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European Perspectives of Agricultural Changes and Societal Adaptations

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BISMARCK, the famous German Imperial Chancellor, once supposedly said, "He who speaks of Europe is wrong." When Bismarck made this statement he was referring to the political unity of Europe, which according to him, was an illusion. But even years later when we try to look at Europe as a whole we often cannot avoid the feeling that this statement still holds true in a wider sense than Bismarck imagined. Europe shows such a diversity in almost all aspects of human life that often European unity seems to be a creation of the imagination. The study of agriculture, rural life and agricultural policy in that part of the world particularly can evoke this feeling.

There are countries like England where only a small percentage of the active population is working in agriculture. But there are also countries like Italy whose economy still depends on agriculture to a high degree. There are parts of Europe like Denmark, the Netherlands and Belgium where the output per acre and the production per animal are on the average higher than anywhere else in the world. On the other hand, in northwestern Ireland and southern Italy productivity in agriculture is still at an extremely low level. In the Netherlands almost every young man who wants to become a farmer gets a vocational education in agriculture and, after he becomes a farmer, he has the most extensive agricultural extension service at his disposal.

In some other European countries education in agriculture is far from what it should be. In Northwestern Europe in particular the way of life of many farmers hardly differs from that of modern middle-class people in the cities, while in some parts of

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Southern Europe illiterate peasants are living in almost the same way as their medieval forbears. In a country like Germany protection of agriculture as a national policy is a long-standing tradition. Elsewhere in Europe free trade is deeply rooted in the minds of policymakers, and protection for national agriculture is still accepted only hesitatingly. In some countries a matter-of-fact attitude towards agriculture and rural life by the general public is more or less common. In other places there is still a strong tendency to ascribe all kinds of special virtues to agriculture and rural life. People still often think in terms of the German sociologist Tönnies. For them the village is the noble "Gemeinschaft" and the city is the bad "Gesellschaft." When one lectures about agriculture and rural life in an objective, non-emotional way, he runs the risk in certain circles in Germany, Austria and Switzerland, for example, of meeting a vehement, emotional opposition. But the same lecture in similar circles in England, the Netherlands or Denmark would only evoke a matter-of-fact discussion.

And so one could go on for some time, even if he considers only the part of Europe west of the Iron Curtain.

But notwithstanding all these great and important differences between the various countries, Europe is more than a mere geographical concept. We cannot deny that it makes sense to look at Europe as a whole — at least at the non-Communist part of Europe. And even more than that, it is necessary to look at Europe as some kind of unit if we want to understand what is going on in that part of the world. We can blame many students of social and economic life in Europe for still being so strongly impressed by Europe's diversity and being so strongly involved in the study of national problems that they forget that those problems often can only be understood when they are seen in relation to the problems of Europe as a whole.

It would lead us too far to investigate here the historical, cultural, social and economic conditions which mean that the European countries will face a common future on the one hand and will act as more or less separate parts of the world on the other hand. I want especially to point out that this holds true for agriculture and rural life.

When we study the development of social and economic life in the rural districts of Europe, regardless of the many differences which exist and which have been emphasized here already, it is rather astonishing to perceive that everywhere the changes in Europe are moving in the same direction. It is hardly necessary to say that the establishment of the European Economic Community — the Common Market as the Anglo-Saxon countries

continue to call it — has nothing to do with this. Only during 1962 did it really begin to influence the economic aspects of agriculture in the six countries. In 1961 the six came to a fundamental agreement as to the future agricultural policy of the Common Market. And the fact that they agreed must — at least partly — be explained as a consequence of a conscious or unconscious feeling that regardless of existing differences, they face the same troubles and have the same perspectives.

What are the forces which shape conditions and will shape the future of agriculture and rural life in Europe? The answer will be different according to the student's point of view. The sociologist, the economist and the agronomist will emphasize different aspects of the phenomenon. I think it is my bias as a sociologist which makes me consider the sociological, or better perhaps, the socio-cultural aspect as the most fundamental one.

DISAPPEARANCE OF TRADITIONALISM

The most important feature of rural life in Europe is perhaps the rapid disappearance of traditionalism. The attitude towards change is the essential characteristic of traditionalism as a pattern of culture as contrasted with the modern-dynamic pattern. In a traditionalistic culture man considers change essentially wrong and dangerous. For him the norms which regulate behavior come from the past. Past ways of doing things were right. Thus these ways must govern in the present and also in the future. The traditional man, because of his strong ties with the past and the stability of his society, at least in his own surroundings, shows a strong self-confidence in his behavior. He knows exactly what he has to do in his trade, in his family and in his community. He knows the customary sequence of these actions.

