

protest in the 1840s, first in machine-breaking and attacks on part-time rural labour brought in to undercut wages, then in the Prague cotton printers' action of 1844, which grew into a controlled demonstration by a thousand workers from several cotton-printing works in front of the Viceroy's palace. Prague emissaries with an organisation apparently based on workers' benevolent funds played a role in sympathy movements among the textile workers of north Bohemia. Meanwhile part-time railway construction workers near Prague entered the city and destroyed Jewish merchants' shops. The episode excited Marx and Engels and belied official assertions that the labour question was a foreign affair. It gave an ageing government another problem to deal with, to add to those it faced where the great majority of Habsburg subjects still lived, in the countryside.

### Reforming Landlords and Resentful Peasants

The population living from the land fell relatively in this period from about 75% to approximately 71% of the total – but in absolute terms it grew considerably, while land under plough in Alpine Austria increased 30% between 1789 and 1830. Estimates of annual agricultural growth rate for the Monarchy as a whole vary between 0.5% and at least 1% a year. Whatever the precise figure, the pressures exerted by population growth for improved performance imposed strains on the social order on the land which helped burst it apart in 1848.

Agrarian growth did not come primarily, as the Enlightenment had envisaged, from a new class of peasant proprietors. The maintenance of the seigneurial relationship in the countryside, underlined by the prohibition of commutation for *robot* on Crown estates in 1821, put paid to that. In the absence of decent credit facilities peasants could, anyway, only redeem their services by selling much of their land, which was sufficient discouragement, while the same factor doomed the peasant plots created on the Raab model to disappointingly slow growth. Agrarian improvement was thus mainly a noble affair.

Most significant was the advance in communications. The Danube Steamship Company played a key role in the doubling of value of Hungary's agricultural exports to Austria between 1831 and 1845. Along the Danube, 147 depots sprang up, even more densely at Győr than at Pest, which itself had a thousand steamship sailings

up-river a year and over a thousand merchants to Győr's 272 (1846). Just over half the latter dealt in both grain and livestock, a sign of Hungary's lack of specialisation compared to more advanced countries. Indeed, many small Hungarian merchants might band together to export a single cargo up the Danube, when profits could be of the order of 40%. Railways made an equally rapid impact. The *Northahn* was carrying about 211,000 tons of freight by 1846, nearly 30% of it agrarian produce. Much that the eighteenth century had conceived in terms of drainage and canals was now accomplished, often by magnate initiative, like Count Ferenc Zichy's regaining of hundreds of square miles of marshland around Lake Balaton. Most spectacular, albeit a state-aided project, was Count István Szechenyi's regulation of the river Tisza begun in the 1840's which aimed to save 5000 square miles of regularly flooded land for arable use.

Meanwhile, the professionalisation of estate management proceeded apace. The Georgikon on the Festeics estate in west Hungary, with 1414 pupils between 1797 and 1848, and the Schwarzenberg school at Krumlov in south Bohemia were perhaps the most famous of estate training schools. By the 1840s estate managers like František Horský and Antonín Komers, the overall directors of the Schwarzenberg and Thun estates respectively, were important figures in their own right. The tiny provincial agrarian societies set up under government sponsorship in the 1760s were succeeded from the 1800s by voluntary provincial bodies, often with branches and containing hundreds (in the Alpine provinces, thousands) of members. Those of Styria (1819), Tyrol and Vorarlberg (1838) and Upper Austria (1845) were a particular cause of the Archduke Johann, living with his ex-post-mistress bride in the semi-retirement the nineteenth century reserved for all Habsburgs with a touch of imagination.

Nineteenth-century Habsburg farm management added to the nostrums of the Enlightenment the cause of convertible husbandry, practised by the 1840s by some 170 Bohemian estates covering 7% of the arable land. Even on the most advanced estates, though, it was combined with the three-field system improved by the use of root crops on the fallow. Other new crops were tobacco and sugar beet, while potatoes made great gains. Nobles' industrial speciality came to be agricultural processing. Twenty-five per cent of Bohemian potatoes and 60% of Galician went on distilling alcohol, and breweries and saw-mills were also popular. Probably the biggest activity of early nineteenth-century landlords, however, was the keeping of merino sheep for their fine wool. Prince Esterházy had