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COLLECTIVIZATION OF AGRICULTURE IN POLAND (1948 - 1956)

1. THE PROGRAMME

The agrarian policy pursued in the first three post-war years consolidated the conditions created by the land reform in 1944 and created an atmosphere of support for individual farming, which was then regarded as a relatively permanent element of the "Polish road" to socialism.¹ A nucleus of a new form of farming was provided by the state farms, which covered land excluded from distribution under the land reform and were to serve as exemplary and experimental centres.

Up to 1948, the idea of a general collectivization of the countryside had, for political as well as economic reasons, been rejected, out of respect for the historico-psychological conditions in the Polish countryside and for the directives of the classics of Marxism, which had warned against the hasty collectivization of agriculture without the necessary material and political conditions.²

While putting off collectivization, the Polish Workers' Party (PWP) sought to develop cooperatives which would meet the

¹ J. Tepicht, *PPR a indywidualna własność chłopska* [The Polish Workers' Party and Individual Peasant Property], "Trybuna Wolności", 1946, No. 94, p. 9; M. Mieszczankowski, *Wypaczenia czy błędne teorie* [Distortions or False Theories], "Życie Gospodarcze" 1957, No. 22, p. 4; W. Góra, *Wpływ działalności partii robotniczych na społeczno-ekonomiczne przemiany w Polsce Ludowej, 1944 - 1968* [The Influence Exerted by the Activity of the Working Class Parties on Socio-Economic Changes in the Countryside in People's Poland, 1944 - 1968], "Rocznik Muzeum Rolnictwa w Szreniawie" 1969, vol. 1, pp. 47 - 82.

² H. Chołaj, *Kwestie polityki rolnej i spółdzielczości wiejskiej w Polsce Ludowej* [Questions Concerning the Agricultural Policy and Rural Cooperatives in People's Poland], Warszawa 1970, pp. 20 ff.

production and consumer needs of farmers. Their aim was to popularize cooperative ownership and link agricultural producers with the state.³

Taking into account the nexus of socio-political factors, the state authorities, under the influence of the Polish Workers' Party, determinedly opposed the peasants' spontaneous attempts at joint farming on parcelled out land. Examples of such an approach could be seen in Great Poland, where the tradition of hired labour was stronger than the desire to work one's own land. As a result, the peasants often tried to set up jointly owned farms on the distributed land.⁴ Their endeavours encountered opposition from the authorities, which feared that this might create an atmosphere for an early Soviet-style collectivization. Confronted with disapproval, the trends towards joint farming quickly subsided. Slight changes in the authorities' categorical stand took place in 1946 when permission was given to organize settlers' cooperative farms on parcelled out land. Their aim was to populate and develop former German farms in the territories which Poland had recovered in 1945. This idea did not assume large proportions, being disliked by the peasant-settlers who came from the poor and overpopulated regions of central Poland or were repatriates from the territories incorporated into the USSR. Brought up in traditions which were different from those of Great Poland, they wanted to own their land and work it individually.⁵

The next step towards the gradual inclusion of agriculture in the orbit of cooperative influence and towards a rapid reconstruction of agriculture on the basis of private ownership was the establishment of self-help villages. The economic centres of these villages were the supply and purchase cooperatives which, using state credits, participated in ventures benefiting the whole rural

³ T. Stankiewicz, *Spółdzielnie rolniczo-handlowe w Polsce Ludowej 1944 - 1947. Problematyka ekonomiczna i organizacyjna* [Agricultural-Commercial Cooperatives in People's Poland 1944 - 1947. Economic and Organizational Questions], Warszawa 1971, pp. 36 ff.

⁴ Cf. H. Ślabeek, *Przebudowa ustroju rolnego w Wielkopolsce i na Pomorzu, 1945 - 1949* [The Transformation of the Agricultural System in Great Poland and Pomerania, 1945 - 1949], Poznań 1968, p. 54.

⁵ Cf. H. Ślabeek, *Polityka agrarna PPR. Geneza i realizacja* [The Agrarian Policy of the Polish Workers' Party. Its Genesis and Realization], Warszawa 1967, p. 393.

community (electrification, road building, construction of communal houses).⁶

These examples show that the Polish Workers' Party adopted a wary attitude to the question of a socio-political transformation of the countryside. It looked for solutions which would fit the Polish conditions and the level of the peasants' social consciousness. It was afraid of the political and economic costs of a rapid collectivization. However, as soon as the new political power was established, preparations began to be made to introduce further changes in agriculture, after the land reform. These changes were to be based on various forms of rural cooperation and on the strengthening of economic ties between town and country and the worker-peasant alliance. The PWP's realistic approach to the agrarian question commanded the respect not only of Marxists but also of people representing other ideologies.⁷

The sudden appearance of the question of cooperative farming in 1948 was due to profound political transformations.⁸ An immediate commencement of the collectivization of villages as the basic form of socialist agriculture became one of the main elements in the struggle for power which developed in the PWP leadership in the spring of 1948. Its aim was to push aside Władysław Gomułka and his adherents under the charge that they were delaying the development of socialist elements and stressing the specific features of the Polish road to socialism. The sources

⁶ S. Jarecka-Kimłowska, *Polityka spółdzielcza na wsi polskiej w latach 1944 - 1970* [The Cooperative Policy in the Polish Countryside in the Years 1944 - 1970], Warszawa 1978, pp. 49 ff.

⁷ Cf. A. Dobieszewski, *Ideologiczne i polityczne podstawy sojuszu robotniczo-chłopskiego i współdziałania partii marksistowsko-leninowskich z partiami chłopskimi* [The Ideological and Political Foundations of the Worker-Peasant Alliance and of Cooperation between the Marxist-Leninist Parties and the Peasant Parties], in: *Z dziejów ruchu ludowego w PRL* [A History of the Peasant Movement in the Polish People's Republic], Warszawa 1976, p. 29; A. Korboński, *Politics of Socialist Agriculture in Poland 1945 - 1960*, New York-London 1965, pp. 136 ff.; Z. Załęski, *Uwagi o spółdzielczości produkcyjnej w rolnictwie. Z samotnych rozważań* [Remarks on Production Cooperatives in Agriculture. Solitary Reflections], Warszawa 1957, p. 9.

⁸ In April 1948, serious disputes over collectivization developed in the PWP leadership. Cf. shorthand report on the meeting of the Planning Section of the Economic Department of the PWP Central Committee, held on April 22, 1948. Central Archives of the PUWP Central Committee 295/IX/20, k. 38 ff.

of these charges against the Secretary General of the PWP Central Committee lay both within the party, being linked with the offensive launched by the dogmatic forces then present in the PWP leadership, and in the increasingly complicated situation in the international working class movement. A special role in this respect was played by the Information Bureau of the Communist and Workers' Parties (Cominform). In the middle of 1948, the Bureau called on all the People's Democracies to liquidate the remnants of capitalism, including the small-commodity economy in the countryside, by way of collectivization.⁹

In Polish conditions the attitude of the Information Bureau made possible an open attack on the political programme which looked for solutions that would integrate society round socialist building, a programme aiming at the gradual transformation of the countryside with extensive state assistance.¹⁰

Speaking at the plenary meeting of the Central Committee held in July 1948, Hilary Minc, a leading representative of the dogmatic group within the PWP, said that the working class movement in Poland should include collectivization in its programme. He justified this stand by saying that it was necessary to abolish the remnants of capitalism, to raise the living standards of the agricultural population and increase the productivity of agricultural work.¹¹ Minc's speech contained elements of the former concept: he recognized the necessity of creating appropriate economic conditions and of overcoming the mental resistance of the peasants. The main difference, which set the direction of a new agricultural policy, consisted in the stress placed on the necessity of intensifying the struggle against capitalist elements in the countryside.

