

# Employment Problems in Polish Agriculture

by

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*In the following pages Mr. Frenkel, who is a senior adviser on agricultural aspects of long-term planning in the Planning Commission of the Polish Council of Ministers, describes the measures taken in his country to tackle rural overpopulation. After making a general survey of policy trends since the war, the author shows how overpopulation has been affected by agrarian reform, land settlement, industrialisation and regional development; he concludes that rural unemployment and underemployment can be finally eliminated only when the present small-farm economy has given place to a system of large-scale socialist ownership and working of the land. This transformation of the agrarian structure is one of the main aims of the Polish long-term development plan (1961-75), the employment aspects of which the author briefly outlines in conclusion.*

## BASIC OBJECTIVES AND TRENDS OF AGRARIAN POLICY IN POLAND

THE principal objective of the social and economic policy applied in Poland since the war has been to change Poland from a backward agricultural country, as it was before the war, into a fully developed industrial country with a high standard of living. The agrarian policy being applied in the three main spheres—namely production, technical and structural questions, and social affairs—is playing an important part in the attainment of this objective.

### *Agricultural Production*

One of the main indices of the improved living conditions of the Polish people is the substantial increase and the changed pattern of its food consumption. The changes that have already taken place in this field and estimates for the future are shown in table I.

TABLE I. CONSUMPTION OF BASIC FOODSTUFFS  
PER HEAD OF POPULATION

Foodstuff	Unit	Year					
		1933-37	1949	1955	1958	1965	1975
Cereals . . . . .	kg.	136.8 <sup>1</sup>	163.3	170.7	141.6	135	125
Meat and fats <sup>2</sup> . .	„	19.6 <sup>3</sup>	32.7	45.7	55.0	72	79
Milk and dairy produce <sup>4</sup> . . . .	litre	262.3	276.0	327.1	354.5	410	505
Eggs . . . . .	one	—	116.0	137.0	134.0	150	188
Sugar . . . . .	kg.	9.6	19.3	24.0	28.5	34	36
Fruit and vegetables	„	—	—	84.0	98.8	127	200
Potatoes . . . . .	„	—	—	229.0	231.0	200	140

Source: *Rocznik Statystyczny 1959*, pp. 353-354, and data furnished by the Planning Committee for the Council of Ministers.

<sup>1</sup> 1938. <sup>2</sup> Including butter. <sup>3</sup> Excluding butter and vegetable fats. <sup>4</sup> Excluding butter.

The large gap between the level of food consumption in Poland after the war and the desirable level in accordance with the principles of sound nutrition, and the high rate of the natural increase of the population <sup>1</sup> mean that an intensive and systematic increase in agricultural production will be needed to meet the country's food requirements. For this reason also one of the most important objectives of agrarian policy is to ensure the proper development of the production potential of agriculture.

Since almost all the available land is already farmed, the only way of increasing agricultural production is by intensifying production methods, and for this there is great scope in Poland. Although the output of Polish agriculture has increased in comparison with the pre-war period, in most branches of production <sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> In pre-war years Poland was one of the European countries with the lowest level of consumption. The situation in this respect worsened considerably during the war and the occupation. As a result there was a great difference between the actual and desirable levels. On the other hand, since the war Poland has had the second highest birth rate in Europe after Albania, averaging nearly 1.8 per cent. per annum, which in absolute figures means an annual increase of nearly 500,000. As a result the population has risen from 25 million in 1950 to nearly 30 million in 1960. The birth rate estimates show that a further substantial increase in the population will also take place in the future, namely to over 32 million in 1965 and to between 36.5 and 37.5 million in 1975.

<sup>2</sup> For example the production of the four grain crops (wheat, rye, oats and barley) rose from 11.4 quintals per hectare in the years 1934-38 to 14.5 in the years 1955-58 and 15.6 in the years 1959-60. Over the same period the number of pigs per 100 hectares almost doubled. While it was only in 1960 that the number of cattle attained the pre-war figure the annual milk yield per cow has increased by nearly 500 litres, that is, by 36 per cent.

it is still considerably lower than in many European countries of similar natural and soil conditions, which shows that there are immense production reserves.

The average annual rate of increase over the last ten years (1949-59) is 2.6 per cent., the rate over the first five-year period (1.9 per cent.) being much lower than that over the succeeding years (3.2 per cent.). In the planning work now being undertaken it is expected that the maintenance of the rate of increase over the next 15 years at an average of between 3 and 4 per cent. per year and the corresponding change in the structure of production will make Poland fully self-supporting as regards consumer demands in this period and leave the margin of agricultural produce necessary to satisfy all other economic demands.

### *Technical Problems*

Another basic objective of agrarian policy in Poland is the modernisation of the technical and structural basis of agriculture, without which it will be impossible to ensure a constant rise in agricultural production. The technical level attained in agriculture in pre-war Poland was extremely primitive. Even on large farms tractors were few and far between. Sowing was done from a canvas bag, crops were reaped by scythe and threshing was carried out by flail and horse-driven mill. In vegetable growing and stock-breeding, mechanisation did not attain 1 per cent. The vast majority of farms had no electricity whatever.<sup>1</sup>

All this shows what a great leeway in the development of agricultural mechanisation remained to be made up in Poland. The task of technical reconstruction was started with determination as soon as the war ended and has gone on since at an increasing speed and on a widening scale. Substantial progress has been made in the equipment of agriculture with tractors.<sup>2</sup> At the same time there has been a considerable increase in the supplies of other agricultural machines, the majority of which, like that of the tractors, are now produced in Poland.

