



Kent Academic Repository

**Farquharson, J. E. (1972) *The NSDAP and Agriculture in Germany 1928-1938*.
Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) thesis, University of Kent.**

Downloaded from

<https://kar.kent.ac.uk/94338/> The University of Kent's Academic Repository KAR

The version of record is available from

<https://doi.org/10.22024/UniKent/01.02.94338>

This document version

UNSPECIFIED

DOI for this version

Licence for this version

CC BY-NC-ND (Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives)

Additional information

This thesis has been digitised by EThOS, the British Library digitisation service, for purposes of preservation and dissemination. It was uploaded to KAR on 25 April 2022 in order to hold its content and record within University of Kent systems. It is available Open Access using a Creative Commons Attribution, Non-commercial, No Derivatives (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>) licence so that the thesis and its author, can benefit from opportunities for increased readership and citation. This was done in line with University of Kent policies (<https://www.kent.ac.uk/is/strategy/docs/Kent%20Open%20Access%20policy.pdf>). If you ...

Versions of research works

Versions of Record

If this version is the version of record, it is the same as the published version available on the publisher's web site. Cite as the published version.

Author Accepted Manuscripts

If this document is identified as the Author Accepted Manuscript it is the version after peer review but before type setting, copy editing or publisher branding. Cite as Surname, Initial. (Year) 'Title of article'. To be published in *Title of Journal*, Volume and issue numbers [peer-reviewed accepted version]. Available at: DOI or URL (Accessed: date).

Enquiries

If you have questions about this document contact ResearchSupport@kent.ac.uk. Please include the URL of the record in KAR. If you believe that your, or a third party's rights have been compromised through this document please see our [Take Down policy](https://www.kent.ac.uk/guides/kar-the-kent-academic-repository#policies) (available from <https://www.kent.ac.uk/guides/kar-the-kent-academic-repository#policies>).

THE NSDAP AND AGRICULTURE IN GERMANY

1928-1938

by

J.E. FARQUHARSON

for the Ph.D. Degree,

University of Kent,

Canterbury.

1972.

ABSTRACT "The NSDAP and German agriculture 1928-1938"

The object of this work is to examine the impact made by the NSDAP upon agriculture in Germany until just before the outbreak of the Second World War. This entails showing how the movement first came to regard the agrarian sector c. 1928 as a fruitful area for vote-collecting, after an early period in the Party's history when the land was virtually neglected. How the Hitler movement came to organize all those agricultural interests hostile to the Weimar Republic into one disciplined force is described. In particular, this thesis deals with the way in which the NSDAP won votes from peasants on the one hand, whilst infiltrating into their organizations on the other, seen in the light of existing discontent and economic recession. The part played by agricultural interests in unseating both Brüning and Schleicher is also examined.

For the period immediately following Hitler's nomination as Chancellor there are three main themes; the first is the co-ordination of all existing landed corporations, co-operatives, etc. into one unified body to represent the whole of food production and distribution in the Third Reich, a task accomplished by R. Walther Darré on behalf of the NSDAP. Secondly, the six-months sojourn in the office of the Food and Agriculture Minister by Hugenberg is described: his measures to aid the peasants are dealt with, as well as his eventual resignation in June 1933. Thirdly, the legislation introduced by his successor, Darré, in the autumn of 1933 is investigated, with particular reference to those laws designed to guard the peasant farmer against speculation and the free play of market forces: these are described in the framework of National Socialist hostility towards capitalism.

The middle section of this thesis deals with the effect of National Socialist economic measures upon the financial position of the agrarian sector; the battle to achieve self-sufficiency is examined, both in regard to its origins and to its degree of success. For the period after 1936 the impact made upon agriculture by the introduction of the Four Year Plan

is discussed, with particular reference to the need for price-stability, and therefore cheap food, in order to realize the defence programme. A subsequent chapter assesses rural migration, in terms of its causes, its actual degree, and influence upon food production.

Political relationships are next examined, in particular those obtaining between the unified agrarian corporation on the one hand, and Party and government, both local and national, on the other. Quarrels with various Gauleiters and with Dr. Ley's DAF are also investigated, as is the internal leadership in Darré's organization, as well as his relationship with Hitler, and the question of the corporative state as such.

Two chapters are devoted to legislation which produced hereditary entailment of certain peasant holdings after 1933. The historical background to the law is examined, and its reception upon the land. How the judges actually administered it is the subject of the second of these two chapters.

Finally there are separate sections dealing with the NSDAP settlement programme and the flattery given to the peasants during the Third Reich. This latter section also includes attempts at political indoctrination of the landed population, especially its youth and a description of National Socialist racial measures, and the opposition encountered from religious bodies. A conclusion to the work attempts to pull together all the strands previously narrated in order that NSDAP agrarian policy may be analysed as a coherent whole, set against the existing structure of German society in 1933.

Acknowledgements

The opportunity is taken here of expressing grateful thanks to all those persons who have assisted with the composition of this work. This applies not only to the two supervisors at the University of Kent, Dr. Ridley and Mr. Langhorne but also to a number of academic and professional staff in West Germany itself, as well as to those people who were kind enough to grant interviews and render assistance based upon their personal experiences of the period under review. Foremost among the latter were Drs. Krohn and Reischle of the Reichsnährstand itself, Dr. Merkel and Professor Haushofer, as well as Herr Kahlke, formerly an Erbhofgericht judge. Dr. Günther Franz of the Institute for Agrarian History, Stuttgart-Hohenheim, allowed full use to be made of his library and records, and my thanks are due to him and his staff, who assisted in every possible manner. Among archivists who particularly helped, mention must be made of Dr. Kahlenberg and Fräulein Kinder at the Bundesarchiv, Koblenz; Fräulein Tietze of the American Document Centre, Berlin; Dr. Thévoc of the Prussian Archives, Berlin-Dahlemdorf; Dr. Lendt of the Lower Saxon Archives, Hanover; Herr Wolke of the Landesarchiv Schleswig-Holstein; Dr. Hillebrand and Fräulein von Woelke of the City Archives, Goslar; Dr. Möllmann of the Agricultural Chamber, Westphalia-Lippe kindly allowed use to be made of the records both in Münster and in Unna. Thanks are also due to Dr. Bly, Herr Witt and Herr Saul of the University of Hamburg for their help over sources; Drs. Gies and Verhey both kindly allowed their dissertations to be used, and gave much-appreciated advice. Finally, I must express my gratitude to Herr Joachim von Rohr, for his kindness in granting an interview.

C O N T E N T S

<u>Chapter No.</u>	<u>Title</u>	<u>Page</u>
	Abstract	
	Acknowledgements	i
	Contents	ii
	Forward	1
	Abbreviations for Sources used in footnotes in this work	6
	List of German words and abbreviations used in the text	7
I	German Agriculture in the 1920s and the early years of the National Socialist Party	13
II	Radicalism in Schleswig-Holstein and NSDAP development in the province	42
III	The NSDAP Programme of March 30th, the build-up of the agrarian cadre and the conquest of power in the existing agricultural organizations	62
IV	The Economic Crisis, government policy and agricultural reaction	89
V	NS propaganda activity on the land, the last days of the Republic and the takeover of agrarian organizations in the Third Reich	116
VI	Agrarian policy in 1933: Dr. Hugenberg as Minister of Agriculture and the Introduction of laws to eliminate speculation	152
VII	The Reichsnährstand in detail: the capabilities and political affiliations of its personnel, the reorganization of agrarian marketing and the crisis of 1934/5	181

VIII	Self-sufficiency in the Third Reich: currency shortages and the attempts at autarky: the 4 Year Plan and its effect upon agri- culture	212
IX	Rural Migration between 1933 and 1939 and the consequences for agricultural production	252
X	The Reichsnährstand in its rel- ationship to other official bodies and its own leadership crisis in 1936/7	293
XI	The Erbhof Law: the background to its introduction, its pro- visions and reception upon the land	338
XII	An examination of actual litig- ation under the EHG system	368
XIII	National Socialism and the Peasant: race and romanticism and the efforts to convert the peasant politically	401
XIV	The NS Settlement programme: its principles, organization and achievements	443
	Conclusion	485
	Appendices	510
	Bibliography	572

FOREWORD

It must be made clear in advance that this work is not primarily an economic treatise, but rather an attempt to show the NSDAP impact upon the agrarian population, how this assisted the rise of Hitler's party to power and then what structural changes took place in the agrarian sector as a result. How the advent of National Socialism affected agriculture's place in the economy and in German society as a whole will also be dealt with. This process will be described up to 1938 only, since the acquisition of new territory from that time inevitably affected statistics and makes comparison with early periods difficult. The link between foreign policy and that of autarky as an economic goal will also be discussed, not to apportion guilt or otherwise for the war, but because the two in the Third Reich are inseparable: there is a close connection between Hitler's desire to acquire living-space and the drive to achieve relative self-sufficiency through the Four Year Plan, since the latter was a prelude to bringing about the first.

To show all this, some recourse to economics as such, and to statistics, cannot be avoided, since the background to the NSDAP's rise to office must be sketched in, as must the connection between economic considerations and policy-making in the Third Reich. Figures have been relegated to footnotes or appendices in order not to disturb the narrative, but they cannot be left out altogether.

In order to show what areas will follow in somewhat more detail, a series of propositions are listed here, for which evidence will be offered in this work. Firstly, it is hoped to show that the NSDAP took little interest in the land prior to 1928 except in isolated cases, and the Party's programme of March 1930 and subsequent activity

in rural areas was chiefly opportunism. It will be maintained here that this action was prompted by a growing radicalisation on the land, due to the economic crisis in general from 1928 onwards and also to the fact that the rural community had systematically been stirred up against the Weimar Republic throughout the twenties by farm unions and Right-Wing politicians prior to the NS arrival. It will be suggested that it was the peasants rather than the estate-owners who flocked to the NSDAP, so that the sociological structure of German agriculture, based on a very large number of relatively small holdings, was probably a factor in helping the Party into office. The tactics of legality followed by the movement will be assessed as contributing to electoral success, in contrast to the methods of some of its rivals.

As far as actual policies initiated in the Third Reich are concerned, these were by no means always original, and it is hoped to illustrate in this work that in many respects the NSDAP was firmly in the tradition of the German Right, by goal if not by method. This is held to be particularly true of the policy of autarky, and evidence will be produced demonstrating that the Weimar Republic went some way along the road towards self-sufficiency and protective tariffs before the NS accession. Similarly the continuity of economic policy in the Third Reich will be stressed insofar as the question of whether priority should be given to industry or to agriculture tends to crop up again and again in Germany from the turn of the century onwards.

Further, it will be held here that in purely economic terms the NSDAP aided the German farmer greatly from 1933 to 1936 to regain viability for his holding, partly through the use of the fixed-price system. But it will be suggested that the situation deteriorated for

the food producer past 1936, partly because of the introduction of the Four Year Plan but also because a system of supply and demand prices would have enabled the farmer to cash in on growing public prosperity, which a fixed-price structure prevented him from doing. It will thus be argued that removing the farmer from outside the realm of speculation and free prices provided an accelerator for the community in 1933 but by three years later had become a brake: the NSDAP's defiance of supply and demand as a concept was therefore only partly successful.

How the NSDAP accorded a special place to the peasant will be described: much propaganda in the Third Reich extolling rural virtues was pure gushing enthusiasm in the full tradition of Romanticism: but there were solid, practical reasons for furthering the farmer as well, so that the propaganda was to a certain extent the icing on the cake only. The NSDAP genuinely believed the peasantry to be essential as food-suppliers, as the backbone of defence and above all, as the life-source of the nation: behind this credolay the statistics of the birthrate in Germany c. 1933. Ultimately, the Party's belief that the rural community would always produce more children than city-dwellers was incorrect but appears to have been genuinely held. Thus in supporting and flattering the peasantry the NSDAP was romantic to a certain extent only: this should not conceal the very real politico-economic grounds for the policy.

Connected with this support of the land is the question of rural migration to the cities, usually called "land flight" in this work: it is a curious fact that a movement dedicated to furthering the land should have presided over so many people leaving it. This paradox grew from 1933 onwards, as industry gradually recovered in Germany from the depression. The efforts of the NSDAP to prevent this, both by

exhortation and decree, were fruitless: no one seems to have cared about legal measures to stop the flight at all. This is a strange fact to the person accustomed to thinking of the Third Reich as a society ruled by intimidation and fear. But the truth seems to be that insofar as agriculture was concerned, the rulers of Germany had a healthy respect for public opinion: evidence will be offered here to show that this was true in respect of the law for the entailment of peasant holdings, as well as in the case of the land-flight. In both areas although legal measures were instituted to back up policy, they were never really applied as thoroughly as they could have been. Even in the case of the "Battle of Production" on the land, exhortation seems to have been preferred to coercion. The reservation must, of course, be made at once that one is speaking here of the period 1933-8; no doubt these observations were not true of wartime Germany, but neither would they be of wartime England. But prior to 1939 at least the Third Reich showed agriculturally a wide divergence in several instances between the introduction of legislation and its whole-hearted application.

It should now be made clear that certain matters have not been dealt with: there is an obvious distinction between food-production and agriculture, and it should be emphasized that market-gardening, viniculture, fishing and forestry have not been included. Similarly, the efforts made to conserve food launched under the title of "Kampf dem Verderb" have not been described for reasons of space; these have also precluded any mention of the various bodies set up in the Third Reich to deal with the planning of land resources.

Finally every effort has been made to restrict the use of both initials (as in NSDAP) and German expressions. The criterion adopted in the latter case has been to employ English equivalents wherever

possible and only to fall back upon the original where no precise equivalent exists. This applies particularly to names of official bodies (e.g. "Reichsnährstand") or offices such as "Landesbauernführer": in these cases it might be misleading to attempt a translation. In any case, there is the additional advantage in retaining the original word since it often obviated the need to use a whole phrase in translation. Otherwise, translations have been made in all cases.

Abbreviations for Sources used in footnotes in this work

ADC	American Document Centre, Berlin
BA	Bundesarchiv, Koblenz: the West German National Archives.
BM	British Museum
GSA	Geheime Staatsarchiv, Berlin-Dahlemdorff: the Prussian State Archives
HSA(D)	Hauptstaatsarchiv Nordrhein-Westfalen, Kaiserswerth Düsseldorf: the state archives for North-Rhine/Westphalia
HSA(S)	Hauptstaatsarchiv Baden-Württemberg, Stuttgart: the state archives for that region
IfZ	Institut für Zeitgeschichte, Munich: the Institute for Contemporary History
LA	Landesarchiv, Schleswig-Holstein, Schleswig: the regional archives for Schleswig-Holstein
LUD	Schloss Ludwigsburg: branch of Baden-Württemberg archives
ND	Nachlass Darré, Goslar: Darré's personal letters, circulars to his subordinates etc. in the city archives, Goslar
NSA	Niedersächsisches Staatsarchiv, Hanover: State archives for Lower Saxony
Unna	District office of the Agricultural Chamber for Westphalia- Lippe, Unna, Westphalia

It should be added that the main sources used for Press cuttings and newspapers were the British Museum and the Wiener Library in Landau, the Bundesarchiv in Koblenz and the Press Institute in Dortmund. The "Westfälischer Bauer" is in the Library of the Agricultural Chamber Westphalia-Lippe in Münster. The document referred to as "Trial Brief" is in the library of the Landwirtschaftliche Hochschule, Stuttgart University, Stuttgart-Hohenheim, as are the "Entscheidungen des Reichserbhofgerichtes" 1934-39, the relevant copies of "Odal" and of the "NS Monatsheft".

List of German words and abbreviations used in the text

Abfindung	Private family agreement regarding the compensation paid to those children who could not inherit land from their peasant father
Abmeierung	The dispossession of a peasant from the management of the farm in the Third Reich
Anerbengericht	First channel of legislation under the EHG (see below); a local court formed for the administration of this law, with no other authority outside the agrarian community
Anerbenrecht	One of two forms of inheritance practised in Germany prior to the EHG; a system of closed inheritance, with one heir only inheriting the farm
Ausstattung	Legal obligation upon heir in the EHG to provide his brothers and sisters with vocational training and any equipment for a career where necessary
Bauer	Plural "Bauern": roughly the equivalent of "yeoman" in the old English connotation of that word; after the EHG the word "Bauer" designated the owner of an Erbhof (see below)
Bauernführer	The local agrarian leader in the Third Reich usually a member of the NSDAP (see below)
B.D.M.	Bund Deutscher Mädel was the youth organization for girls in the Third Reich.
Bezirk	Area of local authority administration in Prussia, headed by a Regierungspräsident (see below)
CNBLVP	Christliche National Bauern und Landvolk Partei, a small Right-Wing political party formed under the Weimar Republic

DAF	Deutsche Arbeit Front, the compulsory labour organization which replaced trade unions in Germany after 1933
DDP	Deutsche Demokratische Partei, a Centre political party to which Dr. Dietrich, Minister of Agriculture from June 1928 until March 1930 belonged
Deutsche Bauernschaft	Agrarian union founded in 1927 to represent the Protestant dairy-farmers of North West Germany
DNB	Deutsches Nachrichten Büro, a press agency
DNVP	Deutschnational Volkspartei: Right-Wing political party whose leader was Hugenberg, Minister of Agriculture between January and June 1933
DVP	Deutsche Volkspartei: Right-Wing party representing mainly business interests; Stresemann was its best-known leader
EHG	"Erbhofgesetz" 29th September 1933 established hereditary, entailed farms (Erbhöfe) in Germany
Erbhof	Plural "Erbhöfe" literally "hereditary farm": see "EHG"
Erzeugungsschlacht	"Battle of Production": the title of the struggle to achieve agrarian self-sufficiency in the Third Reich
Gau	Administrative regional area for the NSDAP, and therefore a Party term, nothing to do with the State government: from "Gau" comes "Gauleiter" the NSDAP leader for each of the 35 Gau. "Gauleitung" simply means the apparatus of Party administration in each Gau
Gesetz	Law in general, as in Erbhofgesetz

Ha	Abbreviation for "Hektar", a unit of land measurement equalling 2.47 acres
Heimatzuflucht	"Flight to home": part of the EHG, this provision entitled siblings of the heir once grown-up to receive food and shelter on the farm when in financial distress
HJ	"Hitler Jugend" the masculine equivalent of the B.D.M.
KBF	"Kreisbauernführer": in the Third Reich the peasants' leader in one of the 514 Kreisbauernschaften (see below) into which the country was divided
Kbsch	See "Kreisbauernschaft"
Kreis	Administrative area in Germany equivalent to "district" in England, for the NSDAP in general and for the agrarian corporation in particular in the Third Reich. From the word is formed "Kreisleiter" the Party leader next in importance to "Gauleiter"
Kreisbauernschaft	Administrative area in agrarian terms for which a KBF was responsible in the Third Reich: abbreviated as "Kbsch" in footnotes
Landbund	Right-Wing farmers union prior to 1933, especially associated with the eastern estate-owners who monopolized its leadership
Landesbauernschaft	The largest area of agrarian administration in the Third Reich, there being 19 for the whole country: these were sub-divided into Kreisbauernschaften: abbreviated as "Lbsch" in footnotes.

Landrat	A Civil Servant: head of a "Kreis" as a unit of local government throughout the period of this thesis
Landtag	Regional parliament for each of the 17 States of Germany which existed prior to 1933
LBF	"Landesbauernführer": leader of a Landesbauernschaft
Lbsch	See "Landesbauernschaft"
LGF	"Landwirtschaftlichergaufachberater": agricultural adviser to a Gauleiter in the NSDAP
LKF	"Landwirtschaftlicherkreisfachberater": agricultural adviser to a Kreisleiter in the NSDAP
LVL	"Landwirtschaftliche Vertrauensleute": Party agents on agrarian matters prior to 1933: the lowest level of the Party's agricultural cadre
IVO	"Landwirtschaftsverband Ostpreussen": estate-owners union in East Prussia before 1933
Ministerialblatt	Weekly pamphlet issued by Ministry of Agriculture on agricultural administration
Morgen	Unit of land measurement, equalling 1/4 Hektar or 0.62 acres
NS	National Socialist(s) used here as a noun to denote members of the NSDAP or as an adjectival prefix e.g. "NS ideas" "NS policy" etc. when speaking of the NSDAP in general
NSDAP	"National Sozialistische Deutsche Arbeiter Partei": official title of the Hitler movement
NS Frauenschaft	Party organization for womens matters
Oberpräsident	Head of a province in the administration of Prussia

OBf	"Ortsbauernführer": lowest level of agrarian leadership, the head of the peasants in an Ortsbauernschaft in the Third Reich (usually a village)
Osthilfe	"Eastern Help": system of financial aid to agriculture in eastern parts of Germany, introduced in 1929
Pfennig	Coin = 1/100 of a mark (see "RM")
RBF	"Reichsbauernführer": National Peasant leader after 1933
Realteilung	Alternative system of land inheritance (see "Anerbenrecht") mainly practised in West and South-West Germany entailing the division of a farm among all the farmer's children, similar to gavelkind in Kent
Regierungspräsident	Head of a Bezirk in Prussia i.e. an official in local government: abbreviated to "Regpräsident" in footnotes
Reichslandbund (RLB)	Central Committee of Landbund (see above) which co-ordinated its various regional and district branches
RGB	"Reichsgesetzblatt": official gazette for publication of all laws in Germany 1919-1945
RNS	"Reichsnährstand": the unified corporation established after 1933 to administer food production and distribution the head of which was the RBF (see above)
REM	"Reichsernährungs und Landwirtschafts Ministerium": Ministry of Food and Agriculture

RM	"Reichsmark": unit of currency, varying between 12 and 14 to the £1 sterling 1933-9
S.A.	"Sturmabteilung": uniformed NSDAP organization
S.S.	"Schutzstaffel": body which tended to push out the S.A. in importance after 1934, having originally been Hitler's bodyguard
SPD	"Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands": Social Democrats and main recipients of working-class vote before 1933
Stahlhelm	Right-Wing ex-Servicemen's association under Weimar
VB	"Völkischer Beobachter" main press organ of the NSDAP
Verband	Plural "Verbände": in this work used to designate marketing associations in the Third Reich
VJH	"Vierteljahrsheft für Zeitgeschichte": Quarterly magazine on contemporary history
Völkisch	A difficult word to translate, it means anti-semitic, nationalistic and extreme Right-Wing in politics. Perhaps above all placing German blood and culture in the forefront of one's thinking is chiefly implied.
WB	"Westfälischer Bauer": journal of the Christian (Catholic) Farmers Union in Westphalia up to 1933
Wehrmacht	Equivalent to "Armed Forces of the Crown" in Britain
WTB	"Wolff's Telegraphisches Büro": press agency
Zentrum	The Catholic Centre Party under Weimar

Chapter I: German Agriculture in the 1920s and the early years of
the National Socialist Party

As far as the statistical and geographical background to German agriculture is concerned this has been sketched in briefly in Appendix A in order to paint in the backcloth against which the political struggles over the land took place. The object of the chapter which follows is to describe the nature of the struggles themselves, and illustrate the general economic position for the farmers in the twenties, as well as their attitude towards the Republic in general, and the history and organization of their unions as well as that of the Hitler movement. It is felt that this is a necessary preliminary to explaining the National Socialist rise to power.

The Struggle over Tariff Protection

(i) The main question in German agrarian policy during the twenties was of relatively long standing, namely, Protectionism versus Free Trade. Since industrial interests were normally in favour of the latter, in order to further exports, discussion of agricultural tariffs policy was not confined wholly to the agrarian sector: clearly, had Germany discriminated too much against foreign foodstuffs this might have led to reprisals against her own industrial exports. There was a social aspect to the question too, in that import duties obviously made food dearer to the consumer; this had the effect of producing Left-Wing support for Free Trade, as will be shown later.

A further point in the discussion was that regarding the striking of a favourable balance in national terms between industry and agriculture, and their respective roles in the economy as a whole. This cannot be separated from the tariff question, since the preservation of agriculture as such might entail high duties, irrespective of the effect of them upon exports; the logical conclusion of this

argument would be a policy of self-sufficiency behind protective barriers, rather than large-scale participation in international trade.

Indeed, as early as 1901 the economist Adolf Wagner was writing of the dangers, as he saw it, of too much reliance upon an exports policy and industry, which, if carried to its logical conclusion, would expose German farmers to the vicissitudes of the world market and foreign competition, thereby endangering the country's food supply. By this he meant that German farmers would be ruined by cheap imports of foodstuffs, agriculture would collapse, and the whole of the nation's sources of nourishment would then be in foreign hands; this led Wagner to call for a policy of Protectionism.¹

In the same year a conference of thirty of the country's leading economists was convened to discuss the whole matter of what shape the economy should have in future. It is interesting that no firm decision could be reached one way or the other, particularly in respect of a tariffs policy.² The growth of industrialism had in sum produced divisions of opinion as to how the German economy should best be organized.

The early postwar years saw the same problem under discussion; some economists, such as Aeroboe and Max Sering, maintained that modern economics transcended national frontiers, and that the best course for Germany lay in importing grain, especially wheat, from those lands where it could be most cheaply produced, with industrial exports providing the necessary financial backing.³ Domestic farmers should concentrate their efforts upon a more intensive type of farming based on dairy-farming and livestock, since it was in these sectors that the gap between demand and domestically produced supply was at its largest.⁴

Over and against the concept of concentration upon dairy-farming

domestically was the old view that Germany should be self-sufficient completely. Several separate factors may be distinguished as having played a part in the formation of this opinion, the first having been the War, in which the enemy naval blockade had caused great suffering in the country. Historians have suggested that this made an indelible impression upon the public consciousness and prepared Germans psychologically for an antarkistic type of policy.⁵ Secondly, Germany lost a good deal of agricultural land in 1919 as a result of the peace treaty, which deprived her especially of areas favourable to grain and potatoes in the east.⁶ These demands were also occasioned partly by another aspect of the Treaty of Versailles which had imposed heavy reparations.⁷ This led to a serious threat to the balance of payments, since if a large part of exports was to be written off merely as, in effect, debt payments, then it looked as though some effort ought to be made to reduce imports in order to balance the books. Since raw materials for exports could not be cut, then diminished food purchases seemed to offer the best solution. The unofficial but highly-respected Agricultural Council passed a resolution to the effect that "At the present time the re-introduction and strengthening of tariff protection ... is imperative for national self-preservation."⁸ As the Council made clear, the problem of reparations lay behind this demand, in that German agriculture alone should feed the country and should be sheltered from abroad in order to help it to do so. Both leading farm unions followed suit in 1925 with calls for virtual self-sufficiency to save imports.⁹ The agrarian sector itself had arrived at the same conclusions as Wagner, albeit as a result of altered circumstances. Industrial interests took a somewhat different stance inclining more to the Sering thesis of an efficient, intensive type of farming to make farmers more competitive, rather than to shelter them via tariffs.¹⁰ Fears of possible retaliation

against industrial exports doubtless played some part in this. Thus when the right to fix her own tariffs returned to Germany on 1st January 1925 the country was as divided between Protectionism and Free Trade as in the year 1900.

(ii) The current Minister of Agriculture was Graf von Kanitz of the German National Peoples Party (DNVP) a Right-Wing movement normally associated with the eastern grain-producers and a policy of tariff protection.¹¹ The Bill which the Minister prepared however, did not, after all, lean towards the Junker grain-producers particularly but rather brought back a modified version of the duties as applying in 1902. The new measure placed more emphasis on protecting livestock breeders and dairy-farmers than on helping the eastern grain-producers. It has been described as a conscious move to avoid the charge of partiality to the east by deliberately favouring the peasants of the South and West.¹² Of course, the desire to help redress the imbalance between grain and animal products in imports may also have played a part in formulating the new proposals.

When the Bill was presented in the Reichstag a lively debate ensued; the Peoples Party (DVP) linked with business interests argued for cheap fodder imports but high duties on finished foodstuffs such as fats; not surprisingly, the Catholic Zentrum Party, representing the peasants of South and West Germany did likewise and consequently, like the DVP, supported the Bill as drafted.¹³ This accord showed the common interests of industry and the dairy/livestock sectors in calling for modified duties. The DNVP and the National Socialists, i.e. the extreme Right both demanded self-sufficiency as a policy and therefore Protectionism in full. Free Trade found its advocates on the Left: both the Social Democrats (SPD) and the Communists voted against the new modified duties. The measure was eventually adopted as presented.¹⁴

What makes the debate interesting is the clear demonstration of divisions of interest. The extreme Right demanded full protection which would have entailed great benefit to most food-producers at the consumer's expense; the Left wanted cheap food for the masses, and appeared to be prepared to sacrifice farm interests to get it. This can hardly have improved its electoral chances on the land. The alliance between the Catholic Zentrum and business showed too the division between various sectors of the agrarian economy, since the animal/animal products area desired modified duties only, with cheap imported fodder, whereas the eastern grain-cultivators, via the DNVP, were in favour of total protection. As will be shown later, this split was to last throughout the period up to 1933.

(iii) The failure of the Right to get its demands led to heavy pressure on the government frequently in the form of letters from eastern grain-producers for example from East Prussia, regarding their economic difficulties. One of their spokesmen, von Kalckreuth, spoke of adopting radical methods if nothing was done to help; these included the threat of a buyers strike by the farmers i.e. of industrial goods.¹⁵ Not all protests about inadequate protection stemmed from the East however; in November 1925 the local farmers union in Stormarn (Schleswig-Holstein) wrote to the head of the provincial government regarding the rye and potato prices, suggesting heavier tariffs as a remedy.¹⁶ Von Kanitz himself joined the chorus with a message to the Chancellor requesting some form of government aid to keep up grain prices.¹⁷ This proposal was eventually taken up and a company established with state backing to buy rye on the open market and thus strengthen demand.¹⁸ The gap left by low duties on grain was thus filled by measures to help internally.

The events of 1925 have been described here in order to illustrate politic-economic diversions in the country, and within agriculture itself,

and to show the methods of some farmers themselves which was to demand assistance as a right and use threatening language if it did not materialize. This type of tactic was to be used repeatedly against the government in the years ahead. But perhaps most interesting in 1925 was the nature of the problem and response situation; no really clear decision had been taken at governmental level over the shape of Germany's economic future in terms of an outright policy favouring either industry or agriculture especially; the tariff protection introduced, plus the grain-support company, represented a compromise. The desire for industrial expansion based on free trade and cheap food could have been met, although the grain interests would have had to be sacrificed: had Germany adopted the kind of agricultural pattern which Sering had advocated she would have spent a good deal on grain imports nationally but cheaper bread and hence lower industrial costs might well have provided more than a recompense in terms of increased exports. It should be pointed out here as against this that commercial treaties signed in 1926/7 did reduce the degree of tariff protection afforded to animal husbandry under the 1925 Act. Germany was thus left with a large agricultural population not wholly protected by duties in any sector.

The economic situation on the land in general 1920-1928

(i) How far agricultural voters supported the Republic clearly depended in part upon purely material factors, as implied in the foregoing. C. 1925 the position was not all that favourable to the farmers, many of whom had doubtless lost savings in the inflation.¹⁹ As against this, however, there had been a very considerable rise in the price of foodstuffs from 1920 to 1923.²⁰ This had had a decisive effect upon farm indebtedness: by 1924 the pre-war total debts of fifteen billion RM had been fully redeemed.²¹ The Tariff Act and grain-buying helped to keep prices up after 1925, and a relative stability was observable until 1928, as can be seen in Appendix B. This is a generalization, it must be admitted, since

there was some variation insofar as the various branches of agriculture were concerned; on the whole, the prices for crops and livestock did better than those of dairy-products. Indeed, in 1928 only the latter index was lower than it had been four years previously. This affected the peasants more than the big landowners, since it was the smaller holdings which tended to derive most of their income from animals or their products.²² This clearly had voting implications, as obviously there were more peasants than Junkers.²³

Despite a relatively favourable price pattern and the advantage of starting with a clean slate in terms of debt after 1923, the farmers by 1928 were worse-off than they had been some four years before. The explanation of this seeming paradox, which occurred during a period of rising production²⁴ is explainable simply in terms of rising costs, particularly of fodder, taxes, fertilizer and industrial goods in general. Production costs outstripped prices, in other words. This was accompanied by a very sharp increase in indebtedness and hence in interest payments: capital shortage after the inflation led to as much as 12% being demanded on farm loans.²⁵ This rise in indebtedness was potentially dynamite, since whereas obligations could be met as long as prices remained constant, it was obvious that any sudden fall would be disastrous for the farmers. Even the awareness of the danger, let alone its materialization, was sufficient to begin to alienate the landed population from the Republic by 1928; the whole picture of discontent on the land in the twenties is dealt with in the next section, where it will be seen that some farm unions played a not inconsiderable part in the radicalisation of the farm voter. The overall economic position for agriculture in the twenties is summarized in Appendix B.

Farm Unions and the Republic

- (i) In order to make the attitude of the farm unions to the

government explicable, it is necessary to sketch very briefly their origins and organization, and, above all, their religious and sociological structure. The first ever farm union in Germany was the Christian Farmers Federation (CBV) a wholly Catholic body mainly representing the peasants in the South and West; (Bavaria had its own separate union (BBB)).²⁶ The Protestant counterpart to the CBV was the Agrarian League (RLB) founded in 1893 at the time of the Caprivi crisis; it represented, at least at leadership level, a somewhat different type of food-producer than did the Catholic Union, and was traditionally associated with the Junkers in the eastern rye and potato regions.²⁷ The organizational structure of the associations was similar, in that both had autonomous branches affiliated to a co-ordinating central office, which made for only loose control at the top, since all finance was in the hands of the branches, which alone could enrol members. For this reason the initials "RLB" when used in this work will designate the central committee of the Agrarian League, whereas for any regional or district branches of the same organization the word "Landbund" will be used. "Landbund" therefore means the actual farm union in Pomerania or Westphalia for example, whereas "RLB" is the central committee of all such "Landbund" groupings.

Since the two main unions were unlike socially and also in religious confession, it is not surprising that their political views were different. The CBV normally, although not invariably, followed the line of the Zentrum Party:²⁸ the highly nationalistic RLB leaned towards the DNVP. This variation in outlook inevitably affected the unions respective attitudes towards the Republic. The RLB was an extreme nationalist and Right-Wing organization;²⁹ as early as 1922 it was violently attacking the government of the day at its annual general meeting in a series of anti-semitic speeches³⁰ (the then Foreign Minister

Rathenau was Jewish). So marked was their agitation against the Republic in general that the secretary of the Zentrum Party in Baden wrote to the government with a warning: he alleged that the RLB was using low prices and high costs as weapons to stir up discontent. The letter went on to state that Right-Wing radicals were only waiting for the peasantry to get into real difficulties so that they could benefit from this.³¹ The RLB maintained this kind of propaganda line throughout the twenties stirring up the farmers wherever possible; at a provincial meeting in Schleswig-Holstein in 1927 a national president of the organization complained bitterly about farm taxes and lack of governmental protection; he stated that any economic policy furthering one section of the community at the expense of another was false; the implication here was that the farmers were being sacrificed to industrial interests.³² Even when the government did produce measures like the Tariffs Act they were denounced as insufficient by the RLB.³³ These attacks were all the more dangerous by being launched by the largest farm union.³⁴

This is not intended to imply that only the RLB fomented discontent, or even that any union was needed to do so; in Bavaria, for example, food producers appeared by 1929 to be alienated from society of their own accord, and were threatening not merely to boycott an exhibition but even to suspend food production altogether as a protest against government policy.³⁵ In Württemberg a small farmers union was allegedly telling its members in the same year that the Civil Servants were eating up the whole country;³⁶ the implication here is that the taxes of the producers, i.e. the farmers, were being used just to keep state functionaries in office.³⁷

(ii) The fact that professional representation of the farmer was not carried out by one united body was of concern to some union leaders and

farmers alike, and there had been much talk in the postwar years about the possibility of amalgamation. In this respect the Westphalia and Rhineland branches of the CBV had been especially progressive but unfortunately their proposals fell through.³⁸ By 1927 disunity had become even more pronounced with the formation of a new organization in North Germany, the "Deutsche Bauernschaft" whose membership consisted of the Protestant dairy-farming peasantry of that area.³⁹ The position was now that one very large union, RLB, had a membership overwhelmingly Protestant and a leadership leaning heavily towards the Junkers, the CBV represented the Catholic peasantry and the "Deutsche Bauernschaft" some of their Protestant counterparts, although many of the latter stayed with the RLB.⁴⁰ There were small local bodies in Bavaria, Mecklenberg, Schleswig-Holstein etc. which complicated the picture of professional representation still further.

Such disunity at a time of increasing economic difficulty led to renewed demands for some kind of order to be brought about and eventually a compromise was reached in 1929 when the RLB, the CBV, the "Deutsche Bauernschaft" and the Bavarian union came together in a loose alliance entitled the "Green Front".⁴¹ Not one of the bodies ceded any real power to the central committee which consisted of leaders of the individual unions.⁴² No genuine integration had been achieved but at least some co-ordination of policy was now possible. As a result a joint programme of demands was delivered to the government in March 1929; this complained of agricultural prices being too low whilst the costs of farm machinery, tools and artificial fertilizer were too high; the state had a moral obligation to help the farmers and should do so by raising food prices.⁴³ The demands for assistance as a moral right, heard in 1925 at the time of the Tariff Act, were now repeated by the new alliance. The "Green Front" spokesmen never varied from this line; von Kalckreuth

(RLB) for example once declared that the German people should be compelled to buy German food only, presumably by the government.⁴⁴

Before this introductory section is completed it should be pointed out how illusory the union alliance of 1929 turned out to be; when the government introduced a maize monopoly in 1930 to control the imports of feeding-stuffs, the move was welcomed by the RLB, who saw in it the chance for eastern farmers to dispose of their surplus rye on the inland market, as a substitute for foreign maize; since the latter was cheaper the "Deutsche Bauernschaft", as a representative of the livestock-rearing peasants in the North, walked out of the "Green Front".⁴⁵ The clash of economic interests precluded any chance before 1933 of bringing about any real voluntary unity of a permanent nature.

(iii) The picture presented by the agricultural scene in the twenties was one of confusion, partly as a result of disunity in professional representation and socio-religious variations between the unions, plus economic differences. But there was a gap too between agriculture and industry over the question of tariffs, although on this matter also, the farmers and peasants were far from united among themselves. In economic terms indebtedness was growing rapidly at the end of the twenties, boding ill for the Republic, from which large numbers of the landed population had apparently already become estranged: in Bavaria this process had gone so far by 1927 that Dr. Heim could write to the Chancellory that the farmers were putting the blame for their postwar disappointments onto "the parliamentary democratic system."⁴⁶ Perhaps to an outsider the most significant events in retrospect are those of 1925 and the Tariffs Act debate and its aftermath. By adjusting duties in favour of the livestock and dairy-farming branches the government had seemed initially to be following the Sering thesis of an intensive agriculture on the Dutch/Danish model; agitation by the Junkers and the general need to save imports

because of reparations led later to support for the grain interests as well. Germany was left with a comprehensive system of food production rather than an efficient and specialized one.⁴⁷ The logical consequence of this was the necessity of taking measures to help all sectors of agriculture with its inherent difficulty, as exemplified by the maize monopoly, that a scheme to help one section might well harm another; one man's protective duty was another man's higher production costs.

As will be seen in the later chapter, devoted to Cabinet policy in more detail post 1928, this fatal imbalance in agriculture made for a governmental inability to please everyone simultaneously; before dealing with Cabinet measures and the economic depression in general, one must first describe the early history and attitude to the land of that political movement which was subsequently to benefit most from that situation.

The Early Years of the National Socialist Movement

(i) The German Workers Party, to be referred to here as the NSDAP, was founded in 1919 by Anton Drexler, a locksmith, in Munich. Both his occupation and the Party's birthplace were significant in that the movement was from its inception urban and lower-middle to middle-class. This did not make it a bourgeois party in the conventional sense, since it had a basis of anti-semitism and of anti-capitalism from the beginning.⁴⁸ Its urban origins tended to make it indifferent to the land as far as can be seen.⁴⁹ The orientation of the Party is revealed by an analysis of attendances at meetings, for example, the one when the NSDAP recruited its most famous member, Adolf Hitler, in September 1919: agricultural representatives were conspicuous only by their absence upon that occasion.⁵⁰ This does not necessarily mean that as individuals they would not have been accepted at the time, but rather that the movement had its attention elsewhere;⁵¹ so true was this that even when the NSDAP began to spread out

into rural Bavaria, farmers were under-represented on the membership lists, suggesting a mutual lack of attraction.⁵²

There may well have been two main reasons for this, both tactical, apart from the tendency towards urbanism implicit in the choice of birthplace. Firstly, Hitler desired to build up one citadel as a kind of cornerstone of the movement, and once the primacy of his leadership had been asserted in August 1921 he set up a structure with a strong bias towards centralized control and authority; linked with the centralism of Munich in organizational terms was the desire to take on Marxism openly in a large conurbation and defeat it publicly.⁵³ Secondly, there was the question of mass-organization and propaganda, clearly easier to realize in cities than in villages. In this respect, Hitler's later biography is interesting, since he specifically cites a mass demonstration by the Communists which he had seen in Berlin as an example of how the populace could be swayed. The whole affair with its "sea of red flags and red flowers" clearly made an indelible impression on Hitler's mind,⁵⁴ the comparative neglect of agriculture in the NSDAP which will be described here as being typical of the movement prior to 1929/30 must be seen in the context of tactical considerations and organizational control.

The point must however be made here that there is a difference between "agriculture" and "rural", in that not everyone living on the land is necessarily a farmer, but may be a blacksmith or mechanic, or simply a tradesman. This stipulation has to be made early in this work, as a German historian has shown that in Autumn 1923 quite a large proportion of members of the NSDAP were rural in their habitation.⁵⁵ That this did not mean that they were always farmers or peasants can be seen from the fact that at the same time only ten per cent of the membership were actually engaged as occupiers or lessees of farms.⁵⁶ Indeed, the craftsmen's share of the movement tended to increase in inverse proportion

to the proximity of their dwelling to the towns; whereas the Party overall drew one fifth of its strength from the occupations summarizable under the general heading "Craftsman" (Handwerker) in rural areas the percentage was somewhat higher at 24.3.⁵⁷ It must therefore be borne in mind that the spread of the NSDAP in rural areas as described anywhere in this work in general terms does not necessarily imply an equal growth among the farming community as such; a relatively large rural membership in the early years of the movement and Party neglect of agriculture do not therefore constitute a contradiction in terms.

(ii) February 1920 saw the drawing-up of a programme of 25 Points, mostly notable only for their extreme vagueness.⁵⁸ Of these, No. 17 dealt with the land, calling for reform based upon uncompensated expropriation where necessary, in the interests of the community as a whole. The abolition of speculation in agricultural property was also demanded, with no details offered as to how this was to be achieved.⁵⁹ However nebulous the talk about "expropriation" may have been, it is suggested here that the move was not likely to win many votes in a country where most holdings belonged to peasant proprietors; the inclusion of Point 17 leads one to suppose that the NSDAP was simply not really interested in agriculture in any precise way at this time.

However, some thinking about what shape the Party's agrarian policy should take was done at a later date, but significantly enough in North Germany rather than in Munich, and as part of an attempt to concretize Party thinking in general. In 1925/6 a campaign to launch a new programme, more detailed than the 25 Points, was undertaken by Gregor Strasser, Ley and Goebbels, among others. This attempt was defeated but the proposals were not without interest. On the agrarian front the northern group proposed that farmers should be allowed to keep up to 1 thousand Morgen (250 Hektars) of land as private property, but that any in

excess should be taken by the state and parcelled out into new holdings of 50-200 Morgen. Farm labourers would have been allocated two Morgen each as a private plot; the contrast between the size-range permissible for land-owners and that allocated to workers shows the essentially conservative view of society implicit in their thinking.

On the other hand, it must be accepted that the attitude towards private property as such removes any belief about the NSDAP being wholly conventional. The opening line of the agrarian section of the proposed new programme runs "Land and soil are the property of the nation."; from this it was held to follow that all new holdings created under the land redistribution suggested should be upon a tenurial basis only with the state as the ultimate overlord; these farms would be entailed on an hereditary system, and would not be capable of being offered as collateral against a loan. These points are clearly to concretize the desire to end speculation in land produced as a generalization only in the original Point 17. The granting of new leases and financial assistance was to be decided by a chamber of professional experts. Marketing would also be reformed and all farmers would have to join a parish sales co-operative. A contract system would replace the free play of market forces.⁶⁰

Hitler himself defeated the proposed new programme, and in May 1926 formally declared the original 25 Points to be unalterable.⁶¹ This episode, and the ideas themselves, have been described to bring out two points; firstly, the leader's lack of interest in concrete thinking about socio-economic plans in general, in conformity with the view expressed later that a programme was a means to power rather than a forecast of specific action.⁶² Secondly, the thinking shown in the proposals shows that for some NS at least the anti-capitalism of the Party meant something; the attacks on speculation in the agrarian section are interesting in this respect, especially as when the Party did come to

power the farming community, as will be seen, was to a very real extent lifted out from the realms of the free market and supply and demand requirements. Although the programme of 1925/6 was framed by a minority and defeated it did have an unconscious predictive value for legislation in the Third Reich.

(iii) It was the leader's own intervention which had defeated Strasser in 1926, and this implication of dominance over the movement necessitates an examination of his own attitude to the land, since clearly Hitler's opinion was by now of paramount importance in deciding policy. As a preliminary, it should be made clear that the Führer took little interest in agriculture as such; unlike Mussolini who took pains to publicize himself driving tractors and chatting to peasants Hitler had no feeling for the land and its occupants.⁶³ Presented with the deeds of an estate in Lower Saxony in 1937, he never subsequently visited the place at all.⁶⁴ This does not, however, imply that he was unaware of the peasantry as a class or indifferent to the role they played socially and economically in the country; his biography contains frequent references to agriculture in general, though not in very precise terms.

Hitler's economic policy and his agrarian one cannot in reality be distinguished from one another, since he based his views upon the concept of autarky in general, a self-sufficient state in all ways possible. The Imperial Germany of pre 1914 was chided for its laxness in not following such a policy. The Kaiser's government, wrote Hitler, could either have acquired new land to establish self-sufficiency or it could have paid for food imports, in lieu of autarky, by way of industrial exports; "The soundest way of these two would have been the first."⁶⁵ The amount of land available to Germany in Europe was the decisive factor for Hitler, due to his belief that productivity

in agriculture could be increased up to a certain point only, but that this higher output would be eventually swallowed up by better living-standards in general, causing more food to be consumed.⁶⁶ Hence the famous passage where the task of the German sword is said to be to win fresh land for the German plough.⁶⁷

In an essay written in 1924 Hitler expanded his views somewhat on the subject of the space available to the country, and postulated four possible solutions. These were birth-control and/or emigration to reduce the pressure of population upon land: these he rejected as implying less people and hence less political influence for the country. This left the possibilities of either paying for food by exports or acquiring fresh territory.⁶⁸ A speech in Hamburg saw the first of these rejected, as it had been in "Mein Kampf"; Hitler stated now that "an export/import economy is the symptom of a disease" and cannot be viable in the long run." The products of the soil have to support the whole population."⁶⁹ In a series of essays also written in 1928 Hitler turned down the export of finished goods in bulk for political reasons; since Germany herself did not possess all the necessary raw materials, overseas colonies were implied in the policy, which in turn entailed a merchant marine and a fleet to guard it, and hence a possible clash with England. A "territorial policy" based on the acquisition of sufficient living-space to nourish the whole population was the only answer.⁷⁰

From this line of thought Hitler never seems to have deviated, as witness the memorandum he wrote in 1936 which served as an introduction to the Four-Year Plan. He returned here to the alternatives originally raised, of self-sufficiency or a share in international trade, and again eliminated the second, leading to the conclusion "The definitive solution lies in a widening of our living-space."⁷¹ Hitlerian

foreign policy and agricultural policy were, in sum, intermingled; the object of the first was to acquire enough space to ensure autarky. That Germany needed more was based on what one historian has called Hitler's Malthusian outlook on the relation between increasing consumption and possible production.⁷²

The NSDAP leader had other reasons for supporting the peasantry than the purely economic ones described; many "present evils" he believed to have their origin "exclusively in the disproportion between the urban and rural portions of the population. A solid stock of small and medium-sized farm owners" is the best protection against social evils.⁷³ As the latter are not exactly specified the reader is left to infer that Hitler means Communism and the class-struggle.⁷⁴

One interesting feature of the passages is the concealed value-judgement in the term "disproportion". Mathematically Hitler was right, as by 1910 only 38% of the population lived in rural communities, whereas in the year of German unification the proportion had been two thirds.⁷⁵ Many might hold this as a sign of economic progress, but precisely through his use of the word "disproportion" Hitler seems to express his belief in the virtues of the peasantry as such. Hence the judgement that "the preservation of a healthy farming community can never be estimated highly enough."⁷⁶ For Hitler economic theory and the political need for a conservative bulwark combined to produce a policy of the preservation of the peasantry as a socio-economic class.

Party activity on the land before 1928

(i) Prior to the Putsch in November 1923 the NSDAP showed virtually no interest in the rural sector at all: this does not appear to have changed with the re-formation of the Party in January 1925. Hitler was now convinced that the road to power lay through the ballot-box, but faithful to his concept of mass organization and propaganda,

continued to steer an urban course. Activity in the years 1925-8 tended to concentrate upon the Ruhr, Thuringian industrial regions, Berlin and Hamburg.⁷⁷ In 1926 Westphalia, Düsseldorf and the lower Rhine industrial area were built into one unified Gau, in order to wage the battle of words more effectively in the whole Ruhr area,⁷⁸ this structure pattern indicates an emphasis upon winning adherents in the mass in urban regions. Indeed in the same year Goebbels expected that the Party would win power by developing "Two dozen cities into unshakeable foundations for our movement."⁷⁹ The impression of urban orientation is confirmed by a report sent to the Ministry of the Interior in March 1927 stating that "Their (NS) agitation in rural areas is very slight".⁸⁰

Of course there was some; the contention here is not that the land was totally ignored, but rather that interest in it was both local and limited, rather than representing a nationally-directed drive. One branch account from Lower Saxony speaks of attempts to win over the peasants in that area, which were evidently unsuccessful, since the report speaks of their allegiance to the Ex-Servicemens League (Stahlhelm);⁸¹ this in itself was a Right-Wing body often associated with the DNVP. It rather looks as though at the time the NSDAP was unable to penetrate the ground held in country districts by the traditional Right.

A further factor inhibiting rural activity in the years immediately following the re-formation was finance, as collections were taken at public meetings, which would, for a Party still limited in numbers,⁸² suggest that the best place to hold them would be where attendance was most likely to be at its highest; this would not be lightly-populated rural districts.⁸³ Nonetheless, by 1927/8 the Party was in some regions beginning to cast its eyes rather more upon the land than previously.

(ii) There appear to have been two reasons for this, of which the first was a growing alienation among farmers from the Republic at the

time. This led the NS to begin to consider the rural vote as a worthwhile factor, and their activity began to increase, slightly at first, outside the towns. December 1927 saw the V.B. aiming its propaganda at a sensitive point for the peasants, their growing indebtedness; this, they were now told, was due to reparations in the shape of the Dawes Plan.⁸⁴ In April, 1928, Hitler issued an official pronouncement on Point 17: the ambiguity of its remarks about expropriation had led to opponents asserting to the peasants that the NS, like the Marxists, were aiming to remove the cultivator from his holding.⁸⁵ To obviate any adverse reaction in farming circles, it was now stated that such action would be taken only against Jewish speculators; the ordinary food-producer had nothing to fear.⁸⁶ In early 1928 the V.B. began to direct its attention to the farm union leaders, presumably to shake members confidence in them.⁸⁷

By December of that year NS attacks upon the Landbund leaders as "Freemasons" etc. had become widespread, according to one of its regional journals.⁸⁸ At a Party meeting at Niederochtenhausen (Lower Saxony) an hour and a half speech was devoted to such typical themes as Jews, Freemasons, Marxism, the Press, interest-slavery, reparations and Locarno. This occasion was said to be well-attended, and most of the audience were described as Landbund members.⁸⁹ This is significant and suggests that the NSDAP was already enjoying some success in opening up a gap in this union between leaders and led.

The activity on the land was by no means uniform in all regions however, and one must beware of generalizations; in Munich itself there seemed as late as 1929 to be little formal organization for the rural areas, although there were village meetings. After one such at Wolznach (Upper Bavaria) the Gauleiter sent an urgent message to Party headquarters

describing the successful meeting but complaining that no written material existed to follow this up in the form of propaganda leaflets.⁹⁰ No formal cadre of agitators yet existed on the land, nor was one installed until mid 1930, so that until that year it is impossible to speak of a national drive in rural areas. With the Hitlerian statement about Point 17, however, there was at least a certain clearing of the decks preparatory to action. This new regard for the land, in the North at least, is consistent with Hitler's own dictum, that one road to office lay through a concentration upon these classes whose economic existence was currently threatened.⁹¹

The second reason for the limited re-orientation was the comparative failure of the Party in urban areas anyway, a fact which showed up in the Reichstag elections of May 1928, when the Party got 1.3% of the votes cast in the Ruhr.⁹² The share of the poll for the NSDAP was drastically down in comparison to December 1924 for the country as a whole.⁹³ Over three years of urban campaigning had ended in electoral failure.⁹⁴ Nonetheless there were a few bright spots in what must otherwise have seemed like a very depressing result indeed; in some rural districts the NSDAP vote in Schleswig-Holstein was quite encouraging when expressed as a percentage of the total poll.⁹⁵ How the Party now built on this by capitalizing on local rural discontent will be the subject of the next chapter, in order to illustrate the NS rise in microcosm.