If a man takes part in modern-dynamic culture, it means that in principle he has a positive attitude toward change. Such a man believes that in trade, in family life and in society as a whole change may lead to more adequate provisions for the existing needs. Therefore he is willing to consider the value of anything new which comes to his knowledge and is willing to ask himself whether it can contribute to his goals.²

² About the modern dynamic pattern of culture versus the traditionalistic pattern and its influence on agriculture and rural life, see several publications of the department of rural sociology of the Agricultural University of Wageningen, as for example: E. W. Hofstee, "Veranderend Platteland," Landbouwkundig Tijdschrift, 1962, pp. 671-90; E. W. Hofstee, "75 Jaar ontwikkeling van de Nederlandse landbouw," Driekwart eeuw plattelandsgroei, Nederlandse Heidemaatschappij, Arnhem, 1963,

The origin of the modern-dynamic pattern of culture probably is to be found in the Italian Renaissance where, for example, Leonardo da Vinci clearly represented the modern man. From there it spread over Europe, but for ages this new way of thinking remained restricted to a relatively small elite. Only in the eighteenth century did the modern-dynamic culture gradually penetrate larger numbers of the population finally reaching the lower classes. The process of the development of the modern pattern of culture and the passing of the traditionalistic one is not yet completed.

In general the modern pattern of culture developed rather late in the rural districts. This is not only, and probably not primarily, a consequence of the isolation of the countryside. In several rural districts where we find a well-to-do class of farmers, the modern pattern of culture developed as early, and sometimes even earlier, than in the nearby cities.³ But the majority of rural people were poor and, along with the lower classes in the towns and cities, they were relatively late in being influenced by modern ways of thinking.

Generally speaking, the modern way of thinking among the farmers, came first into being along the shores of the North Sea. Here, already at the end of the eighteenth century and in the first half of the nineteenth century, clear symptoms of a changing mentality could be perceived in some districts.

But since the end of the 19th century and in particular since World War II the modern-dynamic culture spread very quickly. Gradually it gained ground in the southern and eastern parts of Europe and penetrated also into the minds of the rural population in the poorer districts where small-scale farming prevails. Only a few years ago it seemed that in some rural areas there were pockets of resistance against modernization, but this resistance is gradually breaking down.

There are still important differences, of course, as to the degree to which modern-dynamic culture is accepted. In France, for example, a clear distinction can be made between the country north and south of the Loire. But more than ever the modern pattern of culture is becoming characteristic for agriculture and rural life in Europe.

pp. 92-129; E. W. Hofstee, "Sociological Aspects of Economic Growth in Agriculture," International Conference of Agricultural Economists, Mexico, 1961 (in print), B. Benvenuti, Farming in Cultural Change, Assen, Van Gorcum and Comp., 1962, R. Bergsma, Op weg naar een nieuw cultuurpatroon, Assen, Van Gorcum and Comp., 1963.

³ A rural district in which the modern-dynamic pattern of culture came into being at the end of the eighteenth century is described in: E. W. Hofstee, Het Oldambt, Groningen, J. B. Wolters' Uitgeversmaatschappij, 1937.

The penetration of the modern-dynamic pattern of culture means that the rural population is exposed to new ideas and new types of behavior in all spheres of human life. Just being willing to accept change does not determine, of course, what type of change will take place. The outcome depends also on the alternatives to former ways of thinking and former ways of behaving and on the choices made from these alternatives.

URBAN POPULATION AS REFERENCE GROUP

We come to the second factor of decisive importance for the development of agriculture and rural life in Europe, namely the rural population's acceptance of the urban population as their reference group. It is not necessary to mention the factors which caused the opening up of the countryside to urban influences in Europe. They are essentially the same as in the United States. Ultimately they led to the same results, namely an increasing acceptance of urban values and a striving for an urban way of life. But it seems to me that there are differences in the history of the urbanization of the countryside in Europe and in America. It is important to stress in this respect that in Europe, World War II is a clear reference point. Urban centers, of course, already had considerable influence on rural life in many parts of Europe long before the war. But the changes were gradual. Rural life, even in areas where the modern-dynamic pattern of culture was completely accepted, was regulated by a set of norms of its own which differed from that in the cities.

The rural population, for example, had their own ideas about a reasonable standard of living. The level of wages and prices was lower than in the cities. The kinds of social and economic services which were considered normal and sufficient in the country were simpler than those the urban population desired and they were fewer in number. The same holds true for cultural services like education and recreation. Urban life was still more or less foreign to the rural people. The countryside was a world of its own. City life had few temptations for the rural population, and when one migrated to the city it was for economic reasons, not because one liked it.

