

## **Agrarian Politics in Interwar Austria**

**James Miller**  
**Professor, Department of History**  
**University of Arkansas, Little Rock**  
**February 1992**  
**Working Paper 92-3**

*© 1997 by the Center for Austrian Studies. Permission to reproduce must generally be obtained from the [Center for Austrian Studies](#). Copying is permitted in accordance with the fair use guidelines of the US Copyright Act of 1976. The the Center for Austrian Studies permits the following additional educational uses without permission or payment of fees: academic libraries may place copies of the Center's Working Papers on reserve (in multiple photocopied or electronically retrievable form) for students enrolled in specific courses: teachers may reproduce or have reproduced multiple copies (in photocopied or electronic form) for students in their courses. Those wishing to reproduce Center for Austrian Studies Working Papers for any other purpose (general distribution, advertising or promotion, creating new collective works, resale, etc.) must obtain permission from the [Center](#).*

With the demise of the Habsburg Empire in 1918, Austrians entered uncharted political waters. At first, the German-speaking population of the seven provinces of Rump-Austria thought their only hope for survival lay in union with defeated Germany.<sup>(1)</sup> Austrians' aspirations for Anschluß were crushed, however, by Allied unwillingness to reward defeated Germany with additional territory. In the Treaty of St. Germain en Laye, the Allies even prohibited the name German-Austria. The three major political camps in Austria--the Social Democrats, the Christian Socials and the German Nationals--were then forced to invent a new political structure for themselves, a task for which previous experience had ill-equipped them.

Although the western half of the monarchy had had a constitution and a legislative body since 1861, it had only flirted very briefly with liberalism. The three major parties had not been permitted to shoulder responsibility for the country's destiny. They had gained considerable experience in parliamentary obstructionism during the monarchy's last fifty years, but little adeptness at that most vital of skills for the smooth functioning of a parliamentary democracy--the fine art of compromise. When called upon to create a new political identity for the country, they proved too limited by ideological blinders to see their adversaries as anything but hated enemies. Only during the period of crisis in the immediate post-war period did they work together to establish the new federal state. Although the First Republic benefited from a democratic constitution, anti-democratic elements continued to enjoy great influence in the country. In addition, democracy was weakened by the ideological hostility between Austria's main democratic forces. After the breakdown of the Great Coalition in 1920, they became increasingly unable to

cooperate for the common good; unintentionally they cooperated instead in the republic's demise.

Adding to the difficulties of the new republic were the economic limitations of its territory. The Austro-Hungarian monarchy had been a well-functioning economic union. Its Alpine lands, however, had had a considerable trade deficit, particularly in foodstuffs and raw materials, with the rest of the empire. Now after the ravages of war had taken their toll, Austria had little to trade for the imports she so desperately needed. Compounding the problem was the fact that her domestic markets were insufficient to keep her factories busy.<sup>(2)</sup> The economic plight of the republic exacerbated existing political divisions as peasants,<sup>(3)</sup> workers and industrialists each tried to use the tools of the state to their own advantage.

It was within this troubled and volatile polity that Austrian agrarian political organizations began to mature. After the emancipation of the peasantry in 1848, the rural population of Austria had been slow to transform its newly won economic independence into political freedom. After the introduction of a new constitution in 1861, of the rural population only the landed aristocracy and a few very wealthy peasants enjoyed the franchise. It was not until 1907 that universal manhood suffrage was introduced.

The creation of a powerful organization to represent the interests of rural people was hindered not only by restrictions on the franchise, but also by the intensity of local and regional differences. Before the creation of the Republic, there was no national peasant organization, and even provincial organizations were rife with regional splits. Although a peasants' league (Bauernbund) was, for example, established in Tyrol already in 1904, it operated chiefly in the northern part of the province, since regional loyalty to Bozen kept the South Tyrolian peasants from participating in a organization headquartered in Innsbruck.<sup>(4)</sup> Such regional patriotism made it difficult for the rural population of Austria to make its voice heard in national politics. Habsburg agricultural policy therefore was overwhelmingly determined by aristocratic estate owners.

After 1918 aristocratic domination of agrarian politics fell apart. German-speaking noblemen had based their power to a large degree on their holdings in areas of the empire now lost to Austria and on support from noblemen of other ethnic groups.<sup>(5)</sup> Although after the war noble agricultural interests did organize such institutions as the Austrian Agricultural and Forestry Society (Österreichische Land- und Forstwirtschaftsgesellschaft) and the Central Association of Forest- and Property owners' Societies of Austria, (Hauptverband der Wald- und Grundbesitzer-verbände Österreichs), they were too small in numbers and resources to play the same role that they had before the collapse of the monarchy. With noble influence eclipsed, agrarian politics began to group around the three major political camps of republican Austria: Social Democracy, Christian Socialism and German Nationalism.<sup>(6)</sup> The resulting partisan divisions made it difficult for rural people, despite their numbers, to influence federal policy-making.

The Social Democrats' agrarian wing was the Union of Small Peasants, Vintners and Small Renters (Vereinigung der Kleinbauern, Weinbautreibenden und Kleinpächter),<sup>(7)</sup>

founded in 1923 as an outgrowth of the Austrian Agricultural and Forest Workers' Federation (Österreichische Land- und Forstarbeiterverband. The parentage of the organization made clear the Social Democratic perception of small holders as members of the proletariat, and therefore as a natural part of the party's constituency.<sup>(8)</sup> The social make-up of the country, with almost forty percent of the population making their livelihood from agriculture, also made it politically necessary to recruit voters from among the rural populace in order to achieve a Socialist majority. As Otto Bauer (1881-1938), the chief Social Democratic ideologue of the First Republic put it in 1925:

The proletariat must understand that no matter how important the other struggles we find ourselves engaged in, the real, serious struggle for power cannot be won without winning for our party large numbers of agricultural workers, both those with and without propertycotters and cottagers, renters and small peasants and farm hands.<sup>(9)</sup>

Bauer's hope for a windfall from these groups was not an unreasonable one; about 45 percent of the agricultural work force fell into the categories he targeted.

Thus began the "struggle for the village," a concerted effort to formulate a revisionist Social Democratic agrarian program. Although not of rural origins himself, Bauer was one of the most important individuals contributing to this campaign. In 1925 he wrote a treatise on the agricultural problems of Austria entitled *Der Kampf um Wald und Weide* (The Struggle for Forest and Pasture). It paved the way for consideration of a new approach to agriculture at the Party Congresses in Vienna in 1925 and in Linz in 1926. The result was a comprehensive program encompassing land reform--specifically the splitting up of the few remaining large estates, creation of a state-run import/export monopoly for grain and flour products, tax reform and support for the growing cooperative movement, as well as other progressive measures.<sup>(10)</sup>

Most inhabitants of rural Austria, whether from the wealthier peasantry or from the agricultural proletariat, viewed the program with more than a little suspicion, however. During the war, requisitioning by the state had aroused a great deal of animosity among the peasantry. Immediately after the war under the influence of the Social Democrats in the Great Coalition, the government had retained the controlled agricultural market for a time in response to the severe food crisis faced by the country. The prospect of a reintroduction of a controlled agricultural economy under Socialist auspices drove many peasants and their dependents to reject Socialism even more vigorously than they had before the announcement of Bauer's new program. They quite naturally assumed the Socialists would use the state's monopoly to keep agricultural prices low to accommodate their chief constituents, the urban workers. In addition, while the peasants by and large were no fans of the landed aristocracy and in the heat of revolutionary fervor had themselves agitated in 1918/19 for conversion of large estates into small peasant farms, they did not trust the Socialists to stop with expropriation of aristocratic property. Once such a policy was underway what would stop the state from nationalizing peasant property as well?<sup>(11)</sup> Even though Bauer explicitly reassured them that small peasant

proprietors would be safe in their property under a Social Democratic government, the mistrust was not so easily overcome.<sup>(12)</sup>

Not only the party's economic program was unsettling for the rural populace. The party's anticlerical tendencies limited its attractiveness in areas where devotion to Catholicism was strong. The rural clergy succeeded in turning the anti-religious rhetoric used by party operatives in the cities against the whole movement. Social democracy was labeled "godless and Jewish-Bolshevist" on the basis of attempts by some Socialist activists to encourage their fellow workers to withdraw from the Church.<sup>(13)</sup>

Just as significant a factor in the agriculturalists' rejection of Socialist leadership as their doubts about Socialist religious and economic policy was the certainty that if they joined the party they only be second-class members of the party. Bauer admitted in a speech before the 1925 party congress that incorporation of the rural proletariat into the Socialist movement would mean the creation of the hegemony of the industrial proletariat over the rural proletariat in the sense that the industrial proletariat is the core of our movement and will remain so. No matter what class may be won for our movement or may swarm about it, . . . it will be led by the industrial proletariat.<sup>(14)</sup>

Such honesty did little to make Socialism attractive to the peasantry. It was clear that in a future Socialist state, if it came to a conflict between worker and peasant interests, the former would take precedence.