Notes

1. Wagner's views in "Agrar und Industriestaat" are summarized in M. Tracy "Agriculture in Western Europe" p.93
2. See C. Von Dietze "Deutsche Agrarpolitik seit Bismarck" in "Zeitschrift für Agrargeschichte und Agrarsoziologie" 1964, p.203 for the conference details.
3. The opinions of Sering etc. are condensed from J. Holt "German Agricultural Policy 1924-1936" pp.8-12
4. Throughout the 1920s Germany devoted more money to importing animal products and feeding-stuffs than to bread grains. From 1925-9 the yearly average amount of grain imports was 532 Million Reichsmarks (RM) but for eggs, dairy produce, meat and meat products and feeding-stuffs the total combined average for the same period amounted to 1771 Mill RM. E. Borsig "Reagrarisierung Deutschlands?" p.29
5. G. Stolper, K. Hauser and K. Borchhardt "The German Economy 1870 to the present day" p.96
6. Germany lost 17% of her rye and barley production, 11% of oats, 13% of her wheat and 18% of her potato output as a result of Versailles: D. Petzina "Autarkiepolitik im Dritten Reich." p.16
7. For 1925 the amount fixed was 1548 Mill RM "Foreign Trade and Exchange Controls in Germany" p.53
8. In a pamphlet "Der Schutz der landwirtschaftlichen Erzeugung als Vorbedingung des Wiederaufbaues der deutschen Wirtschaft": BA-R431/1277
9. From H. Kretschmar "Deutsche Agrarprogramme der Nachkriegszeit" pp.42-8
10. Ibid: Netherlands and Denmark were taken as models in this respect vide Tracy p.192
11. The Party had been demanding self-sufficiency and protection in

- 1919, J.B. Holt "German Agricultural Policy 1924-1936" p.18 (henceforth "Holt")
12. Vide H. Haushofer and H. Recke "50 Jahre: Reichsernährungsministerium - Bundesernährungsministerium" pp.17-18 (henceforth "50 Jahre")
 13. Holt p.108. The Zentrum and the DVP argued for autarky as a policy in general terms: Stoltenberg p.70
 14. A fuller account of the debate is in G. Stoltenberg "Politische Strömungen im Schleswig-Holsteinischen Landvolk 1918-1933" pp.70-90 (henceforth "Stoltenberg")
 15. W. Goerlitz "Die Junker: Adel und Bauer im deutschen Osten" p.357
 16. Chairman to Oberpräsidium Schleswig-Holstein 26th November 1925: LA 301/4089
 17. W. Goerlitz above cit. p.357
 18. J.B. Holt p.209
 19. From July to December 1922 the paper mark fell from 317 to the $\text{§}1$ to 7390 and thence to 110,000 by the following June: W. Maser "Die Frühgeschichte der NSDAP" p.329.
 20. Where 1913=100, the wholesale price for fats, sugar, meat and fish reached 207.6 in November 1923 (Stoltenberg p.66)
 21. Ibid p.67
 22. Investigations in Schleswig-Holstein from 1927 to 1929 showed peasants as obtaining 76.7% of their income from cattle or their products, whereas for larger farms the relevant percentage was 58.7%: Reports by local Agricultural Chamber: LA 301/3518
 23. Of just over three million holdings in 1933 over 85% were 20 Hektares (50 acres) or under in size: "Wirtschaft und Statistik" 1934 p.554
 24. If the total output of 1927-9 is taken as 100, that of 1924-5 had been 88 only: "Landwirtschaftliche Statistik 1937" p.101
 25. According to Dr. Schiele, himself later a Minister of Agriculture,

in an essay in "Das Hugenberg Programm: Entschuldung der Landwirtschaft" p.33 interest payments rose from 425 Mill RM in 1924-5 to 920 Mill RM four years later: H. Bente "Landwirtschaft und Bauerntum" p.177

26. The founder's principle reveals the religious basis of the organization: he declared it to be his belief that the farming community could only be saved by "Bringing it together in a corporation based upon a religious foundation:" F. Jacobs "Von Schorlemer bis zur Grünen Front" p.11 For a similar statement in 1928 see "Westfälischer Bauer" 13th June 1928 showing that the belief still held good in the twenties.
27. Of the forty-three chairmen of its provincial branches, twenty-six owned large estates whilst others included a general and five government officials: S.R. Tirell "German Agrarian Politics after the fall of Bismarck" pp.177-182
28. At the May elections for the Reichstag in 1928 one regional CBV journal called on its readers to vote to strengthen the agricultural community rather than for any specific party WB "Die Bauernvereine zu den Wahlen" 14th March 1928
29. Vide the speech of a President in 1917 for a peace signed not with a banker's quill or diplomat's pen "but with the point of the German sword". Quoted in F. Jacobs "Von Schorlemer bis zur Grünen Front" p.63
30. "Bericht über die Reichslandbundtagung in Hannover": BA-NS 26/141
31. Secretary to Wirth October 1922: BA-R43I/1277
32. Meeting reported in the "Kieler Zeitung" 13th January 1927
33. Stoltenberg p.91: in February 1925 von Kalckreuth, President of the RLB, denounced government agrarian policy in general as unfavourable

34. The RLB had 1.7 million members, the CBV 560,000: there were also a few smaller bodies of no political significance: H. Gies "NSDAP und landwirtschaftliche Organisationen in der Endphase der Weimarer Republik" p.355 (henceforth "Gies")
35. Dr. Heim, to the Chancellory 30th January 1929: BA-R43I/1301; the doctor was head of the Bavarian Peoples Party, the Bavarian equivalent of the Zentrum
36. Reported in the SPD organ "Donauwacht" (Ulm) 9th November 1929
37. Taxes were higher than pre-war, the burden for 1924-6 being 5.5 to 6.9% of total income per Hektar as compared to the 1912-4 average of 1.2 to 2.3%: Holt p.146
38. One writer suggests the leaders at national level were frightened of losing their own influence in the individual unions: E. Topf "Die Grüne Front" p.45
39. Business manager to Chancellory October 1927: BA-R43I/1301. This letter officially announced the Union's foundation
40. At Goslar in 1930, for example, membership of the local Landbund was almost exclusively peasant in character, 64% having holdings of 20 Ha or less: "Goslarsche Zeitung" 14th March 1930
41. Gies p.355
42. Dr. Schiele (RLB) Dr. Hermes (CBV) H. Lübke (Deutsche Bauernschaft) and A. Fehr (Bavarian Farmers Union): E. Topf "Die Grüne Front" p.148
43. Ibid p.148 for details of the programme
44. Ibid pp.184-5
45. Holt p.126
46. Heim to Chancellory 28th September 1927: BA-R43I/1301
47. How much the country needed agricultural rationalization in general can be seen from the fact that in 1927 over 400 different kinds of wheat were being sown: Stoltenberg p.115

48. Vide an essay by Hess in the V.B. 31st July 1921 describing the movement as anti-semitic, anti-capitalist (in the sense of speculation and interest) anti-parliamentarian, in favour of profit-sharing by the workers and against the class-struggle as such. (From G. Franz-Willing "Die Hitler Bewegung" Vol. I pp.82-3)
49. Or even perhaps slightly hostile, as a result of high food prices in war time according to K. Heiden "Geburt des Dritten Reiches" p.13
50. The audience of 46 included 16 craftsmen, 5 students and 13 self-employed persons in business, indicating an urban lower-middle class interest grouping: G. Franz-Willing "Die Hitler Bewegung" Vol. I pp.82-3: (henceforth "Franz-Willing")
51. In February 1920 Drexler went on record as saying that the aim of the Party was to create a unity from all members by hand and brain, which would have included farmers in principle (From W. Maser "Die Frühgeschichte der NSDAP" (henceforth "Maser" p.211)
52. In August 1922 the percentage of farmers on the membership rolls of external branches was 0.6 in Rosenheim, nil in Passau and 3.6 in Landshut (Bavaria), (Maser p.255)
53. These tactics are described in Maser p.278; see also "Mein Kampf" p.382 (German Edition)
54. "Mein Kampf" p.552 (German Ed.)
55. A sample study of 4726 members at that time reveals that over one half were living in rural areas: M. Kater "Zur Soziographie der frühen NSDAP" VJH April 1971, pp.138 and 153
56. Ibid pp.138-9
57. Ibid pp.138-9

58. Precisely who devised the programme is still in doubt: See Maser pp.205ff.
59. The 25 Points and a Commentary upon them are in G. Feder "Das Programm der NSDAP"
60. The whole 1925-6 campaign led by Strasser, and the proposals, are described in R. Kühnl "Zur Programmatik der NS Linken: Das Strasser Programm von 1925-6" in VJH 1966
61. A. Bullock "Hitler: A Study in Tyranny" p.139
62. Vide "Mein Kampf" p.225
63. According to an official of the NS agrarian organization erected in the Third Reich, at the post-war trial of Darré, the Minister of Agriculture "Trial Brief für den angeklagten Richard Walther Darré" p.222. This document is in the library of the Landwirtschaftliche Hochschule, Stuttgart-Hohenheim
64. K. Verhey "Der Bauernstand und der Mythos von Blut und Boden, mit besonderer Berücksichtigung auf Niedersachsen" p.103 (henceforth "Verhey"; this is a doctoral dissertation for the University of Göttingen 1965)
65. "Mein Kampf" p.146. Cf. Wagner's views expressed on pp.1-2 of this work
66. Ibid p.722
67. Ibid p.722
68. "Warum musste ein 8 November kommen?" in "Deutschlands Erneuerung"; this article is dealt with by W. Horn "Ein unbekannter Aufsatz Hitlers aus dem Frühjahr 1924" in VJH 1968
69. Quoted in F. Wunderlich "Farm labour in Germany 1810-1945" p.160
70. "Hitler's Secret Book" pp.144-5

71. The memo is dealt with in W. Treue "Hitlers Denkschrift über den 4 Jahresplan" in VJH 1955: the quotation is on Page 206
72. Vide W. Maser "Hitlers Mein Kampf" (Eng. Ed.) p.122
73. "Mein Kampf" (Eng. Ed.) p.126
74. Cf. Hess's essay referred to here on Page 38 Note 48
75. H. Bente "Landwirtschaft und Bauerntum" p.19
76. "Mein Kampf" (German Edition) p.151
77. Vide D. Orlow "The History of the Nazi Party 1919-1933" p.90
(henceforth "Orlow")
78. J.A. Beck (Ed.) "Kampf und Sieg" p.68, an account of the South Westphalian NSDAP from its foundation
79. Orlow above at p.90
80. "Reichskommissariat für Überwachung der Öffentlichen Ordnung" report for March 1927: LA 309/23055
81. G. Seifert "Beginn und Entwicklung der ersten norddeutschen Kämpfe der NSDAP in Hannover und Niedersachsen" pp.51-7: NSA 3101 GI
82. The average membership for 1926 was only 3,500 (Orlow p.109)
83. Vide the report quoted on the previous page which speaks of a difficult financial situation for the Party (Note 80)
84. V.B. 23rd December 1927: the same month saw a speech by Hitler to agricultural representatives in Hamburg.
85. Apparently the main reason for Hitler's declaration was a challenge from the RLB: D. Schoenbaum "Hitler's Social Revolution" p.33
(henceforth "Schoenbaum")
86. V.B. 13th April 1928
87. See Orlow p.118
88. "Hannover Landbund" 15th December 1928
89. Ibid

90. Reinhardt to Himmler 5th March 1929: ADC Himmler
91. "Mein Kampf" (German Edition) pp.108ff.
92. Orlow p.129
93. Ibid; the December 1924 vote was in itself only about half that of May 1924 (Bullock "Hitler: A Study in Tyranny" p.126)
94. It is surely significant of NS orientation towards the cities prior to May 1928 that only one elected Reichstag deputy out of twelve (Werner Willikens) was a farmer himself (Orlow p.131)
95. NSDAP Vote in selected rival districts in Schleswig-Holstein

May 1928

<u>District</u>	<u>% Vote for Party</u>
Norderditmarschen	18.1
Süderditmarschen	17.7
Steinburg	10.4
Rendsburg	8.6

From R. Heberle "Landbevölkerung und Nationalsozialismus" p.42:
in the province as a whole the Party polled only 4% as their
share (Ibid p.30)

Chapter II: Radicalism in Schleswig-Holstein and NSDAP development
in the province

The politico-economic background of the twenties

(i) It is of course as true of Schleswig-Holstein as of any other region that statements about the province as a whole are necessarily generalizations: this advance warning is required here as descriptions of particular districts will show an uneven rate of advance by the Hitler movement from 1928 onwards. This did not apply to the NSDAP only, as political affiliations in the area had always been partly determined by varying soil and climatic conditions, which produced different types of agriculture in different districts, and therefore political reactions were not always the same in one part of the region as in others. The dairy and livestock farmers on the west coast tended to be in favour of a free trade pattern whereas the corn-growers of the eastern areas had traditionally been rather more for protectionism, hence local support there for the DNVP.¹ In general terms, however, the latter party was already beginning to lose some influence in the late twenties, its share of the poll in the May 1928 Reichstag elections being markedly lower than in December 1924.² The other main party of the Right in the province was the DVP, which tended to decline with the death of its most famous leader, Gustav Stresemann:³ in any case, as a movement which, although anti-Marxist, had a definite bias towards heavy industry, the DVP had less appeal for the rural than for the urban electorate.⁴

Just at the time therefore when the NSDAP was made conscious of its relative failure in urban areas, a favourable situation appeared to be developing for it in Schleswig-Holstein, in that a certain vacuum in political allegiance was beginning to appear among a rural population suffering to some extent from economic recession and resentful against the government. This fluidity existed in a province with a record of

radicalism on the land, as the next section will show.

(ii) Schleswig-Holstein's history of militant Right-Wing protest went back to the early postwar years; in 1919 a local politician named Iversen founded the "Schleswig-Holstein Peasants and Landworkers Democracy". The latter word was used in connection with the concept of a "Green Democracy" viz a rural movement to combat what was called the "golden democracy" of materialistic, liberal capitalism. Despite its name the Party was violently anti-semitic, and its original election appeal demanded the disenfranchisement of all Jews;⁵ "current Jewish domination in the government and economy will be forcefully combated" was a promise contained in the movement's first manifesto.⁶ It is not without interest to note that the future NS Gauleiter of the province, Heinrich Lohse, was business manager for Iversen's party in the early twenties.⁷ Similarly, a journalist on the movement's own newspaper eventually became one of the first NSDAP members in Schleswig-Holstein.⁸ The parallel cannot be taken too far, however, as although nationalistic and anti-semitic Iversen was also a pious man, and his party normally sided with the DDP, a centre party, in the Landtag.⁹ By the mid twenties Iversen's movement had lost its momentum, possibly due to the settling-down of bourgeois democracy from 1924 on after surviving a period of initial stress. The party had nonetheless been a storm warning, presaging what might happen again in terms of rural support for Right radicalism, if another crisis should occur.

Apart from purely local products of this type of ideology, Schleswig-Holstein contained provincial branches of the national anti-Republican forces; one of the most active of these in fomenting discord was the Landbund. Its regional journal carried a regular dose of anti-semitism;¹⁰ when bomb outrages were committed by peasants or their leaders against public property, this newspaper was the first to sympathize with the accused persons.¹¹ This was perhaps hardly surprising as one of these

latter was the Landbund district chairman in Bremervoerde.¹² Documents confiscated in police raids showed a close link between the incidents and another provincial leader of the farm union.¹³

Another national movement whose members in Schleswig-Holstein were implicated in 1929 in the same outrages was the Stahlhelm, which had sixteen to eighteen thousand members in the province.¹⁴ One of its leaders once declared at a meeting that as far as youth education was concerned, "healthy instincts, character, blood-will" and "battle capacity" were more important to stress than academic knowledge.¹⁵ The existence of relatively large groups of men so orientated, and also naturally with an anti-Republican bias, was evidence of potential trouble for the government in the province.¹⁶

Neither were the Landbund and the Stahlhelm alone in their attitude; militants proliferated in the twenties, to such a degree that examination of each group would not be possible here: suffice it to say that among these organizations active in the province at the time, members of which were later implicated in the explosion incidents carried out by a rural movement were, apart from the Stahlhelm, the West Coast Stahlhelm, (an associated group apparently) the German Racial Freedom Movement, the Pan-German League, the Ehrhardt Circle and the Werwolf. This over and above the Landbund, the NSDAP and the DNVP, members of which were also alleged to have been active in the movement responsible for the outrage.¹⁷ Of course, there was in many cases duplication of membership between these organizations, but it is suggested here that no supporter of democracy in the province could feel happy against such a background, even if not all the above-listed bodies were necessarily equally aggressive.¹⁸

(iii) Furthermore, the local economic situation was not very healthy; from 1927 to 1929 there was genuine distress among the rural population, judging by the annual investigations carried out by the provincial Agricultural Chamber.¹⁹ These show that 1927/8 was financially quite disastrous for

peasant and larger land-owner alike, with some improvement in the following two years.²⁰ Foreclosure and compulsory auctions became inevitably more frequent.²¹ A word of warning must be sounded once more about generalizations, since one police report in early 1929 alleged that unrest on the land was entirely caused by agitation rather than genuine need, since many farmers were said to be running cars.²² From this conflicting evidence of outside observers and financial statistics the only conclusion to be drawn was that some farmers were harder-hit than others at the time. The impression gained in general is of a situation where what the landed population felt was perhaps rather more decisive in determining their actions than cold statistical fact. In other words hardship existed in some quarters but came to be exaggerated, as can be seen from a local farm union circular in 1928 calling on members to find every legal way of tax evasion until the government restored profitability to agriculture.²³ How explosive the feeling became was dramatically illustrated in January 1928, when a series of giant demonstrations, organized spontaneously by the peasants, took place all over the province, attended by 140,000.²⁴ The gap between food-producers and their leaders is best shown by the remark of a union official in Berlin "We are superfluous in Schleswig-Holstein, our peasants lead themselves".²⁵ At a place called Laengenols fuel was added to the flames when a police detachment opened fire on the demonstrators.²⁶

The local peasants were now thoroughly aroused, and the example of their action was taken to heart by the local unions, which took a step towards unity of direction on the agrarian front; on February 16th a formal fusion at Neumünster produced a new federation at regional level with thirty five thousand members, the biggest body of professional representation in the province.²⁷ Scenting danger in the combination of more leadership co-operation and a militant rank and file, the Reichs government hurriedly invited federation representatives to Berlin to talk things over; at the

subsequent discussions the then Chancellor, Marx, promised a respite in local action against any farmers whose debts exceeded one third of their property's value; he also warned that genuine large-scale relief to agriculture must take time to be initiated.²⁸ The latter commodity was exactly what the moderate union leaders did not possess in any quantity; the chief organizer of the January demonstrations, Johannsen, lost all his influence after this meeting, through appearing to place too much trust in official promises.²⁹ He was replaced by men of a different stamp.

The Rural Peoples Movement

(i) From the stress of the times now arose an entirely new, and disturbingly radical organization, the Rural Peoples Movement, (LVB); its chief leaders were Klaus Heim and Wilhelm Hamkens. The first had been a member of the Pan-German League, the second, an officer in the War, was in the Stahlhelm West Coast.³⁰ They were both products of the cauldron of radical Right protest in the twenties. It should be made clear that the new movement which they headed was not confined entirely to peasants, although these did form the majority of its membership.³¹

The LVB's aims were summed up in one of their internal circulars which fell into police hands; they were listed as a secure existence in economic terms, under guarantee of the cultural importance of the rural community, and politically a state where every trade and profession enjoyed its own representation in a national assembly, (as opposed to one parliament elected by the entire nation); the circular stated that the present constitution laid stress upon the sanctity of private property and suggested that the LVB must teach Civil Servants to respect this injunction.³² This last sentence was presumably a reference to legal action by the state against peasants in arrears with taxes. The reference to the hope of a guarantee of the cultural importance of the rural sector showed perhaps a slight inferiority complex, which doubtless explains why the peasants so

readily exaggerated all grievances.

It must be made clear that the LVB was never a political party as such, in the sense of presenting candidates at elections, but rather a movement which sought to express itself in more direct ways.³³ This naivety was eventually to contribute to its own undoing as will be shown, and left a clear field in political terms to more skilful exploiters of trouble. The relevance of the LVB to the NSDAP's development was therefore that of a group which, having stirred up feelings by demagogery and violence, abandons the field and its harvest to others.

(ii) Initial LVB action took the form of interventions at auctions of farm property in order to prevent them; from April 1928 until March 1929 twenty-four such proceedings were affected in this way from the ninety-four undertaken by the authorities.³⁴ A typical case was at Gording in December 1928 where none of the assembled peasants bid for some auctioned animals and when a man from another locality made an offer, he was chased away amid uproar; the auction had to be terminated and the peasants then met elsewhere to be harangued by Hamkens.³⁵ Even more violent methods were feared by the provincial administration since in January 1929 all rural districts were ordered by the Regierungspräsident to afford police protection at auctions; it was also decreed that all peasants arriving in possession of hunting weapons were to surrender them at the door.³⁶

Tax strikes now came to be used by the LVB as a weapon against the government in rural areas, a move which led to Hamken's arrest. Hundreds of peasants then attacked the courtroom where he was appearing and stoned the police.³⁷ Hamkens had already sent an open letter to the parish council chairmen in the Eiderstedt district asking them if they were prepared to inform the relevant authorities that the peasants were no longer able to pay taxes without falling victims to Jewish capitalism.³⁸ In February the tax office took the step of confiscating money due to this LVB leader

in lieu of his own arrears; Hamkens turned up at the Husum tax bureau to reclaim the sum taken accompanied by eighty to one hundred supporters, who forced an entry and refused to leave. Arrested for breach of the peace Hamkens issued a statement from jail calling for "no positive co-operation for this system (Weimar) and its hangers-on."³⁹ As a final commentary on tax refusals may be cited a police report on three farmers who had declined to pay; these three between them were alleged to have given the LVB 11,000 RM. One had recently allowed two oxen to be auctioned publicly by the state rather than settle his tax arrears; he was known to have contributed 3,000 RM to the LVB.⁴⁰

The movement made a fatal mistake in escalating from rowdiness at auctions and financial boycott to the bomb attempts. These explosions normally took place in tax offices or buildings of the provincial administration in general.⁴¹ Twenty-four persons were eventually arrested upon suspicion of complicity.⁴² Such outright violence was a tactical error and led to a falling-off in peasant support for the movement even amongst those persons still very much anti-Republican.⁴³ By mid 1929 the LVB's influence seemed to have passed, which created a financial crisis so serious than in Steinburg the movement was reduced to making house to house collections.⁴⁴ Paradoxically this resulted in efforts to extend the movement to other northern regions of the country, in an attempt to counter-balance losses in Schleswig-Holstein.⁴⁵ The LVB followed much the same pattern of activities elsewhere with the exception of explosives.⁴⁶

However much support declined in its original home, the movement, after Hamkens release from prison, continued its radical propaganda against the government. At one typical meeting at Brachefeld in September 1929, selected here from a number of similar events, the government was alleged to be run by Jews, Freemasons and Jesuits: the latter were said to give Dr. Steiger, Minister of Agriculture in Prussia, their orders daily.⁴⁷

Some one hundred and twenty people half of them peasants were estimated to be present at this meeting; the naivety of the speeches led the SPD journal reporting the event to ask "Are the peasants really so stupid?"⁴⁸ Propaganda produced by the LVB's own press organ was equally crude speaking on one occasion of "The iron language of the bayonet before which the whimperings about peace of the prophets of reconciliation . . . must remain dumb."⁴⁹ An example of one of the newspaper's appeals is attached.

(iii) By October 1929 the LVB was in so marked a decline that Hamkens was trying to establish an alliance with the Tannenberg Bund, another extremist body led by General Ludendorff.⁵⁰ That it had now shot its bolt was so obvious that the SPD Press was commenting openly upon the movement's demise and its negotiations with Ludendorff.⁵¹ The government policy of isolating the LVB from all other groups as far as possibly may have contributed to the downfall, but the main reason was undoubtedly rural aversion from its excesses. As a consequence it now passed into virtual oblivion, and its leaders played no further role in rural leadership.⁵² New men stepped into the breach; as one historian phrased it "The Hitler Party gradually took over the leadership of the land movement and became in Schleswig-Holstein the collecting-centre for the dissatisfied and disappointed."⁵³ This process will be described in the next section.

NS development in the province

(i) Although the NSDAP capitalized on the storm which the LVB created, this does not mean that it had played no part at all in previous events in Schleswig-Holstein. The Party had begun a drive on the West Coast, in Ditmarschen, in the last quarter of 1927.⁵⁴ Speakers in the area for the May 1928 elections included Frick, Gregor Strasser and Graf von Reventlow.⁵⁵ The NSDAP had turned its eyes upon the province at a most auspicious moment, not only because of the radical atmosphere prevailing, but also as a result of a definite vacuum on the Right which was beginning to appear. In autumn

-48-

Jeder Deutsche muß seinen Feind kennen. Die Vernichtungsmethoden der Feinde müssen bekannt und seine Helfer entlarvt werden.

Der Feind ist das jüdische Großkapital mit dem Endziel der Völkerverflavung

Seine Vernichtungsmittel sind vielgestaltig. Wesentlich sind:

1. Das System der Strohmannen, welches die wahren Schuldigen und Drahtzieher verbirgt.
2. Die Korruption mit der Jagd nach der Futterkrippe und der Vernichtung des Ehrbegriffes.
3. Die Zerstörung der Eigenkultur u. Sittlichkeit durch Verseuchung von Presse, Mode, Theater u. Literatur.
4. Die Vernichtung der Rasse und die Begünstigung der Mischlingsehen.
5. Das parlamentarische System mit seiner Zersplitterung und Uneinigkeit.

Durch dieses System hat der Jude erreicht:

- a) Bruder- und Klassenkampf durch unzählige Parteien und Bünde.
- b) Massenfäbrilation von Gesetzen, die jedes Unrecht sanktionieren.
- c) Abschluß außenpolitischer Verflavungsverträge.
- d) Eine Steuergesetzgebung, die das Volk ausfaugt und enteignet.
- e) Handelsverträge und Bindungen zur Vernichtung der Deutschen Wirtschaft.

Die Helfer des Juden sind alle Nutznießer des Systems

also: Minister, Präsidenten, Regierungsräte, Landräte und viele Verwaltungsbeamte; soweit sie durch blinden Kadavergehorsam gebunden sind und ohne Bedenken alle Ausfaugungs- und Verflavungsbefehle ausführen. Auch alle Volksvertreter, die durch sogenannte sachliche Arbeit das jüdische System stützen, gehören hierher.

Durch dieses System bist Du — Arbeiter — erwerbslos

Du — Bauer — ausgebeutet und verachtet

Du — Mittelständler — entrechtet und enterbt.

Nun, Deutsche, wehre Dich!

Deine Kampfmittel sind machtvoller als Du denkst! Dazu gehören:

1. Verweigerung jeglicher Mitarbeit am System und gänzliche Ablehr von ihren Handlangern.
2. Rücksichtsloses Aufdecken aller Korruption
3. Schonungslose Namensnennung aller Schleicher und Dunkelmänner.
4. Haftbarmachung der Urheber unlauterer Machenschaften.
5. Ablehnung der jüdischen und Verbreitung der wenigen unabhängigen Zeitungen.
6. Meidung jeder Handelsbeziehung, die dem Juden finanziellen Gewinn bringt (Warenhäuser, Banken, jüdische Konsumvereine usw.)
7. Ausnutzung aller gesetzlichen Rechte zur Wahrung der Substanz bei Vernichtungssteuern.

So wird dieses System fallen und der wahre

Deutsche Staat entstehen, den wir alle ersehnen!

1928 Himmler remarked in a letter to the newly-appointed Gauleiter in East Prussia that his area offered the same opportunity for Party advance as Schleswig-Holstein;⁵⁶ this choice of analogy suggests that the NSDAP was very conscious indeed of what the latter province now had to offer a movement which so far had shown little signs of progress elsewhere in the country.

Real growth for the Party seems to have begun in Schleswig-Holstein just about this time; in October Hitler spoke at Heide which signalled the unrollment of a lively campaign on the West Coast.⁵⁷ Altogether five thousand meetings were claimed by the Party for the province in 1928.⁵⁸ From this scale of activity proceeded the "great growth" in Ditmarschen by the opening of the New Year.⁵⁹ In the following month NS agitation was described as extremely noticeable.⁶⁰ What seems to have turned a considerable increase in local interest into a real breakthrough was the event at Wohrdener, when Communists and the NSDAP clashed in a brawl, in which two of the latter's members died.⁶¹ The occasion of the funerals was turned by the Party into a huge propaganda demonstration, at which both Gauleiter Lohse and Hitler spoke; that the leader had come all the way from Munich to be present is said to have greatly impressed the local peasantry. Other mourners at the burials included three to four hundred uniformed Party members and an S.A. band from Hamburg. Two thousand spectators attended the first interment and double that number the second, at which Hitler's speech was provocative. The Führer bade a solemn farewell to the fallen comrades, martyred by the System through their inability to adjust themselves to its iniquities, as he put it.⁶²

(ii) At nearby Albersdorff NSDAP membership rose from 220 to 310 in the following week;⁶³ the Party had really made an impression by its exploitation of the deaths, and now the harvest came in as the Party became the topic of the moment: in some villages almost everyone either joined or

became at least a sympathizer as the movement gained the reputation as the collection-point for everyone who was against the Republic.⁶⁴ The wave now gathering momentum was not everywhere so strong, however: Husum was currently described as quiet with little support for the Party, although even there the Wohrdener incident was operating to its advantage.⁶⁵ At the Gau annual Party meeting in April Lohse could report solid progress; (it is surely significant that nearly one quarter of the then members had joined since March 1st) there were now over four times as many branches as at the end of 1927.⁶⁶

The advance was not solely due to NS activity or recent martyrdom; two other reasons for the sudden increase appear to have lain in the peasants themselves, namely, pressure by some upon the more reluctant to join the movement and sheer political illiteracy. Rise in membership figures at this time may therefore be a little suspect, as two different sources reported that peasants already in the NSDAP were threatening boycott measures against any of their fellows still remaining outside.⁶⁷ For this reason the number of sympathizers is more significant than statistics of actual enlistment.

As far as peasant ignorance of the real aims of the movement is concerned, one police report describes the rural population as having no conception of what National Socialism actually meant.⁶⁸ In Ditmarschen many were said to believe that the Party's "Tageszeitung" was an LVB newspaper.⁶⁹ How the NSDAP exploited this can be illustrated by the case of a meeting at Itzehoe where a speaker dealt with the "Breaking of debt-servitude" as an integral part of NS policy, doubtless offering hope to the indebted who were among the audience;⁷⁰ but as the Agricultural Chamber was later to point out, once the economic crisis got under way high interest rates were absolutely essential in order to protect the mark as a viable currency;⁷¹ no evidence has been found that exhaustive analyses of this

nature were provided by the Republic's opponents. As one NS account of Party Struggles later put it quite frankly "The movement would never have conquered the people . . . if its propaganda speeches had been based upon reason only."⁷²

(iii) Under the impact of NS advance the other Right-Wing groups began to wilt; by February 1929 the DNVP was stated to have neither the tight, organizational structure nor the available finance of the NSDAP to enable it to compete effectively.⁷³ Likewise the Stahlhelm began to melt away; from Itzehoe the police reported that it had almost completely disappeared in that district by spring 1929,⁷⁴ having been swallowed by the NS. Three months later the Regierungspräsident informed his superiors in Berlin that this body and the Tannenberg Bund were now receding so rapidly in public favour that there was no longer any point in reporting on their activities.⁷⁵ LVB members went over to the NSDAP en masse, for example at Niebull, where a recently-founded Party group had fifty members in February 1930, everyone a former member of Hamkens' movement.⁷⁶ The Right-Wing Wachverein once associated with the LVB reacted in similar fashion at Buesum with a mass desertion to the NS ranks.⁷⁷ Throughout 1929/30 this process continued, the NSDAP acting as a sponge, soaking up all the discontented by presenting them with the chance of joining not just another anti-Republican movement, but a tightly-disciplined driving-force led by able politicians. Indeed, by January 1929 one report described all subordinate leaders of the LVB as being NS members.⁷⁸

Nothing illustrates the difference in leadership skill of the NSDAP and the other movements more than the former's handling of the LVB. That the Hitler Party might exploit the agitation of the other movement occurred to the LVB itself; the editor of its newspaper wrote to his counterpart on the NS Journal in Hanover ("Niedersächsischer Beobachter") trying to make contacts between the respective movements, stating frankly "As the LVB has

no organizational intentions, the Party (NSDAP) would be in a position to utilize for itself the mood which we have created in the rural population."⁷⁹ Hitler had already thought of this for himself, but did not want to proceed too quickly, and apparently told the Hanover editor that things must be braked in Schleswig-Holstein.⁸⁰ Surprising as it may seem, the NS attitude to the LVB was one of rejection, explicable by a letter sent from Lohse to Party head office in Munich to the effect that the "stupidities" of the LVB were a "gigantic danger" to the NSDAP.⁸¹ The Gauleiter was referring to the violent methods of the Hamkens movement, of a type with which the NS did not wish to be associated.

In August Hitler ramméd this point home with an order actually prohibiting the LVB to his own followers; all co-operation was similarly forbidden.⁸² This was not well-received in the Party, according to a letter from an NSDAP member to one of the persons arrested after the bomb incidents: this missive confirmed that Hitler's stated reason for the ban was a desire not to be blamed for any violence in the province.⁸³ In Schleswig-Holstein the Führer's order was not, in fact, always obeyed.⁸⁴ But the political flair of Hitler and Lohse was justified when the peasantry deserted the LVB banner just because of its excess, vide a police report for October 1929, which confirmed that the tide was turning against the LVB and running for the NS precisely as a result of the former movement's stupidities, as compared to the NSDAP. The Hitler Party was now esteemed on the land exactly because it fought with "realistic means."⁸⁵

(iv) For a party which had made little effort in the province until late 1927, the NSDAP registered a dramatic success at the polls for the Reichstag in September 1930, best shown by comparing its share with that of the DNVP/DVP combined. Whereas the ratio of the NSDAP to the others had been 1:9 in 1928, by September 1930 it was 2:1 in favour of the NS.⁸⁶ Even more striking is the fact that the NS percentage increase was almost

exactly equal to the others' loss.⁸⁷

The foregoing statistics are for the whole province: an examination of the NSDAP vote in rural areas only is more interesting still, providing clear evidence, not merely of rural but more specifically peasant, as opposed to landowner, support for the Party.⁸⁸ Generalizations must be qualified however; neighbouring rural districts often showed marked variations.⁸⁹ The same considerations apply to whole areas, particularly in respect of the eastern and western coastal strips. The NS advance in membership terms described here was largely on the west coast; it must be said at once that the economic recession was sharper there, according to informed current opinion.⁹⁰ As has already been pointed out, the DNVP was in any case rather more entrenched in the Corn-growing east. These two facts together seem to suggest that the NSDAP progressed most rapidly in areas suffering simultaneously from a political vacuum and an economic crisis.

But in general the NSDAP had received more votes proportionately on the land than in the urban districts.⁹¹ Secondly, this support came mainly from owners of small or medium holdings; this seems to be conclusively demonstrated in a sociological survey based upon electoral behaviour in thirty selected districts. The investigation showed a high positive correlation between an NSDAP vote and agriculture as an occupation but a much smaller one in the case of land workers, suggesting owners rather than labourers were the chief NS supporters; an examination of the vote in relation to the size of farm holding (this time in twenty districts) demonstrated that peasants with twenty Ha or less were much more likely to choose the NSDAP than were larger scale farmers. This positive link between the smaller-sized holdings and the Hitler party was to be evidenced again at the elections of July 1932 in the province.⁹² Equally informative is the steady increase in the negative correlation between the same agrarian class and the DNVP, illustrating how the rural

lower-middle class who chose the NSDAP in such large numbers were mainly recruited from the traditional Right with which they became steadily more disillusioned. Admittedly by 1932 there was a certain swing back to the DNVP amongst owners of small holdings but to compensate for this from the NS standpoint the proprietors in the 20-100 Ha range had now begun to go over to the Party in larger numbers.

In sum, the people who voted for the NSDAP in Schleswig-Holstein in 1930 and 1932 were more likely to be rural, than city-dwellers, and more precisely, to be peasants rather than landworkers or estate-owners. The NSDAP was born as an urban petty-bourgeois splinter group in Munich, but in Schleswig-Holstein it became a mass movement largely, although of course not entirely, through the petty-bourgeois on the land;⁹³ this was completely at variance with its own original ideas of winning power through the major cities.

Notes

1. Stoltenberg pp.31 and 39
2. 23% as against 31%: R. Heberle "Landbevölkerung und Nationalsozialismus" p.30 (hereafter "Heberle")
3. According to Stoltenberg p.197
4. For a description of the DVP's policy line see K.D. Bracher "Die Auflösung der Weimarer Republik" p.87
5. Stoltenberg p.33
6. Heberle p.42
7. Stoltenberg p.34
8. Ibid p.34: in 1921 he wrote an article "Our Political Need" calling for a national leader, which appeared in Iversen's paper.
9. Ibid p.36: in 1919 the party got 0.4% of votes cast in the towns, but as much as 16.4% for rural areas, in one district 38.4%
10. Stoltenberg p.64: the title was "Der Landbote"
11. Regpräsident to Min. of the Interior, Prussia 31st September 1929: LA 309/22784
12. "Bei K- Husum am 10.9.1929 beschlagnahmtes Material": LA 309/22784; this is a police report on confiscated documents
13. Ibid
14. Stoltenberg p.97
15. Ibid p.98
16. The national president of the Stahlhelm, Düsterberg, once declared "We wish to destroy this State (Weimar) born of unity and treason and produce a state on racial (völkisch) foundations": "Begriff und Wesen des Völkischen" p.87
17. See "Festgenommene Personen anlässlich der Sprengstoffattentate": police reports on persons detained: LA 309/22784
18. In the Pinneberg district the Werwolf had to be disbanded in 1926 as they had been caught practising with infantry rifles "Reichskommissariat

- für Überwachung der öffentlichen Ordnung" report April 1926: Ibid
19. The Agricultural Chambers were semi-official bodies, so that their reports were not merely agrarian propaganda
 20. See Appendix C
 21. There were 81 in the province in the last quarter of 1928: H. Beyer "Die Landvolkbewegung Schleswig-holsteins und Niedersachsens 1928/1932" p. 174 in "Jahrbuch für Kreis Eckernförde 1957". This will be referred to as "Die Landvolkbewegung" in future in this work
 22. Berlin-Flensburg joint police report 21st March 1929: LA 309/22668
 23. Circular to members 23rd November 1928: LA 309/22696
 24. Stoltenberg p.112
 25. E. Topf "Die Grüne Front" p.8
 26. Ibid pp.1/2
 27. Although complete unity was not achieved, as the Landbund refused to work with the "Deutsche Bauernschaft" yet another example of their mutual antagonism. See Dr. T. Thyssen "Schleswig-holsteinisches Bauerntum zwischen den beiden Weltkriegen" p.152: "Jahrbuch des Angler Heimat Vereins" 1963/4
 28. H. Beyer "Das Bauerntum Angelns während der grossen Krise 1927-32" p.176 (henceforth "Das Bauerntum"): "Jahrbuch des Angler Heimat Vereins" 1961/2
 29. Stoltenberg p.121
 30. Stoltenberg pp.202/3: Hamkens had his own farm at Tetenbüll.
 31. One member subsequently imprisoned was a dentist "Flensburger Nachrichten" 1st October 1929
 32. "Anweisungen für die Versammlungsleiter" police report 10th June 1929: LA 309/22784
 33. The decision not to present election candidates was taken, according to the police, at a meeting in Husum 11th October 1929: Flensburg police report 20th October 1929 LA 309/22784

34. Beyer "Die Landvolkbewegung" p.186
35. Report in Danish language journal "Flensburg Avis" translated by the provincial administration: LA 309/22696
36. Regpräsident to Landräte 3rd January 1929 Ibid
37. Stoltenberg p.133
38. Letter 15th November 1928: LA 309/22696
39. From reports in "Der Schleswiger": LA 309/2268
40. Police report Altona 7th October 1929: LA 309/22784
41. Beyer "Die Landvolkbewegung" p.185
42. Including Heim and Hamkens "Festgenommene Personen anlässlich der Sprengstoffattentäte" LA 309/22784
43. For evidence both of diminishing support and of continued discontent see Flensburg police report 24th January 1929: this report was based on a visit by agents to five districts in the province: LA 309/22696
44. Landrat Steinburg to Regpräsident 4th July 1929: LA 309/22668
45. As Hamkens admitted in a postwar interview with Professor Beyer, Beyer "Die Landvolkbewegung" pp.195/6
46. Stoltenberg p.136: in Silesia they became well enough established to have a newspaper at Liegnitz
47. Dr. Steiger was in the Zentrum
48. "Schleswiger Volkeszeitung" 18th September 1929
49. Stoltenberg p.132; the journal had a circulation of 10,000 at the time: in 1925 the population of the province was nearly 1,300,000 Ibid p.8
50. Hamkens attempts are described in a police report 5th October 1929: LA 309/22784
51. "Schleswiger Volkeszeitung" 30th September 1929 "Wölfe kämpfen um einen Brocken"
52. Whilst Heim was in prison for the bombing, he was offered an NS

- candidacy which he rejected, as he did for a later one from the Communists: Beyer "Das Bauerntum Angelns" p.159 and "Die Landvolkbewegung" p.175
53. E. Topf "Die Grüne Front" p.41
 54. Where 150 meetings were held during this period: Stoltenberg p.143
 55. Ibid p.145
 56. Quoted in Orlow p.144 Note 4
 57. Regpräsident to Min. of Interior 5th June 1929: LA 309/22668
 58. NS journal "Tageszeitung" 31st January 1929
 59. Flensburg police report 24th January 1929: LA 309/22696
 60. Regpräsident to Min. of Interior 18th February 1929: Ibid
 61. Police report 16th March 1929: LA 309/22668
 62. Details from report cit. in Note 61 above
 63. Ibid
 64. Vide joint Berlin/Flensburg police report 21st March 1929: LA 309/22668
 65. Police report 24th March 1929: LA 309/22668
 66. The increase was from 45 to 201; the meeting is described in a police report Flensburg 25th April 1929: Ibid
 67. Landrat Meldorf to Regpräsident 27th November 1929: LA 309/22998;
Flensburg police mentioned the same pressure for Heide 21st March 1929: LA 309/22696
 68. Police report Flensburg 21st March 1929: LA 309/22696
 69. Police report Flensburg 24th January 1929: Ibid
 70. Ibid
 71. Agricultural Chamber report 30th July 1931: LA 301/4111
 72. J.A. Beck (Ed) "Kampf und Sieg" a Party history of Gau South Westphalia p.80
 73. Regpräsident to Min. of Interior 18th February 1929: LA 309/22696
 74. Police report Berlin 26th March 1929: LA 309/22668
 75. "Politische Lage in Regierungsbezirk Schleswig-Holstein" ~~LA 309/22668~~

5th June 1929: Ibid

76. Police report Flensburg 20th February 1930: Ibid
77. Joint police report Berlin/Flensburg 21st March 1929: Ibid
78. Police report Flensburg 24th January 1929: Ibid
79. "Auslese wichtigen Materials aus der von der Redaktion der Landvolk Zeitung beschlagnahmten Materials": LA 309/22784
80. Heinze to von Salomon 26th March 1929: LA 309/22784
81. Lohse to NSDAP (Munich) 27th May 1929: Ibid
82. The Niedersächsischer Beobachter" editor was himself dismissed from the NSDAP on these grounds: NS Press announcement 6th August 1929: Ibid
83. "Vorläufiges Ergebnis der Sichtung des P- beschlagnahmten Materials": Ibid
84. A joint NSDAP/LVB meeting was held at Itzehoe in October 1929 according to a police report Altona 16th October 1929: Ibid
85. Police report Heide 12th October 1929: LA 309/22784
86. The results were as follows:-

		<u>NSDAP</u>	<u>DNVP</u>	<u>DVP</u>
(in percentages	1928	4.0	23.0	13.7
cast for each				
Party)	1930	27.0	6.1	7.3
- Heberle p.30
87. NSDAP = +23.0 DNVP/DVP together = -23.3
88. The point about the difference between "rural" and "agricultural" needs to be remembered here; the first people to take up with the new movement in the villages were often craftsmen, not peasants: Heberle p.78
89. For example, as in one case where 25.2% and 39.2% were given to the Party in neighbouring districts
90. Regpräsident to Min. of Interior, Prussia 5th June 1929: LA 309/22668
91. In electoral districts with more than 2,000 people the NSDAP received an average 23.2% of the votes, for those under 2,000 in population

terms the percentage was 35%: Stoltenburg p.164

92. Correlation between the votes for the NSDAP and farm size in 20 selected districts of Schleswig-Holstein.

<u>Party and Election</u>	<u>Farm Size (Ha)</u>		<u>Over 100 and under 2 combined</u>
	<u>2-20</u>	<u>20-100</u>	
<u>1921</u>			
DNVP	-16.0	-5.4	-1.8
<u>1930</u>			
DNVP	-32.1	- 19.7	+26.8
NSDAP	+42.9	+12.5	-44.6
<u>July 1932</u>			
DNVP	-14.3	-44.6	+21.5
NSDAP	+67.9	+14.3	-80.4

From Heberle pp.108/116

93. In July 1932 the province became the first in Germany where over one half of all votes cast went to the NSDAP alone: Stoltenberg p.7

Chapter III: The NSDAP Programme of March 1930, the build up of the agrarian cadre and the conquest of power in the existing agricultural organizations.

The NS agrarian programme of 1930 and its antecedents.

(i) The increasing radicalisation on the land from 1928 onwards turned NS attention more and more to that sector; as a sign of this new interest, two articles were produced in the Party Year Book in 1929 and 1930, both written by the spokesman on agricultural affairs in the Reichstag, Werner Willikens.¹ These show a progressive development from the generalizations of point 17 towards a more detailed concrete agrarian policy.

Admittedly the first of these essays was couched in fairly general terms; the present government was attacked for paying insufficient attention to self-sufficiency as a policy, which was in line with Hitler's own beliefs and the NSDAP's opposition to the Tariffs Act in 1925. There was some wooing of the landworkers with remarks about the possibility of profit-sharing: in accordance with the usual NS slogan "The common good before individual gain" the article stated firmly that agriculture must be organized to serve the nation as a whole.² The following year Willikens became much more specific: firstly however he returned to the theme of defending Point 17 and its talk of "expropriation", being concerned to refute "lying attacks" by opponents who were concentrating upon this word in their propaganda in order to make the NSDAP look like a Marxist party intent upon separating the peasant from his holding.³

Having cleared that up, Willikens turned to describing a more positive NS policy for agriculture than anyone had produced before. He declared that the Party was for a large settlement programme in the East; land for this would be acquired from the big estates and allocated primarily to those landworkers aspiring to rise to the rank of peasant, and farmers' sons unable to obtain land elsewhere. Speculation in land was to be abolished and ownership confined to Germans; perhaps the chief interest in the 1930 essay

is the demand for a revision of the inheritance laws.

In this respect Willikens came out firmly for the abolition of partible inheritance, widely practised in the Rhineland and parts of South West and West Germany.⁴ Under this system of dividing the land amongst all the heirs, farms obviously tended to get fragmented, with disastrous results for their viability in economic terms.⁵ The NSDAP proposed to combat this possibility by allowing only one heir to inherit all the land; the others would be limited to sharing in any monetary legacies, apart from which holdings would be made available in the east under the settlement scheme.⁶ This NS demand for inheritance reform must be seen in the context of the times, since it was by no means an original point; the Agricultural Council had been calling for some action about the law throughout the twenties, as had the RLB.⁷ The German Civil Code of 1900 had sanctioned divisions in effect and subsequent demands for revision were an agrarian reaction against this.⁸ A summary of the situation was that Germany had two inheritance systems on the land in general; these were Realteilung in a few regions and Anerbenrecht (closed inheritance) in the others, both on a voluntary basis. What the NSDAP now prepared was the abolition of the first and compulsory application of the second to all regions.

Behind the NS wish to reform the law was the old point 17 concept of the abolition of speculation in land, so that agriculture may better serve the community. Indeed, nothing illustrates the Party attitude to private property more clearly and its basic anti-capitalism, than Willikens article. Land, it was held, should nourish the whole people, a point of view which necessitated "a rigorous prohibition of any kind of land-pawning"; one no longer had the right to do what one would with it, merely as the present owner. The general tone was that private property was acceptable, provided that it did not clash with community interests since it was only for the latter that the present occupier had received

his commission to till the soil. As Willikens summed it up, the NSDAP did not demand the sacrifice of the right to property as such, but merely of the right to do with it what one wished.⁹ To anyone in the liberal tradition this last point may seem to be a very fine distinction indeed; but it can scarcely be denied that from the foregoing the Left-wing concept of National Socialism as the last stage of monopoly capitalism seems ill-founded; it might be more accurate to describe it as an answer to liberal capitalism at any rate in agrarian terms.¹⁰

(ii) Rapid growth of support in Schleswig-Holstein and North Germany in general in the rural areas led to yet another stage in the process of concretization of plans for agriculture, this time in the shape of an official declaration of intent. This was issued under the aegis of Department II of the Party headquarters at Munich, which was responsible for forward planning in general. Since it in principle expanded upon the ideas of Willikens in the two articles in the Year Book, at least as far as the positive proposals were concerned, it seems probable that he was mainly responsible for its production. What follows here has been summarised from the publication in the "VB" 7th March, 1930.¹¹

The programme was divided into three sections, of which the first was a general review of agriculture, pointing out that imports of food were being paid for in money borrowed from abroad, putting the country in the hands of foreign capital; only increased domestic production could change this, and the augmented rural purchasing-power so engendered would act as a boost to industry; two advantages could be obtained by aiming at self-sufficiency. The furtherance of the farming community had, in NS eyes benefits other than the purely economic, in that the peasantry was the back-bone of national defence and the lifeblood of the people.¹² Thus the preservation of an economically viable peasantry in correct proportion to the whole population was a corner-stone of NS policy.¹³

Section II dealt with current (alleged) government neglect of agriculture, in both biological and economic respects. The community on the land had therefore become threatened by unprofitability, of which there were four individual causes. Firstly, taxes were too heavy, because Jewish world financial power wanted to ruin the German farmer as a preliminary to enslaving the whole people; secondly there was inadequate tariff protection against foreign food-stuffs, which could be produced under more favourable conditions. (In other words German farmers were not to blame just because they could not compete). Thirdly, there was too big a price-gap between the wholesale and retail index, due to the intervention of wholesalers making big profits; most of these were said to be Jews. Finally, fertilizer and electricity cost too much, both being produced by mainly Jewish firms.

The foregoing was cleverly put together to appeal to farm grievances; wholesalers profit margins for example were a perennial source of discontent among farmers.¹⁴ Artificial fertilizers do seem to have cost too much c. 1930; the Agricultural Chamber in Schleswig-Holstein pointed out in the following year that a cartel appeared to exist in the industry, as repeated improvements in production techniques seemed never to be followed by price reductions.¹⁵ As to the anti-semitism of this section, its precise effect as propaganda in vote-catching is hard to estimate, but from the fact that the DNVP and the LVB in Schleswig-Holstein both made attacks on Jews, a regular feature of their speeches and press, it can only be assumed that electorally speaking it was a good card to play at the time.¹⁶ In this connection a Gestapo report for the Aachen area in August 1934 is not without significance; the compiler was principally engaging in recording rural discontent, one of the causes of which was the fact that the new NS organization for agriculture in the area had left cattle trading "as before, principally in the hands of Jewish dealers."¹⁷ That this should be a

matter of complaint among farmers shows that the anti-semitic line of the March programme was probably efficacious.

Having devoted two parts of the party announcement to the errors and omissions of the Republic, the NSDAP turned in the last to its own remedies, contained in nine detailed points, many reminiscent of the Willikens articles of 1930. Only Germans would be able to hold land, which should be cultivated in the interests of the nation; a supervisory court should be set up to ensure this point, whose members would be chosen from among the farmers themselves. The state would be given priority at all sales of land to eliminate speculation; as a further step in this direction, it would be forbidden to offer farming land as collateral to a private money-lender.¹⁸ To fill the credit gap the state or agricultural co-operatives would provide capital. From the standpoint of population policy, a large number of small and medium farms was above all, to be favoured;¹⁹ the economic importance of large estates was nonetheless recognized (so that a mixture of farm sizes was accepted.) A large settlement scheme in the east under government supervision was again advocated.

In point 7 the inheritance laws were raised again; these were to be reformed to avoid too heavy an indebtedness for the heir taking over, and safeguards would be provided against possible fragmentation. Expropriation was then carefully delineated; this would only be used where land did not belong to Germans, in the case where public interest appeared to demand it (Settlement, roads, defence etc.) and in those cases where in the opinion of the farmers' courts already described, the present occupier appeared not to be farming it in the interests of the people. This last statement really makes absolutely plain the implications of Willikens articles about private property, since it forecasts a quite considerable deviation from the practice of liberal, democratic states. Read in conjunction with the point about the reform of inheritance, it indicates that in any NS state the food-

producer would be subjected to very considerable restrictions upon his individual liberty insofar as the disposal of his own property was concerned: to these limitations one must add the points about the elimination of speculation by state intervention in the realms of purchase and credit. No one could maintain on reading the foregoing proposals that the farmer had not been warned about what might take place if he voted for the NSDAP, at least in general terms.

As a conclusion to its programme, the Party called for the cultural advancement of the peasantry, by which it appeared to mean in terms of social standing on the one hand and the revival of peasant culture on the other. The efficient landworker should be offered the chance to rise to the rank of independent settler; the wages and terms of service of those remaining as employees would be regulated by "socially correct" contracts. By means of this, and the prohibition of rural migration the need for foreign labour on the land would disappear, and would therefore be forbidden.²⁰ The statement that the Party would prohibit rural migration to the towns is certainly frank. The State was to ensure that agriculture was profitable in future, although the programme made it clear that one section of the community could not be saved alone (which was why the professional farm unions alone could not help the farmer). The peasantry would be saved when the whole people was delivered from the present system of parliamentary democracy, which was the task of a political movement, the NSDAP.

As a propaganda appeal, the announcement had something for everyone, estate-owners, peasants and labourers alike. Many of its points were frank, sometimes surprisingly so, many others were vague and ambiguous. This last point was, of course, by no means disadvantageous.²¹ But in some respects, particularly on inheritance laws and speculation, it was a statement of genuine policy, as far as can be judged in retrospect.

The Political Apparatus on the land

(i) The Party had formulated a programme but what it still lacked was an apparatus in rural areas to put it across; it now found a man to undertake the organization of this, Richard Walther Darré. His background will be sketched in briefly before a description of this task is given.²²

Like several other prominent National Socialists, he had been born outside Germany, in Argentina in his case. Sent to Europe to be educated (including a year at Wimbledon) he enlisted in the Army and fought during the War as an artillery officer: he qualified as an agronomist in Germany after demobilisation, serving as an estate administrator as part of the course. Darré was fully trained in agriculture and specialized in animal breeding.²³ As such he appears to have acquired a certain professional reputation and in 1927 was suggested by the Agricultural Chamber in East Prussia as an envoy to an agricultural exhibition in Finland.²⁴ In 1928 he worked for a time for the German Embassy in Riga, but was dismissed the following year.²⁵ By 1927 he had already involved himself in "völkisch" politics by joining the "Nordic Ring," which had links with Alfred Rosenberg's "Combat League for German Culture."²⁶ It was possibly due to these affiliations that he lost the chance of two jobs for the German government, although he gave the reason as "personal grounds".²⁷

1927 saw the publication of a work by an author named Kern who advanced the thesis that the Nordics had been warlike nomads.²⁸ This led to a reply by Darré seeking to prove that in fact they were the true creators of European culture, in contrast to genuine nomads, of whom the Jews were an example, and who could only exploit what the Germanic peasants had created.²⁹ That peasants were the foundation stone of culture was a theme of Darré's work; space does not permit a searching examination of it here and it can only be said that the view of history contained in it is eccentric and

tendentious. Despite the author's own later description of himself as a Protestant the book was markedly anti-Christian in its view that the German peasant, once free, had been shackled since the days of Charlemagne by "Judo-Christian materialism".

The following year he published a further work this time to disseminate the concept of a new ruling-class rooted in the peasantry; the latter class were uncritically accepted as the best of the nation.³⁰ Darré's closeness to NS racial policy and Social Darwinism can be seen from his embracing the concept that progress can best be achieved by restricting the possibility of increase by the less "valuable" in order to further the advance of the "valuable"; he is actually referring to human beings.³¹ The book showed his affinity to the NS desire to reform the inheritance laws and remove speculation by producing the idea of entailed holdings as the basis for the new peasant governing-class.³² In pure economics he advocated self-sufficiency and not international trade,³³ thus completing the picture of a man who could fit easily into the NSDAP. Like Hitler, Darré saw the peasantry as a force making for social conservatism, and gave it as his belief that "if Marxism is to be overcome in Germany the flag-carrier in this battle will be the German peasant."³⁴

One group of which he was a member was the "Saalecker Circle," where he met Georg Kenstler, editor of a magazine called "Blood and Soil" and a leader of a "Back to the land" movement called the Artamanen League.³⁵ Kenstler for his part had contacts with the LVB at the time; indeed, he had been a guest at Hamkens' farm.³⁶ The editor's enthusiasm for this movement led him to see in it the germ of an organization which could overthrow the Republic by building a network of cells among the radically-minded peasants, centrally controlled.³⁷ Kenstler involved Darré in the project by writing to him with suggestions in June and September 1929.³⁸ The two men now took up contact with a Dr. Ziegler, editor of an NSDAP

newspaper in Thuringia.³⁹ The new organization was worked out on the assumption that it would be financed by the NSDAP and led by Darré, who would pose as a veterinary inspector in order to allay suspicion as he travelled around the country.⁴⁰

It is interesting to notice that the NSDAP at Munich showed some interest but no action in autumn 1929 to the proposed scheme, so that by March 1930 negotiations were still in progress; this seems to suggest that headquarters had still not fully comprehended the potential of an angry peasantry in the north.⁴¹ By early 1930, however, Darré had managed to get personal, albeit indirect, contacts with Hitler himself, through another member of the "Saalecker Circle", Professor Schultze-Naumberg.⁴² The Führer, it transpired, had heard of Darré, although he had never read any of his works, and could offer him only a post as a travelling speaker in Pomerania.⁴³ Nonetheless, Schultze-Naumberg continued as contact-man, and by May Darré was convinced that the original plan for a revolutionary cell-network could still be sold to the Führer, if he could get down on two sides of paper exactly what was proposed.⁴⁴ Later that month Hess told Darré's publisher that Hitler laid great store on acquiring the NS-orientated writer as an agricultural adviser.⁴⁵ Either Hitler had been impressed by reading Darré's works between February and May or Schultze-Naumberg had done his job as intermediary well, since the Führer's change of attitude from almost complete ignorance of Darré to warm approval had taken place very quickly. The seal of this approbation came finally in July with a direct commission from Hitler to Darré appointing him as the leader of the Party's agrarian apparatus, which he was to build up personally.⁴⁶

There are perhaps two interesting facets to this nomination. Firstly, the way in which it had been arranged, viz as a result of personal contacts made possible by the proliferation of Right radical groups, such as the

"Saalecker Circle", the LVB, the NSDAP and the "Artamanen", well illustrating the background of anti-Republican feeling among certain sections of the people, and the tendency for the disaffected to be members of two or three such organizations simultaneously. Secondly, the speed and nature of the appointment as finally made, and in particular to whom it was given. As far as the Party was concerned Darre was decidedly a newcomer as his high membership number, 248,256, testified.⁴⁷ According to Bullock the NSDAP had 210,000 members in March 1930.⁴⁸ There is therefore the distinct possibility that he only joined upon receiving Hitler's commission. Certainly the older Party members, in particular Willikens, had been passed over in favour of the new man. Evidence will be produced later that longer-serving NS resented the fact that Darre had been so suddenly promoted to office in the hierarchy.

(ii) Darre was placed initially under the command of Chief Department II at Munich, which was responsible for forward planning in general, of which the plans for agriculture would be a subsidiary. His first move was to lay two memoranda before the Party leadership in August, 1930. In the initial one he suggested that if the food-producers could be brought under Party control, a boycott could be organized to deny food to the urban population, a move which no state force or authority could overcome.⁴⁹

The second outlined the build-up of a cadre of agrarian agitators for the NSDAP based on the Kenstlerian model; Darre began from the standpoint that only professionals who knew agriculture could persuade the farmers, who would listen to them rather than to mere political agitators: he therefore proposed an organization which would on the one hand know rural life inside-out, and on the other be firmly under Party political control, thus ensuring the direction of propaganda to the correct ends.⁵⁰ Under this scheme every Party leader from Gau down to village level would be furnished with an agrarian adviser, subject simultaneously to him and to the adviser's own

superiors in the agrarian apparatus at Munich.

Only the second of these memoranda found favour; again the element of illegality in the first may have been held to be tactically unsound, or perhaps the leadership now felt the Party was on the verge of an electoral breakthrough anyway.⁵¹ If the latter supposition did play a part it was justified at the September 1930 elections when the NSDAP won 107 seats.⁵² At this point, therefore, it should be pointed out that the Party was launched firmly on its way to power before the agrarian cadre was installed, and indeed had been organizing a propaganda drive from the first quarter of the year on the land through normal Party propaganda channels;⁵³ the relative success enjoyed at the elections does not seem to support Darré's thesis that only agrarian experts could convince the farmer. Indeed, judging from reports of speeches and newspaper articles, the tone of the NSDAP approach to the rural population was based heavily on the March 1930 programme, in which Darré had had no hand.⁵⁴ These points must be made clear, otherwise it would appear that NS progress on the land dated exclusively from the formation of the new cadre; this is not to deny the subsequent role it did play, as the following sections will show, but its eventual success must be seen within the framework of an already inflamed peasantry, turning an ear to NS propaganda at the time when the organization started.

(iii) Darré's projected cadre found formal acceptance by the Party leadership in late August, and all Gauleiters were ordered to install advisers by the 1st October: there was one slight difference in the instructions to Darré's original requirement, which had been for full-time professional advisers, this suggestion being rejected on financial grounds in favour of "reliable farmers" as honorary advisers.⁵⁵ Ideally, a pyramidal structure was aimed at, the lowest level of which was the village community and agricultural organizations in general, where a Party adviser was to be installed (LVL).⁵⁶ These latter were appointed by their immediate superiors

in the apparatus, the district advisers (LKF) in consultation with the Party's normal leadership at that level.⁵⁷ The LVL were not required to be professional farmers, unlike advisers further up the pyramid, but merely to have the confidence of the rural population. Above the district LKF came the Gau adviser (LGF). In some cases there was an intermediary between district and Gau called LPF. Gaus were themselves sometimes grouped together for administrative reasons, so that a post called regional adviser (LLF) interposed itself between Gau and Party-headquarters, where Darre, with the title LRF, reigned as departmental chief for the apparatus, (as a section of Chief Department II).⁵⁸ All the foregoing officials were subjected to the relevant Party political leadership, as well as to their own immediate superiors in the organization itself.

As can be seen, the organization erected had quite early a tendency towards bureaucratization; this was accentuated by the creation of two further offices, those of LAF and LOF; unlike all the officials with wholly consonantal titles, these two posts were part of the agrarian apparatus only, and consequently not responsible to normal Party channels.⁵⁹ It is not surprising to hear that by spring 1932 the whole structure had come to be a Chief Department (No. V) of the Party in its own right;⁶⁰ by July of that year it had spread out to ten rooms at headquarters in Munich.⁶¹ The growth at the top was paralleled throughout the organization; by 1932 Gau Saxony had thirty-four LKFs and no fewer than eleven hundred LVLs, plus forty speakers on agricultural matters, a press secretariat and a large office staff.⁶² For a man who joined the Party in mid 1930 Darre had come with remarkable speed to preside over ~~what came to be~~ his own private empire.

For in December 1932 Hitler took the whole apparatus out of the normal Party administration altogether and made it, still under Darre, directly subordinate to his own decrees: the entire agrarian-political Press of the

NSDAP was simultaneously made answerable to Darré, instead of to the Party propaganda department.⁶³ The new viceroy for Hitler's agricultural realm regarded the move as a reward for services rendered;⁶⁴ actually according to a memorandum from Hitler himself on Party matters in general it was to free leadership from the professional, organizational side of the movement, in order to let it concentrate upon its political mission.⁶⁵ Whatever the grounds it certainly gave Darré a free hand and thereby obviously created the possibility of friction with normal Party channels as such, which were, by the Führer's order, excluded from any real share in agricultural organization.