The mechanisation of agricultural operations has been most marked in the state farms, where almost all the basic field operations are carried out by tractors or mechanical traction. The degree

<sup>1</sup> It was also highly characteristic that the situation worsened rather than improved in this respect. For example the total tonnage of agricultural machines and implements produced by Polish industry fell by almost one-half over the period from 1929 to 1938.

<sup>2</sup> The number of tractors in use increased from 22,500 in 1949 to 61,900 in 1959. Over the same period the area of arable land per standard tractor of 15 horse-power dropped from 870 to 207 hectares. See *Mały Rocznik Statystyczny 1960* (Warsaw, GUS, 1960), p. 98.

of mechanisation in the production co-operatives is also well above the average. The least mechanised farms are those under individual ownership.

Mechanisation reaches agriculture in the different social sectors of the agrarian economy in different ways. On the state farms machines are supplied directly by the State. The production co-operatives purchase their own machines and also receive assistance from the state machine centres, which carry out a number of operations on the co-operative farms in return for payment. Private farms achieve mechanisation in the same way as co-operatives. Recently, however, new facilities for mechanisation have been provided for them in connection with the intensive development of the so-called "agricultural circles" and with the setting up for these circles of a special Agricultural Development Fund.<sup>1</sup> Each circle utilises the basic part of this Fund for the purchase of agricultural machines, which are used by all the members in accordance with rules laid down by the circle itself. Although it is barely 18 months since the Fund was created, its influence on the acceleration of the technical reconstruction of agriculture is fully apparent. In Poland, where almost 87 per cent. of the area of agricultural holdings is occupied by privately owned farms and 64 per cent. of the latter are smaller than 5 hectares, the development of the agricultural circles and the creation of the Agricultural Development Fund are playing a very important part in surmounting the restrictions which the system of small-scale farming imposes on the modernisation of agriculture. Despite all its advantages, however, this is only a half measure since it does not eliminate the principal sources of backwardness in agriculture, which are to be found in the great fragmentation of the ownership and exploitation of land in Poland. If technical progress is to be permanently achieved in agriculture, this fragmentation must be eliminated. This, however, is connected with the need for a radical reorganisation of the agrarian system now obtaining in Poland.

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<sup>1</sup> Poland has a system of compulsory deliveries of three basic agricultural products—grain, fodder and potatoes. Under this system all farms are obliged to sell specified quantities of these products to the State each year at fixed prices substantially lower than the prices on the free market. Until the middle of 1959 the entire yield from the difference between the two prices was placed at the disposal of the central state budget. At present it is used to constitute the Agricultural Development Fund, which is available to the agricultural circles for investment in agriculture. An agricultural circle is a voluntary, autonomous association of all or some of the peasants of a rural area. While each farmer retains full control of his own property, the circle engages in a number of collective operations concerning all the members, namely the purchase and utilisation of large agricultural machines, land improvement, the organisation of seed economy, etc.

*Agrarian Structure*

Agrarian policy in Poland does not keep aloof from problems relating to the organisation of agriculture. On the contrary it is aimed at actively influencing the structure of rural areas in such a way that they will be able to catch up not only technically but also socially with the towns. The agrarian reform carried out in the first years after the war paved the way for structural changes in Polish agriculture.

The agrarian system of pre-war Poland was characterised by the great fragmentation of peasant farms, on the one hand, and the concentration of landed property, particularly in large estate farms, on the other. Nearly two-thirds of the total number of peasant farms occupied barely one-seventh of the total ground, whereas the large estates, which amounted to less than 1 per cent. of the total number of farms, owned almost half the total land occupied by farms.

The agrarian reform carried out after the war in conjunction with the settlement of the Western Territories fundamentally changed the system of ownership in Polish agriculture. The large estates were partly nationalised and partly distributed among peasant smallholders and former métayers. Nearly 30 per cent. of the total number of farms in Poland today belong to peasants to whom they were distributed, wholly or in part, under the decrees on agrarian reform and land settlement.

In this way agrarian reform fulfilled the most important peasant aspirations of the pre-war period, namely the distribution of the land to the cultivators and the ending of the exploitation and humiliation of the peasants by the landowners.

The achievement of these aspirations did not, however, put an end to fragmentation in agriculture. Although the average size of agricultural smallholdings increased, the number of small farms also increased at the expense of the large farms, and the root problem of fragmentation has remained unsolved hitherto. This means that once the agrarian reform is completed the next stage in the structural transformation of rural areas will be the solution of the problem of fragmentation or the start of concentration in agriculture.

At the present day the process of concentration in agriculture is making unprecedented strides in almost every country in the world. The nature and speed of this process, however, vary from country to country and are conditioned by each country's social and economic system, history, economy, politics and culture. Notwithstanding this variety, two essentially different forms of concentration in agriculture are beginning to crystallise in the

modern world. The first aims in various ways at the replacement and absorption of small farms by larger ones and is the most common form in the capitalist countries. The other consists in amalgamating the land and resources of small farms into one large farm by various means in accordance with co-operative principles and is applied mainly in the socialist countries, including Poland. Concentration in Polish agriculture is achieved principally by means of production co-operatives. Although these differ little from each other in the essentials, the degree of co-operativisation and the ways in which the work is organised and the income distributed vary considerably from one co-operative to another. The methods used range from the very simplest, which differ little from those used in the agricultural circles, to highly organised forms of co-operative farming.

