest in the same province, who in the winter might become hired men or peddlers, and the Hessian subsistence farmer—the Thuringian peasant who supplemented independent farming by home work and peddling. The dwarf holders should also be included in farm labor since many of them depended upon wages to eke out a living, and many of the migratory workers were drawn from this class.

[21] A peculiar mechanism has been described by Seiff. If the inherited holding is equally divided among the children "the son who gets the building remains the farmer. However, because the buildings are too big for the inherited farm after its division, he looks around for enlargement. Besides a clever marriage policy this is effected in the main by additional leases and purchases. A second son goes into the city to work as a laborer, craftsman, or small official until he has saved enough money for taking up farming again on his own inherited land, which he meanwhile has let to a tenant. The daughter enlarges the husband's farm with her inherited land. In this manner every division of inherited land brings many new small owners and tenants." Rudolf Seiff (Bibl. #105a), 1926, Vol. 1, p. 17.

[22] C. von Dietze (Bibl. #149d), 1931, pp. 144-145.

[23] Total number of persons gainfully employed in agriculture, forestry, fishing, and horticulture, exclusive of the Saar territory:

	1925	*1933*	*1939*
Independent	2,193,700	2,179,800	1,962,300
Helping members of the family	4,790,500	4,516,200	4,764,700
Salaried employees	171,700	116,100	93,400
Workmen	2,607,300	2,530,600	2,109,000
Total	9,763,207	9,342,700	8,929,400

Source for 1925 data: Bibl. #153c, 1936, p. 19; for 1939 data: Bibl. #153e, 1940, no. 24, p. 538.

[24] This study, therefore, will consider not only hired labor, but the fate of the peasant and his family also.

The peasant farm in Germany was not a business enterprise, and farming not a profession, but a way of life. To the peasant (and to many big landowners as well) the ancestral farm represented more than a means of earning money. He was not a man who engaged temporarily in agriculture and was willing to exchange his profession for an easier and more profitable one or to give up his land for commercial reasons. The owner felt himself closely bound to the soil by a tie amounting almost to devotion, clung to it in spite of privations, and maintained it for his family even under the unfavorable conditions. Thousands of farms were owned for centuries by the family occupying them. Sales took place in many cases only under extreme pressure. On the small peasant farm the chief laborers were members of the family.[25] In Baden four-fifths of the farm laborers belonged to owners' families. Children continued working after leaving school (for ten to fifteen years) in return for their keep and pocket money. On the large estates where the work was done by landless laborers, under the supervision of the owner, wages constituted the most important item of expenditure, whereas the main portion of the income from the family farm represented the family's wage. The peasant and his family worked harder than the farm worker and found compensation in their independence, their social status, and their attachment to the soil. Münzinger[26] found in one district (where in 1925-1927, 98.1 per cent of the farmers were peasants with holdings up to 20 ha.), that the farmer earned less than the paid laborer although he and his wife worked longer hours.

The more than two million hired workers could be grouped in several main types in 1925.[27]

Workmen without land	830,287
Workmen with own or leased land	101,683
Workmen with deputate	218,477
Farm servants	1,115,303
Milkers	65,971
Vine growers	7,855
Craftsmen, and so forth	50,754

Most numerous among them were the farm servants (Gesinde), who lived

[25] In 1925, 60.8 per cent of all farms were family farms on which only members of the family were employed, while on 22 per cent the owner worked without any help whatever. Only 17.2 per cent of farms hired workers (Bibl. #153b,3, 1929, p. 9). The percentage of hired workers grew with the size of the farm (Bibl. #104b, 1929, Part II, p. 4).

[26] Adolf Münzinger, Bibl. #59, Vol. II, pp. 873ff.

[27] Bibl. #153e, 1927, Vol. VII, No. 22, p. 926.

on the farm and worked for board and lodging plus a cash wage. They were found all over the country. Most of them were employed on family farms (except the smallest) located in western and southern Germany where the seasonal peaks of work are less sharp. Those farms were generally unable to engage the more expensive older married worker if permanent help was needed. Living conditions of small holders and wage-paid laborers were identical in those parts of the country in which small holdings prevailed. The servants lived with the family, worked with them in the stables and in the field, and ate at the same table. Peasant and servant consorted in the same room but ate at different tables in the village inn, the center of rural life. Servants came largely from the peasant class and returned to it through heritage, marriage, or settlement. Thus, no class feeling or social problem developed. Farm servants usually concluded contracts for one year, received board, a small cash wage and contractual gifts, mostly clothing, on certain holidays. Most of them were young and unmarried. Around the age of thirty, the servant had to give up agricultural work or renounce marriage unless he could either marry the heiress of a farm, or pool his savings with that of his spouse and buy a small holding. Even with such a holding, he had to supplement his income by accepting seasonal work on other farms, in brickyards, or on railroads.