An outline of the programme for the collectivization of the countryside was presented at the plenary meeting of the Central Committee in September 1948, after the formulation of the charge

⁹ Resolution of the Information Bureau, "Nowe Drogi" 1948, No. 10, pp. 14 - 17.

¹⁰ Cf. Speech by W. Gomułka at the August - September Plenum of the PWP Central Committee, *ibidem*, 1948, No. 11, p. 42.

¹¹ H. Minc, *Wytyczne w sprawie naszego ustroju gospodarczego i społecznego [Directives Concerning Our Economic and Social System]*, Speech made at the Plenum of the PWP Central Committee on July 6, 1948, *ibidem*, 1948, No. 10, p. 83.

of right-wing nationalist deviation in the PWP leadership and after the dismissal of Gomułka from the post of secretary general. The programme provided for a slow process of collectivization, which was to depend on the economic capacity of the state. In 1949, the cooperative form of farming was to cover 10% of all the holdings, and the same rate of establishing cooperative farms was to be maintained for the next two years. It was stressed at the meeting that the principle of voluntary accession should be adhered to and that the new cooperative farms should be strong economically, so as to be an example and inducement for the individual peasants. Since the campaign was of a political character, it was decided to apply class criteria. Only the owners of small and medium-sized farms could be founders and members of collective farms; rich farmers, called kulaks after the Russian fashion, were denied access.¹²

By defining the level of collectivization to be reached in 1949 the September plenary meeting in fact decided that collectivization was to be initiated at once, without leaving enough time for organizational preparations and, above all, for the creation of economic conditions that would make a structural transformation of agriculture possible. The political character of the collectivization was unequivocally defined in the ideological declaration of the Polish United Workers' Party, formed after the merger of the Polish Workers' Party and the Polish Socialist Party in December 1948. In transferring onto Polish soil the Stalinist theory that the class struggle becomes increasingly acute as socialism develops and that capitalist elements in town and country must be speedily eradicated, the Declaration pointed out that cooperative farms were meant to fight the rural rich. The economic and social benefits to be derived by the rural population from collective farming were pushed into the background.¹³

¹² H. Minc, *Bieżące zadania partii w zakresie polityki gospodarczej i społecznej na wsi* [The Current Tasks of the Party with Regard to the Economic and Social Policy in the Countryside], Speech made at the Plenum of the PWP Central Committee on September 3, 1948, *ibidem*, 1948, No. 11, p. 156; J. Tepicht, *W sprawie walki klasowej na wsi* [The Class Struggle in the Countryside], *ibidem*, 1948, No. 12, pp. 247 ff.

¹³ *Deklaracja ideowa PZPR. Statut PZPR* [The Ideological Declaration of the PUWP. The Statutes of the PUWP], Warszawa 1949, p. 26.

The theses of the PUWP Declaration which dealt with cooperative farming were developed by Roman Zambrowski, Secretary of the Central Committee. In a speech made at the plenary meeting of the Central Committee in April 1949, he again stressed the theory that the class struggle became increasingly sharp in the period of transition from capitalism to socialism, and asserted on this basis that the struggle was becoming particularly violent in the conditions prevailing in the countryside, because of the existence of the capitalist class, the rural rich who exploited the owners of small and medium-sized holdings. In Zambrowski's opinion the process of collectivization should be based on the village poor, who were politically the most mature class. According to him, the success of the campaign required the strengthening of the worker-peasant alliance which—in his opinion—isolated rural capitalists and helped to overcome the hesitations of owners of medium-sized holdings.¹⁴ In an uncritical and simplified way the Secretary of the Central Committee recalled the threefold formula created by Vladimir Lenin in different conditions, a formula which divided rural society according to the economic criterion only. This division became the basis for the different policies adopted by the government towards the rich, the owners of medium-sized holdings and the village poor.¹⁵

According to Zambrowski, cooperative farming should be a tool in the struggle to eliminate the influence of rich peasants in the countryside. He warned against their inclusion in collective farming and was strongly in favour of pauperizing the kulaks through a determined state policy. He asserted rashly that changes were quickly taking place in the consciousness of small holders who, in his view, were becoming increasingly inclined to set up collective farms. The CC Secretary belittled the danger that agricultural production might drop if rapid structural changes were made in the countryside. His economic arguments were superficial and clearly subordinated to political principles. He regarded the socialization of agriculture as the task of the party apparatus and held the view that the results would depend on political and

¹⁴ R. Zambrowski, *Aktualne zadania na wsi* [Current Tasks in the Countryside], "Nowe Drogi", 1949, No. 2, pp. 81 ff.

¹⁵ Cf. H. Chołaj, *Kwestie...*, p. 37.

propaganda work.¹⁶ Zambrowski's attitude seems to reflect fully the principles and methods used to force through an intensive collectivization in Poland.

Transition to collectivization was approved by the United Peasant Party in its ideological Declaration of November 29, 1949, which pointed to the importance of cooperative farming for raising the living and cultural standards of the rural population and increasing agricultural production.¹⁷

When putting forward the collectivization programme, the PUWP leadership proposed various forms, and, accordingly, several variants of the statutes of cooperative farms were drawn up. The possibility offered to the founders to choose their own statute was to promote the interests of peasants in collective farming. The chance of choice was treated as an element of free will in establishing cooperative farms and determining the degree of their socialization.¹⁸ The differentiation of the forms of collective farming was one of the few manifestations of a creative approach to the experiences gained so far in collectivization. Taking into account the conditions created by the land reform, the party chose those Soviet and Bulgarian organizational solutions which recognized private ownership of land. The Soviet artel and Soviet association for joint farming became the model for Polish cooperative farms. It should be added that there was a strong trend to establish only one form of collective farming, the one corresponding to the kolkhoz.

When the collectivization programme had been defined, a large-scale political propaganda campaign in which several themes stood out was launched. The former PWP leadership headed by Gomułka was criticized for having delayed collectivization under the pretext of protecting the agricultural production level. It was pointed out that too little attention had been paid to the class

¹⁶ R. Zambrowski, *Aktualne zadania*, pp. 81 ff.

¹⁷ *Deklaracja ideowa Zjednoczonego Stronnictwa Ludowego* [The Ideological Declaration of the United Peasant Party], in: S. Lato, W. Stankiewicz, *Programy stronnictw ludowych. Wybór dokumentów* [The Programmes of Peasant Parties. Selected Documents], Warszawa 1969, p. 399.

