

Agrarian Politics in Interwar Greece: The Stillborn 'Peasant' Parties (1923-1936)

Spyridon G. PLOUMIDIS*

Keywords: *agrarian politics, agrarianism, peasant parties, agrarian economy, interwar Greece*

Abstract: *My article will examine the role played by the agrarianist ideology in inter war Greek politics. Political interest in the rural population dates back to the early nineteenth century. Radical land reform and the emancipation of the peasantry had become part of the modernizing liberal government programmes since 1910. Yet it was not until 1923 that an agrarian party was founded in Greece. The emergence of the peasant as an active factor in the political and social life was a striking phenomenon in the history of Greek politics between the two world wars. However, factional misgivings, the petite - bourgeoisie's aspirations of the Greek peasant masses as well as the clientelist networks of the established bourgeois parties left very limited ground for its success.*

Yet, agrarianism exerted a far greater intellectual influence on interwar Greece's hegemonic ideology than the electoral sway of the Agrarian Party of Greece (which actually hardly ever exceeded 6%). To this end, I will investigate the origins and identity of the agrarian political personnel, and their parliamentary career. Similarities and differences between the right-wing and the left-wing agrarianist agenda will be highlighted. State intervention and protectionist measures in agriculture will be revisited. Last but not least, the influence of agrarian populism on the discourse of Greek nationalism will also be briefly considered.

Introduction

The emergence of the peasantry as an active factor in the political and social life of Europe, particularly in the agrarian East, was a striking phenomenon in the social history of the Continent between the two world wars.¹ Agrarianism, whose the underlying notion is the idea that agriculture and those whose occupation involves agriculture are especially important and valuable elements of society², certainly was not a novel ideological phenomenon of the twentieth century. Since the late nineteenth century, agrarian parties, which intended to elevate the peasantry to a determinant socio-political position, were established throughout Central and Eastern Europe. However, it was not until after the First World War that agrarian politics came to acquire a prominent place on the political agenda. In the aftermath of World War I, radical land reform and the emancipation of the peasantry became part of the modernizing government programmes even of highly conservative regimes in the area³. In Central and Eastern Europe, where the greatest part of

* Lecturer of Modern History Faculty of History and Archaeology, University of Athens, Greece (sploumid@arch.uoa.gr; sploumidis@yahoo.com).

¹ David Mitran, *Marx against the Peasant: A Study in Social Dogmatism* (New York, 1961), 31.

² James A. Montmarquet, *The Idea of Agrarianism: From Hunter-Gatherer to Agrarian Radical in Western Culture* (Moscow, Idaho, 1989), VIII.

³ Ivan T. Berend, *Decades of Crisis: Central and Eastern Europe before World War II* (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London, 2001 [1998]), 287-289, 292.

the population lived based on agriculture, agrarianism was disseminated along with the rise of the forces of populist movements, which intended to provide solutions to backwardness and socio-political marginalization of the peasantry. The scope of agrarianist populism entailed a fundamentally politicized view of the farmers as a social class; claimed to represent genuine rural interests; and officially aimed at establishing the peasantry as an independent socio-political force with an increasing sense of their own standing, interests and purpose of action.⁴ The agrarian parties, in their majority republican with ostensible left-wing, pacifist and socialist leanings, left their impact on East European politics in the 1920s, the era of the so-styled (by the German historian Edgar Hösch) ‘green uprising’. However, the limited power of Prague’s Green International (est. 1921) and the vigorous reaction of the established bourgeois monarchist parties left very little ground for the eventual success of the agrarians.⁵ (In fact, the only agrarian party in the Balkans that independently yielded power was Alexander Stambolijski’s Bulgarian Agrarian National Union between 1919 and 1923.⁶)

In Greece, political interest in the rural population dates back to the early nineteenth century. Agrarian - minded intellectuals and politicians saw the ‘agrarian problem’ (*αγροτικόν πρόβλημα*) as an issue of landed private property. They openly expressed their distaste for the landlords, which they renounced as the ‘parasites on agricultural production’, and propagated the creation of a large class of small proprietors in agriculture. However, before the turn of the twentieth century agrarianism was not translated into a practical form of politicized interest in the peasantry as a social class *per se*. The situation changed substantially since Spyros Chassiotis (1862-1945), the (in Evelpidis’ words) ‘protagonist of the agrarian idea’ in modern Greece and an agronomist by trade, came to the fore and publicized (by means of his periodicals *Georgiki Proodos*, 1892-96, and *Nea Geoponika*, 1900-1927) the scope of agrarianism. The agrarian problem during the *fin-de-siècle* Greece centred around the *çifliks* (i.e. the large estates) of Thessaly (alias the ‘issue of Thessaly’), and secondly those of Arta, Attica and Euboea, which (after the incorporation of Thessaly and Arta to Greece in 1881) were owned by Christian proprietors. The ‘issue of Thessaly’ particularly attracted the attention of several political activists, such as the Larissa (Thessaly’s capital) lawyer Demetrius Chatzigiannis and Marinos Antypas (a socialist and agrarian publicist that was murdered in 1907 at the behest of the Thessaly landlords). On 6 March 1910, skirmishes between the army and outraged peasants at the railway station of Kileler (on the outskirts of Larissa) left two dead and about a dozen wounded people. The bloody events of Kileler showed the violent potential of the agrarian problem in Greece. Land reform and the emancipation of the peasantry became part of the modernizing agenda of Eleftherios Venizelos’ first Liberal government, elected on 28 November 1910. An active role in agrarian politics was also played by

⁴ Cf. Mitrany, *Marx Against the Peasant*, 32; Nissan Oren, *Revolution Administered: Agrarianism and Communism in Bulgaria* (Baltimore and London, 1973), 5-6, 9-10, 12, 14; Montmarquet, *The Idea of Agrarianism*, 228; Berend, *Decades of Crisis*, 76, 83.

⁵ L. S. Stavrianos, *The Balkans since 1453* (New York, 1965 [1958]), 608-612; Edgar Hösch, *Geschichte der Balkanländer: Von der Frühzeit bis zur Gegenwart* (München, 1988), 206-209.

⁶ See e.g. John D. Bell, *Peasants in Power: Alexander Stamboliski and the Bulgarian Agrarian National Union, 1899-1923* (Princeton, 1977); Richard J. Crampton, *Bulgaria* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008 [2007]), 224-236.

Alexandros Papanastassiou, a moderate socialist-minded ideologue who initially became politically affiliated with the Liberal Party and later, in 1928-36, led the Agrarian and Workers' Party (see below). In 1911, the revision of article 17 (that touched upon private ownership) of the Constitution paved the way for a future forced dispossession of the *çiflik*-owners. The expropriation of the large estates and their distribution to the landless peasantry was finally announced by the Venizelos 'provisional' government in Salonica in May 1917. At the same time, the establishment of a self-standing Ministry of Agriculture in 1917 (where Chassiotis served as General Director) and of the Advanced School of Agronomy at Athens in 1920 (which was directed by Chassiotis until 1925) created an institutional forum for the expression and dissemination of agrarianist political ideas⁷. Yet it was not until 1923 that an independent agrarian party was founded in Greece. Before 1923, there had not been any genuinely agrarian movement, let alone parliamentary party, in the country; the various agricultural associations, societies and leagues, such as the Athens-based Central Agricultural Society (est. 1864) and the Greek Agricultural Society (est. 1901), for 'the improvement of agriculture and of the agricultural industries' as well as for 'the practical and theoretical education of the farmers', had been staffed and administered by estate owners; and the rural populations had been represented in parliament by their landlords.⁸

For a better understanding of agrarian politics in interwar Greece, particular attention needs to be drawn to the 1917 land reform, which was actually materialized in February 1923, i.e. shortly after the Asia Minor Catastrophe and the influx of 1,3 million (mostly destitute) refugees in 1922. The interwar land reform eventually expropriated approximately 1,700 estates and rurally settled 130,000 landless native families and 145,000 refugee families. The interwar agrarian reform created a massive stratum of new smallholders out of the refugees and landless natives in Thessaly and in the (post-1912 annexed) New Lands of Macedonia, Thrace and Epirus. By 1930, Greece had irrevocably become a country of small peasant proprietors.⁹ The socio-political importance of the land

⁷ Chrysos Evelpidis, *Σύστημα αγροτικής πολιτικής* [System of Agrarian Policy], vol. II (*Αγροτικόν Πρόγραμμα*) [Agrarian Programme] (Athens, 1923), 6; Chrysos Evelpidis, "Αγροτικόν ζήτημα" [Agrarian Problem], *Megali Helliniki Engyklopaedia*. I (Athens, [1926]), 494-495; Aristotle D. Sideris, *Η γεωργική πολιτική της Ελλάδος κατά την λήξαν εκατονταετία (1833-1933)* [The Agricultural Policy of Greece during the Past One Hundred Years, 1833-1933] (Athens, 1934), 141-181; Giannis Kordatos, *Ιστορία του αγροτικού κινήματος στην Ελλάδα* [History of the Agrarian Movement in Greece] (Athens, 1973), 147-157; Demetrius G. Panagiotopoulos, *Αγροτικό Κόμμα Ελλάδος: Όψεις του αγροτικού κινήματος στην Ελλάδα* [Agrarian Party of Greece: Aspects of the Agrarian Movement in Greece] (Athens, 2010), 41-50.

⁸ Nikolaos I. Pantazopoulos, "Παραδοσιακοί αγροτικοί θεσμοί σε δοκιμασία: Η περίπτωση της Θεσσαλίας. Ο Αλέξανδρος Παπαναστασίου και η αγροτική μεταρρύθμιση," [Traditional Agricultural Institutions Tested: The Case of Thessaly; Alexandros Papanastassiou and the Land Reform] in Giorgos Anastassiadis, Giorgos Kontogiorgis and Pavlos Petridis (eds.), *Αλέξανδρος Παπαναστασίου: θεσμοί, ιδεολογία και πολιτική στο Μεσοπόλεμο* [Alexandros Papanastassiou: Institutions, Ideology and Politics in the Inter-War Period] (Athens 1987), 240-241; Leonidas Kallivretakis, *Η δυναμική του αγροτικού εκσυγχρονισμού στην Ελλάδα του 19ου αιώνα* [The Dynamics of Agricultural Modernization in Nineteenth-Century Greece] (Athens, 1990), 105-117.

⁹ Kostas Vergopoulos, *Το αγροτικό ζήτημα στην Ελλάδα: Το πρόβλημα της κοινωνικής ενσωμάτωσης της γεωργίας* [The Agrarian Problem in Greece: The Issue of the Social Integration of Agriculture] (Athens, 1975), 149-155; George Th. Mavrogordatos, *Stillborn Republic: Social Coalitions and Party Strategies in Greece, 1922-1936*, (Berkeley, 1983), 156, 159-161; Mark Mazower, *Greece and the Inter-War Economic Crisis* (Oxford and New York, 1991), 75-78.

reform of 1917 was literally immense. Chassiotis commented in 1924, when the land reform was still in advance, that ‘the landless, who work as simple wagers on alien estates, are easily carried away by the communist propaganda, which (if this frivolous and dangerous ideology happens to spread into the countryside) threaten to paralyze labor, peace, family and social order, and to dissolve the polity and the nation’; he argued that ‘a good and just solution to the agrarian problem is the best measure for peace, social equilibrium, order, progress and true civilization’; and he praised the socio-economic advantages of the small landed property.¹⁰ Babis Alivizatos, a future secretary-general of the Ministry of Agriculture and vice-director of the Agricultural Bank of Greece, noted in 1934 that ‘thanks to the applied agrarian policy, Greece has acquired a most broad conservative social foundation, i.e. the landed agrarian class, something which will help so that social evolution will take place at a milder pace and without abrupt social tossing’.¹¹ Truly, the rurally newly settled population of about 1,000,000 came to be politically conservative at heart, and communist influence among the Greek peasantry remained limited throughout the interwar period.¹²

Besides the land reform, the interwar years were economically characterised –and the agrarian agenda was consequently influenced– by a worldwide agricultural crisis, which hit European agriculture especially hard. The depression of the 1930s was preceded by a slump in agricultural prices because of increasingly excessive productivity, particularly in the Americas. Global recurring crises in the rural economy, peaking in 1924 and in 1928, were considerably severe and contributed to the downward spiral in the early 1930s. As output rose, prices declined and farmers clamoured for protection. Worst affected in Europe were producers of staple commodities, such as wheat.¹³ In 1925-29, the international index price of wheat decreased by 28%.¹⁴ The down swing in agriculture hit badly the Balkan national economies, since agricultural products were their main export commodities.¹⁵ Moreover, low productivity, lack of capital, primitive farming methods and a rural overpopulation marred the Balkan (and more generally Eastern European) agricultural economies.¹⁶ In Greece, in 1927-31 the index price of wheat fell from 151 to

¹⁰ Spyros Chassiotis, “Σκέψεις τινές επί του αγροτικού ζητήματος,” [Some Thoughts upon the Agrarian Issue] *Ta Nea Geoponika*, 9-10 (September-October 1924), 77.

¹¹ Babis Alivizatos, “Δημοκρατία και γεωργία: Ο απολογισμός μίας δεκαετίας (1924-1934),” [Democracy and Agriculture: The Account of a Decade (1924-1934)] *Ergasia*, 230, (27 May 1934), 667.

¹² George Th. Mavrogordatos, *Stillborn Republic: Social Coalitions and Party Strategies in Greece, 1922-1936*, (Berkeley, 1983), 161, 176; cf Kostas Vergopoulos, *Το αγροτικό ζήτημα στην Ελλάδα: Το πρόβλημα της κοινωνικής ενσωμάτωσης της γεωργίας* [The Agrarian Problem in Greece: The Issue of the Social Integration of Agriculture] (Athens, 1975), 153.

¹³ Chrysos Evelpidis, *Η γεωργική κρίσις ιδία εν Ελλάδι* [The Agricultural Crisis, Particularly in Greece] (Athens, 1931), 8, 10, 21-23; Shepard B. Clough, Thomas Moodie and Carol Moodie (eds.), *Economic History of Europe: Twentieth Century* (New York, Evanston and London, 1968), 14, 215-216; Frank B. Tipton and Robert Aldrich, *An Economic and Social History of Europe, 1890-1939* (Basingstoke, Hampshire and London, 1988), 165-166; Gerold Ambrosius and William H. Hubbard, *A Social and Economic History of Twentieth-Century Europe* (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1989), 169.

¹⁴ Giorgio Candeloro, *Storia dell’Italia moderna*. vol. IX (*Il fascismo e le sue guerre*) (Milan, 1990), 121.