In areas of single inheritance, the old patriarchal relationship disappeared, servants ate in the servants' room, and a class feeling developed which separated peasant and laborer. As a consequence the number of farm servants drawn from peasant families tended to decline in these areas. Servants were also employed on the large estates of the east.

The second largest category of farm labor was composed of wage hands, either with or without property. They were usually divided into two groups: steady workers (mostly deputatists, who lived on the estate, were bound by yearly contracts, and received cash wages and perquisites), and independent (Freiarbeiter) or seasonal workers many of whom lived in villages near the estate and went out to work during the season. A third group, migratory workers, moved from one part of the country to the other during the season.

Besides their labor contract on large farms during the year or the season, agricultural workers in all parts of the country (with the exception of eastern Germany) frequently owned the cottages in which they lived or some land to fall back on. Some, owners of small holdings which did not produce enough to give them a living, went out to work, leaving the cultivation of their land to their wives and children. Their social standing

varied according to the section of the country. In small peasant districts, where members of all groups performed wage work for some time, they belonged to the peasant and small craftsman classes. There was no social gap between those who employed and those who provided labor. If surrounded by large farms, however, they were considered an inferior group.

In sections of northwest Germany (West Hanover, Wesphalia), the areas of the isolated farmstead, the Heuerling system prevailed. Heuerlings were laborers with small holdings who leased land, usually 1 to 5 ha., and paid rent partly in the form of labor (in general from twenty to one hundred days a year); frequently they owned some poultry, pigs, or a cow. The Heuerling brought his wife to help for twenty to twenty-five days a year. Due to mechanization and migration to industry the number of Heuerlings had decreased before the First World War, but migration had stopped after the war. The Enquête Commission found in 1929 that the Heuerling group (about 30,000)[28] lived at a low economic level. But since they cultivated their piece of land, practically hereditarily, and earned some cash by breeding pigs and by home work, whenever it was available, they were satisfied and considered themselves small peasants rather than laborers.

3. THE LANDLESS WORKER IN THE EAST

The large estate in the east had to rely, in addition to servants, on a class of landless farm hands created during the long-drawn-out adjustment of relations between freed peasants and their lords. In the first period following the liberation, laborers were comparable to the nonhereditary peasantry of the period before. They were married people called Instfolk, living in their own homes (in barracks in Silesia) or in employers' houses. They had annual family contracts and up to the middle of the nineteenth century received prevailingly wages in kind, such as a dwelling, a small piece of land, a share of the grinding or of the threshing, and a very small amount of money. Their income was fixed traditionally according to family needs. They could sell their surplus grain and their hogs. Thus both employer and worker had a community of interest. Both wanted high yield and high prices. The Instrelation still belonged to a barter economy. The master's lack of commercial acquisitiveness and the worker's apathy compensated each other and were the psychological basis for the traditional form of undertaking as well as the traditional position of political dominance of the manorial aristocracy.[29] This semifeudal relationship gradually disinte-

[28] Heuschert. *Das Heuerlingsverhältnis* (Bibl. #104b), 1929, p. 531.
[29] Weber (Bibl. #85), 1924, p. 474.

grated with the increased seasonal character of the work, brought about by the introduction of the threshing machine and of intensive cultures, such as that of sugar beets, and the concomitant greater expenditure of capital and rising value of the soil. The Instrelation meant greater independence and, at first, less work and equal income, but it also meant proletarization during the latter part of the nineteenth century when instead of shares of the products, laborers' wages were paid in money and definitely fixed annual wages in kind. They became deputatists. Wives and children of the deputatists and additional labor from the villages, i.e. independent workers, were employed during the harvest.

During the nineteenth century agricultural workers in the east were legally free and yet dependent. Since the early period after the emancipation, the lords had been anxious to retain control over their people. Until wages in money and in kind began partly to replace their share in the crops, the relationship was one of subjection, not of contract. As the disintegration of this "patriarchal" relationship which transformed the Instmann into a deputatist progressed, the rural laborer became more and more independent, although less well supported. The community of interest ceased, the employer was interested in low production costs which meant low wages, the worker in high wages, although neither group developed the acquisitiveness of those in industry. The custom of providing the workers with a house owned by the landowner, one-year contracts which were extremely difficult for the workers to break, the poor law, and local manorial government had made them feel personally dependent. The century-old tradition of serfdom gave the landholding class an initial claim to regard their workers as servants. The continuing institution of local manorial government (Gutsbezirke) made the owner, in effect, the government administrator in his district and thereby gave him authority over the inhabitants. Although he lost the right of patrimonial justice in 1848, he constituted the police power until 1872 and applied the poor law. He controlled the worker's daily life through the school, the church, and domination of the local and, frequently, county sphere. The squires who as a result of the grossly unequal three-class franchise system, dominated the House of Deputies of the Prussian Diet and had a stronghold in the Upper House, defeated all attempts to abolish the remnants of local government.[30]