(iv) Although Darré's empire eventually became impressive, it had a relatively slow take-off. By the end of 1930 only fifteen Gaue had erected the desired structure (mostly the northern and eastern areas), others were still at various stages, including three quite "dead" in terms of agrarian activity.⁶⁶ Nonetheless since all had at least an LGF it was decided to call them together for a policy meeting at Weimar;⁶⁷ the task of the new organization had already been laid down in tactical terms. This was simply to regard all agricultural organizations, irrespective of their present political affiliations, as "conquerable fortresses";⁶⁸ this was later expanded to the statement that "there must be no farm or holding, no co-operative or rural industry, no local farmers union" etc. where our LVLs have not so worked that we cannot immediately paralyse the structure."⁶⁹ A directive referred to the members of the cadre as "the eyes and ears" of the NSDAP on the land, and the link between farmer and the leadership of the Party. Every adviser was to strive to bring about a situation where the movement knew of everything that happened in rural affairs.⁷⁰ As an example of what was eventually achieved in this respect, Saxony may be cited; by early 1933 so formidable a machine had been built there that its local leader, the LGF Körner, was able to boast that as a result of his connections

with the agricultural department of the Saxon regional government he knew of everything taking place in the area and could keep all his opponents fully under observation.⁷¹

In addition to being the means of conquest of existing agricultural associations, the apparatus was an instrument of propaganda of which the Weimar convention was to be the first example.

Darrel himself was well aware of how the occasion could be utilized for the Party as a propaganda event, to beat the drum for the NSDAP for agriculture as a whole; the time seemed to him too most propitious for this since, as he wrote to Hitler, the DNVP was in trouble over Hugenberg's leadership and the farmers were dissatisfied with the government. Darrel saw the chance for the NS to step into the leadership breach left by DNVP decline, and begged his leader to attend the Weimar meeting as a propaganda exercise.⁷² In this connection, it must be made clear that other agricultural bodies were to send representatives to the convention, as well as the Party itself.⁷³ Hitler took the hint and came; he told his audience of rural visitors that "The Third Reich will be a peasant Reich, or it will pass like that of the Hohenzollern and the Hohenstaufen."⁷⁴ That he intended to build a state, if he came to power, upon the basis of the peasantry can hardly have failed to make an impression on the hearers.

The Conquest of existing organizations

(i) From propaganda the apparatus moved swiftly to operations against the largest farm union, the RLB, which was undergoing a leadership crisis at the time. When Schiele, its president, became Minister of Agriculture under Brüning in spring 1930 he had broken with Hugenberg, with whose DNVP the union had been associated; Schiele entered another party (CNBLVP) and laid down the union presidency. This caused some uncertainty in the RLB ranks, as members were not clear whether to follow Schiele's party or Hugenberg's.⁷⁵ Dissension among the RLB leaders themselves accentuated the confusion; at

national level the union declared itself behind Schiele's policies as Minister of Agriculture in April 1930.⁷⁶ Yet in the following July a Hanover Landbund leader was attacking Cabinet measures as inadequate.⁷⁷ The same month the V.B. was gleefully reporting how poorly-attended Landbund meetings were in Saxony due to the "catastrophic policy" of the national leaders⁷⁸ (as having supported Schiele presumably).

On 22nd July, the central committee of the union decided that all parliamentary action on its behalf would be carried out in future via the CNBLVP.⁷⁹ This caused a terrible row in north and east Germany at the union's regional leadership level; Pomerania, for example, flatly refused to support any one party.⁸⁰ A couple of days later one district branch in Reichenau (Silesia) simply withdrew itself from the RLB as a result of the central committee's decision.⁸¹ By August the V.B. was speaking openly of "chaos" and of the RLB as being in a state of dissolution.⁸² By late 1930 the whole organization was in disarray, and in no position to withstand systematic infiltration by any group so organized and determined as the NSDAP. In November 1930 Darré ordered his new apparatus to undertake the task of penetrating into the RLB in order to undermine its leadership:⁸³ he continued to advocate a similar policy of "nibbling away" at the RLB throughout 1931.⁸⁴

It should be made plain that the object of this exercise was not to destroy the RLB as such but rather to take it over as the foundation-stone for the eventual NS agrarian organization in the Third Reich: this is quite clear from Darré's own directives, one of which described the RLB in exactly this way.⁸⁵ By June 1931 Hitler was publicly appealing to Party members to join the "great organization, which will be well able to collaborate in the Third Reich."⁸⁶

Success came swiftly in terms of winning influence within the RLB ranks:

by December 1930 the entire management committee of one Kreis branch, formerly in the CNBLVP with Schiele, resigned to make way for NSDAP members.⁸⁷ In February 1931 some NS were elected to office for the Landbund committee in Silesia.⁸⁸ Two months later in Baden the LGF of Darré's apparatus was telling subordinates that the time had come to roll up the RLB from underneath in order to bring it firmly under NSDAP control.⁸⁹ By September union leaders in Franconia were approaching the NS with a view to collaboration;⁹⁰ Darré had by now come into possession of the plan of the entire internal organizational structure of the RLB, which he passed on to LGFs in September to facilitate conquest; he drew attention to the fact that the local control of finance was of importance to the NSDAP, i.e. once local branches were in Party hands the existing central committee of the union would be helpless.⁹¹

Infiltration was not the only weapon used; strong attacks were also made upon RLB leaders in personal terms. When one of the latter was incautious enough to praise the government, he was promptly described in the NS Press as "a friend of fulfillment", that is, of the terms of the Versailles Treaty and of Marxism.⁹² Darré himself justified the frequent practice of referring to RLB leaders opposed to the NSDAP as Communists on the grounds that their non-cooperation with the Party would contribute to Communist success.⁹³ This convenient logic allowed the NS to attack anyone attempting to obstruct their onward march.

Yet another weapon employed against the RLB was that of forcing a split between the paid union officials and the elected leadership; the former were invited to come over into the NSDAP which combined with NS infiltration into the rank and file membership would produce a situation where the existing leaders were totally isolated from everyone else within the union. Officials were to be decoyed with promises of a secure future for them in the NS ranks.⁹⁴ Threats were used as liberally as promises,

since the NSDAP suggested that anyone in the RLB who worked against the Party would find no place in the Third Reich.⁹⁵

This combination of propaganda and infiltration into the lower reaches of the union inevitably led to disruption of the organization at higher levels. In the late summer of 1931 one of the two national directors, von Sybel, took up contact with the NSDAP, which he did not publicly announce.⁹⁶ Darre was now able to consolidate NS progress by demanding parity of leadership at national level, on the grounds that the NSDAP now had the majority of the membership in the union. It was stated that if the leading positions were not shared, the peasants would become infuriated and destroy the whole union anyway.⁹⁷ In a directive to his cadre, Darre emphasized the advantages of now gaining representation among the national RLB leaders officially; this would stop the DNVP from using the union against the NS, and secondly, pull the ground from under the feet of those who maintained still that the Party was not "agriculture conscious."⁹⁸ This last point is interesting: evidently NSDAP opportunism on the land was still fairly obvious.

On the 8th December the RLB national leaders held a conference in Berlin to discuss the situation created by Darre's demands to Kriegsheim in the previous month.⁹⁹ NS pressure now received its reward, when the management committee of the union elected to yield and chose Werner Willikens as a member.¹⁰⁰ The Party was now well and truly on the road to total conquest, and Darre sought to hammer home the advantage gained by telling the LGFs to intensify the drive for management positions at lower levels.¹⁰¹ By February 1932 the entire leadership in Kreis Einbeck (Lower Saxony) was in NSDAP hands.¹⁰²

Apart from the reasons already discussed, the Party could use the union in another way, simply as a mouthpiece of its own propaganda. Saxony provided an excellent example of this in September 1931. The then

regional president (who was in Schiele's CNBLVP) wanted the branch to publicly support government policy. The LGF in Saxony then moved into action, first by rallying all branch members who were also NS to act against this suggestion. He then wrote an article violently attacking the president on personal grounds, as being weak and dishonourable. NS lobbying was successful, and endorsement of Schiele's policies prevented.¹⁰³

Thus by early 1932 at the latest the NSDAP had made substantial inroads into the largest farm union, and were using their power to shape its policy and actions. The speed by which this had been accomplished was due partially to the dissension at national and regional level existing in the summer of 1930, but the NS had certainly helped themselves by skilfully exploiting this situation. To win influence in another sphere, that of the Agricultural Chambers, the same kind of tactics were used, as will be described in the following section.

(ii) Darré had set his sights on the Chambers quite soon after his appointment, since they constituted another pillar of agricultural organization. For the basis of his campaign he suggested pillorying Schiele to make the farmers and landworkers dissatisfied with the Republic.¹⁰⁴ For the opening salvo, Darré drew attention to a recent article in the NS Press alleging corruption in grain dealings.¹⁰⁵ Financial irregularities and bad management of the Chambers themselves were used repeatedly in NS propaganda activity aimed at winning control for the Party in this organizational area.¹⁰⁶

To take two regional examples, the Schleswig-Holstein Chamber was in a leadership crisis, as the rank and file membership had lost confidence in their representatives. An exhibition organized by the latter in Hamburg had proved financially disastrous, losing 400,000 RM: the NSDAP belaboured the Chamber President mercilessly in their journal for inefficiency.¹⁰⁷ Political differences had added to the gap between leaders and led in the

province, as the President was in the Landbund and many of the latter in the "Deutsche Bauernschaft".¹⁰⁸ NS progress was rapid in the area, and by October 1931 the Party had 73 members in the Chamber, 13 of whom were LVLs from the agrarian cadre.¹⁰⁹ In East Prussia the Party followed similar tactics of personal abuse of existing leaders; the local President, Brands, was alleged to be guilty of mismanagement, as well as being a Freemason.¹¹⁰ Before the end of 1932 the NSDAP controlled fifty places out of seventy-six in management in this Chamber. Commenting on this a local newspaper stated that whereas NSDAP farmers voted en bloc in the elections, only thirty to forty per cent of their opponents had bothered to do so.¹¹¹ Apathy by the opposition was perhaps as great a factor in NS success as their own activity.¹¹²

Another tactic employed by the Party was to raise the question of contributions paid by members to the Chambers which were always said to be too high. In one case at least the Party representatives claimed success in actually lowering them; in Westphalia the subscription was 65 Pfennigs per 1000 RM of property value for farm-owners, which the NS group in the Chamber, by careful financial scrutiny, had reduced to 62 Pfennigs. The NSDAP members managed, in addition, to get the (for them) unwanted President replaced in Westphalia, and by January 1932 their own group leader, Meinberg, was on the management committee.¹¹³ In East Prussia also, the subscription was cut after the NS won control although the decision to do so had been made previously to this;¹¹⁴ it is unlikely that many local farmers realised this.

Throughout 1931/2 the NS advances continued apace in many areas of the country.¹¹⁵ By the end of 1931 the Party had won one third of all seats contested that year for the country as a whole.¹¹⁶ In January and February 1932 the V.B. was full of reports of new successes in the Chambers, often at the expense of the Landbund. As was the case with that organization, the

Chambers, once captured proved useful organs of propaganda: in East Prussia the Chamber accepted an NS resolution in December 1931 recognising the helplessness of the Reichs President Hindenburg in face of the Parliamentary system, and requesting that the way should be made free for men welded by "struggle and faith" to save not merely agriculture but the entire country.¹¹⁷

For a party possessing in March 1930 neither a precise agrarian programme nor an apparatus for propaganda on the land, the NSDAP position by mid 1932 was astounding. A programme had been published, a cadre built up covering the whole country and the two main pillars of agrarian organization, the Chambers and the largest union, had both been successfully invaded. Even when allowance is made for apathy on the one hand and determination on the other, it seems unlikely that such an advance could have been recorded if the farmers had had confidence in the government or in existing professional bodies. In the next chapter the farmers hostility to the Republic will be described in order to show how it was that the NSDAP was able to win votes on the land from 1930 onwards with the same ease with which they did in the Chambers.

Notes

1. Willikens was a farmer himself and had joined the Party in South Hanover-Brunswick in 1925: ADC personal file "Willikens" and IfZ 1622 which gives his postwar interrogation
2. The article "Nationalsozialismus und Landvolk" is in "National Sozialist Jahrbuch 1929" pp.192/9
3. For examples of opposition exploitation of Point 17 see "Hannoversche Zeitung" 2nd December 1930 and a pro-DVP journal "Niedersächsisches Wochenblatt" 22nd April 1932: the first implied that the NS would deprive landowners of mineral rights under Point 17, the second identified NS expropriation with Communism
4. The German word is "Realteilung"; the majority of districts had another custom "Anerbenrecht", closed inheritance, but only on a voluntary basis.
5. One agrarian writer (Sering) gave an example of a farmer with 49.4 Ha in 67 different strips. Quoted in R. Brady "The Spirit and Structure of German Fascism" p.217
6. Willikens' article "Der Boden im Dritten Reich" is in "National Sozialist Jahrbuch 1930" pp.197/210
7. Holt p.209
8. Point 19 of the original NSDAP programme called for the replacement of "materialistic" Roman law by a Germanic code, which was an attack upon the 1900 Civil Code
9. An article in the following years "NS Jahrbuch" put the same concept more emotively by calling the peasant the "trustee (sic) of this holy hereditary estate of our forefathers." "Bauernsendung" pp.194/7
10. Cf. "Der Angriff" 18th September 1930 attacking the "liberal state" for treating land as though it were just another commodity, instead of a dowry from nature

11. "Official Party announcement regarding the position of the NSDAP to the rural community and to agriculture"
12. This is presumably an allusion to the relatively high birthrate on the land
13. The views summarized in this paragraph may be compared to those of Hitler expressed on Pages 28-30 of this work
14. At an RLB meeting in Dresden von Kalckreuth said he felt ashamed every time he tipped the waiter after a meal in a restaurant, as this sum was bigger than the one the farmer had got for growing the food he had just eaten: E. Topf "Die Grüne Front" p.192
15. Agricultural Chamber to Oberpräsident 22nd October 1931: LA 301/4111
16. Cf. LVB poster attached to Page 49
17. Quoted in B. Vollmer "Volksopposition im Polizeistaat" p.64
18. Cf. the Strasser programme Pages 26-7
19. "Population policy" means the birthrate question in Germany:
20. In fact, foreign labour on the land was being used less and less anyway: in 1914 there had been 382,000 non-German workers in agriculture but by 1928 there were less than a third of that number, the figure for 1932 being only 7,000. Holt p.163. The NSDAP was therefore in effect simply demanding current government policy, which was based on a quota system
21. As one hostile newspaper remarked "The ambiguity and unclarity of the NS programme makes for the convenient practice of always saying to each different group of supporters what it most wishes to hear" "Der Niedersachse" 12th September 1930
22. Unless otherwise stated the details given here are from H. Haushofer "Ideengeschichte der Agrargeschichte und Agrarwirtschaft" (henceforth "Haushofer Ideengeschichte") pp.170ff
23. According to "Das Führer Lexicon" 1934 p.22

24. Ibid
25. ADC "Darré" and E. Topf "Die Grüne Front" p.142
26. Verhey p.31
27. Darré to von Wangenheim 3rd December 1929: ADC "Darré"
28. "Stammbaum und Artbild der Deutschen und ihrer Verwandten": see Verhey p.35
29. "Das Bauerntum als Lebensquell der nordischen Rasse" was the title of Darré's book replying to Kern
30. For example "heroes come from the land, the cities ... produce only stereotyped masses" p.87. The title of this second book was "Neuadel aus Blut und Boden"
31. Ibid p.52
32. Which Darré called "Hegehöfe", protected farms
33. Private letter 19th April 1930: ADC "Darré"
34. "Neuadel aus Blut und Boden" p.73
35. Haushofer "Ideengeschichte" p.164
36. Beyer "Das Bauerntum Angelns" p.161 Note 33
37. Gies p.343: the centre was to have been Weimar
38. Ibid p.344
39. Ibid p.344: Weimar is in Thuringia
40. Darré to Kenstler 2nd February 1930: ND 142
41. For the lack of interest see Gies p.344: it could, of course, be that the relatively negative reaction was inspired by the aversion from potentially illegal methods of overthrowing the government, as had been the case with the NSDAP's attitude to the LVB
42. Verhey p.31
43. Darré to Kenstler 2nd February 1930 and 25th April 1930: Ibid
44. Darré to Ziegler 7th May 1930: Ibid
45. Darré to Ziegler 28th May 1930: Ibid

46. Darre private letter 19th July 1930 said that he had received the commission "last Sunday": ND 91
47. Darre's number is taken from the "Dienstaltersliste der Schutzstaffel der NSDAP" pub. in Berlin (as at 1st October 1934)
48. "Hitler: A study in tyranny" p.150
49. Gies pp.343/4
50. Ibid p.345/6
51. Darre had estimated that only 60 NSDAP candidates would be returned when he wrote his first memorandum, which the leadership felt perhaps to be an under-estimate
52. Gies p.345
53. In predominantly rural South Hanover-Brunswick the Gau responsible held 1,200 meetings in the first quarter of 1930: the NSDAP vote in this region rose from 46,000 in 1928 to 283,000 in September 1930
"Zum Gautag der NSDAP am 21/22 Februar 1931 (p.46): ADC "Gaue":
Similarly July 1930 saw 14 meetings in Upper Bavaria in a saturation campaign on the land V.B. 25th July 1930 "Trommelfeuer auf Oberbayern" /
54. In July, for example, NS deputies in the Prussian Landtag were asking questions about fertilizer prices and alleging a syndicate V.B. 12th July 1930. At Gunzenhausen (Bavaria) Hitler addressed 7,000 farmers and told them no single profession could be saved, only a political movement could do that for the nation as a whole: V.B. 17th July 1930
55. Gies p.346
56. The following details except where otherwise stated, are from Gies p.346, Circular No. 94 13th October 1931 ND 142 and an instruction 23rd June 1932 BA-NS26/953 regarding the requirements laid down for LVLs etc.
57. The nomination by immediate superior in consultation with political

leaders applied at all levels except LVL

58. In February 1933 there were only 11 LLFs: Anordnung No.3 13th February 1933: ND 139
59. Darré to LGFs. Circular No.94 13th October 1931: ND 142
60. H. Reischle "Agrarpolitischer Apparat und Reichsnährstand" p.810 in "NS Monatsheft" Nr 54 September 1934
61. From a report in BA-NS26/953
62. "Bericht über die Tätigkeit der landwirtschaftlichen Abteilung der NSDAP im Gau Sachsen": ND 140
63. A copy of this announcement of 14th December 1932 is in BA-NS26/953
64. Darré to LGFs 20th December 1932: ND 145
65. "Denkschrift über die inneren Gründe für die Verfügung zur Herstellung einer erhöhten Schlagkraft der Bewegung" 20th December 1932: ND 128
66. "Bericht über den agrarpolitischen Apparat etc" 9th January 1931: ND 148
67. Darré to LGFs 26th November 1930: ND 148
68. Darré to LGFs 17th November 1930: BA-NS26/951
69. Darré to LGFs 20th November 1930: BA-NS26/951
70. Darré to LGFs 17th November 1930: NS26/951
71. "Bericht über die Tätigkeit der landwirtschaftlichen Abteilung im Gau Sachsen etc": ND 140. This report covers the period from January 1932 - January 1933
72. Darré to Hitler 28th January 1931: ND 148
73. Darré to LGFs 16th January 1931 Ibid
74. H. Reischle "Agrarpolitischer Apparat und Reichsnährstand" p.811: the first clause of the quotation particularly becamee frequently cited by the agrarian apparatus in essays, etc. in the Third Reich itself.
75. Stoltenberg p.158
76. "Goslarsche Zeitung" 3rd April 1930

77. Ibid 12th July 1930
78. V.B. 11th July 1930
79. Kretschmar "Deutsche Agrarprogramme der Nachkriegszeit" p.80
80. V.B. 26th July 1930: see also previous day "Krach auch im Landbund"
81. V.B. 27th July 1930
82. 2nd August 1930 "Auch die Bauernfront in Auflösung": this article was signed "W." perhaps for "Willikens"
83. Darre to LGFs 20th November 1930: BA-NS26/951
84. See Gies pp.361/3 for similar instructions in August and September 1931
85. Darre to LGFs 16th December 1930: BA-NS26/951
86. Quoted in Heberle p.164
87. Darre to LGFs 22nd December 1930: BA-NS26/951
88. NS "Freiheitskämpfer" 11th February 1931
89. Gies p.361
90. Darre to LGFs 23th September 1931: ND 142
91. Darre to LGFs 24th September 1931: ND 142
92. "Kampf" (Bayreuth) 14th March 1931
93. Darre to LGFs 16th December 1930: BA-NS26/951
94. Darre to LGFs 13th August 1931: ND 142
95. This campaign provoked protests from RLB newspapers to which Darre replied 18th October 1931: BA-ZSg 103/2002
96. Gies p.359; by July 1932 von Sybel was an NSDAP representative in the Reichstag. Ibid
97. Darre to Kriegsheim, President of the RLB 6th November 1931 /
98. Darre to LGFs 25th November 1931: ND 142
99. It was probably a sign of NS infiltration that Darre knew of this proposed meeting in advance (Ibid)

100. Gies p.368
101. Darré to LGFs 19th December 1931: ND 142
102. "Niedersächsischer Tageszeitung" 5th February 1932
103. For these events see Darré to LGFs 23rd September 1931: ND 142
104. They were the people who chose the management committees of the Chambers
105. "Unerhörte Korruption an der öffentlichen Getreidewirtschaft" V.B. 8th November 1930
106. For example, "We demand clean Agricultural Chambers" "NS Landpost" 8th November 1931
107. T. Thyssen "Bauern und Standesvertretung" p.250
108. T. Thyssen, Ibid p.247
109. Stoltenberg p.177
110. Darré to LGFs 20th November 1931: ND 142
111. "Rugensches Kreisblatt" 6th November 1932
112. Even the V.B. admitted on 7th April 1932 that voting in the April elections had been "extraordinarily slight"
113. The events in Westphalia are described in Darré's address to LGFs 30th January 1932: ND 145
114. "Rugensches Kreisblatt" 6th January 1932
115. For example, ten seats in the Rhineland, twenty three out of thirty in Oldenburg: Gies p.366
116. M. Broszat "Der Staat Hitlers" p.12
117. WTB 22nd December 1931

Chapter IV: The Economic Crisis, government policy and agricultural reaction

The object of this chapter is to examine the nature of the background against which the NSDAP came to office, since without some description of this its electoral success on the land would be inexplicable. This entails a brief summary of the economic crisis itself, government measures to deal with it and the agricultural community's reaction to Cabinet policy. It is hoped that it will then be clear exactly how dissension in the government and mutual distrust between industry and agriculture, as well as between different branches of the agrarian sector itself, all contributed to the relative ease and speed of the NS accession to office.

The Economic Crisis

(i) The sharp downturn in trade started in Germany as early as the fourth quarter of 1927,¹ unemployment eventually quadrupled and prices fell drastically.² For agrarian products this fall was uneven, in that the index for crop products was hit less than those for dairy products or livestock: within the crops sector itself there were differences as well; the price for rye was more affected than that for wheat.³ Thus it is clear that any statements about the effect of the crisis on agriculture must be generalisations when applied to the agrarian sector as a unity: this does not alter the broad conclusion that with the exceptions covered by Note 3 as previously listed, all sections of agriculture were worse off in general in 1932 than four years previously. The point being made here is that the degree of hardship experienced varied, not only from one sector to another, but doubtless in individual cases as well within the same sector. Speaking broadly, the peasants suffered most from the price-fall, since their

income was more likely to depend upon dairy-products and livestock than did that of the larger farmers cultivating grain; even here however it must be emphasized that the price of milk remained relatively less affected than the index for livestock.⁴ In sum, it can be said that what was shown as true in Schleswig-Holstein, namely, two relatively good years after 1928, followed by a sharp decline past 1930, was true of Germany as a whole: a statistical summary is given in Appendix B.

(ii) It is not surprising that as prices fell indebtedness increased on the land.⁵ This led to the dismal spectacle of foreclosure and compulsory auctions being of increasing frequency after 1928.⁶ Some caution must be observed in interpreting these figures, however, since the number of holdings so disposed of did not amount to more than a tiny percentage of all farms in Germany, which is true of every size of holding.⁷ The average peasant was scarcely faced with eviction as a real possibility, although the effect of hearing of foreclosures may well have been psychological. Moreover, when peasants were dispossessed it does not necessarily follow that the crisis was always the only factor involved: personal failure could also contribute.⁸

Equally, statistics of rural indebtedness are no guide as to the nature of the creditors; to add up what all farmers owe individually is of little use when determining how much agriculture as such is indebted to outsiders, since clearly one farmer's creditors may simply be other farmers. That this was often the case can be seen by studying farm creditors lists, drawn up after the NS accession to power. In Vohwinkel (Wuppertal) one farmer owed in all 17630RM, not less than 14500RM of which was due to another farmer. The same parish showed a case where all debts incurred had another farmer as creditor.⁹ Equally informative is the number of peasants claiming debt-relief: in Hemmerde (Westphalia) only

twelve farmers out of fifty six in the parish did so.¹⁰ Creditors lists for this village also show a considerable frequency of farmers among the professions cited.

The object of this section has not been, despite the foregoing, to prove that the agrarian community did not experience some hardship past 1930 particularly, but rather that the degree must be seen in its proper context. The crisis affected all classes and trades in the country, and although agriculture was affected, it was almost certainly less so than other sections of the community. As evidence for this one may consider the following fact, that in 1932 food producers were actually receiving a higher share of the national income than three years previously.¹¹ As Appendix B shows this was not due to their being absolutely better off in 1932 but rather to the fact that by comparison with 1929 they were relatively less worse-off than the rest of the country.

Government Agricultural Policy

(i) From 1928 to 1932 there were several changes of government in Germany and three different Ministers of Agriculture.¹² This does not, however, seem to have produced any sweeping changes of policy, since successive Ministers adopted a roughly similar attitude towards the land, which was based upon four main considerations. Firstly, domestic production was to be expanded as far as possible; in June 1930 Schiele, the then Minister, expressed the hope that agricultural output could be raised by 2.5 thousand million RM annually, in order to give some stimulus to industry by increasing farm purchasing-power.¹³ Secondly, German agriculture was to be made more efficient and thereby more competitive internationally. In this respect a better marketing system should be developed. Thirdly, the dairy sector should be especially encouraged

since in these products the gap between consumption and domestic supply was at its greatest.¹⁴ Finally, wheat cultivation was to be furthered at the expense of rye.

Evidence for the above as a basis for policy formulation will be offered in the next section: before this is done, however, the point should be made that any government assistance to agriculture must be seen in the light of the general crisis in the country. In the Budget of 1929, for example, there was a deficit of 500 Million RM.¹⁵ Aid to the industrial unemployed necessitated huge sums of money at this time;¹⁶ if the scale of help to agriculture in the measures now described seems low, the background of claims from other sections of the people must be borne in mind.

(ii) In February 1928 Schiele introduced an emergency programme to relieve economic distress, the keynote of which was aid to dairy and livestock farming, and to an improved marketing system.¹⁷ To increase domestic fats supply, 30 million RM were given in subsidies to pig producers.¹⁸ A total expenditure of 60 Million RM over five years was envisaged for agriculture as a whole.¹⁹ The programme expressed its belief in greater efficiency as the best way to safeguard the industry, but by 1929 falling world prices pushed the government a step along the road which they were eventually to travel in policy terms, namely, that of protectionism. The Cabinet was now awarded the right to impose further tariffs by decree.²⁰ The same year saw Dr. Dietrich, Schiele's successor, taking up a new weapon in the shape of an Act establishing minimum percentage levels for domestic wheat in all flour making.²¹ Compulsory consumption of home-produced food was added to tariffs against that coming from abroad, so that the original idea of a highly efficient domestic agriculture to compete with foreigners (à la Sering)

seemed by now to have been at least partly abandoned in favour of state protection for all.

The next problem to confront the Cabinet was that of the rye surplus, engendered by a series of good harvests and a change in eating habits.²² As the Prussian Minister of Agriculture, Dr. Steiger, pointed out, the public was now eating more white bread than formerly, which left a huge rye surplus on the domestic market.²³ The government acted by buying up 200,000 tons to store at public expense.²⁴ By March 1930 the situation was so serious however that Schiele, now back as Minister, had to raise tariffs on rye imports and introduce a government maize monopoly to control the imports of feeding-stuffs.²⁵ The thinking behind this was that the throttling of maize imports would lead livestock farmers to use home-produced rye as a substitute feeding-stuff. In July Schiele enacted the compulsory mixing of wheat and rye in flour for human consumption as well.²⁶ These measures undoubtedly aided the eastern rye cultivators, but at the expense of the dairy and livestock farmers since foreign maize was cheaper than German rye. By July 1930 the concept of aiding dairy farming especially seems thus to have been abandoned, which can hardly have made the dairy-farming peasants feel more attached to the Republic.

That grain producers were being particularly helped by protection cannot be gainsayed, since the government itself continually drew attention to how much higher domestic grain prices were than those prevailing on the international market. One Cabinet Minister, Treviranus, indeed asserted that wheat prices were twice as high in Germany as outside at a peasants meeting in 1931.²⁷ As a result, domestic production had so increased that imports had been cut by 56%.²⁸

However successful on one front, the Cabinet policy had by now become

dangerously one-sided, as can be seen by a scrutiny of the prevailing duties on various agrarian products, which shows how dairy and livestock production had been relatively far less protected against imports than had grain.²⁹ One historian has suggested that this failure to protect the dairy and livestock producers was due partly to Cabinet dissension. Dr. Brüning was alleged to have been more concerned with foreign than with domestic affairs and did not wish all customs duties to become too high; his policy was rather to await protective action against German goods, and then use this as a lever in order to get the suspension of reparations payments, on the grounds that the country could no longer achieve an exports surplus. Schiele's proposals for a higher tariff on butter was therefore opposed by the Chancellor in 1931.³⁰

(iii) The relative lack of aid to the dairy-farming peasants as opposed to grain producers inevitably produced hostility to the Republic. This was particularly unfortunate since the 1928 programme had raised hopes of effective assistance to the dairy/livestock sectors which had been sustained by Schiele's reappointment in 1930.³¹ This can be seen from the welcome given to the 1930 measures on rye etc. and increased duties in general by the Christian Farmers' Union in Westphalia: Dr. Hermes of the "Green Front" likewise gave qualified approval.³² In April the RIB declared itself behind its former president.³³ Schiele thus got off on the right foot but he simply failed to maintain his popularity for long, and by 1931 the whole agrarian sector seems to have been against him, although for differing reasons.

Firstly, there was the failure to protect the peasants adequately, in which the butter duty was the decisive factor. The absence of an increase in the spring Budget of 1931 caused a lively reaction among the peasants all over the country, and more especially in the South and

West. From Westphalia the regional Christian Farmers' Union sent a telegram to Brüning expressing grave concern and forecasting catastrophe for the region.³⁴ Representatives for the Rhineland, Baden and Württemberg followed suit.³⁵ In January 1932 the northerners in Schleswig-Holstein voiced their protests against foreign butter imports in a letter to the REM and the regional Oberpräsident from the Agricultural Chamber. The organization asked that if existing trade treaties could not be abrogated perhaps a system of quotas could be introduced.³⁶ In fact the government acceded to this and similar requests in the same month and initiated quotas for butter imports, based on approximately 60% of the 1931 actual figures for purchases abroad.³⁷ Unfortunately prices continued to fall, which had the effect of nullifying government intentions, and also worked against any increase in domestic fats supply, which the Cabinet was aiming at. Its propaganda to the peasants was currently engaged partly in trying to persuade them to plant barley in lieu of oats in order to provide more feeding-stuffs and thereby increase both animal stocks and fats. As critics pointed out, it was pointless to exercise propaganda to this end if the fats products themselves, in the shape of butter, continued to fall in price.³⁸

(iv) The attitude of the "Green Front" leaders played a large part in fomenting discontent among all kinds of food-producers, since the Federation represented nearly all of them. Its leaders entered into negotiations with Schiele and Brüning regarding policy and then announced that they were awaiting the implementation of promises made to them, as the nature of the situation brooked no delay.³⁹ In fact, the "Green Front" seems to have placed the emphasis upon Protectionism and the use of domestic rye as feeding-stuff.⁴⁰ As an illustration that agriculture was split in its own demands and attitude to tariffs the disagreement

over the maize monopoly among "Green Front" leaders is instructive; since the "Deutsche Bauernschaft" could not support the idea in principle as it meant dearer fodder it left the Federation.⁴¹ The "Green Front" seems to have been thereafter dominated by the RLB whose spokesman, von Kalckreuth, went on record as saying that "The German people must become compelled to buy only German food."⁴² The situation thereby developed unfavourably to the Republic in that the largest union came increasingly under NSDAP control and demanded in effect that agriculture be saved at the expense of the consumer, whilst the peasantry itself, despite government promises, became increasingly alienated.⁴³

Indeed from early 1931 onwards signs of disaffection on the land became more and more frequent: from Silesia the chairman of the local farmers union wrote to Brüning in February warning him that radicals were finding an ear everywhere in the region, and specifically mentioning the RLB as the Republic's strongest opponent.⁴⁴ The journal for the CBV in Westphalia denied that to protest meant to be radical, it was just that the farmers were at the end of their tether.⁴⁵ In Schleswig-Holstein bad weather added to economic depression in general and the local farmers' union passed a resolution demanding a debt moratorium; it was further demanded that there should be an interest-free respite for turnover tax.⁴⁶ The Regierungspräsident stated on the day after the resolution that the Reichsbank was refusing to extend credit on bills falling due, which was likely to have serious political repercussions.⁴⁷

This proved an accurate forecast; by November 1931 the situation in the province had deteriorated still further, according to the Prussian Minister of the Interior; all the old slogans of the LVB, such as tax strikes and boycotts of farmers who did pay taxes, were now being taken up again among the peasants, who intended to spread them out over Pomerania, Silesia and East Prussia; the Minister suggested an official

announcement be made threatening the full rigour of the law against transgressors.⁴⁸ (It should be made clear that the leaders of this movement were apparently the DNVP and RLB, not the NS, who were forbidden to participate in any regional tax strikes as Party members, although allowed to as private individuals.⁴⁹) Feeling was clearly running high in Schleswig-Holstein.⁵⁰ Unfortunately for the government this was now true of other regions: in November 1931 the Ministry of Economic Affairs in Württemberg reported an increasing number of cases of financial collapse due to lack of liquid capital on the land and high rates of indebtedness.⁵¹ The Württemberg Justice Minister described what effect this was having on the peasantry in reference to demands for protection against foreclosure; if these were not met it would be dangerous "since the peasants up to now have supported the state" but "the agitation is now great, even amongst otherwise calm people."⁵² Feeling in South Germany was beginning to equal that in the North.

As von Kalckreuth looked back in January 1932 upon the year that had just ended and thought of government promises to save agriculture he declared himself certain that no salvation could be expected from Brüning's Cabinet.⁵³ If the April 1930 resolution of the RLB welcoming Schiele had been the honeymoon period between government and farmer, von Kalckreuth's speech sounded rather like a demand for a divorce. There is no doubt that by now there was bitterness everywhere on the land and equally no doubt about the part that the Landbund had played in fomenting it. Indeed, in August 1931 Lüboke of the "Deutsche Bauernschaft" wrote to Brüning enclosing a tendentious Landbund press article, so demagogic in tone that the union chairman was moved to say that "Everyone in agricultural circles must ask themselves how long the government will tolerate such undermining of its authority."⁵⁴

Friction in Prussia

(i) Not all hostility in agricultural circles was due to arguments over tariffs and prices. In Prussia the state administration had almost always been on bad terms with the Junkers:⁵⁵ most really big estates in Germany were in the East and the alienation of the farming community from the Republic must be concerned with regional as well as national administrative measures, since the estate-owners were a Prussian, as well as a German, problem.⁵⁶ This is particularly important in view of Prussia's predominance in terms of population.⁵⁷

One cause of friction between landowner and government was the constitution of the Agricultural Chambers, since the former tended to dominate the leadership positions in them. In order to break this the SPD in Prussia produced a law enfranchising the smaller landowners in 1920; so strong was tradition that these latter continued to vote for the Junkers to fill the management positions.⁵⁸ April 1929 saw the production of a draft law aiming at further democratization, by enfranchising land workers at Chamber elections. The published Bill provoked so much controversy that the Prussian Government had to issue an official press statement to justify what had been included in the draft.⁵⁹ Apart from voting rights for labourers the landowners objected to a proposal that the administrative apparatus in Prussia should always hear advice from the Chamber before proceedings to measures affecting agriculture; the Junker allegation that this would place the Chambers under government influence is absurd in retrospect, but perhaps symptomatic of their distrust of anything to do with the Prussian regime.⁶⁰ By October 1930 ill-feeling over the draft law had reached such a pitch that Schiele himself wrote to Brüning to draw his attention to unrest on the land on the matter.⁶¹ This fuss had been provoked by a Bill establishing in Prussia what nearly all other states had already instituted.⁶²

In East Prussia relations between the government and the most important local agricultural association became very strained indeed. This latter body was known as the Agricultural Federation (LVO) and had close connections with Hindenburg.⁶³ Its membership was confined almost solely to the larger landowners;⁶⁴ in July 1930 it condemned the draft Chambers Bill, and in October 1931 sent a memorandum to the President demanding lower taxes and social security payments in view of financial difficulties in the province.⁶⁵ By the following December the Prussian Civil Service was referring to the LVO's activities in stirring up the rural population as sabotage, and requested that it should be dissolved.⁶⁶ Before leaving this organization, it is worth pointing out that when the SPD/Zentrum coalition government of Prussia was ejected from office in July 1932 by von Papen, his Minister of the Interior in the National Cabinet was Freiherr von Gayl, who was mainly responsible for the eviction itself.⁶⁷

(ii) Without doubt the measure most responsible for stirring up ill-feeling in Prussia from 1929 was the system of aid to distressed areas known as "Osthilfe" or Eastern aid.⁶⁸ This scheme created trouble between Prussia and the landowners, between the Prussian government and the Reich and aroused deep feelings in other parts of the country: it may have played some part in the downfall of Dr. Brüning.

It must be accepted that in economic terms the East was disadvantaged; the cutting-off of East Prussia from the Reich and the closing of the lucrative trade with Russia as a result of the revolution there played some part in this:⁶⁹ but unfavourable soil and climate were the main factors for agriculture, as well as the high freight charges involved in conveying grain to the West.⁷⁰ Consequently indebtedness among farmers was high, so much so that in July 1930 the five most indebted regions in

the country were all in Prussia, and mostly east of the Elbe.⁷¹ The bigger estates appear to have suffered relatively more than the peasant holdings in the area, judging from statistics on foreclosure given in a Landtag speech by Dr. Steiger.⁷² These showed that in 1929/30 the percentage of farms sold off in each size range increased in direct proportion to farm size. This should be borne in mind when statistics regarding the apparently disproportionate amount of aid given to the estate-owners are evaluated.

To alleviate distress in the area the scheme known as Osthilfe was instituted, comprising tax cuts, loans and debt relief for the agricultural part of the economy: it was envisaged that from 1931 to 1936 as much as 500 million RM would be needed in respect of debt relief.⁷³ Administratively there was a Reichs-kommissar at the top and a central bureau, with regional offices under him with a Commissioner in each region. There was an unfortunate dualism between the Reich and Prussia in that the Commissioners were appointed by the first body, whereas the second was responsible for day to day administration. When debts were proved eligible for relief, a trustee was appointed for each holding to supervise the spending of public money. The entire system was slow and cumbersome, as one Agriculture Minister was to admit later.⁷⁴

In statistical terms there were well over half a million holdings over 2 Ha in the area concerned, of which rather more than seventy thousand claimed assistance which was granted eventually to 49,821 farmers.⁷⁵ In relation to the total number of holdings in each size range, three times as many estate owners requested help as did peasant proprietors.⁷⁶ This led to the unfortunate result that even if the scheme had not been fraudulently administered it certainly looked as though it had been, since the large estate-owners received the lion's share of the assistance. The official figures given for farms totally relieved up to the end of 1932 shows

that of 12470 so dealt with, as few as 191 (those over 500 Ha in size) had received a quarter of all monies given; if all estates of 100 Ha or more are taken into account, then 722 holdings out of 12470 had obtained 46% of all aid.⁷⁷

These figures are misleading, since they conceal that the smaller properties had received far more per Ha.⁷⁸ Unfortunately the mere fact that a few recipients were tending to monopolise the scheme led to a genuine belief that corruption was taking place on a colossal scale. Undoubtedly there was some abuse; in Pomerania the Commissioner went over the head of the Prussian administration in order to help a landowner related to Hindenburg out of turn, and then aided one of his own relatives; the Prussian government instigated disciplinary procedure against him.⁷⁹ In the Prussian Landtag SPD deputies alleged that some estate-owner recipients were buying up copies of a reactionary newspaper in bulk and giving it away free.⁸⁰ Public funds were thus said to be used to subsidize anti-government propaganda. The NSDAP group in the Landtag alleged abuse of the trustee system, in that some appointed were administering public expenditure on their own properties or those of relatives.⁸¹ When Osthilfe was debated by the Reichstag's Budget Committee hair-raising stories of fraud were freely bandied around, especially by deputies from the SPD, Zentrum and Bavarian People's Party; Hindenburg's neighbour, Oldenburg-Januschau was said to have had 610,000 RM under the scheme.⁸²

As a result of the debate, von Braun agreed to set up an all-party investigating committee, which eventually reported in April 1933, after the NS accession. The report said it had found no financial irregularities, although twenty-six cases of alleged corruption had been looked into.⁸³ Whatever may be thought of this statement, it must be accepted that the granting of the largest share of the monies to the Junkers does not necessarily imply corruption or fraudulence since as has been stated, the

larger properties were most heavily-indebted.

Not all complaints about Osthilfe were necessarily based on mal-administration; as national funds were being devoted to one part of the country only, jealousy was aroused in other regions. The local council in Stuttgart passed a resolution to the effect that the large estates should be allowed to collapse anyway, which was endorsed by the Württemberg Landtag and sent to the REM.⁸⁴ Mountain farmers in Bavaria sent a spokesman to Brüning with a description of their plight; a report on the visit shows the depth of bitterness in the area over Osthilfe, which had now become directed against Hindenburg himself since he was helping the estate-owners who were the enemies of the Republic anyway.⁸⁵ These South German attacks were prompted by a desire not to afford any aid to the Junkers, irrespective of how it was administered.

The scheme managed to produce discord between the Reich and Prussia at governmental level, as well as between politicians and public. The background to the bickering is too involved to be detailed here, but it culminated in Brüning's issue of an emergency decree in November 1931 assuming full responsibility for Osthilfe on behalf of the Reich.⁸⁶ Behind this decision lay a growing conviction among politicians that the scheme was simply not working as it might have done to alleviate distress.⁸⁷ Apart from that consideration, there had been trouble between the Reichs Kommissar, Treviranus, and the Prussian government;⁸⁸ Junker attacks on the latter had perhaps also contributed to Brüning's desire to make the Osthilfe administration national and not regional.⁸⁹ Needless to say, von Kalckreuth and the RLB were among the most vigorous critics of the Prussian government, taking up the attack by means of the pen and through demagogic speeches.⁹⁰

The root cause of Junker objection, not only to Prussian but later Reich, administration of Osthilfe was that it would be used as a weapon to

break up the estates for settlement purposes. Braun had more than once hinted that he would be quite happy to see the large estates disappear; as early as 1928 he went on record as advocating that economic laws should be allowed to work themselves out in respect of the landowners rather than that a programme of public aid should be given.⁹¹ When one farmers union proposed a boycott of industrial goods as a protest against government policy, Braun replied that the government would not capitulate but rather, "We should see ourselves able to bring in a large-scale settlement policy."⁹² He was then attacked by the DNVP Press as favouring a socialist policy of expropriation.⁹³ It would seem that aid to the Junkers upset everyone else, and threats to give help only on certain conditions annoyed the estate-owners, so that the government was doomed to be attacked either way.

Ironically, the removal of Prussian influence did nothing to allay Junker fears, since the new Kommissar, Schlange-Schöningen, was a keen advocate of settlement, by which he hoped to sell the whole idea of Osthilfe to the country, to pacify its critics. His main starting-point was to divide the estates into those capable of financial reconstruction and those no longer viable; debts owed by the first group were to be reduced from 1000 million RM to 600 million RM.⁹⁴ As far as the second were concerned, he declared at a press interview that "Agricultural properties deemed to be incapable of reconstruction. . . will be used for settlement as soon as possible."⁹⁵ Braun referred to this statement as "incautious" in his memoirs, and said that Junker circles around Hindenburg, notably Oldenburg-Januschau, began to talk about "agrarian Bolshevism."⁹⁶ By early 1932 Schöningen had drawn up an actual draft Bill in collaboration with Stegerwald, Minister of Labour in the Reich Cabinet: in May Freiherr von Gayl wrote to Hindenburg to draw his attention to these proposals.⁹⁷ Later that month Brüning's Cabinet fell.

Was this cause and effect or merely temporal coincidence? One historian points out that when the Chancellor met Hindenburg on 29th May settlement was not discussed, and that the President was suspicious of some other financial measures proposed by Brüning.⁹⁸ Von Papen later denied that Osthilfe had played any part in the Chancellor's dismissal.⁹⁹ But in retrospect, when it is considered how close some estate-owners were to the President, and the degree of dissension which Osthilfe had caused previously between the Junkers and the Prussian government, plus Schöningen's outright advocacy of non-assistance to properties no longer viable, it seems hard not to believe that Osthilfe was at least a contributory factor in Brüning's downfall.¹⁰⁰ Its chief significance for this work is perhaps the discord and jealousy caused by the programme in general, and the effect it had on poisoning relations between the rural population and the Republic. The NSDAP exploited this naturally and drew attention to the scheme's ineffectiveness; when Schiele made an optimistic speech about the East the NS contrasted this with the reality, alleging that bankrupt German farms were being bought up by Polish consortiums.¹⁰¹

Disunity in Agriculture and Industry

(i) Before closing this chapter some reference needs to be made to the strength of "lobbying" on behalf of special interests in industry and agriculture apart from the Junkers already discussed, in order to show how hard it was to formulate any policy to please everyone at the time. The estate-owners demanded special treatment it is true; but they were not alone in this respect. Different sections of the economy found it hard to reach any mutual agreement. The "Deutsche Bauernschaft" as has already been stated left the "Green Front" in 1930: by March 1932 it produced its own agricultural policy in a pamphlet called "Agrarian Policy in Statistics". This was, as might be expected from a peasant union, an attack

on high fodder tariffs which disadvantaged dairy and livestock farmers: the pamphlet alleged that whereas crop prices were rising, the indices for other products were doing the reverse.¹⁰² The brochure drew a reply from the Christian Farmers Union (entitled "Agrarian Policy in correct Statistics") which was still in the "Green Front".¹⁰³ The thesis here was that the benefits of cheap fodder had been grossly exaggerated, since continued imports would lead only to over-production of livestock and hence lower prices still.¹⁰⁴ Thus the peasant sector was split into two opposing camps over the correct policy to pursue, which of course did not facilitate government measures.

If the CBV did not see eye to eye with the "Bauernschaft" its relation with the RLB was at least as bad, animosity frequently being expressed in personal terms. One RLB newspaper accused Dr. Hermes of receiving 40000 RM annually from IG Farbenindustrie the chemical firm: this imputation has to be seen in the context of high fertilizer prices at the time. A Christian Farmers Journal promptly described this as a lie.¹⁰⁵ The "Deutsche Bauernschaft" was also on bad terms with the RLB, to complete the unhappy triangle of three unions all busily quarrelling with one another. In January 1933 the peasant organization passed a resolution declaring the crisis on the land to be partly due to the government having perpetually assisted the estate-owners at everyone else's expense. The RLB was named in the motion as being the chief culprit in this, since it continually put pressure on the government to bring about such action: it was further alleged by the "Bauernschaft" that the RLB was motivated by a desire to hinder peasant settlement in the East, that is, by preserving the big estates.¹⁰⁶

Professional representation in agriculture was in disarray from 1930 onwards, as the different unions were obliged to advocate different policies, since their own respective memberships were so unlike in religious and

especially sociological terms. A desire to end this kind of disunity must no doubt have been a factor on the land in influencing voting practice, insofar as this was actuated by a wish to end the seeming anarchy of the current situation.

(ii) Similarly, there was tension between the farmers and some other sections of the community, especially industry. To a certain extent the government was partly responsible for this: in January 1930 Dr. Dietrich declared in a speech to a private society that reparations were especially disadvantageous to agriculture, as industry had just transferred the debts to farmers who could not recoup themselves by higher prices.¹⁰⁷ This kind of statement seems to have created suspicion or reinforced that existing among farmers that they were being sacrificed to a policy of export furtherance. When they demanded higher tariffs, one newspaper associated with business interests attacked the suggestion, using language like "traditional considerations of industry" to back up a policy of free trade. A farm journal promptly called this kind of talk "barefaced cheek", and an example of complete cynicism towards the land: the peasantry would have to expect growing opposition from industry.¹⁰⁸ To show how previous governmental policy had favoured manufacturing the same farm newspaper later printed a comparison of the price indices for industrial goods and food to illustrate how badly the farmers had fared.¹⁰⁹

In 1932 the chief German industrial confederation (Reichsverband der Deutschen Industrie) produced its own programme for agriculture, the essential points of which were a better marketing system and lower production costs.¹¹⁰ There seems little doubt that behind this was the desire on the part of manufacturers to obviate protective tariffs on food which of course put up the price to their own workers. It is difficult to avoid a certain impression, in sum that the manufacturers did want to help exports at the expense of the farmer. By January 1933 the RLB added fuel

to this particular fire by roundly accusing the government of "pillaging" agriculture to accommodate trade interests; this charge brought a vehement denial from two industrial/trade organizations.¹¹¹ At the same time the Christian Farmers in Westphalia passed a resolution deploring the "one sided furtherance of export policies."¹¹²

Agricultural representatives also quarrelled with other parts of the community; when the RLB demanded a debt moratorium this drew an instant response from the National League for Savings Protection: the body drew governmental attention to the thousands of letters arriving at its head office from embittered members who were creditors to farmers; the League attacked the RLB, again speaking of one-sided demands.¹¹³

The latter phrase seems indeed to have been the keynote of the last years of the Republic; everyone wanted to be saved at everyone else's expense; this was particularly true in respect of industry and agriculture and their repeated advocacy of conflicting policies over tariffs. However much farmers might complain in reality the government had shielded them from the worst effects of the world crisis.¹¹⁴ This does not seem to have made food-producers grateful in any way, as the next chapter will show in describing NSDAP advance on the land. Before this is done this section is concluded with the suggestion that the spectacular success of the Party would not have been possible without the economic crisis on the one hand and the manifest discord and ill-feeling, not merely between industry and the land, but inside agriculture itself on the other: the picture was not made clearer by internal dissension in the Cabinet.

1. See Beyer "Das Bauerntum Angelns" p.132 quoting the Institute for Business Research
2. For the unemployment figures see Bullock "Hitler: A Study in Tyranny" p.152
3. In 1932/3 the income from wheat sales was actually greater than it had been in 1928/9, the only agricultural product of which this was true, apart from honey: "Landwirtschaftliche Statistik 1937" p.100
4. If 1913 = 100, the index for milk in Westphalia in 1931 was 106, as against 86 for cows and heifers and 85 for pigs: WB 29th April 1931
5. From 8728 Mill. RM in 1926 to 11,425 Mill. RM in 1932: Bente "Landwirtschaft und Bauerntum" p.152
6. In 1931 5,798 separate holdings were so sold, and the following year 7,060: "Landwirtschaftliche Statistik 1938" p.21
7. See Table XIV Appendix B
8. Of 415 cases of farm bankruptcy examined by the Agricultural Department of the Bavarian government, 117 were found to be due to personal failure, including 87 cases of persistent drunkenness: Beyer "Die Agrarkrise und das Ende der Weimarer Republik" p.80
9. 49 Vohwinkel HSA(D)
10. Hemmerde Unna
11. The relevant percentages were 7.2 in 1929 and 8.5 in 1932: Bente "Landwirtschaft und Bauerntum" p.15
12. Respectively Dr. Schiele (originally DNVP) from 1927 to Spring 1928, Dr. Dietrich (DDP) from Spring 1928 until early 1930 and then Schiele again until mid 1932 when von Braun (DNVP) assumed office until the advent of Hitler

13. Schiele to all Ministries 3rd June 1930: BA-R2/18016
14. See Appendix B Table VII
15. Stoltenberg p.129
16. Unemployment benefit was 1,294,000,000 RM in 1928/9 and in 1931/2 this had risen to 2,957,200,000 RM: "Landwirtschaftliche Statistik 1937" p.108
17. Haushofer and Recke "50 Jahre: Reichsernährungsministerium Bundesernährungsministerium" (henceforth "50 Jahre") pp.20/21
18. Beyer "Das Bauerntum Angelns" p.136
19. "50 Jahre" pp.20/21: Dr. Dietrich increased this to 100 Mill. RM
20. Tracy "Agriculture in Western Europe" p.193
21. Ibid p.193
22. The rye harvest amounted to 6,406,000 tons in 1926, but by 1928 had risen to as much as 8,522,000 tons: E. Borsig "Reagrarisierung Deutschlands?" p.31
23. In a speech in the Prussian Landtag in February 1930 in which he said that whereas domestic rye consumption 1908-13 had been 65.4 kilos per head annually by 1928/9 this had dropped to 52.4 kilos: LA 301/4089
24. Vide Dr. Steiger's speech in February 1930: LA 301/4089
25. "50 Jahre" p.23
26. Ibid p.26
27. WB 20th January 1931: government claims about prices were based on fact; in May 1931 the Berlin wheat price was 285/287 RM per ton against 128 RM per ton for Chicago: WB 20th May 1931
28. From 1929-1933 wheat acreage increased by almost 25%: A. Gerschenkron "Bread and Democracy in Germany" p.142
29. In 1931 duties on grain amounted to 180/200%, on raw sugar 280%, on wheat flour 326%, but on pigs 54%, on pork 51% and on butter 21% only: "Foreign Trade and Exchange Controls in Germany" pp.40/1

30. Beyer "Die Agrarkrise und das Ende der Weimarer Republik" p.85
31. The farming community set great store on Schiele according to Joachim von Rohr, then chairman of the Pomeranian Landbund and later Secretary of State in the REM: Personal interview
32. WB 16th April 1930 for both these points
33. "Goslarsche Zeitung" 3rd April 1930
34. WB 6th May 1931
35. Ibid 10th June 1931
36. Agricultural Chamber to Oberpräsident and REM 13th January 1932:
LA 301/4111
37. "Foreign Exchange and Trade Controls in Germany" pp.45/6
38. "50 Jahre" p.20
39. WB 18th January 1931: the message was signed by Kalckreuth (RLB) Hermes (Christian Farmers Union) Fehr (Bavarian Farmers) and Brandes of the Agricultural Council
40. The demands are in E. Topf "Die Grüne Front" p.221
41. Holt p.209
42. E. Topf "Die Grüne Front" pp.184/5
43. As a sample of official wooing of the peasant, see Schiele's speech at a meeting in Westphalia declaring that there must be no future government in Germany not influenced by the peasantry "Goslarsche Zeitung" 27th August 1930 "Heran an die Verantwortung"
44. Dr. Ruchel to Chancellor 6th February 1931: BA R43 I/1301
45. WB 11th February 1931
46. Meeting 23rd July 1931: LA 301/4111
47. Regpräsident to Prussian Ministry of Interior 24th July 1931: LA 301/4111
48. Prussian Minister of Interior to Oberpräsident 17th November 1931:
Ibid

49. Vide Darre's Circular November No. 103 to LGFs 19th November 1931:
ND 142
50. There was undoubtedly genuine distress among livestock farmers;
the Agricultural Chamber's office at the Hamburg cattle market
reported in April 1932 that although in the financial year just ended
the number of cattle from Schleswig-Holstein sold was 10% up in
volume, receipts were down by 22%. Report 26th April 1932: LA 301/
4136
51. Ministry of Economic Affairs Württemberg to Departments of Labour
and Agriculture 30th November 1931: HSA(S) 452/E130 IV
52. Minister of Justice to Minister of State Württemberg 4th December
1931: HSA(S) 980/E130 IV
53. At a Christian Farmers Union meeting in Hamm 6th January 1932:
V.B. 8th January 1932
54. Lübke to Brüning 5th August 1931: BA-R43 I/1301. Von Kalkreuth
himself pledged RLB allegiance to the "Harzburg Front" of October
1931, formed to fight the Republic: Bullock "Hitler: A Study in
Tyranny" p.188
55. The Kapp Putsch of 1920 was led by a representative of the East
Prussian agriculture: W. Maser "Die Frühgeschichte der NSDAP"
p.213
56. Of 177 estates over 1,000 Ha in size 150 were in Brandenburg
Mecklenburg Pomerania and East Prussia: Holt p.3
57. 38 Million out of a total population for Germany of 65 Million:
Bullock "Hitler: A Study in Tyranny" p.190
58. According to Otto Braun the responsible Minister, in his memoirs
"Von Weimar zu Hitler" p.21
59. See Ministry of Interior to Oberpräsidium Hanover: NSA 122a XXXII 80
60. For landowner attacks on the draft see "Junker laufen Sturm gegen
den Entwurf" "Schleswig-holsteinische Volkszeitung" 27th December 1930

61. Schiele to Brüning 25th October 1930: BA-R43 I/1277
62. Vide "Frankfurter Zeitung" 1st November 1929
63. Its President Freiherr von Gayl had been on the Marshal's staff during the war: Hertz-Eichenrode "Politik und Landwirtschaft in Ost Preussen 1918-1930" p.201 (henceforth "Hertz-Eichenrode")
64. In 1932 94% of the members owned estates of 100 Ha or over: Ibid p.75
65. Ibid p.84
66. Hertz-Eichenrode p.84
67. Ibid p.84
68. This was not confined to agriculture only, although the help given to trade and industry in the region has been left out of consideration in this work
69. Vide Braun "Von Weimar zu Hitler" p.385
70. Farm prices for all types of grain were lower in the East than in any other region: "Goslarsche Zeitung" 15th March 1930
71. Namely, East Prussia, Pomerania, Mecklenburg Breslau and Brandenburg in that order. As a comparison, whereas in the first two-named the total average debts expressed as a percentage of total farm value were respectively 57.1 and 52.8, in Hesse Baden and Cologne the relevant figures were 13, 12 and 11 only: V.B. 10th July 1930
72. Steiger stated that whereas only 1.0 holding per 10,000 in the under 2 Ha category was sold by auction in 1929/30 in Prussia, for farms of 100 Ha or over the figure was 89.0: in East Prussia it was as high as 197.0 in the latter range: LA 301/4089
73. Reichsratsstagung No. 26: HSA(S) 452/E130/IV
74. Freiherr von Braun in a Budget debate 20th January 1933. "Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung" 21st January 1933: there were eleven thousand officials in the administration including eight to nine thousand trustees

75. "Bericht des Osthilfeuntersuchungsausschuss" 21st April 1933: GSA 1112
76. Ibid
77. "Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung" 21st January 1933 reporting Budget Committee debate at which the figures had been made available
78. For holdings under 5 Ha the amount per Ha was 933 RM, for estates over 1,000 Ha the amount was 146 RM per Ha: the amount given fell steadily in inverse proportion to farm size: "Bericht des Osthilfeuntersuchungsausschuss" GSA 1112
79. Braun "Von Weimar zu Hitler" pp.387/8
80. Anfrage Nr 2555 in "Preussischer Landtag": GSA 1111
81. Grösse Anfrage Nr 64: Ibid
82. W. Boyens "Die Geschichte der ländlichen Siedlung" (Vol.II) p.256
83. "Bericht des Osthilfeuntersuchungsausschuss": GSA 1112
84. Ministry of State to REM 28th December 1932: HSA(S) 913 E130/IV
85. "Berliner Tageblatt" report: BA-NS 26/962
86. Decree 4th November 1931: GSA 1111
87. See Dr. Hirtsiefer to Braun 24th October 1931: Ibid. Dr. Hirtsiefer, Minister of Social Welfare in Prussia, regarded Osthilfe as having been ineffective due to the falling agrarian price-index, which nullified its benefits
88. In October 1931 Treviranus wrote of an "absolute veto" which Prussia was applying to the efforts of the Reich: Treviranus to Brüning 15th October 1931: Ibid
89. Like Treviranus, some Landtag deputies on the Right alleged that the Prussian Government was sabotaging the Osthilfe, which Dr. Steiger denied in the Landtag: LA 301/4089
90. Von Kalekreuth produced a pamphlet "Um die Herrschaft in Preussen" imputing sabotage again to Prussia; this produced a formal dementi from the official Press service: 22nd July 1931: GSA 1111
91. Hertz-Eichenrode p.318

92. Braun "Von Weimar zu Hitler" p.386
93. Ibid p.386
94. Haushofer "Ideengeschichte" p.110
95. Braun "Von Weimar zu Hitler" p.390
96. Ibid p.390
97. Goerlitz "Die Junker" pp.379/80
98. Ibid p.380
99. F. von Papen "Memoirs" pp.164/6
100. K.D. Bracher "Die Auflösung der Weimarer Republik" calls it one factor among many: p.571
101. "Osthilfe in Theorie und Praxis" "Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger" 28th January 1931
102. A copy of the pamphlet was sent to the Oberpräsident Schleswig-Holstein March 31st 1932: LA 301/4089
103. This pamphlet is discussed in Haushofer "Ideengeschichte" p.182
104. No doubt this had been a factor in making the Christian Farmers decide to stay in the "Green Front" when the latter supported the Maize Monopoly
105. WB 8th April 1931 replying to allegations in the "West Deutscher Bauer"
106. The RLB was campaigning at the time to extend protection against foreclosure, which under the Osthilfe scheme was introduced in December 1931 to last until after the 1932 harvest: W. Boyens "Die Geschichte der ländlichen Siedlung" Vol.II pp.192/3
107. "Goslarsche Zeitung" 11th January 1930
108. This exchange took place between the "Kölnische Zeitung" and the "Westfälischer Bauer" 18th February 1931
109. If 1913 = 100 agrarian prices in March 1931 were 108.2 while industrial goods stood at 137.7: WB 13th March 1931

- 110. See Haushofer "Ideengeschichte" p.181
- 111. "Goslarsche Zeitung" 13th January 1933
- 112. WB 23rd January 1933
- 113. League to Chancellery 12th January 1933: BA-R43 II/196
- 114. See Appendix B Table X

Chapter V: NS propaganda activity on the land, the last days of the Republic and the takeover of agrarian organizations in the Third Reich.