¹⁵ John R. Lampe and Marvin R. Jackson, *Balkan Economic History, 1550-1950: From Imperial Borderlands to Developing Nations* (Bloomington, 1982), 434-435, 466-467.

¹⁶ L. S. Stavrianos, *The Balkans since 1453* (New York, 1965 [1958]), 593-599; Ivan T. Berend, *Decades of Crisis: Central and Eastern Europe before World War II* (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London, 2001 [1998]), 255-259.

117.¹⁷ The income of the Greek farmers shrank accordingly below the national average, reaching the limits of poverty: in 1927 the average income per 'agro-pastoralist' family was \$282.4, while the median household income amounted to \$377.9.¹⁸ The decrease in the agricultural income was also coupled with the fall in the average productivity (until 1931), as well as with the indebtedness of the farmers to banks and money lenders. The indebtedness of the Greek peasantry deepened in the 1930s: in 1937, agricultural debts reached 43.3% of the gross agricultural income and involved 70% of the Greek farmers.¹⁹

Farmers in Greece responded to the economic crisis by forsaking their plots and emigrating to the towns. Undoubtedly, urbanism was not a novel phenomenon in Greece. In the 'long nineteenth century', a steady stream of migration to the towns (or to the Americas up to 1922) offered an outlet for the overflow of labor in the countryside.²⁰ Nevertheless, in the interwar period this migratory stream widened. The agrarian reform of 1917, which turned the landless peasantry and the refugees settled in the countryside into independent smallholders, did not put an end to or reversed this demographic trend. The new smallholders did not succeed in turning themselves into successful entrepreneurs, while the economic slump of the 1920s and the early 1930s worsened the business environment in agriculture. At the same time, the mounting population pressure on available arable land produced a marked movement from agriculture to non-agricultural occupations in the towns. Thus, seeing no future prospects in agriculture, Greek farmers migrated themselves or incited their (male) offspring to move to the towns.²¹ While between 1910-30 the increase in the size of the urban population was moderate in all the other Balkan countries, in Greece the share of the population living in towns rose spectacularly.²² In 1920-28, the percentage of Greece's urban population living in cities with over 20,000 people populating them, rose from 17% to 27%; this was practically the result of the settlement of around 390,000 refugees in the three largest cities of the country (Athens, Piraeus and Salonica), as well as of the internal migration of another 500,000 from the rural areas to the large urban centres.²³ This internal migratory movement

¹⁷ Kostas Kostis, *Αγροτική οικονομία και Γεωργική Τράπεζα: Όψεις της ελληνικής οικονομίας στο Μεσοπόλεμο (1919-1928): Τα τεκμήρια* [Agricultural Economy and Agricultural Bank: Aspects of the Inter-War Greek Economy (1919-1928): The Sources] (Athens, 1990), 43 (Table 14).

¹⁸ Chrysos Evelpidis, "Η γεωργία εις τα Βαλκάνια," [Agriculture in the Balkans] *Ergasia*, 1 (11 January 1930), 27.

¹⁹ Kostas Kostis, *Αγροτική οικονομία και Γεωργική Τράπεζα: Όψεις της ελληνικής οικονομίας στο Μεσοπόλεμο (1919-1928)* [Agricultural Economy and Agricultural Bank: Aspects of the Inter-War Greek Economy (1919-1928)] (Athens, 1987), 48-49, 58, 137-138; Sokratis Petmezas, "Αγροτική οικονομία," [Agricultural Economy] in Christos Hadziiosif (ed.), *Ιστορία της Ελλάδας του 20ού αιώνα* [History of Greece in the Twentieth Century], vol. II, part 1 (Athens, 2002), 215.

²⁰ Georges B. Dertilis, *Ιστορία του ελληνικού κράτους 1830-1920* [History of the Greek State 1830-1920], vol. I (Athens, 2005), 238-245.

²¹ Spyridon G. Ploumidis, *Έδαφος και μνήμη στα Βαλκάνια: Ο «γεωργικός εθνικισμός» στην Ελλάδα και στη Βουλγαρία (1927-46)* [Land and Memory in the Balkans: "Peasantist Nationalism" in Greece and Bulgaria (1927-46)] (Athens, 2011), 51-64.

²² John R. Lampe and Marvin R. Jackson, *Balkan Economic History, 1550-1950: From Imperial Borderlands to Developing Nations* (Bloomington, 1982), 331.

²³ Cf. John R. Lampe and Marvin R. Jackson, *Balkan Economic History, 1550-1950: From Imperial Borderlands to Developing Nations* (Bloomington, 1982), 334; *Annuaire Statistique de la Grèce 1931* (Athens, [1932]), 31-32; Dimitri Pentzopoulos, *The Balkan Exchange of Minorities and its Impact upon Greece* (Paris, 1962), 99, 105, 112.

continued well, yet to a lesser degree, into the 1930s. In 1928-40, the population of the ‘Capital complex’ (i.e. Athens and Piraeus) increased by 40.2%, jumping from 802,000 to 1,124,109.²⁴ Around 200,000 of these new urban settlers were internal migrants from rural areas.²⁵ About one-fourth of the annual natural growth of the population of the countryside (15.47‰ in 1931-35) was thus lost to the towns during this period.²⁶ In March 1930, the general secretary of the Ministry of National Economy formally identified the Greek problem of urbanism with the German-coined term *Landflucht* (namely in Greek: *αγροφυγία*), meaning the ‘desertion’ of peasants from the fields and their ‘flight’ into the towns.²⁷ (As a matter of fact, the *Landflucht* was a rather generic phenomenon that inflicted a wide range of societies in Europe –France, Italy, Germany, Norway, Finland, et. al.– at the time, except for Britain.²⁸)

The Agrarian Party of Greece, 1923-33

The need for the establishment of an agrarian party in Greece that would promote the ‘agrarian idea’ was proclaimed at the so-called First Panhellenic Agrarian Congress, which was held in Athens in January 1922. The Agrarian Party of Greece was eventually founded at the Second Agrarian Congress in March 1923. Representatives of the cooperative movement, agronomists and officials of the Ministry of Agriculture played a leading role in its establishment and manned its provisional 16-member administrative council. Chassiotis was elected leader of the party, whereas another three eminent agronomists (Chrysos Evelpidis, Ioannis Karamanos and Demetrius Margetis), along with syndicalists of the cooperative unions (such as Gregorios Bamias from Arta), became members of its administrative council.²⁹ Chassiotis, Evelpidis and Bamias were re-elected in the Party’s first presidium in January 1924 (with Chassiotis once more in the chair).³⁰ Ostensibly, a leading role in the new-fangled Agrarian Party was played by the agronomists, a new

²⁴ Nikolaos Chr. Settas, *Το δημογραφικόν και το κοινωνικο-οικονομικόν πρόβλημα της Ελλάδος* [The Demographic and Socio-Economic Problem of Greece] (Athens, 1964), 23.

²⁵ A. Delendas and I. Magioros, *Πως τίθεται το Ελληνικόν Πρόβλημα* [How the Greek Problem is Put Forward] (Athens, 1946), 30-31.

²⁶ A. Delendas and I. Magioros, *Πως τίθεται το Ελληνικόν Πρόβλημα* [How the Greek Problem is Put Forward] (Athens, 1946), 32.

²⁷ Petros E. Garoufalias, “Ο υπερπληθυσμός των πόλεων,” [The overpopulation of the towns] *Ergasia*, 8 (1 March 1930), 17; cf. Demetrius E. Kalitsunakis, “Αγρότης (ο),” [The Farmer] *Megali Helliniki Engyklopaideia*. vol. I (Athens, [1926]), 491.

²⁸ Frank B. Tipton and Robert Aldrich, *An Economic and Social History of Europe, 1890-1939* (Basingstoke, Hampshire and London, 1988), 241-242, 245; Gerold Ambrosius and William H. Hubbard, *A Social and Economic History of Twentieth-Century Europe* (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1989), 56-60.

²⁹ Konstantinos Mavreas, “Η πολιτική οργάνωση του αγροτικού χώρου στην Ελλάδα κατά την περίοδο 1922-1936,” [The Political Organization of the Rural Realm in Greece in the Period 1922-1936] in Theodoros Sakellaropoulos (ed.), *Νεοελληνική κοινωνία: Ιστορικές και κριτικές προσεγγίσεις* [Modern Greek Society: Historical and Critical Approaches] (Athens, 1993), 122; Gunnar Hering, *Τα πολιτικά κόμματα στην Ελλάδα 1821-1936* [The Political Parties in Greece, 1821-1936], vol. II (Athens, 2006), 1119-1120; Panagiotopoulos, *Αγροτικό Κόμμα Ελλάδας*, 50-53.

³⁰ Demetrius Pournaras, *Ιστορία του αγροτικού κινήματος εν Ελλάδι* [History of the Agrarian Movement in Greece] (Athens, 1931), 75-77; Panagiotopoulos, *Αγροτικό Κόμμα Ελλάδας*, 56-57.

emerging elite of technocrats.³¹ (Similarly, a populist circle of agronomists, sympathetic to the plight of the peasantry, were among the founders of the agrarian political movement in Bulgaria in 1899.³²)

The Party's overall aim, upon its foundation in 1923, was to promote the interests and the emancipation of the agrarian class.³³ It thus appealed to 'the farmers to send to the parliament, as their representatives, individuals that have a practical understanding of agricultural life; individuals who know the problems of the farmer; individuals that are flesh of the flesh of the farmers, i.e. who are agrarians'.³⁴ The Party accentuated its class identity by placing emphasis on the clash between its 'agrarian' candidates and the 'scribes' (*καλαμαράδες*) and the 'drones' (*κηφήνες*) of the cities'.³⁵ The party that represented the progressive ideology of agrarianism initially appeared to be distancing itself completely from the bourgeois establishment. Chrysos Evelpidis, an agronomist by trade and a founding member of the Agrarian Party, reveals that in September 1920 (in view of the approaching general elections) he and other agrarian leaders had been called upon to join up with the Socialist Workers' Party (the SEKE), which had just (in April 1920) become a member of the Third International (and in 1924 was renamed as the Communist Party of Greece, the KKE). The 'electoral programmeme' of SEKE called for 'the immediate and irrevocable occupation of the fields by the farmers who till them, without any indemnification of the landlords', as well as for 'the disbandment of all the old debts of the peasants toward usurers, monasteries and the state', appeared –in the agrarians' point of view– to be 'far too radical and not compatible with the conservative perceptions of the Greek people'. On the other hand, SEKE's agrarianist programmeme (its 'social programmeme on the economic, political and social issues of the countryside'), which stood for small private property (in particular, it stated that 'every peasant that tills his plot of land, by himself and with the help of his own family, has the right to keep it'), appeared to be 'too conservative' and opposite to the principles of the Comintern, and thus the agrarian–communist alliance was called off by the Communists.³⁶

The 'manifesto', the 'principles' and the programmeme of the Agrarian Party, which were initially published in *Agrotiki Simaia* (the Party's organ) on 1st December 1923, clearly addressed the agrarian class. The manifesto alerted 'our farmers brother of the 'several perfidious individuals' who for the past one hundred years were presenting themselves as their defenders; and called on the former to realize their strength and get politically organized, since the farmers represented '80% of Greece's population' and thus were 'the real power of the people', yet so far they had remained 'neglected and looked down upon' by the politicians. Along these lines, the first and foremost principle of the

³¹ Demetrius Sotiropoulos and Demetrius Panagiotopoulos, "Ειδικοί διανοούμενοι και θύλακες χειραφέτησης στο Μεσοπόλεμο: Μεταρρυθμιστές γεωπόννοι και μηχανικοί στην ύπαιθρο και στο άστυ," [Special intellectuals and enclaves of emancipation in the inter-war period] *Mnimon*, 29 (2008), 132-135.

³² John D. Bell, *Peasants in Power: Alexander Stamboliski and the Bulgarian Agrarian National Union, 1899-1923* (Princeton, 1977), 23, 27, 32.

³³ Gr. Bamias, "Αγροτικόν Κόμμα," [Agrarian Party] in *Megali Helliniki Engyklopaedia*, I (Athens, [1926]), 501.

³⁴ *Agrotiki Simaia*, 27, December 1, 1923, 1.

³⁵ *Agrotiki Simaia*, 27, December 1, 1923, 1.

³⁶ Chr. Evelpidis, *Σύστημα αγροτικής πολιτικής*, II, 8; cf. *Rizospastis*, 1126, September 20, 1920, 1; 1133, September 27, 1920, 1.

Party declared that ‘the political power must belong to the agrarian class, which is the most numerous, and contributes the most to the country’s economic life’. For that matter, the farmers were ‘entitled to assume, through the representatives of their class, the reins of the country’s government for the effective support of the agrarian interests in harmony, always, with the general interests of the nation and of the whole society’. In its third (out of the ten in toto) principle the founders of the Party asserted that ‘popular sovereignty must be real and absolute’; and it briefly referred to the ‘positivity’ of the individual liberties and the freedom of speech. Another principle called for the protection and the material elevation of the ‘working people and especially the farmers’ in the interests of the country’s prosperity and the increase of the national product. Subsequently, the Party manifested that ‘the land should belong to its tillers and the *çifliks* should be abolished’. Besides being radically principled on the core issue of the land, the Party was also critical towards the capitalists, who ‘should assist and not exploit the producers’, and called on the state ‘to intervene and regulate economic life’. Furthermore, the Party asked for ‘full and real local self-government (communal and provincial)’, so that ‘all issues of a local nature must be settled promptly by the interested regional organs’.³⁷ Much of these, as well as other agrarianist measures (such as the performance of extensive irrigation and drainage public works; the amelioration of transport and communications in the countryside; the provision of low-interest loans to cooperatives and individual farmers; the establishment of medical services in the countryside; the improvement of hygiene and housing conditions in the villages; the treatment of malaria and the fighting alcoholism among the peasants; the provision of electricity, fresh water as well as entertainment to the villagers; etc.) had been proposed and ‘systematically’ enlarged by Evelpidis earlier in 1923.³⁸

Subsequently, the Party’s programmeme specified the aforementioned suggested measures and addressed several other pertinent issues in a more analytical and practical manner. For instance, it indicated that the ‘decreed expropriation of all the large agricultural estates, including the meadows’, should be ‘direct, simultaneous and complete throughout the country’. It also demanded that the distribution of these estates to the landless peasantry and shepherds or refugees (or to those who did own adequate landed property) as well as the use of these estates should be handed to and handled by the cooperatives. It further petitioned the advancement of the infrastructure in agriculture: the construction of drainage, irrigation and anti-flooding works; the improvement of rural transport; the establishment of an Agricultural Bank; the strengthening of the cooperative organization of the farmers; the consolidation of agricultural security with the help of the agrarian police (*αγροφυλακή*); the undertaking of urgent and radical measures for the rural hygiene, and the establishment of public surgeries in the rural areas, etc. It further called for the ‘re-organization’ of the education and the ‘re-orientation of the educational system towards the contemporary social needs, especially in the rural areas, and towards the agrarian character of the country’. This practically meant ‘the transformation of several classical Gymnasiums into agricultural Lyceums and more generally the expansion of the teaching of applied sciences’, as well as ‘the establishment of agricultural and other specialized professional schools throughout the country’. The agrarians’ programmeme

³⁷ *Agrotiki Simaia*, 27, December 1, 1923, 2.

