

# STRIKES AND SOCIAL CONFLICTS IN THE GREEK COUNTRYSIDE FROM 1922 TO 1935

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## 1. Introduction

The main objective of this paper is to study strikes and other forms of rural mobilization in Greece, placed within a wider agricultural movement, during the larger part of the interwar period. Looking at the strikes, which are the main theme of this Conference, we should point out that their frequency in the rural areas was much lower as compared to that of the urban centers. This fact, however, should not be exclusively attributed to the conservatism of the farmers, as compared to town dwellers. On the contrary, it should be taken into account, that very often the farmers were expressing their protest in different ways, as they were directly dependent on their harvest and even a few days of strike could give rise to serious problems.

The starting point for the study of the various forms of mobilization is the year 1922, as our objective is to look at the impact on the country of the defeat at the Asia Minor front and the arrival of almost 1.5 million refugees. Particularly for the rural sector, it should also be taken into account that the year 1923 marks the enactment of a rather radical agricultural reform aspiring to solve the problem of refugees' settlement and rationalize the landowning structures through the large estates' expropriation. At this point however it should be stressed that the rural reform (essentially the expropriations of large estates in the areas where they were used as the main vehicle for exploitation) had been planned since the early 1910s, but it was practically never implemented up to 1922. On the other hand, looking at the state policy on the management of the rural sector and the refugees' settlement from 1922 onwards, we should underline that the Greek state was greatly supported by the League of Nations and the Refugee Settlement Commission (RSC), which was set up in 1924. In particular, regarding the commission's work, it is clear that the main emphasis was given on the settlement of rural population, as compared to the urban dwellers. Taking into account those developments, as well as the systematization of the efforts for the

solution of a series of hot issues, we should go on to study the evolution of rural mobilization, the collective bodies that had shaped it and the forms it had taken.

The end point of the period under study, on the other hand, coincides with the restoration of the monarchy in the country and a general political unrest, Metaxas (leader of the *Eleutherothronai*, a party with very small electoral base) would take advantage of and impose his dictatorship. It is extremely interesting, to note that the social tensions as manifested by the strikes of tobacco workers in May 1936 and the fear of a “communist revolution”, were the main arguments used by the dictator to justify the need of imposing such a regime.

## **2. The basic lines of the rural policy in Greece during the interwar period**

Following this brief introduction, which has focused mainly on the reasons of choosing this particular period, for the study of the rural mobilization, our objective in this section, is to present the main lines of the rural policy during this period, always in conjunction with the difficulties the rural population had to face.

As it has already been stressed, the rural policy in the period under study was marked by its “interconnection” with the issue of refugees, as it was crystallized through the enactment of the rural reform of 1923. The need to form a large stratum of small landowners, which would contribute to the increase of production but at the same time, would guarantee the social stability, was a basic aspect of the rural policy, ever before 1922. However, after the refugees’ arrival, this objective became an urgent need and the support of small property was closely connected with the formation of a nationally homogeneous class and the presence of a steady electoral base. Hence, the government’s efforts focused on the process of the settlement of landless (both native and refugees).

The colonization policy of the Greek governments over the next years, as well as the efforts of the RSC, contributed to the fast and effective restoration of the refugees. Within this framework, a number of significant facilitations were provided to the landless. The formation of cooperatives, which were responsible for the farmers’ settlement, as well as the granting of loans were some of the dimensions of the state’s aid.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Petmezas, S. (2001). Agricultural Economy, in Hadziiosif, Chr. (ed), *History of Greece in the 20th century. The Interwar Period, 1922-1940*, Vol. B’, Part I, Vivliorama, Athens, p. 200-203. (in greek)

However, despite the coordinated efforts of the Greek governments, various problems related with the process of expropriations, were emerging. The exemption, for example, of the monastery property from expropriation had often led to increased social tension, directed mainly against the church. The difficulty of paying back the agricultural loans and the consequent accumulation of debts to credit organizations was an additional cause of popular discontent in the countryside. The excessive debt of the farmers, especially in a harsh economic period, was one of the basic reasons for the rural mobilization.