The Propaganda machine post 1930 in rural areas.

(i) Some space in chapter 3 was devoted to showing how the NSDAP built up an agricultural organization and used it to win control of the RLB and the Agricultural chambers. The other activity for which the Cadre was intended was to win votes and how the Party did so will now be described, since Hitler's choice of legality as the method to obtain power entailed the concept of electoral success. To achieve this, great energy and determination was displayed, which will be shown to be a factor in the NS victory of equal importance to the existing "radicalised" anti-Republican mood on the land. It is necessary, in other words, to take both these points into consideration in assessing the extraordinarily rapid climb to influence of the movement in rural areas. Had the NS not been energetic they would not have won: but had the peasantry not been prepared to listen the activity would all have been in vain.

In describing NS activity frequent use has to be made of newspaper quotations to report on meetings or cite articles. This is not intended to suggest that the Party won the rural voter over by means of the written word: this point needs to be made since the role of the newspaper in the NS victory march seems to have been relatively small: in 1932 the total circulation of the NS press amounted to 780,000 only.¹ The SPD alone had three times as many dailies in that year as the NSDAP.² At a time of economic distress many peasants probably did not even buy daily papers, some evidence for this being available in the Third Reich itself.³

When the record of NS activity is surveyed it seems fairly clear that the spoken word was of far greater importance to the party in vote-catching. The scale of the propaganda drive launched by the NSDAP in this respect was immense; in one rural Kreis, Hamlin-Bad Pymont (Lower Saxony) there were

as many as seventy meetings in a single month, mostly in villages.⁴

One contemporary account from Westphalia graphically described the difficulties frequently encountered in conducting a propaganda drive of this nature, not the least being the lack of facilities for meetings in rural Sauerland. Speeches were sometimes held in village pubs, sometimes in a field with a swastika banner over the platform.⁵

This does not, of course imply that all peasant meetings or demonstrations were necessarily on a small scale; every effort was made to influence the peasants en masse as well. Hunsrück (Rhineland) saw a demonstration of two thousand peasants in January 1932.⁶ Apart from going to the people via public meetings individual contact was also employed; in Westphalia the local LGF Meinberg made a habit of attending all Agricultural Chamber or rural co-operative assemblies and handing out NS propaganda sheets and party application forms at the door to the departing farmers, the S.A. and S.S. assisting him in the task. This proved so successful that Darre recommended it to all LGFs.⁷ Personal contact was thus employed in almost every available way to bring the farmers' attention to the movement.

(ii) Broadly, the propaganda employed can be divided into two main kinds, the promises of a better life in the Third Reich for the peasant and attacks on the present "System".⁸ As far as the first was concerned the NSDAP was never backward with its promises in dealing with the rural voter; at Clausthal-Zellerfeld (Harz) for example one speaker promised that no less than two million Ha of waste land would be made fertile to provide places for a gigantic settlement scheme.⁹

Perhaps the best example of an appeal to the peasantry as a whole was the propaganda manifesto issued for Hitler's presidential campaign in April, 1932, which devoted a whole section to the peasant's place in the Third Reich, where he would no longer be neglected as under the present "System". The NSDAP predilection for self-sufficiency was repeated, and it was stated that unlike other parties the movement did not see Germany's future in world trade.

Hitler recorded his belief that "The true welfare of our people does not seem to me to be expressed in terms of import/export statistics but rather through the number of viable peasant holdings." The basic tenets of "Mein Kampf" and the 1930 programme were reiterated, the best safeguard against social evils and racial degeneracy being the "maintenance and promotion of a sound peasantry."¹⁰ To farmers, faced by mounting debts and critical of what they felt to be the one-sided governmental support for industry and trade, these words, repeated no doubt at many a future meeting, must have sounded like the announcement of the promised land.

In addition to such general statements, the NSDAP made great efforts to appeal to certain sections; in particular Darre believed that women were often more active workers for the Party on the land than their menfolk, and that the rural vote could not be won without them. He therefore ordered his agitators to work hand in hand with a non-party organization called the "Agrarian Housewives League" wherever possible.¹¹ A concentration upon the female sex had apparently occurred to the normal Party apparatus already since from Alfeld (Lower Saxony) two meetings for women only, both highly successful, were described in April 1932.¹² The NS Press also participated in this campaign drawing its readers attention to the plight of the over-worked rural housewife, placed in recent years in a hopeless financial position; only Adolf Hitler could relieve this misery.¹³

Hand in hand with promises of a glowing future went the attacks on the "System" as such: this was carried out at various levels, by speaking of financial distress caused by democracy, by attacking individual leaders and by playing on the bogeys of Marxism and anti-Semitism, alleging that democracy was only really a sham and secretly controlled by Jewish wire-pullers. Full attention was always given to the first point; distress in the Bavarian Alps was said to be due to the flooding of Germany with foreign food and the lack of any adequate import protection, the latter being a sore point with the farmers.¹⁴ When Dr. Dietrich, then Minister of Agriculture, spoke

favourably of a certain brand of imported wine, the NS Press demanded "What does the (German) wine-grower who voted for this party (DDP) think now?"¹⁵ That the farmers plight was caused by reparations was also a favourite theme in the appeal to nationalism on the land; Brüning's emergency programme in 1931 was hailed as "New mass taxes for the German slaves of Young."¹⁶ Commenting on an Agricultural Chamber report on farm distress in Württemberg the leader of the NS group in the Landtag blamed this latter fact on the Young policy which was bleeding Germany white.¹⁷

The personal attack, whether upon the "System" politicians or upon rivals to the NSDAP among right-wing parties or unions was a much-employed tactic. In September 1932 Darré called upon both von Papen and von Braun to resign in a telegram as they had delivered the farming community over to the hands of "Capitalists."¹⁸ Personal failings of opponents were frequently alleged in order to create distrust among potential voters: in Schleswig-Holstein the chairman of an anti-NSDAP farm union was accused of having misappropriated official funds.¹⁹ Rival politicians also came under the lash; all attacks on the DNVP to be made by the agrarian apparatus were ordered to be directed at Hugenberg the leader, as he was in trouble with the younger element of the party; he was to be labelled as "reactionary."²⁰ In as far as propaganda to the Stahlhelm was concerned, it must be made clear to members by NS speakers that the ex-servicemen in the league were following a Jew, Dusterberg.²¹ Innuendo of every kind was thus employed in shaking the confidence of the rural electorate in the government or in unions and parties other than the NSDAP; this kind of propaganda has to be seen in conjunction with the claims made by the movement that it alone could save the farmer; destruction of faith in other parties and groups was an essential part of this operation.²²

Lastly there was the line about the government being controlled by Jews and Marxists; in October 1931 Darré told his agitators to characterize the

Brüning regime as being synonymous with Kerensky's, in that the Chancellor was moving to the Left and would be eventually forced to give way to pure Bolshevism.²³ The acquisition of power by von Papen made no difference to this kind of propaganda as in October 1932 the agrarian cadre was told to explain to farmers that "Jews and Freemasons" were the wire-pullers behind the "Cabinet of the Barons."²⁴

If this type of attack seems naive it must be pointed out that voters were not always capable of sophisticated discrimination; one farmers meeting (not organized by the NSDAP) in Passau (Bavaria) stated that all state expenses should be reduced to the level obtaining in 1913; on the same day farmers in Hanzenberg (Bavaria) demanded more state aid, and the extension of Osthilfe to the Bavarian Ostmark.²⁵ It must therefore be remembered that NS speeches were being directed at people who apparently saw nothing illogical in demanding less taxes and more state expenditure simultaneously. Indeed, the NSDAP was frequently more reasonable than some of its rivals in its statements. In February 1932 the RLB actually told farmers not to deliver food to the towns unless prices were improved. Hitler thereupon made a statesman-like appeal to the land, telling food-producers to bring the harvest on to the market as a national duty, as Germany no longer had sufficient currency reserves to pay for large imports.²⁶ The contrast of this statement with the selfishness of the RLB approach must surely have impressed the farmers that Hitler was a more responsible leader than some of his rivals.

As far as the anti-Semitism was concerned, the Party seemed convinced that this was efficacious as a propaganda line, and a directive was sent out to all functionaries in March 1931 stating that "the natural hostility of the peasant to the Jews ... must be stirred up to boiling-point."²⁷ In this connection it must be remembered that other movements had been inciting peasants against the Jews long before the advent of the NSDAP, notably the RLB; indeed, this union had banned Jews from membership at its first ever

general meeting in 1894.²⁸ The Hitler movement, in winning votes on the land by anti-Semitic speeches, was reaping where the Landbund had sown.

The foregoing has described the various themes of NS propaganda, but in order to show what kind of impact the agrarian machine could really make in one concerted campaign where all the various strands were brought together, the elections of November 1932 make an informative example. Plans for the verbal assault on the rural voter were laid down as though for a military operation.²⁹ Section A entitled "Means" listed the different organs available, such as the "NS Landpost" a magazine called "Deutsche Agrarpolitik" and the "V.B.", plus pamphlets and brochures. Section B dealt with how these were to be used (as additions to ordinary meetings). Beginning from the 10th October there was to be a unified approach similar to "advanced artillery fire";³⁰ which would assail the Cabinet as such by all the organs named: this was to last until the 16th and the main theme was to be the abandonment of agriculture to speculative capitalist interests. From about the 20th onwards use was to be made of a Strasser speech on "interest-slavery," which would serve as an introduction to the second move of the assault concentrating on indebtedness and unemployment. The 30th October would see the introduction of the third stage centring around personal attacks on Hugenberg as the man behind Papen, who had abandoned agriculture to speculators and the dumping of foreign food. The whole impression given by the directive is of a powerful and well-organized campaign to predetermined ends.

(iii) Despite the obvious energy and effectiveness of the NS agrarian machine, the Party did not have matters all its own way on the land, since after all other movements had speakers and newspapers as well. The Zentrum Party was always a thorn in the flesh to the NSDAP in Catholic districts. When the NSDAP launched a drive to win over Catholic youth in Württemberg the Zentrum organized a lively opposition: at Vollmaringen its local

secretary savagely attacked the NS, in particular their racial policies: he stated that for them the Pope was the agent of a foreign power rather than a spiritual leader, and then dealt with the expression "Workers Party" in the NSDAP title: the secretary suggested that the movement consisted in reality of capitalists and ex-officers. The next speaker advised all young farmers to think hard about joining such a Party.³¹

Later in the year a Zentrum journal in the region put NS policy under the microscope in a series of four articles signed by "A Theologian": he found it to be incompatible with Christianity and ended the final instalment "German Catholics awake!"³² In West Germany a Catholic farm-journal called on its readers to vote for parties which based themselves on Christian ideology.³³ That could hardly have meant the NSDAP. There seems little doubt that the Catholic Church and the Zentrum constituted an obstacle to the NS in some rural areas: in Lower Saxony, as one historian has pointed out, the latter received a much lower share of the poll in Catholic districts than in Protestant ones.³⁴ This appears to have been true of Württemberg as well according to one analysis in a Catholic newspaper.³⁵ Much the same picture is obtained if Prussia as a whole is considered; the largely Protestant areas showed a higher vote for the NSDAP in general, although it must be emphasized that this is a generalization and that the difference is one of degree only as can be seen from the relevant figures.³⁶ But the fact remains that the Zentrum appears to have acted as a barrier of some kind,³⁷ which highlights perhaps that NS success in non-Catholic regions was due to its arrival at a time of a political vacuum, which a Protestant equivalent to the Zentrum might have filled. It might with some justice be argued that rural indebtedness was higher in Protestant regions:³⁸ but the difference in the NS share of the poll in both Lower Saxony and Württemberg between Catholic and non-Catholic districts within the borders of the same region seems to answer this point.

The SPD also provided lively opposition in rural areas where it was very active: in Einbeck (Lower Saxony) it held fifteen meetings in a month compared to the ten arranged by the NSDAP.³⁹ It seems however to have been received with some scepticism by the peasants in view of its Marxist antecedents, although in 1927 the small peasant holding was officially declared not to be considered as a form of exploitation since it employed only family labour.⁴⁰ Nonetheless farm journals seem to have felt the SPD was still dangerous to the peasant, and according to one never more so than when it tried to be friendly in order to conceal the "cloven hoof." This same article alleged that the SPD wanted misery on the land in order to drive the farmers to Socialism.⁴¹

The Communist Party for its part had long adopted a thoroughly ideological approach to the peasantry, declaring them to consist of four classes (by farm size) of which the lower two were "proletarian" and the upper two "bourgeois" with a fear of Communism.⁴² The Party had organized a farmers union but its strength of ten thousand only is eloquent testimony to its lack of appeal.⁴³ In any case the Communists vitiated their efforts by attacking the SPD and not the NSDAP: one propaganda report of the latter movement records that a recent Communist leaflet had devoted twenty per cent of its text to attacking the NS and the remainder to verbally assaulting the Social Democrats.⁴⁴ It cannot be said, in sum, that the left-wing parties constituted any real threat to the NSDAP on the land.

The other Right-Wing movements seem to have suffered the same fate in Germany as in Schleswig-Holstein, that is, they simply got swallowed by the NS. As early as March 1929 the Gauleiter of Lower Bavaria wrote to Party HQ reporting that Stahlhelm and DNVP members were asking him for NS material so that they could recruit for the NSDAP at their own meetings.⁴⁵ By January 1932 it was reported from one Kreis in Lower Saxony that the local Stahlhelm members were 100% in the NS movement.⁴⁶ At another locality

in the same area the Stahlhelm apparently voted almost en bloc for Hitler at the April 1932 presidential elections.⁴⁷ Against another Right-Wing rival, the DNVP, the NSDAP seem to have used as a method of attack the former's alleged support for the Brüning Cabinet, which, it was suggested, left the NSDAP as the sole defence for Germany against the "enslavement plans" of reparations.⁴⁸

(iv) To summarize the opposition to the Hitler movement's onward march is to say that a vacuum existed on the Right in rural areas, into which the Party struck with speed and determination,⁴⁹ exploiting the peasants' economic grievances and simultaneously providing them with new leadership possibilities at a time when the old ruling-class, as represented by the DNVP, seemed to have failed to bring down the hated "System."⁵⁰ Since the Left had little hope of winning mass support among the peasant proprietors only the Zentrum was left as a barrier, in Catholic districts at least. Even its influence should not be over-estimated; it is interesting to note that when an anti-Semitic petition was sent in to Bismarck in 1882 by a "völkisch" movement, the 225,000 signatures upon it had been collected mainly in North and East Prussia, with only very small contributions from South Germany.⁵¹ The NSDAP ultimately won in those districts traditionally adhering to extreme Right-Wing politics based on nationalism, and anti-Semitism; its relative lack of success in Catholic areas may therefore have had little to do with the Zentrum as such.

The question finally remains as to how much the peasant vote contributed to the NSDAP accession to power; this is a hard problem to solve, since "rural" and "agricultural" are not necessarily synonymous, due to the presence of so many tradesmen and artisans in villages. In any case, the advance of the Party on the land was not everywhere similar; one historian has chosen to compare the NSDAP share of the poll in five rural areas with that in five selected urban ones from 1928 to November 1932 to demonstrate

how much better the movement did in the former.⁵² But equally, it has been pointed out that in July 1932 the Party got relatively more votes in the urban districts of Upper Bavaria than on the land in the same region.⁵³ In other words, evidence showing an adherence to the NSDAP among the peasants depends on which particular sample is taken. It certainly cannot be denied however that if Germany overall is considered the peasantry did as much as any sector of the nation to assist Hitler to power through the ballot box.⁵⁴

The last days of the Republic

(i) The closing stages of the old regime in Germany were marked by considerable dissatisfaction on the land and some dissension in the cabinet. As far as the first was concerned, this seems to have played some part in the demise of Schleicher as Chancellor, and demonstrates that the rural sector did not merely assist the NSDAP to obtain power by voting for it, but also by putting pressure upon the existing government. Before that process is described some space must be devoted to discord in the Cabinet itself, which may well have contributed something to governmental inability to please the rural population.

Soon after Christmas 1932 some dissension seems to have prevailed in the government, chiefly over the question of fats, more especially butter imports and the price which domestic farmers were getting for the commodity. In a letter to the Chancellor, von Braun, the Minister of Agriculture, emphasized how grave the general situation was, and how much he wished to assist butter producers: as the trade treaty with Holland (from which Germany imported butter) was about to expire, he suggested that now would be a good time to increase the duty; he further alleged that Dr. Warnbold, Minister of Economic Affairs, was delaying decision on the matter.⁵⁵ So incensed was von Braun by this that at a meeting two days prior to his letter he had accused the Economics Minister of being prepared to sacrifice

whole sections of agriculture to assist the export drive: unless a decision was reached von Braun said that he would wash his hands of the whole affair.⁵⁶

He estimated the fall in price due to cheap imports to be the equivalent of a 268 Million RM annual loss to the German peasant: there is no doubt that a catastrophic drop in the wholesale price did take place at the time as can be seen from newspaper reports.⁵⁷ This cannot however have been due merely to foreign imports, since a quota system had been adopted by the government for some time, and imports in 1932 were little more than two thirds that of the previous year.⁵⁸ What Schleicher was now toying with was the idea of ordering the compulsory mixing of butter and margarine in order to remove a surplus on the home market and thus keep the price up.⁵⁹ As this became known, some speculation on the butter exchanges took place which had forced down the price. Even the NS Press held that imports alone could not be the cause of the price-fall.⁶⁰

The repercussions of the delayed decisions in Cabinet were serious for its prestige, since that there was discord in the government was well-known; as early as October 1932 one newspaper had described Stegerwald, the Minister of Labour, as being on the side of those favouring the export drive rather than agricultural protectionism, and as being in effect on the trade union wing of the Zentrum.⁶¹ The NS Press took up the divisions in the Cabinet to make the "System" appear inefficient and uninterested in agriculture; one of its organs pointed out that Dr. Warmbold (who was a director of I.G. Farbenindustrie⁶²) was arguing with von Braun and ended savagely "The ministers quarrel and the peasant loses house and farm."⁶³ This no doubt had some effect upon dairy-farmers in financial distress; that their position was currently serious can be seen from the telegram sent to the REM from one local farm union in South West Germany reporting that "The bitterness of the peasantry has mounted to its highest and allows

one to fear acts of desperation."⁶⁴

Perhaps bitterness on the land would not have reached the proportions which it ultimately did had the government firstly not offered so much and then argued among themselves without implementing their promises. In October von Papen in a speech in Munich had admitted that the dairy and livestock producers had been neglected by the government in the past in favour of industry.⁶⁵ This kind of statement naturally confirmed the worst suspicions of the peasantry and probably alienated them further from the "System." Consequently when Schleicher succeeded von Papen it was perhaps not surprising that a farm journal should herald this by fearing that the General would concentrate on trying to win trade union approval for his regime, and warned him he would fail if he neglected the land.⁶⁶ Just before Christmas Schleicher made a radio speech which included promises to the farmers; when nothing was done and the butter price continued to fall the peasants' attention was drawn by their organizations to this failure.⁶⁷ Once again the feeling of having been betrayed was allowed to prevail on the land.

(ii) Indeed nothing perhaps is more outstanding in January 1933 on the German scene than the pressure brought to bear on the Cabinet by farm interests, and the public expressions of no-confidence in it. Just after the New Year had started the LVO in East Prussia demanded the immediate redemption of solemn promises in a letter to the government.⁶⁸ A fortnight later it passed a resolution to the effect that the fight against the government was "a matter of honour."⁶⁹ At this moment the chairman of the LVO was Oldenburg-Januschau, Hindenburg's neighbour, which clearly implies that an attack by this body on any regime was a serious matter.⁷⁰ The RLB joined in the fray; on the 7th January one of its newspapers called for a "general offensive" against Schleicher-Warmbold:⁷¹ on the previous day "Der Angriff" (NSDAP) published eighteen petitions of protest from

agricultural organizations. On the 12th the Landbund in Pomerania sent a telegram to Hindenburg asking him to protect the rural population against "a failing cabinet."⁷² By the 25th von Lüninck, the President of the Agricultural Chamber in the Rhineland was recording that the West German peasantry had the greatest mistrust of the present government.⁷³

The Cabinet might perhaps have withstood even this extraordinary pressure had Schleicher not committed the supreme folly of quarrelling openly with the RLB, the largest and most influential farm union, thus compounding indiscretion with indecision. The union had asked Hindenburg for an audience on the 11th January to explain the plight of agriculture, a meeting being arranged through the offices of Oldenburg-Januschau.⁷⁴ the RLB delegation included Willikens, von Sybel (both of the NSDAP) and von Kalckreuth, a long-time admirer of Hitler and opponent of Weimar.⁷⁵ Hindenburg was so impressed by the facts given by the deputation that he arranged for them to have a further audience that evening, at which Schleicher and von Braun were present:⁷⁶ von Rohr of the Pomeranian Landbund joined the delegates for agriculture.

Kalckreuth spoke of farms being foreclosed and of the need for help to dairy-farming, as a proper tariffs policy was not being followed: he asked if the government was going to decide which to protect, industry or agriculture. In the context of current Cabinet dissension this was a fair question. Schleicher then replied for the government, firstly on debt-relief: he pointed out that this was hard to arrange as farm creditors were also undergoing a financial crisis.⁷⁷ Von Braun then wound up for the Cabinet by promising a protectionist policy for the future; he came under fire from von Rohr as apparently the Agriculture Minister did not seem sincere in his remarks.⁷⁸ The meeting was, in sum, inconclusive and ended with the familiar promises by the government.⁷⁹

But now an accident led to a total break between the RLB and Schleicher.

Before meeting him, the delegates had passed a resolution attacking the government, which was handed out to the Press, but not mentioned at the subsequent meeting with Schleicher. The Chancellor was furious and issued an official communiqué declaring that he would not deal with the union again: the Statement added that had he or Hindenburg known of the resolution beforehand they would not have received the delegates.⁸⁰ The fat was now on the fire with a vengeance; the Landbund in Schleswig-Holstein called a demonstration on the 16th where it was roundly declared that "In common with the peasants and land-workers we take up the gauntlet thrown to us by the government."⁸¹ This declaration of hostilities was matched by the Landbund in Hesse, which wrote two days later to Hindenburg stating its lack of confidence in Schleicher.⁸² The NSDAP poured fuel on the flames with a protest from Darre', anxious to exploit this overt breach between governors and governed: this took the form of an open letter to the Chancellor blaming him for the row. The tone, bearing in mind to whom it was addressed, was one of contempt: Darre' concluded by expressing the wish that the troubles of German agriculture, which he averred had commenced with "General" Caprivi, would end with the dismissal of General Schleicher.⁸³

(iii) It can clearly be seen that mounting pressure on an indecisive Cabinet, coupled with the quarrel with the RLB, contributed to Schleicher's political demise, since these factors can scarcely have strengthened Hindenburg's confidence in him.⁸⁴ It has sometimes been averred that the Osthilfe scheme also played a part in unseating the General: this has indeed come to be quite strongly held by some writers who believe that Junkers fear of scandals being exposed led them to undermine Schleicher via approaches to Hindenburg.⁸⁵ However there are several points to be made in this connection; firstly, at the RLB delegates meeting with the government on 11th January Osthilfe was not even mentioned.⁸⁶ Secondly,

although it is true that ten days later von Braun agreed to set up an investigation, this was in response to requests from the Reichstag Budget Committee and had nothing to do with Schleicher as an individual. No change of regime would have altered the appointment of such an examination of Osthilfe, and indeed an all-party committee to conduct the investigation was initiated by Hugenberg, the new Minister of Agriculture, after Schleicher's dismissal.⁸⁷ If the fall of the General made no difference to this appointment, why dismiss him in order to prevent it?⁸⁸ Furthermore when the committee reported to Hugenberg in April 1933 they had found no evidence for corruption in any case.⁸⁹ There are further von Papen's memoirs, in which he does not even mention Osthilfe as a factor in Schleicher's demise: this seems all the more significant as he does go out of his way to draw the reader's attention to the RLB affair and the virtual declaration of war by agricultural associations on the Chancellor with the passage "Schleicher recognized this as a critical factor."⁹⁰ Whatever part the Osthilfe played in unseating Brüning its significance in January 1933 seems largely mythical.⁹¹ Von Sybel, himself one of the delegates at the 11th January meeting with Schleicher, was of the opinion that it was the subsequent row which finally sealed the General's fate, (rather than Osthilfe).⁹²

The takeover of agrarian organizations in the Third Reich.

(i) When Hitler was appointed Chancellor on 30th January 1933 he nominated Hugenberg as Minister of Agriculture: before proceeding to the latter's term of office it is necessary to describe how the NSDAP succeeded very rapidly in bringing all agricultural associations under its control: the very speed of this was partially determined by the fact that the new government, which was national in tone rather than purely a one-party affair, was well-received by the peasantry.⁹³ This no doubt made agricultural organizations anxious to co-operate with it, a feeling reinforced

by adroit propaganda to the farmers by the NSDAP: how the government was initially received and how the NS played up to this will be dealt with here prior to a narrative of the actual takeover so that the latter's speed and smoothness can be seen in the right context: as has been seen, agriculture suffered from a feeling of neglect, and the NSDAP was at pains to insist that this would now be changed.

That many agrarian leaders welcomed the national government can be deduced from the messages which arrived at the Chancellory from them, and also from the tone of farm journals not affiliated to the NSDAP. As for the former, von Kalckreuth was the first to get in his congratulations, the day after Hitler's appointment.⁹⁴ On the same day the Agricultural Council passed a resolution greeting the new government.⁹⁵ These were only the first in a positive flood of welcoming messages: the Agricultural Chamber in Oldenburg communicated its "rocklike confidence" in Hitler, the Pomeranian Landbund announced itself as following him "in perfect confidence", the Bavarian branch of the Agricultural Council sent a complimentary letter. In March a laudatory RLB national resolution referred to the Führer's "work of salvation," to which it was proud to have contributed.⁹⁶

Hitler skilfully exploited this fund of goodwill, particularly by promising better times ahead; in his address for the new elections the statement was made that the government would lift the German peasant from his misery within four years.⁹⁷ on the 23rd March in the Reichstag the Führer declared that profitability must be restored to agriculture, which might be hard for the consumer but would be preferable to the annihilation of the peasantry, which would have even worse consequences in the long run.⁹⁸ Here was a clear promise of better prices even if the public had to pay more: Hitler rammed his advantage home on May Day with a declaration that no national recovery could take place that did not start with the peasants, and said that future governmental care would be the opposite of the treatment

received by agriculture in the previous fourteen years.⁹⁹ His sentiments made an impression upon the rural community; a laudatory speech to the Agricultural Council on 5th April was reprinted in part in a Catholic farm journal under the heading "The honouring of German peasantry by Adolf Hitler."¹⁰⁰ The newspaper opined that the speech should be put up in public offices all over the country. This was a far cry from the comments which the same source had made about previous governments.

(ii) There was thus a constant flattery of a part of society suffering from a feeling of neglect, and this partly accounts for the smoothness of transition from the Republic to a unitarian type of agrarian organization in the Third Reich. Of course, another factor in this process was the allegiance already given to the NSDAP by so many rural voters even before Hitler's nomination as Chancellor, so that in many cases leaders and rank and file in various associations were either Party members or sympathizers.

As early as September 1932, in fact, a new body had been built up among the peasants called the "NS Bauernschaft" intended for those peasants of NS persuasion too poor to pay the subscription to the Party. The new organization was designed as a kind of bridge to lead them over so that when better times came they could officially enrol; in the meantime they would be indoctrinated through a free Party publication.¹⁰¹ All agricultural associations, whether unions, co-operatives or Chambers had a solid NS core: as explained in Chapter 3 this applied at leadership level as well.

But there were still some leaders left whose presence the Party found unacceptable; in March 1933 Dr. Hermes of the Christian Farmers Union was arrested on a charge of having misappropriated funds, and given four months imprisonment;¹⁰² this effectively removed him at the time of co-ordination, which he might have opposed. The Westphalian branch, long in favour of unity of professional representation for agriculture, proposed new discussions

regarding this: these took place on the 27th March, the unfortunate Dr. Hermes not being mentioned.¹⁰³ A new leader, von Lüninck from the Rhineland was chosen, and it was agreed to approach other unions for further discussions on unity.¹⁰⁴

Meanwhile the RLB had been dealing with the same topic; Darré knew of this in advance and ordered his rank and file to attend en masse in order to ensure that the union came to the right decision from the NS standpoint.¹⁰⁵ In this the NS were successful, and on 22nd March the RLB expressed the belief that through an amalgamation of all persons cultivating the soil agriculture would be reconstructed as a pillar of the national state.¹⁰⁶ The basis for unity had now been created, and on the 4th April a notice appeared in the Press to the effect that a joint meeting of the agrarian apparatus of the NSDAP, the Christian Farmers Union and the RLB would take place; the meeting was at the invitation of the latter's management committee.¹⁰⁷

At this meeting von Kalckreuth formally proposed that a unified organization should be erected by January 1st 1934: under the title "Community of the German Farming Profession" a provisional body was formed at once.¹⁰⁸ In principle, this had four representatives from each member association, but Willikens was on as an RLB representative, so that the NSDAP had five members, the RLB three, and the Christian Farmers four.¹⁰⁹ This minority was evidently displeasing and in May Kalckreuth (of the RLB) was arrested on the now-familiar charge of corruption.¹¹⁰ On the 9th he wrote to Hitler personally for an investigation to clear his name; a minute in the Chancellery files on this request said that there could be no question of a reply.¹¹¹ In his enforced absence Meinberg, LGF in Westphalia, was elected as a President of the RLB and took Kalckreuth's place on the "Community" Committee.¹¹² The balance was now six to six between NS and others but the Party put itself in the majority by the simple method of removing

Dr. Hundhammer of the Christian Farmers in June, sending him to Dachau.¹¹³ So in two months a ratio of 5:7 between the NS members and the rest had become 6:5 in the Party's favour. In the same month the NS control was made absolute by the appointment by Darré of Meinberg as deputy chairman: he simultaneously announced the "Community" would be divided into four departments, all of which were given NS as leaders.¹¹⁴ Existing farm unions were given a chance of either affiliating themselves to the new structure or going into voluntary liquidation: the RLB, the "NS Bauernschaften" and the League of Agrarian Housewives took the former course; the Christian Farmers Union (founded 1862) wound itself up with its last meeting in September.¹¹⁵ the "Deutsche Bauernschaft" and other smaller unions did likewise.¹¹⁶ By autumn 1933 all bodies of professional agrarian representation were under NS control, with Darré as leader.

(iii) By April Darré was issuing guidelines to his organization as to how the co-ordination of unions should take place in the regions; the LGFs must insist upon being voted on to the governing committees or get on in some other way (sic). Darré was concerned about the possibility of deception by branches not controlled by the NSDAP, in that such a body might well simply enrol its governing committee in the Party and then announce that it had NS leadership, although the enrolled persons would still really be against the NSDAP. To obviate this he laid down that the criterion of the expression "National Socialist" was to be actually approved by the LGF concerned.¹¹⁷

In fact takeover in some regions had preceded this directive: in Schleswig-Holstein one farm union criticised the government's election manifesto, and its next meeting on 15th February was attacked by the S.A. On 1st April the police occupied the union's offices on the pretext that state funds had been misused. The Kreisleiter of Flensburg declared that only one union was acceptable in the province, that one being already

affiliated to the RLB.¹¹⁸ On the 5th May, Struve the regional LGF, declared it to be his duty to co-ordinate unions, chambers and co-ops into one body:¹¹⁹ the union already attacked was then liquidated together with all others not affiliated to the RLB.¹²⁰ The latter was left as the sole representative body, and new elections gave its management a NS majority.¹²¹ What Struve had done in Schleswig-Holstein, Meinberg achieved in Westphalia; a corporate union like the national "Community" was established at regional level under his chairmanship, with the same Christian Farmers, NSDAP cadre and RLB tripartite membership on the council:¹²² the leading Christian Farmers member, von Lüninck, co-operated so whole-heartedly that he was soon appointed Oberpräsident of the Rhineland.¹²³ For once, the carrot had been used rather than the stick. Thus in the regions co-ordination under NS control was pushed through as efficaciously as at national level.

(iv) The Agricultural Chambers were as necessary to the NSDAP as the unions had been. The Party started its campaign by arresting elected leaders in the Chambers who were DNVP members by use of the S.A. This aroused Dr. Hugenberg, Minister of Agriculture in the Hitler government and himself leader of the DNVP, to protest. In April he raised the matter in Cabinet and got a very strong reaction from Goering, who replied that the present leadership no longer corresponded to political reality (meaning no doubt that the Chamber management committees still were not fully under NSDAP control): he believed that new elections were necessary. Hugenberg accepted this point, and said he was arranging for this to take place: Goering then rejoined that until they did he could not hold the S.A. back.¹²⁴

At regional level similar forceful tactics were adopted; in Württemberg the NS took control first of the government by demanding two Ministerial posts out of three, although in the Landtag elections of March 1933 they

had polled only one third of the votes.¹²⁵ There was no possibility of opposition; a National Socialist, Murr, was installed as Commissioner for the region and on 11th March named the local S.A. leader as head of all police forces, giving the Party control over all non-military armed authority.¹²⁶ The leader of the NSDAP group in the Landtag, Mergenthaler, became head of the Württemberg administration:¹²⁷ he soon dealt with the Chambers by a new law transferring all duties of the general assembly in them to a committee of management, which would be named by the government: the voting rights of the members of the assembly was terminated. The Press announcement issued by the Württemberg government in effect echoed Goering, viz. the Chambers no longer corresponded to the realities of the situation.¹²⁸

In another regional case Schleswig-Holstein, a slightly different approach was adopted; Gauleiter Lohse appointed a special Commissioner to take over the local Chamber in April.¹²⁹ The existing chairman, who was in Berlin, had already been told that if the present management committee, which the NSDAP did not control, did not resign its members would be arrested: at a meeting on 8th April the hint was taken, and the committee stepped down in favour of the Commissioner.¹³⁰

(v) Rural co-operatives were an important feature of the German agricultural scene; in 1930 there were no fewer than 40,845.¹³¹ It was regarded as essential to bring them under NS control, and in February a plan was devised for achieving this end by a member of Darre's office named Arnold Trumpf.¹³² Current leadership was estimated to be mainly in the hands of the DNVP and the Zentrum, according to this analysis: similar tactics to those employed against the RLB were to be used, i.e. the leadership was to be undermined by infiltration of the NS into the rank and file. Attendance at all meetings was to be a duty for Party members: they must agree among themselves beforehand about candidates for vacant places on the management committees and then vote en bloc for their chosen man: this strategy must

work "as most co-operative meetings are poorly attended."¹³³

In April two positions on the Co-operative National Council fell vacant; in a letter to LGFs Darré intimated that he wished to fill these with Trumpf and Granzow (LGF in Mecklenburg).¹³⁴ As the election would take place in six days there was no time to be lost; Darré enclosed a list of the names and addresses of all existing councillors, each of whom was to be approached by the appropriate LGF either in person or by telegram demanding support for the NS candidates: this request was to be accompanied by the hint that if this was not forthcoming, the NSDAP would declare itself uninterested in co-operative affairs until such time as the request was complied with. In addition, telegrams were to be sent to the Council as a body by the LGFs, and articles were to appear immediately in the Press stressing the necessity of incorporating the co-operatives inside the new unified "Community" structure. As a final effort Darré accompanied in force by Willikens and Meinberg among others, entered the Council meeting on 20th April and demanded the election of the NS to the management committee. Evidently previous pressure had been successful, since in fact three Party members were elected to the committee.¹³⁵ Infiltration by NS into the rank and file as outlined in Trumpf's original plan of conquest was a contributory factor.¹³⁶ The following day the co-operatives were formally affiliated to the new "Community:"¹³⁷ the department responsible for them was headed by Trumpf.¹³⁸

Again regional co-ordination paralleled the national; in Westphalia the local general council held a meeting in June and elected Meinberg and three other members of the agrarian apparatus to its ranks: von Lüninck, was elected for another of the vacant places.¹³⁹ This was hardly surprising in view of his speech in April, which referred to the "national uplift" under Hitler.¹⁴⁰

(vi) Apart from unions, co-operatives and chambers there were several

other quite important bodies to be brought under NS control; these included the League of Rural Trades (Landhandelsbund) of which Darré had become head in April.¹⁴¹ Then there were the farmworkers unions; these participated in the fate of workers unions in general in the Third Reich. On 2nd May there was a general arrest of leaders, on the charge of embezzlement of funds, as many as five hundred being taken into custody from the Landworkers Union alone.¹⁴² From now on only Dr. Ley's Labour Front was permitted as the organization for working-class representation.

Finally there was the Agricultural Council, semi-official and highly influential: to this Hitler had paid court in April by attending its general meeting, to which he addressed flattering remarks about the agrarian population, describing its part in the overthrow of the Republic as having been decisive and generally praising the farmers as the backbone of the country: he referred to the unity it was now finding and assured his hearers that the Cabinet was ready to take such measures as would ensure the future prosperity of the agrarian sector.¹⁴³ His remarks about unity evidently sank home; on 12th May the Council held a meeting at which the chairman, Dr. Brandes, accepted the government viewpoint on this matter and consequently recommended that Darré be elected as his successor.¹⁴⁴

(vii) Apart from rapidly bringing all professional associations into its power, the Party's agrarian office infiltrated its representatives into positions of influence in the state machinery in order to ensure that the "correct" decisions were taken. Bavaria can be taken as an example in this respect: like all states except Prussia and Mecklenburg it had had no separate Ministry of Agriculture prior to the NS accession, rural affairs being administered by a section of the Ministry of the Interior. The official responsible for this department after January, Wagner, was himself in the NSDAP, being LLF for Bavaria. He issued a directive ruling that in future LGFs concerned with Bavaria would be permitted to make proposals direct

to the Ministry of the Interior on agriculture. Similarly, before the Ministry made any decision on its own ideas it would consult the LGFs: wherever the Ministry wished to deviate from the latter's advice, the agricultural department would have the final word: this department was under Wagner anyway, so that the LGFs could, in effect, use him to work their will on the State apparatus. Darré was so struck by this system that he recommended it as a model for all LGFs.¹⁴⁵

The question of state organization cannot be left without some reference to Prussia; as has been seen its internal government and that of the Reich had not always seen eye to eye: the NSDAP obviated this for the future by simply not appointing a Minister of Agriculture in that State, but arranging for a Secretary of State only, who turned out to be Willikens.¹⁴⁶ Eventually the Prussian and Reich Ministries were amalgamated under NS leadership.¹⁴⁷ Prussian agriculture was thus brought under that of the central government, and the kind of policy disagreements possible under Weimar simply could no longer take place.

The NSDAP also used power positions to get rid of opponents, as well as to further their own doctrines. In March 1933 the local Landbund chairman in Alfeld (Lower Saxony) asked the Minister of the Interior in Prussia to remove the head of the State administration for that district on the grounds that he was an SPD member.¹⁴⁸ The Landbund chairman was Herbert Backe, a member of the NS agrarian office and one of the four departmental "Community" leaders to be named in June: this request was thus NS in origin, although apparently emanating from a neutral organization.

By autumn 1933 the NSDAP controlled all agrarian organizations, whether of farmers, of landworkers, co-operatives, rural trades and dealers, or of the semi-official chambers and Agricultural Council, and had won positions of influencing local State policy as well. When it is recalled that in

September 1930 it had had no agrarian office of its own, the sheer momentum of its advance had been astounding. A powerful machine had captured the farm vote, used it in conjunction with other anti-republican forces against the "System", and seen the latter collapse, partly due to the indecisiveness and dissension within the ranks of the Cabinet. Then one body after another had been brought under control, so that whereas the picture of agrarian organization in September 1930 had been pluralistic and even devoted to internecine warfare, three years later, one man, Richard Darré, headed a completely unitarian structure, into which all those controllable had been brought, whilst those undesired by the NS had been forced into liquidation. The words used by the then French Ambassador to describe the NS takeover of the country in general can well be applied to the agrarian scene in particular; François Poncet was moved to say that "The astounding things in this revolution are the speed ... but also the facility with which it is everywhere completed, the scant resistance which it encounters."¹⁴⁹

Several grounds for this can be distinguished; of these, the greatest was probably that large numbers of farmers had simply been against the Republic and welcomed the change of régime wholeheartedly, which naturally led to co-operation. As far as unity was concerned it must be borne in mind that various attempts had been made to procure this, by the Rhineland/Westphalian branches of the Christian Farmers, for example, or by the formation of the "Green Front", all of which had proved abortive. Now a determined group of men put unfulfilled desire into practice. Not all unions agreed with the way it was done, but a combination of the latent desire of many and an adroit NS mixture of force, propaganda and infiltration was sufficient in the end to ensure success.¹⁵⁰ There is also the point that not everyone who might have opposed the NS did so as a result of sheer miscalculation about the nature of the new government, in which, it must always be remembered, the NS were in a tiny minority initially. This was

undoubtedly a factor in the "scant resistance" mentioned above. So great was misapprehension on the land, at least in some quarters, that in February 1933 the "W.B." could actually write that it would never cease to remind the government of the promises contained in its February election manifesto, on which the journalist was commenting, as though opinion would remain free. By October of that year the same journal was preparing its last issue.¹⁵¹

It is of course true that NS co-ordination took place against a background of actual legislation for the farmers by the new government, and which proved both popular and efficacious.¹⁵² In assessing the Party's success this must have been a strong contributory factor in the situation, in that it was relatively contented agrarian organizations which allowed themselves to be drawn into unity under NS leadership. A description of the actual policy and legislation for 1933 follows in the next chapter as a kind of additional backdrop to the events already narrated.

Notes

1. M. Broszat "Der Staat Hitlers" p.70
2. K.D. Bracher "Die Auflösung der Weimarer Republik" p.126
3. An investigation of living-expenses of two farms in Swabia in March 1938 revealed that they bought between them one Sunday newspaper and no dailies. M. Brand "Die Frau in der deutschen Landwirtschaft" p.65
4. Monthly propaganda report to Gauleiter South Hanover-Brunswick for June 1932: NSA 310 I B.11
5. J.A. Beck (Ed) "Kampf und Sieg" p.82
6. V.B. 9th February 1932
7. Darré to LGFs 16th December 1930: BA-NS 26/951
8. The Party organization at Munich had two main divisions, one for attacking the "System" and the other for forward planning; the propaganda division seems to have corresponded to this
9. "Öffentlicher Anzeiger für den Harz" 21st November 1931
10. V.B. 5th April 1932: "Rettung des Bauernstandes heisst Rettung der deutschen Nation"
11. Darré to LGFs 11th May 1932: ND 145
12. Monthly propaganda report to Gauleiter for April 1932: NSA 310 I B.11
13. V.B. 9th February 1932 "Not und Kampf der deutschen Landfrau"
14. V.B. 17th January 1932 "Die Notlage der Landwirtschaft im Bayerischen Voralpenland"
15. "West Deutscher Beobachter" 23rd March 1930
16. V.B. 5th June 1931
17. Speech reported in HSA(S) 535/E.130/IV
18. Darré to von Papen/von Braun 8th September 1932: ND 145
19. Beyer "Das Bauerntum Angelns" p.160 Note 28
20. Darré to LGFs 17th October 1932: ND 145

21. Darré to Major Buch NSDAP (Munich) 14th November 1932: ADC Darré
22. See Appendix D for some sample NSDAP posters of the period
23. Darré to LGFs 20th October 1931: ND 142
24. Darré to LGFs 12th October 1932: ND 145
25. V.B. 22nd January 1932
26. Domarus "Hitler: Reden und Proklamationen" Vol II pp.93/4 (henceforth "Domarus")
27. Bracher "Die Auflösung der Weimarer Republik" p.115
28. Pulzer "The Rise of political anti-semitism in Germany and Austria" p.190
29. The following description is based on the instructions "Propaganda der Hauptabteilung V für den 6 Nov 1932": ND 145
30. Darré had been an artillery officer in the War, hence the frequency of military terminology in his circulars and directives, of which this is only one example of many that could be given
31. "Schwäbische Volksbote" 20th February 1930: "Abrechnung mit den NS im Bezirk Harb"
32. "Deutsches Volksblatt" (Stuttgart) 31st October 1930, 3rd, 6th and 7th November 1930
33. WB 6th August 1930
34. Verhey p.14
35. This examined 62 constituencies and found that in the 40 in which the NSDAP had received the highest poll in three successive elections only 7 had more than 20% Catholics on the voters list: of the 22 where the Party had had least success, only 2 were less than 50% Catholic: "Deutsches Volksblatt" 14th November 1932
36. (See over)

36. Vote for the NSDAP in selected areas of Prussia at the Landtag elections March 1933

<u>Mainly Protestant Areas</u>		<u>Mainly Catholic Areas</u>	
<u>Area</u>	<u>% Vote</u>	<u>Area</u>	<u>% Vote</u>
E. Prussia	55.7	Cologne/Aachen	29.7
Schleswig-Holstein	52.7	Koblenz/Trier	37.4
East Hannover	53.5	E. Düsseldorf	37.1
South Hannover	48.7	W. Düsseldorf	35.0

From "Handbuch für den Preussischen Landtag 1933" p.285

37. In this connection one notes that the Zentrum held its voting percentage of the poll steadily around 15 in all elections from 1930 onwards: D. Petzina "Autarkiepolitik im Dritten Reich" p.68
38. Vide the indebtedness statistics on p.100 : all these five regions named as the most indebted were overwhelmingly Protestant except Breslau where Cologne Hessen and Baden were strongly or largely Catholic
39. Monthly propaganda report of NSDAP to Gauleiter for January 1932: NSA 310 I B.11
40. This declaration was contained in the Heidelberg Programme and was the most recent SPD policy statement for the period dealt with in the present work: for a summary see "Schleswig-holsteinische Volkszeitung" 25th May 1927
41. WB 1st January 1930
42. For the Communist Party analysis of the rural situation see "Richtlinien für die Arbeit unter den Bauern" 20th February 1925 issued by the Central Committee's Rural Secretariat: LA 309/23055
43. Gies p.355

44. Monthly propaganda report for Nienburg (Weser): NSA 310 I B.11
45. Reinhardt to Himmler 5th March 1929: ADC Himmler
46. Nienburg (Weser): NSA 310 I B.11
47. Alfeld (Lower Saxony) report 4th April 1932: Ibid
48. "Goslarsche Zeitung" 7th April 1930
49. As far as strength of will was concerned Darré held this to be essential for his agitators and advised any of them not of sufficient mettle to decide the outcome of the struggle by sheer determination to resign forthwith: Darré to LGFs 16th December 1930: BA-NS26/951
50. As Darré observed the peasants were awaiting new leaders because the nobles had failed them: Darré to LGFs 18th November 1931: ND 142
51. Pulzer "The Rise of political anti-semitism in Germany and Austria" p.96
52. Whereas in 1928 the NSDAP polled 2.4% of the vote in the selected urban areas as against 2.8% in the rural by November 1932 the proportions had become 29.9% and 42.4% respectively: Gies p.343
53. Beyer "Die Agrarkrise und das Ende der Weimarer Republik" p.80
54. In July 1932 the NSDAP received 37.4% of the vote in rural areas only as against a national average for all areas of 37.3%:
C.P. Loomis and J.A. Beegle "The spread of German Nazism in rural areas" in "American Sociological Review" December 1946 pp.721/728:
the warning about the difference between "rural" and "agricultural" has to be remembered here, but even so it is clear that the peasantry must have chosen Hitler in large numbers
55. Von Braun to Schleicher 5th January 1933: BA-R43II/192
56. Meeting 3rd January 1933: BA-R43II/192
57. For example the "Goslarsche Zeitung" 5th January 1933 quoted the following prices for various parts of the country

Wholesale Butter Price in RM per 50 kilograms

	<u>1st half December 1932</u>	<u>4th January 1933</u>
Hamburg	111.96	96.37
Berlin	113.0	92.0
Kempton (Bavaria)	110.0	82.0

This is an average fall of nearly 20% in only three weeks

58. "Statistisches Jahrbuch 1933" pp.194/197
59. According to the "Goslarsche Zeitung" 5th January 1933, confirmed by the V.B. 6th January 1933
60. Ibid
61. "Schwäbische Zeitung" 9th October 1932: the reference to trade union implies that Stegerwald simply wanted cheap food for the workers rather than protection for agriculture
62. According to Bullock "Hitler: A Study in Tyranny" p.211: his industrial connections gave the NS propaganda the chance to maintain that he was in favour of the export policy (like Stegerwald)
63. "NS Kurier" (Stuttgart) 29th December 1932
64. "Goslarsche Zeitung" 5th January 1933
65. "Frankfurter Zeitung" 13th October 1932
66. WB 7th December 1932
67. Ibid 18th January 1933
68. V.B. 3rd January 1933
69. Hertz-Eichenrode p.75
70. The information regarding the chairmanship is from Hertz-Eichenrode above cit. p.75
71. Quoted in Gies p.374
72. Gies p.374
73. WB 25th January 1933

74. According to M. Tönnsen "Rückschau und Erinnerungen" in "Jahrbuch des Angler-Heimat Vereins 1963/4" p.143, who was present at these two meetings described as a delegate.
75. List from "Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung" 12th January 1933: for the point about Kalckreuth and Hitler see Gies p.369 who states that the RLB President had congratulated Hitler on his success in the April 1932 elections
76. Tönnsen above cit. p.143
77. This was true as the Cabinet was being bombarded by missives from representatives of trade and industry protesting about a possible debt-moratorium on the land: these communications are in BA-R43II/192
78. According to Tönnsen p.143
79. The meetings are reported in BA-R43II/192
80. "Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung" 12th January 1933 which called the communiqué a declaration of war on the RLB
81. V.B. 17th January 1933
82. Chairman to Hindenberg 18th January 1933: in BA-R43II/192: a row of similar resolutions from local and regional branches was printed in the V.B. 19th January 1933
83. Darré to Schleicher January 1933: ND 159: the allusion to Caprivi is to the agricultural crisis over protection in 1894
84. There were of course many other things involved in the General's dismissal and it is not intended to maintain here that agriculture alone was decisive
85. For example Braun "Von Weimar zu Hitler" pp.275/8 and Bullock "Hitler: a Study in Tyranny" p.246
86. As pointed out by W. Goerlitz "Die Junker" p.385
87. This committee consisted of 3 NSDAP members (including von Sybel of the RLB) plus one each from the DNVP, DVP and Bavarian People's Party:
GSA 1112

88. In this connection it should be remembered that Freiherr von Braun, who would have remained Minister of Agriculture had Schleicher not gone, was himself in the DNVP like Hugenberg: thus the departure of the General made no difference to the Party affiliation of the Minister responsible for the Osthilfe report
89. "Bericht des Osthilfe untersuchungsausschuss" 21st April 1933:
GSA 1112
90. Von Papen "Memoirs" p.234
91. In any case the remarks about corruption were allegations made either in the Press or in the meeting of the Reichstag Budget Committee meeting of 20/21st January and remained unsubstantiated
92. Bracher "Die Auflösung der Weimarer Republik" pp.697/8
93. The government had at first only three NSDAP members, Hitler, Goering and Frick and represented itself as a national coalition
94. BA-R43 II/196
95. BA-R43 II/203
96. All these communications etc. are reproduced in BA-R43 II/203
97. V.B. 4th February 1933 for the address
98. Quoted in H. Reischle "Die deutsche Ernährungswirtschaft" p.8
99. Domarus p.263
100. WB 19th April 1933
101. The organization is outlined in ND 145: on 2nd January 1933 it was announced that all "Bauernschaften" would be placed under the agrarian apparatus of the Party: VB 4th January 1933
102. Jacobs "Von Schorlemer bis zur Grünen Front" p.53
103. Ibid pp.77/8
104. Ibid p.78
105. Darré to LGFs 20th March 1933: ND 140
106. BA-R43 II/203

107. Jacobs "Von Schorlemer bis zur Grünen Front" p.79: the management committee of the RLB included Willikens and von Sybel of the NSDAP
108. Ibid p.79: Darré was elected chairman
109. WB 10th May 1933
110. M. Broszat "Der Staat Hitlers" p.232: ironically it was Kalkreuth who had proposed that Hitler be elected as "Protector" of the new body, which the Führer accepted: WB 12th April 1933
111. Minute 30th May 1933: BA-R43 II/203
112. WB 10th May 1933
113. Jacobs above cit. p.87
114. Ibid p.81
115. Jacobs "Von Schorlemer bis zur Grünen Front" pp.81/2
116. Ibid p.85. The Deutsche Bauernschaft's leader was also among those already arrested.
117. Darré to LGFs 11th April 1933: ND 140
118. Stoltenburg p.190
119. Ibid p.192
120. Jacobs "Von Schorlemer bis zur Grünen Front" p.85
121. Stoltenburg p.192
122. WB 26th April 1933
123. Jacobs above cit. p.81
124. Cabinet minutes 4th April 1933: BA-R43 I/1461
125. "NS Kurier" 6th March 1933
126. HSA(S) Bundle 81/EL31
127. HSA(S) 653/EL30/IV
128. Ibid: this also includes the law "Gesetz des Staatsministerium über die Umbildung der Württemberger Landwirtschaftskammer" 15th July 1933
129. Thyssen "Bauer und Standesvertretung" p.252
130. Tönnsen "Rückschau und Erinnerungen" p.138

131. V.B. 19th January 1932, these were savings co-operatives, plus those for marketing, for electrification, drainage and other forms of rural co-operation.
132. "Eroberung des landwirtschaftlichen Genossenschaftwesens durch den National Sozialismus" 28th February 1933: ND 140
133. Cf. the poor voting turn-out in Agricultural Chambers described on Page 80; apathy undoubtedly assisted the NS to victory as much as their own drive
134. Darré to LGF's 13th April 1933: ND 140
135. M. Broszat "Der Staat Hitlers" p.231
136. Dr. Reischle of Darré's office, himself present on this occasion, gave infiltration as an important factor in the situation: Personal interview
137. M. Broszat above cit. p.231
138. Jacobs "Von Schorlemer bis zur Grünen Front" p.81
139. WB 7th June 1933
140. Ibid 26th April 1933
141. Holt p.180
142. "Dokumente des Dritten Reiches" Ed. Maier-Hortmann p.54
143. Domarus p.253
144. M. Broszat "Der Staat Hitlers" p.231
145. Darré to LGF's 29th March 1933: ND 140
146. Vide Willikens post-war interrogation: IfZ ZS 1622
147. REM to Ministry of State, Württemberg 1st January 1935: HSA(S) 913/E/130 IV
148. Backe to Daluge 13th March 1933: ADC Ordnungs polizei: Willikens
149. Quoted in M. Goehring "Alles oder Nichts" p.70
150. As far as infiltration was concerned, Darré himself pointed out that the formation of the new unitarian "Community" could never have

happened without Willikens work as a president of the RLB: Darre' to
LGFs 11th April 1933: ND 141

151. WB 31st October 1933

152. When Hitler visited the Agricultural Council in April, for example,
the chairman actually thanked him for governmental policy so far
pursued. Minutes of meeting 5th April 1933: BA-R43 II/203

Chapter VI: Agrarian Policy in 1933: Dr. Hugenberg as Minister of Agriculture and the introduction of laws to eliminate speculation

Dr. Hugenberg as Minister of Agriculture

(i) Whilst Darre at one level had been unifying agriculture for the Party, Dr. Hugenberg had been grappling with the agrarian problems inherited from Weimar; these, it will be recalled, centred around three main points, namely, falling prices for farm products, a consequent rise in indebtedness and an imbalance of production typified by a continuing grain surplus in a land importing sixty per cent of its animal fats' consumption.¹ (That the domestic price-index was still falling can be seen from one of the Minister's own reports of the period.²)

Hugenberg himself was of the opinion that the chief fault of previous administrations was that agriculture had been dealt with in bits and pieces, rather than as a unity, in policy terms. He now proposed to deal with its problems en bloc by a series of solutions introduced simultaneously; these included the compulsory mixing of butter and margarine to use up surpluses of the first, plus the reduction of imported feeding-stuffs.³ This latter was to be seen in conjunction with the grain surplus, as pointed out by von Rohr, whom Hugenberg had brought in as his Secretary of State:⁴ duties on fodder imports would be used to pay for official price support of domestic grain, the surplus of which could be used in lieu of foreign maize and barley as feeding-stuffs by German farmers.⁵ For general price policy, Hugenberg believed that this difficulty would be solved only when domestic prices were entirely divorced from those prevailing on the world market: this view found ready acceptance with Hitler.⁶ This was simply a continuation of Weimar protectionism. Decrees to this effect were soon introduced, including heavier duties on livestock and meat, while those on certain fats were quadrupled. Von Rohr explained the reasoning behind the government's tariff policy in a radio speech on 22nd February.⁷ As far as fodder was concerned,

the Cabinet accepted Hugenberg's proposals and in June 1933 the Maize monopoly organization instituted by Dietrich in March 1930 was replaced by a body controlling all grains and fodder, plus oil-cake etc.⁸

(ii) The disposal of the grain surplus and the cutting-off of Germany from world meat and livestock prices had not proved too difficult, but fats were another thing entirely, as Schleicher had found to his cost. Hugenberg defended his proposal for the compulsory mixing of butter and margarine at a series of cabinet meetings, supported by von Rohr. This was only part of a general "fats plan" to restore profitability to the dairy farmers hit by falling prices. Also included were proposals to shrink margarine production by law, and to tax it heavily, with the object of using domestic butter rather than imported fats.⁹ The proposal for mixing proved to be the greatest obstacle, since Hitler himself was reluctant to embark on this policy.¹⁰ He declared in cabinet that the price increase would be unacceptable to the poor. On 11th March Hugenberg took up the cudgels with a suggested mixture of twenty to eighty of butter and margarine respectively. Hitler again spoke of the less well-off, stating that thirty million Germans were living on 45-99RM monthly and could not pay any increases in price; he feared that rationing might become necessary under such a scheme. The Führer's objections were taken up by Frick, the Minister of the Interior, who feared possible political repercussions in the shape of unrest among the population if price increases were established.¹¹

To these objections Hugenberg could only reply that prices were falling and something must be done; he feared that if dairy-farming were not made more profitable farmers would switch to grain-cultivation, of which the country already had too much. Hitler asked, for the second time, for the debate to be adjourned: he said that he did not like the proposals but that he felt himself obliged to help the peasants and wanted time to think. On 18th March Hugenberg returned to the attack with a memorandum to the Cabinet

claiming a causal connection between dairy products prices and rural indebtedness, which no doubt was justified. To deal with Hitler's objections about the poor he proposed a levy on margarine manufacturers in order to raise 190 Million RM annually, to be used as a subsidy.¹²

The result was a compromise; by the new "Fats Plan" margarine was taxed at 50 Pfennigs per kilo, the yield of which was used to subsidize a coupon system enabling the poor to buy at reduced prices: production of margarine was limited to one half of the previous year's output by a series of quarterly decrees.¹³ the price of butter and milk was raised to the domestic producer: surpluses were bought up and stored by the grain-buying agency under government supervision.¹⁴ There is no reason to doubt von Rohr's claim that the "Fats Plan" was a success.¹⁵

What makes the affair interesting is really two points; firstly, Hitler prevented the idea of compulsory mixing, although he did have to accept some price increases involved for the consumer: of these German historians have used the phrase "considerable sacrifice."¹⁶ This can best be measured statistically according to current reports; in June 1933 the average consumer was devoting a higher proportion of his food outlay on fats than he had done in January, and that at a time of financial hardship.¹⁷ The Hitler Reichstag speech of 23rd March had thus been justified, insofar as he had spoken of possible hardship for the consumer in restoring profitability to the farmer: this warning had come true. Hitler's current sensitivity to public opinion in general regarding prices and food supply may be gauged from his demand at the end of May to be furnished with a monthly report regarding the fats situation "in appreciation of the political dangers" inherent in shortages.¹⁸ Statistics show that the farmer did well in the first six months of 1933, compared to the disastrous three previous years. The price increase of 5% as an average for all agrarian products was slight, it is true, but the disastrous fall had not only been halted for the first

time since 1930, the index had actually begun to climb.¹⁹ Secondly, this must be taken into account in assessing the ease with which the NS accomplished their unification plans; this must have been facilitated by better prices, as well as by the propaganda and infiltration tactics already referred to. In sum, by mid 1933 the new government was well on its way to solving the problem of prices and had tackled that of the endemic imbalance between grain and fats: in this connection it must be pointed out that the two questions were related insofar as better prices for products would stimulate dairy-farming at home.