The Socialists often had difficulty reconciling their message to the urban proletariat with their wooing of the small holders. When, for example, agricultural producers were granted a reduction in the turnover tax, the Arbeiterzeitung, the Social Democratic party newspaper in Vienna, protested it as preferential treatment for a single class. The Socialist were also fairly consistent opponents of tariff increases on agricultural products. The Bauernbündler was quick to capitalize on such stances in arguing that socialism's primary constituency would never permit it to become a true champion of the rural poor.<sup>(15)</sup>

The failure of the Social Democrats to win over the peasants with the "struggle for the village" meant that Social Democratic peasant organizations remained small in size. Although led by able men such as Laurenz Genner (1894-1962) and Alois Mentasti (1887- ), the Union of Small Peasants never attracted a very large following. In 1925 it could boast of only 6,150 members, which probably represents its peak.<sup>(16)</sup> Socialists were able to gain meaningful political influence among the rural population only in a handful of villages, particularly in poorer regions where there were a large number of peasants who worked off the farm to make ends meet. Even there, however, the socialists were seldom able to gain a majority. At the provincial and federal levels, the socialist agrarian movement was virtually powerless. Nonetheless, the Socialist attempt to recruit small holders and agricultural laborers had more far-reaching consequences than numbers alone can measure. The "struggle for the village" was perceived by many peasants as an

attempt to undermine agrarian solidarity. It therefore served to heighten the level of political animosity in the First Republic without gaining any significant advantage for the Socialists. Numerically more noteworthy was the German nationalist agrarian movement. Ever since the mid-nineteenth century there had been attempts to create a nationalist peasant organization, but with limited success. It proved difficult to overcome the association of nationalism with liberalism. Although the Austrian peasants had liberalism to thank for their emancipation, liberal economic policies in the years 1867-1879 had left many peasants in grave danger of foreclosure. The bank crisis of 1873 and its catastrophic effect on the availability of credit simply hammered home the lesson that the peasant could expect no mercy from a free market.<sup>(17)</sup> When a transregional nationalist agrarian organization, the German Peasant Party (Deutsche Bauernpartei) was founded in 1901, its primary power base was in Moravia, Silesia and Bohemia where nationalistic concerns overrode any animosity toward liberalism.

In the provinces that would make up the future Austrian Republic, the nationalist agrarian movement remained divided along regional lines. Independent (i.e. anticlerical) peasant parties were established in Carinthia in 1886 (Carinthian Peasants' League/Kärntner Bauernbund) and in Styria in 1897/98 (Christian Peasants' League in Styria/Christliche Bauernbund in der Steiermark).<sup>(18)</sup> They drew on conflict over the position of the Slovenian minority in the two provinces, but also on a long standing tradition of anticlericalism dating back to the counterreformation. In fact, many of the leaders of the movement in the two provinces (and indeed throughout Austria) were Protestants, a fact that made it suspect in the eyes of many Catholic voters. Despite the similarity of the political bases of the Styrian and Carinthian parties, the two organizations were not able to coordinate their programs to increase their influence on the monarchical level. In other Austrian provinces success in mobilizing discontented peasants was even more limited.<sup>(19)</sup>

After the collapse of the monarchy, the liberal/nationalist peasant movement continued to be strongest in the regions where it had secured a following before the war. It was in Carinthia, where border conflict with Yugoslavia kept nationalist sentiment at a boil and Slovenian Catholic priests led a campaign to separate part of the province from Austria, that the movement was most successful, but it also gained followers in Upper Austria, Styria and Burgenland. Elsewhere it remained an almost meaningless political organization, electing only a handful of representatives to the provincial assembly, if that.

The mixed success of the movement on the provincial level led to differences over strategy at the federal level. Nationalist agrarian leaders from provinces with only limited numbers of supporters generally favored combination with the Greater German People's Party (Großdeutsche Volkspartei), the largest and most important nationalist party in the Republic. Styrian leaders, on the other hand attempted to maintain an independent identity.<sup>(20)</sup> The electoral system of the new republic discriminated against very small parties, and if the movement was to have any influence on the national level, it had to break out of its traditional provincialism or change the electoral system to permit election of personalities rather than party lists.<sup>(21)</sup>

In 1923 with the creation of the Agrarian League (Landbund für Österreich) a concerted effort began to create an independent, nation-wide anticlerical peasant movement. Still, it was really little more than an association of the provincial parties, not a national party as such. Already in the 1923 election, its small electoral base was diluted by divisions within the Upper Austrian and Burgenland parties. In 1923 only five nationalist agrarian representatives were elected to parliament, and it is telling that they referred to their caucus as the "Club of German-Austrian Peasant Parties."<sup>(22)</sup>

Such organizational problems were addressed at the party convention in Klagenfurt in early February 1925. Under the leadership of the new party chief, the Carinthian Vinzenz Schumy (1878-1962), the party adopted a more streamlined structure and a better articulated program. The program addressed itself to the ticklish problem of differentiating the party from the more powerful Christian Social peasant movement while at the same time winning voters away from the Christian Socials. The anticlerical nature of the party was modified to be less offensive to Catholic peasants. Now the party insisted that it was built on a "Christian foundation" and would do all it could to protect Christianity as "the most precious of our people's spiritual values." On the other hand, it was opposed to "all misuse of religion for political purposes and for the attainment of secular power." The program emphasized as well the party's independence, arguing that it was freer to defend agrarian interest than parties bound to a larger political and economic bloc (i.e. the Christian Social peasant movement). Finally, the program highlighted the Agrarian League's national roots and devotion to union with Germany, the protection of German minorities abroad, and the removal of "the harmful influence of the Jews on our public, cultural and economic life" through legal and economic means.<sup>(23)</sup>

One of the party's most notable characteristics was its relatively democratic structure. The Carinthian Agrarian League was exemplary of the movement as a whole in this regard. In each community, party members elected a chairperson, who represented them at the county level. The provincial leadership was chosen at the annual meeting of the League at which representatives of the local committees (one for each 50 members) and the chairmen of the county committees had the right to vote.<sup>(24)</sup>

This electoral process often brought persons to positions of leadership who were not intimately bound to the land. Many tilled the soil only on a part time basis, if at all. Among the most prominent of the party's leaders were a university professor, a former professional officer, a landlord in Graz and several professional agricultural experts.<sup>(25)</sup> Unfortunately for the party, these individuals often proved unwilling to subordinate personal ambition to the needs of the party. Leadership crises played an important role in the League's eventual downfall since it was perpetually plagued by internal conflict and divergent policies.<sup>(26)</sup> Before the 1927 elections, for example, the possibility arose to run in partnership with the Christian Socials and the Greater German People's Party. The Carinthian party had benefited from such cooperation already; Schumy had been elected provincial governor in 1923 as the head of a Christian Social/Agrarian League/Greater German People's Party coalition against the Social Democrats. The national party congress at Graz in February of 1927 decided, however, to go it alone, but there continued to be uncertainty about the party's direction because of serious disagreements

at the provincial level. In some cases, the word never got to local party operatives that they were actually campaigning as a separate party.<sup>(27)</sup>

Despite these problems, the party won a significant increase in votes in the April 1927 elections, more than doubling its representation in parliament. In Styria the League won four seats, in Carinthia three and in Upper Austria two. This success led Chancellor Ignaz Seipel (1876-1932) to offer the Agrarian League a role in his new government. Karl Hartleb, a Styrian peasant who had become head of his province's branch of the League in 1924, joined Seipel's government as Vice-Chancellor and Interior Minister.

