

# FROM “PEASANT” TO “FARMER” IN GREEK MODERNITY: CONSTRUCTING FARMER IDENTITIES IN 19<sup>th</sup>- AND 20<sup>th</sup>- CENTURY GREECE

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**Abstract:** Constructing the farmer in the 19<sup>th</sup>-and-20<sup>th</sup>-century dominant political discourses in Greece pertains to a passage from the peasant to the farmer/farm worker and farmer/patriot, on to the professional farmer; this passage ought to be studied in terms of a specific model which is characterized by small-size family farm units. The above model was mainly promoted by bourgeois forces which led the modernization process in Greek society, and it was the model which the rival socialist movements consented to after their defeat in the Civil War. In the postwar period the acceleration of agricultural development, particularly following the country’s integration in the European Community, imposed a certain consensus in seeking a unitary model of agriculture, whereby the dominant role was assigned to the small farmer-landowner-entrepreneur. At the dawn of the new century, the European agricultural policy reforms entail new vicissitudes for the small landowner, who is now finding him/herself seeking new roles in order to be integrated into a post-industrial developmental model for the countryside. He/she is constituted, once more, a subject of new ontological ventures, such as, for instance, the much-discussed symbolisms of the “warden of the countryside”, and “protector of the environment” and/or the “national cultural heritage”.

**Keywords:** farmers, social representations, Greek history, rural sociology

## INTRODUCTION

The successive CAP reforms during the last couple of decades have brought back to the fore discussions on the definition of the concepts “peasant” and “farmer”. Agriculture and, subsequently, the farmer, in the current process of restructuring rural space, do not have the kind of priority which they had during the postwar period of agricultural modernization. At the same time, with very few notable exceptions

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(e.g., Damianakos 1997), there has been no systematic approach to the above concepts in Greece during the last few decades, despite the revitalization and flourishing of empirical sociological research on rural society and economy. As a consequence, reference to these concepts usually takes place in an erratic manner.

In this paper, we aim to map out different uses of representations of farmers during the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries in Greece, as traced mainly in political discourse (parliamentary speeches, announcements of measures, pre-electoral campaigns, party literature etc.). This mapping out can be seen to serve as an initial and introductory—and, for this purpose, more schematic—version of a broader comprehensive undertaking in tracing constructions of farmer identities in a European locality. As we shall demonstrate, the passage from the peasant to the farmer/farm worker and farmer/patriot, on to the professional farmer, constitutes a series of instances which ought to be seen within the course of a historical transformation at the level of discourse on the countryside dweller.

With this assertion as our point of departure, we propose to argue that representations of Greek farmers are the outcome of an economic and ideological struggle between social groups claiming a hegemonic role in the formation of the newly established Greek state. We consider the analysis of the various particular uses of the above concepts within the national context to be a *sine qua non* for designing the new agricultural policy, as well as a contribution to the overall discussions within the European context on the redefinition of the concept and the role of the farmer.

## ON THE CONCEPT OF THE PEASANT IN THE COURSE OF THE 19<sup>th</sup> CENTURY

The most crucial agricultural problems faced by the newly constituted Greek state<sup>1</sup> in the closing decades of the 19th century had to do, in the first place, with distribution of the land that had come under its jurisdiction following Independence. The landless constituted the overwhelming majority of the peasantry who, under heavy pressures from taxation and political coercion had resorted sometimes to uprisings of a religious/insurrectionary character, at other times to

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<sup>1</sup> Following the Greek War of Independence against the Ottoman Empire (1821-28), the Greek state becomes officially recognized in 1829.

banditry.<sup>2</sup> The first significant attempt to distribute the so-called national lands took place with the limited agricultural reform proposed in 1871 by Prime Minister A. Koumoundouros. At the economic level, the aim of the reform was to strengthen the economic role of the state, the credit system, and merchant capital, and at the political level, to create a broader stratum of small landowners with a view to the latter comprising the social base of the regime.

In the prevailing political discourse of the day representations of the farmer were overshadowed by those of the fugitive and the bandit<sup>3</sup> (see Koumoundouros 1870). The phenomenon of banditry is particularly complex, linking together the most diverse forms of work, income and upward social mobility: "often one and the same family produced a farmer, a bishop, a head of the gendarmerie and an equally distinguished bandit" (Karavidas 1978: 586).

Equally complex at that time were the relations between big landowners and bourgeois social strata in the Greek diaspora (merchants, professionals, government officials, etc.) with the state and the successive governing coalitions. Prime Minister Charilaos Trikoupis<sup>4</sup> backed away from promotion of land redistribution and the creation of a stratum of small landowners in the hope of securing the support of the big landowners of the diaspora and attracting investments to Greece.<sup>5</sup>

The result of the failure of this policy was not only perpetuation of the large numbers of the landless but also failure to promote industrial development and create employment opportunities for the working

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<sup>2</sup> The rural population of Greece in 1879 numbered 254,000 families while, with the land reform, 265,000 hectares were distributed among 357,217 allotments (*Istoria tou Neou Ellinismou* [=History of Modern Hellenism] 2004: 81).