(iii) Higher prices would help fight future indebtedness in themselves but in the meantime something had to be done about the current situation, since debts in 1931/2 had cost agriculture over one thousand million RM in interest payments.²⁰ Schiele had attempted to deal with this through Osthilfe but the general beneficiaries of that had been the big estates.²¹ Hugenberg's own Party had proposed a general debt-relief scheme in 1931, and it was upon this suggested basis that the Minister introduced legislation in June 1933.²² Under its terms, all farmers unable to meet their obligations were to register this by 30th June 1934: recipients of Osthilfe were excluded. Debts taken over by the State were to be subject to a fixed 4% interest rate.²³

Before Hugenberg could initiate this measure he met with stiff opposition from Darré. On 11th May the latter, with staff from the Party agrarian office, met Hugenberg and von Rohr from the Ministry in what was in effect a clash of ideologies. This much had already been made clear by Darré, who had learned of Hugenberg's draft in advance and which he abhorred; in a confidential circular to his subordinates he expressed the view that ~~one could~~ not have approached the question of debt-relief in a more capitalistic way than the Minister had done.²⁴ Three days previously he had expanded on this theme in a letter to Hugenberg himself, complaining that the whole draft had been based upon purely economic considerations. The NSDAP on the other

hand took "blood" and "man" as their first concern (the new proposals limited debt-relief to those farms deemed capable of financial reconstruction, and it was this which had aroused Darré's ire). What measures are you taking, he demanded, to protect holdings not economically viable but whose owners have valuable blood to contribute to the race? He referred to Hitler's expressed desire to preserve the peasantry as the life-source of the nation.²⁵

With such a basis for his thought, which shows clearly the primacy given by him to political and racial considerations over the purely economic ones, it is hardly surprising that Darré should have clashed with Hugenberg at the 11th May meeting, particularly about interest rates: Darré wanted 3% only against the proposed 4%. The Minister drew his attention to the economic situation as precluding so low a figure and suggested that in the long run one Pfennig extra per litre on the milk price would help the peasantry more than Darré's desired cut.²⁶ The question of non-viable farms does not seem to have been raised at the meeting, at which the Agrarian Office came out second-best, in the sense that its objections seem not to have altered the draft proposals.

When these were presented in Cabinet, however, Hugenberg encountered opposition of another kind; he admitted that there was some differences of opinion about interest rates. He now found objections to these on the grounds that they were too low, from the Finance Minister, Schwerin von Krosigk, especially, who stated that he had already spoken to Hugenberg about the matter many times; Dr. Gürtner, the Minister of Justice, recorded his opinion that the government was being asked to pay too much.²⁷ Eventually, however, the draft was accepted.²⁸ The Minister of Agriculture had thus piloted the measure between the Scylla of Darré's racialism and anti-capitalism on the one hand, and the Charybdis of more orthodox financial views upon the other. However much Darré wished to assist the peasants because of their "valuable blood," the fact remained that Germany's financial position was weak;

the Budget deficit was currently running at 945 Million RM per annum.²⁹ Moreover, behind Hugenberg's opposition to a 3% interest rate was that of Schacht, President of the Reichsbank, who had stated in a radio speech on 18th March that he would adopt orthodox measures to put the economy right.³⁰ Thus, the Hugenberg Act as passed was a compromise to a certain extent, but one which leaned rather more towards financial orthodoxy than towards National Socialist racialism. The law ultimately proved a boon to many peasants, as under it approximately ten percent of all farmers were substantially relieved of their financial burdens and given a breathing-space to rebuild their economic position.³¹

Side by side with the new law went the extension of the protection against foreclosure introduced under the Osthilfe plan. The existing arrangements were due to lapse in June 1933, and Frick raised the question of a further extension in February.³² Dr. Gärtner asked for this in regard to public debts only rather than for any monies due, whereupon Hitler pointed to the necessity of satisfying the peasants, presumably he meant politically.³³ (Frick himself said at a later meeting that he wanted the matter settled for the sake of the farm vote.³⁴) Eventually foreclosure was forbidden before December 1933.³⁵ A further measure to aid the farmer financially was produced in the autumn, lowering taxes to the extent of 250 Million RM yearly.³⁶

(iv) Hugenberg's term of office was a substantial success; he dealt competently with outstanding problems, whilst the foreclosure protection measures of the NSDAP, raised for electoral reasons, complemented his own debt-relief scheme. Protection against imports had been extended, prices improved. To a certain extent he had been given a free hand at a time when the NSDAP was intent upon consolidating its political power-base in the country. Darré however began to instigate trouble for the Minister in April; he telegraphed to Hitler from Stargord (Pomerania) announcing

"strong unrest" among the peasants over the secrecy under which the new debt-relief law was being prepared; he underlined his personal opposition by enclosing a copy of the letter he had sent to Hugenberg with his telegram.³⁷ Inside his own cadre Darre had already begun the work of undermining the Minister's position with a directive telling his LGFs not to attack Hugenberg or von Rohr by name but to speak rather of the "capitalistic agrarian front" so that everyone would know who was meant.³⁸

By late April Darre's hostility was apparently being taken up in Cabinet. Frick asked Hugenberg if the head of the Party's agrarian office was being kept in touch with proposed agricultural legislation, as he had not been acquainted with the details of the debt-relief Bill: Hugenberg replied that he had invited Darre to a meeting to discuss it but that he had not turned up.³⁹ The original telegram to Hitler may have played some part in setting off this pressure on the Minister of Agriculture, although one historian has stated that Hitler at this time wished to amalgamate the NSDAP and Hugenberg's party, which may also have been a factor in the situation.⁴⁰ Certainly pressure on the DNVP as such now intensified; by the end of May Hitler was threatening to disband its youth organization.⁴¹ On 11th June some DNVP members went over to the NSDAP and the NS Press began to speak openly of the "collapse of the German Nationalist Front."⁴² Ten days later all DNVP subsidiary groups were formally disbanded by law, on the grounds that they had been infiltrated by Communists and Social Democrats.⁴³ Since this seems hardly likely to have really been true it rather looks as if the NSDAP was bent on destruction of the DNVP as such.

Hugenberg might have survived the pressure described, most of which was aimed at his Party rather than at him, had he not precipitated a crisis over his own personal qualities as a result of the London Economic Conference, which he attended as a leading member of the German delegation.⁴⁴ During the course of the Conference he chose to present a memorandum, which had

apparently not been approved by his fellow-delegates, on the question of Germany's debts; he stated his belief that these could only be met if the country's overseas possessions were returned. This caused rumblings in the Franco-British Press about the "imperialistic goals" of German foreign policy:⁴⁵ this was embarrassing to Hitler who was currently engaged in a campaign to persuade European powers of his peaceful intentions. When the two chief delegates returned to Germany on 23rd June in the middle of the negotiations to render a progress report Hugenberg found himself isolated in the Cabinet. First he tried to put the blame for the indiscretion onto Dr. Possee, a senior Civil Servant in his Ministry, and asked that he be dismissed, a suggestion which met with no approval at all: most Ministers felt that to dismiss someone in the middle of the Conference would produce an impression of disunity on foreign observers. Of Dr. Possee, Hitler remarked that he would loyally follow "if he receives an exact march-route:" the implication appeared to be that up to now he had not been fortunate enough to get one from his minister, Hugenberg.⁴⁶

Four days after this meeting the Führer announced to the Cabinet that Hugenberg had resigned, citing the Possee incident as grounds. Hitler also revealed that he had previously asked the DNVP leader to accept Herbert Backe as Secretary of State in the Ministry of Agriculture prior to the resignation:⁴⁷ in addition the Führer told the Cabinet that Hugenberg now agreed that it would be best for the DNVP to disappear completely. Hitler did not give the full facts behind this latter point; in fact, Hugenberg had been making desperate efforts behind the scenes to keep his Party intact including an attempt to procure an interview with Hindenberg for one of the Party's leaders, an ex-chairman. Only when that fell through did he then accept the inevitable.⁴⁸

From the foregoing it is clear that Hitler intended to destroy the DNVP, although from the alleged request to Hugenberg about possible amalgam-

ation made about the end of April he may originally have been willing to accept that as an alternative. Once Hugenberg had rejected the idea, he certainly sealed his Party's fate. Quite separate from this issue is that of the DNVP leader as a person. It seems pretty clear that Darre always wanted to get rid of him, and set out systematically to undermine his position among the peasants and to destroy Hitler's confidence in Hugenberg's capacity. In this connection it is interesting to note that in January, before the NS accession, Darre had written to his subordinates informing them that Hitler had promised him the post of Minister of Agriculture.⁴⁹ Darre would surely never have put this statement in writing had it not been true; presumably Hitler eventually chose Hugenberg out of two possible considerations, firstly, to give an air of national coalition to his administration;⁵⁰ secondly, he may have wished to afford Darre the chance of concentrating wholly on the co-ordination of agriculture, undisturbed by Ministerial responsibility, in which case Hugenberg's dismissal was only a question of time. Some support is lent to this theory by the post-war interrogation of Werner Willikens, who declared that Hitler had given him a verbal commission "to lift Hugenberg out of the saddle." When Willikens turned down the demand Hitler took it amiss, as a result of which he lost the post of deputy to Darre, which went to Meinberg.⁵¹

This has the ring of truth to it, since clearly some explanation has to be sought for the passing-over of Willikens in favour of the Westphalian LGF: the former clearly had some claim to priority. He had been in the Party long before Meinberg, who was a comparative late-comer;⁵² secondly, he had been official spokesman on agricultural matters in the Reichstag since 1928, had twice contributed to the "NS Jahrbuch" and was author of the semi-official book on agrarian policy "NS Agrarpolitik."⁵³ He had been given priority for a place on the RLB's governing body, being the official NS candidate for this in December 1931, rather than Meinberg. Finally, until

April 1933 Meinberg's only Party position was LGF in Westphalia, whereas Willikens was LLF for the whole of Prussia and therefore Meinberg's superior in the hierarchy of the Agrarian Office. It certainly seems curious that with such qualifications for office Willikens should have been offered nothing more exciting than the post of Secretary of State in Prussia:⁵⁴ this lends credence to his own account, for which in any case he had no particular motive to be mendacious, seeing that it was a post-war interview.

As against the solid evidence that Hitler wanted Hugenberg out of office there seems a good deal which may be said on the other side; Hitler after all had used plenty of other politicians who were not in the NSDAP, so that Hugenberg's non-affiliation would appear not to have been grounds for his removal. The latter's own version of his interview with the Führer on 27th June supports this view: according to Hugenberg, Hitler had begged him emotionally to remain in office:⁵⁵ certainly when the Führer announced the DNVP leader's resignation he told the Cabinet that he tried to persuade him to stay.⁵⁶ The evidence is conflicting when these facts are taken into consideration with Darré's January letter and Willikens remarks. Perhaps they can only be reconciled by suggesting that Hitler wanted Hugenberg away from the REM only in order to give Darré the post, whilst leaving the DNVP leader as Minister of Economic Affairs, which he had previously combined with direction of the REM. This is, of course, entirely suppositious: the fact is that on 29th June Darré was named as Minister of Agriculture and thus the NS grip on the agrarian sector was finalized, since he was now leader of the peasant "Community," Minister, and head of the Party's Agrarian Office. Professional, State and Party leadership of agriculture was in the hands of one man.

NS legislation to end speculation in agriculture

(i) Before any examination of the laws passed in the latter half of 1933 and the outlook behind them, it must be pointed out that the two main

Acts, that for the establishment of a corporate body embracing all those persons engaged in food production and distribution, and the second dealing with farm entailment, are considered in the following section as a unity in general terms only, with separate chapters later devoted to each one in more detail. This form of narrative construction has been undertaken since it is felt that to consider the Acts quite separately in different parts of the work would be to miss the essential underlying unity of thought which produced the legislation, which although dealing with different issues, constituted two pillars of the same structure in principle. The Acts complemented one another in order to reorganize German agriculture on a new basis, that of NS ideology, as opposed to that of the free play of the market forces, on which agriculture in the country had formerly been grounded. Anti-capitalism and dislike of speculation pervade the legislation, which is consequently described first as a whole in order to bring out the essential nature of the change which took place after Darre's nomination as Minister.

This new policy had to be two-pronged, due to NS beliefs about the origins of the financial crisis in agriculture; as one of the Agrarian Office leaders put it, indebtedness had been produced in two ways: firstly, under the Republic the farmers had been fobbed off with low prices in order to assist industry and exports; secondly, the inheritance laws had also contributed to the agrarian crisis, and therefore they needed to be reformed.⁵⁷ This was pointed out as early as 1930 by Willikens in an "NS Jahrbuch" article, drawing attention to the fact that indebtedness was highest in those regions with closed inheritance, since money had to be borrowed in order to compensate those family members unable to inherit actual land.⁵⁸ The correctness of this implication was confirmed by a writer not in the NSDAP, who pointed out in a similar context that the region with the lowest debts was the Rhineland, where partible inheritance had always been practised,⁵⁹ (and where consequently no-one had to borrow to make monetary compensation, since all heirs

received a portion of land). Logically therefore the assault on the crisis had to have two spearheads, better prices and new inheritance legislation. As will be shown, the combined effect was to lift the peasantry out of the realm of supply and demand economics altogether.

Coupled with these financial considerations was the ever-present NS desire to protect the peasantry as the "life-source" of the nation. In this connection, the Party made frequent use of population statistics, as evidenced by one spokesman, who declared that unless the birthrate were raised, Germany would have a population of only twenty millions by the year 2000.⁶⁰ A more thorough investigation of the whole question of the high rural birthrate and its influence upon NSDAP thinking in respect of the peasantry will be carried out in Chapter XIV; suffice it to say here that the Party was convinced that in purely biological terms the peasants were the actual foundation of the German race.⁶¹ Whatever may be thought of subsequent legislation it has to be accepted that it was based on what appeared at the time to be purely practical considerations: this has to be emphasized, since otherwise talk of the "life-source" of the nation and "blood and soil" may appear to have been mere Romanticism.

(ii) As far as marketing and prices went, the Agrarian Office had been working for some time on how to plan the reorganization of food production and distribution; it seems to have had a special section called "Marketing Organization" at least as early as October 1931.⁶² Dr. Reischle was mainly responsible for the actual details and by September 1932 was in a position to give a series of lectures on marketing arrangements in the Third Reich:⁶³ that these had not yet been finalized can be deduced from a Darre directive warning speakers not to go into precise details about this in their speeches as the Party itself was not yet fully clear on the subject.⁶⁴ Indeed some members had a hankering after State control, including Gregor Strasser, but after a conversation with Dr. Reischle at

Party headquarters in summer 1932 he was apparently won over to the Agrarian Office viewpoint:⁶⁵ this was based on the concept eventually hammered out by Reischle of an autonomous agricultural corporation rather than outright State control. The incident at Munich seems to suggest that the Agrarian Office was working out concrete details of its policy rather earlier than the Party in general. Darré's department wore a very professional air insofar as planning ahead was concerned.

A key concept in the thinking of Reischle and Darré was that of the fixed price system for products as distinct from "liberal materialism," under which "all prayed to one God called the free play of the market forces."⁶⁶ Prices had been a plaything of interests superior to the farmer, and had been determined by speculation so that the food-producer had had no security. This was now to be changed and the peasant would get a fair fixed price to give him security and an incentive towards steady production.⁶⁷

By June 1933 the scheme to reorganize marketing had been worked out closely enough for Darré to give out the ground plan in the "NS Landpost," based on a unified body embracing agriculture in all its aspects with five departments.⁶⁸ Additional to these came the idea of a General Staff office to plan ahead and co-ordinate in general. As soon as Darré was appointed Minister he hurriedly produced a law to authorize the building of the organization as envisaged. He seems to have been worried that if this preliminary step were not taken on behalf of the Reich, individual states would start to reorganize agriculture on their own: the new provisional law therefore reserved any such powers to the central government alone.⁶⁹

September saw the finalization of current planning and the production of more specific legislation defining and describing the new organizational structure envisaged.⁷⁰ The new law had first to be piloted through the Cabinet, where it met some opposition from two non-NSDAP members, von Rohr and von Krosigk, the Minister of Finance. Von Rohr in particular wished to

control production by legal limitations on grain acreage rather than using the fixed price system to do so.⁷¹ (the latter could be utilized to achieve that particular end simply by paying better prices for those products most needed than for those of which there was a glut). Darré rejoined that legal means of controlling acreage sown with any one product would have entailed a vast bureaucracy. Hitler then spoke up for the proposed measure; he was of the opinion that control based on prices was more effective, since if farmers received a guaranteed price for that quantity of food which the nation needed they would never produce surpluses deliberately for fear of being unable to dispose of it. Goering also advocated that the Bill be accepted, which the Cabinet eventually did.⁷² Thus the NSDAP were successful in eliminating speculation in wholesale food prices; both the advantages and disadvantages inherent in the law of supply and demand were to be banished from the agrarian scene: the effect which this had on the rural community will be discussed in a later chapter.

(iii) The body now established by the law was known as the "Reichsnährstand" (henceforth RNS in this work) and encompassed the entire food production and distribution on the land, namely, peasants and farmers, dealers, co-operatives, processing industries like mills and dairies, wholesalers and retailers. Statistically the RNS was vast; it included over forty-two thousand co-operatives, nearly three hundred thousand workers in the processing industries and another half a million in the retail trade.⁷³ The new Corporation was authorized to regulate production, marketing and prices where necessary which the RNS could delegate to individual branches if it desired. The powers given were both interventionary and supervisory, and no indemnity could be claimed for hardship resulting in individual cases from the new organization. As a public corporation the RNS could fine members up to 100,000RM or inflict prison sentences, or both, for transgressions. As far as the retail and processing sides were concerned, the parent body could

close a business both permanently or temporarily as it saw fit or refuse licences to trade to new firms. Membership of the RNS was obligatory; any trader in any doubt as to whether the new corporation included his business or not was advised to join to be on the safe side, as there were penalties for non-entry for those firms to which the regulations definitely did apply.⁷⁴

All food producers had to enrol naturally; when one RLB member in Silesia attempted to resign from the union on the grounds that he did not wish to participate in any unitarian structure the local LGF announced that he would regard any such attempt to get out as sabotage of the NS State: anyone who withdrew from a professional body would be held to have left the profession as such, and would consequently be regarded as unfit to farm German soil in future.⁷⁵

There were four departments in the RNS dealing respectively with the farmer and his family as people, with the management of the farm in practical terms, with the co-operatives, and with the processing and retailing business areas. These four departments corresponded roughly in their administrative duties to the unions (No.I) the Agricultural Chambers (No.II) the co-operatives (No.III) and the retail and processing trades (No.IV), so that one body covered the aspects of food-production etc. hitherto dealt with by various types of organization. The structure was vertical as well as horizontal, in that it extended at various levels downward in geographical terms, as well as spreading out to include all trades and professions. Germany was divided into various administrative levels: the lowest of these was the Ort headed by an Ortsbauernführer (OBF) of whom there were just over fifty thousand, not provided normally with an office staff. The next level up was Kreis, of which there were 514 each headed by a Kreisbauernführer (KBF); at this level the four departments system began. The penultimate stage was a Landesbauernschaft, the country being divided into 19 initially:⁷⁶ the

leader was a Landesbauernführer (LBF), again with four departments. Finally at the top of the hierarchy was the national leader Reichsbauernführer (RBF) in Berlin with his deputy; these two posts were held by Darré and Meinberg respectively. Between them and the four departments at national level was the Staff Office, headed by Dr. Reischle, to plan and co-ordinate all activities. It should be pointed out that in some areas it was found necessary to insert another level between Landesbauernschaft and Kreisbauernschaft, known as Bezirk. Westphalia had six of these to cover its thirty seven Kreisbauernschaften.⁷⁷ All leaders were appointed on the "Führer" principle, that is, by their immediate superiors, with no question of democratic election by those below.

In theory this was an autonomous body, representing agriculture as a profession and governed by its own members, rather than an appendage of the State. The NS wished to emphasize that what they had erected was a halfway house between State socialism on the one hand and the untrammelled freedom of the individual allegedly entailed in liberal societies on the other.⁷⁸ There is however the question of whether the RNS really was autonomous in practice. In June 1933 Darré himself wrote an article in the "NS Landpost" on the shape of things to come; he stated that "In the coming development it is the duty of the leader of the farmers' profession to lay the politico-economic needs of the profession before the state leadership . . . the politico-economic decisions taken are within the province of the state leader, to whom the profession's chief can only ever be an adviser."⁷⁹ This asserts the clear primacy of political, that is State, considerations over those of professional representation in Darré's mind; it must be remembered that in any case he was eventually both RBF and Minister. Under these circumstances the claim that the RNS was autonomous can scarcely be taken as valid.

There were in reality three choices confronting German agricultural

organization at the time; it could have stayed with the old, pluralistic forms of the Weimar Republic, which of course so holistic an outlook as that of the NSDAP's could not accept, because of the lack of unity as such. The rejection of the old left two possibilities, a democratically-run unitarian body or an authoritarian type of corporation, which the RNS was. The NS build-up along these lines should not obscure the fact that a real alternative was also possible which would have combined both unity and democracy. Indeed, such an organization was precisely what von Rohr desired to construct for agriculture. Like the National Socialists he was dedicated to the idea of "Blood and Soil" and the preservation of the peasantry, but he proposed a rather different corporation to achieve it. This was based on a vertical build-up from district level with the top, central organization to carry out merely what the lower echelons could not, rather than imposing its own policy from above, as the RNS was to do. In combination with a democratically elected leadership, which von Rohr advocated, this would have constituted a real alternative. It was no doubt the lack of centralized, State control in this idea which led Darré to reject it in favour of the RNS as eventually organized.⁸⁰

However, as at this time there was a general move in Western Europe towards a greater degree of state intervention in agrarian matters, for example, the Milk Marketing Boards in Britain, it might well be held that what the RNS really represented was part of a general trend.⁸¹ It is, of course, true that the NSDAP went further along this particular path than Britain without ever attaining the total state control, at least before 1939, exercised in the Soviet Union, so that to a certain extent the claim to have reached a compromise has some genuine grounding. However, it may seem in retrospect that the underlying pattern common to most countries at the time was more important than the degree of its manifestation in any one particular instance. It might also seem that what von Rohr advocated was a genuine,

and more democratic, alternative to the RNS.

(iv) Fixed prices and reorganized marketing was one way of removing agriculture outside the realm of the free play of economic forces, and it was complemented in September 1933 by the law to entail farm holdings, which applied, in principle, to those between $7\frac{1}{2}$ and 125 Ha in size.⁸² The provisions of this law affected fifty five percent of all agricultural land in the country.⁸³ Its preamble stated that the object was to preserve the peasantry under the safeguard of old German inheritance customs, the chief weapons used being the restrictions upon testamentary freedom now made upon all peasants affected by the law, and the total exclusion of any form of foreclosure by creditors involving the sale of actual land. This could be neither bought nor sold, and this fact, in concert with the regulations on its actual inheritance, meant that the soil would remain in the same family and its descendants in perpetuity.⁸⁴ In this way the programme of 6th March 1930 was fulfilled: the relevant phrase used therein had been "German soil will not be allowed to be the object of financial speculation."⁸⁵ From now on over half of it could not be. The peasants' family received, by the entailed farm Act and the formation of the RNS, absolute security of tenure on the one hand and guaranteed prices for their products on the other: a privileged class, sheltered from all the worst effects of free market forces, had been created in Germany.

The actual details of the new legislation on entailment, and how it came to be passed have been postponed until Chapter XI so that the RNS and the efforts at autarky etc. can be discussed first for the sake of narrative continuity. But before leaving the subject altogether, the historical background to the Erbhof law (henceforth EHG) will be discussed in order to show that the legislation, although introduced by the NSDAP, was by no means an original piece of thinking.

(v) There had been a groundswell of demand from agrarian circles in the

twenties in general that some reform of the inheritance laws relating to farm property should be introduced; it was, however, based upon the feeling that a voluntary system of closed inheritance (Anerbenrecht) should be recognized in law. Hanover had enjoyed such a system since 1866, and other states came to ask for this in the twenties; in 1922 a farm union in Bavaria requested the state government to produce something along these lines, the request being reiterated in 1927.⁸⁶ The Agricultural Council and the RLB had repeatedly called for similar provisions.⁸⁷ In 1925 a draft law (Reichsanerbengesetz) was framed jointly by the Agricultural Council, the RLB, the CBV etc. and sent to the government but not taken up.⁸⁸

In several states legislation embodying the principle of a voluntary roll containing the names of all peasants promising to nominate one heir only to the farm was actually introduced in the twenties. Württemberg saw such an Act in 1929 accepted by the Landtag. When the Bill was presented the leader of the NSDAP group, Mergenthaler, welcomed the measure by pointing out that although it would mean hardship for all those children now barred from land inheritance, legislation was necessary in order to save German soil,⁸⁹ (presumably from being fragmented). The law provided for voluntary enrolment which could be annulled whenever the owner wished. There was to be one heir only, with precedence for the eldest son; for the others a system of monetary compensation spread over ten years was provided.⁹⁰ For cases of dispute an arbitration procedure to determine the true value of the property was laid down. This law did not, however, prevent sale of the farm.⁹¹ Thus Anerbenrecht was to be voluntarily strengthened in the area, in order to maintain a sturdy and capable peasantry, holding the same land perpetually in each family, according to a minute of February 1928 which had preceded the Bill's presentation. This suggested that the German Civil Code of 1900 which permitted all children to inherit land from the head of the household and then freely dispose of it afterwards was injurious

to the normal national customs of *Anerbenrecht*. The minute further drew attention to the prevailing situation in Prussia, where such a measure was already in effect.⁹² From correspondence in the State files, it is clear that other regions, notably Saxony and Lippe, either already had or were at the time contemplating similar legislation.⁹³

This concern to preserve farm property in one piece is understandable when the facts about partible inheritance (*Realteilung*) are considered, whether the co-heirs subsequently sold the land or not. An example of what effect it could exercise upon farm size was given in a Stuttgart newspaper in 1925; the case of a holding being left to eight children was cited. Each heir got one strip, four more pieces were to be farmed in common, from the next four the eldest child got two and the remaining children shared the other two equally; finally, the last few strips were divided by the second and third child getting one apiece and the last five children sharing the remainder. As was pointed out, quite apart from the difficulties posed for actually farming land split up in this way an enormous amount of legal red tape in conveyancing etc. was necessary.⁹⁴ When such a system was traditional land became ever increasingly fragmented; one report in 1938 found two parishes in Württemberg where the number of holdings under five Ha in size was 296 out of 309 in one case and 183 out of 186 in the other.⁹⁵ Under these circumstances it is not surprising to hear Hitler's subsequent comment that the EHG had been necessary to prevent any further division of the German soil.⁹⁶

The NSDAP legislation must be seen, in other words, in the context of recent history, which showed a widespread desire in agrarian quarters for some kind of new law, already anticipated in some states but never made national. These demands had been for a voluntary system, however, and what made the EHG unique was its element of compulsion; *Anerbenrecht* was from September 1933 an obligation in all Germany. Finally, it must be borne in

mind that although the new law in its preamble spoke in seemingly romantic terms of the necessity of securing the peasantry as the life-source of the nation according to old Germanic customs there were nonetheless solid practical grounds behind its introduction, the need to preserve some kind of economic viability in peasant holdings. The NSDAP were faced in effect with three possibilities in 1933; it could have allowed existing conditions to have continued which included Realteilung, and therefore fragmentation in some regions, or it could have introduced voluntary Anerbenrecht on a national basis, or, as finally undertaken, compulsory closed inheritance for the whole of Germany.

(vi) In the Cabinet debate on the new measure the Prussian Minister of Finance called it "a step of immense fundamental significance."⁹⁷ This was undoubtedly true, in that a new privileged class, the peasantry, had been created, sheltered against the play of normal market forces completely; the RNS gave it guaranteed prices, the EHG a guaranteed farm, in that it would always remain in the hands of the same family. The loss of individual freedom in testamentary terms was balanced by this new security, which must be seen in the context of world depression, falling prices outside Germany and a recent history of agrarian foreclosures within the country. A fundamental change in the economic scene seemed to have taken place, agriculture was now being totally sheltered and the accent was no longer wholly upon international trade and exports. This does not mean that the NSDAP was anti-industrial, but rather that a new importance was apparently being given to the peasantry. Party speakers underlined this change in status by talking of a "peasant policy," as Meinberg described it. In a speech in September 1933 he referred to a conversation he had had with Darré and Hitler a few days previously, at which the Führer was alleged to have said, "I shall not yield an inch in any question affecting the peasants." Meinberg went on to stress what this meant: price increases in other branches of the economy

would not be tolerated if they adversely affected the balance between agrarian and other wholesale prices for the peasants. Any attempt to do that and "the band of criminals" involved would be put into a concentration-camp, a statement which to the journal reporting it seemed plain enough.⁹⁸

The advent of Adolph Hitler appeared to have signalled a new era of protection for agriculture and a new standing in the community as that class most favoured by NS legislation. Official propaganda rammed home the point; in February 1933 Darre called on the Party's agrarian press to make widespread use of the phrase "Peasant Chancellor" when referring to the Führer, as he called him himself at the Harvest Festival ceremony in October of the same year, just after the EHG was announced.⁹⁹ Hitler himself never lost the slightest chance of assuring the peasants of his goodwill towards their profession; on 1st October 1933, for example, he received a delegation of 100 at the Chancellery and emphasized the firm bonds between his government and agriculture.¹⁰⁰ Built by an apparently pro-agricultural government the twin pillars of the RNS and the EHG represented a coming era of security for the land.

1. Hugenberg to Cabinet 18th March 1933: BA-R43 I/1460
2. Wholesale Price Index for food stuffs by type (1913 = 100)

	<u>Oct. 1932</u>	<u>Jan. 1933</u>
Crop products	100.3	95.7
Cattle	66.2	57.9
Animal Products	98.7	87.5
- REM report to President Hindenburg 20th February 1933: BA-R2/18202
3. Cabinet minutes 16th February: BA -R43 I/1459: German fodder imports in 1932 amounted to 1,328,000 tons of barley and maize and 640,000 tons of oilcake: Hugenberg to Cabinet 18th March 1933: BA-R43 I/1460
4. Joachim von Rohr was a DNVP member and chairman of the Landbund in Pomerania
5. Price support for domestic grain was costing 100 Mill. RM annually according to the Finance Minister at the Cabinet meeting on 16th February: BA-R43 I/1459
6. Cabinet minutes 2nd March: BA-R43 I/1460
7. WB 1st March 1933: the information on increased duties was in the same journal 15th February
8. REM/Ministry of Finance to Cabinet 7th July 1933: R43 I/1464
9. "50 Jahre" p.27
10. Which the NSDAP had never supported: see V.B. 6th January 1933
"Warum lehnt die NSDAP den Butterbeimischungszwang ab?"
11. The Ministers of Transport and Finance, neither in the NSDAP, also rejected the idea, without actually mentioning possible unrest: opposition to Hugenberg was not a purely party matter
12. This memorandum and the cabinet minutes on which the account is based, are in Ba-R43 I/1460
13. "Zweite Verordnung" "Dritte Verordnung" etc. in RGB(I) pp.143 and 622 are examples of these decrees
14. WB 15th March 1933

15. Made in a personal interview: see Page 151 for Dr. Brandes speech in April thanking Hitler for the "Fats Plan".
16. "50 Jahre" p.28
17. In January the consumer devoted 12.6% of his total outlay to fats, in July 15.4%, or nearly 25% more: RRM to the President 20th February 1933 and 20th July 1933: BA-R2/18202
18. Chancellery to Hugenberg 31st May 1933: BA-R43 II/192
19. RRM to President 20th February 1933 and 20th July 1933: BA-R2/18202: the comparative statistics for individual product-types are as follows: (1913 = 100)

	<u>Jan. 1933</u>	<u>June 1933</u>
Crop products	95.7	100.8
Cattle	57.9	59.7
Animal Products	81.9	86.6

20. Bente "Landwirtschaft und Bauerntum" p.177: one Kreis in Schleswig-Holstein with 5,2000 Ha of agricultural land was said to have debts in May 1933 amounting to 36 Mill. RM, half of which were short-term credits: Kreis Norderdithmarschen Farmers Union to Agricultural Chamber 2nd May 1933: LA 301/4111
21. By the closing stages of the Weimar Republic the Osthilfe had been spread out to include some other regions e.g. in Bavaria
22. The 1931 scheme was in "Entschuldung der Landwirtschaft": "Das Hugenberg Program" issued by the DNVP
23. "Gesetz zur Regelung der landwirtschaftlichen Schuldverhältnisse": RGB (I) p.331
24. Darré to LGFs 1st April 1933: ND 140
25. Darré to Hugenberg 29th March 1933: Ibid
26. Meeting 11th May 1933: BA-R43 II/192
27. The cost of the proposals to the state was estimated by one source at 460 Mill. RM: WB 21st June 1933

28. Cabinet minutes 31st May 1933: BA-R43 I/1462
29. Cabinet minutes 20th February 1933: BA-R43 I/1459
30. Simpson "Hjalmar Schacht in perspective" p.84
31. H. Haushofer "Die deutsche Landwirtschaft im technischen Zeitalter" p.261
32. At a meeting of the Economic Committee of the cabinet: Hitler had referred to the matter as "urgent" only one day after coming to office: Cabinet minutes 31st January 1933: BA-R43 I/1459
33. Cabinet minutes 1st February 1933: Ibid
34. Cabinet minutes 8th February 1933: Ibid
35. See RGB(I) pp.63 and 779
36. R. Erbe "Die NS Wirtschaftspolitik 1933-39 im Lichte der modernen Theorie" pp.31/2
37. Darré to Hitler: 16th April 1933: BA-R43 II/192
38. Darré to LGFs 20th March 1933: ND 140
39. Cabinet minutes 28th April 1933: BA-R43 I/1461
40. A. Ritthalter "Eine Etappe auf Hitlers Weg zur ungeteilten Macht" in VJH 1960 p.199: as already mentioned on Page 135 the SA had begun to arrest DNVP members of the Agricultural Chambers in early April, but this seems evidence for a wish to destroy the DNVP rather than amalgamate
41. Ritthalter above cit. pp.198/9
42. Ibid pp.198/9
43. Ibid p.199
44. The other being von Neurath, the Foreign Secretary
45. Ritthalter pp.197/8
46. Cabinet minutes 23rd June 1933: BA-R43 I/1463
47. The only existing Secretary in that Ministry was Joachim von Rohr of the DNVP: Hitler's desire to appoint a NS as well would not necessarily have entailed von Rohr's resignation: in fact he

- remained in office even after Hugenberg's departure, and resigned in September 1933: personal interview
48. Ritthalter pp.199/200: on 26th June Hugenberg wrote to Hindenberg regretting NS attacks upon him and the necessity of leaving office: Ibid pp.204/207
 49. Gies p.375
 50. It has even been suggested that Hindenberg would not have agreed to Hitler's cabinet unless it included the DNVP leader: Bracher "Die Auflösung der Weimarer Republik" p.727
 51. IfZ ZS 1622: unfortunately Willikens did not give the exact date of this commission.
 52. Their Party numbers were 3,344 for Willikens and 218,582 for Meinberg, who joined in 1930 as compared to Willikens who became a Party member in 1925 almost as soon as the movement was re-founded: ADC Willikens and ADC Meinberg
 53. Published in 1931: Willikens almost certainly helped with the drawing-up of the March 1930 official Programme
 54. He became Secretary of State in the REM after von Rohr's resignation: at his interrogation he stated unequivocally that he would have preferred the post of Darré's deputy as he had never been a State official: IfZ ZS 1622
 55. Ritthalter pp.208/214 gives the report of the actual meeting between the two men
 56. Cabinet minutes 27th June 1933: BA-R43 I/1463
 57. Speech by Dr. Reischle, reprinted in "NS Landpost" October 1933: HSA(D) 1028
 58. "Der Boden im Dritten Reich" in "NS Jahrbuch 1930" p.204
 59. T. Thyssen "Bauern und Standesvertretung" p.278
 60. Erwin Motz, head of the special "Blood and Soil" Section in the REM in a Press interview 13th July 1933: V.B. 2nd August 1933

61. Cf. Darre's letter to Hugenberg about the need for preserving those on the land who had "valuable blood" even if their holdings were not viable economically: Darre to Hugenberg 29th March 1933: ND 140
62. See "Schematische Darstellung der Gliederung der Abteilung Landwirtschaft: ND 128 128
63. See Darre to LGFs 21st September 1932: ND 145
64. "Sonderschreiben" 12th October 1932: Ibid
65. The incident was recounted by Dr. Reischle: personal interview
66. Reischle "Die deutsche Ernährungswirtschaft" p.5
67. Vide Darre speech in 1934 to the Foreign Press "We came from the liberal-Marxist fiction of a free price to the NS recognition of an economic price": speech reprinted as "Ziel und Weg der NS Agrarpolitik".
68. WB 7th June 1933
69. "Regelung des ständischen Aufbaues" RGB (I) p.495: Darre's fears about the individual states possible action is contained in his remarks in Cabinet: Cabinet minutes 11th July 1933: BA-R2/17988
70. "Vorläufigen Aufbau" etc. RGB (I) p.627
71. Von Rohr was against fixed prices as such but his main criticisms of the RNS were made in 1934 in a letter to Hitler which will be discussed later to avoid breaking the chronology here
72. Cabinet minutes 11th July 1933: BA-R43 I/1465
73. Brady "The Spirit and Structure of German Fascism" p.225 and W. Saure "Reichsnährstandgesetz" p.79
74. The classic source for information on the structure is H. Reischle and W. Saure "Der Reichsnährstand - Aufbau, Aufgaben und Bedeutung"
75. WB 26th July 1933
76. For a diagrammatic representation see Appendix E
77. WB 13th September 1933

78. For an example of this kind of statement see Reischle "Die deutsche Ernährungswirtschaft" p.17
79. Quoted in Jacobs "Von Schorlemer bis zur Grünen Front" p.80
80. Von Rohr's proposals in draft fell into the hands of Meinberg in April 1933: ND 143
81. For a description of this move towards State intervention in agriculture in the thirties see Tracy "Agriculture in Western Europe" pp. 124-7
82. Although these size limits were guide-lines, rather than absolute criteria
83. "Vierteljahrsheft zur Statistik des deutschen Reiches 1939" Part II p.36
84. The whole legislation "Erbhofgesetz" is in RGB (I) p.685
85. Section 3 Point 4: V.B. 7th March 1930
86. Haushofer "Ideengeschichte" p.104
87. Holt p.209
88. REM to all State governments 2nd April 1925: HSA(S) 343/E 130/IV.
It would appear that the individual states wanted to be left to bring in their own legislation.
89. "Württembergischer Landtag": 61 Sitzung 23rd October 1929 pp.1530/1: HSA(S) 321/E130/IV: Mergenthaler's observation was acclaimed by the Centre parties as well as the NSDAP
90. The system of compensating family members barred from land inheritance under Anerbenrecht was known as Abfindung
91. Draft law in HSA(S) 343 in E 130/IV
92. Minute 8th February 1928: HSA(S) 343/E 130/IV
93. See Minister of Economic Affairs Saxony to Minister of State Württemberg 15th November 1928 enclosing copy of draft Bill along similar lines already accepted by the Saxon Landtag: Ibid: For

Lippe see Lippe Ministry of State to Minister of State Württemberg
2nd July 1925 for the information that Lippe had had a similar
law since March 1924: Ibid

94. "Schwäbische Zeitung" 22nd July 1925
95. Report by Landwirtschaftliche Hochschule Stuttgart for Reichsarbeits-
gemeinschaft für Raumforschung 1938: HSA(S) 646/E 130/IV
96. "Hitler's Table Talk" pp.18 and 618
97. Cabinet minutes 26th September 1933: BA-R43 I/1465
98. WB 13th September 1933
99. Verhey p.43
100. Domarus p.304

Chapter VII: The Reichsnährstand in detail: the capabilities and political affiliations of its personnel, the reorganization of agrarian marketing and the crisis of 1934/5

The object of this chapter is to describe the initial impact of the RNS upon German agriculture in more detail, in particular the new marketing arrangements, the price crisis of 1934/5 and the administration of the agrarian sector at local level. As far as the events of 1934/5 are concerned, it should be pointed out that these were also connected with the efforts made at autarky for Germany under the Third Reich, and the question of lack of foreign currency to pay for food imports. Since the latter issue is far too important and complicated to be included in this chapter it has had to be postponed until another; the actual shortages of food-stuffs experienced just after the formation of the RNS will be dealt with then, since to include that point here would misleadingly suggest that the RNS marketing system was responsible, whereas in fact there were other causes. This means that there will be a certain narrative repetition in chronological terms of 1934/5, in the later chapter devoted to autarky, but under the circumstances this cannot very well be avoided.

The RNS Officials

(i) It will be remembered that the leadership of the RNS was not elected by the agrarian community but appointed on the "Führer" principle. Contrary to existing practice in agricultural representation in Germany, each leader nominated his subordinates under the new system, and since the head of the whole organization was a National Socialist this tended to mean that the entire hierarchy was drawn overwhelmingly from the ranks of that Party; most of the leaders in the RNS had formerly been in the NS Agrarian Office and simply went over to the new body en bloc.¹ The existing LGFs now became LBFs (Landesbauernführer), i.e. the heads of the nineteen different regional branches of the new organization (Landesbauernschaften).

An examination of the LBFs as for 1934 makes this point quite clear, as in almost all cases they had been the former LGFs of the Agrarian Office for that particular area of the country.² In terms of occupation they were all professional farmers, ranging from estate-owners like Freiherr von Reibnitz in Silesia to peasants such as Hubner, the LBF in Baden.³ Underneath the LBF as head of a Landesbauernschaft came the KBF (Kreisbauernführer) and at the lowest level of all the OBF (Ortsbauernführer). Despite the use of the word "Bauer" in the title these men did not actually have to be peasants themselves, in the sense of being proprietors of an Erbhof, although they did have to be engaged in agriculture for a living as land-owners of some kind.⁴ In sum, the Bauernführer who carried out RNS policy were professional farmers and almost always Party members.

As far as their white-collar staff was concerned, this tended to be highly professional, since Department I of the RNS consisted mainly of the old unions' personnel, in particular the RLB, which had been used as the basis for the new structure created in April 1933. When the RLB was incorporated into the RNS the existing professional agrarian officials came over automatically with it.⁵ The same applied to Department II of the RNS which comprised the staff of the former Agricultural Chambers.⁶ Because of these facts the new organization tended to consist initially of NS Bauernführer as the leaders, while the subordinate personnel were frequently not Party members, but rather professional agrarian administrators. One contemporary leader has estimated that up to one quarter of the officials in the Staff Office of the RNS were not in the NSDAP.⁷ This claim has independent evidence for its support: as late as May 1937 the Landesbauernschaft in Westphalia had fifteen officials who had formerly been in the Zentrum Party, nine of whom were in agricultural training schools.⁸ Despite the initial prevalence of non-Party members there does appear to have been pressure exerted later to produce a wholly NS structure, even for office staff, as is clearly shown

in the attached letter from the administrative section of the Rhineland branch of the RNS to all staff. Whether this kind of drive was typical of all Landesbauernschaften cannot be proved, but it seems very likely that the organization became increasingly dominated by Party members in the course of time. Of course, the very fact that staff were pressurized into joining the NSDAP means that they were not convinced National Socialists necessarily. On the whole, the main impression given of the staff is its professional tinge: the RNS was run by men who were farmers, agrarian officials or economists by profession, and who were usually Party members. It was certainly not in general staffed by National Socialists who got a job in it by virtue of their political allegiance. The smooth running of the new organization in Schleswig-Holstein has been attributed to its solid professional core.⁹

Of course, this is not to say that every appointment made was solely in terms of merit; some unsuitable people did get nominated to positions of responsibility. For example, a KBF in the Osnabrück area was said to have been neither a farmer nor a local man and of inferior ability;¹⁰ from Münster came a report that a local Bauernführer was an old Party member who had married a farmer's daughter but otherwise had no discernible connection with the land.¹¹ These reports were made relatively early in the life of the RNS, but there is no doubt that many senior officials felt the need for a professionally competent leadership of agriculture at local level: at the National Peasant Assembly in 1935 Dr Krohn, a section-leader of Department II at headquarters, made a speech along these lines; he argued that the peasant only allows himself to be convinced by other peasants, so that if progress were to be made technically the OBFs would have to be highly competent at farming, (rather than just being Party members).¹² This drew a letter from an OBF in Bavaria who stated from personal experience that RNS advisers who really knew farm management were still to some extent

Landesbauernschaft Rheinland.
Verwaltungsamt.

Bonn, den 1. Hornung (Febr.) 1935.

V.C.1475

An alle Beamten, Angestellten und Arbeiter der Landesbauern-
schaft !

- - - - -

Die Landesbauernschaft muss erwarten, dass ihre sämtlichen Beamten, Angestellten und Arbeiter, soweit sie nicht bereits Parteimitglied sind, irgendeiner Gliederung der NSDAP angehören. Der Reichsnährstand nimmt im Aufbauwerk des Führers eine besonders bevorzugte Stellung ein und ist es Ehrenpflicht aller Gefolgschaftsmitglieder, durch die Zugehörigkeit zu den NS.-Gliederungen ihre Verbundenheit mit Führer und Volk zum Ausdruck zu bringen. Es soll niemand darüber im Zweifel bleiben, dass in Zukunft für alle diejenigen, die ausserhalb der aktiven Volksgemeinschaft stehen, in den Reihen des Reichsnährstandes kein Platz ist.

Sie werden ersucht, am Schluss dieses Schreibens die Erklärung abzugeben, welcher NS.-Gliederung Sie angehören bzw. bei welcher NS.-Gliederung Sie Ihre Anmeldung inzwischen vollzogen haben.

Frist: 15.2.1935.

Heil Hitler !

Im Auftrage:

H e r k e n r a t h .

lacking in the area.¹³ As late as 1940 one OBF in Marienau (Lower Saxony) was said to have been technically unreliable and had been the object of complaints from the local peasants.¹⁴ Reports of this nature were, however, relatively rare and would seem to have designated the exceptions rather than the average: as the RNS developed it tended to grow more professional in its appointments and less politically biased, since it was found by experience that the peasants simply would not co-operate with Bauernführer whose only qualification was Party membership.¹⁵ The top leadership of the RNS seemed in any case to be quite ready to deal with short-comings, professional or otherwise by their staff: in one district some OBFs did not meet their tax obligations, which was hardly a good example to the peasants: when the Regierungspräsident complained to the LBF he had the offenders removed from office.¹⁶

Quite apart from professional knowledge of agrarian matters, all Bauernführer were required in some degree to be administrators: since they were farmers by profession they had no especial qualifications in this respect, which was initially a weak point in the RNS as a whole. An examination of the correspondence of OBFs shows that many were only semi-literate, as they were after all only local peasants who happened to be in the Party: in Schleswig-Holstein they were described as being of variable quality.¹⁷ As an example of the OBFs' lack of education in general may be instanced the question of the speech at harvest time, which the OBF was called on to make when the first harvest wagon arrived from the fields in each village, at least in Württemberg. Most OBFs were quite unable to compose this and bombarded the Landesbauernschaft for instructions. Eventually a model speech was sent out to them.¹⁸ Their inability to manage this on their own behalf suggests that however skilful as a farmer, the average OBF was not an educated man.

(ii) This obviously was of importance because of the vast amount of

administration which the local leaders were called upon to undertake, and which inevitably involved a great deal of paperwork. For the OBF the burden of administration was so heavy that Darre ruled that no one should remain in this office above the age of fifty-five, when he received an honorific "Old Bauernführer" upon retirement.¹⁹ When their list of duties is surveyed, it becomes clear why this regulation was necessary. One set of instructions from a Kreisbauernschaft ordered the OBFs to try and sell copies of an RNS calendar, find out how many Erbhöfe in the district needed debt-relief, and complete a questionnaire regarding the supply of timber from private forests.²⁰ When a referendum was held in 1938 OBFs were expected to participate on behalf of the Party in propaganda and assist with the machinery of vote-registration on the day of the poll;²¹ when it was decided to install more bath facilities on the land, it was the OBF who was charged with the execution of the plan in his village.²² The list of duties was so varied that they cannot all be quoted, but additional tasks included checking grain deliveries at every farm, seeing that eggs were delivered to official collection points only, administering state aid for technical improvements such as silos, reporting on land helpers sent from the cities, ensuring that farmers wives joined the Party organization "NS Frauenschaft," dealing with landworkers' accommodation, checking cattle diseases, publicizing new RNS reading material and reporting any peasants meetings.²³ Even that was not the full monthly list for a man who had his own farm to run and was not even paid for the work, in addition to having no office staff. Moreover a conscientious OBF regularly visited all holdings to urge on better management.²⁴

Under this kind of pressure it would have been surprising if all duties had been carried out as efficiently as possible. There seems some evidence to support the view that supervision of the peasantry was sometimes laxer than the RNS would have liked. In Leezen (Schleswig-Holstein), for example,

a peasant was deprived of the management of his holding and his wife installed as trustee in March 1937; in July 1939 the KBF found out quite accidentally that she had died months before and that her husband was back in control.²⁵ That he could have been managing the property in defiance of a court order without the OBF apparently knowing about it is informative. Similarly, the OBFs do not seem always to have been acquainted with the RNS marketing regulations; in 1937 a legal official advised a cattle-trading organization to dismiss one peasant transgressor of its rules with a warning as although he had been charging too much the local OBF had apparently not known the rules regarding prices himself, and the peasant in question had consequently never been properly advised.²⁶ Of the paperwork required in general one peasant leader reported that there was so much to do that it made the authorities look ridiculous.²⁷

(iii) This degree of bureaucracy existed at the higher echelons of the structure as well as at local level. In this connection the diary of a Kreisbauernschaft official is informative; on the Tuesday of one particular week he dealt with the contracts between farmers and landworkers by visiting the actual farms, which he followed by attending a conference on agricultural marketing. Wednesday was devoted to routine office work. Thursday to attending the court-hearing of an evicted landworker with a conference on Co-operatives afterwards: the next day saw another dispossession case, a discussion at the Labour Exchange and a visit to a farm being run by a trustee to see how he was faring. On Saturday the official dealt with office routine and had an evening meeting: his diary reveals that he worked every Saturday and one Sunday in this month.²⁸ This basic paperwork inevitable to any large organization was exacerbated by the multifarious duties of the RNS at the Kreisbauernschaft level: an examination of its correspondence shows it to have been weighed down with tasks imposed by its use, both by the peasants and official bodies, as a kind of general factotum

in rural areas, quite apart from its ordinary administration described above. When one peasant's sister was left money in her father's will the heir to the farm did not pay up, and it was to the KBF, not to a lawyer, that she went for redress:²⁹ if a peasant did not contribute to the "voluntary" Winter Help Scheme it was again the KBF who called him to order.³⁰ Other calls upon this leader included cases of non-payment of subscriptions to a rural co-operative,³¹ and the collection of a debt owed by a cattle-slaughterer to a peasant.³²

(iv) ~~Under~~ Under these conditions it was scarcely surprising that the RNS was a large organization; in the opinion of some, too large and costly.³³ By June 1938 its total personnel reached seventy-three thousand, although full-time paid employees were only sixteen thousand in number, the remainder being honorary, more especially the OBFs of which there were some fifty-five thousand.³⁴ The sheer size of the organization entailed considerable expenditure to keep it going, and since it depended ultimately upon subscriptions from its members for its finance, the RNS had to fix rates quite high in this respect.³⁵ This aroused opposition from the Ministry of Finance, which criticized the proposed budget in detail.³⁶ the worst extravagance was held to be the use of the same system of four departments in every region, irrespective of how large the Landesbauernschaft was: as an example Hohenzollern was cited, with its two Kreise only, but with the same administrative apparatus as other regions, which now cost three times as much as the same area had cost for agriculture, prior to the formation of the RNS.³⁷ When the latter body took over the running of forestry in Württemberg from the State it demanded nearly three times as much in expenses as the Agricultural Chamber had done for the same task.³⁸

The high subscriptions to the RNS, which were compulsory, aroused considerable feeling, from both food-processing firms and producers. One business in Königsberg, formerly liable for 394RM annually in dues to various

professional bodies, had to pay the RNS 12000RM per year.³⁹ The subscriptions of three farmers in Württemberg showed them as having paid between them little more than a quarter before 1933 of the sum now owing to the RNS.⁴⁰ The total cost of running the organization was such that some of its own employees alleged in 1938 that with less paperwork enough money could be saved to pay all landworkers higher wages.⁴¹ This must be taken as an exaggeration but it is undeniable that the RNS employed a considerable army of officials and that it was not lacking in bureaucratic methods. In assessing it in this respect, however, it is only fair to remember that one large organization, completely comprehensive, had replaced several smaller ones, such as the unions and the Chambers; these may have had plenty of officials in their time who were less obvious by virtue of the fact that each body had been smaller in scope than the RNS. But the increased cost of subscriptions does seem to suggest that the new organization was relatively larger and more costly than all the previous ones combined.

The Reorganization of Marketing

(i) Parallel with the duties of the RNS dealt with in the preceding sections went the reorganization of marketing in Germany. This affected the agrarian sector in two respects, namely, the distribution of its products and the prices offered for them; these will be dealt with separately here, but first the new system must be described in principle.

The basis of the reorganization was the individual commodity, for each of which a separate structure was built up. These were administered at first by Departments III and IV of the RNS, which dealt with agricultural dealers, the processing firms, distributors in general and the co-operatives. All of these interested parties were represented in an association for each leading agricultural product, commencing at regional level, where the new body was called a Verband (plural "Verbände"). The local associations terminated in a national Federation, of which ten were eventually organized,

in respect of grain, livestock, milk, fats, potato flakes (for fodder), eggs, spirits, sugar, fruit and vegetables, and fish.⁴² For a number of other products commissioners were named pending the formation of a Federation.⁴³ The RNS could depute all its powers to the Verbände if it wished, but it is important to remember that these bodies were nonetheless supervisory only: no Verband or Federation was a trading concern in the sense of buying and selling goods. These latter functions continued to be exercised by co-operatives or by private dealers.⁴⁴ What the Verbände did was to regulate prices and marketing conditions, license to trade etc. in other words to administer the market without entering into its actual transactions. In cases of dispute over its decrees, a Court of Arbitration for each commodity was responsible, dealing not only with cases of transgressions against the rules but also in those where a peasant came into conflict with a co-operative or miller, for example. If a business was pronounced no longer viable and closed by the Verband, it was to this court that the owner had the right to appeal.⁴⁵

(ii) In order to make the system clearer the grain trade will be taken as a specific example; this was brought into a unified association on 17th July 1934.⁴⁶ The Federation headquarters in Berlin had nineteen regional groups under its wing. The Federation chairman was nominated by the Minister for a two year period of office, and provided with an administrative council of at least eleven members from the regional bodies themselves named by the Minister in agreement with the RBF.⁴⁷ The lowest rung of the ladder was the district Verband, whose chairman was nominated by the LBF in agreement with Federation headquarters; each Verband council had at least nine members, similarly chosen. Peasants, millers and bakers each had two of these representatives, whilst one member each from the flour and grain dealers and the local co-operative made up the nine. Each district Verband had as a supernumary advisory council an assembly of thirty

members, of whom ten were peasants or farmers.