The Agrarian League remained a part of the government until 1933, generally filling the post of minister of the interior and for a time the vice-chancellorship as well. Although League leaders would have preferred the agriculture ministry seat, the more powerful Christian Social peasant organization claimed that prize as its own. Nonetheless, the ruling coalition was generally too weak to do without the Agrarian League's support, and that gave it a position in the government far greater than its voter potential or internal organization alone justified. In 1929 the League was even able to prevent the formation of a government under the leadership of Johann Mittelberger on the basis of his inexperience in matters of national economic policy. Eventually, the League agreed to Ernst Streeruwitz as chancellor, but not before gaining concessions on a long list of demands in the area of agricultural policy as a precondition for its participation in a coalition government.<sup>(28)</sup>

The cooperation between the Agrarian League and the more powerful Christian Social Party ended when the last three Agrarian members of government, Franz Winkler (1890-1945), Franz Bachinger (1892-1938) and Vinzenz Schumy, left the government in the wake of Chancellor Engelbert Dollfuß's (1892-1934) authoritarian course.<sup>(29)</sup> The factors which led to this parting of the ways are worthy of examination, since they illustrate one of the ways the Agrarian League differed from its clerical counterpart. While the Christian Social Party was ambivalent in its support of Austrian democracy, the leadership of the Agrarian League unequivocally advocated parliamentary government until the conflict-ridden months of 1933/34. Since the founding of the party, the League had made use of corporatist and anti-Semitic rhetoric that might lead one to question its devotion to democratic principles, yet its leaders consistently stood for constitutional government and conciliatory politics.<sup>(30)</sup> The League accordingly became one of the most important opponents of the Home Guard (Heimwehr), a right-wing paramilitary organization, while the Christian Socials eventually joined forces with the Home Guard to demolish the edifice of democratic government in Austria.

The League's devotion to democracy was tested after 1927 as its leaders, in their capacity as ministers of the interior with responsibility for the police, were forced to deal with escalating political violence. In July 1927 bloody rioting broke out in Vienna as workers took to the streets in anger over an innocent verdict in a trial over the murder of five workers the previous January. The rioting left 89 dead, 1,057 wounded and the Palace of Justice in flames. Fear among the peasants that the workers of Vienna and other industrialized areas of Austria led some to join the Home Guard and others to become

sympathetic with the Nazis. The Agrarian League had difficulty selling its message of moderation in this atmosphere of heightened political tension.<sup>(31)</sup>

Indeed, such incidents of violence radicalized the Home Guard itself. In 1930 members of the Home Guard met at Korneuburg and swore an oath that included clearly fascistic elements, including the commitment to bringing down the democratic government and replacing it with a corporatist dictatorship. Despite the Agrarian League's stated sympathy for corporatist ideas, Schumy and Winkler both opposed the radicalism of the Home Guard. They were not willing to sacrifice the rule of law for an uncertain corporatist future. In 1930 in reaction to the Korneuburg Oath, Schumy stood in Parliament and stated his unswerving support of the constitution:

It is impossible to be a legislator in a democratic state and at the same time be bound by an oath to use illegal means to abolish the established constitution. . . . If citizens believe they must seize the reins of power in this state, the road of democratic action is open to them. The leaders of the Home Guard have the same opportunity as anyone else to prove through elections that the majority of voters in this country support them.<sup>(32)</sup>

The Home Guard attempted to prove just that. In 1930 it campaigned independently of the Christian Socialists and won eight seats in Parliament; the Christian Socials lost seven, the Schober Bloc, which included the Agrarian League, lost two. At the same time, the National Socialists began to win supporters from both the Christian Socials and the Agrarian League. The challenge posed by the Nazis and the Home Guard was to have disastrous consequences for the Agrarian League.<sup>(33)</sup>

In order to counter the paramilitary nature of the Home Guard and the Nazi SA, members of the League founded an Austrian Peasant Guard. Southern Styria had the first such organization in the winter of 1929/30. It was created to challenge the enemy that increasingly talks of a dictatorship and wants to erect it, either on the left or the right. . . . The Peasant Guard stands on the foundation of the Constitution and the democratic Republic and declares its unequivocal allegiance to them.<sup>(34)</sup>

A national organization with representation from Upper and Lower Austria, Salzburg, Carinthia, Styria and Burgenland was then created on January 17, 1930. Initially, the Peasant Guard had no formal ties with the party leadership in Vienna, but especially after 1933 with the incorporation of the Peasant Guard in a National Corporative Front (Nationalständischer Front) under the Agrarian League's party chief, Franz Winkler, the distinction between the Peasant Guard and the party was blurred.

Creation of a parallel paramilitary organization did little to stop the erosion of the League's position vis-a-vis the Home Guard and the Nazis, however. Even Winkler's attempt after 1931 to transform the party into a centrally controlled institution with greater ability to discipline its membership failed to staunch the flow of blood. In fact, irritation over Winkler's high-handed administration actually drove some party members in to opposing camps.<sup>(35)</sup> In addition, the leadership's eagerness to compromise both with



its coalition partners and its political opponents found increasing disfavor with the party's rank and file, who wanted a more forceful program in response to the country's economic and political crisis.

The importance of this shift in fortunes was not lost on the Christian Social leadership. By August of 1933 when Chancellor Dollfuß met in Riccione with Mussolini to shore up his increasingly authoritarian government with support from abroad, the decision to lean on the Home Guard for domestic order had already been made. The Guard's Major Emil Fey (1886-1938) was made Minister of Security on May 10 of 1933.<sup>(36)</sup> The ascendancy of the Home Guard led to serious disagreements in the Ministerial Council between Fey and Vice-Chancellor Winkler over the government's security policy, particularly the arbitrary arrests that Fey's police forces had been carrying out against individuals of questionable political loyalty.<sup>(37)</sup>

On September 11, 1933, Chancellor Dollfuß made official his concessions to the Home Guard in a speech before a large crowd at the Trabrennplatz in Vienna. He announced his intention to replace the party system in Austria with a single organization--the Fatherland Front (Vaterländische Front). Parliamentary democracy would give way to a corporate constitution under authoritarian leadership. Winkler told Dollfuß that this was tantamount to admitting he had become the Home Guard's chancellor.<sup>(38)</sup>

On September 21 a new government was formed, this time without the participation of the Agrarian League.

Thus the stage was set for the disintegration of the party. The longstanding personal split between Winkler and Schumy compounded the increasingly intense division between pro- and anti-Nazi elements in the League and led to its collapse in 1934. In late February of that year, League member Ferdinand Kernmaier (1884-1941), the governor of Carinthia, was forced out of office because his government had been elected with the help of Socialist votes. Kernmaier then joined the NSDAP, taking many of the most nationalistic members of the League with him. Faced with these divisions and defections, the party leadership decided on May 18, 1934 to dissolve the party, a move which merely confirmed what had already taken place.<sup>(39)</sup> Winkler and Bachinger eventually followed Kernmaier into the NSDAP. Schumy sided with the government's authoritarian policies and led the remnants of the party still loyal to him, particularly those in Carinthia, into the ranks of the Fatherland Front.<sup>(40)</sup>

The increasing radicalization of Austrian politics also eroded the support enjoyed by the Christian Social agrarian movement, the Peasant League (Bauernbund). Because the Peasant League was a much larger and more robust organization, however, it weathered the storm more successfully. One of the political strengths of the Peasant League was its rootedness in the larger Christian Social movement. Christian Socialism in Austria owed much of its force in the early twentieth century to the integrative politics of the Viennese mayor, Karl Lueger, and the anti-liberal, social reformist ideological foundation provided by Karl von Vogelsang. By 1907 the Christian Social Party had become a union of peasants and urban small shop-owners, and after 1918 it increasingly represented the

interests of big business as well. The combined voting strength of this bloc and its economic resources allowed the Christian Social Party to dominate the federal government after the breakdown of the Grand Coalition in 1920.

But membership in this powerful political bloc cost the Peasant League some freedom of action. The League was bound to uphold policies supportive of not only the peasants that made up its membership, but also the urban middle class that served as its partner in competition with the Socialists. It was not always an easy partnership to maintain, since agrarian interests often conflicted with those of the bourgeoisie. In trade policy, food policy, tax policy and credit policy, the various factions in Austrian Christian Socialism were at variance. One of the few things that kept them together was the Socialist challenge.

