



ΑΚΑΔΗΜΙΑ



ΑΘΗΝΑΝ



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Category: S65. The Great Depression and the rural world in South-eastern Europe; evaluating and representing the agrarian change

Agricultural Commodities: Data on local economies and visual representations of agrarian changes in interwar Greece". An analysis of the economic and social impact of the rural crisis, based on the results of the TransMonEA project.

Dr. A. Antoniou, Dr. M. Arkolakis

The paper firstly discusses why currant is selected as the product analyzed, foregrounding the significance of the product and its links to interwar international trade. Parts of the TransMonEA Serial Database on prices and exchange rates are presented concerning the buying prices of currant (in current drachmas) at the main export port of Patras from 1925 to 1935. It is also explained the impact of the Great Depression on the currant commercial prices as regards its international trade. The currant prices in foreign currency will be thoroughly discussed, while the stances and attitudes of social actors in rural areas are highlighted in relation to product prices fluctuation.

In the second part, the paper explores audiovisual documents from the period of economic crisis in the agricultural sector of interwar Greece. Focusing on the rural communities of Thessaly, it will present photographic and cinematic depictions by particular professional photographers and cinematographers. On the one hand, the use of audiovisual media by state entrepreneurial institutions will be read as a new means of propaganda and advertisement and on the other, emphasis is given on the visual representation of the interwar crisis on local level.

Socio-economic Origins of the Balkan Agrarianism. The Case of Bulgaria during the Interwar Period and the Great Depression

Dr. Michalis Sarras

The aim of the present article is the investigation of the agrarian movement in Bulgaria, during the Interwar Period. The causes that led to the formation of a worthwhile Peasant Party and agrarian movement in Bulgaria will be analyzed and interpreted through the prism of social and economic history.

As an introductory part of the paper, a reference to the fundamental issues afflicting the Bulgarian peasantry is possible only from a historical point of view, and mainly in the late 19th century, particularly from the late Ottoman Period up to the Interwar Period. This retrospective on the origins of the agrarian movement is fundamental in order to shed light on the causes that forced the peasantry in Bulgaria, as well as the agrarian populations of many other Eastern European countries, towards a dynamic political mobilization.

In the first part of the proposed paper, it will be mentioned that in interwar Bulgaria there were few large estates and most peasants were small landholders. There was very little social mobility amongst Bulgarian peasants since commercial transactions and migration towards urban centers and abroad remained limited and the commercialization of agrarian production was minimal. In addition, urbanization was not dynamic in Bulgaria. Therefore, the transition from the traditional-rural economy and fundamentally agrarian society towards modern production and organization methods was slow if not stationary, leading to the political elites being unable to control the peasants by political means. In other words, the bourgeoisie failed to shape the productive relations and in general, the socioeconomic institutions in rural areas in a suitable way to exert political control over the peasantry, which at that time constituted the great majority of the population until the end of the Interwar period.

In the second part of the paper, it will be examined through statistical data the impact of the Great Depression on the Bulgarian rural economy. The Great Depression caused tremendous problems in the agrarian states of East and South East Europe in terms of trade decline. The market for agrarian products shrank as a result of industrial decline and mass unemployment and an unparalleled collapse of prices was experienced in the early thirties. In agrarian countries the crisis was manifested by the following problems: by the loss of income caused by the fall in prices paid for agrarian products, by the gap between prices of agricultural and industrial products and in connection with the narrowing of external markets a severe lack of stability in the balance of payments and of trade.

Consequently, the global economic crisis was an important factor that delayed further the process of modernization as described by the data under examination.

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Germany's Drang nach Südosten and the Marketing of Southeastern European Agricultural Products in the Interwar Period

Dr. J. Carmona Zambala

The strengthening of economic and cultural ties between Germany and a number of southeastern European countries in the interwar period has been referred to as *Drang nach Südosten* (thrust towards the southeast). Driven by a German aim to boost its international standing after its defeat in World War I, and shaped by the constraints of the Great Depression (falling demand, clearing agreements, foreign exchange controls...), the *Drang nach Südosten* resulted in increased economic and diplomatic influence over the region. However, as Gross has shown in *Export Empire: German Soft Power in Southeastern Europe, 1890–1945* (2015), this was far from a unidirectional process of power projection. Actors

from southeastern Europe, both state and private, actively shaped these interactions and pursued their own goals.

The purpose of this paper is to describe, and account for, the efforts that German, Greek, Bulgarian and Turkish actors made for the promotion of southeastern European agricultural products in Germany in the interwar period. More concretely, the paper focuses on the participation of Greece, Bulgaria and Turkey in the Leipzig Fair, and a number of initiatives undertaken for the marketing of one of the region's main exports to Germany: Oriental-type tobacco. Such initiatives included the establishment of cooperative companies and industrial facilities, as well as new forms of state intervention in the market. The picture that emerges from this analysis is one of path dependence (different countries took different approaches to the same problem), and of an understanding of the legitimate scope of foreign economic policy that was in flux, at a time of great economic and social upheaval in southeastern Europe.

This paper falls within the scope of the session "The Great Depression and the rural world in South-eastern Europe; evaluating and representing the agrarian change." It presents a number of cases that could be characterized as "transnational action taken in order to tackle the new conditions in national economies based on the primary sector."

The Great Depression in Eastern Europe as a Catalyst for the Regulation of the European Agricultural Market

Dr. Uwe Muller

Agriculture in Eastern Europe was hit particularly hard by the Great Depression (1929-1933). This hardship was experienced both within the framework of the individual national economies and in the export of agricultural goods. In the late 1920s, Romania, Hungary, Yugoslavia and Poland, as well as the Soviet Union, had tried to revive traditional exports to Western and Central Europe after the collapse of these exports because of the First World War and its aftermath. However, competition from overseas and the protectionism of agricultural importers made Eastern European agricultural exports enormously difficult. In this crisis situation, Eastern European actors, such as Romanian economist, sociologist, politician and the main theorist of the Peasants' Party Virgil Madgearu, fought for a fundamental change in the order of international agricultural markets.

The first request of the Eastern European stakeholders and agricultural politicians was the taking out of the most-favoured-nation clause contained in most of the trade contracts. The Eastern European exporters argued that deleting this clause, while greatly helping Eastern European agrarian producers, would only minimally reduce the sales of the overseas cereal and meat exporters that dominated the market and not harm Western European farmers.

As a next step, the Eastern Europeans argued for the introduction of a system of preferential tariffs within Europe. They managed to get the Commission Internationale d'Agriculture (CIA) to adopt their demands. Thus, the idea of a common European agricultural market was discussed within the League of Nations and at the Stresa Agricultural Conference in September 1932 and at the London World Financial and Economic Conference in June and July 1933.

The paper examines how all the Eastern European states except the Soviet Union put aside their differences and founded a so-called agricultural bloc in Warsaw in 1930, in the face of the challenges of the Great Depression. It presents the means and arguments with which Eastern European interest groups and agricultural politicians attempted to assert their positions in international negotiations. The main objective of the paper is to determine both the opportunities and the limits that actors from the periphery face in shaping global economic conditions.