<sup>3</sup> Notwithstanding the numerous measures that had been taken to stamp it out, banditry had not been successfully eradicated. Thus in 1899 there were 12,580 bandits in Greece, in a total population of around 2,700,000 (Alevizatos 1995: 341).

<sup>4</sup> Charilaos Trikoupis formed his first viable government in 1880, was defeated in 1885, and returned to power as Prime Minister in 1887. He was defeated again in 1890, became Prime Minister again in 1892, and resigned in 1893 after coming into conflict with King George I.

<sup>5</sup> Towards the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and particularly following the integration of Thessaly into the Greek state (1881) the big landowners succeeded in gaining recognition of the "unlimitable" character of their property and in effecting a gradual transformation, from the legal viewpoint, of share-croppers into tenants (Vergopoulos 1875: 118-119).

class in urban areas.<sup>6</sup> Poor peasants did not move to the cities, but rather to other rural areas, or abroad.

To quote the elegant formulation by Karavidas, “the male offspring, and often the father himself, the head of this rustic clan, having mortgaged his property, and become in succession a sheep thief, a bandit, a mule-driver, a rural policeman, a bailiff, chairman of the council, a purportedly free citizen, a lamp-lighter, a descendant of the ancient Greeks, a gravedigger and – worst of all – a voter, knowing how to bargain with his vote, having finally become a lawyer and acquired a degree, the supreme qualification in the Balkan, and particularly the Greek, hierarchy, having thus tasted the rankest depths of indignity, finally packed his bags for America in search of ready cash...” (1978: 440).

Noteworthy are the changes taking place in representations of the farmer current in the urban bourgeois strata. Literature and the theatre are important sites for recording these changes. Idyllic rural ethnography idealized the outdoor life (probity, faith, bravery, freedom) elevating the peasant from bandit or rebel to fount of national unity and pride (Vitti 1980: 75). By contrast, the cities are portrayed as places of isolation, exploitation and misery (Paparousi 1996-1997: 70-71; Dromazos 1980: 10-26) in which the state imposes policies of constraint and repression (Korasidou 1992).<sup>7</sup> Similarly romantic and similarly imbued with strongly conservative motifs, is the mood that comes to prevail in painting.

Given the need to seek out elements of unity in historical space and time, both classical and folk artists in Greece were to manifest particular interest in rural conditions, traditions, customs, dress, etc.

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<sup>6</sup> Notwithstanding all the expectations of Charilaos Trikoupis, in the 1875-1885 period the bourgeois social strata of the Greek diaspora remained exclusively oriented towards mines, trade, public works and the stock exchange and not towards the newly established industrial enterprises.

<sup>7</sup> Analogies in the field of literature can be found in 19<sup>th</sup> century France. Political conflicts between democrats, socialists and Bonapartists mark the transition from the “eternal peasant” (G. Sand) to the representations of the farmer whose essential features after 1880 are shaped by the rural crisis and acceleration of the exodus from the cities (Balzac, Zola, Bazin, Guillaumin, et al). Intervening between the moral uprightness of the people and the corruption of the cities there emerges a peasantry which is represented not only as impoverished and destitute but also as opportunistic, vengeful, lacking in moral backbone, subordinated to the bourgeoisie, etc. (Ponton 1977; Barral 1988).

(Kotidis 1999; Tamvaki, 1988). "It was the *foustanella*<sup>8</sup> and the peasant's breeches that made us a free nation"<sup>9</sup>, says N. Gyzis in 1895, a painter who was to exert a decisive influence on the attitudes of the time towards rural society.<sup>10</sup>

But there is another side to it. A significant proportion of the representations of farmers at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century take as their point of departure the politically opposing ideologies, that is, those of utopian socialism and anarchism. Certain socialists organized themselves around the *Sosialistikos Sillogos* and, through the newspaper *Sosialistis* (1896), published their views on the agrarian question. These amounted to a reformist programme focusing on questions of farm credit, taxation, education, etc., and sidelining such hot issues as distribution to the landless of the estates of the large landowners.

Another socialist group, through the periodical *Ardin*, proclaimed aspirations echoing those articulated by Marx in relation to the "realm of freedom". In a society of "reconciliation and coalescence of the life of the city with the life of the countryside...there is nothing strange about one legislating or writing books in the morning, building or sweeping the floor at midday and in the evening making one's clothes or printing the books one has written" (*Ardin* 1887).

Anarchism in Greece (1870-1885), taking the form, in the first instance, of anarcho-syndicalism, made its presence particularly felt at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century in the context of the economic crises in the winegrowing areas of the Northern Peloponnese and the Ionian Islands. Notwithstanding the generally favourable historical conjuncture, while anarchist views on the peasantry project the ideal of the peasant as model revolutionary, in practice they end up supporting an amalgam of utopian socialism, Christian socialism and theosophy. It is typical that the discourse of the leader *par excellence* of the

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<sup>8</sup> The *foustanella*, a pleated white skirt, used to be a common men's garment in certain parts of Greece. It has been symbolically associated with the "bravery" and "self-sacrifice" of Greek fighters in the war of Independence, and has thus been established as a national costume.