Furthermore, the League itself was an amalgam of different interests. Even to speak of the Peasant League as a single organization is a bit misleading, since it really was only a loose association of provincial Peasant Leagues. The roots of the Peasant Leagues go back to regional organizations founded in the nineteenth century, but as province-wide organizations, most date to the early twentieth. The Catholic-Conservative Peasant Union for Middle and Upper Styria (Katholisch-konservative Bauernvereinfür Mittel- und Obersteiermark) was founded in 1899 by Franz Hagenhofer (1855-1922), a progressive, wealthy peasant-politician who was a member of the provincial assembly and later of parliament.<sup>(41)</sup> Despite the name, it became the core of the Christian Social Peasant League for the entire province. Similar provincial organizations sprang up in Tyrol in 1904, in Lower Austria and Salzburg in 1906 and in Carinthia 1908. In Upper Austria and Vorarlberg, provincial Peasant Leagues were not organized until 1920 and 1921 respectively. Catholic peasants from Burgenland finally developed an independent organization in 1922.<sup>(42)</sup>

The Peasant Leagues attempted to win voters through a combination of traditionalist ideas and promises to support peasant economic interests in parliament. The Leagues consistently emphasized their devotion to Catholicism. Party operatives presented the Catholic religion as the mainstay of moral and social well-being. Priests were prominent as organizers of regional peasant organizations and a number of priest-politicians were sent as representatives by the Peasant Leagues to the provincial and national assemblies. Peasant League election campaigns emphasized the need to retain strict divorce laws and religious education in the schools as a way to preserve the authority of the Church and with it the socially nurturing influence of the clergy. This clericalism not only played well to the traditionalism of the peasantry, it also helped differentiate the Peasant League from both the Social Democrats and the Agrarian League.<sup>(43)</sup>

These ties to the Church were one source of the Peasant Leagues' pronounced anti-Semitism. The old strains of religious anti-Semitism were given a new purpose by the political struggle of the First Republic. The Lower Austrian Peasant League's newspaper, for example, depended upon anti-Semitic rhetoric for much of its ammunition against its political enemies. One issue from 1923 proclaimed that it was understandable that August Bebel (1840-1913) had thought Christianity and Socialism were opposed as fire and

water: "After all, the ancestors of the Jewish founders and leaders of Social Democracy hated Christ and crucified him."<sup>(44)</sup>

Indeed, the Lower Austrian Peasant League competed with the Agrarian League for the distinction of being the more anti-Semitic. The Peasant League newspaper accused the Agrarian League of being insufficiently anti-Semitic because it entered into an agreement with an insurance company that had Jews on its board of directors. The election campaign of 1920 was notable for the shrill tone of the Peasant League's anti-Semitic rhetoric. Its newspaper argued that there was only one real enemy--Judaism, and that both the German nationalist peasant movement and the Social Democrats were representatives of it--partners in the destruction of German culture: "The Jewish reptile of amorality and enervation sucks at the marrow of the German people."<sup>(45)</sup> Although the Peasant League's anti-Semitism became less strident after the mid-twenties (at least to judge from the Lower Austrian press), use of Jews as a focus of political enmity remained an important aspect of the movement's ideology.

Just as the Peasant League's anti-Semitism was built upon a clerical base, so too was its emphasis on traditional power relationships in the family and in politics. The League presented the traditional peasant family with a dominant male head of household (Der Bauer--the peasant) as a model for political relationships. Respect for religious authority, for political authority and for parental authority were interwoven in the Peasant League's ideology. The party press urged young people not to abandon the tradition of addressing their parents with the formal Sie form of address, arguing that society depended upon respect for authority at all levels. Just as the patriarch stood at the head of the family, protecting those under his domain, so too did the politician have the moral obligation to look after the interests of his charges. And it was from the ultimate authority--from God--that these relationships, built on obeisance on the one side and solicitude on the other, took their cue. But as in any dependent relationship, the "weaker" partners in this patriarchal system were never granted equality with their "protectors." They were to respect and obey, not "sow discord and division."<sup>(46)</sup> This paternalism was one of the most important aspects of the Peasant League's political ideology.

An additional traditionalist element of Peasant League ideology was the conviction that the peasantry represented a fundamental support of both society and the economy. It provided a moral gyroscope for society because it embodied Catholic teaching. The peasantry sustained other classes of society through its cultivation of the land, rather than seeking its own advantage at the expense of others. Furthermore, upon agriculture depended all other branches of the economy; without a healthy peasant economy, there could be no recovery from the ravages of war and depression. This gave the peasantry a special claim to attention from the government.<sup>(47)</sup> Advancing such a claim was easy; making good on it was quite another matter. It required more than just an ideological justification; it required political clout.

Welding the provincial Peasant Leagues into a larger, more powerful organization was attempted for the first time in 1909 at a meeting in Vienna of representatives from around the German-Austrian provinces, but it came to naught. It was not until after the fall of the

monarchy that this goal was realized. In the course of 1919 the five then existing provincial Peasant Leagues agreed to form a national organization (Reichsbauernbund) to provide a united political front in protecting agrarian interests.<sup>(48)</sup> Requisitioning continued to be a sore spot for peasants throughout the country and a national organization, it was felt, might be better equipped to sway federal policy.<sup>(49)</sup> Yet the intense regional concerns of the provincial Peasant Leagues limited the new organization's ability to coordinate policy. The Imperial Peasant League constantly had to reconcile the opposing positions of the grain-producing peasants of eastern Austria and the cattle-raisers of the West. Although there were attempts to appear united in public at the periodic National Peasant Conventions (Reichsbauerntage), factionalism often proved them to be little more than window-dressing. In 1925, Rudolf Winter, an agrarian bureaucrat under the Empire who served as general secretary of the central organization of the Austrian chambers of agriculture after 1923, lamented that there was "too little solidarity in political matters, which of course is detrimental to the effective representation of agrarian interests."<sup>(50)</sup> Thus although the National Peasant League encompassed a total of 240,000 members in its constituent organizations, its real power was less than its numbers might have suggested.<sup>(51)</sup>

In the absence of a powerful, well coordinated, central political party, leadership of the Christian Social agrarian cause tended to devolve on to the provincial Peasant Leagues. The Tyrolian and Lower Austrian Leagues were among the best organized and were, as a consequence also the most influential. Though it was not the oldest provincial League, the Lower Austrian group was in several ways the more important of the two. As the largest, and hence most powerful such League, and headquartered in the capitol city, the Lower Austrian Peasant League often dominated national discussions concerning the welfare of the peasantry. Since Lower Austria's agriculture was structured differently than that of the Alpine provinces to the west and south, however, the strength of the Lower Austrian Peasant League also meant that public policy was often skewed to the disadvantage of the peasants of the Alpine provinces. In its very structure, therefore, Christian Social agrarian democracy was flawed.

Furthermore, although formally committed to democracy, the provincial Leagues blended democracy and authoritarianism in ways that made it difficult for them to defend against the fascist threat in the late 'twenties and 'thirties. While committed to democracy as an idea because it had given the peasants their influence in national politics in the first place, the Christian Social Peasant Leagues were themselves more frequently characterized by paternalism and elitist approaches to decision-making.

The Lower Austrian League is a case in point. From the very beginning it was dominated by patriarchal types who saw themselves not so much as the representatives of the peasantry as their protectors and patrons. They accumulated offices and perquisites in astounding profusion and governed the League as if it were a private fiefdom. Their birthdays were celebrated in the party press in high fashion, almost as if they were patron saints, with congratulatory messages from leaders of other provincial Leagues and distinguished members of the clergy. They regularly exhorted their followers to stay united, not to question the leaders' actions since that would weaken the movement. In

short, the patriarchs of the Peasant League appropriated for themselves many of the advantages previously enjoyed by the nobility.

The League's first chairman was Josef Stöckler (1866-1936). A product of the more prosperous peasantry, Stöckler had begun his political career by serving as mayor of St. Valentin an der Enns, and then was elected to the provincial assembly. He went on to help found one of the most important regional leagues in Lower Austria, that of the Viertel ob dem Wienerwald. Under the republic he would serve as State Secretary for Agriculture and both as a member of and, for a short time, also as president of the upper house of parliament (Bundesrat).<sup>(52)</sup>

Under Stöckler's leadership the Peasant League's membership grew to 35,000 during the year following its founding in 1906, and by the end of 1907 it could boast of 50,000 dues-paying members, roughly fifty-five percent of the total number of peasants eligible for membership.<sup>(53)</sup> The elections to the National Assembly (Reichsrat) in 1907 demonstrated the political muscle of the new organization. All twenty-one seats from the rural districts in Lower Austria were filled by members of the Christian Social Peasant League, who managed in every case to win more than seventy percent of the vote.<sup>(54)</sup>

The Peasant League's constitution provides insight into the way in which its founders viewed democracy. "Grass-roots" democracy was not a mode of governance they held in high esteem. Even though its relatively small size would have made it possible to direct the organization's affairs without benefit of a highly hierarchical structure, the constitution specified a method of choosing leaders that was destined to foster elitism. Local clubs of the Peasant League elected from their members a local peasant council. These councils elected chairmen, who in turn formed a regional peasant council. The chairmen of the regional peasant councils constituted the Peasant League's provincial governing council and elected from their number the provincial chairman.<sup>(55)</sup>