³⁸ Evelpidis, *Σύστημα αγροτικής πολιτικής*, 72-114.

touched also on 'the improvement of justice'; the abolishment of the capital punishment and of the imprisonment for debts towards the state; 'the reformation of taxation' with a view to increasing the exempts of the agricultural cooperatives and the abolishment of indirect duties on staples. In the end, the programme called for the reduction of the military service and for a foreign 'policy of peace'. Concerning the latter, the Agrarian Party stood for 'peaceful relations with all the countries and the solution of every difference through arbitration', with a view to establishing 'a sincere understanding and economic cooperation with the neighbor countries and for the attainment of permanent peace in the Near East [*Ανατολή*, which included Turkey and the Balkans]'.³⁹

The Agrarian Party based its electoral prospects on the ostensible reality that two thirds of Greece's population (c.60%) lived on agriculture, fishing and husbandry.⁴⁰ Its founders were fully aware that their party was certainly not the first or the only one that had a coherent agrarian programme. Evelpidis, who in July 1923 'more academically' elaborated on the Party's programme, admits that Venizelos' Liberal Party had already introduced 'a really new and complete system of agrarian policy', and that the Liberals' Law 1072 of 1917 (which decreed the expropriation of the large estates) was 'undoubtedly a steppingstone for a new agricultural progress in the country'. However, he claims that the actual implementation of these agrarianist measures was impeded by the 'bourgeois character' of the successive Liberal governments. More generally, in Evelpidis' view, the agrarian programmes of all the 'bourgeois parties' (Venizelist and Anti-Venizelist alike) were rather 'improvised', and their mere purpose was to 'steal' the farmers' vote; their promises were forgotten the very next day after the elections. The political schemes of the 'bourgeois parties' on agriculture focused on the increase of the agricultural production, and ignored the interests of the farmers as a social class, seeing them merely as 'tools of production'. The tillers of the land were thus being 'fooled and exploited'.⁴¹

The Agrarian Party of Greece drafted a remarkably extended agenda in 1924. From 22 to 29 May 1924 the so-called Third Panhellenic Agrarian Congress took place in Athens. The Congress was convened on the initiative of the Party and of the Panhellenic Confederation of Cooperatives, and was chaired by Chassiotis. The Congressmen highly praised Chassiotis for being 'among the first who sew the agrarian idea' and for 'indefatigably toiling for so many years over the awakening of the rural people and over the latter's ethical and material elevation'. (The Congress came under the aegis of Alexandros Papanastassiou, who at the time held the office of the Prime Minister. In his address to the participants, Papanastassiou exalted the social role of the peasantry.) The Congress' resolutions echoed the main ideological tenets of the Agrarian Party. The resolution on the 'agrarian issue' called for 'the absolute expropriation of the *çifliks* and any other farm that is cultivated under serfdom, and their allotment to the landless

³⁹ *Agrotiki Simaia* 27, 1 December 1923, 2. L. S. Stavrianos, *The Balkans since 1453* (New York, 1965 [1958]), 610 notes that "in international affairs, the peasant parties had marred pacifist leanings". The programme of the Agrarian Party of Greece was republished in the summer of 1925; see "Πρόγραμμα του Αγροτικού Κόμματος," [Programme of the Agrarian Party] *Ta Nea Geoponika*, 7-8, (July-August 1925), 93-95.

⁴⁰ Evelpidis, *Σύστημα αγροτικής πολιτικής*, 10; cf. Chrysos Evelpidis, *Οικονομική και κοινωνική ιστορία της Ελλάδος* [Economic and Social History of Greece] (Athens, 1950), 112.

⁴¹ Evelpidis, *Σύστημα αγροτικής πολιτικής*, 18-19.

peasantry or to the farmers without sufficient land'. The resolution on the 'settlement' (of the Asia Minor refugees and the native landless peasantry) openly pronounced the following radical agrarianist principle:

'The land must belong to those who cultivate it; those who do not contribute by means of personal labor to agricultural production shall have no property rights [on the land]. Therefore, land shall be expropriated on the above basis without taking into account whether the present owners of the land have or have not any other adequate property or fortune'.

This resolution determined also the priority in claims of agricultural land:

'Wherever there is scarcity of land, priority shall be given to the cultivators who have the most labor rights and those who have difficulties moving. Therefore, sharecroppers should have priority over capitalist farmers; married over unmarried [farmers]; native over refugee [settlers], etc.'

The congressmen clarified that the minimal size of the expropriated land allotted to landless peasants and refugees should, by any means, suffice the maintenance of 'an agricultural family, for it to live on its personal labor'.

Additionally, the resolutions touched on the 'self-governance' of the agricultural communities, and called for the broadening of the scope of the cooperative movement to the management of 'local public functions' with a view in attaining 'full self-governance and their emancipation from state intervention'. More particularly, they requested the expansion of the agricultural cooperatives' jurisdiction onto the election of local communal officials; onto 'communal security and agrarian policing'; onto primary education; public works for the benefit of the community; the levying of 'communal and other taxes', et. al. The resolutions also requested the provision of 'popular and agrarian education' by the state; more particularly, they asked for the re-orientation of the existing educational system away from its traditional classicist form, and toward the 'actual social needs and the agricultural character of the country'. That explicitly meant the transformation of the majority of provincial 'classical Gymnasiums' into 'practical Lyceums' (i.e. vocational High Schools); the establishment of several 'agrarian' and other special schools, wherein the farmers could receive training by professional agronomists; and more generally, the expansion of applied science within state education. Moreover, the resolutions demanded the establishment of a 'large Agricultural bank', and the abolition of the bureaucratic fixing of prices of agricultural products, which restricted the returns of the farmers.⁴²

In addition to issues related to the land reform and agricultural education, 'cooperatism' (*συνεργατισμός*) and the 'cooperatist idea' (*συνεταιριστική ιδέα*), a 'new system of social organization that would embrace all the phenomena of economic life', yet distinct from Soviet-type collectivism (*κολλεκτιβισμός*), also figured prominently on the agenda of the agrarians.⁴³ Evelpidis, as well as other agrarianist intellectuals, placed an emphasis on

⁴² Anonymous, "Το Γ' Πανελλήνιον Αγροτικών Συνέδριον," [The Third Panhellenic Agrarian Congress] *Ta Nea Geoponika*, 6-8, (June-August 1924), 49-61.

⁴³ D. Chatzigiannis, "Το ιδεολογικόν περιεχόμενον του ελληνικού αγροτικού κινήματος," [The ideological content of the Greek agrarian movement] *Koinoniki Ereuna*, 9, (December 1932), 5-6. The cooperative ideals were originally formulated in the nineteenth century by Robert Owen (1771-1858) and Charles Fourier (1772-1837). Cooperatism, which is founded on the belief that the means of production, distribution and exchange or consumption should be owned or controlled by cooperatives, essentially is a vision of an

sustaining the agricultural cooperatives, 'the free-will unions of farmers of the same vocation'. In Evelpidis' view, the cooperatives are ideally founded on the ethical principle of 'solidarity'; 'struggle against usury and profiteering; they render commerce more moral; and tend to restrict the dictatorship of the capitalists and the parasitism of the middlemen, who exploit the work of the farmers'. Yet, as a matter of fact, the cooperative movement in Greece was lagging far behind its counterpart in the neighboring Bulgaria. Within 1922, Stambolijski's government doubled the number of the hence existing 1,862 cooperatives, whereas in Greece the official score of the agricultural cooperatives at the end of 1922 only reached 1,816. And while the majority of the Bulgarian cooperatives belonged to 'producers', their Greek counterparts were, in their great majority (1,345), credit institutions, with only a slight minority (of 72) dealing with the actual production. Evelpidis accordingly admitted that 'a great part of the founded cooperatives did not advance an inch beyond the signing of their statute', and 'unfortunately, the majority of the cooperatives in Greece forgot their long-term general agendas, such as the advancement of agriculture and the sustenance of cooperative solidarity, and were overwhelmed by the petits-traders' spirit and the craving for profit'.⁴⁴ Demetrius Pournaras, a prominent left-wing agrarian journalist and publicist, regrettably acknowledged in 1931 that 'in Greece most of the cooperatives, except for a small score of them, were not founded in order to serve a more general agenda, and their actions were solely restricted to the drafting of their statute'. Pournaras underlined that 'the cooperative spirit and the pure cooperative idea (the cooperatives to become the bulwarks of the interests of the farming people and the latter's political and economic emancipation) did not flourish' in Greece, and consequently many cooperatives were practically 'completely dead'. The deplorable situation of the cooperative movement in Greece had resulted in the Agrarian Party 'walking slowly or even backwards, and not being in a position to develop the necessary political propaganda among the farmers'.⁴⁵ Gregorios Bamias, a cooperative syndicalist who had become head of the Athens branch of the Agrarian Party, acknowledged in 1933 that there was 'very little or not at all cooperative conscience' in Greece, and reasoned that cooperatism should not yet be included in the agenda (the 'fundamental programme') of the Party.⁴⁶

Cooperatism was not the only liability to the Party; ideological and personal differences and clashes caused a deeper rift among its ranks. Thus, despite its fruitful reports and profuse discussions, resolutions and suggestions, the Third Panhellenic Agrarian Congress did not forge unity between its members, and the first break-up of the Agrarian Party followed shortly after, in the summer of 1924. Chassiotis seceded along with his followers and established the National Agrarian Party, while Evelpidis and Bamias retained, for a short time, the control of the master Party and its mouthpiece, *Agrotiki Simaia* [Agrarian

alternative society to both capitalism and socialism; it is a mode of ownership of the means of production that is both compatible with (indeed, a form of) private property, and at the same time not dependent on any division between capitalist and laborer; see Roger Scruton, *A Dictionary of Political Thought* (London, 1996), 109-110; Iain McLean (ed.), *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Politics* (Oxford and New York, 1996), 111-112.

⁴⁴ Evelpidis, *Σύστημα αγροτικής πολιτικής*, 125-126, 129-130, 133-135, 138.

⁴⁵ Demetrius Pournaras, *Ιστορία του αγροτικού κινήματος εν Ελλάδι*, 82-83, 86-88; Μανρεάς, "Η πολιτική οργάνωση του αγροτικού χώρου στην Ελλάδα κατά την περίοδο 1922-1936", 126.

⁴⁶ Gr. Bamias, "Αι δύο τάσεις του Αγροτικού Κόμματος," [The two Tendencies of the Agrarian Party] *Koinoniki Ereuna*, 10, (January 1933), 22.

Flag, issued in the years 1923-1926]. On 6 December 1925, the Panhellenic Agrarian Radical Party was established in Trikkala (a major town in Thessaly) under the leadership of Demetrius Chatzigiannis. Chatzigiannis' party, which practically replaced the stump Agrarian Party, by and large represented the new smallholders of Thessaly and of the New Lands (i.e. of the newly annexed northern provinces of Epirus, Macedonia and Thrace), who had acquired their plots thanks to the land reform of 1917 and therefore had established Venizelist and republican loyalties. On the other hand, Chassiotis' offshoot mostly expressed the interests of the yeomen of Old (i.e. pre-1912) Greece and more particularly of the Peloponnese, who had settled on their properties as a result of the 1871 land reform and were distinguished for their most conservative and royalist leanings. Nevertheless, the Panhellenic Agrarian Radical Party was no more radical than the master Party: Bamias clarified that the party was acting 'within the framework of the existing social and economic regime', and was absolutely rejecting the idea of 'the dictatorship of the agrarian class, which had been applied by the Bulgarian Agrarian Party' (in 1919-23). Nor does Chatzigiannis claim, in his memoirs, any differently. The pronounced 'promotion of agrarian interests', as well as 'the awakening and the emancipation of the agrarian class', which figured in the newly-founded party's programme, solely meant (in vague and unclarified terms) 'the movement of the weight center of popular sovereignty from the cities to the rural areas'.⁴⁷

In 1929, renewed efforts were made for a unified Agrarian Party. For this purpose, the so-styled First Panhellenic Unitarian Agrarian Congress was convened in Salonica in May. The Party headquarters came to be 'provisionally' stationed in Salonica, and Chatzigiannis obtained the leading position of the secretary-general in its 'executive committee'. (The transfer of the Party's administrative centre to Salonica reflected the prevalent estimation that support for agrarianism came mostly from the stratum of new smallholders of Thessaly and northern Greece.⁴⁸) Thereupon, the Party assumed a more strict class character, and placed forward pretensions for the assumption of the political power by the agrarian class 'through the parliamentary way'. Left-wing agrarian (such as Kostas Gavrielidis) as well as former Communists (such as Apostolos Pagoutsos) came to hold a

⁴⁷ Gr. Bamias, "Αγροτικόν Κόμμα," [Agrarian Party], *Megali Helliniki Engyklopaedia*, I (Athens, [1926]), 501; D. Pourmaras, *Ιστορία του αγροτικού κινήματος*, 88; Constantine Trachanas, "The Agrarian Political Party of Greece: Politics and Peasants, 1922-1936," unpublished PhD thesis, University of Amsterdam 1989, 176; Mavreas, "Η πολιτική οργάνωση του αγροτικού χώρου στην Ελλάδα κατά την περίοδο 1922-1936", 125; Panagiotopoulos, *Αγροτικό Κόμμα Ελλάδος*, 58-60; Ioulia Kandila (ed.), *Αναμνήσεις Δημητρίου Χατζηγιάννη 1888-1973* [Demetrius Chatzigiannis "Memoirs" 1888-1973] (Larissa, 2011), 144-146, 323. The stratum of old smallholders, namely yeomen (*νοικοκυραίοι*), which dated back to the Ottoman times, was the product of the distribution of the "national lands" –i.e. the previously Turkish properties taken over by the independent Greek state– in 1871; and owed its existence and hence its allegiance to the nineteenth-century monarchical state bourgeoisie. On the other hand, the bulk of the new smallholders came to be the most solid and numerous base of support for Venizelism and the Republic (established in 1924), the twin agents of their emergence; cf. Kostas Vergopoulos, *Το αγροτικό ζήτημα στην Ελλάδα: Το πρόβλημα της κοινωνικής ενσωμάτωσης της γεωργίας* [The Agrarian Problem in Greece: The Issue of the Social Integration of Agriculture] (Athens, 1975), 153; George Th. Mavrogordatos, *Stillborn Republic: Social Coalitions and Party Strategies in Greece, 1922-1936*, (Berkeley, 1983), 155-157, 161. For Stambolinsky's agrarian regime in Bulgaria, see above, fn. 6.