Looking at the basic lines of the rural policy in the period under study, we should not disregard the strong state interventionism, which reached its climax during the 1930s. The increasing protectionism of the country's basic export products, through the setting-up of organizations entrusted with the regulation of production, the holding of prices at a steady level and the reduction of imports was certainly a main aspect of this policy. The first such intervention mechanism concerned the currants and from the end of the 1920s onward a number of similar mechanisms were set-up for wheat, cotton and tobacco. The state's intervention was gradually reflected on the legislation for the cooperatives. The increase in the number of inspectors was a first result of this policy, which reached its climax with the laws enacted on this issue in the early 1930s<sup>2</sup>.

As a result of the new laws, the cooperatives lost some of their basic characteristics, as self – administration, self – action, the significance of mechanisms restricting their operations was reinforced, while at the same time the participation in the cooperatives of individuals, who had in the past been involved in politics, was prohibited. Those state's initiatives were essentially aiming at converting the cooperatives into state policy puppets through the suffocating control of their activities.<sup>3</sup> The decisions taken for the rural sector in the early 1930s were, in my opinion, in line with the general spirit of the Liberal's government which had been in office since 1928. Venizelos, at that period, was not characterized by the liberal rhetoric of 1910, when he was elected Prime Minister for the first time but, on the contrary, he had clearly moved towards a model of state intervention, which was reinforced by the financial crisis of 1929. Indeed, many times in his effort to prevent possible social outrages, he had taken

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<sup>2</sup> Panagiotopoulos, D. (2003). *Rural Economy in History of New Hellenism*, vol. II, Ellinika Grammata, Athens, pp. 160-162. (in Greek)

<sup>3</sup> Avdelidis, P. (1986). *The agricultural cooperative movement in Greece*, Papazissi, Athens, pp. 69-72. (in Greek)

decision characterized by a spirit of state authoritarianism, as for example in the case of the cooperatives.

Returning to the issue of a continuously increasing state intervention in the rural sector (which was obviously, related to the increasing interest for agriculture) we should refer to the case of the Agricultural Bank of Greece (ABG). The need to found a bank, exclusively responsible for the granting of loans to the rural sector, was beyond any doubt and indeed it had been a firm and long – standing demand of the majority of agrarists, since the early 1910s. Its establishment however in 1929 disappointed the agrarists since its basic lines were completely different from their visions. The option of a bank based on the agrarists and organized from below, seemed impossible within the prevailing, at that time, climate of intense interventionism. On the contrary, as it was very soon revealed, the intention of the Greek government was to use the Agricultural Bank not only as a vehicle for the monetization of the rural economy and the increase of agricultural production, but mainly as a control mechanism of the cooperativist movement. The Agricultural Bank of Greece took over this role and, as it may also be seen through the legislation enacted after 1929, there was a direct involvement of the Bank's supervisors into the cooperatives' internal affairs<sup>4</sup>.

All those governmental initiatives towards the culmination of state interventionism and the setting – up of control mechanism, were undoubtedly related to the intensified rural mobilization during the late 1920s and the early 1930s. Concluding, we could say that yet another basic aspect of the state's rural policy, during the period under study, was the more systematic implementation of the modernization plans. The main goal of production increase, interconnected with crucial options, such as draining of lakes, flood controls and irrigation works especially in the annexed, during the last decades, Greek regions.<sup>5</sup>

### **3. The main reasons of the intensified rural mobilizations after the agrarian reform**

The governmental plans were often facing serious problem, as a result of the country's harsh economic situation, which had been undoubtedly deteriorated by the global economic crisis. Looking at the rural mobilizations in the Greek countryside after 1922, we would perhaps have expected a decrease in the number of rural protests. This,

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<sup>4</sup> Agricultural Bank of Greece, (1940). *The work of a decade*, Athens, pp. 153-189. (in Greek)

<sup>5</sup> Sideris, A. (1934). *The agricultural policy of Greece during the last century*, Papadogianni, Athens, pp. 311-315.(in Greek)

however, as we shall see in the following pages, never occurred, but on the contrary the number of rural mobilizations, with varying demands, had drastically increased in a number of regions. Furthermore, a gradual radicalization of the rural populations, who were often using acts of violence to promote their claims, was also observed. Naturally the first question, which should be asked, is why, despite the enactment of the radical rural reform of 1923 and the seeming confrontation of one of the hottest issues of social reality, the momentum of the agricultural movement kept increasing over the following years.