¹⁸ Cf. Shorthand report on the 52nd meeting of the Legislative Sejm held on January 10 and 11, 1949, columns 148 ff.

struggle in the countryside in conditions of an economic differentiation of peasants. An important element of the propaganda was the call to do away with the kulaks as a social class. The economic arguments in favour of collectivization focused on the need to eliminate the disproportion between the big socialist industry and the backward small-commodity economy in the countryside.¹⁹

The political character of collectivization was stressed again in the resolution of the Organizational Bureau of the PUWP Central Committee of May 1949. In an unequivocal way it made "[...] the first secretaries of the district committees responsible for the development of cooperative farms and for initiating committees in their area".²⁰

The intensive collectivization trend was strengthened by the decisions taken by the Political Bureau in October 1949. They demanded that the initiating movement should be concentrated in districts with a high agricultural production so that the new farms could have a high level of production and establish their influence in the countryside. They stressed that cooperative farms should be set up irrespective of the season and the intensity of field work. The Political Bureau intensified the process of establishing State Machine Stations which were to render mechanization and agro-technical services to cooperative villages. Having no machines and tractors of their own, the cooperative farms were dependent on a state organization and thus lost their basis of independence.²¹ The State Machine Stations were also entrusted with the task

¹⁹ Cf. R. Zambrowski, *Aktualne...*, pp. 83-84; *W walce o realizację stalinowskiej nauki o sojuszu robotniczo-rolniczym* [The Struggle to Implement the Stalinist Teachings on the Worker-Peasant Alliance], "Nowe Drogi" 1949, No. 3, pp. 134 ff.

²⁰ *O aktualnych zadaniach partii na wsi. Z uchwały Biura Organizacyjnego KC PZPR* [Current Tasks of the Party in the Countryside. The Resolution of the Organizational Bureau of the PUWP Central Committee], in: *O budownictwie partyjnym. Uchwały Komitetu Centralnego Polskiej Zjednoczonej Partii Robotniczej 1949-1953* [Party Work. Resolutions of the Central Committee of the Polish United Workers' Party 1949-1953], Warszawa 1954, p. 143.

²¹ W. Reczek, *Pierwsze doświadczenia spółdzielczości produkcyjnej* [The First Experiences of Cooperative Farming], "Nowe Drogi", 1950, No. 1, pp. 46-47; W. Herer, *Ekonomiczne stosunki między Państwowymi Ośrodkami Maszynowymi a spółdzielniami produkcyjnymi* [Economic Relations between the State Machine Stations and Cooperative Farms], "Ekonomista", 1956, No. 1, p. 74.

of creating a political atmosphere favourable for the establishment of cooperative farms.

It is noteworthy that the Political Bureau censured all critical opinions expressed in party organizations about the adopted methods of collectivization. This was a telling signal that the agrarian policy initiated the year before aroused reservations among some party members. Critical views were also expressed in other circles. In the middle of 1950, an organ of the Central Cooperative Union published an article which stated that the rivalry between voivodships and districts to set up the largest number of cooperative farms was unsound.²²

The party authorities sharply attacked the Catholic priests who came out against collectivization.²³ In the PUWP opportunistic and over-zealous attitudes predominated over resistance to the adopted methods of collectivization. These arose from the socio-political atmosphere which had arisen earlier and developed fully in 1949.²⁴ The atmosphere of general suspicion, the hunt for enemies in the party's own ranks and the artificial fanning of the class struggle led to the degradation of many fields of socio-economic life. The main tendency was to achieve rapid, immediate quantitative successes, even if this would impair the realization of the strategy. It seems that this intensive collectivization can justly be called a quantitative theory of socialist building in the countryside.²⁵ As an example it can be recalled that in December 1950 the PUWP Central Committee called on party organizations to intensify their activity with a view to increasing the number of cooperative farmers. It argued that even small groups of peasants convinced of the superiority of collective farming provided a basis for the organization of initiating committees. In this opinion

²¹ E. Wiśniewski, *Finansowanie i zaopatrzenie spółdzielni produkcyjnych* [The Financing and Supplying of Cooperative Farms], "Przegląd Spółdzielczy", 1950, No. 5 - 6, p. 265.

²² See Hilary Chełchowski's speech in the Sejm, in: Stenographic report, columns 148 - 149.

²³ III Plenum Komitetu Centralnego Polskiej Zjednoczonej Partii Robotniczej, 11, 12, 13 listopada 1949 r. [The Third Plenary Meeting of the Central Committee of the Polish United Workers' Party, November 11, 12, 13, 1949], Warszawa 1949, p. 205.

²⁴ W. Herer, in: *O nowy program rolny. Ekonomiści i publicyści dyskutują* [For a New Agrarian Programme. Discussions of Economists and Publicists], Warszawa 1957, p. 140.

the transformation of these committees into cooperatives depended on the fight against rich peasants. The Central Committee argued that the more energetically the kulaks were ousted, the more inclined would the small and middle-holders be to join cooperative farms.²⁶

As economic difficulties began to appear, the result of intensive industrialization and an erroneous agricultural policy, wider use began to be made of economic arguments in the promotion of cooperative farming. In 1951, Minc asserted: "Our agriculture cannot keep up with the growth rate of industry because it is an individual, small-commodity agriculture or an agriculture partly of the capitalist type, that is, an agriculture which cannot make full use of modern machines and the achievements of agrotechnics and increase its production at the required rate".²⁷

This was only part of the truth, because in fact agriculture was unable to make use of modern machines and the achievements of agrotechnics since the industry, carrying out other tasks, did not supply it with the necessary amount of resources for agricultural production. Minc's argument merely provided the basis for further political-administrative measures aimed at increasing the number of cooperative farms, even if this meant the breaking of the principle of voluntary access, which was regarded as an incidental phenomenon.

The flagrant cases of violation of the rule of law in relations with farmers aroused two rather different kinds of reaction. At first they were subjected to criticism by the highest party authorities in resolutions adopted by the PUWP Central Committee.²⁸ The sharpness of this criticism disorientated party

²⁶ Uchwała KC PZPR o zadaniach partii w dziedzinie rozwoju ruchu spółdzielczości produkcyjnej i wzmożenia politycznego, gospodarczego i organizacyjnego oddziaływania POM [The Resolution of the PUWP Central Committee Concerning the Tasks of the Party in the Development of Cooperative Farming and the Strengthening of the Political, Economic and Organizational Influence of the State Machine Stations], in: *O budownictwie...*, pp. 154 - 155.

²⁷ H. Minc, *Przyczyny obecnych trudności w zaopatrzeniu i środki walki z tymi trudnościami* [The Reasons for the Present Difficulties in Supplies and the Ways of Overcoming These Difficulties], "Nowe Drogi", 1951, No. 4, p. 12.

²⁸ Uchwała KC PZPR w sprawie łamania linii partyjnej w organizacji gryfickiej w woj. szczecińskim [The Resolution of the PUWP Central Com-

activists and the apparatus and damped organizational zeal. The rate of establishing new cooperative farms slowed down. The fall in quantitative results met with the immediate reaction of the political leadership of the country. Speaking at the Seventh Plenary Meeting of the Central Committee in 1952, Bolesław Bierut, Chairman of the PUWP Central Committee, called on the party to keep up the rate of collectivization. Although he criticized "harmful sectarianism" as well as "opportunism" consisting in the underestimation of the development of cooperative farming in the countryside, he stressed that cooperative farming was of decisive importance in the socialist transformation of agriculture.⁹ In its directives sent to the party organizations in February 1952, the Central Committee called on them to develop political work in the countryside, to exert a stronger influence on the peasantry and expand the initiating committees and initiative groups.¹⁰ At the same time, in its directives for the 1956 - 1960 plan, the State Commission for Economic Planning assumed that collectivization would be concluded by 1960.¹¹

At the First Congress of Cooperative Farmers in February 1953, Zenon Nowak, Secretary of the Central Committee, said: "We must ensure that more and more individual holders throughout the country join the ranks of cooperative farmers ever more

mittee Concerning the Violation of the Party Line by the Gryfice Organization in the Szczecin Voivodship], in: *Uchwały Komitetu Centralnego PZPR 1951 [Resolutions of the PUWP Central Committee 1951]*, Warszawa 1952, p. 72; *Uchwała KC PZPR w sprawie wypaczeń linii Partii przez KP w Drawsku [The Resolution of the PUWP Central Committee concerning the Distortion of the Party Line by the Drawsko District Committee]*, in: *O socjalistyczną przebudowę wsi. Uchwały KC PZPR 1949 - 1952 [For a Socialist Transformation of the Countryside. Resolutions of the PUWP Central Committee 1949 - 1952]*, Warszawa 1953, p. 57.