⁴⁸ Mavrogordatos, *Stillborn Republic*, 172; Mavreas, "Η πολιτική οργάνωση του αγροτικού χώρου στην Ελλάδα κατά την περίοδο 1922-1936", 128, 130, 139-140.

strong position in the re-established Party. Overall, the Unitarian Congress of 1929 signified a substantial leftist and anti-capitalist turn of the Party. Reasonably, this overtly radical turn to the Left appealed more to the representatives of Thessaly and the New Lands, and failed to win the support of Chassiotis and other conservative cadres (such as the former MP for Florina Philippos Dragoumis, who politically originated from the anti-Venizelist Popular Party); the latter were reportedly horrified by their colleagues' random appeals to 'people's democracy' and their anti-capitalist overtones. Nevertheless, the reshuffled Party overtly rejected, in its new statute and programme (that was completed and published in *Koinoniki Ereuna* in August 1932), communism and the nationalization or the collectivization of the land; and established 'small property' as the basis of the envisaged socio-economic system. Its radicalism did not step far beyond the principle that 'the land should belong to the farmers who till it', and the standing appeal for the absolute expropriation of all the remaining large estates (*çifliks*). Article 1 of the statute repeated that 'the political power should be in the hands of the agrarian class, which constitutes the biggest part of the laboring people and contributes the most to the economic life of the country'; it advocated the 'real and absolute people's sovereignty'; and stated that, regarding the form of government, the Party was 'inclined toward people's democracy'. It also put forward the claim that 'production and demand should be organized on a cooperative basis'. Yet, it made clear that the assumption of the political power by the Agrarian Party 'for the implementation of its programme would only be sought 'through the parliamentary way'. The administration of the unified Party was organized on a maximal collective and impersonal manner: the administrative and executive jurisdictions passed into the hands of the Party Congress; a 20 – member General Council; and the Executive Committee. The party officers were elected for a short, two-year term.⁴⁹

A new schism within the Party came underway at its Second Unitarian Congress in Salonica on 17 December 1930. This was prompted by the formal attempts of three Liberal politicians to join the Party and lay claims for its leadership: they were Apostolos Alexandris, Alexandros Mylonas and Ioannis Sophianopoulos, all former officials in successive Liberal Party governments (for instance, Alexandris was Minister of Agriculture in 1930-31; Mylonas had been appointed Secretary-General in the same Ministry in 1917-20, whereas Sophianopoulos had served as Secretary-General in the Ministry of National Economy in 1917) as well as admittedly close (political) 'friends' of El. Venizelos. The move of these three bourgeois (and lawyers in their professional life) politicians was interpreted (besides their personal ambitions) later (in the wake of the elections of March 1933) as an orchestrated attempt to draw the Party away from its left-wing trends, and to pave the way for its eventual incorporation into the right-wing Venizelist camp.⁵⁰

⁴⁹ Trachanas, "The Agrarian Political Party of Greece", 181-187; Mavreas, "Η πολιτική οργάνωση του αγροτικού χώρου στην Ελλάδα κατά την περίοδο 1922-1936", 129; Hering, *Τα πολιτικά κόμματα στην Ελλάδα 1821-1936*, 1173; Panagiotopoulos, *Αγροτικό Κόμμα Ελλάδος*, 62-65. See also *Koinoniki Ereuna*, 4 (June 1932): 1; August 6, 1932, 45-48; Chatzigiannis, "Το ιδεολογικόν περιεχόμενον του ελληνικού αγροτικού κινήματος", 5-6.

⁵⁰ D. Chatzigiannis, "Ποία η σημερινή θέση του αγροτικού μας κινήματος," [Which is the present position of our agrarian movement] *Koinoniki Ereuna*, 3 (April 1933): 4; Mavreas, "Η πολιτική οργάνωση του αγροτικού χώρου στην Ελλάδα κατά την περίοδο 1922-1936", 131-132; Panagiotopoulos, *Αγροτικό Κόμμα Ελλάδος*, 67-68.

The final and irreversible break-up came along in November 1932, when the Salonica-based Executive Committee along with Sophianopoulos (who in September had been elected MP for Serres on the Party's ticket) seceded from the party; and more completely in the wake of the March 1933 parliamentary elections. The new and final division of 1933 was mainly caused by the severe polarization of the Greek body politic between the two opposing camps of Venizelists and Anti-Venizelists. In effect, the Agrarian Party broke up into three parts through difference in opinion over the question of alignment with the two major political camps. Personal ambitions played also a decisive role in this partition. The three break-away groups were largely personified by: Mylonas' group aligned itself with the National Alliance, i.e. the coalition centred on Venizelos' Liberal Party. Chatzigiannis' group allied with the United Opposition, which coiled round the conservative Popular Party. On his part, Sophianopoulos followed the middle route, and succeeded in gathering around him some left-wingers of the Agrarian Party.⁵¹ Pournaras' and others' desperate calls to all the agrarian leaders, 'leftist and rightist alike' (Sophianopoulos, Mylonas, Chatzigiannis, Gavrielidis, Rentis, etc.), to set aside their 'personal aspirations' and 'individual interests', and to find 'a way for the restoration of the unity of the agrarian movement'⁵² were to no avail. Mylonas alleged in April 1933 that the 'unification of the similar or parental political groups or factions' was impeded by 'certain untreatable personal ambitions' of his 'ideologically akin' antagonists.⁵³ A columnist of *Koinoniki Ereuna* (the Agrarian Party's semi-official periodical organ) attributed this 'deplorable plight of Agrarianism' to 'personal passions', 'spites' and 'squabbles'; 'egoism'; and 'petty ambitions'.⁵⁴

Besides the polarization of Greek politics and the personal desires, ideological preferences were also a third reason behind the Party's successive break-ups. In fact, ideological heterogeneity and dissension marred the Agrarian Party of Greece right from its establishment. Evelpidis noted in 1923 that the composition of the Second Agrarian Congress was already characterized by 'evident social heterogeneity'. Despite their overall consensus on the 'general idea', meaning the representation of 'the interests of the agrarian class' and the need for 'a more integral political organization of the farmers', the Congressmen were actually divided into 'conservatives', 'radicals' and 'socialists'. Additionally, these ideological divisions cut across geographical affiliations: the Peloponnese representatives were by and large 'conservative', whereas the other two ideological categories were identified with the representatives from Thessaly and

⁵¹ Anonymous, "Το Αγροτικόν Κόμμα ανασυγκροτείται εν Αθήναις," [The Agrarian Party is Restructured in Athens] *Koinoniki Ereuna*, 8 (November 1932): 16; Trachanas, "The Agrarian Political Party of Greece", 206-210; Mavreas, "Η πολιτική οργάνωση του αγροτικού χώρου στην Ελλάδα κατά την περίοδο 1922-1936", 139-140; Hering, *Τα πολιτικά κόμματα στην Ελλάδα 1821-1936*, 1185-1186; Panagiotopoulos, *Αγροτικό Κόμμα Ελλάδος*, 79-80; Kandila (ed.), *Αναμνήσεις Δημητρίου Χατζηγιάννη 1888-1973*, 171.

⁵² D. Pournaras, "Η αναζωογόνησις των κοινοτήτων αποτελεί καθήκον του αριστερισμού," [The revitalization of the communities is a duty of Leftism] *Koinoniki Ereuna*, 14 (May 1933): 1.

⁵³ ΑΙ. Κ. Μυλωνάς, 'Που προσκόπτει η ενοποίησίς μας' [What impedes our unification], *Koinoniki Ereuna*, 14, May 1933, p. 43; G. Giakoumogiannakis, "Η ενότης του αγροτικού κινήματος και η ευθύνη των ηγετικών στελεχών του," [The Unity of the Agrarian Movement and the Responsibility of its Leading Cadres] *Koinoniki Ereuna*, 14 (May 1933): 67.

⁵⁴ Savvas Kantartzis, "Ίδου που κατηντήσατε το Αγροτικόν Κόμμα της Ελλάδος," [This is the Dreadful Situation you Brought the Agrarian Party into] *Koinoniki Ereuna*, 14 (May 1933): 66.

Macedonia respectively.⁵⁵ In 1932, Kostas Gavrielidis, a left-wing agrarian with communist leanings, censured the agrarian movement and its periodical organ for their 'theoretical anarchy', and identified their 'social content' as a 'mixture of different conflicting ideas' that caused real 'confusion'.⁵⁶ Chatzigiannis attributed the fraction of November 1932 to the 'disorderly' state of the Party's ideology and organization.⁵⁷ For his part, Pournaras confirmed that within the Agrarian Party there was no ideological 'homogeneity' and not 'one and the same programme nor a single theoretical line' existed therein. Instead, there were several 'agrarian and socialist nuances'. From his perspective, Pournaras identified three 'main nuances' within the Agrarian Party: a. the 'old agrarians', such as Chatzigiannis, who had indoctrinated farmers into class politics and had 'read socialism', yet he did not 'fully agree that the Agrarian Party should acquire a socialist character'; b. the 'agro-socialists', such as Gavrielidis and Pournaras himself, who belonged to the new generation of 'young and full of energy' agrarianist politicians, and were destined to play a 'very important' role in the agrarian movement and lead it toward 'certain left-wing and class directions'; c. the 'agrarians of Old Greece', such as Evelpidis, Bamias and Constantine Rentis (a former Foreign Minister), who 'stroved to disseminate, in a moderate form, the agrarian idea to the popular masses of the southern provinces' of the country. Pournaras rightly commented that the yeomen of southern Greece were 'less leftist' than the farmers of Thessaly, Macedonia and Thrace, whereas 'the farming and more generally the laboring populations of northern Greece' were more in sympathy with the 'agro-socialists'. Therefore, the 'agrarians of Old Greece' were 'the Right of Greek agrarianism'; Chatzigiannis's faction was 'ideologically' the political 'Centre'; and the 'agro-socialists' constituted 'the Left' of Greece's agrarian movement.⁵⁸ In addition to the founders' socio-ideological 'dissimilarity', Pournaras commented also in 1931 on 'the lack of a farmer conscience' among the greatest part of the Party's founders. He rebuked the latter as 'pseudo-agrarians who are deprived of the slightest trace of farmer conscience, being in reality mere exploiters of the confidence and the naïve credulity of the popular masses'. He further accused these 'traders of agrarianism' of 'trafficking the most sacred interests of the farmers', as well as of being 'authorized by the old bankrupt parties to break apart the newly began political struggle of the farming people and to cause disappointment amongst its ranks'.⁵⁹ For his part, Bamias identified in early 1933 two general 'tendencies' within the Agrarian Party: a. the 'socialist Left'; and b. the 'radical socialist-like Right'. Despite the 'existing antitheses', Bamias believed that the coexistence of the two 'tendencies' within the Party was 'not impossible'.⁶⁰ History though proved Bamias wrong about the potential of this coexistence.

⁵⁵ Evelpidis, *Σύστημα αγροτικής πολιτικής*, 9; Mavreas, "Η πολιτική οργάνωση του αγροτικού χώρου στην Ελλάδα κατά την περίοδο 1922-1936", 135.

⁵⁶ Kostas Gavrielidis, "Μία συζήτηση διά τας θεωρητικές κατευθύνσεις μας," [A Discussion on Our Theoretical Course] *Koinoniki Ereuna*, 4 (June 1932): 5-6.

⁵⁷ Chatzigiannis, "Το ιδεολογικόν περιεχόμενον του ελληνικού αγροτικού κινήματος", 5.

⁵⁸ D. Pournaras, "Ο αγροτισμός, ο σοσιαλισμός και το κόμμα: Ποία η ενιαία ιδεολογική γραμμή," [Agrarianism, Socialism and the Party: Which is the Common Ideological Line] *Koinoniki Ereuna*, 4 (June 1932): 6-8.

⁵⁹ D. Pournaras, *Ιστορία του αγροτικού κινήματος*, 80-81.

⁶⁰ Gr. Bamias, "Αι δύο τάσεις του Αγροτικού Κόμματος," [The Two Tendencies of the Agrarian Party], *Koinoniki Ereuna*, 10, (January 1933): 22.

The right-wing agrarians

The programme of Chassiotis' National Agrarian Party largely copied the programme and followed the main principles of the master party: it equally petitioned for the 'direct, simultaneous and complete decreed expropriation of all the large agricultural estates', and for an active role of the agricultural cooperatives in the distribution of the expropriated land. Its main principal was that 'the land must belong to its tillers, and the *çifliks* must be abolished'. Politically, it was similarly principled on 'the real and absolute popular sovereignty', and called for 'full and real self-government (communal and provincial)' of the farming people. It further maintained that 'the political power should belong to the agrarian class', on the grounds that the latter 'is numerically superior' to the other social classes and it 'contributes the most to the economic life' of the country; yet, it clarified that the representatives of the farmers, whenever they assumed power, they would 'always harmonize the agrarian interests with the general interests of the nation and the whole society'. The National Agrarian Party's programme differed from its left-wing counterparts in the role that it attributed to the (bourgeois) state: it clearly stated that 'the State must be the father for all the social classes and not a tool of pressure, exploitation and one-sided protection of individual or party interests'. In its view, the state should intervene to regulate economic life and prevent the capitalists from exploiting the producers. To this end, it stressed the need for 'the protection and elevation of the laboring and especially the farming people', and further opined that the fiscal policies of the state should serve the purpose of a 'fairer distribution of wealth'. This clear and emphasized reference to the role of the state in agriculture was absent from the programmes and principles of the left-wing agrarian groups and parties; instead of the bourgeois state and governments, the left-wingers of agrarian politics attributed the leading role in the agrarian economy to the agricultural cooperatives and to the local rural communities (see below). The programme of the National Agrarian Party, in addition to its theoretical principles and its suggested practical measures on the amelioration of agriculture, touched upon several other major issues, such as tax reforms, the re-organization of public education, the improvement of justice, the expansion of welfare, etc.. Regarding foreign policy, Chassiotis' party stood for –alongside with its master party– 'a policy of peace' and 'peaceful relations with all the countries', especially with those in the Near East, with a view in establishing a 'permanent peace' and 'economic cooperation' there; it further urged that 'all differences should be solved through arbitration', and that 'mutual obligations, by treaty, for the restriction of armaments and other war expenditures, should be undertaken' by all states.⁶¹

In fact, the divergent visions over the role of the bourgeois state (in the agricultural economy; in the cooperative movement; in the advancement of the agrarian class; etc.) was a crucial political difference between the right- and the left-wing agrarians.⁶² The underlying idea of Evelpidis' suggestions (back in 1923) was the intervention of the organized state in the countryside, wherein the only presence of the Polity so far was the

⁶¹ "Το Εθνικόν Αγροτικόν Κόμμα της Ελλάδος: Αρχαί – Πρόγραμμα – Οργάνωσις," [The National Agrarian Party of Greece: Principles – Programme – Organization] *Ta Nea Geoponika*, 7-9 (July-September 1926): 86-88.