To answer this question we should, in my opinion, focus on the main difference with the previous years when, despite the presence of a number of serious problems, we didn't have an organized rural movement. Indeed, we could say that a rural movement had clearly emerged from 1923 onwards in contrast with the scattered outbreaks of rural populations, which had been taking place in the previous years. The main difference was the absence of social rural collectivities and political parties, which could act as levers of rural mobilization. Indeed, in spite of the emergence of certain dynamic groups which led the mobilizations in Thessaly in 1910, we did not have any similar examples, in other areas of Greece, over the next years.

Looking at this matter and also at the weaknesses detected at a national level we could, without any doubt, argue that up to the first decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Greece was a country in a process of continuous annexation of territories. Hence, it was practically impossible to have even the skeleton of an organization that could coordinate the rural demands at a national level. After the defeat of 1922, when the plans for further territorial expansion were abruptly interrupted, the conditions for the birth and growth of a national agricultural movement became much more favorable. On the other hand, returning to the absence of those collectivities, which could mobilize the large rural population masses, we should mention the significant steps, which had already been made since the late 1910s and continued during the next decade. The foundation of SEKE in 1918, which a few years later was renamed into KKE (Communist Party of Greece), was the first big step. Despite the strategic mistakes made in its planning, it was the first time that an organized political body had put forward radical demands that would satisfy the overwhelming majority of farmers. Further significant developments were the discussions among the farmers and the activities behind the scenes for the foundation of purely agricultural political party. The first attempts towards this direction, made in the early 1920s, were basically supported by the unions of certain

agricultural cooperatives and a few agrarists and intellectuals active in the rural sector. Those attempts did not last long and did not lead to any tangible outcome. Nevertheless, the discussions for the setting – up of such a political formation continued throughout the 1920s and, indeed, in certain cases, even those incomplete organization structures had contributed to the increase of rural mobilization during the period under study.

On the other hand, the strengthening of the cooperativist structures was remarkable; already, from the 1920s, when the first unions of cooperatives had become to emerge, there were frequent discussions concerning the establishment of a confederation of cooperatives. Indeed, according to the law regulating their operation, the cooperatives should not have a vindictive character but, on the contrary, their main concern should be to facilitate the money circulation in the rural sector. In reality, however, several cooperativists had fought for the setting – up of a new organizational model, that would give the cooperatives a much more decisive role in context of rural demands. It was for this reason that, throughout the period of the cooperativist movement's evolution, official governmental sources kept recommending to the unions not to deviate from their institutional role. In any case, it should be stressed that during the whole period of increased radicalization in the rural sector, certain cooperatives (either first – grade (degree) or more complex structures) were among the basic supporters of rural vindications.

#### **4. Notable moments of the rural movement and the means of their expressions**

Having presented the basic qualitative characteristics of the rural movement that contributed to a clearly more intense mobilization in the early 1920s, we would now look at the most important moments of the cooperativist movement during the period under study, which is split into parts the first extending from 1923 to 1929 and the second from 1929 to 1935.

##### **4.1 The rural mobilization from 1923 to 1929**

The first dynamic agitations in the Greek countryside, after the rural reform of 1923, took place in the first months of 1925. In January and February of this year, we came across a generalized wave of resistance not confined only to one region. It was expressed through the farmers' attempts to seize the monastery lands since, although according to the reform's clauses they were among the lands in process of expropriation, the monasteries kept occupying a large part of them. The attempts of

mass land seizures started at the first days of January in the region of Livadia and shortly afterwards continued in Thessaly. From the last days of January, a similar climate of revolt was prevailing in Trikala, Thessaly, where the basic demand was again the expropriation of big estates and monastery lands<sup>6</sup> and the form of its expression, once more, mass seizures. The contribution of the old guerilla movement to the rural mobilizations – through the unions it had founded – was decisive throughout the period under study. It was basically an anti-war movement, aiming at the restoration of the reserve officers who had returned wretched and decimated from the Asia Minor Front and its growth should be studied in parallel with the spreading of the Communist Party of Greece (formerly SEKE) in the countryside, as their actions were –to a large extent– interrelated.