⁹ B. Bierut, *O umocnienie spójni między miastem a wsią w obecnym etapie budownictwa socjalistycznego [For the Strengthening of Ties between Town and Country at the Present Stage of Socialist Building]*, "Nowe Drogi", 1952, No. 6, p. 5.

¹⁰ *Instrukcja KC PZPR w sprawie zadań komitetów partyjnych w walce o podniesienie produkcji rolnej i rozwój spółdzielczości produkcyjnej [Directives of the PUWP Central Committee concerning the Tasks of Party Committees in the Struggle to Increase Agricultural Production and Develop Cooperative Farming]*, in: *O budownictwie...*, pp. 183 ff.

¹¹ See *Wstępny zarys planu rozwoju gospodarki narodowej Polski na lata 1956 - 1960 [Preliminary Outline of the Plan for the Development of Poland's National Economy in the Years 1956 - 1960]*, AAN, PKPG 6, vol. 811, unpaginated.

quickly".¹² In the rhetoric of unabated pressure to speed up the rate of collectivization, this representative of the highest party authorities also included some words of criticism. Nowak pointed to the violations of statutory principles, economic abuses, lack of responsibility and the inadequate commodity production level.

At the end of 1953 and the beginning of 1954, criticism began to mount owing to the changes in atmosphere caused by the death of Stalin. However, the criticism concerned mainly secondary questions of a technical-economic character. In spite of growing disappointment at the implementation and results of collectivization, the authorities avoided approaching the problem in a principled way.

The Ninth Plenary Meeting of the Central Committee held in October 1953, an event of great importance for many economic questions, and the Second Congress of the PUWP which took place in March 1954 did not pay much attention to cooperative farming. However, the Plenary Meeting pointed out that it was wrong to set up small economically weak farms. It criticized the poor financial results of many cooperative farms and expressed the hope that cooperative farming would become more efficient through economic-organizational improvements and an increase of state assistance to socialized agriculture.¹³ The Second Party Congress confirmed the general principles of the collectivization policy. Though it perceived some shortcomings, it did not formulate any profound unequivocal conclusions. It warned both against a hasty organization of cooperative farms and against delays in the process of socialization. It emphasized the need for a more proportionate development of cooperative farms throughout the country and also the necessity of paying special attention to old villages in the central and eastern voivodships, which resisted collectivization. The Congress paid much attention to the question of improving the work of the State Machine Stations. The policy of treating collectivization as the main instrument in the class

¹² *Pierwszy Krajowy Zjazd Spółdzielczości Produkcyjnej [The First National Congress of Cooperative Farmers]*, Warszawa 1953, p. 43.

¹³ *IX Plenum Komitetu Centralnego PZPR [The Ninth Plenary Meeting of the PUWP Central Committee]*, Warszawa 1953, pp. 151 ff.

struggle was fully upheld.¹⁴ The decisions of the Congress did not envisage any changes in the collectivization policy until the end of the Six-Year Plan. The existing model for the transformation of agriculture was also fully approved in the provisions of the first Five-Year Plan (1956 - 1960) and was to be continued. It was pointed out, however, that state assistance should be increased and that the existing cooperative farms should improve their results.

The third Plenary Meeting of the PUWP Central Committee, held in January 1955, took the following decision: "In order to intensify the development of cooperative farms and, especially, to overcome the harmful phenomenon of the cooperative farmers' inadequate activeness in collective farming, it is necessary to make a thorough analysis and adopt appropriate measures both with regard to material incentives as well as with regard to improving work organization in cooperative farms and raising party political work to a higher level".¹⁵

At the beginning of 1956, when indications of essential political changes were becoming increasingly clear, the principles formulated in 1949 were still in force in questions concerning cooperative farming. The resolution adopted by the Fifth Plenary Meeting of the Central Committee in February 1956 included a statement saying that small farms should take up collective forms more quickly than in the years 1949 - 1955,¹⁶ justifying this assertion by the argument that agriculture was lagging behind industry. In view of the setbacks, it was envisaged that by 1960 cooperative farms would include 25 - 30% of the total area of peasant land. The resolutions envisaged preferences for cooperative farms,

¹⁴ *II Zjazd PZPR [The Second Congress of the PUWP]*, Warszawa 1954, pp. 63 ff.; S. Kuziński, *Niektóre zagadnienia gospodarczego umocnienia spółdzielni produkcyjnych [Some Questions concerning the Economic Strengthening of Cooperative Farms]*, Warszawa 1955, pp. 4 ff.

¹⁵ *Uchwała w sprawie węzłowych zadań gospodarczych na rok 1955 i ulepszenia metod kierownictwa gospodarką narodową [Resolution concerning Key Economic Tasks for 1955 and Improvements in the Methods of Directing the National Economy]*, in: *Uchwały Komitetu Centralnego od II do III Zjazdu [The Resolutions of the Central Committee from the Second to the Third Congress]*, Warszawa 1959, p. 79.

¹⁶ *Uchwała o rozwoju rolnictwa w latach 1956 - 1960 i zadaniach partii na wsi [Resolution on the Development of Agriculture in the Years 1956 - 1960 and the Tasks of the Party in the Countryside]*, *ibidem*, pp. 105 ff.

promising to decrease their quota deliveries, expand credits and increase the supplies of resources for agricultural production. Propaganda and agitation work was to be intensified. A small correction was made in the agrarian policy, as was indicated by the appeal of the Plenum for simple forms of cooperation in the countryside. This was a call for the re-activation of some peasant collective activities which were given up in the frenzy of establishing cooperative farms (joint draining and irrigation work, road and forestry companies, etc.).

As late as May 1956, during the debates of the Second Congress of Cooperative Farmers, representatives of the authorities emphasized the immutability of the collectivization policy, despite the clear signs of a political crisis.¹⁷ However, under the influence of the sharp criticism expressed by many delegates, the resolutions of the Congress contained many formulations which showed the actual situation of cooperative farming. The delegates criticized the restrictions of their inner democracy and the broad interference of the political and administrative authorities in their life. The Congress stated that one of the reasons for the decay of self-management was that cooperative farming had no authentic superior organs of its own. The Congress refused to recognize the state-appointed Cooperative Farming Council as a representative of the movement. In one of its resolutions the Congress decided to set up, through elections, a new council and to establish voivodship and district unions of cooperative farms. The Congress pointed out once again that state assistance to cooperative farming was insufficient and that there was no proper cooperation between the State Machine Stations and collective farms.¹⁸

In our opinion, the resolutions of the Second Congress of Cooperative Farmers marked the end of the first stage of collectivization, a period of an intensive growth of cooperative farms. The political events which took place in the country in the summer and autumn of 1956 exerted a deep influence on all the spheres of socio-economic life and led to a profound reappraisal of opinions

¹⁷ Cf. Z. Nowak's speech, in: *II Krajowy Zjazd Spółdzielczości Produkcyjnej* [The Second National Congress of Cooperative Farmers], Warszawa 1956, p. 127.