All this has changed very quickly. It should be pointed out that even after the war, agricultural policy in many European countries consciously or unconsciously is partly based on the assumption that the rural society is a world of its own with its own values, its own standards and its own mentality. Plans for social and economic development of rural districts are often

made as if rural life was still more or less independent of what was going on in nonrural society.⁴

But the real development in rural areas since the 1950's has shown that this assumption is out of date. In all European countries farmers and farm laborers are now demanding the same incomes, the same housing facilities, the same opportunities for education and other kinds of cultural services, the same shopping facilities and so on. But they want more than the urban standard of living. Regardless of what one hears of speeches at meetings of farmers' unions or country women's associations which seem to indicate the opposite, farm people also wish to become mentally like the city-dweller; they want not to be "different."

It should be emphasized that this urbanization of the countryside is a thing essentially different from the assimilation of the modern-dynamic pattern of culture, though the two often go hand in hand. Man's assimilation of modern patterns of culture — thus his acquisition of a positive attitude towards change — means that he is not tied anymore to tradition. He is more or less free to choose his future behavior and his future mental interest. Whether he chooses to be interested in urban material and non-material culture is another question.

As was already mentioned, in some rural areas in Europe where the modern-dynamic pattern of culture developed early in the 19th century, the way of life remained for a long time and in many respects clearly different from that in the cities. The desire to equal the city dwellers is more recent. On the other hand, the impression is that in the more backward parts of Europe the desire for the pleasures of city life came first and was followed rather slowly by the development of the modern-dynamic attitudes.

PEASANT'S ATTACHMENT TO FARM

A third factor responsible for the rural social situation in Europe, seemingly more or less in contradiction with the two discussed already, is the strong attachment of the European farmer or peasant to his farm. It is very difficult, of course, to establish how much this attachment has to do with farming as a profession

⁴A clear example of rural planning in which the growing influence of the urban way of life on the attitudes of the rural population was insufficiently taken in account are the plans for land reform and rural reconstruction in southern Italy in the post-war period. But also the planning of the *Zuiderzee*-polders in the Netherlands after the war shows still signs of an underestimation of the rapid changes which take place in the minds and the behavior of the rural population.

and how much with an attachment to the land as such. But there can hardly be any doubt that the European farmer has an emotional relationship to the land and the homestead which have been in many cases owned and used by his family for many generations. The fact that land still adds to a man's social status may be of some importance too. It must be admitted, and research shows,⁵ that farmers with a modern outlook display more rational attitudes when comparing farming with other possible professions.

It is also clear that a man under the spell of the pleasures of urban life is sooner tempted to leave the parental farm than the farmer's son of the 19th century who considered his village way of life self-evident. But this does not alter the fact that leaving the farm is a decision even a modern European farmer will not make easily. In this respect there are probably still some differences between the American and the European farmer even if in America being a farmer means also more than just having a job.

I have dwelled rather long upon these socio-cultural phenomena, though several aspects of them have been discussed many times before in Europe as well as in America. But I believe that they seldom or never have been discussed in this combination. It is just such a combination of these three factors which is responsible for the development of a structural crisis in European agriculture and for a revolutionary change in European rural life, which will also have strong repercussions outside Europe itself.

The economist will perhaps consider the acceptance of the urban population as a reference group as the most important of the three. This is because this factor culminates in the desire of the rural population for higher incomes. But in various combinations with the other two factors it can lead to different economic results.

MEANS TO HIGHER INCOME

If the European farmer wants a higher income, there are in principle four different means to reach that end. (1) He can try to produce more with the same labor force. In such case he can get a higher income for himself and can pay higher wages to his laborers. (2) He can try to produce the same as before with less labor and reach in this way the same result for himself and the reduced labor force. (3) He can also try to solve the problem by asking a higher price for his products or for some kind of

⁵ See for example: Benvenuti, *op. cit.*

additional payments, so that he gets a higher income for the same contribution to the national product. (4) Finally, he can leave the farm and try to get a job outside agriculture which pays him a higher income.

Of these four means the farmer can use the two mentioned first only when he is willing to accept certain changes in the way he manages his farm. Like social change, if technical and economic change is to be rapid, important and enduring, it can only come about when traditional attitudes give way to a certain degree of modern-dynamic thinking. If, however, farmers are still traditionally minded and they come nevertheless under the influence of city dwellers and city life, they will be inclined to see the solution of these problems in protection, relief measures, guaranteed prices, etc. When the government is not willing or not able to support them sufficiently, they will often be more inclined to leave the farm than farmers with modern attitudes.