⁶² Μανρεάς, "Η πολιτική οργάνωση του αγροτικού χώρου στην Ελλάδα κατά την περίοδο 1922-1936", 127, 135.

gendarme and the tax-collector; and the 'civilized society' to more closely draw its attention to the villages. Along these loyalist to the bourgeois establishment lines, Evelpidis had pointed out that the scope of the Agrarian Party should reach as far as a 'social reform',⁶³ and therefore not a revolution or the overthrow of the existing socio-political order. Mylonas' Agrarian Democratic Party, which was established in 1934, i.e. after the final rift of March 1933, stated in its programme that it was promoting the interests of the 'large class of farmers, whose interests have to be given priority over the interests of other groups or individuals'. This promotion would best be served by state intervention in the economy. The intervention of the state would not only increase the national income, but also secure a more just redistribution of public wealth so as to reduce poverty and unemployment and eventually obliterate the exploitation of the working people. Mylonas (initially, in 1908-10, a member of Papanastassiou's left-wing Sociological Society) placed a great emphasis on the 'social mission' of the (bourgeois) state for attaining a 'real Democracy' (i.e. equality) within the economy and the society. Nevertheless, Mylonas clarified that his party was 'democratic' in the sense that it vehemently opposed 'any form of authoritarianism, whether dictatorial, fascist or communist, or a monarchical imposition'. It stood for a balanced and 'healthy' parliamentarism, free of the high-handed intervention of political parties and other strong poles of power; for that reason it suggested the curtailment of the jurisdictions of the President of the Republic and of the Senate. It also asked for the transfer of more power to the local government so that elected (and not appointed by the central government) local councils would henceforward manage more sufficiently local issues, yet 'under the general instructions of the state'. In that case, a reduction in the numbers of the Members of Parliament would be possible. Regarding the Senate (est. 1929 and disbanded in 1935), the Agrarian Democratic Party proposed the expansion of 'professional representation', which was expected to practically hand over the majority within this legislative body to the agrarian class; 'professional representation' (a principle of 'consensual-licensed' corporatism) was thus more preferable (in Mylonas' view) to general senatorial elections, for the farmers were easily manipulated by politicians that were alien to their profession.⁶⁴

The programme of the Agrarian Democratic Party included also suggestions for all the sectors of the central government (the Ministries of Agriculture, National Economy, Finance, Foreign Affairs, National Defence, Education, Justice, Home Affairs, Transport, etc.). As expected, the party's points on agriculture appeared first and foremost on its agenda. More particularly, Mylonas' party promised 'the systematic increase and improvement of agricultural and stock-breeding production' (with attention to its quality, productivity and cost); that special importance would be given to the export products (such as tobacco, raisins, olive oil, wine, etc.) and the expansion of the domestic production of cereals. Thereafter, the programme emphasized the need for the social 'integration of the function of agricultural cooperatives, and their transformation into fully self-managed units, without any further interference from the state or the Agricultural Bank'. At the same time, Mylonas' party proposed the financial strengthening of the Agricultural Bank (est. 1929) and its safeguarding from any political party interference. Furthermore, it made

⁶³ Evelpidis, *Σύστημα αγροτικής πολιτικής*, 19, 114.

⁶⁴ "Το πρόγραμμα του Αγροτικού Δημοκρατικού Κόμματος," [The Programme of the Agrarian Democratic Party], *Ergasia*, 231, June 3, 1934, 699; cf. Hering, *Τα πολιτικά κόμματα στην Ελλάδα 1821-1936*, 846 (fn. 57).

promises for a ‘radical settlement’ of agricultural debts, especially those toward private institutions or individuals, with a general reduction of the interest and the crossing-out of the refugee settlement debts. Mylonas also renewed therein the master party’s call for the expansion of public works for the improvement of the infrastructure in agriculture (in irrigation, draining, forest hydraulics, etc.). Moreover, the party’s programme called for a more advanced forest management; the completion of the land reform and the expropriation of the remaining large estates (such as the Kopais plain); the institution and application of measures for the protection of the small farmer property, such as the regrouping of lands into viable properties, and the legal definition of the ‘minimal land tenure’ that should not be confiscated or further divided.⁶⁵

Despite its emphasis on agricultural issues, Mylonas’ party was not a mere or exclusively agrarian class party. About half of its programme referred to various other major issues of politics and economics. In that sense, the Agrarian Democratic Party was closer to the mainstream established ruling parties. For instance, it expressed its support for the protective measures on native industry (such as the tariff barriers); the clearing agreements in inter-state commerce; the state control on banks, loans and savings, and appealed for a more rigorous state intervention for the benefit of the ‘working classes (workers, farmers, employees, professionals)’, stressing the matter of social security and the expansion of benefits on accidents, unemployment, illness and disability. To the same end, it called for the diminution of working hours, ‘by agreement with the other countries’, and the improvement of working conditions and pays. In financial matters, it demanded the ‘gradual’ increase of direct income taxes on the rich and the fiscal relief of the poor, as well as the reduction of indirect taxes on staples. On education, Mylonas’ plan of action included the full use of the *demotic* (vernacular) language in the primary schools ‘without any idioms’, and the upgrading of the education in peripheral rural areas, along with the provision of free textbooks and the organization of soup kitchens for the indigent students. It also referred to the need of adjusting public general education to ‘the agrarian character of the country’, suggesting the introduction of more technical and practical teachings and the establishment of ‘practical farming schools’. Last but not least, the Agrarian Democratic Party stood for a pacifist and ‘conservative’ foreign policy. In particular, it called for ‘political and economic rapprochement with all those states around the world, and especially in the Balkans, that are reciprocally depended on Greece, for the consolidation of Peace and economic communication in the common interest’. The means for this worldwide rapprochement, envisaged in Mylonas’ party programme, were purely economic: it suggested the redistribution of the production on an international level ‘according to the natural and economic conditions of each country’, and the re-adjustment of the scale of production to the needs of consumption; thus, the way would be paved for

⁶⁵ “Το πρόγραμμα του Αγροτικού Δημοκρατικού Κόμματος”, 699-700. For the meaning of “consensual-licensed” corporatism, see Peter J. Williamson, *Varieties of Corporatism: A Conceptual Discussion* (Cambridge, 1985), 7, 11. The corporatist principle of “professional representation” practically meant that eighteen out of the 120 members of the Greek Senate were representatives of professional associations (such as the Chambers of Commerce and Industry, the Chambers of Agriculture, the Technical Chamber, the Union of Greek Ship-owners, et al.); see Nikos K. Alivizatos, *Το Σύνταγμα και οι εχθροί του στη νεοελληνική ιστορία, 1800-2010* [The Constitution and its Enemies in Modern Greek History, 1800-2010] (Athens, 2011), 265.

‘a future, most broad, global political and economic federation between states that are inspired by the same social principles’.⁶⁶

Table 1 *Agrarian parties in interwar Greece, 1923-36*⁶⁷

Title	Leader(s)	Years
Agrarian Party of Greece	Spyridon Chassiotis (1923-24); Gregorios Bamias (1924-25)	1923-25
National Agrarian Party of Greece	Spyridon Chassiotis	1925-29
Agrarian Radical Party of Greece	Demetrius Chatzigiannis	1925-29
Agrarian Party of Greece (Unitarian)	Demetrius Chatzigiannis (1929-32); Athanassios Tanoulas (1932-33)	1929-33
Agrarian Party of Greece	Ioannis Sophianopoulos	1933-36
Agrarian Party of Greece	Demetrius Chatzigiannis	1933-36
Agrarian Democratic Party of Greece	Alexandros Mylonas	1934-36
Agrarian and Workers’ Party of Greece	Alexandros Papanastassiou	1928-36

The left-wing agrarians

Georgi M. (‘Gemeto’) Dimitrov, the Bulgarian leader of the ‘Pladne’ left-wing agrarian group, defined agrarianism in the following terms:

‘In its fundamental principles, Agrarianism tends to be the ideology of political and economic democracy based on the idea of cooperative syndicalism. It is an ideology of social justice which repudiates the communist idea of the dictatorship of the proletariat and upholds that of the private and cooperative ownership of the means of production and its results for the laboring classes’.⁶⁸

In Greece, the ideological backdrop of left-of-the-centre agrarianism was defined as ‘agrarian socialism’. Aristotle Sideris, an agrarian-minded economist who in 1915 was elected MP for Salonica on a socialist ticket and in the interwar years became a supporter of Papanastassiou, clarified that ‘agrarian socialism’ drew on Karl Kautsky’s teachings on

⁶⁶ “Το πρόγραμμα του Αγροτικού Δημοκρατικού Κόμματος”, 700-701. The programme of the Agrarian Democratic Party was also published in *Koinoniki Ereuna*, 26, (May-June 1934): 399-402.

⁶⁷ Constantine Trachanas, ‘The Agrarian Political Party of Greece: Politics and Peasants, 1922-1936’, unpublished PhD thesis, University of Amsterdam 1989, 172-214; Konstantinos Mavreas, ‘Η πολιτική οργάνωση του αγροτικού χώρου στην Ελλάδα κατά την περίοδο 1922-1936’ [The political organization of the rural realm in Greece in the period 1922-1936], in *Νεοελληνική κοινωνία: Ιστορικές και κριτικές προσεγγίσεις* [Modern Greek Society: Historical and Critical Approaches] Theodoros Sakellariopoulos (ed.) (Athens, 1993), p. 122-143; Demetrius G. Panagiotopoulos, *Αγροτικό Κόμμα Ελλάδος: Όψεις του αγροτικού κινήματος στην Ελλάδα* [Agrarian Party of Greece: Aspects of the agrarian movement in Greece], (Athens, 2010), 50-83; I Iouliia Kandila (ed.), *Αναμνήσεις Δημητρίου Χατζηγιάννη 1888-1973* [Demetrius Chatzigiannis’ Memoirs, 1888-1973] (Larissa 2011), 168-169, 325.

⁶⁸ George M. Dimitrov, “Agrarianism,” in: Feliks Gross (ed.), *European Ideologies: A Survey of 20th Century Political Ideas* (New York, [1948]), 396.

the agrarian question and the socialization of agriculture.⁶⁹ For his part, Chatzigiannis identified Kautsky's *La question agraire: étude sur les tendances de l'agriculture moderne* (Paris 1900) and Charles Gide's *La coopération: conférences de propagande* (Paris 1922) as the sources of his political indoctrination.⁷⁰

Koinoniki Ereuna, the monthly mouthpiece of the left-wing of the Agrarian Party (that all-in-all published 28 issues between March 1932 and August 1934), a self-styled 'theoretical organ of agrarianism and socialism', identified 'capitalism', 'plutocracy' and the 'depraved faction of the bankrupt old party organizations' as its 'enemies'. In March 1932, it drew a clear divisive line between the 'left-wing' Agrarian Party and the 'bourgeois' (Venizelist) government as well as the 'bourgeois opposition parties'. Its editor-in-chief (a certain Dimos Prasinos) explained that its articles would 'shed more light on the political, social and economic issues of the country', having the 'Marxist views' as the instance for their opinions. He clarified that the 'overall left-wing ideas and tendencies' of his periodical were particularly connected with the 'agrarian movement' and the 'ideal of awakening and emancipating the Slaves of the Land'; these ideas were viewed from a 'broader perception', within the wider realm of 'socialism', yet not of 'communism'.⁷¹ Pournaras, a regular columnist of the periodical, raged, in the very first issue, against 'capitalism, this great exploiter of the wealth of the nations' and the 'somewhat young monster of Greek plutocracy'; and, drawing on the global economic crisis, the 'shocking increase in the number of unemployed', the 'anarchic outburst of popular disaffection and indignation' and the 'general overturn of the so far existing economic conditions and situations', he predicted the 'probable end of the age of the capital'. Furthermore, he reprimanded the 'old parties' for past disasters (such as first and foremost the Asia Minor Catastrophe of 1922 and the uprooting of over one million Orthodox from Turkey) and for being primarily responsible for the 'current indescribable crisis'; yet he concentrated his criticism on Venizelos and his Liberal Party, in their capacity as the mainstream political representatives of the entrepreneurial bourgeoisie (of the 'great capital' and the 'plutocracy'), for plunging, through their 'insane policy', the 'people' ('the farmers, the workers, the professionals, the strugglers of every sort') into 'adversity, poverty, hunger and inability of production or consumption'. Pournaras identified the re-established (in 1929) Agrarian Party as the 'natural leader and main tool of the anti-capitalist struggles of the laboring population of the country'. The (unitarian) Agrarian Party, inspired by a 'purely socialist cum agrarian ideology, fully adapted to the native Greek reality and the present conditions', was destined to attract into its ranks 'all the left-wing elements of the country, which were educated in and infused, by and large, with Marxism'. Pournaras noted that the party of agrarianism substantially differed from the Communist Party in that it sought the 'ideal of social justice' 'gradually', 'through a peaceful revolution' and 'not

⁶⁹ A. D. Sideris, "Αγροτικός σοσιαλισμός," [Agrarian Socialism], *Megali Helliniki Engyklopaideia*, I (Athens [1926]), 502-503.

⁷⁰ D. Chatzigiannis, "Το ιδεολογικόν περιεχόμενον του ελληνικού αγροτικού κινήματος", 5-6.