A particularly noteworthy point regarding the mobilization of 1925 is the farmers' support by the laborers and other employees of the areas under revolt. Indeed, if we examine this phenomenon in conjunction with CPG's efforts to penetrate the countryside, we realize its clear interconnection with the rhetoric concerning the formation of a "common front of workers and farmers" and the future establishment of a "workers' – farmers' government". The CPG seemed to give particular emphasis on this issue, as a clearly stated objective of its leadership was the avoidance of any isolated action of the farmers; on the contrary, it was stressed that the farmers' mobilizations could be fruitful only if they were organized in collaboration with the pioneer sections of the labor movement. The Bulgarian case of Stabolinsky's Agrarian party was a typical counter example. Hence, the view that, even if the farmers could seize power they would not keep it for long, unless they could enter into an alliance with the labor class, had been consolidated in the communist party.

Besides this aspect of joint action, another dimension of the rural mobilization, during the first months of 1925, was that most of the revolts, where "traditional" methods for the promotion on rural demands had been used, were not spontaneous. On the contrary, following the establishment of collective structures in the countryside, more organized ways of vindication had been introduced. The handing out of leaflets and propaganda material, in order to mobilize the rural population was a common practice. The culmination of this process was, undoubtedly, the organization of mass rallies with particularly radical slogans, which in certain cases were put into practice.

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<sup>6</sup> Livieratos, D. (1985). *Social struggles in Greece, 1923-1937*, Komouna, Athens, pp. 122 – 123. (*in Greek*)

The mass seizure of estates was certainly such an example and verifies the increased level of radicalization in the Greek countryside. In some other cases more “moderate” solutions were preferred aiming at the political solution of the existing problems. The submission of resolutions to the prefectural authorities asking for the satisfaction of the rural demands should be seen in this context<sup>7</sup>.

Summarizing, we may note that the rural mobilizations of 1925 were not characterized by an one – sided way of rural vindications but by a pluralistic approach; this demonstrates the presence of a dynamic and mass agricultural movement, clearly better organized as compared to that of the previous decade, and in a process of continuous development. Looking at specific cases, as for example the rural uprising at Trikala in February 1925, we realize that it did not last for one day only but, on the contrary, the continuous action of the region’s farmers had kept this “new” dimension of the rural issue in the full blaze of publicity for about ten days. In 1925 we came across the first strikes, which were not confined to one geographical region only.

As it has already been stressed in the introduction, the character of agitations in the countryside was completely different, as compared to that of urban riots, since the farmers’ survival was directly dependent on their harvest and hence a strike during the cultivation period could be disastrous. Hence, the mobilizations in the countryside were usually taking place in periods of less intense farming activity. In any case, the mass land seizures stopped at the beginning of 1925, following a very tight state riot control (which caused the death of many peasants) aiming to suppress the rural mobilizations.

The next generalized phenomenon of strong tension in the Greek rural sector took place in Iraklion, Crete during the first months of 1928. This time the reason of unrest was not related to the land-owning structures, but to the high-taxation. The farmers demanded a radical reform of the tax system, and it is interesting to note that they used radical ways of pushing it forward. Besides the mass rallies, we should also refer to other forms of action, like the invasion of peasants in the tax offices and the burning of the files. It was clear that the issue of agricultural debts had managed to mobilize a large part of the rural population, while at the same time the contribution of the Communist Party in this direction was decisive<sup>8</sup>.

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<sup>7</sup> Vrachniaris, Chr. (1985). *Between two insurrections, 1910-1925*, Alfeios, Athens, p. 106. (in Greek)

<sup>8</sup> Livieratos, D. (1985). *Social struggles in Greece, 1923-1937*, Komouna, Athens, pp. 122 – 123. (in Greek)

The communist party's leadership underlined the spontaneous character of the rural movement in Crete, but at the same time manifested the party's active participation in the farmers' "day – to– day" fights and its support to the local movements. The view that the CPG's effort for an ever increasing penetration of the rural population would be greatly facilitated by a wider alliance with other left – wing groups, was extremely interesting. Indeed, in contrast to the party's internal opposition which had argued that the spontaneous rural mobilizations should not be supported, since they were the "driving forces" of military dictatorships, the official line was in favor of an even closer guidance of the rural strata<sup>9</sup>. Towards the end of the 1920s the increase of its influence in the countryside and the better organization of the agricultural (rural) structures were two clearly (explicitly) stated goals of the CPG.