As far as I know, there is no research or report explicitly mentioning the reactions of the "traditional" and the "modern" farmers in this respect after accepting the urban group as a reference group. Yet I have the impression that these reactions can be perceived in the divergent attitudes of farmers in the various countries and regions of Europe and even in the ideas of the policy-making bodies.⁶ The discussions during the rural social conference of the European Economic Community regarding the attitudes towards price regulations, relief, social security measures, etc., in Rome in 1961 were very instructive.⁷ The Italian delegates, representing employers as well as laborers, expected almost everything from government measures. But the delegates of the Netherlands, representing probably the most progressive agricultural population of the "six," were far more inclined to consider improvements in agriculture as an important means for a better level of living in the countryside.

It is clear that traditionalistic peasants' lack of modern attitudes works in two ways. On the one hand, they are not able to make the technical and economic changes necessary to get a higher income from their farm. On the other hand, just because they are traditionalistic it is difficult for them to make the big

⁶ Benvenuti, *op. cit.*, shows, that on the one hand farmers with a modern pattern of culture are inclined, far more than traditionalistic farmers, to consider it as self-evident, that their sons will choose a nonagricultural job if that will give them a better living than farming. On the other hand, he shows that just because they are good farmers and earn a good income, more of their sons stay on the farm, than do the sons of the traditionalistic farmers.

⁷ See the mimeographed proceedings of this conference in French, German, Italian and Dutch, edited by the Commission of the European Economic Community, Brussels, 1961.

step from their old profession and their old environment to a new job and a life with city people.

EFFECT OF URBAN STANDARDS

There are indications, however, that peasants in backward areas tend to leave their farms to get the higher income they want. For example, the traditionalistic peasant in southern Italy, feeling the desire for a better life, often tends to leave the land. A number of farms newly created in southern Italy through land reform have already been abandoned again.⁸ In the most progressive parts of Europe, on the other hand, hardly one acre of land goes out of use, even where natural conditions are not very favorable.

Thus the effects of the acceptance of the urban population as a reference group can differ depending on whether it is combined with a modern mentality or not. Its combination with a traditionalistic outlook is not without importance for European development. But this way of reacting, of course, is not dominant. The combination of two factors has been of decisive importance: an increasing diffusion of the modern pattern of culture and an increasing awareness of a higher urban level of living. Thus the majority of farmers were able to react to their desire for a better living by increasing their productivity. But this does not mean, of course, that they were not also interested in higher prices.

The complete acceptance of the urban population as a reference group came about only after World War II. But there was a considerable influence of urban centers on rural life at a much earlier date. This I have already mentioned. This effect was clearly noticeable in the more progressive parts of Europe at the end of the 19th century. At the same time the modern pattern of culture began to spread more widely. Thus the effect of the combination of the two factors began to demonstrate itself. This stimulated a technical change in agriculture resulting in an increase in agricultural production which can be perceived in the greater part of Europe since that time. The growing population of Western Europe and the rising level of living gave the farmers an outlet for their higher production. But the farmer did not try to

⁸In his paper for the third congress of the European Society for Rural Sociology, Sankt Wolfgang, Austria, 1962, Professor Manlio Rossi-Doria, University of Naples, said: "Rural exodus from these areas has taken on proportions of a wholesale flight although the actual agricultural resources and prospects could, in many cases, offer alternative solutions." M. Rossi-Doria, "Problems of Planning in Underdeveloped Areas," *Sociologia Ruralis*, Vol. II, no's. 1/2, 1962, p. 108.

raise his income only by increasing his production; he tried also to manage with less labor.

In spite of higher output per farm the labor needed to farm each acre went down. This could have led to different results. It would have been possible that the number of people working on the average farm remained the same but the average size of the farms gradually increased. In fact, however, the development was reversed. Though there are differences between the various regions and the various countries, the general tendency has been almost no increase in the size of farm, up to the end of World War II. Often the acreage per farm even went down.

It follows from the foregoing that this development must lead to a decrease in the number of people working on each farm, meaning a relative decrease in the dependent labor force (farm laborers, family members working on the farm) as compared with the number of independent farmers. The strong attachment of the farmer to the farm meant that he tried first to raise his personal income by increasing his production and, second, he reduced the number of co-workers. Leaving the farm was his last resort.