The number of production co-operatives reached and passed the figure of 2,000 during 1960. The area farmed exceeds 250,000 hectares ; although this is relatively small, the fact that the production co-operative movement, by combining dispersed resources, creates more favourable conditions for higher production, a larger income for the rural population and the solution of social problems in the rural areas ensures that the co-operative system will be the agrarian system of the future in Poland.

### *Social Security and Conditions of Work*

The extent to which the various groups of the population engaged in agriculture are covered by the state system of social security varies. As a rule, labourers and employees on state farms and in machine centres and day labourers on private farms have the same rights as industrial labourers and employees, i.e. they are entitled to free out-patient and in-patient treatment and to considerable reductions for medicines issued on prescription<sup>1</sup> (these rights are also enjoyed by their dependants) and to sickness benefit, family allowances, old-age and invalidity pensions, etc. In the state sector of agriculture, hours of work and labour protection are also regulated. For example the most recent collective agreement concluded by the Ministry of Agriculture with the Agricultural Employees' Union (in force since 1 January 1959<sup>2</sup>) stipulates a seven-hour working day in January, February and December and an eight-hour working day in the remaining months of the year. In the case of young persons (between 14 and 16 years of age) reduced hours of work are in force and night work and work on certain operations

<sup>1</sup> The reduction of the cost of medicines for insured persons amounts to 30 per cent. of the normal price (10 per cent. in the case of chronic diseases).

<sup>2</sup> This agreement is only applicable on state farms.

are prohibited. A recent enactment also prohibited the employment of women on certain operations such as the driving of tractors, the feeding of grain into threshing mill drums, etc.<sup>1</sup> As a result of all these changes, social protection for agricultural labourers has been substantially extended in comparison with the pre-war period, when they were in every respect the least favoured group of day labourers. Nevertheless agricultural labourers are as yet not always able to enjoy the rights they have acquired as fully as industrial workers. This is due especially to the fact that social institutions (clinics, hospitals, etc.) are less developed in the rural areas than in the towns.

Agricultural labourers are the only group of persons employed in agriculture fully covered by the state system of social security. The other groups are only partly covered. Since 1954 the members of production co-operatives receive free out-patient and in-patient medical care.<sup>2</sup> On the other hand, the question of pension security for members of co-operatives has not yet been regulated. What does happen is that a number of production co-operatives or regional federations of such co-operatives set up their own pension funds, but the benefits they provide are not as favourable as those provided under the state pension scheme.

Hitherto peasants managing their own farms have not been covered by the state social security scheme, except those who are also in regular non-agricultural employment. The latter enjoy the same social rights as the other workers in the undertaking where they are employed, except that in their case the grant of a pension is subject to the amount they earn on the farm.

## RURAL OVERPOPULATION

### *Definition*

We use the expression "rural overpopulation" to describe all forms of visible or concealed unemployment among the agricultural population, while making a distinction between the two basic forms of such unemployment, real and potential unemployment. Real rural overpopulation occurs wherever the manpower supply in agriculture actually exceeds what is required under a particular agrarian structure and in given technical and organisational conditions to ensure a given level of agricultural production. On the other hand, we can speak of potential rural overpopulation where

<sup>1</sup> Order of the Council of Ministers of 18 February 1959. *Dziennik Ustaw Polskiej Rzeczypospolitej Ludowej*, 1959, No. 18, Text 109.

<sup>2</sup> Decision of 23 February 1954 of the Praesidium of the Government. *Monitor Polski*, 1954, Text 42.

the manpower supply in agriculture in fact exceeds the requirements of agriculture not under given but under changed social, economic, technical and organisational circumstances (e.g. as observed in other countries). It is obvious that changes in these conditions without corresponding changes in the manpower supply may transform potential overpopulation into real overpopulation.

Real rural overpopulation is not a homogeneous phenomenon. It appears as a rule in the following forms :

First, in the existence of "superfluous" persons, that is, a section of the agricultural population which may leave the farm at any time without adversely affecting production and which remains on the farm for the sole reason that it is not yet able to leave. In such cases the essential point is not whether this section of the population, while remaining on the farm, takes part or does not take part in the work of the farm ; it is that when they leave all the indispensable agricultural work can be completed by the population which remains.

The second form of rural overpopulation appears in the existence of a section of the agricultural population whose presence on the farm, under a particular agrarian structure and at a given technical level, is essential and which cannot leave the farm without adversely affecting production but which at the same time is not fully employed in agriculture and has a constant reserve of working time. In other words this form of overpopulation is characterised not by superfluous persons but by the superfluous time of indispensable persons.

In both the cases we have mentioned, rural overpopulation appears in a more or less concealed form and only becomes fully visible when opportunities for emigrating from agriculture or finding other employment become available on a large scale for the agricultural population.

In addition, real rural overpopulation takes the form of visible unemployment among agricultural labourers.

### *Efforts to Remedy Rural Overpopulation*

In the inter-war period Poland was characterised by all the types of rural overpopulation mentioned above. The prevailing type was, however, real overpopulation in its most serious form, that of "superfluous" population in the rural areas. It is not therefore surprising that the problem of rural overpopulation in the inter-war period occupied a prominent place among social and economic problems generally. Pre-war Poland was, however, unable to find any practical solutions for this problem. On the contrary, the whole of the period from 1900 to the outbreak of the



Second World War was, with a few exceptions, a period of increasing rural overpopulation, which reached its climax in the 1930s.