<sup>9</sup> See *Istoria tou Neou Ellinismou* 2004: 250.

<sup>10</sup> Indulgence of national identifications deprives Greek painting of the rigour and the critical eye of, for example, French realism, even when the subjects dealt with are social issues (poverty, death, disease, etc.). In both cases the political use to which the representations were put is impossible to ignore (Chamboredon 1977; Juneja 1988; Rouillé 1984: 34, 40).

movement for redistribution of the big estates, Marinos Antypas<sup>11</sup>, was to proclaim in 1905: “What we seek is what was sought by Christ... We want the labouring man to rise up against the idle rich, the peasant against the boss of the land, the bondsman against the master... We seek to replace the God proclaimed by the despots and the tyrants with the true God proclaimed by Christ and called the God of love and freedom, the God of people who help each other, not the god of harshness, of tears and of toil.” (*Anastasis* 1905).

At the same time, alongside freedom and progress, and equality and love, sometimes the idea of return to nature was likewise extolled. In the radical publication *Neon Fos* in 1899 there was the proclamation: “Down with civilization! Long live nature! We don’t want railways, or telegraphs, or telephones, or phonographs, or palaces, or carpets, or silks, or woolens, or footwear, or gold, or silver, or anything! Nothing artificial! Everything natural! Yes! Let’s go back to nature! Let’s go back to our poor Mother Nature!” (*Neon Fos* 1889).

With the above representations of farmers from the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, we have attempted an elementary mapping out of the gradual transition from bandit to national hero (bourgeois ideologies) and from peasant to idealized revolutionary (socialist ideologies). As we illustrate next, the various stakes pertaining to the small landowner are to be articulated politically in the first decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century by means of a set of attributes which is more coherent in terms of the actual realities of Greek farming life; from that point onwards these stakes are to become a terrain for political conflict.

## THE INTERWAR PERIOD: TOWARDS SOCIAL INTEGRATION AND POLITICAL RECOGNITION OF THE FARMER

The pro-farmer policies of the state in the first decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century are linked to the upward social mobility of the middle classes (expansion of the cities, industrial growth, state interventionism) and a continuation of the endeavour to create a stratum of small landowners.

The political discourse of Eleftherios Venizelos<sup>12</sup> ideally encapsulates the bourgeois ideologies of the time. In this context

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<sup>11</sup> Marinos Antypas, radical activist in the struggle for distribution of the estates to the landless, was murdered in 1907 by landowners in the region of Thessaly.

<sup>12</sup> Eleftherios Venizelos, major political figure in 20<sup>th</sup>-century Greek history, was leader of the “progressive” *Liberal Party*, a political formation which condensed the key divides, resistances, and adaptations of bourgeois ideologies of the Greek

Venizelos seeks out both the economic and the moral wherewithal for settling the landless as small landowners without much hurting the interests of the big landowners (Venizelos 1911). The more radical tendencies in liberal discourse, those embraced by A. Papanastasiou,<sup>13</sup> as a "reforming socialist", were to support compulsory alienation and the transition to small proprietorship as a prerequisite for farmers coming to love the land and for the growth of sentiments of emulation and so for progress (Papanastasiou 1988: 182, 69, 62).

In the subsequent period, the so-called Balkan wars (1912-1913) were to invest with new meaning the representations of farmers. The nation's borders were expanding and, with that, went a parallel expansion in the numbers of big estates, the numbers of landless, and the numbers of inhabitants of the state with non-Greek ethnic origin.<sup>14</sup> The announcement in 1917 of an extensive agricultural reform (compulsory alienation of the *tsiflikia* [large estates], organization of co-operatives, education and training, etc.) implied a corresponding need for mobilization of small landowners for national homogenization and social control of non-Greek populations "with diluted<sup>15</sup> national consciousness", as Venizelos put it in a pre-electoral speech in Volos in 1920.

Nevertheless at this time the most important problem was propagation of socialist ideas, which Venizelos planned to deal with using the lever of the small landowners: "while we can make a big estate into five hundred allotments so that each cultivator can take one, we are not able to take a large factory, make it five hundred factories and distribute them to the workers, with each taking one..." (1920).

The representations of the small landowner towards the end of the 1930s, through a succession of economic and political crises, were to be transformed in a national-socialist direction finding expression

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interwar period, towards the direction of a bourgeois modernization. He served as Prime Minister in 1910, 1915, 1916, 1917, and 1923.

<sup>13</sup> Papanastasiou was the so-called left wing of Venizelos' Liberal Party, founding in 1910 the party known as *Democratic Union*. His many-sided relations with liberal-bourgeois political forces brought him into a variety of governmental positions up to 1933.