This complicated electoral system assured the creation and preservation in power of an elite corps of leaders. They came to dominate a entire range of conservative peasant organizations, using as a base their positions in the Peasant League. Stöckler's many different, concurrently held posts provide one example of this, but he was outstripped in that regard by his successor as president of the League, Josef Reither. After six years of service as mayor of his home village of Langenrohr, Reither was sent by the Peasant League as a representative to the National Workers' and Peasants' Council (Arbeiter- und Bauernrat) in 1918. In 1921 he became a member of the provincial assembly. By 1931 he was president of the Lower Austrian Chamber of Agriculture, Lower Austrian Peasant League chairman, and governor of the province of Lower Austria. At the same time he was vice-chairman of the Lower Austrian Central Cooperative Bank, member of the board of directors of the Lower Austrian Association of Rural Cooperatives, vice-chairman of the Lower Austrian Cooperative Dairy, president of the Lower Austrian Cooperative Fire Insurance Association, chairman of the Lower Austrian Association of Cooperative Dairies, the cooperative warehouse of Tulln, and the Agrarian Publishing Association of Lower Austria, to name just a few of his concurrently held offices. After Dollfuß's assassination in 1934, this energetic man also became minister of agriculture.<sup>(56)</sup>

Reither represents perhaps an extreme case, but he nonetheless illustrates how extensively involved officials of the Peasant League were in the establishment and management of other peasant organizations. Indeed, the Chamber of Agriculture, the cooperatives, and the Raiffeisen banks were all dominated by the Peasant League. The Chamber itself was largely the creation of Peasant League politicians, as were most agrarian economic and professional institutions founded in the province after 1908. These interconnections made the fabric of Lower Austria's peasant leadership a very tightly knit one, and this was true not only in Lower Austria, but where ever the League was the major political force.<sup>(57)</sup>

What this political structure failed to foster was a healthy exchange of opinion between these leaders and their constituents; instead it helped to perpetuate among the peasants an overly diffident attitude toward authority. League members were actively discouraged from thinking for themselves. The Peasant League's calendar even attempted to dictate what newspapers were acceptable reading for League members.<sup>(58)</sup> It is therefore not surprising that the Austrian peasantry was susceptible to the attractions of authoritarianism, especially after parliament proved increasingly unable to master the country's severe economic and social problems in the late twenties and early thirties. In Lower Austria and elsewhere, the peasants flocked to the Home Guard in the late 'twenties. In August 1929 the Lower Austrian League's members even joined the Guard en masse in order to

radically reduce the Social Democrat vote, sieze the majority in the communities now still in the hands of the Social Democrats, and then revise the constitution in such a way that we will be safe against further Bolshevization.

However, as the Guard came increasingly under aristocratic and urban leadership and began to campaign as a political party in its own right, both the peasant rank and file and League leaders began to reexamine their relationship with the Guard. By late 1930, many peasants had left the Guard on their own and in December of that year, the Lower Austrian League urged all of its members to resign from all formations of the Guard except those led by the staunchly loyal League member, Julius Raab (1891-1964).<sup>(59)</sup> By 1932 the relationship between the Guard and the League had so deteriorated that the Lower Austrian League's calendar proclaimed:

We too thought the Guard would bring us salvation. Fortunately we recognized in time just who was using this majestic movement to regain power and unjustified privileges. They were no friends of the peasantry; good Catholics they were not.<sup>(60)</sup>

The passage is telling, for it indicates that it was not the authoritarian nature of the Guard that the League found objectionable, it was the fact that the Guard harbored free thinkers and refused to submit to League leadership.

The League's actions in the constitutional crisis of 1933/34 provide further evidence of its ambivalence toward democracy. On 4 March 1933 parliament became paralyzed by the resignation of all three of its presidents. Chancellor Dollfuß took advantage of the

opportunity and proceeded to rule by decree, an action that most peasant leaders greeted with approval. Yet the Lower Austrian League's leaders were clearly uncomfortable with the prospect of a full-scale dictatorship. They proceeded cautiously and at times became mired in self-contradiction. The Lower Austrian League's newspaper declared that members of parliament should take a vacation until a constitutional reform could be worked out that would put it on a "healthier" basis: "Nothing is further from our minds than a desire for dictatorship. What the economy needs now is not unending blather, but a firm grip."<sup>(61)</sup> The following month the newspaper was, however, already urging its readers to greet each other with "Heil Dollfuß" as a counter to the Nazi salute. In early 1934 the paper published a lead article under the title "A Word of Clarification" that attempted to make its position a bit clearer. It began by declaring that all the recent criticism of parliamentarianism and democracy and the praise of fascism and autocracy were slowly becoming boring. What was needed was neither "extreme democracy" nor fascism, but a "golden mean," a patriarchal democracy modeled upon peasant institutions.<sup>(62)</sup> League Chairman Reither himself seems to have been paralyzed by his loyalty to his erstwhile protégé, Dollfuß,<sup>(63)</sup> and his attachment to constitutional freedoms. Reither entered into negotiations with the Social Democrats about ways to head off the development of a dictatorship, but was never able to commit to cooperation.<sup>(64)</sup>

The Lower Austrian League was not the only provincial League where such uncertainty was evident. The Tyrolian Peasant League was split into two camps, one that favored reform through legal means and a retention of at least some form of parliamentary democracy, and a radical wing close to the Tyrolian Home Guard that wanted a rapid dismantling of democratic government and the violent destruction of Social Democracy. From 1930 until early 1934, the radical wing of the League controlled the party's newspaper and administration, but in early February 1934, the radicals overplayed their hand and the Dollfuß-loyal, but nonetheless more democratically inclined wing of the party regained power over the League's central institutions.<sup>(65)</sup> Thus the Tyrolian League's policy was little more consistent than that of the Lower Austrians.

Such equivocation was not very a effective brake on the authoritarian course being urged upon Dollfuß by the Home Guard. When on 12 February 1934, workers in Linz, Vienna, Steyr, Bruckan der Mur and other Socialist strongholds engaged in a revolt in reaction to arms searches and arrests undertaken by the Home Guard Minister of the Interior Emil Fey, the Peasant League's waffling stopped. The government used artillery against housing blocks in which workers were holed up. Before the workers' desperate resistance was over 300 people had been killed and over 800 wounded. The Civil War not only ended any hope for a rapprochement between the government and the Socialists, it also ended the League's pronouncements on the desirability of revitalizing Austrian parliamentary democracy. The government outlawed the Social Democratic party, the Socialist unions and their related organizations on February 12 and the stage was set for a formal reconstruction of Austria's constitution along authoritarian lines.

The League responded to these actions with approval. On 17 March 1934, the Bauernbündler rejoiced:

Finally, one-sided, aggravated party politics have been disposed of; in our Chamber of Agriculture it had long ago ceased to be a hindrance, since 92% of all Lower Austrian peasant voters gave us their confidence and thereby expressed a unified political will. Freed from stupid, stubborn party politics we have been able to accomplish much; we have truly been creative. Now let it be so for the entire country. Who would greet such an eventuality more joyously than the peasantry? Who will be more eager to participate?<sup>(66)</sup>

And participate they did. When the new constitution was promulgated on 1 May 1934, it called for the establishment of a state based upon professional organizations representing the various branches of the economy: agriculture and forestry; industry and mining; the trades; commerce and transport; banking and insurance; the free professions and public service. With the chambers of agriculture already dominating the organization of food production in Austria, it was a relatively simple matter to incorporate those organizations into the new Corporate State, and the Peasant Leagues gave their full backing to this transformation. The Lower Austrian Peasant League, for example, won formal recognition by the state as the sole representative of the Lower Austrian peasantry in the Fatherland Front, and the Lower Austrian Chamber of Agriculture became its economic counterpart as a constituent organization of the Federal Economic Council (Bundeswirtschaftsrat).<sup>(67)</sup> Indeed, of the seven "corporations" foreseen by the constitution, the only one to be fully established (aside from the public servants who were organized by decree) was agriculture and forestry.

The loyalty given the government by the Peasant Leagues following the constitutional changes in 1934 and the importance of the peasantry in the Corporate State's narrow base of support might lead one to expect that following 1934 the government would have been particularly solicitous in addressing some of the problems facing agriculture. Oddly enough, there had been more new programs introduced in period before the adoption of the new constitution than there were from mid-1934 to the Anschluß. During that earlier period the government had been totally dependent upon the Agrarian League for its slim majority, which made it a good listener in agricultural matters. In addition, from 1932 to 1934 the head of government (Dollfuß) was an individual who had come out of the ranks of the peasant movement, and that gave added weight to the peasants' position within the coalition. During the early 1930's peasant politicians were, as a consequence, able to push through a whole range of policy changes favorable to agriculture.