Let us take the Netherlands as an example of this development.⁹ From the beginning of the twentieth century until the end of World War II the average size of farms in that country did not change very much. It fluctuated among farms proper from 11 to 12 hectares (27 to 30 acres). Since the end of the 19th century the Netherlands reclaimed much waste land so that the surface of cultivated land increased from 2,057,000 hectares in 1888 to 2,552,000 hectares in 1959. As a consequence the number of independent farmers (in this case market gardeners included) increased from 160,000 in 1899 to 233,000 in 1947. Notwithstanding this considerable increase in the acreage of cultivated land, the number of co-workers on the farms did not in fact increase at all and was in 1899 as well as in 1947 about 330,000. This means a considerable decrease in the number of co-workers per farmer. In 1889 each farmer had on the average 2.1 male co-workers working on his farm, but in 1947 the number of co-workers had declined to 1.4.

⁹Figures on the development in this respect in other European countries are given in several papers for the conference in Bad Godesberg (Germany) on structural agricultural policy in relation to regional economic policy in Western Europe in 1961 (Agrarstrukturpolitik im Rahmen regionaler Wirtschaftspolitik in west-europäischen Ländern, Berichte über Landwirtschaft, Sonderheft, 175, Paul Parey, Hamburg and Berlin, 1962). For Switzerland also: Wilhelm Gasser-Stäger, Landflucht und Verstädterung, Festschrift für Professor Dr. Fritz Marbach, Stämpfli & Cie, Bern, 1962, pp. 548-571. For Germany see: "Gemeinsames Gutachten von Mitgliedern des Wissenschaftlichen Beirats beim BML und von wirtschaftswissenschaftlichen Beratern der Kommission der E.W.G.," Brussels, 1962.

After World War II the desire of the rural population for a level of living comparable with that of the urban population became much stronger, and at the same time the readiness to accept technical change and social change in general increased. This led primarily to a sharp increase in agricultural production. But the wish of the farmer for a higher income also caused an ever swelling number of co-workers to leave the farms. The switch to other activities was facilitated by the high level of employment during almost the whole period after the war.

In the postwar period the Netherlands showed for the first time in history a considerable decrease in the total number of people working in agriculture. Although a certain number of small farms disappeared, this decrease consisted almost exclusively of co-workers, in particular hired labor but also family members working on the farm.

Thus the number of co-workers per farmer declined from 1.4 in 1947 to 0.8 in 1960. It is interesting to compare this development concerning the number of co-workers in agriculture and industry. In 1889 the number of co-workers per employer in industry (including handicraft) was 2.7, not much more than in agriculture (2.1). By 1960 the number in industry had increased to 7.4, or about 9 times as high as in agriculture. During the early 1960's the decline of the number of co-workers in agriculture has been so rapid that if the development should continue at the same rate no co-workers would be left at all by the late 1960's.¹⁰

The situation for the Netherlands is not in all respects representative of Europe as a whole. But this tendency toward a decrease in the number of co-workers per farmer, particularly during the postwar period, is more or less general. It is clear that this trend leads to a situation in which year after year the one-man farm dominates the agricultural scene more and more. One gets the impression that policymakers and even agricultural economists and rural sociologists in Europe are not clearly aware of this fact or its consequences. In general they know that the number of hired laborers and family workers have been decreasing more rapidly than the number of farmers. But they do not realize that this decline in the number of co-workers per farmer is a long-term trend in European agriculture; neither do they realize that it means in fact that year after year the size of the average farm in Europe as an economic unit is declining. The traditional statistics, which measure the size of farms in hectares or acres of land and not in numbers of workers per enterprise as

¹⁰A detailed survey of the development in the Netherlands is given in: E. W. Hofstee, "75 jaren ontwikkeling van de Nederlandse landbouw" (see footnote 2).

is more usual in industry, contributes to blur the real development in this respect.

It is not fully realized either that under existing conditions the growing dominance of the one-man farm constitutes the background of one of the major problems for agricultural adjustment in Europe.

We can put it this way. The European farmer desires more than ever a level of living comparable to that of the city dweller. On the other hand he does not want to leave the farm. Thus to reach his ends he has used two means, increasing his production and reducing the number of people working on his farm. In the postwar period he used both means to the utmost. But when he has reduced the number of his co-workers to zero and his farm has become a one-man farm, there is no further possibility for the farmer to increase his personal income by cutting down on the number of laborers. In some cases part-time work outside agriculture may help, but in modern European economic life there are not many opportunities for part-time workers. If the farmer on a one-man farm wants to keep his income in line with that of the rest of society, he can only do so by increasing his production still more than he did before he discharged his last co-worker. He will be encouraged to try to get a still higher yield from his arable land and his grassland. He will try to reclaim waste land. He will try to keep more hogs, cattle and chickens. A comparison of areas where small farms dominate with areas where farms are bigger clearly shows that the total output of small farms is increasing much faster than that of larger farms.