<sup>14</sup> The population of the country in 1907 was 2,631,952. In 1920, after the wars, it reached 5,016,889. As far as the ethnic composition of the population is concerned, ethnic Greeks comprised 42.65% of the population of (Greek) Macedonia, 36.7% of Thrace, and 7% Epirus (Diamandopoulos 1985: 130).

<sup>15</sup> The literal translation is "watery" (= "υδαρή").

above all in the political discourse of the dictatorial regime of Ioannis Metaxas (1936-41).<sup>16</sup> The farmers were the ideal citizens, devoted to their fields, their family, their religion and the State. To undertake that role would mean becoming “the great cauldron of a beautiful and powerful race” or, in another formulation, the “healthy blood to renew the permanently declining cities” (Metaxas n.d., vol I: 105, vol II: 232-232).<sup>17</sup>

Particularly in periods where crises in production coincide with war preparations, the distance between the farmer and the hero, the cultivator and the soldier, becomes very small: “...I want farming people to be the army of Greece’s economic life....all of Greece must become a military camp of farming, without the smallest patch of ground remaining unfarmed” (Ibid, vol II: 139). As far as relations between the city and the countryside are concerned, Metaxas wanted to make farmers the basis of a perceived socio-biological system in accordance with which the community is a stream of blood starting from farmers and providing nutrient to the urban/bourgeois strata; hence his view that “if the lower levels of society are contaminated and rotten, everything will become rotten...” (Ibid, vol I: 427-428).<sup>18</sup>

Significant changes also occurred in relation to the construction of the farmer in the imaginary of the urban middle classes. Starting, again, from literature, we can see that, within the new ideological framework, the quest for national identity is no longer oriented towards actually-existing peasants but rather towards biologically vigorous, socially integrated and politically neutral heroes (Vitti 1979: 198). At the opposite pole there are projections of life in—what is perceived

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<sup>16</sup> Following the defeat of Venizelos’ Liberal Party in 1933, and a series of subsequent military coups, Metaxas was appointed Prime Minister of Greece in 1936, by King George II. His dictatorial regime, imbued by a national-socialist ideology, lasted until the Nazi occupation of 1941. The agrarian policies of Metaxas aimed at achieving self-sufficiency and creating a solid class of small landowners, limiting movement of farmers to the urban centres where unemployment levels were high. In reality Metaxas abolished every right of co-operative self-management and freedom, converting farmers’ collectives into instruments of state ideology.

<sup>17</sup> To put these statements in perspective, we remind of Hitler’s ideas of the preservation and promotion of a “robust farming class” as the best protection against “social illnesses” and the “racial degeneration” of “our people” (see Reich 1980).

<sup>18</sup> In Italy, too, representations of farmers and workers in inter-war conservative ideology were based on psychological/intellectual and biological conceptions. The reciprocal North/South racist rejection, according to Gramsci, concealed social and class contradictions between the regions, but also within them (Hastaoglou 1982).



as—the inhuman and dangerous cities, with personalities developing extremist behavioral traits under the influence, among other things, of their proselytization to communist ideologies (Karakotias 1986).

The new bourgeois modes of legitimation will even, via the literature of the politically dominant, exert their influence on the work of popular storytellers. They are obliged gradually to move away from accounts of the bravery and sense of justice of bandits, and to turn towards national heroes or heroes taken from European detective stories (Demertzopoulos 1997: 79). Similar legitimating mechanisms shape the transformations in the heroes of shadow theatre: heroes of a rural background, engaged in rebellious or illegal activity, more and more appear to be under the influence of nationalist ideals (Kouris 1995). The dynamic of transformation in the representation of farmers is to a large extent a reflection of the struggle between bourgeois/liberal and socialist ideologies, particularly after the arrival of the Greek refugees from Asia Minor.<sup>19</sup>

On the terrain of socialist ideologies, the predominant position was occupied by *KKE* (Communist Party of Greece)<sup>20</sup>, which emblematically declared that “the emancipation of the rural masses from the yoke of bourgeois/landowner exploitation is possible only in the framework of the Hellenic Soviet Republic of workers and farmers” (*Kommounistiki Epitheorisi* 1935). This meant that “the revolutionary front (of workers and farmers) could be organized only under the tutelage of the proletariat and the direct leadership of its revolutionary party, the Communist Party” (*Rizospastis* 1923, 1927a, 1927b).<sup>21</sup>

The dominant ideology in the party led to the emergence of a literature of proletarian moralism<sup>22</sup>: “the peasant was typically a thin,

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<sup>19</sup> In 1919 Greek troops landed in Smyrna and invaded the hinterland of Asia Minor. Following clashes with the Turkish forces of Mustapha Kemal, they were defeated in 1922. The expulsions which followed resulted in the flight of approximately 1,500,000 Greeks from Asia Minor. The refugees, who settled mostly in the northern and agricultural districts of Greece, exercised decisive pressure for acceleration and diversification of the agricultural reform that had been proclaimed in 1917.