Already in the mid-twenties, the National Peasant League and the Agrarian League had been able to agree on the need for new tariffs, and they had successfully negotiated protectionary measures for Austrian agriculture in 1924 and 1926. Yet Austria's agricultural tariffs continued to be lower than those of most European countries. When the agricultural crisis became more severe after 1927, agrarian representatives from all parties became increasingly strident in their demands for protection, but were blocked by Social Democratic resistance and the fear on the part of industrial interests of a backlash against Austria's industrial exports. It was not until Dollfuß became Minister of Agriculture that a drastic revision upward occurred with the Ninth Tariff Revision of



1931. The autonomous tariffs on rye, wheat, and barley rose by 200%, those on beef by 250%.<sup>(68)</sup>

Tariff policy alone, however, proved insufficient to counter the devastating effects of falling world market prices. One reason was that the autonomous tariffs covered only a portion of Austria's trade; most of her important trading partners had negotiated bilateral treaties at much more favorable terms. For this reason from 1931 to 1934 Dollfuß proposed a wide range of programs to regulate the internal market and stimulate demand for domestic agricultural production. These included a milk marketing fund (1931) that equalized the price for milk in the country; a milk marketing law (1934) that gave advantages to large, cooperative dairies by requiring pasteurization; a livestock trade law (1931) that attempted to even out the supply of livestock on the Austrian market to eliminate the drastic price reductions that occurred at peak times of the year when the slaughterhouses were flooded with animals; measures guaranteeing a given percentage of the industrial alcohol market to agricultural cooperative distilleries (1932) to increase the market for potatoes; a law making it easier for farmers to use cattle as collateral for loans (1932); and various measures to support pork prices (1931-34), to name just a few of the more important.<sup>(69)</sup> These programs were only implemented after lengthy negotiations over their stipulations with representatives of the Agrarian League and the National Peasant League.<sup>(70)</sup> Normally, this consultation occurred by way of the provincial Chambers of Agriculture and their national umbrella organization, the Presidents' Conference of the Provincial Agricultural Representative Bodies (Präsidentenkonferenz der landwirtschaftlichen Hauptkörperschaften) which were dominated by the Agrarian League and the provincial Peasant Leagues.

In short, the agrarian interests had little reason for complaint about the attention given their plight by the government in the early 1930's. Dollfuß was praised, not only by his comrades from the Peasant League, but also by Agrarian League politicians. So dramatic was the shift in policy that some non-agrarian writers (especially the representatives of industry) accused the government of having sacrificed all to the peasants in what they called "the Agrarian Course."<sup>(71)</sup>

The balance of power within the informal coalition that governed the Corporate State shifted, however, in 1934. The departure of the Agrarian League from the government in 1933 and its subsequent dissolution in 1934 ended its ability to shift the balance in favor of agriculture. With Dollfuß's assassination in a Nazi coup attempt in 1934, agrarian interests lost their control of the chancellorship; his successor, Kurt von Schuschnigg, had practiced law before entering politics. Reither's dismissal as Minister of Agriculture in 1935, just over a year after he had succeeded Dollfuß in that capacity, was an indication already that Schuschnigg was planning a departure from Dollfuß's policy toward agriculture.<sup>(72)</sup> Furthermore, the incorporation of the provincial Peasant Leagues into the Fatherland Front actually diluted their power rather than accentuating it. Under Schuschnigg, agricultural policy increasingly was dictated rather than worked out in cooperation with the affected parties as anticipated in the Corporate State's constitution. One result of this was a reduction in public expenditure on agriculture. Rather than agriculture feeding at the public trough, as some writers had complained under Dollfuß's

government, the process was actually reversed. A tax on imported cattle feed was introduced which raised the cost of production for small farmers in particular, and out of the revenues of this tax Schuschnigg funded projects that benefited industry.<sup>(73)</sup>

Even the limited role of the Peasant League in formulating policy under Schuschnigg came to an end when German troops marched over the border on 12 March 1938. After the Anschluß many high-ranking Peasant League officials suffered persecution at the hands of the Nazis. Some of the most prominent, including Josef Reither and Leopold Figl (1902-1965), the director of the Lower Austrian Peasant League from 1934-1938, were shipped off to Dachau already on 1 April 1938. Peasant politics under the Nazi regime were then subsumed under the National Food Corporation (Reichsnährstand) and its constituent organizations. The Peasant Leagues and Chambers of Agriculture were dissolved, their archives hauled off to central offices of the National Food Corporation.<sup>(74)</sup>

After 1945 former Peasant League officials set about building their organizations once again within the framework of a new party, the Austrian People's Party (Österreichische Volkspartei), an heir to the Christian Social tradition, but without the clerical connection characteristic of the prewar party. The patriarchy that had been so much a part of Peasant League politics before the war was revived as well, with the same tightly interwoven pattern of peasant leadership in agrarian political and economic institutions.<sup>(75)</sup> One of the most important changes made was the creation of a centralized organization, the Austrian Peasant League, with considerable political advantages over the loose federalist structure of the interwar National Peasant League. In essence, the Peasant League simply picked up where it had left off seven years before, making improvements based on their experience in the First Republic.

The same was not the case for the socialist and German nationalist peasant organizations. The Agrarian League was never revived. Its members either joined in rebuilding the Peasant League (as was the case, for example, with Vinzenz Schumy) or joined the new right-wing party, the Independent Union (Verband der Unabhängigen), later to be rebaptized as the Austrian Freedom Party (Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs), which has no specifically agrarian connection. The Socialist agrarian movement fizzled. Laurenz Genner, the Socialists' single most important agrarian leader before the war, had joined the Communists in 1938 and continued to work for that party after the war. Although a Working Peasants' Federation (Arbeitsbauernbund) attempted to tie onto the Socialist agrarian tradition of the First Republic, the party itself did little to recruit among the peasantry. There was no revival of the "struggle for the village." Except for areas where there were a large number of small holders who farmed only part time, both the Socialists and the Communists were a negligible factor in rural Austria.<sup>(76)</sup>

As a consequence, the postwar agrarian landscape was more uniform than that of the interwar period. Before 1938, regional and confessional divisions had limited the effectiveness of peasant politicians in making their influence felt on policy. Split into seven provincial Peasant Leagues, an internally fractious Agrarian League and a numerically insignificant, but nonetheless politically divisive Socialist agrarian camp, the interwar peasant movement squandered its best opportunity to lead the country. Despite

the fact that the peasantry made up more than half of the voting bloc upon which the center-right coalitions of the post-1920 period depended, peasant interests by no means possessed a controlling influence in national politics. It is significant that of the twelve chancellors to serve the First Republic, only one--Engelbert Dollfuß--came from the ranks of the peasant movement. It is ironic then, that the revitalized and more unified peasant movement of the postwar period has played less and less of a role in determining the direction of national policy. Now it no longer has the numbers to support a claim to power.<sup>(77)</sup>

---

### Endnotes

1. The seven provinces were Upper and Lower Austria, Styria, Carinthia, Salzburg, Tyrol and Vorarlberg. Burgenland became the eighth Austrian province in 1921 as the result of the Treaty of Trianon. Vienna was separated from Lower Austria as an independent province in 1922. Ethnic minorities in Rump-Austria were very small in number. Taken together they made up less than three percent of the population. See the tables included as part of the appendix.

2. K. W. Rothschild, Austria's Economic Development between the Two Wars (London: Frederick Muller, 1947), p. 16; Friedrich Thalmann, "Die Wirtschaft in Österreich," in Heinrich Benedict, ed., Geschichte der Republik Österreich (Vienna: Verlag für Geschichte und Politik, 1954), pp. 508-518; Hans Kernbauer, Eduard März and Fritz Weber, "Die wirtschaftliche Entwicklung," in Erika Weinzierl and Kurt Skalník, Österreich 1918-1938. Geschichte der Ersten Republik, 2 vols. (Graz: Verlag Styria, 1983), 1:343-345.

3. The word peasant in this context is meant in the German sense (i.e. Bauer). The German word denotes a traditional, non-aristocratic agricultural proprietor who works his land to support himself and his family. Typically a peasant's family members are also lumped into the peasant class although they are not legally proprietors (e.g. Bäuerin, Bauernkind, etc.). Farm hands (Gesinde and Landarbeiter), non-propertied cottagers (Häusler and Keuschler) and other rural poor are technically not Bauern. Where the rural population in general is meant, the word agriculturalist will be employed in this study.

4. Ernst Bruckmüller, Landwirtschaftliche Organisationen und gesellschaftliche Modernisierung. Vereine, Genossenschaften und politische Mobilisierung der Landwirtschaft Österreichs vom Vormärz bis 1914 (Salzburg: Verlag Wolfgang Neugebauer, 1977), pp. 196-205.

5. Siegfried Mattl, Agrarstruktur/Bauernbewegung und Agrarpolitik in Österreich 1919-1929 (Vienna: Geyer Edition, 1983), pp. 1-3.