The fact that all the efforts which had been made so far for the formation of an agricultural party had failed, in conjunction with the scarcity of strong rural organizations that could be at the head of a movement, advocated the Communist Party's initiative. Such an event of common action was observed in the mobilizations of January and February 1928 in Crete, where the Union of Cooperatives in the Prefecture of Heraklion had an active participation in the rallies which took place, while at the same it seemed to approve the form of the farmers' reaction<sup>10</sup>.

#### **4.2 The rural mobilization after the crisis of 1929**

In any case and towards the end of the 1920s, the rural demands were not any more confined exclusively to the rationalization of the landowning structures. The outbreak of the global financial crisis in 1929 blew up the farmers' social rage. Over the next years, a number of strikes were called in the areas of Northern Macedonia and Thessaly, but also in Peloponnesus and Sterea<sup>11</sup>. The most active militant sector of the rural movement was traced in areas of Northern Macedonia and issues, such as the unbearable taxation and the impoverishment of the rural population, were the main causes of its radicalization. The accumulation of a hard-to-bear sum of rural debts,

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<sup>9</sup> Communist Party of Greece, (1975). *Official texts, vol. II 1925 – 1928*, Sighroni Epoxi, Athens, p. 568. (in Greek)

<sup>10</sup> Agrotiki Kriti, newspaper 23.01.1928. (in Greek)

<sup>11</sup> Seferiades, S. (1999) Small rural ownership, Subsistence agriculture and peasant protest in the interwar Greece. The Agrarian Question Recast, *Journal of Modern Greek Studies*, Vol. 17, pp. 315-316. (in Greek)

which could not be paid back by the majority of the population, was certainly a fact closely related to the abnormal situation prevailing in this area.

The farmers' debts had been incurred after the restoration process and they were due, not only to the Agricultural Bank of Greece, but also to supranational bodies, such as the RSC, which had been entrusted, in 1924, by the League of Nations with the responsibility to assist the Greek nation. The farmers' debts had always been a source of social discontent but the situation had been deteriorating since the early 1930s. The prevailing climate was particularly unfavorable for dealing with such issues, as the country was in a state of bankruptcy and in the middle a global economic crisis. The considerable decrease of the demand for agricultural products and the bad harvests of the early 1930s, were two more problems added to the existing ones.

Hence, the realization that the confrontation of those issues was interrelated with the basic problems of the rural population's survival did not come as a surprise. In this case too, besides the common ways of protest, as for example the farmers' marches, we came across acts of violence against state officials, such as the tax collectors, which were considered as a kind of oppressors for the lower strata of the rural population. As it has already been stressed, the most serious mobilization in the early 1930s broke out in areas of Northern Macedonia and in this case the CPG was not the only strong supporter of the rural demands. On the contrary, the role of the agrarists in Northern Macedonia (perhaps the most radical section of the Greek agricultural movement during this period) who, since 1929, had founded the new Agricultural Party, with more militant character and more advanced demands, as compared to similar ventures of the previous years, was also decisive<sup>12</sup>

The political bond of the rural population (mainly the small landowners, which according to the Greek urban governments' reasoning, were the guarantors of social peace) with Venizelos and the Liberal Party "had broken", as the policy it has followed was held responsible for the farmers' financial distress. The presence of an Agricultural Party, which could offer a new "political roof" to the farmers, caused considerable concern to the Venizelist party's officials. The party, which had been founded by agrarists and was based in Northern Macedonia, was characterized as a class – conscious party and, according to Venizelists' officials, its action was identical to that

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<sup>12</sup> Panagiotopoulos, D., (2010), *Agrarian Party of Greece*, Plethron, Athens, pp. 61 – 62. (*in Greek*)

of the Communist Party<sup>13</sup>. During the following years, up to the establishment of Metaxas' dictatorship, both the rural and urban areas of Northern Macedonia were the breeding ground of strong (intense) social upheavals, with the strike of tobacco producers and laborers in Kavala, in May 1936, to be the most typical case.