<sup>20</sup> *KKE* was founded in 1924.

<sup>21</sup> *Rizospastis* and *Kommounistiki Epitheorisi* are publications of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Greece.

<sup>22</sup> There are corresponding tendencies in post-revolutionary Russian art. For example, in cinema, on the basis of the need to portray the triumph of the revolution, peasants appear as heroic figures (Prédal 1998: 27-29).

sallow individual, racked by fever, of inferior physique because of his bad upbringing, half-blinded by trachoma and with the spore of tuberculosis in his lungs...he perspires, he falls ill, he is in pain from morning to night and lives like one of life's outcasts, virtually like a beast" (*Rizospastis* 1920).

Somewhat paradoxically, the poor peasant never succeeded in winning the confidence of the party. Stumbling between proletarians and the wealthy, the humble and the mighty, trusted and suspect farmers (*Rizospastis* 1925) several months before the imposition of the Metaxas dictatorship and its own outlawing, the Communist Party was to include among its broader goals the "winning over of the intermediate strata who comprise the majority of the population of Greece" (*Rizospastis* 1936).

The same ideological handling and the same contradictory characterizations were to be found with representations of farmers in the political discourse of the inter-war agrarian parties. From being "the most revolutionary class", living amid "grief, poverty and hunger", through the renunciation of Bolshevik communism on the part of the agrarians, farmers very quickly found themselves being incorporated into "majorities", at the cost of losing their specific social traits (*Koinoniki Erevna* 1932: 8; *Koinoniki Erevna* 1932: 9; *Koinoniki Erevna* 1932: 8).

Finally, given the absence of organic or representative links between its leadership and farmers or workers, the Socialist Party alternated between the goal of nationalization of production and abolition of classes, and policies aimed at winning the support of the petty-bourgeoisie, farmers, white-collar employees and wage-earners, intellectuals, etc. (Psallidas 1989).

In summing up, our assertion is that, in the bourgeois political discourse of the inter-war period, employing at times the lever of arithmetical expansion and ethnic homogeneity of the population (Balkan Wars, Asia Minor refugees), and at others the danger of Communism (socialist ideologies, workers' mobilizations), representations of farmers were used to buttress national homogeneity (the farmer as a local person), state order (the farmer as soldier) and bourgeois ideology (the farmer as free proprietor). Within this framework the farmer of socialist and agrarian ideology (the farmer-worker) remained a mere spectre. It was a protean figure with many possible faces which, with the passage of time, began to fade away,

along with some once dynamic categories of working farmers (tobacco workers, etc.).

#### THE QUEST FOR A MODEL FARMER-ENTREPRENEUR AMIDST POSTWAR POLITICAL INSTABILITY

Constructions of the farmer in the political discourse of the immediate postwar period are marked by anti-communist articulations and the weight of the menacing image of the farmer-rebel.<sup>23</sup> In the 1950s it is the priorities of economic development (industrial investments, public works, mechanization of production, etc.) that underlie the image of the "modern farmer" and "mechanized agriculture" as the common element in both visions of the so-called popular-democratic development (Batsis 1977: 443, 449) and in the agricultural policies of the Prime Minister of the time, Konstantinos Karamanlis.<sup>24</sup>

In reality, the priority was to find a way of dealing with depopulation of the countryside, with hundreds of thousands of farmers abandoning the land and emigrating abroad or to the big cities.<sup>25</sup> Thus both in the political discourse of the ruling bourgeoisie and in the views of the cadres of the centre and of the left opposition, attention was focused on the farmer-emigrant whose departure would

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<sup>23</sup> The bourgeois (right-wing) and socialist (left) tendencies that reconstituted themselves politically and militarily in the course of the German occupation (1941-1944), clashed after the liberation over who was to enjoy supremacy in subsequent political developments. With its climax in the bloody confrontation of December 1944, the conflict triggered the 1946-49 Civil War. The conservative forces, supported successively by Britain and the United States, were the victors in this conflict. Proclaiming the Communist Party of Greece an illegal organization, they were to embark on a course of persecutions and jailings of its members and supporters. Farmers were the essential target both of the violent population transfers and of the houndings, imprisonments, executions, etc. (Kotzamanis 1990; Vernardakis 1987: 66).

<sup>24</sup> Konstantinos Karamanlis, one of the most influential Greek politicians of the postwar period, was the leader of the conservative party *ERE (EPE)* [=National Radical Union] and Prime Minister of the country between 1955 and 1963; he served again as Prime Minister from 1974 to 1980 as head of the party *ND (NA)* [=New Democracy], and was elected President of the Republic in 1980 and 1990. He is to be remembered for the leading role he played in the process of Greece's entry into the European Community.

