

AGRARIAN CRISIS IN 15TH C GERMANY: (CF England and France)

HERRSCHAFT (Lordship): process of seigneurial retrenchment, fusion of nobles' role both as landlord and magistrate; economic dependence combined with judicial jurisdiction reduces free peasants to serfs, tenants into subjects

POPULATION INCREASE: 1480-1548 approx 50% increase = pressure on land, reduction of common lands, pasture for grazing
number of landless peasants; move to cities in effort to gain freedom

STADT LUFT MACHT FREI: "city air makes [a peasant] free" after a year & a day which results in decrease in seigneurial income, customary feudal dues
eg **HERIOT** or **TODFALL** = death duties (tax due when serf dies)

INTENSIFICATION OF SERFDOM: new restrictions on peasant freedom of movement, choice of marriage partner, penalties for peasant moving or withdrawing from service of landlord: confiscation of property, disinheritance, fines

FAMINES 1523-24: precipitating cause of peasant revolt

KNIGHTS' WAR 1522-23: REICHSRITTER -- 2,000 "free Imperial Knights" in Empire
late medieval gradual loss of military role for knights: available social roles:

- 1) farming and estate management (pressure on peasants)
- 2) bureaucratic positions in princely governments
- 3) banditry: renegade knights live by pillage, highway robbery

Franz von Sickingen: Imp'l knight, mercenary for French King, turns Lutheran
1522 declares war on Archbishop of Trier, promising "Christian freedom"
motive is secularization of electoral bishopric; defeated by princes

THE GERMAN PEASANTS' WAR or THE REVOLUTION OF 1525? (Peter Blickle = historian)

Precedents: 1493 **Bundschuh** (League of the Shoe)

1514 **Arme Konrad** (Poor Konrad) movement

Economic & social background: nobility intensifies enforcement of seigneurial rights: administration of justice, forest law, fishing, grazing etc.

Political & Imperial factors: increase in Imp'l taxation from Maximilian on

Peter Blickle: historian stresses involvement of urban artisans in revolt

"Revolution of 1525" as "revolution of the common man" not just peasants
appeal against status quo to 1) **customary law** ("old written law")

2) **Godly law** (Scripture, Christian freedom): "**BIBLICISM**" vs "**FEUDALISM**"

TWELVE ARTICLES OF THE SWABIAN PEASANTRY: drafted in city of Memmingen by
Sebastian Lotzer (journeyman furrier) & Christoph Schappeler (Lutheran pastor)
Religious demands: Preface, "Christian excuse for disobedience," Articles 1-3
vs Economic demands: common lands, tithes, return to "customary law"
aftermath of revolt: 1526 Diet of Speyer: 12 Articles submitted as Grievances

THOMAS MUNTZER: begins as **Zwickau prophet**; Luther calls him "Archdevil of Mulhausen"
Doctrines: Radical spiritualist: direct inspiration by Holy Spirit;

Millenarian: imminent coming of last days; holy warfare agst Anti-Christ

1521 "**Prague Manifesto**:" call to take up arms against the godless & priests

1523 town of Allstedt: preaching, followers number about 500; marries ex-nun
-- organizes destruction of chapel with miraculous Madonna

1524 "**Sermon before Princes**:" defends iconoclasm to Duke & Elector of Saxony
leaves for Mulhausen, where he organizes "**League of the Elect**"

1525 joins forces with peasants at **Battle of Frankenhausen**: of 9,000 peasants,
5,000 dead; princes troops led by Philip of Hesse, Duke George of Saxony
Muntzer captured, tortured confession: "all things to be held in common"

LUTHER'S RESPONSE TO PEASANT REVOLT : distinction between **two kingdoms (zwei Reiche)**
treatises: Friendly Admonition to Peace concerning the 12 Articles

defensive motive: need to separate Reformation & self from revolt
explanation of "calling": only princes can wield the sword

Against the Robbing Murdering Hordes of Peasants response to the

sacking of Erfurt (Thuringia); personal attack on Thomas Muntzer

Open Letter on the Harsh Book against the Peasantry: semi-apology

result: Luther and Lutheranism permanently identified with German princely
government; loss of revolutionary illusions among peasantry