¹⁸ *Ibidem*, pp. 140 ff.

on the way collectivization had been carried out. The political consequences were expressed by the Eighth Plenary Meeting of the PUWP Central Committee (October 19 - 21, 1956) and the Fourth Plenary Meeting of the Central Committee of the United Peasant Party (October 18 - 20, 1956). They both condemned intensive collectivization, since it had led to a drop in agricultural production. Taking a critical view of the state of cooperative farming, the PUWP Central Committee called for the strengthening of the farms which enjoyed the conditions for further development, and for the dissolution of those which did not augur well.³⁹

As a result, the policy of collectivization collapsed and there was a rush to dissolve cooperative farms. The rapidity with which this was being done proved that grave errors had been committed in the elaboration of the collectivization programme and during its implementation.

2. IMPLEMENTATION

In 1949, statutes of three types of cooperative farms were drawn up. They differed by the degree of socialization and by the way in which they divided profits.

In type I the peasants organized Land Tilling Associations in order to work the land and harvest the crops together. The land and the buildings remained private property, while the livestock and tools were used for common work, against payment. In the Associations, profits were divided proportionately to the size of the land under joint cultivation.⁴⁰ Judging by the division of profits, the Association was regarded as the simplest form of cooperative farming. The Joint Investment Fund and the Social Fund, which were set up within the Associations, were regarded as a nucleus of a higher form.

Type II were Agricultural Production Cooperatives in which

³⁹ S. Jarecka-Kimłowska, *Polityka...*, pp. 88 ff.; *Uchwała o aktualnych zadaniach politycznych i gospodarczych partii* [Resolution on the Present Political and Economic Tasks of the Party], in: *Uchwały...*, pp. 220 ff.

⁴⁰ J. Tepicht, *O statutach spółdzielni produkcyjnych* [The Statutes of Cooperative Farms], Warszawa 1950, pp. 9 ff.

all the arable land and other lands as well as waste land were merged for the purpose of joint work. The members retained the title to the land they had contributed and could transfer it to their heirs. If they decided to leave the cooperative, they could receive analogous allotments on the fringe of cooperative fields. The members of the Agricultural Production Cooperatives had the duty of contributing agricultural machines and implements, as well as livestock. The family of a cooperative member was allowed to retain a plot of ground adjoining the farmstead (from 0.3 up to 1 ha.), the small implements needed for its cultivation and livestock. The house and farm buildings as well as the installations needed for the plot were the property of the farmer. The principles governing the division of profits in cooperatives of the second type were of a complex character. First, they were divided between the members and the cooperative in the ratio 80:20. The part accorded to the members was then divided as follows: up to 25% was divided according to the contribution of land made by each member, 10 - 15% according to the stock contributed by them, and 60 - 70% according to the work contributed, calculated in terms of workdays.⁴¹ A part of the profits went to create a Joint Investment Fund used to increase livestock and implements and for building purposes. The rest formed the Social Fund which was used to finance the common social and cultural needs of the members.⁴²

The highest form was a collective farm of type III, called the Agricultural Cooperative Unit. It was an exact replica of the Soviet agricultural artel. It differed from the Agricultural Production Cooperative by the division of profits. The profits divided between the members were set at no less than 70%, and the division depended exclusively on the work contributed.⁴³ The fact

⁴¹ *Ibidem*, p. 19. The account workday was the work of "a farmer in the course of which he ploughs with two horses 0.4 hectares of average soil to the depth of 16 to 20 cm." The statutes envisaged 100 account workdays as a minimum, and this entitled the members to obtain bonuses for exceeding production plans. Cf. A. Brzoza, *Statuty spółdzielni produkcyjnych [The Statutes of Cooperative Farms]*, "Nowe Drogi", 1949, No. 3, pp. 44.

⁴² A. Kita, W. Jurek, A. Niedźwiecki, *Spółdzielczość produkcyjna w świetle ustawodawstwa i doświadczeń [Cooperative Farming in the Light of Legislation and Experiences]*, Warszawa 1956, p. 126.

⁴³ *Ibidem*, p. 130.

that profits were divided according to work was regarded as a sign of the highest degree of socialization, which designated this type of farm as a truly socialist one. Applying this criterion, the fourth statute was drawn up in 1950. This was the Agricultural Cooperative Association (type IB), the statute of which was a compilation of the statutes of Type I and Type II. The terms of membership were the same as in the Land Tilling Associations, but the division of profits was based on the principles of the Agricultural Production Cooperatives, which took into account the work contributed.⁴⁴

The initiation of the statutes did not halt the work on their further modification, the aim being to bring them nearer to the statutes of kolkhozes. However, the changes made at the end of 1952 did not result in a full unification.⁴⁵ Among the general provisions common to all statutes were: the principle of voluntary membership, the class criteria of membership, a fixed minimum of collective work, prohibition to use hired labour, retention of land ownership rights, the right to keep a small private plot adjoining the individual farmhouse as well as the right to possess livestock, the principle that the authorities of the collective are to be elected, the self-management of the collective, and last but not least the basing of relations between the cooperative farms and the state on fully commercial principles.

In practice, the interpretation of the statutory provisions frequently departed from the letter of the statutes. As early as 1949, there were cases of the principle of voluntary accession being violated. For the sake of misinterpreted competition, many party district committees tried to organize cooperative farms in villages which manifested no initiative in this direction.⁴⁶ Peasants who withheld from the merging of land received various kinds of threats. It was a common practice for the party organizations to choose the villages where cooperative farms were to be organized. The party concentrated political and administrative activities in these villages and sent there workers' and youth teams to

⁴⁴ Cf. T. Hunek, *Spółdzielczość produkcyjna w rolnictwie polskim* [*Cooperative Farming in Polish Agriculture*], Warszawa 1985, p. 34.

⁴⁵ S. Jarecka-Kimłowska, *Polityka...*, pp. 73-74.

⁴⁶ Cf. R. Zambrowski, *Aktualne...*, p. 81.

achieve their aim, even if the peasants were opposed to the idea. Among the coercive measures were surtaxes, unlawful fines, the threat of dismissing family members from work and even arrest. Some teams of factory workers sent to the countryside earned disrepute among peasants. Instead of helping peasants to repair machines, equipment and buildings, they engaged in the organization of cooperative farms, using "impermissible means of pressure with regard to peasants and violating the principle of voluntariness."⁴⁷

As party documents show, the gravest violations of the principle of voluntariness took place in Western Pomerania. In the first half of 1951, 15 cooperative farms were set up in the Gryfice district in violation of the adopted principles. "The leadership and apparatus of the District Committee in Drawsko violated the principle of voluntary establishment of cooperative farms on a mass scale, making wide use of unlawful surtaxes, unjustified administrative fines and even illegal detention by organs of the Security Office and the Citizens' Militia." The head of the district Security Office was accused of the "ill treatment of citizens."⁴⁸ As a result of these glaring abuses, party punishments and court sentences abounded in the Gryfice and Drawsko districts. These events gained wide publicity and for a short time cooled the zeal to set up cooperative farms by fair means or foul, but for a long time in the peasants' mentality the concept of state was linked with coercion.