<sup>25</sup> Between 1960 and 1973 around 1,000,000 people emigrated to Europe, and 645,000 moved from the Greek countryside to the cities. This resulted in a decline in the farming population from 47.5% in 1951 to 43.8% in 1961 and 35.2% in 1971.

usher in agricultural modernization and, by some accounts, also the strengthening of the national economy (*Epoches* 1965).

Hand in hand with modernization of farm structures, the political discourse of the period acquired populist dimensions through projection of “the great agricultural family”. In the publication *I Foni ton Sineterismon* [=The Voice of the Co-operatives], for example, a Minister for Agriculture invites farmers to come to the Agricultural Bank of Greece “freely, as if to your own home”, while a governor of the Agricultural Bank of Greece opines that the Agricultural Bank “is not a wicked stepmother but the true loving mother of every farmer” (1963).

Last but not least, the Prime Minister Georgios Papandreou considers himself a member of the agricultural family: “My dear friends, I feel, as must be clear to you, deeply moved on each occasion that we meet. I feel that I am in the midst of my very own family, just as when I visit my native village in the mountains. So deep and sincere is this personal sentiment. I feel that I am one of you” (*I Foni ton Sineterismon* 1964).

The dictatorial military regime of Colonel Papadopoulos, in the period of the 1967-1974 dictatorship, was in the habit of extolling life and work in the village, but it did not put a halt to the persecution of farmers. As with Metaxas, the prevailing discourse praised the closed and disciplined character of the family, love of the land and of labour, and the national role of the village. According to the dictator “Greek society cannot live if the village does not live. And the village cannot live if all those who inhabit it do not treat it as their own close social family” (Papadopoulos 1968, vol. II: 90). There was thus a return of the “spirit of the great agricultural family” (Ibid: 151). It is interesting that this traditional discourse in no way interferes with the quest for a model “farmer entrepreneur”.

To quote again the words of the dictator, “we too must search in the village, as the industrialist and the merchant searches in the city... it is not possible to expend our energies and our sweat with our hands on the mattock or the plough, without knowing what it is that we do, and why we do it...” (Ibid: 92, 122). Finally, it is noteworthy that the new dictatorship goes back to the ideologies of the “pollution of the city”: this is where, allegedly, the “communists”, the “utopians of the classless society”, and the “communists from behind the iron curtain” predominate (Ibid: 92-93).

Thus, in the political discourse of the post-war period, it seems that there is a convergence between the aspirations of the "professional farmer" as active subject in the process of economic rationalization (mechanization, link-up between farming and industry), and those of bourgeois politicians (state interventionism, social welfare, etc.). Nevertheless, because of the contradictions between the aspirations of the "professional farmer" and the "traditional farmer", the objective is not realized. In the following period, the political parties undertake management of the same problem, this time in the face of the great challenge of the Common Agricultural Policy, which, even before Greece's entry into the EEC, but certainly after 1981, is the most important hurdle to be surmounted for Greek agriculture to fit into the European framework.

#### RETURN OF PARLIAMENTARY DEMOCRACY: FARMER ENTREPRENEUR AND/OR WARDEN OF THE COUNTRYSIDE

In the early part of the period following the return of parliamentary democracy (1974-1980), the views that prevailed were those of the necessity for modernization of the farming sector. This objective, in various forms, is to be found in all electoral proclamations of the political parties, irrespective of political ideology. Indeed, quite apart from the bourgeois parties, both the socialist and the communist discourse of the period swarm with references to the small-to-medium farmer entrepreneur. The difference is that, in the discourse of the dominant opposition party, the emphasis is placed on the prerequisite of establishing an agro-industrial complex. In the words of Andreas Papandreou<sup>26</sup>, the aim must be "to merge the field with the factory"<sup>27</sup>, an ideal which the Communist Party, too, apparently embraces when it speaks of a "harmonic linkage between the agricultural sector, industry

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<sup>26</sup> Andreas Papandreou, son of Georgios Papandreou and former leader of the party PASOK (*ΠΑΣΟΚ*), was a political figure which marked Greece's political life in the post-dictatorship period, particularly during the 1980s and early 1990s, when he served as Prime Minister. His contribution can be summed up in the country's modernization at a crucial time, i.e., its integration in the EU. Although considerably criticized, he laid foundations for the reform of existing political and economic structures, and for the creation of an economic potential which has promoted Greece's development within a European orientation.

<sup>27</sup> Parliamentary debate on the government's programmatic declarations (*I Foni ton Sineterismon* 1974: 747).

and tourism...”<sup>28</sup> The farmers’ unions, too, seem to be moving in the same direction when they promise that “...the village will become a city...” (*I Foni ton Sineterismon* 1975: 72).

Nevertheless, this modernizing demand does not cease to be accompanied by references to the “great agricultural family”. It is typical that the conservative Prime Minister of the time, Konstantinos Karamanlis, should be constrained to remind the world of his membership in the “great agricultural family”. Obeying the same need for management of the insecurity engendered by the imminent modernization, both the Minister of Agriculture and the President of the Republic were to join this chorus, the former never missing an opportunity to draw attention to his rural background and mentality, the latter frequently alluding to man’s pure, true and eternal relationship with the land (*I Foni ton Sineterismon* 1975: 252; 1978: 7).