Measures to find a practical solution of the problem were taken immediately after the war. Although at that time many circumstances (such as the new frontiers and the associated population movements and the wartime population losses) facilitated the measures to combat rural overpopulation, most of the progress achieved in this field over the past 15 years is associated with a number of fundamental changes that have taken place both in and outside agriculture.

### *Measures within Agriculture.*

The most important changes taking place inside agriculture are those resulting from the agrarian reform and the land settlement programme. Between 1945 and 1949 the distribution of part of the landed property in the Former Territories permitted the creation of 350,000 new farms of an average area of 5.3 hectares. In addition, more than 250,000 farms, mainly very small ones (less than 5 hectares), were increased by an average of 1.9 hectares. Looked at from the point of view that concerns us these figures show, on the one hand, an increase in the over-all employment opportunities in agriculture (through the breaking down of the large estates) and, on the other, the creation of more favourable conditions for the utilisation of the manpower supply on the farms (by the increase in the area of the farms). The combination of these two factors in the years immediately following the war caused a certain reduction of real rural overpopulation in the Former Territories. Similar results were obtained by the land-settlement measures carried out simultaneously with agrarian reform. Between 1945 and 1950 more than 1 million persons, coming mainly from the most overpopulated agricultural regions of the Former Territories, moved to farms in the Western Territories.

One factor which considerably influenced the creation of more favourable conditions for the utilisation of the manpower supply on the farms was the considerably accelerated increase of the branches of agricultural production absorbing most manpower. For instance, whereas agricultural production as a whole increased by 30 per cent. between 1949 and 1959, the production of sugar beet increased by 76 per cent., that of cattle fodder by 106 per cent., pig fodder by 117 per cent., etc. The essential point to be noted here is that a considerable part of industrial crop production and of stockbreeding, especially the breeding of pigs, was transferred under contract to small farms normally having the greatest reserves of manpower.

Progress in mechanisation had the contrary effect ; but the development of mechanisation in the small farms was too limited to hamper the increased absorption of manpower resulting from the causes mentioned above.

*Development of Other Sectors.*

In addition, theoretical reasons and practical experience in many countries show that agriculture cannot combat rural overpopulation with its own resources alone. Before overpopulation can be eliminated, not only must changes be made in agriculture but such conditions of economic development outside agriculture must be created as will permit the systematic emigration from the rural areas of that part of the agricultural population for which the agrarian economy is unable to guarantee regular and full employment.

In post-war Poland the basis for the creation of such conditions has been the nationalisation of the key factors in the national economy (industry, banks, etc.) and the planned development of the national economy. The policy of industrialisation that has been applied for more than ten years now is also of decisive importance. Thanks to these changes the expansion of the non-agricultural sectors of the national economy, especially industry, has continued at high speed throughout the post-war period and has not been interrupted by cyclic fluctuations.<sup>1</sup> This in turn has led to the creation of an extensive and constantly functioning channel of emigration for the agricultural population.<sup>2</sup>

We do not, unfortunately, have statistical data showing what proportion of the population at present earning a living in non-agricultural employment left agriculture during the past 15 years. Nevertheless, the attraction of the agricultural population to other sectors of the national economy during this period is shown indirectly by the figures for the development of the urban and rural population and the changes in non-agricultural employment (see table II).

The doubling of the urban population in such a short space of time, the considerably higher rate of increase of the urban than of the total population and the even higher rate of increase of non-agricultural employment all lead to the conclusion that in the past 15 years a large part, if not the greater part, of the increase

<sup>1</sup> The index of total production in industry and handicrafts increased from 100 in 1949 to 156 in 1951, 218 in 1953, 270 in 1955, 324 in 1957 and 387 in 1959.

<sup>2</sup> Together with the expansion of the non-agricultural employment market there has been a substantial increase in the internal demand for agricultural products, which has provided a constant incentive for the intensification of agriculture.

TABLE II. URBAN AND RURAL POPULATION, AND EMPLOYMENT OUTSIDE AGRICULTURE, 1946 TO 1959

Year or period	Population (millions)			Employment (thousands)	
	Total	Urban	Rural	Outside agriculture and forestry	In industry
1946 . . .	23.9 <sup>1</sup>	7.5	16.1	—	1,244
1949 . . .	24.6	8.9	15.7	3,981	1,755
1955 . . .	27.6	12.1	15.5	6,166	2,702
1959 . . .	29.5	14.0	15.5	6,963	2,972
<i>Average annual percentage rate of change</i>					
1946-59 . .	1.5	4.4	—0.2	—	6.4
1949-59 . .	1.8	4.6	—0.1	5.7	5.4

Sources: *Rocznik Statystyczny 1959* (Warsaw, GUS, 1960), pp. XXVI and 44-45; *Mały Rocznik Statystyczny 1960* (Warsaw, GUS, 1960), p. 8.

<sup>1</sup> Including 300,000 persons not classified either in urban or in rural areas.

of urban population and non-agricultural employment is made up of persons emigrating from agriculture.

A number of factors besides the policy of industrialisation have facilitated and increased emigration from agriculture, especially that of young persons. Among the most important of these are the great expansion of general and vocational education that has taken place in this period, the removal of all forms of discrimination against young peasants in admission to vocational schools and to universities and colleges, the fact that instruction is completely free of charge in every type of school, the development of the stipend system and of a network of boarding scholarships, intern posts, workers' hostels, etc. In addition, the youth in rural areas have been powerfully attracted by the better living and working conditions outside agriculture, especially the fixed and shorter hours of work, the possibility of enjoying the benefits of the state social insurance scheme, the acquisition of financial independence, the possibility of attaining a higher level of culture and enjoying better recreational facilities, etc.