An analysis of party documents shows that the pressure to set up cooperative farms did not ease up until 1953. As a result, the growth rate of collective farms decreased. A great deal of injustice was done through the exchange of land, which was necessary in the process of organizing the farms. Since the number of farmers who merged their land was, as a rule, small in a village, the exchange assumed large proportions. If this was done in the spring, which was not infrequent, the economic losses were

⁴⁷ *W sprawie ruchu łączności fabryk ze wsią. Uchwała KC PZPR [Concerning the Movement for Contacts between Factories and the Countryside. Resolution of the PUWP Central Committee]*, in: *O budownictwie ...*, p. 163.

⁴⁸ See footnote 28.

considerable. The exchange was as a rule unfavourable for the farmers who decided to continue individual farming. The extent of the exchange of land can be gauged by the fact that in the Warsaw, Kielce, Katowice and Lublin voivodships only 10% of the holdings joined collective farming. In the voivodships where the collectivization rate was the highest, this percentage did not exceed 32.⁴⁹

The collective farms were small, economically weak and short-lived, since the quantitative results of the campaign were the main reason for their establishment. In 1956, farms of less than 70 ha. accounted for 12% of the total number of cooperative farms and more than a half of all the collective farms held from 70 to 200 ha.⁵⁰ Collective farms were sometimes organized by rural administration workers, economic institutions and teachers. Since these had no farmers, there was nobody to work the land. Peasants were sometimes promised houses, lighter work and high profits in collective farming if they merged their land, but their hopes were quickly shattered in confrontation with the reality. Party organizations sometimes created hothouse conditions for selected cooperative farms, guaranteeing them high credits and other benefits, which demoralized the members and led quickly to economic ruin.⁵¹

The general rule was that the local administrative and political authorities took a great interest in the establishment of a new cooperative farm, but their interest quickly abated. Left to themselves, the farms often encountered grave difficulties. Class criteria were rigorously adhered to especially in the first phase of collectivization. As the three-divisional formula was the main guideline, kulaks as well as all persons treated as speculators and

⁴⁹ Cf. T. Huneek, *Spółdzielczość...*, pp. 32 - 33.

⁵⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 43.

⁵¹ *O zadaniach partii w dziedzinie rozwoju ruchu spółdzielczości produkcyjnej i wzmoczenia politycznego, gospodarczego i organizacyjnego oddziaływania POM* [The Tasks of the Party in the Development of Cooperative Farming and the Strengthening of the Political, Economic and Organizational Influence of the State Machine Stations], in: *O budownictwie...*, pp. 150 ff.; E. Pszczółkowski, *Zagadnienia gospodarczego i organizacyjnego umocnienia spółdzielni produkcyjnych* [Questions concerning the Economic and Organizational Strengthening of Cooperative Farms], Warszawa 1950, p. 5.

exploiters were barred from collective farming. In a resolution adopted in December 1950, the Central Committee strongly condemned the fact that over 350 peasant holdings having more than 15 ha. each had been admitted and that in some voivodships rich peasants became members of the cooperative authorities. The Szczecin Voivodship Committee was praised for exposing 68 kulaks and expelling them from the cooperative movement.⁵²

In addition to the deliberate policy of barring access to kulaks, there was a spontaneous trend among the cooperative farmers to leave the poorest peasants outside collective farming so as not to decrease the incomes of the members.⁵³ As a result, the share of the small and smallest holdings was insignificant. In the autumn of 1950, holdings of up to 2 ha. accounted for 9.4% of the holdings which joined collective farming and those from 2 to 5 ha. for 18.8%. The share of the large farms, from 5 - 20 ha., was 0.5% and that of farms exceeding 20 ha. amounted to 0.2%. The authorities were surprised at the large percentage of medium-holders in collective farming, farms of from 5 - 10 ha. constituting 60.7% of the total and those of from 10 to 15 ha. 10.4%.⁵⁴ This led to the opinion that it was wrong to base collectivization on medium-sized farms for this meant "the extinction of the class struggle"⁵⁵ in the cooperatives.

In spite of further efforts to win over small-holders, and in spite of the fight against kulaks, the structure of holdings forming part of cooperative farming had not changed much until 1955. Holdings with an area of 2 ha. accounted for 7.2% of the number of the holdings embraced by collectivization, those from 2 to 5 ha. for 14.1%, from 5 to 20 ha. for 78.1%, and farms with an area of over 20 ha. for 0.6%.⁵⁶ Thus, in spite of political endeavours, medium-sized farms dominated in cooperatives and there was also quite a number of large farms. This seems to have been

⁵² O zadaniach partii w dziedzinie rozwoju ruchu spółdzielczości..., p. 149.

⁵³ *Ibidem*, p. 10.

⁵⁴ E. Wiśniewski, *Spółdzielczość produkcyjna w 6-letnim planie [Cooperative Farming in the Six-Year Plan]*, "Przegląd Spółdzielczy", 1950, No. 9 - 10, p. 462.

⁵⁵ *Ibidem*.

⁵⁶ *Rocznik Statystyczny, 1957 [Statistical Yearbook, 1957]*, p. 139.

the result of the geographical structure of collectivization, which was the most developed in the western voivodships, where peasant holdings were, as a rule, larger. The failure of collectivization in central and eastern Poland, where dwarf holdings predominated, was the reason why their share was so small.

The organization of cooperative farms was accomplished in two ways: on the basis of the existing collective farms or from scratch. Where settlers' cooperative farms formed on parcelled out land existed, they were transformed into cooperative farms governed by one of the four types of statutes. The first cooperative farms, which were set up in the Olsztyn voivodship in 1949, originated from these settlers' cooperative farms. Owing to this method, 25 cooperative farms had come into being in Mazuria by the end of 1949, accounting for 10⁰/₀ of the cooperative farms in Poland.⁵⁷ In Great Poland, too, the pioneering collective farms also developed from land reform communes and cooperative farms set up by settlers on parcelled out land.⁵⁸

The organization of cooperative farms from scratch was preceded by a political propaganda campaign, the aim of which was to set up the initiating committee. Next, an organizing meeting was held with the participation of the district political and administrative authorities. It chose the type of statute, elected the authorities of the farm and admitted members. The next step was the registration of the new cooperative farm in the court. However, it was in fact the Agricultural Department of the PUWP Central Committee which had the last say on registration.⁵⁹ Even this cursory outline of the procedure shows that the independence of the

⁵⁷ S. Pacewicz, *Spółeczno-polityczne aspekty rozwoju rolniczych spółdzielni produkcyjnych na przykładzie Polski północno-wschodniej* [Social and Political Aspects of the Development of the Agricultural Production Cooperatives Illustrated by the Example of Northern-Eastern Poland], Warszawa 1978, pp. 39 - 40.

⁵⁸ I. Ławniczek, *Rolnicza spółdzielczość produkcyjna w Wielkopolsce w latach 1949 - 1974* [Agricultural Production Cooperatives in Great Poland in the Years 1949 - 1974], Warszawa; Poznań 1977, p. 24.