Key features of the ensuing period are Greece’s entry into the EEC in 1980 and the coming to power of the party *PASOK* (*ΠΑΣΟΚ*) [=Pan-Hellenic Socialist Movement] in 1981, which, in its endeavour to turn the people against the country’s European prospects, portrayed farmers as the most important grouping of “non-privileged Greeks”.

In the first phase (1981-1990) Prime Minister Andreas Papandreou proclaims that *PASOK* represents “the vital interests of the Greek people, the Greek working person in the field and in the factory, the non-privileged Greek from north and south, east and west of the country”. He states, moreover, that “if Brussels don’t approve the price (for agricultural products) that we want, it is the Athens prices that will apply”.<sup>29</sup> Ideological utilization of farmers, in a spasmodic “anti-monopoly” struggle, takes place against a European background of continuous shifts and realignments. At the end of almost thirty years of confronting undesirable production surpluses and environmental stress,

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<sup>28</sup> See *Documents from the 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> party congresses of KKE*, 1990: 175. Similar views predominated in the following Communist Party congresses: “...utilization of the territorial and climatic conditions of the country so as to increase efficiency and boost the competitiveness of agricultural products with up-to-date methods of organizing agricultural production and measures for extending profitable and exportable cultivation...” (*Documents from the 14<sup>th</sup> Party Congress of KKE*, n.d.: 146).

<sup>29</sup> Speech by Andreas Papandreou at the city of Larissa, Thessaly, 22/3/1982.

farmers are increasingly seen as an insupportably privileged social group (Gray 1988).

The transition from the era of approval and support of farmers to that of a critical questioning of their role, takes place in an undifferentiated manner ignoring the great inequalities in the agricultural sector, which had been reinforced by the CAP as implemented (Brouwer 2000). At the same time other major realignments supervened, such as diminution of the political weight of farmers (Boussard 1987: 507-508), ideological manipulation of farmer demands (Maresca 1981), control of the image of farmers by the mass media (Champagne 1984; Tudesq 1988: 208), and the search for new manners of appropriation of environmental goods and services (see, indicatively, Raymond 1968; McLaughlin 1986; Lowe 1982: 116; Champagne 1977).

It is particularly noteworthy that, in Greece, discussion of these problems of European agriculture is, with few exceptions, ignored, and attention almost entirely focused on the ways in which institutional and extra-institutional political and economic networks profit from Community subsidies and assistance (Louloudis 1991: 65; Louloudis 1999: 108-109).

The identification of the farmer with the non-privileged Greek tends to recede, and there is a proliferation of evidence both of the existence of excessively poor and excessively wealthy farmers<sup>30</sup>, and more generally of the links between "the bloc of the non-privileged" and the black economy, not to mention various forms of parasitism.<sup>31</sup> More specifically, at the end of the 1980s, the many-faceted governmental crisis over serious governmental scandals and new forms of legalized corruption in farm services (bribes, favouritism, "give-away" contracts, etc.) would almost entirely undermine both the public image of the Greek farmer and the legitimating mechanisms that supported him/her vis-à-vis the political priorities and moral commitments of city dwellers (Papadopoulos 1999).

With the power and influence of the mass media very prominent, and in a climate of moralistic condemnation (Demertzis and Kafetzis 1996: 211-212), the parties clash over their responsibilities towards

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<sup>30</sup> Statements made by the Minister for Agriculture, I. Pottakis, in *Agrotikos Sinergatismos* 1985: 7.

<sup>31</sup> Statements made in the speech by Prime Minister Andreas Papandreou at the Organizational Meeting of PASOK of 6-8/7/1995.

purportedly “law-abiding” and “law-breaking” farmers. Numerous different social groups (doctors, lawyers, engineers, etc.) are denounced even by mainstream farmers’ organizations as “farmers on paper”, who are not, in other words, really involved in farming but were nevertheless in receipt of the relevant financial assistance, through mechanisms both lawful and non-lawful.<sup>32</sup>

In parallel with reports of waste of Community subsidies by farmers’ co-operatives, there is a series of evaluative judgements being articulated, particularly of ethical nature, in relation to the way “honest” and “dishonest” farmers organize and act. The deluge of disparaging comments and statements finally force the conservative Prime Minister of the time, Konstantinos Mitsotakis (1990-1993), to retort that “99% of the co-operative movement is in sound health” and the Minister of Agriculture to reassure the public that “the overwhelming majority of co-operatives are run honestly and properly” (*Agrotikos Sinergatismos* 1990: 15-16). Thus, an attitude of deferral and an idealization of reality lead, in the best-case scenario, to an institutional and political inertia.