6. The literature on the agrarian movement in Austria is quite sparse. The chief work on agrarian organizations before the creation of the Austrian Republic is Ernst Bruckmüller, Landwirtschaftliche Organisationen. No work comparable in scope exists for the First

Republic itself. Siegfried Mattl's Agrarstruktur/Bauernbewegung und Agrarpolitik in Österreich 1919-1929 (Vienna and Salzburg: Geyer Edition, 1983) deals with the structural problems of Austrian agriculture in some detail but ends with the coming of the world agricultural depression of the late twenties. Ulrich Kluge's Bauern, Agrarkrise und Volksernährung in der europäischen Zwischenkriegszeit. Studien zur Agrargesellschaft und -wirtschaft der Republik Österreich 1918 bis 1938 (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag Wiesbaden, 1988) takes a longer view, but focuses primarily on agricultural policy rather than agrarian politics. The author's Engelbert Dollfuß als Agrarfachmann. Eine Analyse bäuerlicher Führungsbegriffe und österreichischer Agrarpolitik 1918-1934 (Vienna: Böhlau Verlag, 1989) treats agrarian politics in Lower Austria, but only briefly discusses peasant organizations of other provinces. Many of the other works on the subject are not very well grounded in archival research.

7. It was later named the Association of Free Working Peasants (Verband der freien Arbeitsbauern).

8. An excellent discussion of the Socialists' attempt to win supporters in Austria's villages may be found in Michael Genner's collection of his father's writings, Mein Vater Laurenz Genner. Ein Sozialist im Dorf (Vienna: Europa Verlag, 1979). Laurenz Genner was one of the most important peasant leaders in the Social Democratic camp. For a good example of Socialist political propaganda directed at small holders see "Kleinbauern! Erkennt eure Feinde!" Volkswille, 1 September 1923, p. 6.

9. Protokoll des sozialdemokratischen Parteitages 1925 (Vienna: Verlag der Wiener Volksbuchhandlung, 1925), p. 250.

10. Otto Bauer, Der Kampf um Wald und Weide. Studien zur österreichischen Agrargeschichte und Agrarpolitik (Vienna: Verlag der Wiener Volksbuchhandlung, 1925); idem, Sozialdemokratische Agrarpolitik. Erläuterung des Agrarprogrammes der deutsch-österreichischen Sozialdemokratie (Vienna: Agrarsozialistische Bücherei, 1926).

11. The Lower Austrian Peasant Union's newspaper Der Bauernbündler played upon these fears by quoting Engels and Bebel to the effect that small holders could never be a reliable source of support for socialism since they would consistently oppose the elimination of private property. See the issues from late June 1923, p. 1 and 1 September 1923, p. 1.

12. See, for example, the "Zusammenfassende Stellungnahme zum sozialdemokratischen Agrarprogramm," Universität Wien, Institut für Zeitgeschichte, Nachlaß Vinzenz Schumy, N1 44, (henceforth cited as Nachlaß Schumy) Do 200, Mappe 18.

13. Michael Genner, Mein Vater Laurenz Genner, p. 60. The Bauernbündler also used quotes from Engels, Bebel and Liebknecht to good effect in pointing out the irreligious nature of socialism. See the issue from 15 September 1923, p. 1.

14. Protokoll des sozialdemokratischen Parteitages, p. 250.
15. See Arbeiterzeitung, 1 January 1927 and "Der alter Erbfeind," Der Bauernbündler, 8 January 1927, p. 1.
16. Matzl, Agrarstruktur, p. 269.
17. It must be noted, however, that in some areas, such as Upper Austria, the 1870's were years of prosperity for many larger peasants. Their animosity toward liberalism was a good deal less pronounced than among peasants in Lower Austria where farm size was often smaller. Upper Austria, particularly the region around Wels, became one of the regions where the German nationalist peasant movement was able to score some initial successes in the 1880's and then again after World War I. See Ernst Bruckmüller, Landwirtschaftliche Organisationen, p. 211.
18. Its name notwithstanding, this organization was indeed anti-clerical.
19. Bruckmüller, Landwirtschaftliche Organisationen, p. 213-216.
20. In 1920/21 the Carinthian Peasant League did enter into an electoral alliance with the Greater German People's Party and there was even considerable movement toward fusion of the two parties, but in the end the nationalist Carinthian peasant leadership decided on an independent course. See "Übereinkommen zwischen dem Kärntner Bauernbund und der gro deutschen Volkspartei für Kärnten betreffend das gemeinsames Vorgehen bei den nächsten Wahlen," Nachlaß Schumy, Do 200, Mappe 14.
21. Election reform was a consistent demand of the German Nationalist agrarians throughout the First Republic.
22. Gunther Burkert, "Der Landbund für Österreich. Die Partei der Bundesländerpolitiker," Paper delivered before the Symposium of the Wissenschaftliche Kommission des Theodor-Körner-Stiftungsfond und des Leopold-Kunschak-Preises zur Erforschung der österreichischen Geschichte der Jahre 1918-1938, held on 24 and 25 October 1983 in Vienna, p. 10.
23. "Programmatische Grundsätze des Landbundes für Österreich [1925]," Nachlaß Schumy, Do 204, Mappe 42/1.
24. "Satzungen des Kärntner Landbundes," Nachlaß Schumy, Do 204, Mappe 42/1.
25. Both Vinzenz Schumy and Franz Winkler, the party's chairmen from 1924-31 and 1931-1934 respectively, belong in this latter category. See Arbeiterkammer für Wien, Dokumentation (henceforth abbreviated AKWD), Landbund, "Die Führer des Landbundes müssen weg," Deutsche Zeit, 25 July, 1924; "Landbündler," Neue Freie Presse, 27 April, 1927.

26. One of the most heated conflicts was between Winkler and Schumy, a schism so unpleasant that it severely limited communication within the party in the early 'thirties. Winkler later vilified Schumy as an opportunist in his memoirs, published in exile after both men had lost political influence with the creation of the Corporate State in 1934. See his Die Diktatur in Österreich (Zürich: Orell-Füssli Verlag, 1935); letter from Schumy to Winkler, 4 Februar 1932, Nachlaß Schumy, Do 203, Mappe 37; AKWD, Landbund, "Kärntner Landbund gegen Lausanne, Wiener Neuste Nachrichten, 4 August 1932; *ibid.*, "Der Rücktritt Schumys," Neue Freie Presse, 7 February 1932.

27. Burkert, "Der Landbund für Österreich," p. 14-15; Nachlaß Schumy.

28. "Memorandum des Landbundes von 29. April 1929," Nachlaß Schumy, Do 203, Mappe 34/3.

29. Schumy was vice-chancellor for five months in 1929 and then Interior Minister from May 1933 to September 1933. He headed the party from 1924 until 1931, when he was outmaneuvered by his political rival, Winkler. Winkler was Interior Minister from December 1930 to May 1932 and Vice-Chancellor from January 1932 to September 1933. He served as head of the party from 1931 until its dissolution in 1934. Bachinger served as Minister of the Interior from May 1932 to May 1933, when he became state secretary for forestry, a post he held until September 1933.

30. In 1929 the party did favor constitutional changes to transform the upper house of parliament into a body elected by the provinces and the economic corporations (Chambers of Commerce, Agriculture, Labor, etc.), but these proposals retained a commitment to parliamentary democracy supported by a system of competing political parties. See AKWD, Landbund, "Demokratie in Österreich," Neues Wiener Tagblatt, 25 August 1929.

31. The League's minister's were consistent in their support for "domestic disarmament." In 1929, for example, Minister of the Interior Schumy issued an injunction against the bearing of arms in public demonstrations, an action that the Home Guard interpreted as a direct attack on its interests. Schumy's actions brought accusations that he was undermining the "antimarxist defensive front." See Charles Gulick, Austria from Habsburg to Hitler (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1943), 2:826; Resolution of the non-Marxist town council members of Judendorf-Straßengel (Styria) dated 11 August 1930, Allgemeines Verwaltungsarchiv (Vienna), Bundeskanzleramt für Inneres, KorrespondenzSchumy - 3, Karton 70 (1930), z. 512-30; AKWD, Landbund, "Vizekanzler Winkler über die innere Abrüstung," Neue Freie Presse, 10 February 1932.