⁷¹ Dimos Prasinos, "Ο αγών σκληρός αλλ' η νίκη βεβαία" [The struggle's hard but the victory is certain], *Koinoniki Ereuna*, 1, March 1932, p. 2; Kostas Athanatos, "Το κύμα της εξάλλου αντιδράσεως," [The Wave of the Raging Reaction] *Koinoniki Ereuna*, 1 (March 1932): 3; [Dimos Prasinos], "Αι απόψεις μας διά τα γεγονότα: Είνε καιρός να συνεγείρωμεν την Ελλάδα," [Our Opinion on the Events: It Is High Time that We Roused Greece to Action] *Koinoniki Ereuna*, 3 (March 1932): 1.

by means of anarchical manifestations and overthrows'. He also contended that the previous socialist parties and groups, 'misinterpreting Marx's teachings', 'systematically ignored the great mass of the farming people', the 'plebeians of the fields', and looked down upon the 'newly-born agrarian movement', focusing their attention solely on the laborers of the cities.⁷²

Despite Pournaras' maxims, the left-wing principles of the columnists of *Koinoniki Ereuna* were far from being identical. For instance, certain admittedly Marxist party members called for closer relations of the Agrarian Party with the Soviet Union.⁷³ At the same time, a 'general counselor' of the Party declared that 'in Marxist terms' the Agrarian Party was a 'class' party, a 'political organization of the agrarian class and more generally of the laboring and exploited people'; 'not a bourgeois or a petites- bourgeois party, but one that had a place within the framework of the socialist parties (such as the English Labor Party and the German Social-Democratic Party, etc.)'. He further stated that the Party's final objective was the 'cooperative organization of production and consumption' within the country and a parallel 'restriction of individual initiatives in the production'. The Party aimed at 'the gradual creation of an economic and social system wherein there would be no exploiters or exploited', of which 'the ultimate stage of evolution' would be 'Socialism'.⁷⁴ The organ of the unified Agrarian Party, functioning as a centripetal factor, published long-paged biographical articles on deceased Agrarian and Socialist political figures, such as Marinus Antypas (related by the Marxist historian Giannis Kordatos, an ex-member of the Communist Party)⁷⁵; on 'the murdered leader of Bulgarian agrarianism' Alexander Stambolijski⁷⁶; on Jean Jaurès (the late leader of the French Socialists, assassinated in 1914), 'a major figure of the international movement of the working people'⁷⁷; on Filippo Turati, 'the father of Italian socialism and the leader of anti-Fascism'⁷⁸; et. al. More generally, *Koinoniki Ereuna* drew attention to the Agrarian Party's aspiration to wholly represent the 'laboring masses of the countryside and the towns'; its

⁷² Dim. Pournaras, "Ο ρόλος του αγροτισμού εις την σημερινήν κρίσιν: Αι δύσκολοι στιγμαί της πλουτοκρατίας," [The Role of Agrarianism in the Present Crisis: The Difficult Times of Plutocracy] *Koinoniki Ereuna*, 1 (March 1932): 7-8; "Ο ελληνικός αγροτισμός και το Σοσιαλιστικόν Κόμμα," [Greek Agrarianism and the Socialist Party] *Koinoniki Ereuna*, 3 (May 1932): 8-9. Similar views against capitalism and Venizelos' Liberal Party were also expressed by other columnists, such as the agrarian MP for Serres Socrates Anthrakopoulos: "Διατί ιδρύθη και τι επιδιώκει πολιτικώς το Αγροτικόν Κόμμα," [Why Was the Agrarian Party Founded and what does it Seek Politically] *Koinoniki Ereuna*, 1 (March 1932): 17. For the principal class identity of the Liberal Party, see Mavrogordatos, *Stillborn Republic*, 181.

⁷³ N. Matousis, "Το οικονομικόν πρόβλημα της χώρας," [The Economic Problem of the Country] *Koinoniki Ereuna*, 5 (July 1932): 27.

⁷⁴ Theod. Skrekas, "Το Αγροτικόν Κόμμα της Ελλάδος δεν είνε μικροαστικόν αλλά σοσιαλιστικόν," [The Agrarian Party of Greece is not Petit-Bourgeois but Socialist] *Koinoniki Ereuna*, 3 (May 1932): 31.

⁷⁵ Giannis Kordatos, "Μαρίνος Αντύπας: Ο Κεφαλλονίτης αγροτοσοσιαλιστής που έπεσε θύμα των ιδεών του," [Marinus Antypas: The Cephalonian Agrarianist-Cum-Socialist who Fell Victim of His Own Ideas], *Koinoniki Ereuna*, 1 (March 1932): 33-34.

⁷⁶ Greg. Stoyanov, "Αλέξανδρος Σταμπολίνσκυ: Η ζωή, η πολιτική δράσις και ο μαρτυρικός θάνατός του," [Alexander Stambolinsky: His life, Political Actions and Martyrical Death] *Koinoniki Ereuna*, 1 (March 1932): 38-40.

⁷⁷ "Πως εγνώρισα τον Ζαν Ζωρές, αρχηγόν του γαλλικού σοσιαλισμού, το πρώτον θύμα του Παγκοσμίου Πολέμου," [How I got to Know Jean Jaures, the Leader of French Socialism and the First Victim of the World War] *Koinoniki Ereuna*, 2 (April 1932): 14.

⁷⁸ Jean Longe, "Φίλιππος Τουράτι," [Filippo Turati] *Koinoniki Ereuna*, 2 (April 1932): 16.

editors emphasized the Party's array within the 'Left camp of Agrarianism and Socialism'; and placed particular emphasis on the Party's opposition to the 'Stalinist' Communist Party of Greece (the KKE) and the Moscow-led Third International.⁷⁹

In 1932, Mylonas (who at the time, from 1929 to 1932, was, along with Chassiotis, a Member of the Senate for the agricultural cooperatives) appeared in the columns of *Koinoniki Ereuna* as a self-styled 'politician of the Left camp'; he denounced 'the unharnessed liberty of the capital-holders' and 'the exploitation of the weakest'; and pleaded for a new 'radical' change in governmental policy 'through the parliamentary way'. In particular, he asked for a more energetic role of the cooperatives in the economy in the place of private companies, and for an intervention of the state for the regulation of economic relations; for a more fair distribution of the produced wealth; and for the prevention of the exploitation of the economically weak by the strongest. On the other hand, he disapproved of 'the dogmatic imposition of communism and anarchy' as well as of the nationalization of the land or its legal transformation into 'communal property', arguing that the latter (i.e. the Soviet) system is 'not viable' and 'first and foremost is not compatible with the nature of the Greek farmer'. Mylonas wrote vigorously in support of the small private property; and for that matter he asserted that the Agrarian Party, which sought the 'political organization and the emancipation of the farmers', 'is not literally socialist like the labor parties, which usually are socialist, because the industry workers, since they are deprived of the means of production, are naturally and mainly longing to collectively acquire the ownership of these means'. The social basis of Greek agrarianism, he opined, was the small individual property.⁸⁰ *Koinoniki Ereuna*, which frequently hosted Mylonas' articles, identified Mylonas as a 'moderate agrarian cum cooperative syndicalist' and 'an eminent personality of the Left', yet certainly not a Marxist, and arrayed him within 'the main tendencies and nuances of the leftist politics and intellectual movement' in the country. Comparing him with the 'agro-socialist' cadres, Pournaras placed Mylonas on 'the extreme Right' and 'conservative' wing of the Party.⁸¹

For his part, Sophianopoulos rejected the class character of the Party, and believed in 'the harmonization of the interests of the farmers with the interests of the other working classes'. He argued that the state should assume the role of 'the supreme guardian and judge of everything' with a view to regulating the common interests of the classes, and he abhorred the 'liberalism of the State, which had resulted in the unfeigned dissension between the classes'. Therefore, he supported the 'absolute strengthening of the notion of the State' and the 'disciplining of all classes under the State'. Furthermore, he advocated the bolstering of the executive power and its concentration into the hands of 'the One' and only 'Supreme Ruler'; at the same time, did not conceal his admiration for Hitler and Sir Oswald Mosley. Because of these overtly corporatist and authoritarian views,

⁷⁹ Editorial, "Η ενοποίησης των σοσιαλιστών" [The unification of the socialists]; "Σοσιαλισταί και Αγροτικοί" [Socialists and Agrarians]; "Η ανησυχία των κομμουνιστών," [The Uneasiness of the Communists] *Koinoniki Ereuna*, 2 (April 1932): 1-2.

⁸⁰ Al. Mylonas, "Ποία είνε αι κοινωνικαί βάσεις του ελληνικού αγροτισμού," [Which are the Social Foundations of Greek Agrarianism] *Koinoniki Ereuna*, 2 (April 1932): 11-12.

⁸¹ D. Pournaras, "Ο αγροτισμός, ο σοσιαλισμός και το κόμμα: Ποία η ενιαία ιδεολογική γραμμή" [Agrarianism, Socialism and the Party: Which is the Common Ideological Line] *Koinoniki Ereuna*, 4 (June 1932): 6-8. Cf. D. Prasinou, "Ο αγών σκληρός αλλ' η νίκη βεβαία", 2. See also Mavreas, "Η πολιτική οργάνωση του αγροτικού χώρου στην Ελλάδα κατά την περίοδο 1922-1936", 141.

Sophianopoulos was accused by his opponents of nurturing 'purely fascist' or rather 'agro-fascist' principles.⁸² Demetrius Panagiotopoulos, a historian of the Agrarian Party, characterizes Sophianopoulos' discourse as a 'peculiar mixture of revolutionary socialism and agrarian populism'.⁸³ In that matter, I believe that Sophianopoulos' discourse appears to be most populist *stricto sensu* (not in the more generic usage of populism, meaning mass popular backing or acting in the name of the interests of the mass of the people), in the sense that his rhetoric tended to be a collection of strands of left- and right-wing thought, with a heavy stress on leadership on the one hand, and popular equality on the other, as well as with a rather highly illiberal and intolerant position on civic liberties.⁸⁴ In any case, Sophianopoulos and his associates vehemently objected to these accusations. According to his biographer, Sophianopoulos believed that 'the bourgeois agrarian paternalism' was 'ultimately bankrupt', and that he had gathered around him 'the most lively and progressive cadres of the agrarian movement at his time'. The new-fangled agrarian leader had reportedly identified himself as a politician of the Left. Sophianopoulos' 'ideological fluidity' permitted the formation of a broad agrarian political front that could include the 'radical Left', and favored closer ties with Moscow.⁸⁵ On 22 July 1936, Sophianopoulos actually agreed to join the Popular Front that had been shortly before founded by the Communists 'in order to avert war and the ascension of fascism to power'. The imposition of the Metaxas dictatorship ten days later, on 4th August, suspended parliamentarism and cancelled these plans.⁸⁶

In fact, the left-of-the-centre- agrarians were sharply divided over their relationship and possible co-operation with the Communist Party of Greece. Pournaras stood for the Party's individuality, and opposed both (Sophianopoulos') 'agro-fascism' and 'agro-communism' (i.e. a potential coalition with the KKE). In his and his followers' view, a 'left-wing agrarian party' should draw on 'socialist' and 'scientific Marxist' principles, and aim at establishing a 'true People's Democracy'; yet, it would not seek to fulfill its ideals by means of a revolution but through 'peaceful parliamentary procedures' and 'gradual revolutionary reforms'. For that matter, Pournaras' ideal 'socialist agrarian party' was contrary to any sort of 'dictatorship', of either the 'Capitalists' or the 'Bolsheviks'. On the opposite side, Gavrielidis and his co-believers opined that the alliance of the agrarians with the 'working class' (represented by the KKE) would be the only key to success. Eventually the gap between the two factions was bridged in view of the general elections of September 1932; the Party's electoral platform pointed to a two-front war: against both 'the oligarchy of Venizelism' and an absorption by the KKE.⁸⁷

⁸² Anonymous, "Τι είναι ο αγροτοφασισμός," [What is Agro-Fascism] *Koinoniki Ereuna*, 4 (June 1932), 9-10. Cf. Panagiotopoulos, *Αγροτικό Κόμμα Ελλάδος*, 69-70.

⁸³ Panagiotopoulos, *Αγροτικό Κόμμα Ελλάδος*, 82.

⁸⁴ Cf. David Robertson, *The Penguin Dictionary of Politics*, (London, ²1993), 390-391.

⁸⁵ Sotiris Patatzis, *Ιωάννης Σοφιανόπουλος: Ένας επαναστάτης χωρίς επανάσταση* [Ioannis Sophianopoulos: A Revolutionary without Revolution], (Athens, 1961), 104-105, 114; Hering, *Τα πολιτικά κόμματα στην Ελλάδα 1821-1936*, 1174-1175.

⁸⁶ Patatzis, *Ιωάννης Σοφιανόπουλος*, 155-156; Mavrogordatos, *Stillborn Republic*, 178; Panagiotopoulos, *Αγροτικό Κόμμα Ελλάδος*, 93-95.

⁸⁷ Panagiotopoulos, *Αγροτικό Κόμμα Ελλάδος*, 71-72, 75.

Table 2 *Electoral sway of the Agrarian Party of Greece and its successors, 1926-36*⁸⁸

Year	No. of MPs	Total No. of MPs	%
1923	4	398	?
1926	4	286	2.95%
1928	0	250	1.68%
1932	11	250	6.17%
1933	8	248	5.03%
1936	5	300	3.61%

Papanastassiou's Agrarian and Workers' Party, 1928-36

Alexandros Papanastassiou, a law- and economics-trained (and influenced by the teachings of the German New Historical School in economics, namely Gustav Schmoller's and Adolph Wagner's *Staatssozialismus*) republican politician, was first engaged in active politics in 1908, when he founded the Sociological Society, a political group of 'reformist' or indeed Fabian socialists. (The establishment of the Sociological Society has been historically evaluated as the first collective attempt at creating a social-democratic party in Greece.) In November 1910, the Sociological Society, which had just been reshuffled into a short-lived Popular Party, merged with Venizelos' Liberal Party, and Papanastassiou along with other six of his comrades were elected Members of Parliament on the Liberal ticket. From 1910 to 1920, Papanastassiou and his Sociologists intermittently participated in the successive Venizelos governments and acted as the 'left-wing' of the Venizelist camp. In 1921, Papanastassiou formed the political group of Republican Liberals, which in the next year evolved into the break-away independent party of the Republican Union. In 1924, the Arcadian-born politician formed his first short-lived (approximately three-month-long) government. In 1926, his Republican Union assumed the subtitle 'Agrarian and Workers' Party', and in 1928 it was officially renamed as such, thus ostensibly assuming a more strict class character. In the years 1926-32, Papanastassiou entered the Zaimis 'coalition' administration (1926-28) and successively backed the Venizelos Government (1928-32). In May 1932, he formed his last (one-month-long) government. His sudden death in November 1936 put an end to his time-long and most energetic republican and agrarian struggles.⁸⁹

⁸⁸ Constantine Trachanas, 'The Agrarian Political Party of Greece: Politics and Peasants, 1922-1936', unpublished PhD thesis, University of Amsterdam 1989, p. 175-178, 194-195, 206-209; Konstantinos Mavreas, 'Η πολιτική οργάνωση του αγροτικού χώρου στην Ελλάδα κατά την περίοδο 1922-1936' [The political organization of the rural realm in Greece in the period 1922-1936], in *Νεοελληνική κοινωνία: Ιστορικές και κριτικές προσεγγίσεις* [Modern Greek Society: Historical and Critical Approaches] Theodoros Sakellaropoulos (ed.) (Athens, 1993), p. 124, 126, 138, 142; G. Hering, *op. cit.*, II, p. 1120-1122, 1176, 1183; Demetrius G. Panagiotopoulos, *Αγροτικό Κόμμα Ελλάδος: Όψεις του αγροτικού κινήματος στην Ελλάδα* [Agrarian Party of Greece: Aspects of the agrarian movement in Greece], (Athens, 2010), 79-80, 82, 86.