Coming back to the issue of rural mobilizations, it is clear that the more dynamic ones were those which burst out in areas of Peloponnesus in 1934 and 1935). Their background was almost similar to that of the mobilizations in Macedonia, as the main cause of the social outbreak in Peloponnesus was also the difficulties of the rural populations' survival. One of their main differences, as compared to those of Peloponnesus, was their duration, as they lasted for over a month in each of the two consecutive summers of 1934 and 1935; furthermore, in the summer of 1936 and prior to the establishment of Metaxas' dictatorship, some more upheavals, but of a much smaller scale, broke out in the currant-producing areas. Another difference was that, in the latter case, the protests were not confined to only a part of the prefecture but, on the contrary, they were gradually spreading everywhere. Finally, it should not be overlooked that in the upheavals of 1934 and 1935 the social rage was manifested in a much more direct way against the state and the competent organizations.

Before we focus on the means used to promote the current producers' demands, we should look at the background of this crisis. First of all, it must be underlined that currant, the basic Greek export product, was also related to the big crisis, which had broken out in the mid-1890s and had lasted up to the first years of the new century. In that case, too, the dramatic drop in currant's exports was the basic reason for the riots, with the producers asking for protective measures and mainly for the buying out of the production surplus by the state or a state organization. In spite of the efforts made to solve this issue, almost four decades later the situation hadn't changed considerably.

In 1925, within a context of increasing state interventionism, the Autonomous Currant Organization (ACO) was established and was entrusted with the regulation of the production and the product's exports. However, shortly after its establishment, it was criticized because it was considered as a "vehicle for the safer placement of the loans" granted by the banking organizations active in the countryside<sup>14</sup>. This criticism

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<sup>13</sup> Mazower, M. (1992). The refugees and the economic crisis, *Deltio Mikrasiatikou Spoydon*, vol. 9, pp. 125 – 126.

<sup>14</sup> Communist Party of Greece, (1975). *Official texts, vol. II 1925 – 1928*, Sighroni Epoxi, Athens, p. 600. (*in Greek*)

very soon became general and more severe as, besides the accusations about financial irregularities, the prevailing view among the cooperativists was that ACO, from a third – grade cooperativist organization had been essentially transformed into a state’s organ<sup>15</sup>. In a period of a dramatic drop in exports and the consequent inability of the producers to sell their products, the government’s decision to buy the surplus production (retaining) at very low prices provoked their strong reaction. The basic target of the currant-producers’ protests was undoubtedly the ACO, since it was held responsible for all their problems. As in previous mobilizations, a number of attacks at the offices of state agencies occurred in this case too. Furthermore, a number of “symbolic acts of resistance”, as for example the destruction of the railway lines, in order to prevent the transport of currents, were also observed<sup>16</sup>.

The mass rallies were the most common way of expression of the farmers’ vindications in all areas of Peloponnesus in August and September of 1934 and 1935. Furthermore, in certain cases we had the joint action of farmers with other professional groups, as it had already happened in the past. Moreover in the cases of mass rallies with the participation of currant-producers from every part of Peloponnesus, the shops remained closed and the whole population expressed its solidarity to the farmers.

Regarding the socio-political bodies which constituted the main vehicles of those mobilizations the CPG played, once more, a decisive role. Its influence was detected even in the rhetoric used as, besides the denunciations via slogans such as “Down with ACO”, “We are hungry” and “Life or Death”, the views that the governments’ capitalist policies were responsible for the prevailing situation or that the decisions taken were in favor of the politico-capitalist elites, as expressed in various currant producers’ conferences caused a sensation<sup>17</sup>.