⁵⁹ A. Kita, W. Jurek, A. Niedźwiecki, *Spółdzielczość...*, pp. 162 ff.; W. Kijewski, *Działalność PZPR w zakresie socjalistycznej przebudowy wsi w latach 1949 - 1956* [The Activity of the PUWP in the Socialist Transformation of the Countryside in 1949 - 1956], Warszawa 1982, p. 276.

founders was considerably restricted, that the forms of procedure were, to a large extent, uniform and that the authorities had great possibilities of interfering at various steps of the legalization process. In accordance with the statutes, the highest authority of a cooperative farm was a general meeting of its members, which took the key decisions. Current tasks and the implementation of the resolutions of the general meeting were in the hands of a board elected for a one-year term, which elected a chairman from among its members.⁶⁰

Formally, the cooperative farms were affiliated to the Agricultural Centre of the Peasants' Self-Help Cooperative, but its help and protection were restricted. Interference by state political and administrative organs clearly predominated. The resolution adopted by the Praesidium of the Government on May 30, 1953, set up the Cooperative Farming Council. Its 56 members were appointed by the Prime Minister. Edmund Pszczółkowski, Secretary of the PUWP Central Committee, acted as head of the Council.⁶¹

In order to intensify the establishment of cooperative farms a system of reduced tariffs and other benefits was introduced in 1949. The decree of the Minister of Agriculture and Land Reform of March 14, 1949, suspended the repayment of instalments for land obtained under the land reform⁶² for members of the Agricultural Cooperative Units. The land tax for cooperative farms was reduced. The Land Tilling Associations were granted a 30⁰/₀ reduction on the part of the land tax for grounds included in collective farming. The Land Tilling Associations paid 4.5⁰/₀ of the base of taxation, the Agricultural Production Cooperatives and the Agricultural Cooperative Units 3.5⁰/₀.⁶³ Cooperative farms were

⁶⁰ A. Kita, W. Jurek, A. Niedźwiecki, *Spółdzielczość...*, pp. 176 ff.

⁶¹ S. Jarecka-Kimłowska, *Polityka...*, pp. 60 ff.

⁶² A. Kita, W. Jurek, A. Niedźwiecki, *Spółdzielczość...*, p. 109.

⁶³ Decree of June 30, 1951 on Land Tax, DzU Ministerstwa Rolnictwa [Journal of Laws of the Ministry of Agriculture], 1951, No. 14, item 89; Regulation of the Council of Ministers of January 10, 1951, concerning reduced land tax rates for 1951 for agricultural cooperative associations, DzURP [Journal of Laws of the Polish Republic] 1951, No. 3, item 17.

fully exempted from paying income tax on their statutory activity and in part also on auxiliary production.⁶⁴

In order to strengthen the cooperatives economically, the state transferred to them government-owned immovables. They received land free of charge and paid for livestock and dead stock in convenient instalments.⁶⁵ Cooperative farms benefited from state credits which were granted by the National Bank of Poland for current needs, and by the Agricultural Bank for investment. New cooperative farms as well as those in difficult economic conditions could obtain special financial help.⁶⁶ The dynamic growth of credits from 47 million zlotys in 1949 to 979 million in 1956 was accompanied by large vacillations in the amount of the average credit granted to a cooperative farm, which complicated financial economy.⁶⁷

A special role in helping and influencing cooperative farms was played by the State Machine Stations. Although they were obliged to provide services for individual farmers, they concentrated on cooperation with collective farms. The share of cooperative farms in the agricultural and transport activities of the State Machine Stations rose from 54.2⁰/₀ in 1950 to 72.5⁰/₀ in 1956. Cooperative farms paid lower fees for the services of State Machine Stations than did the individual farmers.⁶⁸

The political departments of the State Machine Stations, headed by deputy directors for political affairs, were given extensive powers. It was their task to maintain work discipline in the

⁶⁴ Resolution of the Council of Ministers No. 97 of February 10, 1951, *Monitor Polski*, 1951, No. A-17, item 224.

⁶⁵ Regulation of the Council of Ministers of February 10, 1951, concerning the transference of state-owned agricultural immovables to cooperative farms, *DzURP* [Journal of Laws of the Polish Republic], 1951, No. 10, item 77.

⁶⁶ Resolution of the Praesidium of the Government of January 21, 1956, concerning the principles governing the granting of long-term investment and production credits to cooperative farms, *Monitor Polski* 1956, No. 8, item 108; Resolution of the Praesidium of the Government No. 74 of February 4, 1956, concerning special financial assistance for cooperative farms, *ibidem*, 1956, No. 17, item 243.

⁶⁷ A. Kostecki, *Główne formy pomocy finansowej państwa dla rolniczych spółdzielni produkcyjnych w Polsce Ludowej w latach 1949 - 1960* [The Main Forms of State Financial Assistance to Cooperative Farms in People's Poland in 1949 - 1960], Kraków 1964, pp. 84 - 85.

⁶⁸ Cf. A. Kostecki, *Główne...*, p. 100.

machine stations and cooperative farms and to propagate collectivization.⁶⁹ The Second PUWP Congress decided that the foundation of State Machine Stations should precede the development of cooperative farming. At the same time the Congress pointed out the defects in their work: a lack of concern for the interests of cooperative farms, bad services, unreliable agro-technical help, incompetent exploitation of tractors and machines.⁷⁰

The number of the State Machine Stations (on the average one station serviced 23 cooperative farms), their equipment, the efficiency of their machines and, above all, their organization and the quality of work did not come up to the expectations of cooperative farmers. The plans of field work were never implemented. In 1953, tractors carried out the first ploughing on only half the area of the cooperative farms. The protraction of harvesting work led to crop losses and an incomplete sowing of after-crops. As a result of unsatisfactory root plant protection, the yields, and especially those of potatoes, were low.⁷¹ Cooperation between the State Machine Stations and cooperative farms was one of the sore points of collectivization and an important reason for its failure.

In the first year of the collectivization programme 243 cooperative farms were set up, covering 41,500 hectares, that is, 0.2% of all the arable land in Poland. The number of peasant holdings belonging to cooperatives did not exceed 0.1% of the total number.⁷² This meant that the plan adopted by the authorities in the autumn of 1948 was not carried out. The majority of the cooperative farms grouped soldier-settlers and former farm hands; owners of hereditary plots only joined sporadically. As has already been mentioned, the voivodships in the Recovered Territories, where cooperative farms were organized on the basis of the existing forms of joint land cultivation, led the way. Up to the middle of 1950, out of 911 cooperative farms only 76 were

⁶⁹ *O pracy Wydziałów Politycznych w Państwowych Ośrodkach Maszynowych. Instrukcja KC PZPR [The Work of the Political Departments in the State Machine Stations. Directives of the PUWP Central Committee]*, in: *O budownictwie...*, p. 158.

⁷⁰ *II Zjazd PZPR...*, p. 64.

⁷¹ S. Kuziński, *Niektóre...*, pp. 23 ff.

⁷² T. Hunek, *Spółdzielczość...*, p. 25.

set up in old villages. As many as 445 had been organized in the Recovered Territories, 124 in villages on parcelled out land and 226 in mixed villages.⁷³ The speedy merging of new farms was justified economically. They were more affected by the lack of resources for agricultural production, by the lack of manpower and the growing encumbrances imposed on agriculture in the form of taxes and quota deliveries.