⁸⁹ Toulia Apostolopoulou-Georgiadi, "Αλέξανδρος Π. Παπαναστασίου: Ο πολιτικός – ο επιστήμων – ο αγωνιστής – ο άνθρωπος," [Alexandros Papanastassiou: The Politician – the Scientist – the Struggler – the Man] in *Αλέξανδρος Παπαναστασίου: Θεσμοί, ιδεολογία και πολιτική στο Μεσοπόλεμο* [Alexandros Papanastassiou: Institutions, Ideology and Politics in the Inter-War Period], Giorgos Anastassiadis, Giorgos Kontogiorgis and Pavlos Petridis (eds.) (Athens, 1987), 21-80; George Th. Mavrogordatos, "Η αυγή της ελληνικής σοσιαλδημοκρατίας," [The eve of Greek Social-Democracy] in *Αλέξανδρος Παπαναστασίου:*

In fact, Papanastassiou’s fruitful career in agrarian politics commenced in 1911, when he succeeded in passing in parliament his reformist proposal for a gradual emancipation of the sharecroppers and the appropriation of the land by the tillers.⁹⁰ In 1917, he came to be one of the most enthusiastic supporters –on the ‘ethical’ ground of social ‘progress’ and of the material advancement of agriculture– of the radical land reform and the forced expropriation of the *çifliks*.⁹¹ Most successful was his term at the office of the Minister of Agriculture in the Zaimis Government (from 7 November 1926 to 3 February 1928): during that period of time he instituted the concentration of wheat and drafted the first bill for the establishment of the Agricultural Bank of Greece (finally established in 1929). (Papanastassiou was since 1909 one of the vehement advocates, in the name of ‘social justice’, of the establishment of an agricultural credit institution ‘beneficial to the public’ or a ‘central bank of the cooperatives’ independent from the commercial capitals.) The concentration boosted the income of the wheat-growers (in 1931, some 35% of the country’s cultivated land was covered with wheat, and approximately 70% with cereals), while it marked the initiation of Greece’s concerted efforts toward autocracy in cereals and other nutritional agricultural products.⁹²

On a theoretical level, Papanastassiou was opposed to both the ‘utopian’ and the ‘revolutionary’ socialism or communism.⁹³ Speaking in parliament in November 1924, he intuitively argued that the necessary preconditions for a ‘Bolshevik revolution’ did not exist in Greece, for ‘the farmers, in their overwhelming majority, are proprietors’.⁹⁴ (In fact, the Stalinist hostility to private property averted the Greek smallholders from

θεσμοί, ιδεολογία και πολιτική στο Μεσοπόλεμο, 104-106; Thanassis Diamantopoulos, “Ο Α. Παπαναστασίου ως αριστερή πτέρυγα του Βενιζελισμού,” [Al. Papanastassiou as the “Left-Wing” of Venizelism] in: *Αλέξανδρος Παπαναστασίου: Οι κοινωνικές, οικονομικές και πολιτικές απόψεις του* [Alexandros Papanastassiou: His Social, Economic and Political Views], proceedings of a conference held at the Panteion University of Social and Political Sciences (Athens 5-7 December 1986), (Athens, 1990), 131-133; Theodoros Sakellariopoulos, “Ο Α. Παπαναστασίου και το αγροτικό ζήτημα,” [Al. Papanastassiou and the agrarian issue], in: *Αλέξανδρος Παπαναστασίου: Οι κοινωνικές, οικονομικές και πολιτικές απόψεις του*, 222-224; Michalis Psalidopoulos, *Πολιτική οικονομία και Έλληνες διανοούμενοι: Μελέτες για την ιστορία της οικονομικής σκέψης στη σύγχρονη Ελλάδα* [Political Economy and Greek Intellectuals: Studies in the History of Economic Thought in Modern Greece] (Athens, 1999), 95-111.

⁹⁰ Pantazopoulos, “Παραδοσιακοί αγροτικοί θεσμοί σε δοκιμασία”, 237, 240, 242.

⁹¹ Sakellariopoulos, “Ο Α. Παπαναστασίου και το αγροτικό ζήτημα”, 213.

⁹² Nikos S. Kastrinos, *Αλ. Παπαναστασίου ο αναμορφωτής και η δημοκρατία* [Al. Papanastassiou the Reformer and the Republic] (Athens, 1975), 193; Thanos Veremis, “Ο αγώνας για την ίδρυση της Αγροτικής Τράπεζας και ο Αλέξανδρος Παπαναστασίου: Ένα χρονικό,” [Alexandros Papanastassiou and the Struggle for the Establishment of the Agricultural Bank: A Chronicle] in *Αλέξανδρος Παπαναστασίου: θεσμοί, ιδεολογία και πολιτική στο Μεσοπόλεμο*, 256-271; Theodoros Dion. Sakellariopoulos, *Οικονομία, κοινωνία, κράτος στην Ελλάδα του Μεσοπολέμου* [Economy, Society and State in Inter-War Greece] (Athens, 1991), 103-106; Mark Mazower, *Greece and the Inter-War Economic Crisis* (Oxford and New York, 1991), 89-91; Ploumidis, *Έδαφος και μνήμη στα Βαλκάνια*, 116-120, 130, 174. In 1931, Greece’s domestic wheat production covered merely 40% of the native consumption; see A. Depastas, “Σίτος (εμπορευτολογ),” [Wheat commercially], *Megali Helliniki Engyklopaedia*, XXI (Athens 1933): 883.

⁹³ Giorgos D. Kontogiorgis, “Οι σοσιαλιστικές ιδέες του Αλέξανδρου Παπαναστασίου,” [The socialist ideas of Alexandros Papanastassiou] in *Αλέξανδρος Παπαναστασίου: θεσμοί, ιδεολογία και πολιτική στο Μεσοπόλεμο*, 84.

⁹⁴ Spiliotis Papaspiliopoulos, “Οι απόψεις του Αλέξανδρου Παπαναστασίου για την κοινωνική μεταβολή και το σοσιαλισμό” [Alexandros Papanastassiou’s Views on Social Change and Socialism], in: *Αλέξανδρος Παπαναστασίου: Οι κοινωνικές, οικονομικές και πολιτικές απόψεις του*, 93-94.

communist agitation.⁹⁵) In 1922, in the aftermath of his secession from the Liberals, Papanastassiou openly identified himself as part of the Left camp.⁹⁶ On a more practical level, the Fabian-minded socialist politician was an adamant supporter of small individual property and the cooperative organization of the agricultural economy in the name of ‘cooperation’ and ‘solidarity’; in his view, ‘the cooperative organization of the producers’ would ‘pave the way that leads to the socialist ideal’.⁹⁷ At the same time, Papanastassiou was in full accord with the right-wing agrarians over the role of the bourgeois state in agriculture. In his opinion, because of the ‘primitive condition of cooperative awareness’ in Greece the initiative for the establishment and the development of the agricultural cooperatives should lie with the state.⁹⁸ In 1930, Papanastassiou took part in the International Conference of the Agrarian Parties in Prague.⁹⁹ Despite its initial programmatic references to certain labor issues, his Agrarian and Workers’ Party essentially was an agrarian class party: twenty-three out of the twenty-five points in the resolution of its Third Congress, held in Thessaly’s capital (Larissa) in 1931, referred to issues of agriculture. As the historian George Mavrogordatos explains, since the class-minded and politically-organized part of Greece’s labor population had been won over by the Communist Party, Papanastassiou and his comrades ended up addressing almost exclusively the new rural settlers and especially the refugee smallholders, who were not yet integrated into the clientelist networks of the established bourgeois parties.¹⁰⁰ Papanastassiou identified agrarianism (in its quality as an ‘idea and a political direction’) as a ‘systematic endeavour of the State for the ethical and economic elevation of the agrarian people’; for that matter, agrarianism was supposed, in his opinion, to be a concern of and a ‘policy of the [bourgeois] State’.¹⁰¹ More particularly, Papanastassiou’s agrarian discourse can be manifestly framed within the context of radical agrarianism (see Conclusions), for his emphasis mainly was on the acceleration or expansion of already undertaken measures, such as the expansion of the institution of the concentration of cereals; the acceleration of the rural settlement of the native landless and the refugees; the acceleration of the construction of small drainage works throughout Greece; the institution, ‘as soon as possible’, of social security, including unemployment benefits; the prompt settlement of agricultural debts, et. al..¹⁰²

The priority of rural over industrial labor interests was manifest in Papanastassiou’s political discourse.¹⁰³ Upon his party’s Second Congress on 8 May 1929, Papanastassiou

⁹⁵ Mavrogordatos, *Stillborn Republic*, 175, 178; Hering, *Ta πολιτικά κόμματα στην Ελλάδα 1821-1936*, 1178.

⁹⁶ Giorgos D. Kontogiorgis, “Οι σοσιαλιστικές ιδέες του Αλέξανδρου Παπαναστασίου”, 90.

⁹⁷ Kontogiorgis, “Οι σοσιαλιστικές ιδέες του Αλέξανδρου Παπαναστασίου”, 91; Papaspiliopoulos, “Οι απόψεις του Αλέξανδρου Παπαναστασίου για την κοινωνική μεταβολή και το σοσιαλισμό”, 85; Sakellaropoulos, “Ο Α. Παπαναστασίου και το αγροτικό ζήτημα”, 212, 222; Thanassis Kalaphatis, “Οι θεωρητικές απαρχές και η πολιτική πράξη του Α. Παπαναστασίου για τους συνεταιρισμούς,” [Theoretical Principles and Political Actions of Al. Papanastassiou for the Cooperatives] in *Αλέξανδρος Παπαναστασίου: Οι κοινωνικές, οικονομικές και πολιτικές απόψεις του*, 229.

⁹⁸ Kalaphatis, “Οι θεωρητικές απαρχές και η πολιτική πράξη του Α. Παπαναστασίου για τους συνεταιρισμούς”, 230-231.

⁹⁹ Apostolopoulou-Georgiadi, “Αλέξανδρος Π. Παπαναστασίου”, 39.

¹⁰⁰ Mavrogordatos, *Stillborn Republic*, 116; Mavrogordatos, “Η αγωγή της ελληνικής σοσιαλδημοκρατίας”, 109.

¹⁰¹ Apostolopoulou-Georgiadi, “Αλέξανδρος Π. Παπαναστασίου”, 53.

¹⁰² *Eleftheron Vima*, 3398, September 28, 1931, 5.

¹⁰³ Ploumidis, *Έδαφος και μνήμη στα Βαλκάνια*, 168.

clearly declared that 'in the first place, we are positively interested in the elevation of agriculture, and thereafter generally in all the laboring people'.¹⁰⁴ In an interview on 14 March 1931, he justified the entanglement of agrarian with labor and other alien interests in his party's programme, and the consequent 'general character of the agrarian parties', in the following terms:

'[...] the life of a society cannot and is not to anybody's interest to become exclusively agricultural; therefore the agrarian parties, vying for power, need to have a clear programme for the entirety of the society, for the entire function of the State. And for the definition of this programme, they are obliged to examine which other non-rural classes are related to and thus in a position to approach the political perceptions of the rural classes.

[...] Most relative to the latter are the labor classes; the classes of the strugglers, who live on their labor. Among these and the farmers there is no social difference, only in the way of working. Both the farmers and the strugglers create [their livelihood] from their personal labor. Both are on the lowest level of economic power, and need one another, not only for their political preponderance, but also for their economic advancement'.¹⁰⁵

Allegedly, Papanastassiou's interest in agriculture and the class of farmers was deeply rooted since his early years; his mentor in agrarianism was one of his uncles (a certain Ioannis Apostolopoulos, a French-trained agronomist by trade).¹⁰⁶

For its part, *Koinoniki Ereuna* critically argued that Papanastassiou's party was 'lightly inclined to the Left, without advancing toward more radical solutions to the Greek problem'. And disparately maintained that Papanastassiou 'is fluctuating between radicalism and petite-bourgeoisie indolence, with a spurious social content and a fully confused ideological character'. It further condemned Papanastassiou's collaboration with Venizelism on the general elections of 1928 as a 'flagrant crime', accusing him of 'forgetting that he is a leftist'. All in all, the 'theoretical organ' of the Agrarian Party claimed that Papanastassiou's party was no more than a 'personal party'; 'one of the various bourgeois parties that contest the power in order to govern to the detriment of the laboring populations of the country'. In June 1932, this left-wing agrarian periodical asserted that it was not feeling 'enmity toward Panastassiou or his party', yet it called on his 'radical' and 'leftist' followers to abandon him and to join the Agrarian Party of Greece. In view of the September 1932 elections, *Koinoniki Ereuna* escalated its criticism, associating Papanastassiou's party with 'the worst capitalist and anti-popular parties' and regarding it as an 'enemy of the laboring people of the country'.¹⁰⁷ In January 1933 and in view of the forthcoming March elections, Papanastassiou made proposals to Mylonas and Sophianopoulos to form a 'coalition of the dispersed agrarian and labor forces' against 'the great economic interests and all the forces of reaction', but he received a negative reply. The leader of the Agrarian and Workers' Party attributed the division between the 'left-

¹⁰⁴ Xenophon Leukoparidis (ed.), *Αλέξανδρου Παπαναστασίου μελέτες, λόγοι, άρθρα* [Alexander Papanastassiou's Studies, Speeches, Articles], vol. II, (Athens, 1957), 574, 647.