Since manpower reserves vary from region to region of the country, opportunities for emigration from agriculture must be similarly varied. One of the best ways of ensuring this is to make appropriate local investments, and the aim of policy in recent years has been to instal new industrial establishments in over-

populated agricultural regions. In spite of the difficulties entailed (e.g. the fact that the localisation of many investments is by its nature affected by other circumstances such as raw materials or water) the development of industry in such regions went ahead at a rate considerably faster than the national average (see table III).

TABLE III. CHANGES OF EMPLOYMENT IN INDUSTRY AND HANDICRAFTS PER 1,000 INHABITANTS IN POLAND GENERALLY AND IN CERTAIN OVERPOPULATED PROVINCES

Year or period	Poland generally	Provinces of—			
		Lublin	Rzeszów	Kielce	Cracow
1949 . . . . .	71	13	22	34	47
1955 . . . . .	90	34	54	68	91
1960 . . . . .	100	38	60	71	99
<i>Percentage increase in employment</i>					
1949-60 . . . . .	121	292	273	209	211

Source : W. KAWALEC: "Niektóre problemy rozmieszczenia zakładów przemysłowych", in *Wiś Współczesna*, 1960, No. 4.

As the economic plans now being drawn up for the near and distant future provide, the balance of manpower in agriculture will play an even greater part than previously in the investment localisation policy.

### *Peasant-Workers*

Not all the population leaving agricultural for non-agricultural employment in Poland abandons the farm completely : considerable numbers continue to live and work on a farm but are at the same time permanently employed outside agriculture. This combination of employment on and off the farm has become very widespread and is a phenomenon of considerable social and economic importance. The part of the population combining both types of employment has come to be regarded as a new and distinct social class, most often called the "peasant-worker group", the emergence of which has played a very important part in the elimination of unemployment among the agricultural population.

At the present time the number of peasant-worker families is estimated at over 800,000, that is, one-fourth of all peasant families in farms of over 0.5 hectare. Among agricultural smallholdings of less than 4 or 5 hectares this proportion is much greater, being as

high in some regions as 70 or 80 per cent. or more. The peasant-worker class has increased very rapidly : whereas in 1950 the number of persons employed simultaneously in and outside agriculture was nearly 650,000, in 1957 there were nearly 1.5 million of them, the greatest increase taking place at the beginning of the 1950s. Recently, however, there has been a certain decrease.

Peasant-workers consist predominantly of married men who find it very difficult to give up their farm permanently. Young peasants, on the contrary, endeavour to settle down in the towns as soon as they find employment.

Peasants are to be found in part-time employment in almost all the non-agricultural sectors of the national economy, especially in industry and handicrafts. Table IV shows all the principal trends in the employment of peasants outside agriculture in a number of regions of Poland.

TABLE IV. PERSONS WORKING ON FARMS CLASSIFIED ACCORDING TO NON-AGRICULTURAL EMPLOYMENT IN 1957  
(Percentages)

Type of non-agricultural employment	Centre—		South—	
	West	East	East	West
Industry and handicrafts . . .	42.0	41.7	64.0	46.3
Civil engineering and land improvement . . . . .	10.6	8.5	10.3	8.9
Transport and communications	19.5	14.2	7.8	13.3
Commerce and catering . . .	7.1	14.8	7.3	12.7
Local authorities, education and culture . . . . .	20.8	20.8	10.6	18.8
All non-agricultural employment	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source : GALESKI and WYDERKO : "Zmiany stosunków pracy na wsi", in *Zagadnienia Ekonomiki Rolnej*, 1960, No. 1.

The majority of peasant-workers live in rural areas and work in the towns, often in large industrial establishments or large building sites. They quite frequently spend several hours a day travelling to work and this considerably reduces the working time that they can devote to the needs of the farm. Others work in their village or nearby, mostly in small-scale manufacturing industry, handicrafts, commerce, etc.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Apart from the peasant-workers properly speaking many agriculturists, especially members of agricultural circles and production co-operatives,

The emergence of the peasant-worker group is attributable to a number of causes. The most important of these are the manner and circumstances in which the process of industrialisation is being carried on in Poland. Though in itself industrialisation is by no means bound to lead to the emergence of such a social group, the special circumstances of Poland have made it inevitable.

In the first place the rate of industrialisation and the rate of increase of non-agricultural employment were, particularly in the period of the Six-Year Plan (1949-55), much higher than the rate of increase of the labour force in the towns and the rate of urbanisation. It therefore became necessary to attract to non-agricultural employment in the towns the manpower reserves remaining in agriculture in the rural areas ; but the transfer of these reserves to the towns was seriously hampered by housing shortages, and a considerable part of the rural population, especially the agricultural population, took up employment in the towns but continued to live in the rural areas and on the farms.

In the second place many people living on small farms who had a limited amount of free time were able to take on additional work outside agriculture but could not, for both economic and family reasons, leave their farms permanently without closing them down (the majority of peasant-workers are heads of farms and heads of families).

In the third place a farmer taking up non-agricultural employment, e.g. in a factory, did not as a rule have any intention of leaving or closing down his farm. This is due both to financial reasons (the peasant-workers, thanks to the double source of income, are generally in a better financial position than workers in a similar wage group and the owners of similar farms) and to other reasons, e.g. the fear of losing the non-agricultural employment, lethargy, force of habit, etc.