[30] In the Upper House of the Prussian Diet large estate owners provided a bloc of life members which represented about 30 per cent of all members. Of 251 deputies in seven Eastern provinces in the House of Deputies in 1913, 58 were squires (65 of 248

Poor laws bound the worker to his place of settlement. Since residence of two years (later one) established the right to receive poor relief in case of need,[31] the estate owner was interested in keeping bad risks out and in hiring only young workers. He looked upon any newcomer as a potential recipient of poor relief and frequently refused to have laborers bring their old parents to the estate. Even after marriage restrictions were abolished, the worker who intended to marry depended upon getting a dwelling in the country and failing this, he might be obliged to move into town.[32]

The tone of the contracts was oppressive. Contracts included regulations concerning family life, and prohibited subscription to Socialist papers. Workers were expected to show extreme respect to the owner and his family. They had a secure but paltry living. Hours were long, wages not high enough to maintain a family in decent fashion. Though wages increased slowly during the period of the Empire, they lagged considerably behind wages in industry because of the importation of cheap labor from abroad. Usually the contracting worker had to put additional workers, his children or other young workers, at the disposal of his employers during the season. These subcontracted workers, so-called Hofgänger,[33] lived with the laborer whose wages were calculated to cover the board of the Hofgänger, who generally received a separate cash wage. Housing was poor, education unsatisfactory, and work very hard. Everything that makes life worth living was withheld from the farm laborer. Von der Goltz[34] and Knapp,[35] describe farm laborers of the 1870's and 1880's as unskilled, depraved, and apathetic, without social contact, separated by a wide breach from the estate owner, subservient actually and psychologically. Conditions were

in 1903). See Lysbeth Walker Muncy, Bibl. #58, 1944, pp. 217-218. Most of the large estate owners were conservative and the conservative party controlled the political situation in Prussia.

In the Reichstag, too, the strength of the squires' influence was out of all proportion to their number. This was due to the fact that the representative districts mapped out in 1871 were not changed in spite of the tremendous growth of the population in the cities. The country population, therefore, obtained proportionately more seats in the Reichstag than popular votes polled, the cities less. In 1907 the Social Democratic Party, representing prevailingly the industrial working class, won 43 seats with 3.25 million votes, the two conservative parties, 85 seats with 1.56 million votes (Fritz Specht and Paul Schwabe, Bibl. #81, 1908, p. 96).

[31] Laws of 1871 and 1908, Bibl. #140, 1908, p. 381.

[32] Theodor, Freiherr von der Goltz, Bibl. #28, 1874, pp. 50ff.

[33] The Hofgänger has no direct parallel in the agricultural system of the twentieth century. The term "subcontractor" does not quite convey the old meaning.

[34] *Op.cit.*, Bibl. #28, p. 102.

[35] Bibl. #42, 1925, pp. 308-10.

similarly pictured in the literature of the last period of Imperial Germany. "The men must obey, work hard, learn as little as possible, be pious, and vote conservative," is a clergyman's description in a novel in which a member of the country nobility excellently portrayed his own class.[36]

Proletarian features of the eastern laborer were his landlessness and his isolation. Trains carrying urbanites to the summer resorts of the eastern coast ran right through the country, but the estates in the east were visited only by guests of the owner who belonged to the same caste. Population is rather dense everywhere in Germany as compared with rural areas of the United States, yet these workers lived as remote as if in a far-away colony. Their remoteness made it difficult to control conditions, to arouse public interest in their problems, and to enforce protective legislation. The problem of these workers was "the rural labor problem in Germany." Although the same categories could be used to characterize the employment relation in various parts of the country, the situation of the eastern laborer was different. In other parts of Germany laborers, whether they lived in villages, on middle or smaller farms, or large estates, mingled with people of similar social standards. They belonged socially with the peasants. They could visit the town in the neighborhood; they were in contact with life.

The Inferior Legal Status of the Farm Worker

During the period of the Empire, changes which could have made working conditions and life more attractive for laborers were barred not only by prejudice, but by the preservation of obsolete laws.

In the first half of the nineteenth century, agricultural workers shared with industrial workers the restriction against combination. A Prussian law of April 24, 1854,[37] corresponding to the Prussian Industrial Code, made it a punishable offense to conspire to stop or obstruct work, or to incite others so to conspire. This meant virtual prohibition of strikes. While similar restrictions of industrial workers' associations were abolished by the Industrial Code in 1869, and all attempts to hamper their freedom of coalition by legislation were refuted, the law of 1854 remained in force for agriculture

[36] Wilhelm von Polenz, Bibl. #62, 1903, I, p. 110. The author contrasts the domineering, authoritarian Junker who wants to keep peasants and workers in servility with the enlightened and refined noblemen who, although conscious of the unexampled "blindness and indifference" of the Junkers, still believes in their future. "We are too deeply rooted in the soil which we have cultivated for centuries to be so easily torn up and thrown aside." *Ibid.*, II, p. 259.