32. Stenographische Protokolle des Nationalrates, 23 May 1920, pp. 3712-3714.

33. In 1933 as the Agrarian League's losses to the Nazis deteriorated into hemorrhaging once Hitler became chancellor in Germany, Vinzenz Schumy met with Austrian Nazi leaders at Linz to explore avenues of cooperation between the Nazis and the League. The Nazis offered Schumy the ministry of agriculture in a future Nazi government if he would

work to incorporate the League into the Nazi movement. For Schumy, however, that was a point that could not be negotiated. He was willing to cooperate with the Nazis in elections as a way to reduce Nazi pressure on the League, but he was unwilling to give up the party's independence and with it its commitment to democracy. See Letter from Hans vom Kothen to Schumy dated 25 April 1933, Letter from Schumy to Kothen dated 5 May 1933, Letter from Schumy to Berthold Storfer dated 21 July 1936, all in Nachlaß Schumy, Do 203, Mappe 41/1.

34. Quoted in Hanno Scheuch, "Die österreichische Bauernwehr," Paper delivered before the Symposium of the Wissenschaftliche Kommission des Theodor-Körner-Stiftungsfond und des Leopold-Kunschak-Preises zur Erforschung der österreichischen Geschichte der Jahre 1918-1938, held on October 24 and 25, 1983 in Vienna, p. 2.

35. "Das System Winkler," undated typescript (1934?), Nachlaß Schumy, Do 203, Mappe 41/1.

36. The Home Guard had first entered the government in 1932 when Guido Jakoncig took over the Ministry of Commerce and Trade.

37. Protokolle des Ministerrates der Ersten Republik, Abteilung 8, 20. Mai 1932 bis 25. Juli 1934, ed. by Gertrude Enderle-Brucel (Vienna: Verlag der österreichischen Staatsdruckerei, 1982), 3:569.

38. Franz Winkler, Die Diktatur in Österreich, p. 69.

39. Burkert, "Der Landbund," pp. 30-31.

40. Ursula Benedikt, "Vinzenz Schumy 1878-1962. Eine politische Biographie" (Ph.D. diss., Universität Wien, 1966), pp. 216-222.

41. Karl Kaser and Karl Stocker, Bäuerliches Leben in der Oststeiermark seit 1848 (Vienna: Hermann Bohlaus Nachf., 1986), 1:104.

42. Theresa Kraus, "Der Niederösterreichische Bauernbund als Kern des Reichbauernbundes 1918 bis 1938," Paper delivered before the Symposium of the Wissenschaftliche Kommission des Theodor-Körner-Stiftungsfond und des Leopold-Kunschak-Preises zur Erforschung der österreichischen Geschichte der Jahre 1918-1939, held on October 24 and 25, 1983 in Vienna, pp. 7-8.

43. See, for example, "Religion und Politik," Der Bauernbündler (Lower Austria), February 1, 1920, pp. 2-3.

44. Der Bauernbündler, 15 September 1923, p. 1.

45. "Der einzige Feind," Der Bauernbündler (Lower Austria), 15 September 1920, p. 1; "Volksgenossen!" *ibid.*, October 1, 1920, p. 1.

46. "Das patriarchalische Verhältnis," Der Bauernbündler, 15 November 1924, p. 1; "Bäuerliches Zusammenleben," Der Bauernbündler, 27 August 1927, p. 2; "Bauernkultur," *ibid.*, 1 June 1929, p. 1.
47. These ideas were common to most peasant movements in German-speaking lands. See Joachim Ziche, "Kritik der deutschen Bauernsideologie," Sociologia ruralis 8/2 (1968): 105-141.
48. The name Reichsbauernbund was in a sense, however, a bit of an anachronism, since Austria no longer enjoyed the benefits of a Reich.
49. Kluge, Bauern, Agrarkrise und Volksernährung, p. 103.
50. Rudolf Winter, "Die zentrale Vertretung der österreichischen Land- und Forstwirtschaft," Die Landwirtschaft, 15 July 1925, p. 274-275.
51. Jahrbuch und Adreßbuch der Land- und Forstwirtschaft. Offizielles Agrar-Handbuch Österreichs (Vienna: Agrarverlag, 1931/32), p. 491.
52. Kalendar des Niederösterreichischen Bauernbundes (Vienna: Selbstverlag, 1935), p. 55-56; Egon Fischer, "Der Niederösterreichische Bauernbund von seiner Gründung 1906-1938" (Ph.D. diss., Universität Wien, 1979), p. 198.
53. Ernst Bruckmüller, Landwirtschaftliche Organisationen, pp. 200-201.
54. Gavin Lewis, "The Peasantry, Rural Change and Conservative Agrarianism: Lower Austria at the Turn of the Century," Past and Present 81 (1978):122.
55. "Statuten des Nied.-österr. Bauernbundes," in Kalendar des Niederösterreichischen Bauernbundes (Vienna: Selbstverlag, 1907), pp. 83-90.
56. Jahrbuch und Adreßbuch 1931/32, p. 225; Allgemeine Verwaltungsarchiv (Vienna), Bundeskanzleramt für innere Angelegenheiten, Präsidium, Karton 501, Z. 25.587 ex 1935; Egon Fischer, "Der Niederösterreichische Bauernbund," p. 191.
57. In Carinthia it was the Agrarian League that filled this position. In Styria, the Peasant League and the Agrarian League shared power. Elsewhere, the Peasant League was predominant.
58. In 1927 it included a list of approved and "enemy" newspapers that should not be found in a League-member's home. See Kalendar des Niederösterreichischen Bauernbundes, 1927, p. 41.
59. "Der Entschluß der Bauern," AKWD, Bauernbund, Reichspost, 29 August 1929; "20,000 Tiroler Bauern solidarisch mit der Heimwehr," *ibid.*, Reichspost, 13 September 1929; "Der oberösterreichische Bauernbund zur Heimwehrfrage," *ibid.*,



Neuigkeitsweltblatt, 2 October 1929; "Vor einem Massenübertritt zurniederösterreichischen Heimwehr," ibid., Reichspost, 20 December 1930.

60. Kalender des Niederösterreichischen Bauernbundes, 1932, p. 39.

61. "Der tiefere Sinn," Der Bauernbündler, 18 March 1933, p. 1; "Bauern Niederösterreichs!" ibid., 12 March 1933.

62. "Ein Wort zur Klärung," Der Bauernbündler, 6 January 1934, p. 1.

63. Dollfuß had begun his career as a clerk in the Peasant League before joining the staff of the Lower Austrian Chamber of Agriculture at its founding in 1922. He became director of the Chamber in 1927 under Reither's presidency. In 1931 he took over the ministry of agriculture before being named chancellor in 1932.

64. Michael Genner, Mein Vater Laurenz Genner, pp. 92-98.

65. Benedikt Erhard, Bauernstand und Politik. Zur Geschichte des Tiroler Bauernbundes (Vienna: Jugend und Volk, 1981), p. 189-199.

66. "Ein fester Schritt in die neue Zeit," Der Bauernbündler, 17 March 1934, p. 1.

67. "Bauernstand--erster Stand," Der Bauernbündler, 7 December 1935, p. 1.

68. Miller, Engelbert Dollfuß, pp. 99-103.

69. Students of eastern European agrarian politics may be surprised that none of these programs address themselves to land reform. This was not as burning political issue in Austria since large estates were few in number. There had been some attempts at land reform in the twenties, but they did not involve very much acreage and did not occupy much space on the agenda of either the Peasant Leagues or the Agrarian League. Agrarian reform generally (i.e., rural education, melioration, etc.) was undertaken by the provincial chambers of agriculture, which were under direct agrarian control and therefore did not dominate agrarian demands on the government.

70. Dollfuß was considerable less careful about consulting with other economic interests that had concerns about his programs, the chambers of commerce and of labor in particular. See Miller, Engelbert Dollfuß, p. 119.

71. Kluge, Bauern, Agrarkrise und Volksernährung, p. 410. It must be added that not all of these programs worked according to plan. Most of them were accompanied by a number of undesirable side effects.

72. Chancellor Dollfuß served as his own minister of agriculture from 1932 to 1934.

73. Kluge, Bauern, Agrarkrise und Volksernährung, pp. 441-467.

74. One of the difficulties in studying the peasant organizations before the war is the fact that these records were then lost in the spring of 1945.

75. A good example of the postwar peasant leadership was Josef Muigg, who after May 1945 was both president of the Tyrolian Peasant League and president of the Provincial Chamber of Agriculture for Tyrol. See Erhard, Bauernstand und Politik, pp. 212-213.

76. Benedikt, "Vinzenz Schumy," p. 239-40; Michael Genner, Mein Vater Laurenz Genner, p. 194, 204-209.

77. Since the war, the Austrian economy has shifted more and more away from agriculture toward the manufacturing and service sectors. The percentage of the population employed in agriculture has dropped from just under thirty percent in 1951 to just under nine percent in 1985. See Österreichs Land- und Forstwirtschaft in Zahlen (Vienna: Präsidentenkonferenz der Landwirtschaftskammern Österreichs, 1987), p. 1.