The generalisation of non-agricultural part-time employment among peasants has had a number of very desirable consequences. In the peasant-workers' farms—that is in one-fourth of the farms which, as small agricultural units, were the principal centres of rural overpopulation—it led to the elimination of unemployment and the full utilisation of the manpower reserves generally. At the same time this group acquired a permanent additional source of income. Moreover, the mass emigration of peasants to work in the towns unaccompanied by a change of domicile and thus not entailing

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are employed part-time in various kinds of ancillary establishments operated by such associations (e.g. establishments for building materials and for the processing of agricultural raw materials, etc.). The production co-operatives are particularly active in the organisation of such establishments, especially in overpopulated regions.

costly urbanisation investments made it possible for the manpower reserves essential for industrialisation and still remaining in the rural areas to be mobilised with the minimum of expense. Permanent contact with large-scale industry and with the towns is helping to overcome the cultural backwardness and outmoded way of life of the rural areas.

On the other hand, the extension of this phenomenon has also had a number of undesirable consequences. Many peasant-workers, who normally spend most of their time working outside agriculture and derive the greater part of their income from this work, begin to take less interest in agricultural affairs, do not intensify their production and produce only enough to meet the consumption requirements of their own families. The great amount of work to be done by the head of the family, especially where he is employed in a distant town, places an excessive burden of responsibility for the work of the farm on the women and children. Besides failing to develop his farm, and in some cases even neglecting it, the peasant-worker is in many cases inferior as a worker to his fellows in the factory. As a rule he has lower qualifications, which he has no time to improve, and he is often absent from work, especially at harvest time, etc. As a result of all these factors the peasant-worker becomes both an unsatisfactory worker and an unsatisfactory farmer.

In a matter like this it is impossible to generalise, and it is difficult in the light of present knowledge to make even an approximate estimate of the scope and scale of the disadvantages accompanying the combination of agricultural and non-agricultural employment. But there is no doubt that they constitute one of the sources of the now fairly universal opposition to the further extension of the peasant-worker group.

In analysing the circumstances in which the peasant-worker group has developed over the past decade it is necessary to distinguish between two periods. The first corresponds more or less to the entire duration of the Six-Year Plan (1949-55); the second falls within the years 1956 to 1960. The principal difference between these periods lies in the parts played by employment and productivity in the increase of industrial production. If during the Six-Year Plan, particularly in its first years, rising industrial production was due mainly to the great increase in employment, in the present five-year period higher productivity is the leading factor. One of the main reasons for this change is the new employment policy, which, in contrast to that of the former period, aims at limiting the rate of increase of industrial employment.

In this way the situation during the years of the Six-Year Plan favoured the development of the peasant-worker group whereas

the present situation is undoubtedly a factor limiting such increase. The present agrarian policy also operates in the same (restrictive) direction since it offers much better incentives and opportunities than that of the former period for increasing agricultural production and the income of the agricultural population.

In addition, in the first years of industrialisation a number of measures were applied which directly facilitated the growth of the peasant-worker group<sup>1</sup>, whereas in recent years steps have been taken to make it difficult to combine employment in agriculture with employment in the towns.<sup>2</sup>

It is difficult at this stage to determine how the peasant-worker group will develop. There is no doubt, however, that it will, for a long time to come, be a large and important factor in the social and economic life of the rural areas. Looking back over the past it can be said that the widespread combination of agricultural and non-agricultural employment has, despite certain disadvantages, played a decidedly useful part and been a specific factor in the elimination of rural overpopulation and an important additional source of income for the population on the farms.

### *The Evolution of Employment*

The process of eliminating rural overpopulation and the factors impeding this process are reflected, though not too accurately, in the evolution of employment in agriculture.

In 1946 nearly 7.5 million persons were employed in agriculture, about 67 per cent. of the gainfully employed population. These figures show that on the threshold of the post-war development of Poland the relative level of employment in agriculture was almost the same as that shown in the general census of 1931 (nearly 66 per cent.)<sup>3</sup>

The first post-war general census of the population and of farms carried out at the end of 1950 showed that 7 million persons were employed in agriculture, i.e. nearly 57 per cent. of the total number of employed persons. Throughout the 1950s the absolute number of persons employed in agriculture was approximately maintained,

<sup>1</sup> For example the provision of very high concessions on monthly tickets for persons regularly travelling to work, the organisation of transport to factories or building sites by the undertakings concerned, mostly at their own expense, mass recruitment in rural areas, etc.

<sup>2</sup> For example the introduction of various restrictions on the engagement of persons not resident in the town in which the workplace is situated. In eliminating excess staff in certain industrial establishments it fairly often happened that workers owning farms of over 5 hectares, and sometimes all workers owning land, etc., were the first to be dismissed.

<sup>3</sup> No absolute figures are quoted for the pre-war period, as they would not be comparable because of the frontier changes.



while the relative number was systematically reduced, so that the estimated figure for 1960 was nearly 7.1 million, or 50 per cent. of all gainfully employed persons.<sup>1</sup>

In the past 15 years, therefore, we find two trends : in the first place the constant and fairly intensive reduction of the relative level of employment in agriculture, and in the second the stabilisation over the last eight to ten years of the absolute level. The first trend is a natural consequence of the evolution of employment in and outside agriculture during these years. On the other hand the reasons for the second trend are more complex. They include the great natural increase of the labour force in agriculture, the high proportion that the number of persons employed in agriculture bears to the total number of gainfully employed persons<sup>2</sup> and recent slackening of the rate of increase of industrial employment.