The duties of the chairman were lengthy and included, in consultation with his fellow-councillors, the fixing of quotas for mills, conditions of payment, price-fixing, the collection of dues for the organization and the imposition of statutory penalties for transgressions of marketing rules;⁴⁸ the closing of existing firms and the opening of new ones also lay within his province. As an example of the Federation's powers over delivery, the regulation of July 1936 can be quoted: this decreed that all farmers must deliver at the mills by 15th October an amount of grain equal to thirty per cent of the previous year's crop, with a similar proportion to be sent in afterwards but before 31st December: the decree applied to all producers with more than five Ha of land.⁴⁹ Behind the staggered delivery system was the desire to bring the crop on to the market at a steady rate, and so avoid an early glut and then a subsequent shortage, as might occur under a free delivery arrangement. Prices were varied from month to month as an added inducement to regular deliveries, and also from region to region, according to the distance from the main market being supplied; in May 1936 the price for rye ranged from 163RM to 183RM per ton according to this system.⁵⁰ Price and delivery rules thus complemented one another in assuring a steady flow, and thereby security, to the consumer. Equally, the producer now had a guaranteed price for his grain. The new arrangements also permitted compensatory payments within the commodities handled; in 1935 the result of a poor rye harvest was balanced by a levy of 6RM per ton on wheat.⁵¹

An elaborate structure was set up in this way to supervise the flow of goods; before actual practice is detailed two points need to be made. Firstly, as might be imagined, the regulations involved a fair degree of bureaucracy, since clearly any form of supervision will require a great many supervisors. The Federation originally set up for the millers as an independent branch of the grain trade had an office staff of nearly five hundred

at its headquarters in June 1934, which two years later had virtually doubled in extent. An accountants' report in the following year described the entire apparatus as over-manned and spoke of delays in procedure, too much formal organization and uneconomical management.⁵² High salaries added to costs; the chairman of the grain Federation received 1000RM monthly as compensation for no longer being able to run his own farm:⁵³ by way of contrast, a Civil Service official (Regierungsrat) received less than half that sum monthly in the Third Reich.⁵⁴ The passage of time seems to have done little to mitigate ~~against~~ bureaucracy inherent in such a close control of trade from outside; new bodies seem to have actually increased, partially due to the introduction of the Four Year Plan.⁵⁵ From Aachen it was reported in 1937 that one food-processing firm had had its books examined by no fewer than nine different organizations in the same year: this was alleged to have given the onlooker an impression of over-organization and, above all, of a lack of co-ordination at the top.⁵⁶ The existence of these over-elaborated structures caused the relatively high subscriptions to the RNS; it also produced muddle over distribution in some cases, but before this is described, some space must be devoted to the efforts at rationalization of marketing in principle made by the RNS.

(iv) The ethic behind the whole structure of the new arrangements was that the distribution of goods should no longer be subject to the free play of market forces, to which the NS were strongly opposed in principle.⁵⁷ The methods of the uncontrolled market were held to be irrational; a propaganda booklet stated that as an example of previous arbitrariness, milk from the Allgäu in Southern Germany had been sent to Berlin, resulting in unnecessary freight charges: the RNS sorted out this kind of muddle by establishing fifteen distribution zones with a view to facilitating its transit from producer to consumer.⁵⁸ The claim was made that as a result of the better system there was a vast increase in the quantity of milk delivered to dairies:

in Württemberg this was said to have nearly doubled between 1932 and 1935.⁵⁹ Actual production was also allegedly stimulated by differential price controls; in the Eifel (Rhineland) area the farmers had almost given up milk production prior to 1933 due to their remoteness from the market: especially favourable prices were offered to them by the RNS as an inducement and a substantial increase in output was achieved.⁶⁰

Parallel with such developments ran the efforts at rationalization which entailed pruning out the number of middlemen in each commodity trade, by making use of the Federation/Verband powers to license to trade or to close down a business where that seemed to be in the public interest. There were ten thousand dairies in Germany in 1933 but by 1939 only 6,134 remained,⁶¹ the smaller concerns having been eliminated in the interests of efficiency. The procedure employed was to issue a trading-licence only to those firms handling a certain quantity of the commodity, those habitually dealing on a smaller scale being given three months notice to either amalgamate with other small firms in order to reach the necessary quota or simply to sell out.⁶² Judging from an instance in Lower Saxony a business so threatened had a month to appeal to the Federation.⁶³

To summarize the RNS marketing order at this point is to say that new structures based on individual commodities had been built up on a pyramidal basis from district to national level: these supervised all dealings and prices without in themselves buying or selling. These various bodies had representatives of all concerned in the product, producers, distributors, processors etc. on their committees at all levels, which undoubtedly produced a very large and costly organizational structure. Private initiative still applied to the individual producer etc. but prices and distribution were closely controlled, and smaller businesses could be terminated by the various Federations. Considerable claims were made on behalf of the new system which it was said had facilitated distribution, increased production

in some cases, and guaranteed security to producer and consumer alike via fixed prices and a steady flow of goods. The next section will describe how operations of the RNS impressed contemporary observers in actual practice.

The new system in practice

(i) The first evidence in this respect was provided by the Regierungs-präsidenten reports of July 1934, thirty one in number, sent to Goering in his capacity as Minister President of Prussia. These painted so disquieting a picture of the RNS at work that Goering had them collated and sent to Darre for information:⁶⁴ The first sore point on the land regarding the new regulations was undoubtedly that concerning the general handling of produce, in particular the fact that peasants could no longer sell direct to the public but had to deliver their milk to a dairy,⁶⁵ which also entailed being unable to make their own butter any longer.⁶⁶ In order to cover the Verband's administrative costs a commission of 2 Pfennigs per litre on milk was charged to the producers which naturally irritated those who had previously been selling direct to the public. Discontent over the new regulation had been reported from Aachen in March 1934 by the Gestapo;⁶⁷ in August of the same year it mentioned the same point in connection with potatoes, which of course also had to be sold through a Verband rather than direct.⁶⁸ In the case of milk the 2 Pfennigs commission could equal as much as twenty per cent of the farmers profit.⁶⁹ As the Gestapo pointed out, this had an unfortunate effect financially upon those producers whose rents were based upon the old profit rates, which led to the suggestion that perhaps an interim period with permitted direct selling would have been better as the first step in the reorganization.⁷⁰

So strong was feeling on this particular point that the peasants in the parish of Egge (Lower Saxony) refused to supply the nominated Verband with milk at all, which led to a hurried conference between the OBF and the KBF, who described the producers attitude as "sabotage." The root of the

matter here was that the locals had always made their own butter but now could not do so, despite the fact that they possessed all the necessary apparatus.⁷¹ The Verband began to threaten official sanctions⁷² after which the correspondence ceases, presumably because the peasants gave way. The whole affair throws an interesting light upon the rural attitude towards the new regulations, which appeared not to have been well received in general, if the Aachen Gestapo report for August 1934 can be believed; this stated bluntly that "the mood on the land cannot be described as good."⁷³ On the other hand, the introduction of the new system in Schleswig-Holstein was said to have proceeded "without friction."⁷⁴ It may well be that in the latter province less peasants were selling direct to the public in the first place, due to their relative remoteness from large cities: whether this was so or not, the comparatively favourable reaction in the area must illustrate the danger of generalization in this matter, although most districts showed some degree of dissatisfaction with the new regulations.⁷⁵

(ii) Apart from the question of direct selling there were other complaints made in respect of the RNS marketing system regarding supply; it was reported from both Wiesbaden and Cologne in July 1934 that eggs were no longer fresh when they arrived on the market, allegedly due to the new and complicated marketing procedures.⁷⁶ Eggs seem always to have presented difficulties in fact: in May 1937 the Kreisbauernschaft for Nuremberg announced a new system for this commodity, as apparently certain people had been visiting farms and buying up supplies, which had resulted in a shortage in West Germany: the newspaper reporting this spoke of a black market.⁷⁷ That that could have been the case in peacetime is surely indicative of a certain degree of muddle caused by over-control. The claims for a more rationalized distribution seem not to have been valid in other cases also; in May 1937 a mill near Jülich (Rhineland) had to be closed for six weeks due to a grain shortage in the area.⁷⁸ In 1938 the OBF in Ruhpolding

(Bavaria) claimed that no cattle-dealer came to the district for two-four months on end, which compelled farmers to feed cattle in winter which they had wanted to sell in the autumn.⁷⁹

Again, such instances cast a curious light on the marketing system in general, and suggest a certain degree of over-organization, since after all the distribution of both grain and cattle would surely take place smoothly enough if producers were allowed to sell freely where they could find a buyer. Too many instances of shortages were reported in the Third Reich in peace time, for such events to be merely chance; in the Aachen district fats and eggs were lacking in October 1936⁸⁰ and in August 1937 pork was in short supply, due apparently to difficulties over fodder.⁸¹ An overall impression of maldistribution is ultimately difficult to avoid.

An early attempt to improve the marketing system was in fact made by Darre in November 1934 when he called a conference at the Prussian Ministry of Agriculture under Backe's chairmanship, attended by RNS officials and representatives of local government.⁸² At the meeting Dr. Reischle admitted that a certain dualism in administration existed between Departments III and IV which would now be overcome by amalgamation. To improve marketing still further LBFs would in future be given unified control over its regulations. That these changes were not sufficient to produce a completely satisfactory distribution system can be gauged not only from examples post 1934 already quoted here, but from Darre's own judgement of the RNS in this field in 1936. In a letter to Goering on agrarian matters in general he twice mentioned that the distribution of produce was the weak point of the organization:⁸³ so impressed was Darre with this that he apparently feared that the old idea in the Party of handing marketing over to the State might be revived.⁸⁴ After such an opinion being expressed by its chief, any further summary of the RNS in this respect would surely be superfluous.

(iii) The second main issue of importance in the new system was the

concept of fixed prices, which may be seen under two aspects, the actual price guaranteed to the producer and the difference between that figure and the amount paid by the consumer. As far as the first was concerned, there were general complaints on the land that it was too low. In July 1934 the Regierungspräsident for Königsberg mentioned this point;⁸⁵ from Aachen the Gestapo gave it as a source of irritation on the land, especially for butter, cheese and eggs.⁸⁶ That the difference between producer and shop prices was too great was felt generally to be a weak point in the new organization; the Regierungspräsident for Schneidemühl made this specific point in July 1934.⁸⁷ The price-span seems to have persisted throughout the Third Reich, as in 1938 there were complaints from Bavaria on the same score;⁸⁸ in particular it was felt that middlemen were doing rather too well at the producers' expense. The OBF at Eggenfelden estimated that on a sack of wheatmeal a baker could make over sixty per cent profit, which amounted to a larger sum than the peasant got for producing it.⁸⁹ In the Rhineland leaflets were handed round during the carnival in March 1938 containing malicious attacks on the LBF in Bonn and the RNS in general "because the producers' price is too low in relation to the selling-price."⁹⁰

Even clearer evidence for the large gap in this connection was afforded by Hitler himself as early as September 1934, after having read the Regierungspräsidenten reports from Prussia of the previous July, he demanded an explanation from Darré pointing out that he had been made aware on journeys throughout the country that the public were complaining about what they had to pay for bread, milk and butter.⁹¹ The Führer clearly found this hard to reconcile with accounts of farm complaints about low prices. Darré could only reply that reports of price increases to the consumer had been exaggerated.⁹² Even if that had been the case it appears evident that the RNS had failed to solve the problem of the gap in prices between shop and farm, and from the 1938 reports cited here, it seems that

this issue was never resolved. It must be said at once that a similar situation had existed prior to 1933:⁹³ but surely at least one goal of the RNS regulations had been to change that. The whole question of farm prices boiled up to a real controversy in late 1934, just after Hitler's letter quoted above; the problem then became so acute that it very nearly unseated Darré and may have contributed to a lack of confidence in him on Hitler's part thereafter. The affair brought the RNS concept of fixed prices into sharp collision with that of the free market ethos and indeed put the issue squarely before the public.

The Crisis of 1934/5

(i) Harvest conditions in 1934 seem to have initially triggered off the crisis which broke later in the year; the crop was a poor one for grain that year in contrast to 1933.⁹⁴ The situation was exacerbated by a shortage of currency and gold reserves in Germany at that time:⁹⁵ there was in sum insufficient food produced at home and the gap could not be covered by foreign purchases, which resulted in short supply in general; as a result retail prices began to rise. It must therefore be made clear in advance that the difficulties of 1934/5 were not primarily due to RNS marketing or administration in general, although evidence will be offered in Chapter Eight to support a view that certain ill-considered measures on its part did contribute to the situation.

That the harvest would be bad had been so obvious quite early in the summer that Darré wrote to the Chancellery in July asking for a twenty per cent increase in the price of bread, or failing that, some other form of compensation for grain producers.⁹⁶ Hitler saw him personally to discuss the matter but rejected the suggestions, as a later minute records that "an increase in the price of bread must be avoided under all circumstances."⁹⁷ No doubt the Führer's grounds for refusing any upswing was his experience

of complaints about retail food prices. By late autumn however the food shortages were causing the consumer to pay more irrespective of stable prices for the producer:⁹⁸ at a Cabinet meeting in November Hitler declared that he would not tolerate this state of affairs any longer; he pointed out that he had given his word to the public that wages and prices would not be allowed to get out of step, and he did not wish to be accused of breaking it, as this could lead to a revolutionary situation.⁹⁹ The Führer's sensitivity to public opinion now induced him to demand Cabinet approval for the installation of a Price Commissioner as a kind of watchdog to oversee prices in those areas where supervision had formerly been carried out by the Ministries of Food and Economic Affairs. In cases of doubt Hitler would personally decide from now on. At this point in the discussion Darré could only claim that he had a duty to make the German people independent in food-stuffs and must therefore have a free hand with prices and production: he added that he had however no objection to the supervision of middlemen by a Commissioner (whose appointment was in any case to terminate on 1st July 1935).

(ii) The appointee was Dr. Goerdeler, Mayor of Leipzig, who had performed a similar task under the Republic. His nomination was welcomed by the Press, one newspaper saying quite candidly that price control had been unsatisfactory before as the RNS, local authorities and the Party had all had a hand in it; the article gave an impression of relief that at last one man alone was responsible.¹⁰⁰ Dr. Goerdeler soon revealed himself as an exponent of the free market system, and this brought a series of lively exchanges between himself and Darré, the high priest of fixed prices.

The first shots in the campaign were fired by the Commissioner with an announcement to the Press, in which he stated that costs to the consumer had increased unacceptably in the previous months in obedience to the laws of supply and demand.¹⁰¹ Nonetheless Goerdeler believed that the deliberate

policy of assisting agriculture had been partly responsible for the upsurge, and accepted that this could not be altered. He then went on however to attack the concept of fixed prices as such, which he averred were wrong, because by eliminating competition they helped the inefficient producer. If this assault on the whole ethos of the RNS marketing scheme was not bad enough Goerdeler then went on to speak of production costs in agriculture which should be lowered by an examination of the distribution-cost element in them.¹⁰² With this announcement Goerdeler had in effect declared war on the RNS as such, and demanded a return to a free market system. The latter body was quick to defend itself; an article appeared in the Press a week later with a veiled attack upon the Commissioner, who was not actually named; those who wished to leave prices to a free market should have the whole Party against them, not merely the peasants, it was said.¹⁰³ One historian has drawn attention to reports in Swiss newspapers at the time which spoke of the internal feud between the economic radicals in the NSDAP, who were flocking around Darré, and the exponents of old-fashioned economic liberalism in the Third Reich, particularly Goerdeler and Dr. Schacht, now Minister of Economic Affairs.¹⁰⁴

In fact, the crisis developing from the poor harvest produced a showdown between these two diametrically-opposed groups. Darré himself was well aware that for the RNS the real foe was Schacht and not Goerdeler. At the November 1934 Peasants Assembly he made a strong speech denouncing economic liberalism;¹⁰⁵ and defending the principles of RNS marketing. At his post-war trial this was described as having been aimed at Schacht, and from other evidence from this period, there seems no reason to disbelieve this.¹⁰⁶ In November 1936, for example, Darré told Goering that the Economics Minister had been using Goerdeler as a weapon against the RNS whilst remaining in the background himself: Darré believed Schacht to have been an opponent of National Socialism, and a ringleader of those against Hitler since 1932.

He consequently attributed to the doctor a desire to shake public confidence in the RNS as a preliminary to destroying both it and eventually the NS State as such.¹⁰⁷ Whether Schacht was really engaged on quite so Machiavellian a project is doubtful, although his antagonism to the RNS seems clearly established.¹⁰⁸ he was after all an advocate of orthodox financial methods and liberal economics, which like Goerdeler was bound to make him clash with fixed prices.¹⁰⁹ It was almost certainly Schacht whom Darre was aiming at when he wrote to Hitler in September 1936 that the troubles experienced in foreign trade and in the economy in general in the Third Reich had not been due so much to the measures undertaken as to the personalities of some of those responsible for them, whom he described as those chosen already during the liberal Weimar period, and therefore dedicated to individualism.¹¹⁰

Ultimately Darré did survive the 1934/5 crisis, although clearly with some difficulty. In the summer of the latter year Goerdeler told von Rohr that he did not think that Darré would last out the year in office.¹¹¹ The Commissioner himself did nothing to lessen the probability; in October he sent Hitler a memorandum setting out his views on the price-control situation, as seen in his retirement from the post; like his original Press announcement this amounted in effect to a sharp attack upon the RNS price policy, which Goerdeler held to be a positive disincentive to production, as it simply sheltered the inefficient.¹¹² In launching this campaign it would seem that Goerdeler had at least some part of public opinion behind him, since the Press in general seemed generally antagonistic to the RNS policy; one article called for an examination of the whole price-mechanism of the marketing system.¹¹³

(iii) The really interesting point about the events is how they threw the concept of guaranteed prices into relief at a time of shortage. Fixed amounts for a given product are obviously a boon at a time of falling prices

in general, as in effect an anchor is provided during an economic storm. The RNS concept may have therefore seemed advantageous to agriculture in mid 1933, after three years or so of depression.¹¹⁴ Once, however, the storm is over the anchor may well become a brake on progress; this appeared to be the case in 1934/5, since there was a considerable food shortage in that period; had a supply and demand situation prevailed in terms of agrarian produce, then clearly the farmers could reasonably have expected to have done better than they did, as the fixed prices became in effect a ceiling above which they could not go rather than, as before, a platform below which they could not sink.

This was not lost upon Meinberg, and he used it to defend RNS policy, by pointing out how advantageous the fixed-price system had now become for the consumer.¹¹⁵ The deputy RBF argued as his contribution to the controversy then raging that under supply and demand conditions the public would now be paying 500 Million RM annually ~~more for its~~ food than it was currently expending; the tenor of his article was equality of sacrifice, in the sense that in 1933 the consumer had been obliged to accept dearer food in order to help the farmers. Now the producer was being shackled at a time of shortage in order to assist the consumer, and indeed the economy as a whole, which benefited from stable agrarian prices, for example by allowing the unemployment relief programme to be maintained.¹¹⁶ These are cogent arguments when seen from the standpoint of the whole community; ultimately therefore judgement of guaranteed prices as such must depend on the viewpoint adopted. Farmers could argue in 1935 that they were disadvantaged by the system, but if it is accepted that agriculture is only one sector of the economy and is not necessarily entitled to preferential treatment, then the RNS policy was vindicated in 1934/5 in principle; had prices for foodstuffs been allowed to find their own level in this period, then the whole rearmament/re-employment programme of the Third Reich could well have been dislocated by price

increases and subsequent wage demands.¹¹⁷ Assessment of Goerdeler's criticisms must take this fact into account.

Over and against this is the question of redressing the imbalance between agrarian incomes and that of industry, the "price-scissors" as the NS called it, and which they had promised to close.¹¹⁸ Prior to 1933 it had been the constant complaint of German farmers that the government was giving a one-sided attention to the economy, by displaying partiality towards industry and especially exports, at the expense of agriculture. As already described here the NSDAP had found favour on the land by promising to redress this imbalance with its "peasant policy" and had indeed increased agrarian incomes. Now by 1935 the move back to a better deal for agriculture was apparently forgotten in the quest for price stability. However much the community benefited from stable agrarian prices, it must not be overlooked that the farmer had again been put at the bottom of the list; offered as a sacrificial victim to exports under Weimar, he was now cast in a similar role to aid industrial recovery and rearmament. When one Schleswig-Holstein peasant was asked, prior to 1933, why he had voted for the NSDAP, he replied that he had done so because in the Third Reich everything would be run for the farmers benefit.¹¹⁹ By 1935 any hope of such a state of affairs actually being produced had already begun to fade fast away.

In May of that year the seal was finally set on the peasants' economic fate; the actual chain of events was started by an aggressive article in a Party journal, which took burgeoning industrial recovery as the excuse to demand higher wages for the workers.¹²⁰ This sudden onslaught caused some agitation in governing circles, and on 2nd May a conference was convened to discuss the implications of the article, presided over by Hess, Hitler's deputy.¹²¹ Virtually all Cabinet Ministers were present and their opinion was as good as unanimous; wages must be prevented from rising as otherwise

exports and armaments would be in jeopardy. It is interesting to note that these assenting to this viewpoint included Dr. Schacht, Goerdeler and Darre himself. The agreement at Cabinet level to stabilization as a policy was bound to have repercussions eventually upon the agrarian index, since holding wages steady must entail doing the same for living-costs, which in its turn implied a non-acceptance of better prices for farmers.¹²² Ten days later a Chancellery letter gave the news that Hitler agreed with the conference decision;¹²³ there is little doubt as to why he found himself in accord: the build-up of the Armed Forces had already taken precedence as far as he was concerned. At a Cabinet meeting in March 1935 he had received complaints about insufficient budgetary funds for housing and the Labour Service with the observation, "As a result of the enormous claims originating from the Wehrmacht build-up which is in the foreground, all expenses not absolutely necessary must give way."¹²⁴ Evidence will be offered later in this work to show how the introduction of the Four Year Plan in autumn 1936 further disadvantaged agriculture in terms of politico-economic priorities; but it should be stressed at this point that the change which then took place was one of emphasis only: as the events of early 1935 described above prove, the farmer had been put into the back seat in principle long before the new Plan.

As a final observation, it is noticeable that although the final decision lay with Hitler he only echoed the opinions of the Cabinet in this case; there seems no reason to suppose that any Right-Wing government would have treated agriculture differently when faced with the need to finance a "Work Creation" programme and rearmament simultaneously. The peasant from now on would be left with guaranteed prices as a minimum security but any increase in his income would have to come from greater output alone.

1. See Reischle "Agrarpolitischer Apparat und Reichsnährstand" in "NS Monatsheft" No. 54 September 1934 p.813
2. Vide "Das Führer Lexicon" pp.36-512
3. The LGE's professions c.1932 are given in an undated list in ND 128
4. When a Bauer in Hagen (Lower Saxony) wrote to the REM on this question in 1934 he was told that there were no legal provisions regarding the choice of Bauernführer: REM to Bauer 20th August 1934: NSA 331 B.35. The local man in this case was apparently a part-time agriculturist with 10 Morgen and a grocery store on the side; according to a letter in the same file 20th July 1935
5. Beyer "Das Bauerntum Angelns" p.152
6. Professor Haushofer, who had been in the Agricultural Chamber for Bavaria became a member of Department II of the Landesbauernschaft for that region in this way: Personal interview
7. Dr. Reischle, who was himself head of the Staff Office: Personal interview
8. Lbsch Westphalia to Darre 3rd May 1937: ADC Reichsnährstand Habbes/Eltz-Rübenach
9. See Beyer "Das Bauerntum Angelns" p.152 and Thyssen "Bauern und Standesvertretung" pp.297/8 for similar judgements
10. Regpräsident Osnabrück to Prussian Ministry of Agriculture July 1934: BA-R43 II/193
11. Regpräsident Münster to Prussian Ministry of Agriculture July 1934: Ibid
12. Dr. Krohn's speech was reprinted in "Flugblätter des RNS Nr 2" 1935, a copy of which is in his possession, and which he kindly allowed to be used for this work
13. Ibid
14. KBF Hamlin/Bad Pymont to Lbsch Lower Saxony 5th February 1940:

NSA 331 B.61.

15. According to Professor Haushofer: personal interview
16. Regpräsident Stade to Prussian Ministry of Agriculture 19th November 1934: NSA 122 XXXII 80
17. Thyssen "Bauern und Standesvertretung" p.299
18. Section IB Lbsch Württemberg to OBF's 22nd July 1935: LUD 1645/K710.
This file also contains the OBF's requests to the Lbsch
19. Thyssen above cit. p.299
20. Kbsch Niederberg (Rhineland) to OBF Mettmann 29th September 1936:
HSA(D) 130
21. Lbsch Rhineland to KBF's 25th March 1938 with Darre's pronouncement:
Ibid
22. KBF Niederberg to OBF's 21st November 1936: Ibid
23. The full list is in Thyssen "Bauern und Standesvertretung" p.299
24. Of which there may have been as many as 81 in his village, vide
OBF letter in "Flugblätter des RNS Nr 2" referred to on Page 183
25. KBF Bad Segeberg to Lbsch Schleswig-Holstein 20th July 1939: LA 691/
430
26. Erbhof court chairman to Cattle Federation 13th May 1937: NSA 331 B.1
27. OBF Ruhpolding (Bavaria) to KBF Traunstein 19th January 1938:
BA-R2/18291
28. Monthly "Tätigkeitsbericht" Section leader IB2 Kbsch Niederberg to
Lbsch Rhineland 29th June 1936: HSA(D) 127
29. KBF Unna (Westphalia) to Debt Relief Office 3rd November 1937: Unna
Hemmerde
30. KBF Hamlin/Bad Pyrmont to peasant 18th October 1937: NSA 331 B.21
31. KBF Hamlin/Bad Pyrmont to peasant 31st July 1937: NSA 331 B.50
32. Lbsch Lower Saxony to slaughterer 28th February 1936: NSA 331 B.35
33. According to the reports of various local government officials July
1934, which Goering, as Minister President of Prussia, had collated

and sent to Darre for information; Goering to Darre 31st August 1934: BA-R43 II/193

34. Darre to Goering 2nd June 1938: BA-R43 II/202a. This was in response to a request from Goering regarding information on the numbers employed; that such details should have been asked for is perhaps indicative of a feeling that the RNS was over-manned
35. In 1934 its total expenditure was 69 Mill. RM on administration, Ministry of Finance to REM 29th June 1935: BA-R43 II/203
36. Ibid
37. The hint was taken and the Lbsch Hohenzollern soon disappeared
38. According to figures produced at a meeting of the State government 17th July 1937. Minutes in HSA(S) 653/E 130/IV
39. Industrial & Trade Chamber Königsberg to Ministry of Economic Affairs forwarded to the Chancellery: BA-R43 II/203
40. 124 RM as opposed to 485 RM for the RNS; the examples are given in an undated minute: HSA(S) 653/E 130/IV
41. Landrat Düren to Regpräsident Aachen 7th June 1938: HSA(D) 1070
42. Details from W. Saure "Der Reichsnährstandgesetz" pp.20/24
43. Ibid pp.20/24
44. In 1938 the grain harvest was bought by private dealers, millers and co-operatives in a ratio of 49:16:35 so that dealing was left to private initiative: "Die Landesbauernschaften in Zahlen" p.122. The proportion handled by each type of buyer had scarcely changed since 1935. For the statistics of that year see Reischle and Saure "Der Reichsnährstand" p.182
45. For the scope of this court in general see Saure "Der Reichsnährstandgesetz" p.120
46. Unless otherwise stated all information on the grain trade is from the Federation's Constitution in "Jahresbericht des Vereins der Getreidehändler der Hamburger Börse über das Jahr 1934": BA-R2/18155

47. The Minister and the RBF were of course the same man, Darré
48. See "Der Angriff" 29th December 1935 for an example of Verband fines on cattle-dealers in Silesia for overcharging
49. DNB 13th July 1936
50. The whole price-span for 1935/6 is in H. Kaiser "Die Getreidemarkt Ordnung 1935/6" pp.45/58
51. C.W. Guillebaud "The Economic Recovery of Germany 1933-8" p.162
52. Report to REM 2nd March 1937: BA-R2/18155
53. Federation to REM 24th September 1935: Ibid
54. See Schoenbaum "Hitler's Social Revolution" p.231
55. The Four Year Plan will be dealt with in Chapter Eight
56. Regpräsident Cologne to Ministry of Economic Affairs 19th June 1937: HSA(D) 1070
57. Vide Reischle "All prayed to one God called the free play of the market forces" "Die deutsche Ernährungswirtschaft" p.5. ~~Goering~~
58. "How National Socialist Germany is solving her agricultural problems" p.21
59. Reischle "Grundlagen Aufbau und Wirtschaftsordnung des NS Staates" p.9 in "Der deutsche Staat auf nationaler und sozialer Grundlage" Vol II edited by G. Feder
60. W. Meinhold "Grundlagen der landwirtschaftlichen Marktordnung" p.87
61. "Die Landesbauernschaften in Zahlen" p.145
62. Ministerialblatt 1939 p.269
63. Hanover Milk Verband to local dairy 26th September 1938: NSA 331 B.1
64. Goering to Darré 31st August 1934: BA-R43 II/193
65. Which accounts for the increase in deliveries to dairies claimed as one of the benefits of reorganization: See Note 59 on Page 143
66. Vide Königsberg Regpräsident report for July 1934: See Goering to Darré Note 64 above. See also Regpräsident Stade to Ministry of Agriculture Prussia 19th November 1934: NSA 122a XXXII 80

67. Quoted in B. Vollmer "Volksopposition im Polizeistaat" pp.44/5
68. Ibid pp.60/62
69. Regpräsident Lüneburg to Ministry of Agriculture Prussia 19th November 1934: NSA 122a XXXII 80: farmers were now receiving 10-10 $\frac{1}{2}$ Pfennigs per litre instead of 12 as formerly in this district
70. Vollmer above cit. p.45
71. KBF Hamlin/Bad Pyrmont to OBF Egge 14th January 1935: NSA 331 B.21
72. Verband to KBF 31st January 1935 and Verband to OBF 16th February 1935: Ibid
73. Vollmer above cit. p.62
74. Thyssen "Bauern und Standesvertretung" p.300
75. Hanover seems to have been another exception to the rule; the new arrangements there were said to have been welcomed by the overwhelming majority of peasants: Regpräsident Hanover to Ministry of Agriculture Prussia 20th November 1934: NSA 122a XXXII 80
76. Regpräsidenten reports July 1934 from Goering to Darré 31st August 1934: BA-R43 II/193
77. "Frankfurter Zeitung" 21st May 1937
78. Landrat Jülich to Regpräsident Aachen May 1937: HSA(D) 1067
79. OBF Ruhpolding to KBF Traunstein 19th January 1938: BA-R2/18291
80. Chamber of Trade and Industry Aachen to Regpräsident 5th October 1936: HSA(D) 1065
81. Landrat Aachen to Regpräsident Cologne 3rd August 1937: HSA(D) 1067
82. Minutes of conference 26th November 1934: NSA 122a XXXII 80
83. Darré to Goering 1st November 1936: ND 146
84. As Strasser had originally wanted: See Page 164
85. See Goering to Darré 31st August 1934: BA-R43 II/193
86. Vollmer "Volksopposition im Polizeistaat" pp.60/2
87. Goering to Darré above cit.

88. For example OBF Chieming to KBF Traunstein January 1938: BA-R2/18291
89. OBF Eggenfelden to KBF Richinger 17th January 1938: Ibid
90. Regpräsident Cologne to Ministry of Economic Affairs report for February-March 1938: HSA(D) 1069
91. Chancellery to Darré 30th September 1934: BA-R43 II/193
92. Darré to Chancellery 9th October 1934: Ibid. Hitler was made aware of his reply 18th October according to a minute 20th October 1934: Ibid
93. Vide Note 14 p.83: it was estimated that prior to the formation of the RNS the peasant received at most about one half of the ultimate retail price for his products: Borsig "Reagrarisierung Deutschlands?" p.15
94. The harvest for 1933 was a particularly good one, as can be seen from the following statistics:-

<u>Commodity (million tons)</u>						
<u>Year</u>	<u>Wheat</u>	<u>Rye</u>	<u>Barley</u>	<u>Oats</u>	<u>Potatoes</u>	<u>Sugar Beet</u>
1933	5.6	8.7	3.5	7.0	44.1	8.6
1934	4.6	7.6	3.2	5.5	46.8	10.4
1935	4.7	7.5	3.4	5.4	41.0	10.6

"Statistisches Jahrbuch 1941/2" p.663. Although root crops were produced in quantity in 1934/5, the output of domestic grain was very markedly less in these two years than in 1933

95. In December 1934 German gold and currency reserves stood at 156.5 Mill. RM only: "Foreign Exchange and Trade Controls in Germany" p.61 (henceforth "FETC" will be used to designate this work)
96. Darré to Chancellery 14th July 1934: BA-R43 II/193
97. Minute 17th July 1934: Ibid
98. The rise in the wholesale food index between spring 1933 and November 1934 was 19.6%: "Frankfurter Zeitung" 7th November 1934
99. Cabinet minutes 5th November 1934: BA-R43 I/1470

100. "Berliner Tageblatt" 7th November 1934
101. The RNS did not of course control retail prices, which had risen due to shortages
102. "Berliner Tageblatt" 9th November 1934
103. "Frankfurter Zeitung" 16th November 1934
104. A.E. Simpson "Hjalmar Schacht in perspective" pp.90/1 quoting reports in the "Neue Zürcher Zeitung"
105. See "Um Blut und Boden" pp.436 ff
106. "Trial Brief" p.20
107. Darré to Goering 1st November 1936: ND 146
108. Dr. Reischle has confirmed the friction which existed between the RNS and Dr. Schacht, due to the latter's non-adherence to the RNS marketing ethos: personal interview
109. The conflict between Darré and Schacht over import policy, which also contributed to their estrangement, will be discussed in Chapter Eight
110. Darré to Hitler 5th September 1936: ADC Darré
111. Information from Herr von Rohr: personal interview
112. Quoted in A. Schweitzer "Big Business in the Third Reich" pp.325/6
113. "Frankfurter Zeitung" 7th November 1934
114. Whereas income from agrarian production amounted to 6.4 thousand Mill. RM in 1932/3, the corresponding figure for 1933/4 was one thousand RM greater: "Landwirtschaftliche Statistik 1937" p.101
115. "Diener des Volkes": V.B. 1st January 1935
116. Stable prices meant that wages and state expenditure could be kept at their current value, instead of losing effectiveness through an inflation beginning with dearer food, and this assisted the government in its plans for financing industrial recovery
117. It must be borne in mind that in September 1934 Germany still had 2.3 Million unemployed workers: Stolper, Hauser and Borchardt

"The German Economy 1870 to the Present" p.133

118. In fact the farmers share of national income rose from 18% to 19% between 1931/2 and 1933/4, so that initially the promise was maintained: W. Bauer and P. Dehen "Landwirtschaft und Volkseinkommen" in "Vierteljahrsheft zur Wirtschaftsforschung" 1938/9 Heft 4 p.426
119. Quoted in Schoenbaum p.45
120. "Der Angriff" 29th April 1935
121. The minutes of the meeting are in BA-R2/18185
122. The large number of unemployed in the country living on low incomes was obviously another factor working on the government in favour of a stable prices policy
123. Chancellery to Seldte, Minister of Labour, 12th May 1935: ^{R2?} BA-R43 II/
18185
124. Cabinet minutes 29th March 1935: BA-R43 I/1472

Chapter VIII: Self-sufficiency in the Third Reich: currency shortages and the attempts at autarky: the 4 Year Plan and its effect upon agriculture

Attention has already been drawn to the fact that the NSDAP was orientated towards self-sufficiency as an economic policy. But it can also be shown that the move towards autarky in the Third Reich stemmed partly from the circumstances prevailing in world trade in general and from Germany's economic position in 1933 in particular. This chapter will try to sketch in the background, describe the actual Battle of Production (Erzeugungsschlacht) itself and the results it achieved, as well as the 4 Year Plan of 1936. The impact made by this on the agrarian sector will be discussed and it is hoped to show how the RNS became even more dominated by the needs of the State and less by considerations of self-government from 1936 onwards. Insofar as the actual degree of self-sufficiency attained by Germany in 1938 is concerned, there were several factors militating against greater success in the endeavour, two of which, land supply and finance, will be discussed here. The most important issue, however, that of rural migration, is so large that it has had to be postponed until a later part of this work since it merits a chapter on its own.

The Background to the Erzeugungsschlacht

(i) The spectacular crash in world trade from 1929 onwards produced a trend towards heavier protection of domestic production in nearly all the developed countries: in 1931, for example, the USA introduced heavy tariffs against foreign goods in the Hawley-Smoot Act, and in the following year Great Britain established Imperial Preference through the medium of the Ottawa Agreement: this was in effect the introduction of a kind of Commonwealth autarky. Italy was at this time engaged upon the "Battaglia

di Grano" in an effort to make itself less dependent upon outside sources of food: the Soviet Union was by now committed to "Socialism in one country": the moves towards higher tariffs in Germany have been discussed in Chapter Four. This tendency became intensified towards the end of the Republic's life, as witness the speeches of Von Papen and von Braun at the annual meeting of the Agricultural Council in June 1932. The then Chancellor drew attention to the difficulties on the current international economic scene in connection with the moves towards protectionism abroad and German currency shortages; he spoke of the latter as necessitating some German action along the same lines as other countries; in the same speech von Papen emphasized the importance of agriculture as a sound basis to the national economy. The tenor of both his speech and of von Braun's foreshadowed an autarkistic approach to economic problems in the near future.¹ Hitler took up the same theme when he addressed the Agrarian Office in January 1933, arguing that outside circumstances, that is, the trend towards higher customs duties abroad, would lead more and more to German export possibilities being limited, hence the need for some internal economic reconstruction, the implication here being that future emphasis would be more on the home market.² As far as the NSDAP was concerned, the "export illusion" as Darre called it, was over; German attempts at conquest via international commerce had failed, henceforward the internal market, based on agriculture, was to be the dominant factor.³

There were, however, grave problems confronting the new regime before any real changes could be effected. Firstly, the country was only some 80% self-sufficient in foodstuffs and considerable sums were needed to import the balance.⁴ In 1933 Germany devoted 3.6 billion RM to this item alone.⁵ Quite apart from this, a huge expenditure on buying new materials from abroad was also necessary in order to supply German industry: finally there was the question of foreign debts; the total amount of these outstanding in February 1933 was 19 billion RM.⁶ Gold and

currency reserves were negligible by comparison and falling very rapidly at this time.⁷ Indeed by June the position was so serious that the directors of the Reichsbank sent Hitler a special memorandum drawing his attention to the gravity of Germany's situation.⁸ Even more disquieting was the rapid fall in Germany's export surplus, which in the first few months of 1933 had shown a monthly average less than half that of the corresponding period in the previous year.⁹ Added to this was the question of the failure of international efforts to regulate trade and finance; in June 1933 the World Economic Conference broke down in London making currency stabilisation impossible in the view of the German delegates who were attending it.¹⁰ German reaction was a measure limiting imports as far as possible, and protecting exports; the covering letter justifying this Bill to the Cabinet mentioned the Conference failure and protectionist legislation recently undertaken in France and Holland.¹¹ The position for Germany was by now very serious indeed; she had to export to meet food and raw material import charges and debt obligations, but was running so short of reserves that she scarcely had enough cash to buy raw materials in the first place. There is no reason to doubt the sincerity of Dr. Schacht's remark, "It was really no pleasure to be Germany's Economic Minister."¹²

(ii) Despite all handicaps, German foreign trade did well in 1933 and a healthy credit balance was obtained.¹³ Indeed by January 1934 currency holdings were actually higher than they had been in the previous July, although only marginally so, it is true.¹⁴ But now three factors entered the picture and continued to alter it so substantially that Germany was plunged into a very serious currency crisis indeed. Re-armament and the creation of new jobs by state expenditure, as on the new roads scheme, now began to get under way and this naturally affected the trade balance in that imports for armaments etc. were consumed at home with no corresponding entry on the export side of the books.¹⁵ Secondly,

as already mentioned, there was a poor harvest in 1934, so that food imports actually rose, although the increase was admittedly only slight.¹⁶ Most important of all, the terms of trade began to move against Germany, caused principally by a devaluation of the dollar in early 1933.¹⁷ As a result of this last factor it now became much harder to sell German goods abroad and the trade surplus of 1933 became a deficit for the following year.¹⁸ By December 1934 the country's currency and gold reserves were reduced to almost nothing.

The result was twofold; firstly, it became clear that rather more rigid control than formerly must be exercised over the acquisition of raw materials, and over the allocation of reserves to finance this which led to the so-called "New Plan," of Schacht in September 1934: this contained two clear premisses (1) no imports not payable by exports (2) imports must be regulated to national needs.¹⁹ Linked with this was the need to further exports as far as possible. Already in May 1934 Schmitt, the then Economics Minister, had set up a Raw Materials Committee, and Hitler's own adviser, Keppler, was accorded powers in the field of currency savings.²⁰ Secondly, it became more necessary than ever to cut down on food imports, so that the maximum possible outlay on raw materials for the armament programme and for the export industry could be achieved. This resulted in the launching of the so-called "Erzeugungsschlacht" in November 1934; this was started behind the scenes by Backe writing to the Finance Minister pointing out the current shortage of reserves and the necessity of increased home production, as so much imported foodstuffs could be supplied by the German farmer: he instanced the purchases of feed cake for cattle which from January to September had cost 182 Million RM in imports.²¹ At the same time Backe wrote on behalf of the REM to the Reichsnährstand in its capacity as the administrative organ of agriculture calling on it to do its utmost to increase output.²² The new drive was therefore launched not so much in response to previous ideological considerations

about autarky, but as the direct result of current economic reality.

The Erzeugungsschlacht itself: aims, methods and preliminary results

(i) The objectives in the drive were summed up by Darre himself at a later date; the essential aim was to reduce the amount of space currently used for grain-cultivation but produce the same quantity as before by increasing yields: on the soil given up in this way fibre-bearing plants and fodder could be sown.²³ The Minister filled in the details of this policy in a speech in January 1935, when he pointed out that Germany was self-sufficient in grain but that gaps still existed in the cases of animal feeding-stuffs and animal produce (e.g. fats) and referred again to the need for fibre-bearing plants as well.²⁴ Of course, there was nothing original in these objectives: in 1928 the need to increase animal products supply from domestic sources had been part of the emergency programme to aid agriculture:²⁵ as far as the furthering of domestic fibre output was concerned, Dr. Brandes had recommended this at the meeting of the Agricultural Council in 1932.²⁶ As a result of poor domestic prices due to dumping from Russia, home cultivation had declined sharply prior to 1933:²⁷ the intention now was to further it again and save currency on raw material imports.

This needed some persuasion apparently, as farmers had naturally now come to be prejudiced against crops like hemp and flax: although no compulsion was ever employed, some pressure had to be brought to bear nevertheless to ensure that the area under cultivation of these plants was augmented.²⁸ In this connection it should be emphasized here that the farmer still remained free to sow what he wanted: some farmers apparently did not even attend Erzeugungsschlacht meetings arranged by the RNS in their villages, since one OBF in the Rhineland furnished his KBF with a list in March 1935 of these Bauern who did not come, amounting to five out of the seventy four in his area.²⁹ Darre himself seems not to have favoured compulsion as a weapon, since in 1936 he told Goering that

the production battle could only be won if one appealed to the honour and voluntary spirit of the peasants; to try and compel them was no use, he argued.³⁰ It has to be accepted nonetheless that the object of the list of non-attenders referred to above may have been occasioned by the desire to apply pressure on them. Backe had prepared a gigantic publicity campaign to put through the message to the rural population, involving an outlay of 357,000 RM: this included the use of a special magazine called "Erzeugungsschlacht."³¹ The Party joined in the drive, and Dr. Goebbels ordered all NS speakers to support the new drive at meetings.³² The RNS itself used various propaganda weapons to urge on the producer to greater efforts: apart from personal contact at meetings organized by the OBFs, these included loudspeakers in cars, which toured the villages with a recorded conversation between two peasants, one against the drive, the other seeking to convince him of Germany's need for increased self-sufficiency by means of factual arguments; this was followed by a recorded speech by the relevant LBF.³³

To sum up, currency shortages and the need for raw material imports to feed the armament drive necessitated an increase in domestic food supplies; this applied especially to animal fats, fodder and additionally, fibre-bearing plants. The farmer was to be persuaded, rather than coerced, into achieving this, and the whole propaganda apparatus of Party and RNS were set on to the task. Before the actual results are described, however, the political friction occasioned by the Erzeugungsschlacht has to be described, especially that between Schacht and Darre: as will be seen the differences of opinion over how currency reserves were to be utilized were the centre of this controversy. The eventual inability to make both ends meet economically led to the introduction of an even greater drive towards autarky, the Four Year Plan: its effect on agriculture will be described and then a summary of the actual results of the Erzeugungsschlacht will be given as an endpiece to this chapter.

(ii) Despite the new campaign launched in 1934 the economic situation did not markedly improve as far as currency reserves were concerned,³⁴ and by August 1935 Schacht was describing the position as precarious in a private memorandum.³⁵ There would have to be some limitation to the consumption of fats, to the import of which precedence had been given, in comparison to raw materials: if Germany now wanted to concentrate on rearmament and work-creation programmes for the jobless fat rationing would have to come. In fact, as early as April 1935 the Minister had cut down on oilseed imports:³⁶ Darre obviously could not accept a situation whereby demands for more food were simultaneously accompanied by cuts in feeding-stuffs, and by August 1935 a lively row had broken out between him and Schacht over the fats question: the RBF wanted more fodder imports so that domestic production of animal fats could be increased, whilst Schacht clearly wished to concentrate the use of currency reserves for raw materials; the doctor was advocating "Exports and guns before butter" in fact. Before the results of his policy on the supply of foodstuffs is described, it should be stressed that the differences between Schacht and Darre were concerned with the best way of using currency allocations; the RBF was in no way quarrelling with the "New Plan" in principle.

For the German people it was unfortunate that the new drive to use scarce foreign money other than for food or fodder purchases came at a time when a mixture of two poor harvests and some ill-judged measures by the RNS had already produced a lack of fats, which as far as domestic output was concerned, could be traced back to the poor grain yields of 1934/35. Since the country was menaced by a shortage of bread grain the RNS decided to oblige peasants to surrender 70% of their rye harvest at once in exchange for imported barley, which could be used as animal feeding-stuffs.³⁷ In this way it was hoped to ensure the future supply of both grain for human consumption i.e. the rye, and of fats, since the barley could be used as pig-fodder; many poorer people used dripping and lard as

substitutes for butter and margarine, and plenty of pigs meant an adequate supply of these fats, which would reduce pressure on the demand for butter and margarine.³⁸ However well-conceived theoretically, the idea did not work: the rye which was delivered by the peasants was badly-handled at the depots and so spoilt that in some cases it had to be handed out again as animal feeding-stuff.³⁹ It would seem also that in those regions where rye was normally used for fodder anyway the peasants saw no point in surrendering one form of feeding-stuffs in order to acquire another, and after objections the original RNS quota of 165,000 tons of rye from Schleswig-Holstein had to be reduced to 100,000 tons.⁴⁰ All in all, reduced grain harvests and maldistribution by the RNS produced a grave shortage of domestic fodder; imports of both barley and maize were greater in 1934 than in the previous year⁴¹ to cover the gap, but this was not in itself sufficient, and the stocks of both cattle and pigs were smaller in 1935 than they had been two years before.⁴²

Thus Schacht's drive to limit fats imports came just at the moment in autumn 1935 when domestic output was at its lowest since 1933: Darre in desperation had recourse to new measures in order to distribute limited supplies as effectively as possible. The production of whipped cream was limited for dairies to try and conserve milk and butter-producing districts had to send ten per cent of their output to central depots for allocation to less-favoured areas. As far as pork was concerned, it was decided to impose a quota on all slaughterers equal to seventy per cent of the pigs killed by them in the previous year; this would prevent any panic slaughtering, as a result of which the current shortage might be solved only at the expense of an even worse one in the future.⁴³

As will be shown, these measures did not work; the combination of this fact with Schachtian import limitations, produced a really quite chaotic situation in November/December 1935, when current reports read as though emanating from a besieged country. As an example, those from Lower

Saxony produced by the Party organization, NS Hago, will be cited.⁴⁴

These make two things very clear, firstly, the lack of fats and meat in the shops, so pronounced in one rural district that its inhabitants actually went to nearby towns in search of food.⁴⁵ Further, it is evident that a vicious circle had set in, with poor harvests etc. producing a shortage which led to complicated regulations, leading to transgressions, thence to a worse shortage and finally to more regulations still. The quota on slaughtering, for example, was an actual hindrance to safeguarding supplies in practice, as no one had apparently been giving the right figures in previous years for the number of animals killed;⁴⁶ this casts an interesting light on RNS marketing in general. It would appear that in this respect, there had been evasion of its rules in the past; slaughterers had evidently been killing more pigs than they admitted in order to sell the others at above the fixed price. This particular chicken now came home to roost with a vengeance, as the seventy per cent restriction obviously applied to official returns given, and not to the actual numbers killed, so that in practice the total of pigs which could now legally be slaughtered was far less than in the previous two years; hence the "wide overstepping" of demand over supply mentioned in this particular report: in desperation the pig-owners began to evade the quota which as a result of the closer supervision now employed, led to arrests.⁴⁷ This was by no means confined to one region; in Bavaria the Minister of the Interior authorized the use of concentration camps for anyone caught rigging the food market in 1935/6.⁴⁸ As far as Lower Saxony was concerned, however, the widespread use of arrests for those transgressing against the rules was not advocated in some quarters, as it only led to bad feeling on the land.⁴⁹

The lack of fats in particular can be seen from many contemporary sources; one town actually asked for a special margarine allocation for Christmas, as it was currently so short;⁵⁰ according to Dr. Goerdeler, four fifths of all Leipzig grocers had no butter at all when visited on

18th October 1935.⁵¹ So obviously bad was the situation that open discussion took place in the Press; the DAF magazine ran two articles on the subject which frankly admitted the gravity of the position whilst seeking to excuse it by attributing scarcity to lower imports.⁵² This point is valid in itself but of course ignores the fall in domestic stocks and the muddle produced by RNS measures.

So serious did the combination of these various factors become that the Schacht/Darre battle took on a new sharpness, which resulted eventually in Goering being called in as a mediator, and in January 1936 he sanctioned more oilseed imports:⁵³ the object was to allow greater domestic cattle stocks, and hence increased fats. This intervention was not in itself enough to halt the strife between Darre and Schacht, and in March the former wrote to Hitler, Goering and Schacht warning them of the consequences if no more currency were used for foodstuff purchases.⁵⁴ This drew a stinging reply from the doctor; he absolved himself of any responsibility in the matter and told Darre that he must ensure a level of agrarian output equal to the one which he had inherited; however blunt, the accuracy of the observation cannot be denied, as undoubtedly domestic stocks of some farm animals had decreased and grain yields had been poor:⁵⁵ the letter finished with the remark "I cannot actually conjure money out of a hat"⁵⁶ ("Ich bin nämlich kein Dukatenmännchen"). Despite Schacht's criticism the appeal to Hitler bore fruit, and the Führer allocated Darre a further 60 million RM for imports.⁵⁷

(iii) Ultimately, when the matter is considered in the light of Germany's overall economic situation, it seems clear that the mutual recriminations were pointless, in the sense that the decision, to which both Schacht and Darre were parties, to build up the Wehrmacht rapidly and concentrate on solving unemployment by public works, necessitated a great strain upon a country lacking in currency. In spring 1936 Schacht pointed clearly to the consequences inherent in such a programme and drew up a

memorandum to demonstrate the current position.⁵⁸ Rearmament as envisaged would need a 25% increase in exports to be held at its present level, but he could not see how an improvement of greater than 10% could be obtained in reality.⁵⁹ The situation could be summarized by saying that Germany was undergoing a boom;⁶⁰ this was based upon internal consumption not upon international trade. To avoid a balance of payments problem therefore, imports had to be cut; since raw materials were needed for the boom the cut would have to be in food. Therefore more food should be produced at home; but the "Fats gap" could only be closed by importing feeding-stuffs for domestic farm animal stocks; a small amount of agrarian imports had therefore to be sanctioned in order to avoid a larger one: currency was so short that this could not be done. Germany was endeavouring to square an economic circle.

The problem seemed to offer only three ways out of which total economic collapse was one, but obviously unacceptable. There were then only two practical possibilities facing the country in 1936, either less guns or less butter. Hitler eventually chose the second, but before this is described, it should be stressed that such a solution had always been inherent in the Third Reich, and the crisis of early 1936 was simply the culmination of a policy, rather than a change of heart. For Schacht it had always been axiomatic that "the standard of living and the extent of rearmament stand in inverse relationship to each other. The less I consume the more I can save and the more I can save the more I can spend on armaments."⁶¹ It is true that in May 1936 he came to demand a slowing-down in the armament programme:⁶² but this was a question of degree rather than of principle.

Hitler at the time was actually contemplating an acceleration of the Wehrmacht build-up, based upon a 36 division Army and an augmented Luftwaffe.⁶³ Coincidentally it transpired that Backe had over-estimated possible increases in domestic agrarian supply in October 1934 when the

Erzeugungsschlacht was launched;⁶⁴ the REM therefore wished to spend even larger sums on imports in the second half of 1936 than in the first. The outcome of these events was the memorandum produced by the Führer and which served as the basis for the new Four Year Plan; a summary of the background to the document, now to be described, is that the drive to self-sufficiency in foodstuffs had not been realized, although progress had been made.⁶⁵ Since even more armaments were desired and export possibilities limited, then food imports must be cut and more produced at home to cover the gap. As will be seen, Hitler eliminated even this possibility in his memorandum.

The Four Year Plan and its effect upon German agriculture

(i) Exactly when the Führer put his thoughts on paper has never been determined but it would appear to have been in late summer 1936, since the memorandum was first read out to the Exchange and Raw Materials Committee on 4th September 1936:⁶⁶ (Goering had been in charge of this body since the previous April, as a preliminary measure by Hitler to try and improve the economic situation.⁶⁷) The document began with a review of political events, in particular the alleged threat which Soviet Communism posed to Germany: "over and against this danger all other considerations must step back as totally unimportant."⁶⁸ The Führer then dealt with economic affairs, drawing attention to the fact that self-sufficiency was easier to achieve with six million unemployed than would otherwise be the case, since clearly re-employment increases people's purchasing-power and therefore their consumption. As the problem of creating work was rapidly being solved there was now no hope of achieving full autarky in foodstuffs from Germany's present soil. This exactly parallels the view expressed by Hitler in "Mein Kampf," that increasing needs always militate against self-sufficiency in food supplies:⁶⁹ the inability of the RNS to close the gap in this respect, and the currency problems involved, seem thus to have buttressed the Führer's original logical deduction with actual empirical

evidence. Hitler now turned in the memorandum to the alternatives of international trade and the internal market: a trade drive abroad could theoretically solve the problem of rising living-standards at home;⁷⁰ this could only be achieved however at the expense of armaments (which is virtually what Schacht had maintained) and the claims of the latter could not be deferred under the present circumstances due to the danger from the Soviet Union. The Führer eliminated international trade once again, in other words, on politico-economic grounds: his summary was that "The definitive solution lies in a widening of our living-space."⁷¹ The memorandum concluded "The German Army must be capable of operations in four years: the German economy must be ready for war in four years."⁷²

The document seems to suggest that Hitler's views had not changed in any way in the course of the twelve years since his autobiography had been dictated. There are ultimately, though the reasons are slightly modified by introducing the actual threat of Communism in 1936, the same grounds for rejecting international trade as before: autarky is desirable but cannot be achieved under existing conditions, therefore let us change our conditions so that it can be, may be described as the Hitlerian syllogism which summed up his economic outlook. It is not suggested here that the failure of the RNS to achieve total independence in food supplies contributed much to this thesis, since as stated, Hitler's mind had always worked that way: but the situation in the summer of 1936 may well have confirmed his views that self-sufficiency inside the existing frontiers would be impossible. However even if the RNS had brought about a far greater success in the "Erzeugungsschlacht" than it had done it seems likely that Hitler would still have proceeded with his plans because of the existence of Communism in the Soviet Union; after all, the rearmament programme was initiated before the production battle on the land, and not as an after-effect of it.

(ii) On 18th October a directive entrusted the execution of the new programme to General Goering, under the title of Commissioner. The economy was divided into six groups of which agriculture was the fourth and labour in general was the third. The goals assigned to the land were the direction of consumption, the battle against waste, planned utilization of available labour and the scientifically organized exploitation of untapped resources in the soil.⁷³ To stress the seriousness of the position in general the death penalty was now introduced for "economic sabotage" a measure enacted at "the wish of the Führer."⁷⁴ The head of the agricultural planning section was Herbert Backe, whose job it now was to co-ordinate agrarian policy and industrial planning, for which he would be responsible to Goering himself and not to Darre. The total resources allocated to agriculture in investment terms amounted eventually to some 1½ billion RM to be spent in the period 1936-1940.⁷⁵ This represented sixteen per cent of the total outlay envisaged on the Plan as a whole for all sectors. The importance attached to fodder may be deduced from the fact that 152 million RM were to be devoted for this product alone; this was chiefly to enable the fats gap to be closed. The new Plan represented a large increase in investment in agriculture compared to previous figures, since from 1933-36 inclusive the total expenditure by the REM had amounted to only about half that now earmarked for the next four years:⁷⁷ the Ministry continued to dispose of its own funds, of course, which also rose sharply after 1936.⁷⁸

Initial measures to use this money in order to improve output were announced by Goering in March 1937; these included a cut in the price of fertilizer and large sums to be devoted to soil-improvement and the winning of new land.⁷⁹ The price of rye was increased in order to help bread supplies, the idea being that by making it dearer its use as fodder would be discouraged: (the fodder gap would be met by increased beet, potato and clover etc. crops);⁸⁰ there was to be better housing for land workers

and subsidies to assist mechanization. To Goering's factual announcements was added an emotional appeal from Darre "I call you, German land people, to a competition in production."⁸¹ By this combination of aid and exhortation it was hoped substantial results would be produced. In East Prussia, for example, Erich Koch the Gauleiter, believed an annual increase in food to the value of 100 million RM to be possible by such a combination, of which better drainage and other soil-improvement methods would contribute a half and more fertilizer another quarter.⁸² At a national level it was intended to increase fibres from domestic sources from 15 thousand tons to 80,000.⁸³ No source of food was to be neglected in the new drive, particularly where fats were concerned; in July 1937 it was announced that two new whalers were under construction, as whale oil could be used in margarine production.⁸⁴ The laying capacity of hens was to be raised and the slogan for poultry-keepers was to be "Produce your own feedingstuffs.": even beekeepers were given new targets to attain. Goats were to produce more milk and by improved breeding etc. the supply of rabbit-meat was to be increased.⁸⁵ In sum, the Erzeugungsschlacht was to be greatly intensified.