[37] Bibl. #137, 1854, p. 124. It was valid for the Prussian area of 1854, but not in the later acquired provinces of Schleswig-Holstein, Hanover, Hessen-Nassau.

until the revolution of 1918. There was similar legislation in the other states.

A number of special state ordinances regulated the status of work of farm servants at a level with other domestic servants, many of them including all agricultural workers. In some parts of the country they had been set up for the express purpose of allowing a continuation of many of the manorial customs which the liberation had intended to abolish. They expressed a paternalistic master-servant relationship. For breach of contract, servants on their part were liable to arrest, and, under certain conditions, even to physical punishment, imprisonment, or return by the police; whereas employers only had to pay reparations to the servant. Forty-four such ordinances were in force in Germany in 1918, twelve of which dated from the eighteenth century, thirteen from the period 1803 to 1848. The Civil Code of 1900, which included agricultural workers in its protective regulations, left the farm servant ordinances in force.

Organization of agricultural workers was hampered by a Prussian decree of March 11, 1850.[38] According to it all meetings had to be announced in advance to the police, who could send officers to the meetings and dissolve them in case the discussion incited to punishable activities. Women, students, or apprentices could not be organized. Local organizations were not allowed to affiliate with central councils. This decree was replaced in 1908 by the Reich Association Act.[39] Oppressive regulations existed in the other territories too. Mecklenburg still introduced restrictions in 1892.

The Federal Act of 1908 left untouched all restrictions concerning stoppages of work and their preparation, but marked a turning point for agricultural labor insofar as it provided freedom of coalition. But even this freedom had to endure the interference of administration authorities, who were always eager to harass trade union activities. The courts to which appeal against the administration was possible were guided by their conservative prejudice that activities in favor of better working conditions were an encroachment on God-willed dependence. Laborers who joined the first organizations, formed in 1909 and 1912 respectively, were subjected to petty tyrannies.

Though much of the oppressive legislation existed principally on paper and had fallen into desuetude,[40] it was a constant source of irritation and kept alive among the more enlightened agricultural workers the feeling

[38] *Ibid.*, 1850, p. 277. Bibl. #148, 1917, III, Vol. 68, pp. 8ff.

[39] Reichsvereinsgesetz, April 19, 1908 (Bibl. #140, p. 151).

[40] Only two suits were filed in the first twelve years of the Prussian law of 1854. (Bibl. #148, *op.cit.*, pp. 17, 28).

that they were second-class citizens. Nearly all the social legislation of the nineteenth century concerned the industrial classes only, except workmen's compensation and invalidity and old age insurance which established full equality for the rural workers.

To be sure, the estate owners did not lack paternalistic enlightenment. There were landlords who were deeply concerned over the welfare of their laborers, and loyalty and attachment were traditional on such estates. Moreover the worker's position was somewhat modified by wages in kind which he received and by many precapitalistic elements which still continued in his traditional relationship to the employer. In the nineteenth century, however, a longing for freedom, for independence, was sweeping the laboring masses and just those agricultural workers who were most vital resented patriarchalism and the almost feudal master-servant relationship.[41] They wanted higher social positions, freedom in personal life, and respect for their personalities, and they were ready to sacrifice even better food for full liberation. The less lethargic elements, attracted by the prospect of independence and social improvement, emigrated to America.[42]

Rural Exodus and Government Countermeasures

As long as agriculture was prosperous and farm hands were kept on the land by patriarchal traditions as well as by the lack of other occupational opportunities, the labor system of the east seemed to work. Germany's economic life during the eighteenth and in the beginning of the nineteenth century was centered chiefly around agriculture. The beginning industrialization in the thirties resulted in an increased demand for agricultural products, in rising prices, and in a prosperity which was due chiefly to tremendous technical improvements. Growing efficiency, largely due to the research of Liebig and Thaer, reduced the demand for farm labor. By the seventies, artificially enriched soils had to compete with virgin soil overseas, world market competition lowered prices, and industrial demands on all available

[41] Wilhelm von Polenz lets a worker, who lived in miserable conditions after migrating to Berlin, answer the former master who wants to take him back: "you and your sort are amazed that we run away. You gentlemen are responsible for it. We shall vote as the lord (gnädige Herr) wants; we shall read what the lord permits; we shall keep our mouth shut about the suppression of the people; we shall stoop under the regiment of the Mister administrator—no, times are too progressive for it; we are independent men. . . . One has too much honor to allow one's self to be treated like cattle." (Bibl. #62, 1903, Vol. 2, p. 22).