Without belittling the part played by the factors already mentioned, we must nevertheless conclude that the principal factor slowing down the absolute reduction of agricultural employment lies in the fragmentation of holdings in Poland, a situation which ties the labour force to the land even where the external conditions (the possibilities of employment outside agriculture) allow it to leave the farms.

The extent to which the level of employment in agriculture is influenced by fragmentation can be seen by comparing the number of farms and the number of employed persons per 100 hectares in the various provinces of Poland (see table V).

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<sup>1</sup> According to the terminology accepted in Polish statistics the following are regarded as persons employed in agriculture: (1) the operators of farms (of a total surface of 0.1 hectare or more) who regard work on the farm as their principal employment; (2) members of the families of such persons who assist them; (3) day labourers in privately owned farms; (4) labourers and other employees on state farms and in machine centres; and (5) members of production co-operatives. The annual individual contribution to agricultural production of the majority of these persons—especially of those in most numerous groups (1 and 2)—varies greatly. A large number of those appearing in the statistics as persons employed in agriculture are not fully productive and not fully employed in agricultural work in the strict sense of the term. This is particularly true of women (especially housewives) and persons not fully capable of work (especially elderly persons). Since these groups constitute a large proportion of the total number of persons employed in agriculture (women, for example, account for nearly 54 per cent. of the total) the figures for employment in agriculture given by Polish statistics considerably distort the absolute and relative amount of work performed in agricultural production; for the same reason they cannot always be used for comparison with the employment situation in countries where, as a rule, each unit shown in statistics as being employed in agriculture is in fact fully productive and fully employed in agricultural work.

<sup>2</sup> At a given rate of increase of non-agricultural employment the possibilities of reducing the absolute numbers employed in agriculture vary inversely with the ratio of the number of persons employed in agriculture to the total number of gainfully employed persons.

TABLE V. DENSITY OF FARMS AND DENSITY OF EMPLOYMENT IN AGRICULTURE <sup>1</sup>

Provinces grouped according to average number of farms per 100 hectares of the total area	Number of employed persons	
	Per 100 hectares of total area	Per farm
Less than 10 farms . . . . .	24.5	2.5
Between 10 and 15 farms . . . . .	30.5	2.4
„ 15 „ 20 „ . . . . .	43.9	2.4
„ 20 „ 25 „ . . . . .	49.2	2.3
„ 25 „ 30 „ . . . . .	67.0	2.3
30 farms and over . . . . .	74.0	2.4
National average . . . . .	39.3	2.4

Source : General Census of Population and Farms, 3 December 1950.

<sup>1</sup> The expressions "density of employment" and "density of farms in agriculture" are used to mean the proportion that the number of employed persons or the number of farms in agriculture bears to a unit of the land area farmed. These data only apply to privately owned farms.

This comparison shows that the density of employment in agriculture is directly proportional to the degree of fragmentation. On the other hand, the average number of persons employed per farm varies little and the absolute number so employed is not high. If we bear in mind that more than half of those employed are women or that on an average there is one adult man per farm, we arrive at the conclusion that the absolute level of employment in agriculture at the end of 1950 was already close to the level below which little reduction is possible under the circumstances of small ownership, where the farm is bound up with the family system.

The decisive influence that fragmentation has on the possibility of reducing the numbers employed in agriculture can also be seen from the fact that even in the most industrialised regions, where there is a chronic shortage of manpower outside agriculture, the number of persons employed per 100 hectares is still high if the agrarian economy in the region concerned is broken up into small units.

A classic example of this nature is the province of Katowice which, although it has been for years the most industrialised province in Poland (in 1950 the number of persons employed in agriculture was barely 20 per cent. of the total) and has the lowest number of persons employed per farm (2.1 persons), still has a high

rate of employment per 100 hectares (42 persons).<sup>1</sup> The example of the province of Katowice suggests a conclusion of a more general nature, namely that even the most intensive process of industrialisation is unable to eliminate the high number of persons employed in agriculture unless the fragmentation of the farms is eliminated at the same time. This conclusion does not, obviously, rule out the immense influence that the process of industrialisation has on changes in employment in agriculture. It only shows the barriers that industrialisation is unable to surmount by itself.

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To sum up, the elimination of rural overpopulation in Poland comprises the following aspects :

(1) the elimination of "superfluous" population in rural areas, that is the systematic transfer to non-agricultural employment of all persons living on farms whose departure from the farms would not—other things being equal—cause a reduction of agricultural production ;

(2) the elimination of underemployment among that part of the rural population which is "tied" in agriculture by the existing agrarian structure and which—other things being equal—cannot leave the farms without detriment to the needs of agricultural production ;

(3) the elimination of the potential overpopulation of the rural areas, that is the reduction of the absolute number of persons employed in agriculture per 100 hectares to the level obtaining in countries where there is a high degree of concentration and mechanisation in agriculture.

What is the situation in present-day Poland?

The first problem has been more or less solved, thanks especially to the successful industrialisation of the country. By and large, with the present agrarian structure, few possibilities still remain of transferring from agriculture to the non-agricultural sectors a number of persons greater than the natural increase of the labour force.