The return of Andreas Papandreou to the prime ministership in 1993 is marked by a recycling of the key populist stereotypes concerning industrialization and restructuring of the industrial-processing and farming sector so that it will be able to cope in conditions of global competition.<sup>33</sup> Nevertheless the European farm subsidization policies already being applied from the mid-80s onwards, and as settled policy from 1992 and after, is to have its effects on the stratification of local communities and markets as well as on differentiation or diminution of the influence of the political parties in the countryside (Demertzis 1996: 134-140; Louloudis 1999; Mavris 1997: 189- 190).

In this context the attempts made by the next Prime Minister, Konstantinos Simitis (1996-2004), come at the wrong time and, so, are ineffective. This involves attempts to revive the spirit of the co-operatives, such as by emphasizing initiative, development, co-operation, employment, retention of population, etc. (*Agrotikos Sinergatismos* 1996: 19), with parallel harmonization of national and

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<sup>32</sup> Statements made by the Chairman of PASEGES (*ΠΑΣΕΓΕΣ*) [=Pan-Hellenic Confederation of Unions of Agricultural Co-operatives], in *Agrotikos Sinergatismos* 1990: 12.

<sup>33</sup> Speech by A. Papandreou at the 8<sup>th</sup> session of the Central Committee of PASOK, February 1993.



European policies, such as cutbacks to subsidies for "Mediterranean products", emphasis on the role of the farmer as "warden of the countryside", etc.

More than this, these attempts, following the revision of the CAP, albeit belatedly and with serious deficiencies, cannot support a new modernizing vision for the countryside that might restore the morale of the young farmer, representative of the "overwhelming majority of the farming population". They are to end up failing even to counter the conservative assessments that focus alternately on the farmer-victim of "misery, dereliction and starvation" and on the extravagant farmer-consumer living it up on his/her subsidy money.<sup>34</sup>

## CONCLUSION

Constructions of the farmer, as they emerge in the political discourse that has predominated in Greece over the last two centuries, converge on a specific model characterized by small-size family farm units. It is a model that reflects the ideological conflicts of the period between the bourgeois forces and the nascent socialist movements. The bone of contention in this sometimes fierce controversy has been appropriation and management of the image of the farmer by the broader bourgeois strata which, in the final analysis, were those that led the modernization process in the Greek society of these times.

Specifically, in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the model of the small landowner was to function as the prime mover in the struggle of the rising bourgeois strata against the big landowners, whose political power acted as a check on the first timid steps towards modernization of an essentially archaic and conservative society. The question was posed again, in new terms, in the first decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and with growing intensity in the interwar years, i.e., in the aftermath of the Balkan Wars and the Asia Minor 'Catastrophe', whereby the annexation of new territories and the influx of refugees from Asia Minor took place, the demographic and ethnic composition of the rural population was altered, and the Asia Minor refugee populations began to be integrated in Greek society.

The chief aspiration of the forces of bourgeois modernization was economic integration and the establishment of political control over the new rural strata, utilizing the instrument of Agrarian Reform –the largest one in the broader Eastern European region. On the other hand,

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<sup>34</sup> Speech by the Prime Minister Konstantinos Simitis at the Special Session of the Central Committee of PASOK, 22/2/1997.

the reform served as a means of damming the flood of surplus rural labour, which would otherwise have been diverted to urban agglomerations at a low level of industrialization, with correspondingly limited capacity to absorb labour in other economic sectors.

In the postwar period the vision that was projected was that of modern (Western European-type) rural development in conjunction with efforts to implement the model of the farmer entrepreneur. Through such “progressive” images, a renewed attempt was made to manage the social and political realities that had emerged with the triumphal predominance of conservative forces, whose discourse was marked by an amalgam of nationalism and anti-communism. The huge number of the peasantry that had been transported, more or less violently, to the larger cities and abroad, as a result of this outcome of the civil war, made it possible for the remaining agricultural population, for the first time in Greek history, to acquire the prerequisites for lucrative exploitation of the small family farm holding they had in their possession.

These prerequisites, particularly in the regions of intensive farming on the plains, were fulfilled in the 1980s, when the country joined the European Community. It was then that relative congruence was achieved between the realities of the Greek countryside and the representation of the entrepreneurial small landowner, which was a main claim at stake within bourgeois modernization, in the *longue durée* of the genesis of the modern Greek social formation. What is paradoxical is that, the opposing ideological stances of socialist or communist origin, notwithstanding their initial adherence to the representation of the farmer as militant and proletarian, finally acquiesced, explicitly or implicitly, in acceptance of these bourgeois ideologies woven around the model of the entrepreneurial small landowner-farmer.

At the dawn of the new century, the vicissitudes of integrating the “small landowner” into a post-modern post-industrial developmental model for the countryside, implicate him/her yet again in social conflicts, this time deriving from new images and roles, fraught with (much-discussed) symbolisms such as those of the “warden of the countryside”, and “protector of the environment” and of the “national cultural heritage”. If, for the moment, we conceive the above as the future roles for the farmer, it is only through tracing the concept of the

farmer in this *longue durée* that these roles can be given a functional content.

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