We see here one of the most important roots of the structural crisis which is threatening European agriculture and which is in some countries an undeniable fact. The ever increasing number of one-man farms is propelling European agriculture toward overproduction. If at the moment the United States, Canada, Australia, New Zealand and other countries which traditionally export large quantities of agricultural products to Europe are afraid of the European Community and its possible high tariffs for agricultural products, they are looking at the symptoms and not at the causes. Economic Community or not, agricultural production in Europe will continue to increase very fast. This is because European farmers want both to enjoy a higher income and to stay on the land. I am against high tariffs. But it must be recognized that it is even possible that lower tariffs and lower prices for agricultural products in Europe would stimulate agricultural production even more than higher tariffs and higher prices. It is this increasing European production which in fact limits imports from other countries.

TREND TO OVERPRODUCTION

People in charge of the agricultural policy of the Community are already convinced that overproduction is unavoidable. In the beginning of the existence of the Community they still hoped that a certain equilibrium between supply and demand could be maintained. But that hope has vanished. Warnings from the side of sensible policymakers and of economists and sociologists that for the future of European agriculture it is necessary that the number of farms in Europe be drastically reduced are mostly answered by an angry howling from the side of the farmers and their unions.¹¹ And if they are supported by mighty but, in this field, ignorant political leaders, the chances for a clear and purposeful policy in this direction are few.

But these leaders cannot alter the fact that the majority of European farmers will have to face a catastrophic situation. It is estimated that in the postwar period the increase of the production per worker in agriculture in the Netherlands was one-third to one-half the result of the decrease of the number of co-workers per farm and the rest the result of the increase in production. In other European countries the situation is similar. Notwithstanding that everywhere there are existing systems of guaranteed prices, subsidies, etc., this increase of productivity was hardly sufficient to keep pace with the increase of the average income of the nonagricultural part of the working population. In most European countries there is still an important difference between the wages of farm laborers and workers in industry,¹² and many farmers still earn less than industrial workers. As was discussed in the foregoing, the possibility of increasing the personal income of the farmer by reducing the number of his co-workers has almost come to an end. If Dutch farmers, for example, should want to compensate for this lost possibility by a still higher production, they would have to try to increase the rate of growth of agricultural production by 50 to 100 percent as compared with the rate of growth during the postwar period.

An accelerated increase of the production would lead within a few years to an unsolvable problem of overproduction. This

¹¹Characteristic was the vehement reaction of the German farmers on the report "Gemeinsames Gutachten, etc." of eight agricultural economists mentioned in footnote 9. The farmers even barricaded the streets of the university town of Göttingen by way of protest against the conclusions of the report in which it was indicated that a high percentage of the farms in Germany have to disappear in the near future.

¹²A comparison of the wages of farm laborers and industrial workers for a number of European countries was made in W. Abel and D. Zöllner, Landarbeiter in Westeuropa, Schaper, Hannover, 1954, and P. von Blanckenburg, Landarbeiter in der europäischen Industriegesellschaft, Agrarsoziale Gesellschaft, Göttingen, 1960.

overproduction would cause more serious problems than the existing surpluses in America. First, it would consist primarily of perishable, high-priced commodities for which it would be difficult to find an outlet in the low-income countries, even against heavily reduced prices. Secondly, even with the European Community, Europe remains a continent with many national governments. Thus it would be almost impossible to carry out a coordinated policy to deal with the surpluses. Probably overproduction would lead to severe production restrictions closing that alternative as a means for future adjustment. Even an increase of production at the same yearly rate as in the postwar years will lead very soon to overproduction, so that we can expect the increase of production in the future will not be faster but slower than it was during the last few years.

European farmers can expect little help from higher prices for agricultural products in the future. The long-run tendency is toward overproduction. Thus it can hardly be expected that in the long run the relative price level for farmers will be much better than it has been in the various countries in the postwar years. Perhaps the establishment of a common price system in the six countries will mean somewhat better prices in the beginning for some products and for some countries. But in the long run the best that the farmer can expect seems to be that the agricultural price level will follow hesitatingly the general price level. That, of course, does not help him when he is not able to expand his production.