[42] From 1871 to 1900, 2.7 million Germans, prevailingly "landfolk," emigrated to the United States. See Herbert Morgan, "Bestand und Aufbau des deutschen Landvolks," in Konrad Meyer (Bibl. #218, 1942, p. 85).

supplies of labor brought many farmers into a precarious economic situation. Consequently, from the seventies on, urbanization, with higher money wages, freedom, and the attractions of city life, appealed increasingly to rural labor. The law of November 1, 1867,[43] established full freedom of migration. A rural exodus first seized those regions of smallest holdings where the surplus population found no industrial work and had no prospect of acquiring small holdings. It quickly spread to those parts of the country where large estates prevailed. The peasant and the heirs of peasant holdings held to their land even in periods of emergency while the younger children and the laborers felt free to migrate. Peasants' children and farm workers were the most mobile groups of the rural population.[44]

The exodus was felt much more in the thinly populated areas of the east than in the densely populated peasant districts. The sons of laborers did not like to follow their fathers' calling but sought their living in towns, although their situation there was no improvement at first. Industry picked young and strong workers and left the less desirable for the farm supply. Migration was a completely new phenomenon since the farm population had always been relatively fixed, conservative, rooted in the soil, with no other way of life that had meaning for them.

But the owners needed labor, cheap labor, because the fall in market prices had reduced profitability of the farms. As Germans were not available, estate owners began in the sixties to import foreign workers for a season, a process which became important after the eighties. Thus the squires who boasted that they were the bulwark against the Slavs became the very instrument of their infiltration. The main sources of manpower were Poles, who were unpretentious, docile, satisfied with poor housing barracks and low wages. They had no claim to poor relief and could be deported for the slightest insubordination. As legislation had, after 1892, limited their stay in Germany each season from April to December, they were out of the

[43] Bibl. #140, p. 55.

[44] M. Schönberg has shown that the shortage of manpower in East Prussia was greatest on holdings of 10 to 28 ha. The holdings of 25 ha. had a shortage of 30 per cent; holdings of 100 to 150 ha., 16 per cent; holdings of 1,000 ha., 12 per cent (Konrad Meyer, *op.cit.*, p. 319). The widely accepted view that the flight from the land occurred mainly on large estates in the east has been successfully challenged by Peter Quante who proves statistically that the migration movement was the same in the west and east and was mainly due to the surplus of births in rural areas and to the natural process of shrinking of the agricultural segment of the population in an industrial society, and that estates over 100 ha. occupied a larger number of persons than peasant holdings (Hans Raupach and Peter Quante, Bibl. #67, *passim*).

way when not needed. The living conditions they accepted could not be offered to German workers. Kärger reported that on one estate men demanded 1 M. and girls 0.80 M. a day. Russians were imported who got 0.30-0.40 M.[45]

In 1886 Bismarck prohibited the immigration of Polish laborers for national political reasons, but his fall removed the barrier. After 1890 they were able to come in unrestrictedly, obliged merely to legitimization with the police and to return to their home country in winter. In 1914 one-seventh of all workers employed in agriculture were aliens (433,000); during the summer months the proportion of foreign workers on certain farms was as high as 50 per cent.[46] They were employed in the central and eastern parts of the country. A vicious circle had arisen: the employment of foreigners prevented improvement of working conditions and methods. The migration of the best workers from the rural districts was the answer.

Rural exodus aroused deep concern. The growing differential of population density in the Polish and German border districts was considered a national danger. Natural increase was greater in the Polish than in the German population. The conservative-minded groups of the population looked upon urbanization as a doubtful benefit. They argued that the country had a higher birth rate and a better standard of health than the city, that the rural sections provided a higher percentage of men fit to serve in the army, that agriculture and handicraft allowed a more all-round development of the human person than factory work. Radicalism flourished among the city proletariat, and a dense rural population seemed to be the best defense against outer and inner enemies. For decades the Prussian Upper House debated the flight from the land and measures for preventing it.

Improvement of farm workers' conditions in order to hold them on the land would have meant hardship for the large estate owners, the most

[45] Karl Kärger, "Die Sachsengängerei," Bibl. #130, 1890, Vol. 19, p. 397.

[46] Petersen in Bibl. #108, February 13, 1932, and Bibl. #139, 1914, Vol. 1, p. 580. The official figure did not indicate the total amount since the obligation to register did not hold good in all states and in the others many workers succeeded in evading registration. Recruiting and placing of foreign workers from 1905 on was supposed to be centralized in an institution set up by the Chamber of Agriculture, the German Workers' Central (at first Deutsche Feldarbeiterzentrale, then Deutsche Arbeiterzentrale). A few Chambers of Agriculture, however, continued to work in the same field. In fact, barely 20 per cent of the recruiting and placing of foreign workers was carried out by the Workers' Central. It was under employers' influence and attracted as many foreign workers as possible (Gerhard Gross, "Ausländische Arbeiter in der deutschen Landwirtschaft und die Frage ihrer Ersetzbarkeit," Bibl. #130, 1923-1924, Vol. 59, p. 6).

influential political group. The powerful heavy industries were interested in the cheap labor supply from the country. The Imperial government met the problem of rural exodus with various reforms such as protective tariffs and colonization, aimed simultaneously at the protection of agriculture and of the large estates, which were considered the backbone of national power, the surest foundation of throne and altar. The eastern nobility, who as grain exporters had been champions of free trade, reversed their stand when Germany's transition from a food-exporting to a food-importing country (in 1874) caused a fall in agricultural prices and an increase in indebtedness. Protective tariffs on agricultural products were supposed to maintain the profitability of agriculture, prevent the depopulation of the country, and increase the ability of agriculture to feed the German population, so urgently demanded by military leaders.

