

17.4 Economic organisation processes and politicisation in European rural societies, c.1850–1940, II

Room 202

Conveners: Gloria Sanz Lafuente and Corinne Marache

Chair: Miguel Cabo Villaverde and Gloria Sanz Lafuente

17.41 András Vári – Political mobilisation and economic support for agriculture. Austria and Hungary (from the 1870s to the First World War)

The paper compares the national and regional agricultural associations of three countries, Germany, Austria and Hungary from the end of the nineteenth century to the First World War. At this period, an intense political mobilisation took place in rural society. The driving forces behind this mobilisation were different associations, fighting partly for narrow economic aims like tariff protection, but also for a more generally anti-liberal government policy. This paper argues, that there were three or four major factors determining the extent, width of political mobilisation. One has been long obvious, the extent of the franchise. But other factors have hardly been studied. The paper looks first at the extent of concrete economic assistance, which the associations were able and willing to extend to their members as a determining factor for the attractiveness of their economic policy propositions. A wider variety of concrete assistance from the economic associations seems to have strengthened the political message of the associations substantially. What other trans-local organisations, networks were there beside the agricultural associations, seems also to have enhanced or emaciated the political response from the land. Both the rural co-operatives movement and the friendly societies, mutual help associations have multiplied in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. There are a number of instances where their effect strengthened rural political mobilisation. Finally, the larger issue of relations between landlords and peasant farmers determined by the different course of peasant emancipation and the tax and tariff policies of the liberal governments of the 1860 and 1870 will also be investigated. But small matters need to latch onto larger issues to have a major impact.

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17.42 Leen van Molle – Peasants, political parties and national identities in a multilingual state: Belgium, c.1880–1940

The process of the politicisation of farming people is a subject that has already exercised more than one generation of historians from various European countries. If anything has become apparent it is that the process was not linear or unambiguous, but had a multiplicity of causal factors and was multi-layered. In this respect, Belgium represents a special case, not simply because of the dominance of a single agricultural organisation – the *Boerenbond* (Farmers' League) – with wide-ranging economic and political sway, remarkable internal cohesion and an unflagging dynamism, but also because of the influence had by specifically Belgian contextual factors on that politicisation in this country. The process here was in fact dual. On the one hand was a tendency towards convergence around a Belgian, Catholic, organisational model that rested on a romantic image of peasantry and countryside. On the other was organisational fragmentation along the fault lines in Belgian society: the first, the ideological cleft between Catholics, liberals and socialists; the second, the socio-economic gulf between agriculture and industry, between rural and urban areas; and the third, the widening rift separating Belgian, Flemish and Walloon nationalism. Those brands of nationalism, the formation of political parties, the extension of the right to vote and economic

transformation all acted upon each other, and it was within this context that farming people became a much-focused-on object of electoral mobilisation, albeit that this was in various and sometimes contradictory directions at the same time. The paper argues that the development of agricultural organisations not only stemmed from the strained context within which they operated, but was also partly responsible for bringing the fault lines into greater relief.

Leen Van Molle is professor of modern history at the University of Leuven (Belgium), Department of History. Her research focuses on Belgian and comparative European social history from 1800 to the present, especially rural history, the rural-urban divide, the construction of social identities, co-operative saving and lending, gender and the methodology of oral history. She is co-promotor of the international research group CORN (*Comparative Rural History of the North Sea Area*, FWO), president of ICAG (*Interfaculty Centre for Agrarian History*, University of Leuven).

16.43 Edouard Lynch – ‘The wine and the bread’: the socialist co-operative movement and the politicisation of countrysides, 1890–1940

In the political history of contemporary French countryside, the concept of politicisation is firmly linked to the nineteenth century and the slow establishment of the Third Republic. However, political thought did not cease to drive new ideologies, norms and political practices in 1880. Throughout the twentieth century, the way citizens interacted with politics continued to evolve. This is clear from the growth of trade unions, mass political parties and new forms of political expressions.

Politicisation was reinforced by the emergence of new political organisations and by socialism. The urban working class was the key protagonist. Yet, socialists in France and across Europe needed to target and win over the rural population, if only to achieve a broader geographic footprint and a better chance of electoral success.

This was manifest in the creation of a new economic entity, the co-operative. Originally concerned with the storage and reselling of agricultural produce. The co-operative, particularly in the wine-making sector, was the key player in the SFIO’s electoral expansion in rural France before 1914.

If the co-operative model was well adapted to the needs of a wine-making sector, faced with increasing over-supply and quality issues; the Great Depression of the 1930s, saw the focus of the co-operative shift to other sectors, such as cereals. The storage of wheat had become a major factor in the organisation and control of agricultural markets.

Creating and encouraging co-operatives had not just an economic purpose. It was part of a conscious political strategy, to engage and organise French rural society, who were being wooed on all sides.

Édouard Lynch is Maître de conférences in Contemporary History in the Laboratoire d’Études Rurales at the Université Lumière Lyon 2. His publications include ‘Les campagnes du Front populaire : entre violence et politisation’, in Gilles Morin and Gilles Richard (eds), *Les deux France du Front Populaire* (2008); ‘Les révoltes de la Champagne au miroir de 1907: modèle languedocien et médiatisation protestataire’, in *L’Aude et la Vigne: cent ans de passion*, Actes du colloque de Carcassonne (28-30 juin 2007) (2008); ‘Les manifestations paysannes de la IVe à la Ve République : un répertoire protestataire à l’épreuve (1953-1965)’, in Gilles Richard and Jacqueline Sainclivier (eds), *Les partis et la République. La recomposition du système partisan. 1956-1967* (2007); ‘Socialisme européen et question paysanne: des ambiguïtés fondatrices’, in Jean Vigreux and Serge Wolikow (eds), *Rouge et rose, deux siècles de socialisme européen* (2007).