ALTERNATIVE: REDUCING NUMBER OF FARMS

Because the possibilities for an increase of the total production are limited and the reduction of the number of co-workers has practically come to an end, there remains only one solution, namely a drastic decrease in the number of farms. But this decrease must come quickly if a disastrous situation is to be avoided. Suppose that in the Netherlands the rate of growth of agricultural production is the same as in the postwar period. Also suppose that the farms which would disappear would be of average size, and that the number of co-workers per farm remains at the same level. Then every year about 5 percent of Dutch farms will have to disappear if the increases in the farmers' income are to keep more or less pace with the increasing incomes of the rest of the population. In fact, as was pointed out, an increase of production as in the postwar period seems almost impossible.

In addition the small farms will disappear first so that more

than 5 percent of the farms will have to disappear to effect the necessary reduction of the total number of people working in agriculture. A decrease of the number of farms by 50 percent in ten years, according to this calculation, would be certainly the minimum to maintain the present unstable equilibrium. This seems extremely high. But even Denmark, which shows almost the highest production per capita in agriculture of all European countries, must have a 50 percent reduction in farms to give the farmers a satisfactory income according to a calculation by the Danish agricultural economist, K. Skovgaard.¹³

It is clear that a decrease in the number of farms by 5 percent every year will have a tremendous effect on rural life. Every year about 3 percent of the farmers die or retire. That means that even if not a single one of them would be replaced, the number dropping out would not be large enough to bring about the necessary decrease. In fact, of course, many farmers' sons will succeed their fathers. This means that if the necessary decrease has to be effected, every year an important percentage of the able-bodied farmers will have to shift from farming to non-agricultural jobs. In view of what was said about the attachment of the European farmers to the land and homestead, that would mean an agonizing decision for thousands and thousands of farm families. It seems almost impossible to imagine that farmers will be able to realize this self-inflicted reduction. On the other hand, the striving for a higher level of living is so strong that the younger farmers especially will go a long way to get what they want.

The decision to leave the farm will probably be made easier as labor conditions on the one-man farm become more and more unfavorable as compared to those in nonagricultural jobs. For the industrial labor force a limitation of the working hours and long weekends and vacations have become normal or will become within a few years. The increasing percentage of one-man farms means that for the farmer these conditions are not only unattainable but that, on the contrary, he becomes more and more tied to the farm. Thus from the social point of view the development of agriculture in Europe has also led to conditions which, as it seems, cannot last for long.

Thus because of the changes in the attitudes of the farmers regarding their own position in society, the family farm and the agricultural population in Europe are in a critical position. But it seems almost certain that this position in the near future also

¹³K. Skovgaard, "Dänemark," *Agrarstrukturpolitik im Rahmen regionaler Wirtschaftspolitik in westeuropäischen Ländern* (see footnote 9).

will be endangered by forces from the outside. Definite symptoms of an important activity by big business in agricultural production in Europe can already be perceived, though these symptoms do not show themselves yet as clearly as in the United States. The growing concentration in the processing of agricultural products and in the retail trade of food products leads to an increasing demand for a regular supply of agricultural products of a stable and good quality which the multitude of small farmers often cannot provide even with the intermediary of farmers co-operatives.

This, more than possible lower prices, motivates an increasing number of big concerns to develop plans for the mass production of agricultural commodities and to carry out their plans. In some branches, like the production of broilers, large-scale production is already dominating, and it seems almost impossible to stop this development. The threat which this possible large-scale production in agriculture means for family farms is so much more serious because it shows a special interest for the products which are the basis of the existence of the small farmer, such as eggs, poultry, pork and milk. A development of any importance of agricultural production by big concerns would mean the end to thousands of small farms.

European farmers as a group are not able to face this threat. That would only be possible if they could organize production and marketing in a much better way. That would require not only a considerable reduction in the number of farms but also a better and more extensive education of the average European farmer, a better system of land division, better farm buildings, better roads, more machinery and better equipment in general. Here again we meet the element of time in the problems of family farm adjustment. One can hardly imagine that it would be possible to bring about all the necessary improvements in time so that the family farm would be a match for big enterprises in agriculture. The speed at which technical change and change in the attitudes of farmers are realized is too low to meet the growing difficulties.

Let us take as an example the system of land division. As is known, Europe inherited from the past a system, or perhaps better, systems of land division unsuited for modern agriculture. In some parts of Europe thousands of acres of fertile land lie fallow¹⁴ because the system of land division does not permit a

¹⁴In Germany much land lies fallow because the owners are working in factories and have no time or no interest to use their land. The land cannot be used by full-time farmers because the parcels are so small and so widely scattered that it does not pay. The Germans even invented a special word for this phenomenon, viz. "Sozialbrache" (social fallow).

profitable use. The American checkerboard system of land division may not be well adapted to modern conditions either, but in Europe the situation is much worse. Improvement is very expensive and time-consuming. In the Netherlands where conditions are still better than in several other European countries, about 60 percent of the total acreage of cultivated land is in urgent need of re-allocation. An amount equivalent to about 7 percent of the total net income of farmers and farm laborers is spent in carrying out re-allocation schemes. But if we should go on in this way it would still take about 50 years before all the land that requires re-allocation could be handled. Almost the same could be said about farm buildings. Though in Europe after the war mechanization of agriculture developed rather quickly, technical equipment for European agriculture lags behind the economic requirements. This is in large part caused by the multitude of one-man farms, which are too small to make modern equipment profitable.