After 1879, the country embarked on a universal protective policy with at first moderate, then higher and higher duties, increasing land values, and raising the cost of living for the nonagricultural population. The system operated largely to the benefit of large estate owners who produced rye, wheat, potatoes, or sugar. When Chancellor Caprivi tried to change this policy in favor of industry and the urban masses by reduction of agricultural duties in commercial treaties, a Farmers' League (Bund der Landwirte) was founded in 1893. This powerful organization of economic and political agrarian interests under the leadership of the eastern nobility captured agricultural owners in all parts of the country. In their feeling of insecurity and distress the peasants followed the lords who had been traditionally their leaders and many of whom were excellent farmers. The League proclaimed: "Only as we follow class politics ruthlessly and undisguisedly can we possibly save ourselves."[47] "We must cease to complain, we must shout," said one of the founders.[48] Flight from the land was attributed to too much educa-

[47] H. Dietzel, "The German Tariff Controversy," *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*, May 1903, Vol. 17, p. 370. "Its agitation, in form and scope unprecedented in Germany, imbued public opinion with an amount of agrarian spirit which would have earlier been thought impossible." *Ibid.*, p. 371. The program of the League demanded, among other things, adequate tariff protections, tax leniency for agriculture, formation of agricultural chambers, regulation of residence requirements for local relief, rules for workers' breach of contract, revision of the laws protecting labor (F. Hohlfeld, Bibl. #38, 1934, Vol. 1, pp. 276-277). In Bavaria a peasants' association was separately organized. The Deutscher Bauernbund (The German Peasant League, at first League of Settlers) organized as opposition, under liberal democratic leadership, was not unsuccessful but never gained the importance of the Farmers' League.

[48] Ruprecht-Rausern, a Silesian tenant farmer, in an article published on December 21, 1892, quoted by Otto von Kiesenwetter, Bibl. #41, 1918, pp. 21, 335.

tion. The League defended the threatened privileges and influenced the course of domestic politics. It worked as a militant political pressure and propaganda group and tried to get its members elected to the parliaments. It soon dominated and invigorated the Conservative party, which protected agrarian interests, and controlled the political situation in Prussia. Caprivi was overthrown. Protectionism increased again as soon as the commercial treaties elapsed.

Other means to help agriculture were the development of a well planned system of credit and other cooperatives, based partly on self help, partly on government assistance. Credit associations, started by Raiffeisen in the sixties, provided loans at low interest rates. Cooperatives, with the help of wholesale societies, supplied seed, tools, and other production and household necessities at low prices. Cooperatives provided electricity, marketing, insurance. Machines were used cooperatively. Through such organized self-help the small peasant could overcome many of the handicaps he would have suffered as an individual producer.

Another government measure, land settlement,[49] was applied to the most vulnerable part of the country,[50] in which a sparse population faced growing Polish masses across the border. The Royal Prussian Colonization Commission was equipped with funds to purchase large estates in the two provinces with large Polish population and divide them into small farms for sale or lease to German peasants and laborers. In the early nineties the settlement activities were extended by law to the whole of Prussia. The settlement policy tried simultaneously to counteract the growing industrialization and to maintain an abundant peasant stock as a source of national vitality by increasing peasant holdings, abolishing the labor shortage, and establishing a bulwark of German peasants against the Poles. However, in Prussia not more than 39,900 settlements for workers and craftsmen were established by the end of 1912.[51] A Prussian high official estimated that up to the end of 1911 only 2,028 workers had been settled.[52]

The Germanization policy of the government was thwarted by Polish societies counteracting the policy and by German estate owners who pro-

[49] The settlement policy was successful in Mecklenburg where half the land belonged to the Grand Duke and the other half to the squires. A new peasant class was created by leasing hereditary farms of the grand ducal land to peasants.

[50] Gesetz betreffend die Förderung deutscher Ansiedlungen in den Provinzen Westpreussen und Posen vom 26 April 1886 (Bibl. #137, p. 131).

[51] *Sonderbeilage zum RABl* 1915, No. 3, p. 54.