On the other hand, in this case too, the agricultural cooperatives were the basic vehicles of the rural vindications and among the main supporters of the currant-producers’ demands. Certainly at the level of rhetoric no argument based on a thorough and documented criticism of the capitalist system had been formulated. On the contrary, as it has already been stressed, the denunciations of the cooperatives were directed

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<sup>15</sup> Klimis, A. (1988). *The cooperatives in Greece, vol. II*, PASEGES, Athens, p. 1122. (*in Greek*)

<sup>16</sup> Livieratos, D. (1994). *Social struggles in Greece, 1932-1936*, Enallaktikes Ekdoseis, Athens, pp. 210 – 211. (*in Greek*)

<sup>17</sup> Seferiades, S. (1999) Small rural ownership, Subsistence agriculture and peasant protest in the interwar Greece. The Agrarian Question Recast, *Journal of Modern Greek Studies*, Vol. 17, pp. 317-318. (*in Greek*)

almost exclusively against the operation of the ACO and the downgrading of the representatives of the unions of the cooperatives.

In any case, however, several cooperatives participated actively in those riots thus composing the most significant non-political organizing body. The continuously improving organization of the rural populations in the countryside of Peloponnesus during those riots is indeed noteworthy. The organization of annual currant producers' Conferences, at the beginning of summer, where the producers were discussing and formulating their joint actions' framework is a typical example.

The setting-up of committees entrusted to publicize the farmers' problems and to push their demands through the competent State agencies was another tool which had been used by the currant-producers at that period and showed that this was an agricultural movement with a many-sided way of action. It was also a natural consequence of the fact that in a mass of 10.000 farmers (an indicative number based on the participation in the bigger rallies) was not easy to have unanimity on the way the currant-producers; movement should proceed. Hence, we had the coexistence of various forms of action, like the attacks in ACO's offices, with the efforts for a political solution of this issue. This may also be fully explained by the simultaneous presence of bodies with completely different rhetoric and practice which were banded together by their discontent for the prevailing situation and their need to satisfy certain short-term goals.

## **5. Conclusions**

Summarizing we could say that from 1922 onwards much more intense, dynamic and frequent mobilizations of the populations in the Greek countryside have been observed. A first conclusion which may be drawn is that the rural discontent was not stemming from one, but, on the contrary, from a variety of reasons. The delays in the implementation of the rural reforms of 1923 and the exemptions of a number of estates from them was certainly one major source of discontent.

The fear of prolongation of an unfair land-owning regime, as well as the accumulated rage of the previous decades, set the background of those mobilizations, while the strong presence of the old guerillas gave an antimilitary character to those actions. The generalized mass seizures of land estates in many regions should be considered as the first expression of rural radicalism in the post-Asia Minor disaster period. At the same time they seemed to follow the pattern of the previous decades

when the overwhelming majority of the isolated revolts were also related to the landowning status.

The strikes constituted a form of mobilization more closely related to the urban areas; on the contrary, the rural populations were mainly using demonstrations in order to press for their demands' satisfaction. As it has already been mentioned, the more radical acts of the farmers' protests were usually taking place after the end of the rallies and were instigated by groups of demonstrators. The much higher number of strikes in the urban centers, as compared to the rural areas is, beyond doubt, related to the seasonality of the work in the countryside. The proclamation of strikes was practically impossible during the periods of intense agricultural activity since given the harsh economic situation the farmers' survival was dependent solely on their harvest. On the contrary, the mobilizations were more frequent during the period with less intense farming activity.

On the other hand, as the economic crisis was getting deeper, many of the rural populations' demands were also focusing on the settlement of financial matters. The issue of rural debts was one of them and led to further radicalization of the rural movement in many areas. The assaults on state employees or the acts of vandalism in state buildings revealed a case where the political authority has lost its legitimization in the eyes of the farmers due to its unwillingness to take some, at least temporary, measures of relief.

The radicalization was naturally stronger in the areas facing the most hard to solve problems, but also having the socio-political bodies which could support the mobilizations. The establishment and the gradual strengthening of those actors was, beyond doubt, a main reason for the more frequent and more dynamic agitations during the 1930s. Indeed it must be mentioned that the most noteworthy riots were breaking out in areas where the model of the commercialized agriculture had been consolidated. The consequences of the global economic crisis, the decrease of exports and, by extension, the lower demand created the environment for intense social protests in areas of the country's basic export products.