(iii) In addition to attempting to increase the output of fats and fodder etc. the Four Year Plan's agricultural branch was charged with the steering of consumption away from certain foodstuffs, such as fats, and on to others which were available as substitutes: the REM consequently issued monthly bulletins for internal use listing items whose consumption was to be encouraged or discouraged according to national needs: with monotonous regularity potatoes, fish, jam and milk (presumably dried)⁸⁶ appeared among those commodities to be furthered and butter, eggs, wheaten bread and pork were included among those whose consumption was to be diminished wherever possible.⁸⁷ A publicity campaign was launched along these lines; in Hanover a Work Group for the Direction of Consumption was organized, containing representatives of Party, State and the RNS, to bring

national needs in this respect to the public notice.⁸⁸ A row of administrative measures were promulgated to save fats in every way possible; in March 1937 the Verband for Milk and Fats announced that in future cheese would contain less of this:⁸⁹ no cream was to be allowed during the winter months by decree.⁹⁰ In August 1937 dough nuts were officially banned.⁹¹ In May 1937 Himmler actually suggested lowering the fat content of milk quite drastically, but this did not meet with Darre's approval:⁹² after talking it over with Backe he decided the use of skimmed milk would be preferable to the diminution in quality of the real thing, which would entail a considerable degree of compulsion and probably of evasion as well.⁹³

As far as the whole campaign to steer consumption by some means or another is concerned, there are two comments that need to be made. Firstly, official statistics seem to show that some success was obtained: there was less white flour being eaten in 1938 than previously, to take one example.⁹⁴ On the other hand, public consumption of cheese and milk actually rose from 1937 to 1938, whilst that of butter diminished only slightly. Results were patchy, in other words. Of course, it must be accepted that national production was constantly rising at this time and people therefore had more money to spend, so that the consumption of better quality foods would normally have risen more sharply than the quoted figures indicated was actually the case.⁹⁵ The best criterion for judging the success of the publicity drive and the actual legislation is probably therefore not so much a rise or fall in individual items as the virtual certainty that a far greater increase would have taken place without the measures. Secondly, over and against this, it must be pointed out that fats were scarce anyway even at the time when the Four Year Plan began.⁹⁶ From Cologne it was reported in January 1937 that local doctors believed the "visible increase" in scrofula in the region to be due to the shortage of fats for children.⁹⁷ The Four Year Plan measures seem therefore to

to have accentuated an existing tendency.

(iv) There was yet another respect in which the Plan affected agriculture; prior to 1936 no real compulsion had been employed but the new emphasis on production brought a change of attitude by the authorities. Every spot of soil now had to be utilized to the maximum possible effect and no considerations about private property could be allowed to interfere in this respect. As one internal directive put it "In the interests of production ... every bit of German land, insofar as it is agriculturally utilizable, must be cultivated in the best possible fashion."⁹⁸ When Goering announced new measures to help the land in March 1937 he referred to that clause in the EHG which empowered the RNS to remove the less efficient Bauer from the management of his holding:⁹⁹ but not all farmers were covered by this legislation. In order to cover this gap a new law was prepared applying to all farms in the country not dealt with by the EHG. The measure authorized the RNS to place badly-run farms under a trustee or to lease it compulsorily to a person experienced in agriculture.¹⁰⁰ In presenting the Bill to the Cabinet Darre requested that not too frequent a use be made of the new legislation: its presence should be a deterrent in itself.¹⁰¹ The measure allowed in any case for a warning to be employed if necessary, rather than actual eviction.

The law was nonetheless applied in some cases, as in Hagen (Lower Saxony) where the OBF was of the opinion that a local farmer was no longer in a position to farm his land properly due to age: the KBF took the case up and told the man concerned to lease the best part of his land or a formal proposal for compulsory leasing would be applied for.¹⁰² One Bauernführer wrote to the owner of 15 Morgen lying idle asking if he was prepared to let it, and giving the name of a neighbouring farmer as a likely candidate.¹⁰³ But the RNS in his district was not always quite so determined, judging from a case where a farmer wrote to the LBF in November 1938 complaining that the owner of a strip of land next to his own had

allowed it to deteriorate so that thistle-seeds were blowing over on to his land: when the farmer asked if he could himself rent this piece, which was fallow, the owner asked for a ridiculous sum per Ha.¹⁰⁴ The KBF had already taken up this issue and written to the owner in October pointing out that under the law of March 1937 he was responsible for seeing that all land was properly used.¹⁰⁵ Nothing much seems to have happened, since in August 1939 the Landesbauernschaft was asking if the matter had been settled.¹⁰⁶ This land had by then been fallow for four years and some ten months of correspondence had apparently achieved nothing. The law was not always applied as vigorously as possible, it would appear.

On the grain-sector compulsion was introduced in respect of deliveries, in that from July 1937 all production had to be officially delivered to the RNS instead of merely that amount for which the organization would give a fixed price: the grain Federation was empowered to make exceptions to the new rule where it saw fit.¹⁰⁷ Darre ordered the Bauernführer to draw up a list of all producers in each district who pledged themselves not merely to be punctual with deliveries but who were also prepared to exceed their quotas: a committee would be appointed in every parish to check on whether the duty was being complied with.¹⁰⁸ Here again, it does not seem as though the matter was always prosecuted with absolute vigour, since in February 1938 the deputy RBF, Behrens,¹⁰⁹ found it necessary to appeal to farmers to do their duty and observe the decrees.¹¹⁰

A much tighter control was observed over the distribution and use of fodder under the joint decree of July 1937; it was forbidden now, under pain of a fine of 100,000 RM, to feed grain suitable for bread to poultry.¹¹¹ Similarly, a control office took over the distribution of pig-feeding-stuffs which it handed out to farmers on a basis of a certain quantity per pig.¹¹² The prohibition on bread grain was expected to save two million

tons of rye and a half a million tons of wheat for human consumption yearly:¹¹³ the law seems to have been enforced since in Detmold a miller was arrested for using rye as grist fodder.¹¹⁴ The gap in the feeding-stuffs created by this use of all available grain for bread appears to have been filled by purchases of foreign maize, which increased very considerably from 1937 onwards.¹¹⁵

Supervision of farming activities in general was facilitated from 1936 onwards by the introduction of a compulsory card for every holding over 5 Ha in size, a copy of one being attached. As can be seen, this required exhaustive details of the holding to be rendered by the occupier, a copy being held by the KBF. There can be no doubt that these cards were the first step in the closer control of individual enterprises, and eventually became an important tool in the wartime economy of Germany to aid food production and distribution. Neutral in themselves, the cards symbolized perhaps that 1936 marked a turning - point in German agriculture.¹¹⁶ Altogether the rule enforcing them embraced over two million holdings containing some ninety per cent of all agricultural land in Germany.¹¹⁷

All in all, there was a noticeable increase in compulsion of various kinds for the agrarian sector from 1936/7 onwards, in which the Four Year Plan played a definite part, with an even greater emphasis than before both on production and on the direction of consumption. It is probably not an exaggeration to say that its initiation saw the introduction of a wartime economy in Germany three years prior to the outbreak of actual hostilities. The Plan affected the land in yet another way, however, even more than by the introduction of stricter supervision. The objects of the programme were to build up the German war potential, both militarily and industrially, in record time. This meant that the tempo of state expenditure and investment in industry and the construction industry noticeably increased since the expenditure envisaged on the Plan

Hofkarte

--	--	--	--	--

Landesamt für Landwirtschaft und Weinbau Rheinland/Hessen-Nassau

Preis: Gemeinde: Ortsteil:

Hofbezeichnung: Name/Vorname: des Landwirts

Landwirtschaft Hauptberuf? ja – nein Name des Verpächters:

Eigentum/Pachtung/Verwaltung. Name des Verwalters:

I. Familien- u. Betriebsangehörige über 14 Jahre		1945			1946			1947			1948		
		männlich unter 18 J.	18 J. u. dar.	weib- lich	männlich unter 18 J.	18 J. u. dar.	weib- lich	männlich unter 18 J.	18 J. u. dar.	weib- lich	männlich unter 18 J.	18 J. u. dar.	weib- lich
Ständig Be- schäftigte	Betriebsleiter												
	familieneigene Arbeitskräfte												
	Aufsichtskräfte, Rechnungsführer usw.												
	Gutshandwerker, Vorarbeiter usw. . .												
	Melker, Schäfer, Schweinewärter . . .												
	sonstige familienfremde Arbeitskräfte (einschl. Knechte u. Mägde)												
	zusammen												
Nicht ständig Be- schäftigte	a) Zahl												
	b) Arbeitstage*)												

I a) Beköstigte Personen	1945	1946	1947	1948		1945	1946	1947	1948
voll beköstigte Familienangehörige unter 14 Jahren					voll beköstigte familienfremde Arbeitskräfte				
voll beköstigte Familienangehörige von 14 Jahren und darüber ein- schließlich Altenteiler					Deputatempfänger (Anzahl der Familien)				
b) Zahl der betriebseigenen Werkwohnungen					davon mit nicht im Betrieb be- schäftigten Familien besetzt . . .				

II. Bewirtschaft. Fläche	1945			1946			1947			1948			II a) Verpachtete Flächen (in der bewirtschafteten Fläche nicht enthalten)			
	ha	ar	‰	ha	ar	‰	ha	ar	‰	ha	ar	‰	1945	1946	1947	1948
Ackerland																
Gartenld. u. Obstanlage																
Wiesen mit 1 Schnitt .																
Wiesen mit 2 Schnitten																
Wiesen mit 3 und mehr Schnitten																
Streuwiesen																
Weiden																
Hutungen (Schafweiden)																
Rebland																
Korbweiden																
Landw. Nutzfläche			100			100			100			100				
Forsten, Holzungen . .																
Od- und Unland																
Sonst. (Wege, Hofraum, Gebäude usw.)																
Gesamtfl. d. Betriebs																
dav. zugepacht. Ackerld.																
„ „ Wiesen																
„ „ Weiden																
„ „ Sonstiges																

Einheitswert 19..... des Betriebes
..... RM für insges. ha

Mindestbewertung? ja – nein

Einreihungswert RM
je ha Landwirtschaft

Zu-
Ab- schläge für

mit RM

Bodenklimazahl nach
Reichsbodenschätzung

*) Gesamtzahl der von den nicht ständigen Arbeitskräften geleisteten Arbeitstage.

IV. Angebaute Früchte auf dem Ackerland												V. Erträge dz je ha				
	1945			1946			1947			1948			1945	1946	1947	1948
	ha	ar	%	ha	ar	%	ha	ar	%	ha	ar	%				
1. Getreide																
Roggen																
Winterweizen (Spelz) . .																
Sommerweizen																
Wintergerste																
Sommergerste																
Hafer																
Menggetreide																
Körnermais																
zusammen																
2. Hülsenfrüchte zum Reifen																
Speiseerbsen, Bohnen, Linsen																
Gemenge, Futtererbsen, Wicken																
Ackerbohnen																
Süßlupinen																
Bitterlupinen																
Sonstige Hülsenfrüchte .																
zusammen																
3. Hackfrüchte																
Spätkartoffeln																
Frühkartoffeln																
Zuckerrüben																
Futterrüben																
Kohlrüben																
Futtermöhren																
Sonstige Hackfrüchte . .																
zusammen																
4. Gartengewächse a. d. Ackerld.*																
zusammen																
5. Handelsgewächse																
Raps und Rübsen																
Flachs (Lein)																
zusammen																
6. Futterpflanzen *																
Klee in Reinsaat																
Kleegras, Ackerwiese Ackerweide																
Luzerne																
zusammen																
7. Gründüngung*																
8. Brache																
9. Deputatland																
Gesamt- Ackerland**																
			100			100			100			100	VI. Allmende berechtigung (Art und Umfang)			

* als Hauptfrucht

** muß mit Ackerland unter Ziffer II übereinstimmen.

XVI. Viehbestand (Stückzahl)					XVII. Viehbestand in Stück Großvieh			XVIII. Milcherzeugung				
		1945	1946	1947	1948	Jahr	Ins- gesamt	Je 100 ha der landwirtsch. Nutzfläche	Kontroll- jahr	Durchschnittl. Milchertrag je Kuh und Jahr kg	Milcherze insgesam kg	
Pferde	Stichtag					1945			1945			
	Unter 1 Jahr alt (Fohlen)					1946			1946			
	1 Jahr bis unter 3 Jahre					1947			1947			
	3 Jahre bis unter 14 Jahre					1948			1948			
	14 Jahre und älter											
	Pferde insgesamt											
Von den über 3 Jahre alten Pferden sind Zuchstuten		()	()	()	()							
Rindvieh	Kälber, Jungvieh unter 1 Jahr . .					XIX. Marktleistungen						
	Jungvieh 1 bis unter 2 Jahre . .					Gesamtverkauf im Wirtschaftsjahr			1945 / 46	1946 / 47	1947 / 48	1948 / 49
	Zuchtbullen					Roggen	dz					
	Zugochsen					Weizen	dz					
	Schlacht- und Masttiere, 2 Jahre und älter					Menggetreide	dz					
	Tragende Färsen, 2 Jahre und älter (Kalbinnen, Stärken)					Hafer	dz					
	Kühe nur zur Milchgewinnung .					Gerste	dz					
	Kühe z. Milchgewinnung u. Arbeit					Getreide insgesamt	dz					
	Rindvieh insgesamt					Ölfrüchte	dz					
Schafe	Unter 1 Jahr alt (einschl. Lämmer)					Kartoffeln	dz					
	Schafböcke					Heu	dz					
	Hammel					Milch	kg					
	Mutterschafe					Landbutter	kg					
	Schafe insgesamt					Ferkel	Stck.					
Schweine	Ferkel unter 8 Wochen					XX. a) Mastschweine-Erzeugung						
	Jungschw. 8 Wochen b. unter 1/2 J.					Wirtschafts- jahr	Hausschlacht. Zahl	insg. dz Lebend- gewicht	Verkauf Zahl	insg. dz Lebend- gewicht	Erzeug. in Zahl	insg. Leb- gew
	Zuchteber					1945/46 . .						
	Zuchtsauen					1946/47 . .						
	Mastschweine, 1/2 Jahr und älter					1947/48 . .						
Schweine insgesamt					1948/49 . .							
Ziegen insgesamt												
Geflügel	Legehühner											
	Hühner insgesamt											
	Gänse, Enten, Trut- und Perlhühner											
Bienenvölker												
XX. Technische Nebenbetriebe					verarbeitet in dz							
Art		Leistungsfähigkeit		Erzeugnis	1945/46	1946/47	1947/48	1948/49				
XXI. Bemerkungen					1945	1946	1947	1948				
Witterungsverhältnisse												
Unwetterschäden												
Seuchen												

as a whole amounted to nearly nine and a half billion RM.¹¹⁸ Accelerated output in other fields was bound to make agriculture's share of the national income drop, since food production cannot be expanded at the same rate as that of industrial goods; similarly, the whole programme of construction and the furtherance of exports to pay for the raw materials on which it was based, necessitated stable prices to ensure that no demand came from the workers for higher wages which might have made German goods less competitive abroad. In this connection it must be borne in mind that the RM was gaining in value constantly from 1933 onwards as unemployment fell.¹¹⁹ This meant that the terms of trade were moving against the Third Reich:¹²⁰ to have added internal inflation to this trend as well would have been to have wrecked all export chances. The net result of the foregoing was that the government became absolutely determined not to allow increases in the cost of living unless they were completely unavoidable. This desire by the government did not start with the Four Year Plan, but the introduction of the new programme certainly hardened Hitler's feelings in this respect as will be shown.

The Four Year Plan and farm incomes

(i) If the new armaments plan was to succeed prices had to be kept stable; the F hrer went out of his way therefore, without talking about guns, to stress the need for stability when he addressed the peasants at the Harvest Festival in autumn 1936. If wages were allowed to rise, prices would follow and no-one would be better-off in the long run: he appealed to his audience to count themselves fortunate to be living in a country where economic stability prevailed.¹²¹ The whole speech was in effect a plea to them not to rock the boat; in theory these remarks may have been acceptable enough, but it has to be borne in mind that agriculture, after receiving temporary financial advantages by way of better prices in 1933, was already beginning by the time of Hitler's speech to lose its relatively favourable position in economic terms. The price increases for

agrarian products were now beginning to get progressively smaller.¹²²

As other sectors were booming, this meant quite simply that (despite the fact that the national income was climbing) the farmer's share of the national cake was diminishing.¹²³ The Führer had of course left this point out of his speech at the Harvest Festival, which had contained none of the statistics on the subject of agricultural, as opposed to national, increases in income.¹²⁴ A brief look at these shows just how much the agrarian sector was falling behind; in this connection it needs to be pointed out that farm receipts were larger in total by 1936/7 than in previous years, but expenses were also climbing, as a result of which the net yield per Ha was actually less in that financial year than in 1933/4.¹²⁵ Putting this another way, after current expenses were deducted from receipts, the farmer had less disposable income in his pocket.¹²⁶ As farm prices remained fixed after 1936, this tendency increased, so that an official report in 1938 could speak of a butter shortage as being largely due to the fact that prices were scarcely covering production costs.¹²⁷ This really was the heart of the matter; if farmers did not receive higher prices, then only one way remained to improve their financial position, namely, more output, (which suited national needs); but in order to produce more they had to invest more;¹²⁸ in order to invest more they either needed better prices or they simply had to cut their own living-standards. As Hitler refused the first of these two latter courses, only the second remained. Thus whilst everyone else in Germany became better-off during the boom the peasantry had the choice of either going short in order to increase output, or of simply not trying to produce more, in which case their income stayed permanently low anyway.

In sum, for the German farmer it was either no jam today in order to have jam tomorrow, or simply no jam either today or tomorrow. The net effect of the drive for increased investment at a time of fixed prices was summed up by Backe when he wrote that "We are approaching the point...

when an increase in production does not strengthen the economic power of the farmer, on the contrary it weakens it."¹²⁹ The ultimate effect upon the reluctance to expand output can be inferred from the article written by the deputy RBF in March 1939, in which he spoke frankly of the standstill in terms of agrarian production in which the country now found itself.¹³⁰ There seems little doubt that the consciousness of how badly he was faring in comparison to the rest of the community played some part in deterring the peasant from greater efforts in the *Erzeugungsschlacht*, as it made his own lack of assistance even more glaring; from Bavaria it was pointed out that the need for a quick build-up of the Army was accepted on the land but that the farmers could not shut their eyes to the fact that everything done for defence and industry took priority over agriculture, for which things were carried out at a snail's pace.¹³¹

(ii) The RNS leaders themselves were fully conscious of the fact that the Plan was accentuating the tendency to push the agrarian sector further into the background, at least in terms of living-standards. This led to renewed efforts to get a better deal for the peasantry, and hence to further friction between RNS and Party leadership. Attempts at obtaining better prices took two forms, in one case propaganda on behalf of the Bauer via the spoken and written word, in the other direct approaches to those in power.

As far as the first was concerned a number of articles and speeches in 1938/9 illustrated the plight of the peasantry, often in a quite frank manner, which showed a certain degree of disillusion with the political leadership for having failed to really implement its "peasant policy." In March 1939 the deputy RBF gave an example of how badly the farmers were doing by citing the trades of various depositors in a rural savings co-operative;¹³² these comprised only seven cases of peasant savers among 171 depositors in general. Similarly, Dr. Reischle pointed out in August

of the same year that whereas farm expenses in 1934/5 had been two thirds of total sales, by 1937/8 the proportion amounted to seventy two per cent;¹³³ this was a small decrease, but its real significance was that it was a decrease at all. Reischle's pen on the whole subject became such an embarrassment as far as Dr. Wagner, the Price Commissioner for the Four Year Plan, was concerned that he tried to get some of his publications forbidden.¹³⁴ This form of reaction did not deter the RNS leaders from pressing their claims for better treatment of agriculture as witness the speech made by Küper, leader of Department III at the Peasants Assembly in October 1938, in which he pointed out quite frankly that the monetary expenses for the farmers were growing ever more disproportionate to their returns; he said openly that there was no real autonomy for the Verbände in the field of price-fixing, which was in reality politically determined.¹³⁵ A more concise and accurate picture of the facts could hardly have been imagined, and the bluntness of the speech surely underlined RNS disillusion with the country's government.

Behind the scenes there was a certain pressure on the political leadership to grant agriculture a better deal, which was exemplified by two letters from Dr. Reischle to Wagner asking for higher agrarian prices, which apparently proved fruitless.¹³⁶ Darre himself then took up the cudgels, which led first to a strong rejection of his claims by Hess, who is alleged to have said "I shall turn down all price increases until I get an order from the Führer to agree with you in this respect."¹³⁷ Rebuffed at the lower levels, the RBF now went right to the top with a letter to the Chancellory for attention by Hitler; in it he listed the aid which he felt the peasantry needed at that time; the total amounted to between seven and eight hundred million RM annually, based on better prices for milk, beef, pork and flax; higher wages for land workers and cuts in the cost of fuel and energy to rural consumers were also suggested.¹³⁸ Darre wanted the Finance Minister to release funds in order

in order to soften the blow to consumers, in other words subsidized food. There appears to be no particular reason why this could not have been done had the political will been present; in 1938 Germany's total GNP was 102,000 million RM according to one source:¹³⁹ seven/eight hundred millions represented therefore a relatively small sum. Hitler's answer was not long delayed; a minute in the Chancellory files recorded simply that "The Führer has taken cognizance. He is in principle opposed to all price increases for agriculture."¹⁴⁰ Despite even this unequivocal statement of policy Darre did not entirely give up hope that perhaps a better deal could be obtained by further pressure; in January 1939 he despatched yet another memorandum to his leader, saying that the "harmonious balance" in the economy had been lost; "the cause of this is the under-valuation (economically) of agricultural work and its last consequence is the land-flight."¹⁴¹ This also achieved no result whatever.

In sum, no one could deny four facts; agriculture was receiving a smaller share of the national income by 1937/8 than it had even in 1931/2 at the height of the depression from which the NSDAP had sworn to save it;¹⁴² secondly, the Four Year Plan, by stimulating other sectors of the economy, had contributed to this circumstance. Thirdly, the RNS leaders were well aware of the facts, but their efforts to help the profession which they led had proved unavailing; this must have been all the more bitter a pill in view of the fact that it was the peasant dairy and livestock farmers rather than the grain-cultivating estate owners who were suffering the most, as they got most of their income from animal products, the prices of which were especially low.¹⁴³ The general feeling in agrarian circles as early as 1938 over the whole question can be summed up by the report on the financial position of agriculture which referred to Hitler's speech about stabilization at the 1936 Harvest Festival and then suggested that the agrarian price index had been fixed quite low in 1933 with an eye to other sectors of the economy; the report then drew the

implication "that in spite of the Führer's promise to bring back profitability to agriculture, the attempt to close the price-gap completely (that between agrarian and industrial products) was never undertaken."¹⁴⁴ This was a very plain statement indeed; the "peasant policy" had never existed, in the sense that the peasantry had really been favoured. What actually happened was that agrarian incomes looked high in 1933/4 because so many people were unemployed in other sectors; once they came back to work then industrial pre-eminence was re-established.

As pointed out here, only higher prices could have remedied this; the fourth point in this summary is that the political leadership had always blocked the road to this. Hitler's refusal to sanction them was a consistent feature of his economic policy from 1934 onwards due to his insistence on the primacy of wage/price stability. It should not be forgotten in this connection however that in May 1935 the whole Cabinet had agreed to this. Indeed, after his resignation Schacht wrote that "I have always considered a rearmament of the German nation as *conditio sine qua non* of a new German nation."¹⁴⁵ When this is borne in mind it seems difficult to conclude that the position for agriculture would have been much different whoever was in power.

Results of the Erzeugungsschlacht

(i) On the whole the Erzeugungsschlacht achieved a limited success; production rose.¹⁴⁶ Germany's degree of self-sufficiency in food stuffs increased, imports fell, which of course saved foreign currency, the main object of the exercise.¹⁴⁷ Government propaganda in respect of fibre-bearing plants may be accounted a success, since the acreage devoted to them was quite substantially larger in 1938 than it had been four years previously. In one Landesbauernschaft, Weser-Ems, there were one thousand Ha of flax being grown in 1937 as against a figure of fourteen Ha only in 1930.¹⁴⁸ Over the same period the output of both fats and of sugar-beet had increased quite considerably in the region,¹⁴⁹ so that in microcosm

Weser-Ems achieved what was desired for the whole country. Its failures however mirrored national trends in ~~very nearly~~ the same way: the grain harvests in 1937 were actually lower in the Landesbauernschaft than they had been seven years before,¹⁵⁰ and although in this respect Germany as a whole was rather better, nonetheless national inability to obtain such high yields in corn that even more land could be devoted to the cultivation of feeding-stuffs, was ultimately the cause of the continuing fats problem, since lack of fodder restricted stocks of pigs and cattle. The old problem of encouraging the dairy and livestock farmers sufficiently to close the gap between domestic consumption and domestic output still remained as alive in 1938/9 as it had been ten years before when the original emergency programme had laid its stress upon this sector. One statistic alone therefore incorporates the relative failure of the Erzeugungsschlacht; in 1933/4 Germany was 53% self-sufficient in fats, four years later 57%.¹⁵¹ True, the population was rising over the same period but relatively slowly.¹⁵² There is no doubt about the cause of this inability to improve fats supply, which was summed up by Backe in 1938 when he wrote that all food shortages in recent years could be traced back to shortage of feeding-stuffs.¹⁵³ The increase in the output of domestic fodder had simply not been great enough.¹⁵⁴

This accounts for the fluctuations in currency saving which may be attributed to the Erzeugungsschlacht, ascertainable through the figures of food purchases abroad expressed as a percentage of total imports: in 1930 this proportion had been 40.7%, from which it declined to 35.5% in 1936. By 1938, however, it was up to 38.8%.¹⁵⁵ Early successes were not maintained, in other words.¹⁵⁶ Imports of vegetable products in general (grain, fruits, fodder and vegetables) declined far more sharply than those of livestock and animal products:¹⁵⁷ this simply reiterates the fact that the failure in the Erzeugungsschlacht was the inability of peasant farmers to increase the output of their particular products.

Two reasons for this have been mentioned already, the poor prices given to dairy produce etc. and labour shortage resulting from rural migration (to be dealt with in detail in Chapter IX). Another pair of causes can also be distinguished, however, the relatively limited public investment in agriculture and the question of agricultural land-loss. These factors are the subject of the next section, to help show that the *Erzeugungsschlacht* could have been more effective than it was had greater priority been given to agriculture in the Third Reich.

(ii) Apart from the difficulties of private investment already dealt with, public expenditure in agriculture should be looked at in the context of national economic expansion. Altogether from 1933-8 inclusive the REM spent over two billionRM on agrarian furtherance.¹⁵⁸ To this must be added the one and a half billion allocated under the Four Year Plan, of which presumably half was used by 1938/9. These figures may seem impressive at first but when they are taken against the background of rising national income they are apt to lose this aspect. Investment in agriculture in 1938, based on the REM budget plus one quarter of the sum allocated by the Four Year Plan amounted to less than six times the figure for 1933.¹⁵⁹ using the same two years as criteria, military expenditure rose nearly fourteen times.¹⁶⁰ What the relative lack of funds for farming could mean at local level may be judged from a report in January 1938 from the Rhineland listing work which could be done to improve land locally if the money were made available. As much as three thousand Ha could have been bettered immediately in some way or another which could have been undertaken without affecting the Four Year Plan at all because of local unemployment, which was fifty per cent higher than the national average: the contribution to food supplies would have been considerable, as the report pointed out.¹⁶¹

Finally, there was the question of agricultural land lost to other uses: this must be set against the programme of land improvement and

and reclamation on the debit side of the ledger.¹⁶² The rearmament of Germany played a role of course in this matter too, as space became needed for manoeuvres etc. barracks and airfields. Pressure on land in this way started as early as September 1934 after the authorities had had time to make the necessary surveys. Protests soon began to arrive at the Chancellory from farmers afraid of losing valuable soil; in September 1934 one letter from four such persons near Bergen (Lower Saxony) was followed by a telegram the next day stating that twenty thousand Ha including five hundred Erbhöfe were being endangered by a military takeover. On 22nd September seventy families sent in a written protest about seventyfive Ha being taken for an aerodrome; the attached telegram is typical of such communications: it is noticeable that in this case the local Bauernführer have also added their names to the appeal. Hitler's reaction was to send the messages to Darre, Blomberg and Goering.¹⁶³ On October 10th General Beck of the Defence Ministry tried to calm fears by pointing out to all Ministries that no firm decisions had yet been reached.¹⁶⁴

Nonetheless a general edict soon arrived; this took the form of two separate measures, one dealing with land acquisition for the Wehrmacht, the other in respect of that procured for public use in general.¹⁶⁵ The first was presented to the Cabinet, and accepted on 29th March 1935; Darre was present and raised no objections. At his post war trial it was maintained "every Ha of land which was taken away from the farmer was fought for;"¹⁶⁶ on this occasion, however, no resistance from the Minister was forthcoming; to the query as to what he could have done, the reply would seem to be that he could at least have said something, since after all the peasants were protesting themselves at the time. As for the second Bill, this was introduced in Cabinet by Darre himself and instituted a general office of land procurement under the Führer. This could have been used for land purchased for settlement purposes, for the

Telegramm

Deutsche Reichspost

220

68 OSTENHOLZ F 80/76 1920 =

Aufgenommen am 30. 10. 1934	AN DEN FUEHRER UND REICHSKANZLER ADOLF HITLER BERLIN =	Befordert Tag Zeit durch
Telegraphenamt Berlin	KK. 8730 - 2. OKL. 1934 ✓ ghr W. J. 40	1. 10. 20. 30 Eg

UNSER FUEHRER : IN ERFAHRUNG GEBRACHT BEABSICHTIGT
EERESVERWALTUNG HIESIGE GEGEND FUER MILITAERISCHE ZWECKE
ZUVERWENDEN ORTSBAUERNFUEHRER UND GEMEINDEVORSTEHER ALS
VERTRETER SCHOLLEN VERBUNDENER BAUERN AUS 17 GEMEINDEN
SICHTEN AN SIE DIE DRINGENDE BITTE UM ERHALTUNG DER SCHOLLE
UND HEIMAT HEIL = HOBURG HEEMANN WILLERS WUENNING KLEINE
EILERS KASTENS MUELLER HELLBERG GELLERMANN IMWIEHE KOTHE
TIMMBECK DREWES MEYER WESTERMANN WROGEMANN HELBERG
SOEHNHOLZ WEHRS HOHMANN SPOERING ELLING RODEWALD
EGGERSGLUESS VON DER WENDE FUHRHOP ELLING BECKER + 76 12 16

military or for forest and road requirements. Some land was eventually lost to the autobahn programme but the scale does not seem to have been large judging from records of Erbhöf courts transactions for land sales: of the 273 such farmers' documents studied for this thesis from various parts of Germany only 34 were affected in this manner, and the strips disposed of were always very small.¹⁶⁷ It is in any case difficult to see how a large-scale road programme can be executed without displacing someone.

There is no doubt that the Wehrmacht in fact took most of the land subsequently lost, its claim for the Siegfried Line alone being 200,000 Ha according to Darre at the sixth Peasants Assembly in 1938; he gave the total figure of land-loss at 370,000 Ha.¹⁶⁸ Another RNS source put the diminution as high as 650,000 Ha from 1933 to 1937.¹⁶⁹ This does not necessarily apply to all regions of the country, however; the Weser-Ems area actually had more land in 1937 than four years previously due to reclamation.¹⁷⁰ How the farmer was affected by the utilization of his land for other purposes depended on where he lived,¹⁷¹ but this does not alter the fact that the country as a whole disposed of less agricultural land as the result of the Wehrmacht build-up. The tempo undoubtedly increased in the course of time, so much so that by early 1939 the RNS internal administrative section was asking all areas if they had begun to compile a "Heimatbuch" like the Landesbauernschaft in Lower Saxony containing records of all displaced peasants: the letter makes it quite plain why they were losing their original holding in the words "on account of the creation of industrial facilities and manoeuvre areas for troops a greater number of peasants must be resettled."¹⁷² Ironically, much later in the history of the Third Reich Willikens actually lost his own family farm due to expansion of the Hermann Goering Works; the holding had been in the family for three centuries.¹⁷³ Land loss, like limited investment, cost the country dearly, but the combined effect of these

factors on domestic food supplies was small in comparison with the greatest problem of all, that of rural migration and a diminishing labour force on the land.

1. Speeches 11th June: BA-R43 I/1277
2. Quoted in Domarus p.173
3. Darré "Das Ziel" in "Deutsche Agrarpolitik" October 1933 p.5
4. D. Petzina "Autarkiepolitik im Dritten Reich" p.95: henceforth
"Petzina" will always indicate this work unless otherwise stated
5. "Statistisches Jahrbuch 1941/2" p.284
6. "Statistisches Jahrbuch 1936" p.506
7. Whereas in July 1931 these had stood at 3.3 billion RM by April
1933 they were down to 450 Mill. RM, roughly one seventh as much:
Dr. Schacht to Cabinet 7th April 1933: BA-R43 I/1461
8. Directorate of Reichsbank to Hitler 6th June 1933: BA-R43 I/1463:
currency holdings were by now only 280 Mill. RM according to this
letter
9. In actual figures, from 94 Mill. RM to 44 Mill. RM: Ibid
10. Hugenberg/von Neurath report to Cabinet 23rd June 1933: BA-R43 I/1465
11. "Gesetz zum Schutz der deutschen Warenausfuhr" presented in Cabinet
20th September 1933 by von Bülow of the Foreign Office: BA-R43 I/1465
12. H. Schacht "Abrechnung mit Hitler" p.49
13. Exports totalled 4,871.4 billion RM, imports 4283.9 billion RM:
FETC p.73
14. The figure for January 1934 was 465.4 Mill. RM: FETC p.61
15. Whereas armaments expenditure in 1933 amounted to 0.7 billion RM
the following year saw an outlay of 3.3 billion RM: Erbe p.100
16. From 3601 Mill. RM to 3676 Mill. RM: "Statistisches Jahrbuch 1938"
p.256
17. FETC p.7: If the price index for both exports and imports in 1927 is
taken as 100, the following figures are obtained

	Export	Import
1933	61.8	45.9
1934	56.4	44.7

- Ibid p.53: Germany thus had to sell far more goods in order to cover the costs of imports
18. The surplus of 667 Mill. RM became a deficit in 1934 of 284 Mill. RM: B. Carroll "Design for Total War" p.88: currency reserves fell to 156.5 Mill. RM: FETC p.61
 19. Simpson "Hjalmar Schacht in perspective" p.94
 20. Petzina pp.24/5
 21. Backe to Ministry of Finance 5th November 1934: BA-R2/18018
 22. According to Dr. Krohn: personal interview
 23. Darré to Ministry of Finance 30th November 1935: BA-R2/18018
 24. V.B. 29th January 1935
 25. In 1933/4 Germany was 99% self-sufficient in grain for human consumption and 98% in meat, but only 80% in eggs and 53% in fats: Petzina p.95
 26. Meeting 11th June 1932: BA-R43 I/1277
 27. In 1920 Germany had 51,000 Ha under flax, but by 1931 this had declined to 6,612: Borsig "Reagrarisierung Deutschlands?" p.40
 28. According to Dr. Krohn, leader of the relevant section of Department II in the RNS: personal interview
 29. OBF Langenberg to KBF Niederberg 24th March 1935: HSA(D) 130
 30. Darré to Goering 1st November 1936: ND 146
 31. Backe to Ministry of Finance 5th November 1934: BA-R2/18018
 32. "NS Landpost" 14th January 1935
 33. "NS Landpost" 15th March 1935
 34. Due partly to a jump in raw material import prices, which for the year 1935/6 equalled 10%: Petzina "Autarkie politik im Dritten Reich" p.31
 35. Memorandum 14th August 1935: ADC Schacht .. It is not clear to whom this was dispatched, or whether it was just Schacht's thoughts collected on paper

36. Petzina p.32
37. Regpräsident Hanover to Prussian Ministry of Agriculture 20th November 1934: NSA 122a XXXII 80
38. For evidence of this way of using pig-fats see Regpräsident Aachen to Ministry of Economic Affairs 12th October 1936: HSA (D) 1065
39. Regpräsident Hanover above cit.
40. Thyssen "Bauern und Standesvertretung" p.300
41. From a combined total of 490,000 tons in the first year to 890,000 in the second: FETC p.122
42. The pig and cattle holdings fell, over the period 1933-5, from 24 million and 19.8 million to 22.8 million and 18.9 million respectively: "Statistisches Jahrbuch 1941/2" p.663
43. REM to Lbsch 1st November 1934: NSA 310 I B.46
44. Gauleitung South Hanover-Brunswick to NS Hago branches 25th October 1935 asked for weekly situation reports: Ibid
45. NS Hago Wolfensbüttel to Gauleitung 28th October 1935: Ibid
46. NS Hago Wolfensbüttel to Gauleitung 28th October 1935: Ibid
47. NS Hago Brunswick to Gauleitung 5th November 1935: Ibid
48. M. Broszat "The Concentration Camps 1939-1945" in H. Krausnick (Ed) "The Anatomy of the S.S. State" p.450
49. NS Hago Nienburg to Gauleitung 28th October 1935: NSA 310 I B.46
50. NS Hago Nienburg to Gauleitung 18th November 1935: Ibid
51. Quoted in A. Schweitzer "Big Business in the Third Reich" p.325
52. "Arbeitertum" 15th November and 1st December 1935
53. Petzina p.33
54. Ibid pp.33/4
55. For the actual results see Appendix H: as far as animal stocks were concerned, limitations on fodder imports had contributed, so that Schacht himself was partly to blame for lower domestic production
56. Quoted in Petzina p.34

57. Ibid p.34
58. W. Treue "Hitlers Denkschrift über den 4. Jahresplan": VJH 1955 p.194
59. Germany had enjoyed a surplus of 111RM in its trade balance in 1935:
"Statistisches Jahrbuch 1941/2" p.3
60. In what respect can be deduced from arms expenditure, which at 9
billion RM in 1936 was thirteen times the figure for 1933: Erbe p.100
61. Quoted in Simpson "Hjalmar Schacht in perspective" p.87
62. Petzina p.35; the demand was made at a meeting of the Exchange and
Raw Materials Committee
63. Ibid p.46
64. Ibid p.46
65. In terms of overall food consumption Germany was 75% self-sufficient in
1932 and 81% in 1936: J. von Stackelberg "Das Ergebnis der Landwirt-
schaft" in "Wirtschaftsjahrbuch 1939" p.27
66. "Trial Brief" p.26
67. Petzina p.34
68. The document is reproduced in Treue pp.205/210
69. Cf. "Mein Kampf" p.146
70. Hitler claimed in the memorandum that 28 million Germans were now
enjoying a better life than they had had in 1933
71. Quoted in Treue p.206
72. Ibid p.210
73. These details are taken from Jacoby (Ed) "Das Dritte Reich im Aufbau"
Vol. I p.55
74. According to Goering when he presented the Bill in Cabinet on 1st
December 1936: BA-R43 I/1465
75. Petzina p.83
76. Ibid p.89
77. In fact some 756 Mill. RM; "Übersicht über die zur Förderung der

- Landwirtschaft (einschliesslich Fischerei) in den Jahren 1933 bis 1938 verausgabten Beträge" 11th September 1939: BA-R2/18019
78. To 1266 Mill. RM (including 40 Mill. RM for Austria/Sudetenland) in 1937 to 1938 inclusive. Ibid
 79. For land improvement in more detail see Appendix F
 80. Beet was particularly recommended; in terms of calories 1 Ha of sugar beet equalled 1.9 of potatoes or 2.4 of other root vegetables for fodder: V.B. 4th March 1937
 81. Details from "West Deutscher Beobachter" 24th March 1937
 82. Koch to Ministry of Finance 21st April 1937: BA-R2/18019
 83. Petzina p.86
 84. "Frankfurter Zeitung" 22nd July 1937
 85. "West Deutscher Beobachter" 8th December 1936 "Kleintierzucht niemals so beachtet": this was a report of the Verband's President's speech at the fourth exhibition of small animals, Essen
 86. The increased use of dried and skimmed milk was advocated at this time: "Frankfurter Zeitung" 1st August 1937
 87. As an example, see "Ernährungsrichtlinien für die Verbrauchslenkung im Februar 1939" in Ministerialblatt 14th January 1939 p.147
 88. LBF Hanover to Oberpräsident 23rd March 1938: NSA 122a XXXII 88a
 89. "Der Angriff" 14th March 1937
 90. "Frankfurter Zeitung" 28th October 1938
 91. "Daily Telegraph" 5th August 1937
 92. Himmler to Darre 13th May 1937, suggesting the Minister spoke to Goering about it: ADC Himmler
 93. Darre to Himmler 14th June 1937: Goering had apparently already turned down a similar suggestion: Ibid
 94. See Table XXIX in Appendix H for the actual statistics discussed here
 95. In 1935 national income in Germany was 56.8 billion RM, but by 1938

- this had risen to 79.8 billion RM: Erbe p.100
96. Landrat Aachen to Regpräsident 3rd February 1937 describes this kind of situation for his district: HSA (D) 1066
 97. Regpräsident Cologne to Ministry of Economic Affairs report for December 1936/January 1937: Ibid
 98. Ministerialblatt 3rd March 1937
 99. "West Deutscher Beobachter" 24th March 1937
 100. "Gesetz zur Sicherung der Landbewirtschaftung" RGB (I) p.422
 101. Darré to Cabinet 16th July 1937: BA-R2/18018
 102. KBF Hamlin/Bad-Pyrmont minute 10th October 1937: NSA 331 B.35
 103. Kbsch Niederberg to farmer 18th October 1938: HSA (D) 49 Vohwinkel
 104. Farmer to LBF 27th November 1938: Ibid
 105. KBF to farmer 7th October 1938: Ibid
 106. Lbsch to KBF 16th August 1939: Ibid
 107. "Verordnung zur Sicherstellung des Brotbedarfs" V.B. issued jointly by Goering and Darré 28th July 1937
 108. From a report in BA-R2/18291
 109. Gustav Behrens became deputy RBF in March 1937; the circumstances of Meinberg's dismissal are dealt with in a later chapter
 110. "Frankfurter Zeitung" 25th February 1938
 111. "Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung" 28th July 1937
 112. "Frankfurter Zeitung" 14th March 1937
 113. "Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung" above cit.
 114. "Frankfurter Zeitung" 19th December 1937
 115. From 338,000 tons in 1936 to over 2 million the next year and almost 2 million in 1938: FETC pp.124/5
 116. The information regarding war-time use is from "50 Jahre" p.33
 117. "50 Jahre" p.33
 118. Petzina p.81

119. In January 1933 the exchange rate for the mark stood at 14.03 to £1 sterling, but by March 1935 this had become 12.03: "Goslarsche Zeitung" 3rd January 1933 and "Rostocker Anzeiger" 1st March 1935
120. If the price index for both exports and imports is taken as 100 in 1927, the variations from 1933 onwards were as follows:-

<u>Year</u>	<u>Export Prices</u>	<u>Import Prices</u>
1933	61.8	45.9
1934	56.4	44.7
1936	50.9	46.3
1938	54.3	46.5

From FETC p.53. As can be seen export prices fell until 1938 whilst those for imports remained steady

121. Quoted in Domarus p.650
122. The agrarian price-index went up 26.8% from 1933-36, but over two thirds of this came in the first two years: E. Steiner "Agrarwirtschaft und Agrarpolitik" p.100
123. From 19% in 1934 to 16% in 1937: W. Bauer and P. Dehen "Landwirtschaft und Volkseinkommen" in "Vierteljahrsheft zur Wirtschaftsforschung" in 1938/9 Heft 4 p.426
124. For a statistical review see Appendix G
125. From 90RM to 86RM: Reichsamt für Agrarpolitik report to Minister President, Württemberg February 1938: HSA (S) 646/E 130/IV
126. "Wirtschaft und Statistik" 1938 p.852
127. Reichsamt für Agrarpolitik to Minister President Württemberg report October 1938: HSA (S) 646/E 130/IV
128. By 1938/9 farmers were devoting nearly twice as much money to building, tools, machinery and fertilizer combined as six years previously (1961 Mill. RM against 1096 Mill. RM): Bente "Landwirtschaft und Bauerntum" p.177 and "Bauerntum" p.48

129. Quoted in Wunderlich "Farm Labour in Germany 1810-1945" p.193
130. Behrens "Stillstand in der Erzeugungsschlacht?" "Odal" March 1939
131. Deputy LBF Bavaria to RNS Berlin January 1938: BA-R2/18291
132. Behrens above cit. p.153
133. "Einkreisung der Unterwertung" in "Odal" August 1939 p.651
134. Reischle to Bormann 14th March 1942: ADC Reischle
135. Quoted in "Ideengeschichte" p.223
136. Reischle to Bormann above cit.
137. Hesse's remark is quoted in Darre to Goering 14th May 1938: BA-R43 II/194
138. Darre's requests are listed in a Chancellery minute 19th May 1938:
Ibid
139. Erbe p.100
140. Chancellery minute 25th May 1938: BA-R43 II/194
141. Quoted in "Trial Brief" pp.225/6
142. Bauer and Dehen p.426: the actual proportion of the national income enjoyed by farmers was 20% in 1924/5, 15% in 1927/8, 18% in 1931/2, 19% in 1933/4 and 16% in 1937/8
143. Vide Reischle "Einkreisung der Unterwertung" p.652
144. Reichsamt für Agrarpolitik to Minister President Württemberg February 1938: HSA (S) 646/E 130/IV
145. Quoted in Simpson "Hjalmar Schacht in Perspective" p.86
146. In 1938/9 production of all agrarian produce was 20% above that of ten years earlier and 10% above that of 1935/6: Petzina p.94
147. For a statistical summary see Appendix H
148. "Die landwirtschaftlichen Verhältnisse in der Landesbauernschaft Weser-Ems in den Jahren 1934 bis 1937" pp.20/22: NSA XXXII 88a
149. Ibid pp.25/38
150. Ibid pp.16/25

151. Petzina p.95
152. The population growth 1928-1938 has been estimated at 7%: Ibid p.94
153. Quoted in "Frankfurter Zeitung" 21st February 1938
154. Average domestic fodder harvests for the period 1928-32 amounted to 9.8 million tons, for 1936-39 to 10.9 million tons: Petzina p.94
155. FETC p.122
156. When the first report on the Four Year Plan attributed a currency saving of 100 Mill. RM to agriculture Backe wrote "completely false" in the margin: Petzina p.95
157. FETC p.122 Table 9: in 1930 livestock purchases abroad constituted 1.1% of all imports, by 1938 the figure was 2.1%
158. "Übersicht über die zur Förderung der Landwirtschaft (einschliesslich Fischerei) in den Jahren 1933 bis 1938 verausgabten Beträge" 11th September 1939: BA-R2/18019
159. Ibid: the calculation for the Four Year Plan is based on Petzina p.81
160. Carroll "Design for total War" p.188
161. Regpräsident Cologne to Ministry of Economic Affairs report for December/January 1938: HSA (D) 1069
162. See Appendix F for the improvement programme
163. The whole correspondence is in BA-R43 I/1301
164. Defence Ministry to Ministries 10th October 1934: Ibid
165. "Gesetz über die Landbeschaffung für Zwecke der Wehrmacht": BA-R43 I/1472 and "Gesetz über die Regelung des Landbedarfs der öffentlichen Hand": RGB (I) p.467
166. "Trial Brief" p.31
167. The farms concerned were in Schleswig-Holstein, Lower Saxony, Westphalia and Württemberg which represents a fair cross-section of northern, western and southern Germany

168. Quoted in "Um Blut und Boden" p.464
169. Reischle "Die deutsche Ernährungswirtschaft" in "Das Dritte Reich im Aufbau" Vol. II p.282
170. "Die landwirtschaftlichen Verhältnisse" etc. p.8: NSA 122a XXXII 88a
171. In one case in the Rhineland a peasant lost 16 Ha out of 18 Ha to the Army, the operation being put through so rapidly that a builder with fifty men were on his land before the legal conveyance had been put through: Bauer's statement to Debt Relief Office 22nd June 1937
HSA (D) 51
172. RNS Verwaltungsamt to Landesbauernschaften 6th March 1939: HSA (D)
854
173. Backe to Himmler 20th January 1943 regarding a replacement to be found for Willikens in the Warthegau, for the administration of which Himmler was responsible: ADC Willikens

Chapter IX: Rural Migration between 1933 and 1939 and the consequences for agricultural production.

The purpose of this chapter is to investigate the background of rural migration in Germany during the period of the Third Reich. What caused peasants and farmworkers to leave the land will be discussed, together with the measures which the NSDAP took against this movement: how successful these were must be judged from contemporary reports and from the statistics showing exactly how many of the rural population of 1933 had migrated to cities in the course of the next six years. The effect of this upon the production of food must also be evaluated, and it is hoped to show that the relative failure of the Erzeugungsschlacht was largely attributable to an increasing lack of farm labour from 1936 onwards.

It must be made clear as a preliminary that the flight from the land did not commence with the NS accession, but was of long standing. As one sociologist has pointed out, there is no natural equilibrium between urban and rural areas since the demand for the products of the latter is more limited than that for industrial consumer goods. Consequently in the long run a "one-sided migration" from the countryside to industry must follow.¹ From 1919 to the census of six years later the population of rural East Prussia declined by 158,000, Pomerania and Silesia showing a similar trend, although not so pronounced.² Indeed the movement from the rural East Elbian areas to conurbations was so pronounced that one suburb of Hamburg became known as "Big Mecklenburg."³ That the motive behind this migration was the desire to find a new type of employment can be judged from an examination of land workers who left Pomerania in 1929, of whom only one in fourteen subsequently found rural work elsewhere.⁴ This does not mean that all migration was from east to west, since western rural areas also suffered depopulation as shown in an investigation of small and

medium sized farms in the Hunsrück/Eifel area of the Rhineland. Whereas in 1900 two thirds of the labour force for milking on the smaller holdings consisted of help from outside the family, by 1928 the proportion had fallen to one third on average.⁵ The Republic made some efforts to halt the continual drain of rural labour by instituting vocational training schools for land workers to give them a better range of skills etc. and the chance of acquiring a diploma.⁶ This does not seem, however, to have met with any real degree of success since between 1925 and 1933 the agricultural working force declined by 713,000 for Germany as a whole.⁷

Rural Migration in the Third Reich

(i) The mass unemployment which greeted the new regime was acting temporarily as a kind of plug against the movement away from the land, however.⁸ The huge army of workless led the government to regard the land as a kind of sponge which might be used to soak up some of those people now out of work in the cities as there was so little unemployment on the land. A contributory factor in the situation was the huge increase expected in the number of school-leavers in the near future, as a result of the sudden population increase in 1920 following mass demobilisation; the children produced in this postwar "bulge" were due to leave school in 1934 which would exacerbate the existing situation.⁹ Consequently a scheme was initiated among German youth as a means of simultaneously increasing food production and finding work for the unemployed, the Hitler Youth being used as the organizational medium: the age-limit for the help engaged was from fourteen to twentyfive. The scheme was based on freedom of choice on both sides, in that the farmer was not obliged to accept the labour offered, nor was the worker compelled to take the job. The programme came into force on March 1st, 1933, and was based on the payment of board and social security contributions plus wages by the farmer, in return for which he received 25RM monthly from the State as a subsidy.¹⁰

The Party press enthused over this scheme and related instances of how the land-flight was being reversed in this manner. One case was quoted in 1934 of a youthful helper from Berlin who had gone on farm aid to a place called Heilsberg, from where his own father had migrated to Berlin thirty two years previously.¹¹ But from other sources it is clear that the programme was not wholly successful; one farm journal in July 1933 saw itself obliged to run a special article calling on local farmers to utilize the scheme, as by the previous month only twenty thousand in the whole of Westphalia had done so, which the article admitted was relatively few.¹² By the following October peasants were being appealed to in this region to keep the helpers on in winter and so combat unemployment in the cities.¹³ There is no doubt that a mutual antipathy for the whole idea existed between the unemployed and the peasants: in May 1937 it was reported from one Rhineland district that there was simultaneously a shortage of three hundred landworkers and an unemployment list amounting to twice that figure; the report made it clear that the peasants had prejudice against taking up those out of work and the unemployed did not wish to work on the land.¹⁴ A 1938 report from Jülich ascribes this reluctance to take on rural work to the fear that once on the land the worker might be obliged to stay by virtue of existing legislation against rural migration.¹⁵ On one occasion at least police aid had to be called in to control one column of unemployed from Pomerania bound for the Rhineland; the helpers could eventually only be brought to their destination under police escort, which suggests that the element of free will was lacking on their part on this occasion.¹⁶

In East Prussia in early 1933 there was no question of voluntariness at all in engaging unemployed on the land, either on their side or on that of the peasants. At Osterode the regional administration called together representatives from the farmers union, (LVO), the Agrarian Office of the

NSDAP, local Party leaders and parish chairmen and simply assigned so many unemployed to each district, including a proportion to agriculture.

Columns of men were organized to take part in land-improvement and allotted to different peasants who had to feed them. No preparations had been made so that the participants did not know what to do. In Wehlau one Party official (Kreisleiter) said to dismayed peasants in the presence of the local KBF that if they said anything about what was happening they would be arrested. Another Kreisleiter told farmers that if anyone refused to accept unemployed organized in this way they would be driven on foot to local Party headquarters bearing a placard "Saboteur of Work."¹⁷ Thus Gauleiter Erich Koch reduced the unemployment statistics in his own fashion.

It seems unlikely that the situation in general was so farcical as in East Prussia, and although the peasants were reluctant to take on unskilled labour no doubt some contribution was made by the scheme to solving unemployment and assisting in land improvement: in January 1935 as many as 111,847 emergency workers were engaged in land-betterment, apart from individual helpers on farms, but the lack of training given makes the whole thing seem more an excuse to reduce unemployment statistics than to assist farmers greatly.¹⁸

(ii) Apart from returning some people to the land the NSDAP also acted in 1934 to stem the flow away from it by means of new legislation. An Act along these lines was introduced in May 1934; this empowered Labour Exchanges to withhold permission for a change of job to anyone employed in agriculture at the time of the measure coming into effect, provided that the applicant had worked on the land for three years prior to the Act. If any such person had obtained new work without Labour Exchange consent, then his new employer could be compelled to surrender him. The justificatory letter to the Cabinet accompanying the proposed legislation pointed out that whereas the major cities had accounted for 51% of the unemployed in

March 1933 the figure for the same month in 1934 was 65%;¹⁹ it was desired to end the flight to the conurbations by keeping workers on the land, through the threat to return them even if they were lucky enough to find work in the cities: the unspoken implication is that their employment there would have deprived urban unemployed of job opportunities.²⁰ The measure was aimed in sum at stopping rural migration and ceasing the position for people out of work in the cities simultaneously. It must be emphasized that the Act was an authorization only, not an injunction to act always in the way suggested.

That it was sometimes used can be seen from the announcement made by the town of Burg in autumn 1934 that for the coming winter all resignations by landworkers would be scrutinized by the local Labour Exchange in conjunction with the KBF with a view to retaining workers on the land and so avoiding the need for foreign labour.²¹ One source gives 15,000 workers as having been returned compulsorily to the land between April 1935 and March of the following year, after they were discovered to have taken other jobs.²² But in general the measure seems to have been a failure and indeed as early as February 1935 the press was already talking about a current landflight.²³ In consequence another Bill was introduced in the same month empowering the Labour Exchanges to order the dismissal of workers who for three years prior to the law had been normally engaged on the land but were now in other employment: this measure again was an authorization only.²⁴ Indeed the "NS Landpost" said quite specifically that it should be used where the other means had failed.²⁵ That all methods together did not succeed can be seen from a report in December 1935 that in spite of all legislation landworkers were deserting their posts in order to become machinists etc. which was creating the possibility of a labour shortage for the coming year.²⁶ In Bavaria the situation became so bad, in fact, that in 1935/6 the Minister of the Interior authorized the use of concentration

camps for farmworkers breaking their contracts.²⁷

By 1936 it was nonetheless clear that the authorizations introduced had had a negative effect, as no one would take up agricultural work as a career for fear of being caught there for good; in fact, parents in rural areas were sending children to the cities as soon as they left school.²⁸ The measures were therefore suspended in 1936;²⁹ they can only really be described as having been counter-productive by having frightened so many away from the land as a future career, and in any case had totally failed to prevent those already in agriculture from leaving; in February 1935 the REM was asking all concerned to make use of existing legislation to prevent migration,³⁰ but in June of the following year it was clear that the landflight was still in full swing.³¹ As in the case of the 1934 measure the law of February 1935 was sometimes applied with the result of returning labour to the land:³² but as one KBF pointed out it was a double-edged weapon precisely because of its deterrent effect upon rural youth to consider the land as a career.³³ The realization of this point may well have stopped the authorization being applied as it might have been.

(iii) So marked did the movement away from the land become that in the Cologne district those holdings being intensively cultivated, that is the dairy-farming, root-crops and horticultural enterprises, had less than half the labour force in January 1938 available from outside the family than they had disposed of three years before.³⁴ The RNS itself did a survey of the landworker position in 1938 which revealed how far agricultural labour had moved away to other sectors since 1935: if the total labour force for the latter year was 100, by the time of the investigation it had fallen to 79 for Germany as a whole. Even more striking was the uniformity of the trend, in that not one of the nineteen Landesbauernschaften had lost less than fifteen per cent except for isolated East Prussia which still had eighty eight per cent of its farmworkers: there was of course

a substantially greater migration from some areas than from others; Mecklenburg and the Saarland were both down to 69% of their 1935 totals.³⁵

By 1938 the landflight was known to have reached such proportions that Darré himself devoted part of his speech to it at the Sixth annual Peasants Assembly in November, estimating the total loss at seven to eight hundred thousand, inclusive of owners, family helpers and outside labour.³⁶ He was later to find out that this was a gross underestimate. The census of May 1939 produced a figure of nearly one and a half million, the overwhelming majority of which was male.³⁷ Thus the rural migration from the time of Hitler's accession until 1939 was almost exactly double that which had taken place between 1925 and 1933.³⁸ These statistics are naturally generalizations, in that not all districts suffered equally; an empirical survey of eighteen Kreisbauernschaften made for the present thesis on a basis of one per Landesbauernschaft as far as existing records allowed, showed that in four cases there was actually more labour available in 1939 than six years previously, although over the eighteen examined as a whole there was a substantial drop. In the case of outside labour this amounted to almost eight per cent.³⁹

In view of these statistics it is not surprising to learn that demands for agricultural labour in the Third Reich showed a steady increase out of all proportion to that actually available; the disequilibrium between demand and supply can be seen in the statistics, based on selected areas of the country, produced by a contemporary writer. Whereas on 31st October 1933 there had been just over six hundred vacancies in agricultural work for nearly ten thousand applicants, by the same date in 1938 there were 228 applicants for almost four thousand places vacant.⁴⁰ A magazine article by the deputy RBF in the following year drew attention to his own Kreisbauernschaft Marienburg, which had had just over five hundred girls on the land in 1932, only 310 of whom remained in 1938.⁴¹ There

was, in sum, a massive movement away from agriculture as a means of subsistence in the Third Reich, which embraced the sons and daughters of the peasants as much as farm labourers.⁴²

The causes of rural migration

(i) It would be too much to expect that so large-scale a phenomenon as the landflight could be ascribed to any one factor, and it is suggested here that at least five can be traced; these were wages, housing, overwork on the farms in comparison to industrial conditions, the conscription programme and the industrial boom in general and the backward living-standards in terms of modern amenities on the land. All of these produced a very low state of morale in agriculture in the Third Reich and led directly to the scale of migration already described; these factors will be considered separately here: before that is done it must be made clear that the general lack of any chance of rising in the world also induced farmworkers to leave the land in the hope that another occupation might help them to do so, but as this was bound in to a certain extent with the settlement programme discussion of this point has been postponed until a later chapter.