[52] Dr. Metz, in Freiherr von Wangenheim (Bibl. #83, p. 34).

duced real or fictitious offers from Polish landowners at high prices in order to blackmail the German land settlement boards into offering still higher prices. The advantages were shared by Polish landowners and served to increase their power of resistance. In a meeting of the Prussian Council to the Crown (Kronrat) on February 13, 1906, the Minister of Agriculture reported that the fight between the settlement authorities and the Polish banks had driven estate prices up from 600 M. per ha. in 1887 to 1,200 and more in 1905.[53] The political aim to set a dam against Polonism had failed. Moreover, two-thirds of all German settlements, i.e. those in Posen and West Prussia, were lost after the First World War.

Settlement was not a success. Peasants' sons from the west who would have needed additional land did not like the inferior soil in the east. Settlement of agricultural workers met the resistance of both parties. Estate owners were afraid of losing laborers and feared that small holders would supplement their low proceeds by theft on the estates. They demanded that the nationality fight should not be made a *casus belli* against big estates. Due to their influence, the Prussian Diet restricted the right to expropriation to such a small extent (70,000 ha.) that it remained without effect.[54] Laborers found that the income they could derive from their holding was too small and feared a return of the old dependence. They were not willing to accept half-subsistence homesteads which did not offer possibilities of social advancement. The gap separating worker and estate owner remained too great.[55] No popular settlement movement arose. The exodus from eastern agriculture did not stop.

The First World War

The situation in German agriculture at the outbreak of the First World War in 1914 was acute. Due to the withdrawal of a considerable proportion of manpower, horses, and fertilizer, the shortage of coal and oil, and the decay of machinery, agriculture became less and less intensive. The crop

[53] Otto Braun (Bibl. #11), p. 63. The price was 1,451 M in 1906, scoring 45 per cent in the last four years (Bibl. #154, 1907, Vol. 1, p. 272). The Prussian Minister of Agriculture, von Podbielski, stated that in seven years prior to 1904 Polish buyers had acquired 40,000 ha. more from German sellers than Germans had acquired from Poles in Posen and West Prussia (*ibid.*, March 3, 1904, Vol. 1, p. 93). When two large estates, one owned by a German and one by a Pole, went bankrupt, the commission bought the estate of the Pole who then bought the estate of the German with the sales money (Hans Delbrück, Bibl. #18, pp. 8-9).

[54] Roman Heiligenthal (Bibl. #35), p. 10.

[55] Max Sering (Bibl. #149a), pp. 120-24, 135ff.

yields, never adequate for the needs of the population, enormously declined. The war deprived the German people of about one-third of its food and foodstuffs according to expert estimates.[56] Millions of soldiers had to be fed, yet the farm population could not be induced to curtail its consumption. The ensuing starvation of the civilian nonfarm population hampered the war effort. Regulation of the food supply was neglected at the beginning of the war because of the general belief that the war would last only a few months. The abuses which grew up in connection with the food supply weakened confidence in government authority as well as any feeling of solidarity in the community of suffering.

The growing cry for a food dictator was not answered until May 1916 when the War Food Office (Kriegsernährungsamt)[57] was established. Rationing was carried through, maximum prices were fixed. Although their shares were larger than those of the general population farmers resented deeply compulsory government measures. Black markets flourished. Government policy was "a hopeless tugging on the food cover which had become too small."[58]

The already existing labor shortage, especially of trained farmers and competent managers, increased catastrophically.[59] Skalweit estimated that nearly 2.7 million men had been withdrawn.[60] A survey of 3,000 Bavarian rural communities in the winter of 1916-1917 showed that 70.63 per cent of all agricultural workers and 37.67 per cent of independent farmers were in the fighting forces.[61] As early as 1914 (and repeatedly in 1915 and 1916) the Ministry of War ordered that conscription of qualified men in the reserves be deferred until after the harvest. From 1916 on, the military authorities granted leaves liberally for soldiers for the periods of intensive

[56] Ernst Wagemann, "Geschlossener Handelsstaat und gebundene Wirtschaft," Bibl. #110, 1917, Vol. 173, p. 200.

[57] Order of May 22, 1916 (Bibl. #140, p. 402). After the war it became the Reichsernährungsamt, which in 1919 changed its name to Reichsernährungsministerium (Reich Ministry for Food); in 1920 into Reichsministerium für Ernährung und Landwirtschaft, Reich Ministry for Food and Agriculture (Decree of March 30, 1920, Bibl. #140, p. 379), after it had been united for a short time with the Reich Ministry of Economics. The Ministry will be referred to henceforth as Ministry for Agriculture.

[58] August Skalweit (Bibl. #79), pp. 3, 164ff.

[59] Friedrich Aereboe estimated that of 5.4 million men working in agriculture (about 3.4 million of whom were in the sixteen to fifty military age group), about 2 million were serving in the armed forces (Bibl. #2, p. 25).

[60] Skalweit, "The Maintenance of the Agricultural Labour Supply during the War," *International Review of Agricultural Economics* 1922, XIII, pp. 851-852.