CONCLUSIONS

Time does not permit picturing other aspects of the problems of agriculture and the countryside in Europe. I could dwell upon the necessity for physical reconstruction of the rural areas in Europe. Europe is covered by thousands of small villages, originating from the Middle Ages, which served the needs of the rural population. They have become inadequate. The decrease of the rural population, the development of modern traffic and in particular the changed needs of the population mean that many villages are on the decline and should disappear. But there has scarcely been any effort toward a systematic redistribution of trade centers. The old people cling to their village and the authorities responsible hesitate to act or do not see the problem. As a result the countryside is beginning to suffer from unsatisfactory service and also from defective social organization, as for example is shown by the declining participation in all kinds of organizations, clubs and other institutions.

It should be emphasized that, compared to that in the United States, social, economic and political life in the European countryside is much more institutionalized. Therefore changes by private activities are much more difficult than in the United States.

What has been said will probably be sufficient to demonstrate that agriculture and rural life in Europe are in a serious crisis which will demonstrate itself in the years to come still far more clearly than it has already. As far as history can tell us, the

European countryside faces the most important and the most sudden change of its existence. Even the existence of a class of farmers as a separate group with its own social, cultural and economic characteristics is at stake.

The situation would not be so desperate if the farmers, their organizations and the governments were fully aware of what is really going on and would try to find an adequate solution for the problems. Agricultural economists, rural sociologists and many experts in the administrations become more and more convinced that only a quick and radical change of the social and economic structure of the countryside can save at least part of the values of rural life and of the system of agricultural production based on the family farm. The official discussions on agricultural problems, however, continue to move for the greater part along the lines of prices, tariffs, import quota, etc. The farmers blame their governments and ask for better prices, more free trade for themselves and higher tariffs for the agricultural products from other countries. The farmers' unions and the agricultural press, as far as they understand the real problems, do not have the courage to contradict the farmers and to tell them that higher prices and tariffs will be of no use without a total reconstruction of agriculture. The governments continue to spend millions and millions on subsidies, etc., but they do little to further this reconstruction.

It is characteristic of the situation that questions relating to agricultural price policy, subsidies, etc., have created an argument for breaking off the negotiations about England's admittance to the European Economic Community and that, on the other hand, this same Community has not yet any fixed plans for the improvement of the structure of European agriculture.

Leading politicians often speak about agriculture in romantic and sentimental terms which belong to the past. They talk of farmers being the backbone of the nation, about their being as strong — that is, as numerous — as possible. They orate on the virtues of the simple peasant, on the industrious farm laborer who saves his money penny by penny and is at the end of his life the owner of a small holding, on the necessity of the country's own agriculture providing food in the next war, and on the farmer as a stable element in the political life of the nation. They repeat all those obsolete slogans which camouflage the real situation and the real problems of agriculture and rural areas but which are unfortunately still so dear to many inside and outside agriculture. We can say that in general European agricultural policy is for an important part aiming at false goals because it is based on unrealistic values.

It must be admitted that in some countries a change in the attitudes of the governments and even of the farmers' unions can be perceived. But it is only a beginning, and in other countries of Europe not even that beginning is present. Most governments and farmers' unions have so strongly identified themselves with the policy of the past that it will be almost impossible for them to change quickly to another way of thinking about the problems of agriculture in Europe and their possible solution.

European farmers suffer on the one hand from increasing feelings of despair about their future and on the other hand from the wrong idea that the only means to defend themselves against the threatening dangers is to cling to the existing social and economic order of agriculture and rural life. They do not see that their own desires and their own activities have undermined this order and that it is collapsing.

What Europe needs is an organized activity of people who are not committed to the point of view of the policymakers, who are able and willing to diagnose the problems of agriculture and countryside objectively and who can show the farmers what chances there are for an independent class of farmers to continue to exist in Europe.

In this respect the United States can be congratulated for having an organization such as the Center for Agricultural and Economic Development which, as I understand, accomplishes a function of importance in this respect for the American farmer.