(ii) There can be no doubt that purely economic reasons played a large part in encouraging migration; as one agrarian historian has put it "Whoever wants to combat the flight of the workers must maintain their wages high enough to ensure that the motive ... disappears."⁴³ The corollary of this is naturally that the employer himself must receive sufficient for his products to ensure that he can pay his workers properly. Labour was undoubtedly better remunerated in the Third Reich than before, insofar as agriculture was concerned. By 1935/6 farmers were paying out more in wages than three years before, although the labour force by then had almost certainly decreased.⁴⁴ Again local conditions tended to be the great determinant; Gunzenhausen (Bavaria) suffered a particularly severe labour loss in the Third Reich, the total dropping from 3,113 workers in 1933 to as few

as 2,476 six years later.⁴⁵ It is not surprising to learn that by 1938 wage rates had increased by 150/200% over the same period of time.⁴⁶

The construction of roads and aerodromes in Upper Bavaria was no doubt a contributory factor here.⁴⁷ But in Erkelenz (Rhineland) it was reported in 1936 that poor wages locally were responsible for landworkers migrating.⁴⁸ Quite clearly wage increases on the land varied from district to district; substantial improvements over former rates were reported from Württemberg as having taken place between 1933 and 1936.⁴⁹ In this region peasants were obliged to pay above the stipulated rates in order to get any labour at all.

But the fact remains that although the landworker was often better off than before, his wages did not equal those of other trades. A married foreman (Deputat) in Brunswick got 1,260 RM yearly from which he paid only 180 RM for his house;⁵⁰ but in the same year the agreed rate for a chimney-sweep was 45 RM per week which was far more money.⁵¹ The difference was so marked that a newspaper article on careers for school-leavers and the remuneration available in each, did not even mention agriculture.⁵² In the Cologne area the financial disadvantages of working on the land were so great that in March 1939 the Regierungspräsident presented them in the form of a table, a duplicate of which is attached: as can be seen every other trade but one was far better off in terms of weekly take-home pay (Netto-wochenverdienst Column 9) than agriculture (Landwirtschaft).⁵³

In 1938 Dr. Reischle of the Staff Office produced a suggestion which might have raised landworkers' wages without increasing the cost of food; he proposed that all workers who had been granted formal increases since 1933 should work one hour per week without payment, the money accruing in the form of these unpaid wages then being given to those workers who had not been officially allowed more money (as was the case for landworkers) as a kind of premium.⁵⁴ The Minister of Finance passed the suggestion

Effektivverdienste in der Landwirtschaft und in den wichtigsten Kölner Gewerbegruppen.

	Bruttowochen- verdienst		Ausserdem Überstun- denverdienst		Wöchentliche ge- setzliche Abzüge		Nettowochen- verdienst	
	Februar	März	Februar	März	Februar	März	Februar	März
	SM	SM	SM	SM	SM	SM	SM	SM
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Landwirtschaft	21.12	26.40	-	-	0.96	1.20	20.16	25.20
Eisen-, Stahl- u. Metallwaren- herstellung	57.02	56.37	-	-	5.61	5.55	51.41	50.82
Maschinen-, Kessel-, Apparate- u. Fahrzeugbau	56.18	51.41	0.55	-	5.68	5.01	51.05	46.40
Elektrotechnische Industrie 1)	44.28	-	0.60	-	4.16	-	46.72	-
Chemische Industrie	56.75	42.71	-	-	9.28	8.79	47.47	33.92
Textil - Industrie	54.28	54.28	-	-	5.21	5.21	49.07	49.07
Druck- u. Vervielfältigungsgewerbe	48.-	48.-	-	-	4.64	4.64	43.46	43.46
Kautschuk- u. Asbestindustrie	54.78	55.26	-	-	5.68	5.71	49.10	49.55
Holz- u. Schnitzstoffgewerbe	27.52	27.52	-	-	2.72	2.72	24.80	24.80
Nahrungs- u. Genussmittelgewerbe	49.44	49.44	-	-	4.63	4.63	44.81	44.81
Bekleidungsgewerbe	45.67	52.78	-	-	4.85	5.81	40.82	46.97
Bau- u. Baunebengewerbe	43.20	43.20	-	3.94	4.32	4.32	38.88	42.82
Handelsgewerbe u. Hilfgewerbe des Handels	48.20	48.20	-	-	4.73	4.73	43.47	43.47
Verkehrswesen	45.10	45.10	7.16	7.48	4.20	4.20	48.06	48.38
Gast- u. Schankwirtschaftsgewerbe 1)	57.90	-	-	-	6.50	-	51.40	-

1) Bei Abschluss der Statistik lagen für den Monat März von der elektro-
technischen Industrie und dem Gast- u. Schankwirtschaftsgewerbe noch
keine Angaben vor.

to Goering's secretary who found it not worth consideration:⁵⁵ this was presumably because of the difficulty inherent in it of getting the consent of industrial workers to a scheme compelling them to work one hour per week for nothing. It must be admitted that in terms of practical politics the idea does not sound realisable.

Thus the position for the rural labourer in financial terms can be summarized by saying that whereas wages had gone up in some districts in response to the labour shortages prevailing there, the picture overall was far from satisfactory, as the income of the other manual occupations was far more advantageous. The net result was described by the RNS in Bavaria whose local officials called the farmworkers situation there "desperate."⁵⁶

There was by 1938 a total impasse financially in agriculture. How little the peasants themselves were able to afford wage increases can be judged from their own incomes; in 1936/7 book-keeping revealed the average holding of 5-20 Ha in size as producing only 1800 RM yearly for the whole family, whilst even those from 20-50 Ha yielded only 3000 RM. As one report pointed out, if the owner sold a 20 Ha farm at the average land price prevailing and invested the money at $4\frac{1}{2}\%$ he would have got 1170 RM annually anyway; he was in effect working for the balance of 630 RM a year.⁵⁷ In one actual case quoted by a contemporary writer one Bauer's Erbhof near Heilbronn produced some 800-1300 RM for his family per annum for a fifteen hour working day, whilst in the neighbouring towns a worker could earn far more without even having any money at stake in the form of investments in land and machinery, as did the Bauer.⁵⁸ Under financial conditions such as these it is scarcely surprising that many peasants' sons left the land, unable to face such a bleak future:⁵⁹ even existing owners of small holdings apparently lost heart and sold out when they could.⁶⁰ One OBF was quoted as saying that he knew many local peasants who had not

been able to buy a new Sunday suit for ten years, and that in his village only two houses had wireless sets; in both these cases there were children from the family working in nearby factories.⁶¹ Thus low prices for food meant poor financial returns, which induced the migration of both landworkers and members of the peasant proprietor's own family.

(iii) The role which poor housing might also play in promoting migration was recognized early by Darré; in January 1935 he wrote to the Finance Ministry pointing out that if the *Erzeugungsschlacht* was to be successful the necessary labour force must be procured; as lack of accommodation for it was much in evidence he asked for a subvention of forty per cent for new building costs.⁶² He did not get far with his proposals, since two months later the Finance Ministry replied by drawing attention to the fact that the entire matter lay within the province of the Ministry of Labour and asking Darré if he was now claiming responsibility.⁶³ Little more seems to have happened until under the impetus of the Four Year Plan more funds were released.⁶⁴ In 1938 a report from the Rhineland mentioned accommodation as a contributory factor in the land flight.⁶⁵ Darré himself estimated that eighteen thousand married landworkers were out of work in 1935 because they could not find quarters.⁶⁶ The whole problem of accommodation remained intractable in the Third Reich, as may be gauged from the number of houses actually built for farmworkers, only 23,338 from 1933 to 1938: in the following year it was estimated that no fewer than 350,000 were still needed.⁶⁷

Apart from the shortage of actual accommodation the primitive living-conditions in the villages played a part in encouraging the rural population to migrate. Nearly two thirds of all farms had no running water in the thirties according to one survey.⁶⁸ This resulted in a vast amount of time being spent just on pumping water, a task which in Saxony was estimated to take up from seven to nine hundred hours yearly.⁶⁹ The authorities were

aware of how backward rural life was in respect of water-supplies and electricity,⁷⁰ and how this could affect migration as witness one official document's concern over these matters expressed in 1939.⁷¹

The brightening-up of village life in general was also accepted as a factor in counteracting the tendency to leave the land, and various organizations of the Party cooperated in the production of evening celebrations, including the Hitler Youth and the League of German Girls, its feminine equivalent. The rural population were said to have been grateful for this variety "in their otherwise monotonous life."⁷² The last phrase goes a long way to explaining land flight in an era where the cities with all their attractions perhaps seemed to offer a glamour which the countryside could no longer match.⁷³ The DAF set out to counter this with an organized campaign "Beauty of the Village." Under this, any place could qualify as a model village if it possessed a swimming-pool, sports ground, a Hitler Youth hostel, village hall and first-aid station.⁷⁴ How many did possess all these facilities is evident from current statistics, since by 1937 fewer than 250 villages had qualified for the title.⁷⁵ In the same year the DAF took over the main responsibility for the cultural entertainments in agreement with Darre.⁷⁶ Its official booklet on the subject announced that it would fight rural migration by giving the village its soul back:⁷⁷ in this object a campaign was launched by special staff who laid on evening shows, working with the LBF concerned as far as possible. The programmes appear to have been based mainly on poetry reading, theatre groups, marionette shows and music, both military and otherwise.⁷⁸ The KdF also organized sport as far as possible, which it started on the land in 1934:⁷⁹ in the east this apparently met with little response among the rural population;⁸⁰ anyone who had to spend two hours a day or more just pumping water, apart from other tasks, was not likely to have much time or energy left for physical recreation afterwards.

(iv) For this was really the core of the problem in the thirties; the city did not merely offer more money and better living-conditions, it offered all this for far less effort. A sample survey on ten holdings in Württemberg showed the average peasant on them as working 3,554 hours yearly, a truly formidable figure: for his wife the total was almost four thousand.⁸¹ Hence the rhetorical question posed by one contemporary observer "How many sturdy, healthy, blooming peasant-daughters become, only a few years after marriage, haggard exhausted old women?"⁸² The general effects of this on the wives' health was terrifying; Behrens, writing of Saxony, mentioned reports of horrifying rural conditions piling up on his desk; and gave two examples of overworked wives suffering miscarriages.⁸³ Another source actually quoted a village where in one year 26% of pregnancies terminated with a miscarriage.⁸⁴ Faced with such a future, female labour was ready to leave the land even for lower wages, as was the case when a paper factory opened in Pomerania.⁸⁵ From Gunzenhausen (Bavaria) it was stated that a paint-brush concern was taking women from the land although its wage-rates were not high.⁸⁶ For those women who did stay by virtue of having already married peasants, it was apparently more a question of resigned acceptance of fate than of looking forward to any real enjoyment of life.⁸⁷ So strong was aversion to farmwork that by November 1938 Darre was launching a desperate appeal to farmers' daughters not to leave their mothers alone to cope with all the farm and household duties by leaving for the cities.⁸⁸

The RNS and several other bodies such as the NS Frauenschaft and even the Labour Corps did attempt to lighten the workload for farmers wives; this was often done by giving advice on household management, farm chores, apprentice training etc., for which Sections IC and ITH of the RNS were responsible, the latter assisting with actual farm management from the wife's angle. The Labour Corps had a department especially to help settlers!

wives to accommodate themselves to their new homestead.⁸⁹ Similarly, the Party welfare organization, (NSV) arranged for creches and kindergartens to be installed in villages in agreement with the RNS, the object being to enable the women to leave their children under supervision whilst they helped their husbands with the farm. The NSV itself undertook the task of appointing a child supervisor, whom the RNS women's section responsible for the district introduced into village life by arranging contacts at a social level between her and the local people.⁹⁰ The Reich government made funds available for the actual kindergartens etc.⁹¹ The scheme in principle was excellent but the degree of overwork for women on the land was such that it could never have been a remedy against rural migration in itself; when daughters saw how their mothers had to work they just continued to leave the land.

Another group concerned with rural women was the NS Frauenschaft, whose duties overlapped so badly with the RNS that an agreement delineating their spheres of influence had to be made in February 1935.⁹² The Frauenschaft had instituted a "Duty Evening" for women, devoted to ideological indoctrination, at which attendance was compulsory, even for the tired farmer's wife. After negotiations it was agreed that as a special concession these latter would be exempted in the summer months. The RNS Section IC incidentally continued with its own programme of "Work evenings" which was heavily biased towards political training.⁹³ Attendance was compulsory for the farm wife: ultimately it is hard to avoid a certain impression that the multiplicity of advice-giving and duty-imposing organizations for rural women not only produced a certain duplication of effort from the various authorities, but actually in the long run added to the burdens of the farmer's wife.

Not only women and their husbands were afflicted by a terrible work burden, the same applied to all members of the family, since all hands were

needed to get the utmost possible from the soil. The resulting effect upon the children's health was evidenced by examinations in various regions of the country: three quarters of all rural children inspected had deformed backbones, and nine tenths had foot defects of some kind or another; in a rural school in Saxony there were only seven children completely fit out of ninety.⁹⁴ This had serious implications for any military programme: the March 1930 NS election programme had called the peasant the backbone of national defence, but the reintroduction of conscription showed just how deficient rural youth was in physical terms: medical examination of recruits showed that those from the cities were superior to their country cousins, which was ascribed to poor hygiene and overwork for the latter.⁹⁵ The low remuneration which the overwork brought just added insult to injury; if the agrarian sector had been paid a share of the national income equivalent to its share of national work, it would have received over four billion RM or more extra in every peacetime year of the Third Reich up to 1938.⁹⁶

(v) The poor conditions so far described worked all the more devastatingly upon morale by virtue of the booming state of the other parts of the economy at the same time; the NS had spoken so much of "peasant policy" in 1933 that the contrast between villages and cities now seemed even harsher. Consequently when a rumour about a new factory arose in the Rhineland there were immediate enquiries from landworkers.⁹⁷ From Monschau it was reported that building work for the Army offered very favourable opportunities to labour, the shortage of which locally was now affecting the agrarian section of the Four Year Plan;⁹⁸ that those leaving the land went into construction of some sort or another is clear from contemporary statistics, which proved an increase in building workers in general of approximately 800,000 between 1932 and early 1938, of which rather over half were assumed to have come from agriculture.⁹⁹ In 1939, the head of

the Party's Agrarian Office, Motz, contributed an article to an NSDAP publication admitting that rearmament was working unfavourably on the agrarian sector in terms of an economic disequilibrium which encouraged migration; he conceded that agriculture was in a state which would be unbearable if it were permanent, but tried to defend the situation by saying that weapons were necessary to defend Hitler's Reich, and that without them the peasant would be annihilated by international Jewry.¹⁰⁰

Some reference has to be made to army service in itself, which operated upon the land in two other ways apart from causing a construction boom. Firstly, it deprived agriculture of a youth's labour services during his term of service and secondly, it unsettled him; as a result, many did not return to the farm after once seeing the outside world.¹⁰¹ One Labour Exchange in East Germany reported that of all the local boys who had attended an agricultural vocational course between 1933 and 1936 only just over one third were still in villages a year later, and added significantly that some on military service expected to return but that the net loss would be probably fifty per cent.¹⁰²

(vi) The factors so far narrated here when combined tended to work very seriously on morale in agrarian circles. The peasant had sufficient wit to know when he was being given low priority, and in any case Party spokesmen like Motz virtually admitted it openly. The net result was a feeling among the farmers that they were "the beasts of burden for society in general."¹⁰³ One OBF was quoted as saying in 1939 that the hardest thing against which he and his colleagues had to struggle was the inferiority complex noticeable among the rural population.¹⁰⁴ One report from Bavaria in 1938 spoke of widespread pessimism among peasants in the region.¹⁰⁵ Indeed this appears to have been quite general, since one official body stated in February of that year that the general mood in the peasantry was one of depression according to reports from all Gauen; indebtedness and

the lack of hired help caused by the landflight were adduced as the main reasons.¹⁰⁶

The consciousness of this state of affairs contributed to the landflight by dissuading girls from marrying farmers. When young peasants were asked in Hesse why they still had not married they gave as the cause a question of their own "Who wants to marry a peasant today?" and alleged that rural girls would rather enter into matrimony with workers.¹⁰⁷

There was solid support for this belief, expressed in a sociological survey analysing matrimonial advertisements in one rural newspaper in Swabia in 1935/6. Altogether there were 224 such announcements from peasants seeking a wife, which drew almost exactly the same number of replies; a group of forty manual workers, craftsmen and officials got 400 answers to their contemporary requests in the same journal. The relative unattractiveness of farmers as husbands was underlined even more sharply the following year, when 71% of all those advertising in a similar fashion got no reply at all from girls.¹⁰⁸ This meant that girls were presumably prepared to marry outside agricultural circles only, which in its turn deterred the youths from remaining on the land.

(vii) There were, of course, other factors making for the migration of youth, but the general unattractiveness of the land as a career seems to have been the main one. In order to try and improve prospects in agriculture for young men the government encouraged vocational training in special schools, a three year course being terminated by the award of a diploma to landworkers attending; instruction was in the hands of teachers who had been farmers themselves and was under the direction of the KBF.¹⁰⁹ There were also apprenticeships for specialized tradesmen, cowmen, shepherds etc., part of the instruction being given on a designated farm, and part in a vocational school. No great enthusiasm on either side seems to have existed for this, as of 41,000 such vacancies in 1937 only 7,000 were

actually taken up by aspiring landworkers;¹¹⁰ there was also a definite resistance on the part of some farmers to take on such apprentices, presumably because they wanted skilled labour only, and it appears that a certain pressure had to be applied to get peasants in the Rhineland to engage youths on this basis.¹¹¹

This was exercised upon rural youth as well apparently since when one farmer's son in the Rhineland wanted to become a locksmith the Labour Exchange refused him permission. The father then wrote to certify that his son had no interest in farming; the Kreisbauernschaft office eventually told the farmer that the decision rested with the Labour Exchange (presumably because the son needed permission to leave the land). Pressure was brought to bear by the latter body on the farmer, a rosy picture of agricultural prospects being painted. The outcome was not recorded, but clearly the authorities did not intend to give up without a struggle.¹¹² It is quite clear that the best of rural youth did not intend to stay on the land as one report in May 1939 emphasized by stating that the well-endowed pupils who remained in agricultural schools were the exception to the rule.¹¹³ The LBF in the Kurmark told Darre that the best of the fifteen to eighteen-year-old rural youth never (underlined in the original) chose the career of a landworker.¹¹⁴ Wages, and the gradual loss of the fear of unemployment in the cities were cited as the greatest factors in deterring youth from the land,¹¹⁵ but later the same source spoke of long hours and no free Sundays as being equally decisive in their effect upon both parents and school-leavers.¹¹⁶

The general reluctance of younger people to take up a career in agriculture, or stay in it once they had, lowered the quality of labour quite considerably. In three parishes in Württemberg, for example, two thirds of all peasants were over fifty years of age by May 1938; to replace the labour loss suffered in recent years only temporary labour had been available at

harvest time.¹¹⁷ One village near Hanover had seven farms, whose combined labour force in 1938 amounted to a curious mixture of maids and labourers; one of the three in the first category was educationally subnormal and another a girl from a local orphanage, six of the seven labourers having also been reared on the parish, whilst the seventh was a Russian by birth and now stateless.¹¹⁸ Even so, the farmers there were luckier than the Bauer in the Swabian Alps where on a 75 Ha holding with 30 cattle he was left alone with his wife and aged parents, his labour force of seven having left completely.¹¹⁹

Rural Migration and Production Levels

(i) Owners in such a situation could do two things; either they could sell or let the property, the latter frequently being done,¹²⁰ or they could reduce their stocks or their output in some way. That the latter course was often chosen can be seen from Darre's speech at the sixth Peasant Assembly in 1938 when he attributed an actual fall in butter production principally to labour shortages on peasant holdings.¹²¹ The deputy RBF himself could quote instances of stock-reduction in Saxony, where one farmer cut his cattle holding from 95 to 65, whilst another could maintain only three quarters the number previously owned.¹²² Even if stock was not reduced no advance in production was possible, despite the needs of the Four Year Plan; by January 1938 the deputy LBF in Bavaria was telling his superiors quite frankly "One cannot think any longer about increasing yields."¹²³

A subsidiary effect of the landflight by the labour force was the necessity to change to part-time farming, judging by statistics available. In Gunzenhausen, for example, there were nearly ten per cent less full-time farmers in 1939 than there had been six years before whilst the increase in those cultivating the land as a secondary occupation corresponded almost exactly.¹²⁴ For eighteen Kreisbauernschaften examined for this thesis, full-

time ownership declined quite sharply over the same period, by slightly over ten per cent. Yet again the number of part-timers rose quite sharply.¹²⁵ It rather looks as though the non-availability of labour was beginning to have an effect upon the whole pattern of farming in the country, which in the long run must have been deleterious to production since clearly no one who is in agriculture as a sideline will devote to it the time which a wholly professional farmer could: investment may also be affected in this way as well. It must be pointed out before leaving the effects of the labour shortage on output that peasants holding stock or farms devoted to root crops like sugar-beet were harder hit than the grain-producers, since the cultivation of the latter needs less labour in general. This is clear not just from the cases of stock-reduction quoted, but also from the replies to a circular sent out by the Oberpräsident of Hanover in 1936, which show that the labour situation in the districts concerned, such as Osnabrück, Hanover and Hildesheim depended on how much beet was being harvested in that area.¹²⁶ Seen in this light the rural migration takes on an even more significant appearance, since it was in fats and fodder, part of which consisted of root crops, that Germany was most deficient. The relative failure of the Erzeugungsschlacht in these two respects can therefore be traced directly to this landflight.

Finally, as far as production was concerned, there was the question of land-improvement, which also underwent setbacks due to lack of labour. In Dinkelsbühl (Bavaria) betterment was cut down to only 11.8 Ha in 1938, having been more than seven times as much in the previous year: in Gunzenhausen silage construction was threatened as well as improvements to the soil.¹²⁷ The REM had to accept that the whole programme of land consolidation, settlement and the betterment of soil in general was being curtailed by a lack of skilled workers, who were going off to private building firms, a process which all legislation had so far failed to stop.¹²⁸

(ii) If all means, both legislative and material, in the shape of attempts to improve housing and amenities etc. had failed, then there seemed to be only two choices left to the NSDAP; either a drop in production was accepted, which would have jeopardized the whole economy by its effect on currency reserves etc. or labour must be obtained from elsewhere. This of course ignores the possibility of increased output with the diminished labour force by rationalization and improvements in technique.¹²⁹ In theory there was nothing to stop bigger units being formed on the land but there were two immediate objections. Firstly, in purely practical terms this would have been hard to achieve in the midst of the Four Year Plan, on which all had been concentrated, and in any case the time-span of six years from 1933 probably was not long enough even without the attention given to rearmament. After all, the pattern of small and medium holdings was the result of centuries of development and could hardly have been changed quickly without provoking a really violent upheaval, with probably disastrous results upon the drive for self-sufficiency in the short-term at least. Secondly, the whole of Party ideology was opposed to the transformation of the agrarian economy into a system of latifundien; the preamble to the Erbhof law stressed the necessity for a sound peasantry purely in terms of maintaining the German population at its present level.¹³⁰ For socio-political reasons no drastic reorganization of farming was possible, and attempts at rationalization and mechanization could take place only within the framework of a large number of relatively small holdings. Given this, and the desertion of existing labour, the only alternative was manpower from other sources to fill the gap.

(iii) The biggest single replacement group ultimately formed in the Third Reich was that of the foreign workers; there can be no doubt that this was a bitter pill for any extreme Right-Wing party to swallow, especially one which had published so definite a statement in 1930 regarding

this point. The Party programme for agriculture had proclaimed that by bettering wages and living-standards for landworkers and elevating agriculture in general and "by a prohibition on rural migration foreign workers will be unnecessary and therefore forbidden in future."¹³¹ This was in any event the policy of the Weimar Republic as well, which made great efforts, including the training of unemployed city youths as landworkers, to obviate the need for foreign labour; Polish workers employed for the beet harvest were not allowed to remain in Germany over the winter, all permanent work of this nature being reserved for Germans.¹³² By adopting such strict regulations the government was able to reduce dependence on foreigners to such an extent that whereas 125,000 were given work permits in 1928, by 1932 the number had been reduced to 7,000.¹³³ The initial policy after Hitler's accession was to continue with this trend and in May 1933 the government announced that no seasonal workers from abroad would be given permits until further notice.¹³⁴ A 1934 article underlined NS principles in this respect by stating that one reason for encouraging the Hitler Youth to take up land work was to avoid hiring foreign labour;¹³⁵ the law of the same year regarding Labour Exchange permits for German landworkers migrating to the cities gave the desire to cut out labourers from abroad as a ground for the measure.¹³⁶

By 1935 however simple practical necessity had already begun to triumph over ideology, since from 1st April of that year to 31st March 1936 over fifty thousand permits for foreign labour for agriculture were issued.¹³⁷ This was soon to become a veritable flood in view of the rapidly increasing shortfall in domestic labour supply, which in terms of excess demand over supply amounted to 374,000 by autumn 1937.¹³⁸ The Four Year Plan naturally intensified the drive for more labour still, and in August 1937 the Ministry of Labour found it necessary to issue a special directive regarding the treatment of foreign workers, who were now

becoming quite a regular feature of the rural scene.¹³⁹ It was decreed that such workers of German descent could remain in steady agricultural employment but that other outside labour must be refused permission to stay once their present duties were fulfilled.¹⁴⁰ By the following January it was estimated that 200,000 foreigners would be required for the coming year, to help fill gaps in the domestic labour force on the land.¹⁴¹ In fact, only 80,000 were eventually hired, due simply to currency difficulties:¹⁴² this was really the crux of the problem, for although some labour from outside had by now made itself indispensable, the fact was that between devoting scarce monetary reserves to importing food and using them to pay for foreign workers there was ultimately little difference.¹⁴³ It was no doubt mainly with this last point in mind that the Labour Commissioner for the Four Year Plan described foreign helpers on the land as being no real solution in a speech in February 1939.¹⁴⁴

By that year Italian workers had become so familiar that the RNS was issuing special instructions on how to deal with them; some individual workers had even expressed a wish to bring their families with them, which sounds like a full-scale invasion.¹⁴⁵ The desperate labour shortage had by now necessitated such a mixture of nationalities being used that fresh problems were created: accommodation normally utilized by Polish seasonal workers was found not to be good enough for Italians.¹⁴⁶ In April 1939 the police in Langenberg (Rhineland) issued permits for two Yugoslavs and a Dutchman who could remain until further notice.¹⁴⁷ The nationality of the foreigners seems to have depended upon which country happened to be nearest to the German region concerned; several reports for the Rhineland speak of Dutch workers:¹⁴⁸ Württemberg on the other hand used Yugoslavs and Italians,¹⁴⁹ and Upper Silesia obtained mainly Poles and Hungarians.¹⁵⁰ By mid-1939 the labour position was so desperate that Germany was going even further afield in search of manpower, even Bulgarians being drawn upon.¹⁵¹

As a sign of the times may be instanced the severe difficulties caused in early summer of the same year when the Polish contingent expected did not materialize; (which may have necessitated the call-up of the Bulgarians) as a result of this shortfall farmers were called on to redistribute existing foreign labour from other countries to ensure fair play.¹⁵² This demonstrated how dependent the country had become, temporarily at least, upon outside sources of manpower for the land. Quite apart from currency problems the use of foreigners brought little relief to the smaller holdings, as farmers in Germany were called upon apparently to pay the return rail fare of any outside helper engaged, which the peasants could not afford.¹⁵³ It may well have been the larger grain and root-crop cultivators who benefited mostly from the scheme; in this conjunction it is noticeable that the cases cited at the time of stock reduction etc. caused by labour shortages refer always to peasant farms.

However well-regarded the outsiders were as workers therefore,¹⁵⁴ they were no long-term solution, although in order to try and fulfill the *Erzeugungsschlacht* the government had to make use of them temporarily. But it is an ironic comment on the Third Reich that six years after coming into office a regime which had sworn to oust foreign labourers from German soil was now granting permits to far more than had been employed by the Weimar Republic in its last years, indeed in 1938 more than eleven times as many.

(iv) Apart from external sources a number of other ways were used to get manpower on to the land, particularly at harvest time. These included the so-called "Duty Year" for girls, the use of the Labour Corps, of volunteers from various youth movements and even of military conscripts and government white-collar workers. Before dealing briefly with each of these it must be underlined that all labour produced by such methods was largely untrained and was at best a poor substitute for the skilled labourer who had migrated to the nearest building-firm.

The "Duty Year" for girls, applicable to all un-married and still less than 25 years old, was introduced in 1937: the obligatory service had to be devoted either to agriculture or to domestic service; without a certificate attesting to completion they could not obtain other employment.¹⁵⁵ From 1st March 1939 until 31st January 1940 nearly forty per cent of all girls conscripted chose agriculture, which represented a powerful addition to the labour force numerically if not in quality.¹⁵⁶ A volunteer service also existed, organized by the League of German Girls (BDM). These helpers received initial training in groups, one group per farm, in order to initiate them into the rural mentality, after which about ninety per cent were ready for installation as individuals in agriculture. The life does not seem to have held any great appeal and in Brandenburg only 6/8% remained after the first year's service.¹⁵⁷ There were no legal limits to their working hours and some peasants were irresponsible enough to exploit the girls as cheap labour.¹⁵⁸

The masculine counterpart to the BDM organization was the Hitler Youth, which operated its own Land Help programme, based on an appeal by von Schirach, its leader, in 1934, to which only four hundred responded.¹⁵⁹ these boys and youths from 14-25 years old were put only on peasant holdings as the larger estates used seasonal labour mainly in summers. By 1937 there were over fifty thousand volunteers under this scheme;¹⁶⁰ yet again, few remained when their tour of duty expired.¹⁶¹ In addition to services for the individual sexes there was also a joint organization called Land Service, based on mixed groups of ten to twenty in number: the workers lived communally but assisted on holdings as individual helpers doing a nine-month spell commencing at Easter. Few stayed on when the time came to leave officially.¹⁶² All told the Land Service provided 26,016 helpers of both sexes combined in 1938.¹⁶³ The volunteer services cannot be said to have really made much difference at a time of such a chronic labour

shortage and the smallness of the number who did stay on is a testimony to rural conditions in general. It should also be mentioned that attempts were made to interest children in the land by giving them nine months in agriculture when they left school; few took up the career permanently, despite this encouragement, as "the parents' resistance was too strong."¹⁶⁴

Probably the largest single source of outside aid, apart from actual foreign labour, was the Labour Corps;¹⁶⁵ originally voluntary it was made a compulsory service in February 1935 and its strength throughout the period of the Third Reich was considerable.¹⁶⁶ It was utilized mainly on land drainage, flood protection, reclamation etc. A contemporary observer estimated its actual contribution to agriculture as being worth some 60 Million RM annually.¹⁶⁷ This should not, however, conceal the fact that the Labour Corps was ultimately of little help to the man who needed him most, the peasant; this arose partially because of the very structure of the Corps, which was a mass organization like an army, and quite unsuitable for the provision of individual helpers on small or medium holdings. Moreover, as in the case of foreign labour, there was the question of finance; farmers had to pay for Labour Corps services and this could naturally be difficult for the peasant accustomed to family labour only on a holding whose cash returns were not large. As the remuneration requested amounted to 40 Pfennigs per hour per worker, even the Bauernführer sometimes turned the Corps down as a labour source.¹⁶⁸ Attempts were made to overcome this by sending troops of helpers from village to village which was unsatisfactory, since at harvest-time all peasants wanted the assistance at the same time.¹⁶⁹ The further point must be made that the Corps actually took labour away from the land by calling up peasants' sons; the latter were obliged to serve in its rank as a result of an agreement in 1935 between Darré and the Labour Corps leader, Hierl.¹⁷⁰ Even landworkers were conscripted, although in the Rhineland at least they were allowed to join on

1st October rather than 1st April like everyone else, which at least saved them for one summer.¹⁷¹

Exactly how the loss of peasants' sons, also liable for military conscription, operated on agriculture can be evaluated from contemporary records; in one case in Lower Saxony one Bauer lost both sons simultaneously in this way, which led to frantic requests for the one in the Labour Corps to be demobilized as the situation on the family holding was desperate.¹⁷² When another Bauer asked for his son in the Corps to get leave for the harvest the OBF refused to take up the case, on the grounds that the organization simply did not grant individual furlough any longer.¹⁷³ In assessing estimates of how much the Labour Corps did in reclaiming land etc. it should be borne in mind that behind these impressive-sounding statistics lay the reality of farmers battling with the problems of maintaining output at a time of labour shortage whilst their own sons were in the Corps and unable to help. In balance this obligatory service may actually have been counter-productive to some extent.

By 1937 a desperate situation was leading to the use of almost any kind of labour available, quite irrespective of quality or knowledge of agriculture. To bring in the harvest any pair of hands was good enough. At Jülich the army was used in July of that year,¹⁷⁴ and at Düren the shortage was so obvious that even in early summer a forecast was made that primary school-children would be required, as the unemployed simply did not turn up for agricultural work when needed.¹⁷⁵ The following year saw an appeal from Hess to the Party and all its affiliated bodies such as the Hitler Youth, BDM, S.A. and S.S. to assist; apparently this was answered, as in October it was reported that farmers were grateful for the help rendered.¹⁷⁶ The same harvest-time saw fifteen hundred sailors being employed on the land.¹⁷⁷ Labour shortage in the summer of 1939 was so severe that white-collar workers in government service with some knowledge

of farming, or with relatives on the land, were granted two weeks special leave if they wished to gather in food supplies.¹⁷⁸ In Lower Saxony one peasant just sentenced to a year in prison for attempted rape got three months suspension due to the labour shortage.¹⁷⁹

Up to a point, of course, the phenomenon of rural migration is an inevitable trend in modern countries, to which Germany prior to 1933 had been no exception. Moreover according to NS ideology the peasantry was the life-source of the whole nation, so that its duty was to supply population to the cities as well as replenishing that in rural areas.¹⁸⁰ But it is suggested that what happened in the Third Reich went far beyond normal migration figures and indeed exceeded any previous drain to such an extent that the whole *Erzeugungsschlacht* began in 1939 to grind to a halt. The paradox was that it was precisely the plan designed to maximise production from 1936 onwards that contributed most to this situation, although the landflight had clearly been in operation almost from the moment of the NS accession, as the unemployment in the cities began to be solved. In retrospect it seems as though the worst effect which the labour shortage subsequently provoked operated on the land in lowering peasant morale and dashing the hopes of 1933; then it seemed to the peasants that at last a government was in office which would put agriculture before exports and international trade. By 1938 it was clear that the peasantry was now playing second fiddle to defence instead. In Pfarrkirchen (Bavaria) morale was so low that peasants were saying that they could now see why the *Erbhof* law had been created, namely, to tie them to the soil and ensure that their farms could not be sold.¹⁸¹ This sounds suspiciously as though they would have done just that had they had the chance to do so. The deputy LBF in the region stated candidly that there was only one solution to the process which left only the old and unfit on the land, and that was a slowing-down

in the tempo of rearmament.¹⁸² He gave it as his opinion that the worst effect upon those remaining was passivity in the face of the Four Year Plan tasks.¹⁸³

Apart from the slowing-down in production, the other two aspects of rural migration worthy of comment are the attitude of youth towards the land as a career and the inability, curious in a dictatorship, on the part of the government to stem the landflight by legal means. As far as the second was concerned, the attached proforma, drawn up by the Labour Exchange in Düsseldorf, sums up the whole position in 1939. It is quite clear that industrial concerns had paid no attention whatever to existing regulations, so grave was their need for labour to complete industry's share of the Four Year Plan. This absolute drive towards fulfillment of output plans seemed to have produced complete indifference to the actual letter of the law, as the last paragraph of the form implies. By January 1939 the Labour Commissioner for the Plan was saying that "absolute freedom of movement cannot exist in a totalitarian state," as duty to the community was ranked higher.¹⁸⁴ Labour problems must be solved in conjunction with Labour Exchanges, even if that led to a shrinking of personal liberty. He appeared to be saying that regulations were more likely to be enforced in the future, which might therefore have taken place even without a war.¹⁸⁵ But it was curiously late in the history of the Third Reich to be talking in terms of actually applying the law.

Finally there is the question of how German youth regarded the land, which was obviously crucial to agriculture's future. It seems reasonably clear from evidence quoted here that it did not much like what it saw, hence the flight, not just of landworkers, but of farmers' sons and daughters. From this it is legitimate to deduce that even if the war had not broken out the NSDAP's dream of the peasantry as the eternal basis to German life etc. would have become progressively harder to realize with the passage of

An die Firma

Betr. Rückführung berufs fremd beschäftigter landwirtschaftlicher Arbeitskräfte in die Landwirtschaft.

Aus wehr- und wirtschaftspolitischen Gründen wurde dem Reichsnährstand die Versorgung des deutschen Volkes aus eigener Scholle zur Pflicht gemacht. Um einen Rückgang der landwirtschaftlichen Produktion zu vermeiden, muss noch mehr als bisher auf die Sicherstellung der erforderlichen landwirtschaftlichen Kräfte hingewirkt werden. Entgegen aller Massnahmen der Reichsregierung hat die Landflucht in erschreckendem Masse zugenommen. Trotz aller Anstrengungen der beteiligten Stellen und dem Einsatz von Schülern, Pensionären, Kleinrentnern, Wehrmacht und Reichsarbeitsdienst zu den Spitzenarbeiten, fehlen in der deutschen Landwirtschaft ca. 1/2 Million ständige Arbeitskräfte. 150 000 ausländische Wanderarbeiter sind bereits schon in Deutschland tätig und kosten uns eine Menge wertvoller für andere Zwecke notwendiger Devisen.- Die HJ. und die Partei bemühen sich durch die Werbung für den HJ.-Landdienst und Bekämpfung der Landflucht dem Übel zu steuern. Alles scheitert jedoch daran, dass trotz aller Belehrungen und Verwarnungen gewerbliche und Industriebetriebe Arbeitskräfte, die bisher in der Landwirtschaft tätig waren, durch Anbieten höherer Löhne vom Lande abziehen. Die Verlockungen der Grossstadt spielen hier auch eine wesentliche Rolle und helfen mit, das Land von tüchtigen und landwirtschaftlichen Arbeitskräften zu entblößen.

Um die Sicherstellung der Arbeitskräfte für die Landwirtschaft in diesem Jahr zu gewährleisten, hat der Stellvertreter des Führers, die Reichsregierung und die Partei die deutsche Jugend zum Dienste und zur Rückkehr zur Scholle aufgefordert.

Der Herr Präsident des Landesarbeitsamtes Rheinland, Köln, hat mit Verfügung vom 4. Februar 1939 angeordnet, dass landwirtschaftliche Arbeitskräfte und vom Lande stammende und mit landwirtschaftlichen Arbeiten vertraute Arbeitskräfte vorerst mit keinen anderen als landwirtschaftlichen Arbeiten beschäftigt werden dürfen. Ebenso wird versucht, alle in den letzten Jahren in die gewerbliche Wirtschaft und Industrie abgewanderten Kräfte, die jetzt berufs fremd beschäftigt sind, der Landwirtschaft unter allen Umständen wieder zuzuführen.

In Ihrem Betriebe ist seit _____ der frühere landwirtschaftliche Arbeiter _____ aus _____ beschäftigt.

Unter Bezugnahme auf die genannte Verfügung und die Bestrebungen der Reichsregierung bitte ich, den Genannten bis zum _____ zu veranlassen, sich mit seinem Arbeitsbuch während der Dienststunden von 9 - 12 Uhr in Zimmer 132 einzufinden. Ich beabsichtige, ihn g.F. in die Landwirtschaft zurückzuführen.

Ich mache darauf aufmerksam, dass Betriebsführer, die sich trotz eingehender Belehrung den arbeitseinsatzmässigen Belangen verschliessen, dem Herrn Präsidenten des Landesarbeitsamtes zu melden sind. Eine Kontrolle der Betriebe bzw. der Arbeitsbücher behalte ich mir vor.

Im Auftrage :

time, due simply to the fact that by 1933 the country was already too highly-industrialized to turn back. The magnet of urban life could not now lose its power of attraction, for overworked, underpaid youth in rural areas. This applied to girls especially, and had done before the NS accession.¹⁸⁶ One farmer's wife perhaps provided the best summary of the situation when she said of contemporary girlhood "They would rather wear silk stockings today than wooden clogs."¹⁸⁷

1. P. Quante quoted in Haushofer "Ideengeschichte" p.120
2. Figures from "Die wirtschaftliche Lage der Landarbeiter und Landarbeiterinnen in Deutschland" p.12.
3. E. Topf "Die Grüne Front" p.53
4. F.C. von Hellermann "Landmaschinen gegen Landflucht" p.18
5. M. Brand "Die Frau in der deutschen Landwirtschaft" p.203
6. See "Bericht über die Tätigkeit etc" HSA(S) 913/E 130/IV
7. "Statistisches Jahrbuch 1941/2" p.18
8. In January 1933 out of six million unemployed only 283,545 were registered as out of work on the land: "Statistisches Jahrbuch 1941/2" p.426 and "1936" p.340
9. According to the Wirtschaftspolitik Commission of the NSDAP at a meeting held on 10th June 1934 when Reinhardt of the Ministry of Finance produced figures to show that whereas 700, 000 children had left school in 1933, 1,300,000 would do so in 1934: BA-NS 26/953
10. A. Müller "Sozialarbeit in der HJ" in "Soziale Praxis" Heft 28 1934
11. V.B. 1st June 1934 "HJ und die Landhilfe"
12. WB 5th July 1933: "Landwirte, macht Euch die Landhilfe zu nutze"
13. Ibid 11th October 1933
14. Landrat Geilenkirchen-Heinsberg to Regpräsident Aachen report for May 1937: HSA(D) 1067
15. Landrat Jülich to Regpräsident Aachen 7th June 1938: HSA(D) 1070
16. Regpräsident Cologne to Ministry of Economic Affairs report for December/January 1938: HSA(D) 1069
17. From reports in September 1933: ADC "Angelegenheit Ost Preussen 1933"
18. "Statistisches Jahrbuch 1936" p.325 for the statistics
19. Minister of Labour to Chancellory May 1934: BA-R43 I/1469
20. The measure was accepted by the Cabinet on 15th May 1934: Ibid
21. "Frankfurter Zeitung" 5th October 1934

22. Wunderlich "Farm Labour in Germany 1810-1945" p.295
23. V.B. 9th February 1935 "Ein Betrag zur Erzeugungsschlacht"
24. "Gesetz zur Befriedigung des Bedarfs der landwirtschaftlichen Arbeitskräften": V.B. 28th February 1935
25. "NS Landpost" 1st March 1935
26. Regpräsident Hildesheim to REM 19th December 1935 regarding a report from Goslar Labour Exchange: NSA 122a 13
27. Brozsat "The Concentration Camps 1939-45" in Krausnick "The Anatomy of the S.S. State" p.450
28. According to Hellermann "Landmaschinen gegen Landflucht" p.39
29. H. Kühne "Der Arbeitseinsatz in Vier Jahres Plan" in "Jahrbücher für National Ökonomie und Statistik" 1937 p.704
30. REM to all Ministries and Länder 27th February 1935: HSA(S) 646/E 130/IV
31. KBF Niederberg to Landesbauernschaft Rhineland 29th June 1936 speaks of workers going off to industry despite all legislation: HSA(D) 127
32. The KBF Niederberg was very active in his attempts to get back the runaways, e.g. his letter to a local farmer on 11th June 1936 asking him which construction company a former landworker was employed in; this was concerned with the new Autobahn programme: HSA(D) 127
On 26th May he wrote to the Labour Exchange in Düsseldorf to get back a man now in a brickworks: Ibid
33. KBF Niederberg to Lbsch Rhineland 28th May 1936: Ibid
34. Regpräsident Cologne to Ministry of Economic Affairs report for December/January 1938: HSA(D) 1069
35. The survey based on farms of up to 50 Ha in size only was reported in the "Westdeutsche Land Zeitung" 28th April 1939
36. About half of this total was comprised of peasants children who had left school since 1933 but were not currently in agriculture:
"Um Blut und Boden" p.503

37. The exact figures, inclusive of all types of labour, were 1,051,000 male and 398,000 female; Darré to all Ministries and Party leaders September 1942 with the census results: BA-R2/18197
38. From 1925 to 1933 the labour loss had been 713,000: "Statistisches Jahrbuch 1941/2" p.18
39. This information has been taken from the respective files in BA-R/16
40. Quoted in Hellermann "Landmaschinen gegen Landflucht" p.21
41. Behrens "Stillstand in der Erzeugungsschlacht?" "Odal" March 1939 p.153
42. That peasants' sons were leaving was noticed as early as 1936 in one area: Regrat Hildesheim to Regpräsident report 2nd March 1936: NSA 122a 13
43. "Ideengeschichte" p.119
44. Bente "Landwirtschaft und Bauerntum" p.177 gives the increase as 1486 Mill. RM to 1512 Mill. RM for this period
45. From BA-R16/969
46. KBF Gunzenhausen to Lbsch Bavaria January 1938: BA-R2/18291
47. Vide the report in January 1938 "Bemerkungen zur Erzeugungsschlacht" from the deputy LBF Bavaria to the RNS in Berlin: Ibid
48. Landrat Erkelens to Regpräsident Aachen 3rd December 1936: HSA(D) 1065
49. These ranged from 17% to 25% depending on the exact duties of the employee: after 1936 further increases took place: Reichsamt für Agrarpolitik report to Minister Präsident Württemberg February 1938: HSA(S) 646/E 130/IV.
50. Lbsch Brunswick to Landwerker 4th May 1938 with details: NSA 331 B.61
51. "Statistisches Jahrbuch 1941/2" p.384
52. "Thüringische Tageblatt" 2nd August 1938 "Was soll mein Junge werden?"

53. The attached schedule was included in the report from the Reg-präsident Cologne to the Ministry of Economic Affairs March 1938: HSA(D) 1069
54. Reischle to Minister of Finance 11th May 1938: Ibid
55. Körner to Reischle 19th May 1938: BA-R2/18197
56. Deputy LBF Bavaria to RNS Berlin 30th January 1938: BA-R2/18291: this letter refers to similar circumstances prevailing in both Saxony and Hanover
57. Reichsamt für Agrarpolitik to Minister President Württemberg "Confidential" report 20th May 1938: HSA(S) 646/E 130/IV
58. Quoted in J. Müller "Deutsches Bauerntum zwischen gestern und morgen" p.33 (henceforth "Müller")
59. KBF Krumbach to Lbsch Bavaria 22nd January 1938 reported one Bauer with three sons of whom the one in the army had renounced the family farm whilst the others had both said "I'd rather be a worker than take over the holding": BA-R2/18291
60. KBF Ingolstadt to Lbsch Bavaria January 1938 gave eight cases from his Kreis of Bauern either selling out or reducing stock, and stated that at least two dozen similar cases had gone to the Erbhof courts in 1937: Ibid
61. Müller p.41
62. Darré to Finance Ministry 26th January 1935: BA-R2/18018
63. Finance Ministry to REM 19th March 1935: Ibid
64. Lbsch Weser-Ems provided only 908 new dwellings from November 1934 to September 1937: "Die landwirtschaftlichen Verhältnisse" etc. p.43: NSA 122 XXXII 88a
65. Landrat Jülich to Regpräsident Aachen 7th June 1938: HSA(D) 1070
66. Darré to Finance Ministry 30th November 1935: BA-R2/18018
67. The figures for house construction are from "Die Landesbauernschaften in Zahlen" pp.176/7: the 1939 estimate of those still required is

- from Hellermann "Landmaschinen gegen Landflucht" p.38
68. Müller p.92
 69. M. Brand "Die Frau in der deutschen Landwirtschaft" p.123
 70. The consumption of electricity was very low on the land, which led to a special tariff in 1938 to encourage a wider use: Hellermann "Landmaschinen gegen Landflucht" pp.77/9
 71. "Ministerialblatt" 5th April 1939
 72. Hellermann above cit. p.49
 73. That the proximity of Berlin had an influence upon landflight in the east, which was more than just economic, was reported in 1938 by the LBF in the Kurmark: Wendt to Darre 29th January 1938: HDC Reichsnährstand Wendt
 74. "Arbeitertum" 15th December 1937 "Unsere Dörfer bekommen ein neues Gesicht"
 75. Jacoby (Ed) "Das Dritte Reich im Aufbau" Vol.I p.73
 76. The RBF issued a decree transferring responsibility to the "Kraft durch Freude" (KdF) department of the DAF 13th March 1937: "Die Betreuung des Dorfes" (published by the KdF) p.7
 77. Ibid p.7
 78. Ibid pp.21/3
 79. See "Arbeitertum" 1st April 1937 "Der Sport muss aufs Land"
 80. Hellermann "Landmaschinen gegen Landflucht" p.49
 81. Quoted in Brand "Die Frau in der deutschen Landwirtschaft" p.37
 82. Ibid p.44
 83. "Stillstand in der Erzeugungsgeschlecht?" "Odal" March 1939 p.153
 84. "Auf dem Wege zur völkischen Schule" published by the RNS and NS Lehrerbund 1939: p.7
 85. Hellermann above cit. p.31
 86. KBF Gunzenhausen to RNS Bavaria 8th December 1937: BA-R2/18291

87. As one writer put it "The peasant's wife of today dare not weigh off the debits and credits of her life against one another" Brand above cit. p.46
88. In a speech at the Sixth Peasants Assembly: quoted in "Um Blut und Boden" p.569
89. "Jahrbuch des Reichsarbeitsdienst 1937" p.39
90. Koeppens "Das Deutsche Landfrauenbuch" p.121
91. Ministry of Interior to Regpräsident Osnabruck 29th July 1938 offered 200 RM subsidy per kindergarten for 36 to be erected in the Lbsch Weser-Ems: NSA 122a XXXII 80
92. Koeppens above cit. pp.84/5
93. Koeppens above cit. p.233
94. These facts are from Müller p.108
95. "Die Betreuung des Dorfes" p.25
96. Except for 1935/6 when the difference amounted to 3.9 billion RM: Bauer and Dehen "Landwirtschaft und Volkeseinkommen" p.430
97. Bezirk Cologne to Regpräsident Aachen 21st December 1936: HSA(D) 1065
98. Landrat Monschau to Regpräsident Aachen 13th June 1938: HSA(D) 1070
99. Reichsamt für Agrarpolitik to Minister President Württemberg February 1938: HSA(S) 646/E 130/IV
100. K. Motz "Landflucht oder Ostraumpolitik?" in "Unser Wille und Weg" July 1939
101. Deputy LBF Bavaria to RNS Berlin January 1938 "Bemerkungen zur Erzeugungsschlacht": BA-R2/18291
102. Quoted in Hellermann "Landmaschinen gegen Landflucht" p.23
103. Müller p.39
104. Ibid p.41
105. KBF Hof/Saale to Lbsch Bavaria January 1938: BA-R2/18291
106. Reichsamt für Agrarpolitik to Minister President Württemberg January 1938 report: HSA(S) 646/E 130/IV

107. Wagner (LBF Hessen) to RNS Staff Office 24th January 1938: ADC
Reichsnährstand Wagner
108. The survey is reported in Brand "Die Frau in der deutschen Landwirtschaft" p.48
109. Dr. H. Hajek "Landwirtschaftliche Berufe für Junge" pp.9/10
110. E. Steiner "Agrarwirtschaft und Agrarpolitik" p.28
111. KBF Niederberg to all OBFs 3rd July 1936 saying in effect that if
peasants want good labour in future its up to them to take on
apprentices now; those who don't conclude such a contract show that
they are not NS or "social thinkers": HSA(D) 127
112. This correspondence in February 1939 is in HSA(D) 26
113. Quoted in Müller p.71
114. Wendt to Darre 29th January 1938: ADC Reichsnährstand Wendt
115. Landrat Düren to Regpräsident Aachen 2nd April 1937: HSA(D) 1066
116. Landrat Düren to Regpräsident Aachen 7th June 1938: HSA(D) 1070
117. Minute No. 4004 6th January 1939 summarizing a recent memorandum on
the landflight in Württemberg: HSA(S) 646/E 130/IV
118. W. Abel "Agrarpolitik" p.129
119. Müller p.55
120. At Wulkefeld (Schleswig-Holstein) the KBF agreed to an Erbhof being
leased in 1939, the owner being 65 years of age with a sick wife and
no outside help at all: LA 355/406: there was a similar one recorded
for Marienau (Lower Saxony) in 1937: NSA 331 B.61
121. Quoted in "Um Blut und Boden" p.506
122. Quoted in Müller p.11
123. Deputy LBF Bavaria to RNS Berlin 30th January 1938: BA-R2/18291
124. BA-R16/969
125. BA-R16/144, 187, 360, 398, 423, 461, 520, 531, 569, 576, 593, 631,
695, 706, 929, 936, 969, 1027

126. Replies from the various Regpräsidenten between January and March 1936: NSA 122a-13
127. KBF Gunzenhausen to Landesbauernschaft Bavaria 22nd January 1938: BA-R2/18291
128. Ministerialblatt 26th May 1939
129. In terms of machinery German agriculture was terribly backward; of the general farmers attitude one writer said that "The German farmer does not buy machines, they are sold to him": Hellermann "Landmaschinen gegen Landflucht" p.63
130. As Darré put it "We don't want grain factories" i.e. collectivization could not be considered: V.B. 11th February 1935
131. Section 4 Point 3 of the official programme: V.B. 7th March 1930
132. For the official attitude see the speech by Dr. Steiger in the Prussian Landtag February 1930: LA 301/4089
133. Holt p.163
134. WB 3rd May 1933
135. Müller "Soziale Arbeit in der HJ." in "Soziale Praxis 1934"
136. Minister of Labour to Chancellery May 1934 with draft Bill: BA-R43 I/1469
137. "Statistisches Jahrbuch 1936" p.326
138. Hellermann "Landmaschinen gegen Landflucht" p.42
139. In 1937 95% of all temporary harvest labour in the Erfurt area came from abroad: Brand "Die Frau in der deutschen Landwirtschaft" p.121
140. Dr. Best of Ministry of Interior to heads of provincial administration 15th August 1937: NSA 122a-13
141. "Frankfurter Zeitung" 17th January 1938
142. Hellermann "Landmaschinen gegen Landflucht" p.49
143. As pointed out by Dr. Reischle: personal interview
144. "Frankfurter Zeitung" 26th February 1939

145. Darré to all Landes/kreisbauernschaften 10th June 1939 in "RNS Dienst-nachrichten"
146. Ibid
147. Their stay was conditional upon RNS acceptance, given in May: KBF Niederberg to Polizeipräsidium Langenberg 5th May 1939: HSA(D) 26
148. Landrat Erkelenz to Regpräsident Aachen 4th June 1938: HSA(D) 1070 also Regpräsident Cologne to Ministry of Economic Affairs January 1938 report: HSA(D) 1069
149. Reichsamt für Agrarpolitik to Minister Präsident Württemberg 20th May 1938: HSA(S) 646/E 130/IV
150. Brand "Die Frau in der deutschen Landwirtschaft" p.121
151. KBF Niederberg circular to peasants/farmers 17th June 1939: HSA(D) 26
152. Ministry of Labour to Labour Exchanges and Special Commissioner for Four Year Plan Labour 10th May 1939: Ibid
153. Reichsamt für Agrarpolitik report above cit.
154. Ibid: see also KBF Niederberg to NSDAP Kreisleitung 10th June 1939 commenting on the good impression made by Dutch and Yugoslavs in the district in general: HSA(D) 26
155. Ministerialblatt 15th February 1938 "Anordnung zur Durchführung des Vierjahresplanes" etc.
156. The relevant figures were 116,672 from a total of 283,704 for the period: "Die Landesbauernschaften in Zahlen" p.174
157. Hellemann p.45
158. See KBF Niederberg to Lbsch Rhineland 12th March 1936 for this information: HSA(D) 127
159. "Landarbeit macht frei": magazine for Hitler Youth Lower Saxony published in 1937 (unnumbered pages)
160. H. Kühne "Der Arbeitseinsatz im Vierjahresplan" in "Jahrbücher für Nationalökonomie und Statistik" 1937 p.704
161. Hellemann p.44 says 10/20%

162. "Landarbeit macht frei"
163. "Die Landesbauernschaften in Zahlen" p.52
164. Hellermann p.44
165. 80% of all Labour Corps work undertaken was agricultural:
Schoenbaum p.84
166. 182, 370 in 1935 and 165, 576 in 1937 for example: "Wirtschaft und Statistik 1939" p.126
167. Bente "Landwirtschaft und Bauerntum" p.91
168. Reichsamt für Agrarpolitik to Minister President Württemberg
February 1938: HSA(S) 646/E 130/IV
169. Landrat Geilenkirchen-Heinsberg to Regpräsident Aachen 25th June
1937 with an account of how labour shortage had led to negotiations
with the Labour Corps with the unsatisfactory outcome described
here: HSA(D) 1067
170. V.B. 2nd February 1935: according to the agreement no one born after
31st December 1914 would in future be able to work for the RNS
without producing a labour service certificate
171. KBF Niederberg to Lbsch Rhineland 28th March 1936: HSA(D) 127
172. KBF Hamlin/Bad-Pyrmont to Lbsch Lower Saxony 8th March 1939
testifying that help was urgently needed for the spring sowing:
NSA 331 B.1
173. OBF Ärzten to Bauer 5th August 1939: Ibid
174. Landrat Jülich to Regpräsident Aachen 5th August 1937: HSA(D) 1067
175. Landrat Düren to Regpräsident Aachen 4th June 1937: Ibid
176. Reichsamt für Agrarpolitik to Minister President Württemberg
October 1938: HSA(S) 646/E 130/IV
177. "Daily Telegraph" 23rd July 1938
178. Ministerialblatt 1st August 1939 "Erntehilfe"
179. NSA 331 B.35: the court decision was given 30th August 1939

180. As pointed out later by the RNS itself: Lbsch Rhineland to all Kreisbauernschaften 9th September 1940: HSA(D) 26
181. KBF Pfarrkirchen to Lbsch Bavaria January 1938: BA-R2/18291
182. Deputy LBF to RNS Berlin 30th January 1938: Ibid
183. In Gunzenhausen a farmer who could not get outside help told the KBF that he would only plant enough for his own family in future: KBF to Lbsch Bavaria 22nd January 1938: Ibid
184. Dr. Syrup reported in the "Frankfurter Zeitung" 21st January 1939
185. In respect of certain tasks, such as the construction of the West wall, a decree authorized the government to use direction of labour already in 1938: Schoenbaum p.98
186. Whereas Saxony had 37,068 farm maids in 1925, by 1933 there were slightly less than two thirds of that number: Brand "Die Frau in der deutschen Landwirtschaft" p.116
187. Ibid: p.117