[61] Schlittenbauer, "Die gegenwärtigen Produktionsbedingungen der deutschen Landwirtschaft," *Süddeutsche Monatshefte*, July 1917, p. 502.

farm work. Deferred farmers and those on leave were obliged to help on other farms in addition to working on their own.[62]

It was a great advantage that the outbreak of the war occurred in a period in which masses of foreign workers were employed in German agriculture. They were detained in the country, and relieved the scarcity of unskilled labor, but not of trained farmers. At the outbreak of the war, 436,000 alien workers had been employed in Germany and 372,000 were still there in 1917-1918.[63] Prisoners of war provided another source of farm labor: 936,000 were employed in agriculture on October 10, 1918.[64] They worked in groups of thirty, and the communities arranged for their allocation. The productivity of these aliens, who were unfamiliar with advanced German techniques, was low. Organized labor complained that the employment of prisoners of war kept wages of German workers down. After the outbreak of the revolution many prisoners refused to work.

Another type of help, Juvenile Assistance (Jungmannenhilfe),[65] grew from companies of high school boys which were formed spontaneously, especially in towns, to help after school hours. By Order of March 24, 1917, the Prussian Minister of War drew up "Fundamental Principles for the Organization of Boys for the Benefit of Agriculture." They provided for an organization of strict military type. Squads of boys were placed under a leader (usually disabled war veterans) to be housed, if possible, in barracks. Farmers provided food and lodging and paid 1 M. per day to the leader. Out of this sum children were insured against sickness, accident, and invalidity, and were paid an allowance of 1.50 M. a week to meet the wear and tear of clothing. The number of boys thus employed was estimated to amount to about 75,000 in 1917. Their efficiency was estimated at about 70 per cent of the average worker. Farmers were therefore reluctant to employ them. Prisoners of war were allocated to farmers by the Ministry of War only on condition that they employ a suitable number of boys.

As early as 1915 the Bavarian military authority restricted the mobility of farm labor by ruling that the latter were not to leave their jobs before the end of the harvest without consent of the employer. Employers could engage farm labor only on presentation of a police certificate giving evidence

[62] Friedrich Becker (Bibl. #6), pp. 20-21.

[63] Bibl. #153c, 1915, p. 416; 1920, p. 25.

[64] Gerhard Gross (cited above, note 46), p. 9. Employers had to provide shelter and board and guard the prisoners. The authorities cared for medical treatment and clothing. A small payment was given the prisoner for work over five hours a day.

[65] Hans Fuhrmann (Bibl. #27), pp. 50ff.

of the legal termination of the worker's previous contract. Greater restrictions followed in 1917. The Auxiliary Service Law,[66] which conscripted men seventeen to sixty years of age for labor, brought no relief to the labor shortage. It provided that workers who were engaged in agriculture or rural handicrafts prior to August 1, 1916, were not to be conscripted for other work. At the beginning of 1918, persons engaged in agriculture were prohibited from passing on to nonagricultural employment without written local police authorization. In some rural districts it was ruled that young people who took jobs for the first time could accept work other than agricultural only with the consent of the authorities.

Under the pressure of the great struggle, union recognition by the government had been achieved in August 1914. On June 26, 1916,[67] an amendment to the Reich Association Law removed a great threat from organized farm labor by stating that trade unions were not to be considered political associations. The Auxiliary Service Law recognized trade unions as official representatives of labor and provided for conciliation boards, organized on the basis of employer-employee participation. The restriction of the use of foreign languages at trade-union meetings was abolished on April 19, 1917.[68]

Legislation alone was not sufficient to remove restrictions. Because of the close tie-up between the squires and the army, the military authorities continued to hamper the activities of organized labor. Meetings of the Socialist farm workers' union were prohibited on the grounds that wage discussions would create labor unrest.[69] "Estate owners in uniform" sent "labor agitators" (Hetzer) to the front.[70] The imprisonment of Karl Liebknecht for treasonous remarks evoked the first political strikes. Mass discontent, spurred by the deterioration of the food situation, increased when the peace of Brest Litovsk showed that the German government did not aim at peace without annexations.

Although agricultural workers did not suffer privations comparable to those of the city population, their standard of living had deteriorated because of the lack of clothing, soap, coal, and all the amenities of life. Dissatisfaction and war weariness as the war continued were shared by all alike. Thus the revolution in which they did not take an active part was greeted by farm workers as a harbinger of peace and a new order.

[66] December 5, 1916 (Bibl. #140, p. 1333). The inferior position of the farm worker was reflected in a clause of the law which provided that industrial workers recruited for agriculture were not subject to the farm servant ordinances.

[67] Bibl. #140, p. 635.

[68] Bibl. #140, p. 361.

[69] Bibl. #112b, 1914-1919, pp. 32-33.

[70] *Ibid.*, p. 131.