¹⁰⁵ Xenophon Leukoparidis (ed.), *Αλέξανδρου Παπαναστασίου μελέτες, λόγοι, άρθρα* [Alexander Papanastassiou's Studies, Speeches, Articles], vol. II, (Athens 1957), II, 695-696.

¹⁰⁶ Apostolopoulou-Georgiadi, "Αλέξανδρος Π. Παπαναστασίου", 52.

¹⁰⁷ Editorial, "Ο ρόλος του κ. Παπαναστασίου," [The role of Mr. Papanastassiou] *Koinoniki Ereuna*, 4 (June 1932): 1-2.

wing [political] organizations’ to ‘either personal or secondary theoretical reasons’.¹⁰⁸ In fact, in 1929-33 the main obvious discrepancy between Papanastassiou’s party and the unified Agrarian Party of Greece was centered on their opposite stances (relatively pro and vehemently against, respectively) toward Venizelism.¹⁰⁹ However, despite their infrequent allusions to the Left, I believe that Papanastassiou’s and, for that matter, Mylonas’ close association with the bourgeois state and the Liberals historically places them on the Right or rather more conservative wing of agrarianism.

Table 3 *Electoral sway of the Agrarian and Workers’ Party of Greece, 1926-36*¹¹⁰

Year	No. of MPs	%
1926	17	6.48%
1928	20	6.71%
1932	8	5.89%
1933	13	4.16%
1936	4	2.59%

Conclusions

The Agrarian Party of Greece and its offshoots, as well as Papanastassiou’s Agrarian and Workers’ Party, failed to inspire, to motivate and win the allegiances of the agrarian population of Greece. All in all, they remained (throughout the interwar period) minuscule political formations with a negligible nation-wide electoral sway that hardly ever exceeded 6-7%. The first and foremost downturn of the interwar agrarian parties of Greece was that their programmes included policies and measures that had either been already applied or were under way of being materialized by the governments of the Liberal (Venizelist) camp. The timely solution to the core of the agrarian problem (meaning the issue of large landed property) had already been delivered by Venizelos himself in 1917 and applied by the Plastiras (Venizelist) Government in February 1923, a month before the establishment of the Agrarian Party in March 1923. For that matter, the Agrarian Party and its offshoots did not innovate but rather came to fill-in omissions and to pressure for the faster implementation and the broader extension or radicalization of existing policies and measures. In other words, in the period under consideration the established bourgeois parties were always many steps ahead of the agrarian socio-political requests.¹¹¹ As Evelpidis admitted in 1926, the tenets of agrarianism (i.e. ‘the decreed expropriation of most large estates; the allotment of land to the landless peasantry for the purpose of creating a class of self-sustained small proprietors; the assurance of a minimum viable property to each agricultural family; the legal protection of the new small landed property;

¹⁰⁸ Al. Papanastassiou, “Η συσσωμάτωση των αριστερών οργανώσεων,” [The Unification of the Left-Wing Organizations] *Koinoniki Ereuna*, 15 (June 1933): 1.

¹⁰⁹ Diamantopoulos, “Ο Α. Παπαναστασίου ως αριστερή πτέρυγα του Βενιζελισμού”, 154-155.

¹¹⁰ Demetrius G. Panagiotopoulos, *Αγροτικό Κόμμα Ελλάδος: Όψεις του αγροτικού κινήματος στην Ελλάδα* [Agrarian Party of Greece: Aspects of the agrarian movement in Greece], (Athens, 2010), 82, 86.

¹¹¹ Cf. Panagiotopoulos, *Αγροτικό Κόμμα Ελλάδος*, 54, 86, 90.

the grouping of small proprietors into cooperatives'; etc.) were by and large fulfilled by Law 1072 of 1917 and the successive agrarian legislature passed in 1919-24.¹¹²

As Mavrogordatos has expressed it, Greek agrarianism essentially grew out of a 'revolution of rising expectations' among the new smallholders, and was sustained by a demagogic and populist agitation against the limitations of the 1917 Venizelist land reform.¹¹³ (For instance, in 1924 Chassiotis suggested the exemption of the former serfs from any indemnities for the small plots of land that they had received.¹¹⁴) The discourse of the Greek agrarians can thus be described as 'radical agrarianism'.¹¹⁵ Still then, Venizelos' ingenuity (which majorly drew on Papanastassiou's original ideas) blunted the radical appeal of the agrarians. In 1928-32, the Venizelos Government carried out major public infrastructure works for the benefit of agriculture: irrigation, drainage and rural road-building works in the Strymon valley, in Thessaly and in Epirus; these works significantly increased the productive possibilities of Greek agriculture (in 1932, wheat production increased by 75 % compared to the median of the period 1927-31), which followed a rising course throughout the rest of the 1930s. Additionally, Venizelos' last long-term Government established the Agricultural Bank, the Tobacco Institute and the Cotton Institute, as well as an Advanced School of Agriculture in Salonica; it continued the policy inaugurated by Papanastassiou for the increase of grain production and the sustainment of the rural income by offering artificially inflated prices to domestic wheat producers; it also expanded and completed the land reform with the expropriation of further 87 estates that were owned by Greek nationals and the 'buying-off' of another 104 that belonged to foreigner subjects.¹¹⁶ Last but not least, in October 1931 Venizelos passed a five-year moratorium on the farmers' private loans, a pro-agrarian gesture that was repeated by the Metaxas Government in 1937 on a more generous (twelve-year) basis.¹¹⁷

In addition to lagging far behind the ingenious agricultural policy of Venizelos, the Agrarians were literally squeezed between the two major political camps (Venizelists and Antivenizelists); the polarization of the Greek interwar political life (especially in the period 1933-35) was the second most severe blow to the agrarian political movement.¹¹⁸

¹¹² Evelpidis, "Αγροτικόν ζήτημα", 495.

¹¹³ Mavrogordatos, *Stillborn Republic*, 173. See also Mavreas, "Η πολιτική οργάνωση του αγροτικού χώρου στην Ελλάδα κατά την περίοδο 1922-1936", 144-145.

¹¹⁴ Spyros Chassiotis, "Σκέψεις τινές επί του αγροτικού ζητήματος," [Some Thoughts Upon the Agrarian Issue] *Ta Nea Georonika*, 9-10 (September-October 1924): 83.

¹¹⁵ Mavrogordatos, *Stillborn Republic*, 172; Ploumidis, *Έδαφος και μνήμη στα Βαλκάνια*, 140.

¹¹⁶ Spyros Tzokas, *Ο Ελευθέριος Βενιζέλος και το εγχείρημα του αστικού εκσυγχρονισμού: Η οικοδόμηση του αστικού κράτους* [Eleftherios Venizelos and the Venture of Bourgeois Modernization: The Construction of the Bourgeois State], (Athens 2002), 102-125; Ioannis D. Stefanidis, "Reconstructing Greece as a European state: Venizelos' last premiership, 1928-1932", in Paschalis M. Kitromilides (ed.), *Eleftherios Venizelos: The Trials of Statesmanship*, (Edinburgh 2006), 203-204; Christine Agriantoni, "Venizelos and Economic Policy," in: Paschalis M. Kitromilides (ed.), *Eleftherios Venizelos: The Trials of Statesmanship*, (Edinburgh, 2006), 303-305.

¹¹⁷ Kostas Vergopoulos, *Το αγροτικό ζήτημα στην Ελλάδα: Το πρόβλημα της κοινωνικής ενσωμάτωσης της γεωργίας* [The Agrarian Problem in Greece: The Issue of the Social Integration of Agriculture] (Athens, 1975), 161; Mark Mazower, *Greece and the Inter-War Economic Crisis* (Oxford and New York, 1991), 133, 248-249.

¹¹⁸ Mavrogordatos, *Stillborn Republic*, 173; Trachanas, "The Agrarian Political Party of Greece", 231-241; Hering, *Τα πολιτικά κόμματα στην Ελλάδα 1821-1936*, 1044-1045; Panagiotoπούλου, *Αγροτικό Κόμμα Ελλάδος*, 62.

The petite-bourgeoisie aspirations of the Greek peasant masses as well as the clientelist networks of the established bourgeois parties left very limited ground for the success of agrarian politics.¹¹⁹ The Agrarian Party presented itself as a ‘genuine party of principles, without corrupt adherents, but based on the agency of sincere and not self-interested ideologues’. Thus, it was manifestly distinguishing itself from the ‘personal parties that vie for power’, and appealed for supporting ‘the mass of the people and especially to those who are minimally related to corrupt practices, and so firstly and mostly to the morally pure farming people’.¹²⁰ However, clientelism (the system by which parliamentary politicians distribute jobs in the public sector or special favours in exchange for electoral support), which was deeply rooted within Greek society, left little ground for the flourishing of ideological and class parties in the period under consideration. Thus, the Greek farmer (especially the yeomen of Old Greece) remained firmly attached to the patronage system of the established bourgeois political parties.¹²¹ Moreover, the radical and far-reaching land reform of 1917 irrevocably sealed the alliance of Venizelism with the formerly landless peasantry and the refugees.¹²²

Furthermore, Greek farmers appeared to lack a social class consciousness.¹²³ In 1931, Evelpidis noted the absence of the ‘necessary technical experience’ as well as of an ‘agrarian conscience’ among ‘many’ of the new smallholders.¹²⁴ This critical absence of a class consciousness can also partly explain the demographic drift from the countryside to the large towns, which – as the agronomists and the ruling politicians feared – tended to assume the dimensions of a rural exodus: tens of thousands of smallholders forsook their land and sought social mobility (namely, to the petite-bourgeoisie level) and employment in the towns as wage-earners or shopkeepers. The feared depopulation of the Greek countryside did not eventually happen during the interwar period (it awaited the devastating occupation by the Axis forces and the subsequent Civil War in the 1940s). However, in the prevalent opinion of the agronomists and more generally of the interwar bourgeois publicists, the ostentatious urbanist trend of the Greek farmers reflected not only the steep drop in the agricultural income due to the ongoing crisis in the rural economy (that peaked in 1924 and 1928); the wretched living conditions in the countryside (which were attributed to the neglect of the rural populations by the official state); but also to the peasants’ attraction to the urban lifestyle; and their aversion to the agricultural profession. Thus, Greek agronomists considered as their social duty to infuse the farmers (especially, the post-1917 new smallholders) with a conservative ‘agrarian conscience’; this ‘conscience’ entailed not only the sealing-off of the farmers from the rebellious teachings of communism and left-wing agrarianism, but also the persuasion of the farmers to remain

¹¹⁹ Mavrogordatos, *Stillborn Republic*, 168-170; Alkis Rigos, *Η Β΄ Ελληνική Δημοκρατία 1924-1935: Κοινωνικές διαστάσεις της πολιτικής σκηνής* [The Second Greek Republic, 1924-1935: Social Dimensions of the Political Scene] (Athens, 1992), 156-157.

¹²⁰ *Agrotiki Simaia*, 3, October 23, 1925, 1.

¹²¹ Nikos Mouzelis, *Modern Greece: Facets of Underdevelopment* (London and Basingstoke, 1978), 102, cited in: Mavreas, “Η πολιτική οργάνωση του αγροτικού χώρου στην Ελλάδα κατά την περίοδο 1922-1936”, 119; Trachanas, “The Agrarian Political Party of Greece”, 221-231.

¹²² Mavrogordatos, *Stillborn Republic*, 158.

¹²³ Trachanas, “The Agrarian Political Party of Greece”, 170-171, 245-253.

¹²⁴ Evelpidis, *Η γεωργική κρίσις ιδία εν Ελλάδι*, 39.

in their profession (by presenting farming as a vital service to the entire 'nation') and not migrate to the urban centers.¹²⁵

In addition to the obvious lack of an 'agrarian conscience' among the Greek farmers, the geographical and social breakdowns of the agrarian electorate (between the New and the Old Lands; between old yeomen and new smallholders; between native and refugee farmers, etc.) limited further the margin for an agrarian political success.¹²⁶ Another (fourth most) important reason that explains the failure of agrarian politics in interwar Greece is the personal character of the agrarian grouplets and the unbridgeable ambitions of their leaders, which left not much free ground for collective action. What is more, none of the agrarian figures had the qualities of a charismatic and indisputable political leader.¹²⁷ Pournaras deplored in 1933 the fact that 'agrarianism' had been ruptured into 'countless pieces and groups out of personal, in their most part, incentives'. In his opinion, agrarianism in Greece had been 'ridiculed' by the 'successive splits, dissensions, personal conflicts and recriminations'. The real intentions behind these ruptures within the Agrarian Party were the ambitions of each one of these figures 'to create his own group and to present himself as a leader, without caring for the exploited and abused people of the plebeians of the land and the laborers, whom they were supposed to represent and defend'.¹²⁸ Last but not least, the majority of the agrarian leaders (Chassiotis, Evelpidis, Mylonas, Papanastassiou, Sophianopoulos, etc.) were not of a rural extraction but belonged to Athens' upper bourgeois strata.¹²⁹ Reasonably, the genuineness of the agrarian parties of interwar Greece was under serious doubts. In conclusion, agrarianism exerted a far greater influence on Greece's parliamentary politics through the agency of Venizelist governmental policies (by means of the Venizelist legislature and via Venizelism's 'left-wing', personified in Papanastassiou) than through the electoral sway of the country's agrarian *per se* parties.

¹²⁵ Mark Mazower, *Greece and the Inter-War Economic Crisis* (Oxford and New York 1991), 78, 133-134; Ploumidis, *Έδαφος και μνήμη στα Βαλκάνια*, 57-58 (fn. 90), 106-107, 112-115, 131-153, 178-181.

¹²⁶ Cf. Panagiotopoulos, *Αγροτικό Κόμμα Ελλάδος*, 90.

¹²⁷ Mavreas, "Η πολιτική οργάνωση του αγροτικού χώρου στην Ελλάδα κατά την περίοδο 1922-1936", 124; Panagiotopoulos, *Αγροτικό Κόμμα Ελλάδος*, 74, 89.

¹²⁸ Demetrius Pournaras, *Σοσιαλισμός, κομμουνισμός και αγροτισμός: Το κοινωνικόν ζήτημα εις την Ελλάδα* [Socialism, Communism and Agrarianism: The Social Question in Greece] (Athens, 1933), 38-39.

¹²⁹ Mavreas, "Η πολιτική οργάνωση του αγροτικού χώρου στην Ελλάδα κατά την περίοδο 1922-1936", 123-124.