Very considerable progress has been made in solving the second problem as a result mainly of the departure from the farms of "superfluous" persons and also to the appearance of the peasant-worker group and the increased intensification of the agrarian

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<sup>1</sup> If we list all the 17 provinces of Poland according to the number of persons employed in agriculture per 100 hectares (in ascending order) the province of Katowice comes in the thirteenth place.

economy. On the whole the problem of real rural overpopulation has become much less acute both in comparison with the pre-war period and in comparison with the situation immediately after the war. Nevertheless, the complete and permanent elimination of this form of rural unemployment is, even with the most favourable external conditions, absolutely impossible under the small-farm agricultural economy, which by its very existence limits the rational utilisation of the labour force.

The elimination of rural overpopulation has not always been carried out in a manner suited to the needs of a given region, and, as a result, in some agricultural areas real overpopulation is still a problem of prime importance, whereas in other areas there has been an excessive emigration of the population from agriculture, which has to a certain degree adversely affected production.

If potential overpopulation in agriculture is to be eliminated, a thorough reorganisation of the present agrarian structure and a changeover from small-scale private ownership to large-scale socialist ownership will be necessary. Since this changeover is only at the embryonic stage, Poland is at a like stage in the elimination of potential manpower surpluses in the rural areas.

Having analysed the present situation we are led to conclude that the fundamental task for the future is to eliminate the residue of real rural overpopulation and, by reorganising the agrarian structure, to establish conditions that will make it possible to eliminate all forms of rural overpopulation. This is one of the principal objectives of the long-term plan for the development of Poland in the years 1961-75.

#### THE TREND AND SCALE OF THE CHANGES IN AGRICULTURAL EMPLOYMENT IN THE LONG-TERM PLAN

Studies on the long-term development plan began a number of years ago. They have not, in fact, been completed, but are already so far advanced that it is possible to know the nature and scale of the basic economic and social problems that will arise in the period in question and the possible means of solving them. One of these problems is the trend and scale of changes in agricultural employment.

According to the introductory principles of the long-term plan it is foreseen that over the 15-year period 1961-75 the number of persons employed in agriculture will fall from 7.1 million in 1960 to 6 million in 1975, or nearly 15 per cent. Over the same period the proportion of persons employed in agriculture to the total number of gainfully employed persons in Poland will fall from one-half to one-third.

In arriving at the estimates for agricultural employment contained in the plan regard was had to the need both to increase non-agricultural employment and to reduce the numbers employed in agriculture, as well as to the possibility of doing the latter. Demographic factors, expected changes in the agrarian structure, agricultural production, the mechanisation of agriculture, etc., were also taken into consideration.

In the drafts of the long-term plan now available, it is foreseen that the high rate of increase of industrial productivity achieved in recent years will be maintained or even improved. Despite this, there will be a considerable increase in the number of persons employed outside agriculture, conditioned by a rapid increase in industrial production, a substantially faster development than in the past of the ancillary sectors and a reduction in hours of work outside agriculture.

It is estimated that the non-agricultural employment market will, in order to meet its expected needs, absorb not only the natural increase of the labour force but also part of the existing agricultural labour force.

The need for an absolute reduction in the number of persons employed in agriculture will be dictated to a like degree by changes in agriculture itself. There is no doubt that such factors as the expected development on a considerably larger scale than hitherto of extensive co-operative farms and also the progress of mechanisation in agriculture will substantially reduce the demand for manpower on the land even though a substantial increase of agricultural production is planned. On the other hand, once the farm ceases, as a result of the socialist reorganisation of the rural areas, to be identified with the home, the restraints on the emigration of the population from agriculture created by the mingling of family and farming ties in the small farms of today will disappear.

We see, therefore, that both the expected evolution of non-agricultural employment and the trend within agriculture in the next 15 years will tend to reduce the number of persons employed in agriculture. In the period under consideration, however, a number of phenomena will limit the possibilities of reducing the agricultural labour force.

One factor of primary importance is the rate of natural increase of the labour force. In the coming 15 years this will be much higher than it has been hitherto, since it is precisely in this period that the large numbers of children born after the war will reach the age for entry into employment.

If the rate of natural increase of the labour force is measured in terms of the increase of the population of 15 years and over it appears that in the years 1951-60 the average annual rate of

increase of this group was 1.1 per cent., which was considerably lower than the rate of increase of the population as a whole (1.8 per cent.), whereas in the years 1961-75 it will be 1.7 per cent., which will be higher than that of the population as a whole (1.4 per cent.).

If during the period covered by the long-term plan the population over 15 years of age increases at the same rate as hitherto and if other conditions are equal a still greater reduction of the number of persons employed in agriculture will be needed to satisfy the demands of the non-agricultural employment market. This means that during the next 15 years the possibilities of reducing the number of persons employed in agriculture will be limited by the rate of natural increase of the labour force.

The aging of the agricultural population is another factor operating in the same direction although in a different way. As a result of this the number of fully productive persons in agriculture will fall much more quickly than the total number of persons employed in agriculture. It is estimated that, where the number of persons employed in agriculture will be reduced by 1 million or 15 per cent. over the next 15 years, the number of persons of working age so employed will fall by nearly 25 per cent., and the proportion of employed persons of 50 years or over to the total number of employed persons will increase to over one-third. These figures show that the rate of reduction of manpower surpluses in agriculture is expected to be considerably higher than the rate of reduction of the total numbers employed.

The reduction of hours of work in agriculture, which will accompany the changeover from the private to the collective economy, will have similar consequences.

It is difficult to say at present to what extent the reduction of manpower reserves in agriculture will correspond to the reduction of labour absorption in agriculture. There is no doubt, however, that once the estimates of employment in agriculture contained in the long-term plan have been realised, decisive progress will have been made towards the final elimination of all forms of rural overpopulation in Poland.

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