A characteristic feature of the early stage of collectivization was the establishment of cooperative farms of higher types. This reflected the sentiments of the party apparatus, which promoted the establishment of farms with the highest degree of socialization. It was believed that only cooperatives of the second and third types would meet with the approval of the political authorities. Hence cooperatives of these two types accounted for 91.0% of all cooperative farms in 1949, for 87.4% in 1950, and 84.4% in 1951. It seems that these results could not have been achieved

Table 1. Cooperative Farms Distributing Profits in 1950 - 1955

Specification	Years					
	1950	1951	1952	1953	1954	1955
Cooperative farms	635	2,707	3,034	6,228	8,109	9,076
Associated families (in thous.)	16.9	67.1	78.7	146.6	175.1	188.6
Area of land in thous. hectares	190.3	684.8	756.7	1380.3	1712.6	1866.9
of which						
collective arable land	169.5	606.7	666.8	1207.3	1491.3	1638.5
farmstead plots	8.8	41.9	47.8	90.3	117.2	128.4
Livestock (in thousand)						
cattle	41.6	153.7	210.5	375.6	502.4	577.1
pigs	57.3	191.0	292.8	542.0	709.0	873.5
sheep	14.0	73.9	127.8	270.1	410.0	470.4
horses	14.7	47.3	52.6	104.4	125.1	128.4

SOURCE: *Rocznik statystyczny, 1957* [Statistical Yearbook, 1957], p. 137.

⁷³ E. Pszczołkowski, *Zagadnienia gospodarczego i organizacyjnego umocnienia spółdzielni produkcyjnych* [Questions concerning the Economic and Organizational Strengthening of Cooperative Farms], Warszawa 1950, p. 2.

without strong pressure on the peasantry. When speaking of the low number of Land Tilling Associations, R. Zambrowski said at the Fifth Plenary Meeting of the PUWP Central Committee in July 1950: "Does this small number mean that this form is not to the liking of the peasants? Not at all, it means rather that this form is not to the liking... of our District Committees".⁷⁴

The foundation of cooperative farms was greatly stepped up after the resolution of the Political Bureau of October 1949, which selected the districts where collectivization was first to be carried out. It was also decided to set up groups of cooperative farms cooperating with the State Machine Stations. As a result, the number of cooperative farms increased by 104 in January 1950, by 176 in February and by 279 in March. When, owing to field work, the rate of collectivization clearly weakened in April (a growth of 40), May (+27) and June (+42), the political authorities regarded this as "an unjustified weakening of political and organizational work."⁷⁵ The party called on its members to intensify the political campaign in old villages, which disliked the idea of collectivization. Pressure on hereditary peasants, who opposed the merging of land, was increased. There was a clear intensification of the fight for quantity and for the economic strength of cooperative farms and their attractiveness to individual peasants. As a result of the political propaganda campaign and administrative pressure, the number of cooperative farms increased rapidly (Table 1), with a clear concentration in the western and northern voivodships: in the Wrocław, Szczecin, Poznań and Koszalin voivodships. The process of collectivization was the weakest (according to an evaluation made by the authorities in 1952) in the Katowice, Kielce, Cracow, Białystok and Zielona Góra voivodships.⁷⁶ At the beginning of 1953, the development of cooperative farming was recognized to be the best in the Poznań, Bydgoszcz and Wrocław voivodships. A positive opinion was expressed as regards its growth in the central and eastern voivodships.⁷⁷

The rate of collectivization decidedly decreased from 1954. The

⁷⁴ "Nowe Drogi", 1950, No. 4, p. 147.

⁷⁵ E. Pszczołkowski, *Zagadnienia...*, p. 2.

⁷⁶ B. Bierut, *O umocnienie...*, p. 56.

⁷⁷ *Pierwszy Krajowy Zjazd...*, p. 19.

setback of collectivization was, in our opinion, due to the doubts and disorientation evident in the party and administrative apparatus in connection with the new events in socio-political life after the death of Stalin, for the official attitude of the authorities to collectivization remained unchanged until the political turn of 1956.

In an atmosphere of quest for quantitative results, 9,975 co-operative farms had been established by June 1956, but they only covered 2,100,000 hectares, that is, 11.2% of the total area of the arable land of peasants. Owing to the trend, noticeable from the beginning of collectivization, to base cooperative farms on settlers' land and land which had been parcelled out, the western and northern territories had the largest share. Up to the middle of 1956, over 40% of land had been collectivized in the Szczecin and Wrocław voivodships, over 20% in the Opole, Zielona Góra and Koszalin voivodships. The process of collectivization was the least advanced in the old villages of the Kielce, Cracow, Warsaw, Łódź and Lublin voivodships, where the index was from 1 to 3%.⁷⁸ More detailed data from the end of 1955, concerning cooperative farms (9,076) distributing profits, show that they comprised 188,600 families, i.e. about 6% of individual holdings. The co-operative farms cultivated 1,638,500 ha. of land and their members had farmstead plots of a total area of 128,400 ha. (Table 1).

Table 2. Yields in Cooperative Farms and Individual Holdings (the Average for the Years 1950 - 1955) in Quintals per Hectare

Specification	4 cereals	wheat	rye	barley	potatoes	sugar beet
Cooperative farms	13.6	14.4	12.9	15.0	94	158
Individual holdings	12.6	12.8	12.3	13.2	119	199

SOURCE: *Rocznik statystyczny, 1957*, p. 126.

In 1955, the cooperative farms (together with small plots for individual use) brought a total production worth 10,800 million zlotys which accounted for only 9.5% of the produc-

⁷⁸ *Rocznik statystyczny, 1957*, p. 138.

tion of individual holdings. The effectiveness of cultivation was well below that achieved by individual holders. The output of cooperative farms was about 14% lower per hectare of arable land than the output of individual farms. However, owing to their freer access to machines and fertilizers, production on cooperative farms per person employed averaged 26,200 złotys while in individual holdings 18,300 złotys.⁷⁹

The data for the years 1955 - 1956 reflect the highest level of collectivization in the history of People's Poland. Since the dramatic breakdown of the collectivization programme in the autumn of 1956, cooperative farming has not yet reached that level.

3. DIAGNOSIS

The main reason why the programme of collectivization broke down was that political motives prevailed over economics and that an excessive role was attributed to the political-propaganda campaigns. In an atmosphere of intensified class struggle and general suspicion, the principle of voluntary accession to cooperatives was gravely abused. The specific features of Polish agriculture and the personality of Polish peasants were not taken into consideration. That is why the compulsory collectivization campaign achieved greater results in the areas where there were no old hereditary farms.

The methods of political-administrative and economic pressure applied during the period of the Six Year Plan set the peasants against collectivization and were the main reason for the mass dissolution of cooperative farms in the second half of 1956. A general negative attitude to collective farming played but a lesser role. From the socio-economic point of view, the failure of collectivization was due, on the one hand, to the incapability of the Polish economy in the first half of the 1950s to carry out a technical reconstruction of agriculture and on the other, to its starting point. The development programme adopted with many corrections in the Six Year Plan (1950 - 1955) envisaged that agriculture would

⁷⁹ *Rocznik statystyczny, 1957, p. 123.*

have a large share in the industrialization of the country. Collectivization was to enable the accumulation of means for the expansion of industry. The attitude of the classics of Marxism who argued that the government must help the countryside during the period of fundamental socio-political changes was thus ignored. In Poland the countryside was practically devoid of the help of the state in the form of adequate credits as well as supplies of implements, fertilizers and building materials.

The investment credits granted to cooperative farms, calculated per hectare of arable land, show how inadequate the state assistance was. In 1950, they amounted to only 478 zlotys, in 1951 to 203, in 1952 to 213, in 1953 to 218, in 1954 to 246 and in 1955 to 244. As an economist has said "with such a level of help the cooperative farms would have needed 10 - 15 years to achieve stability in collective farming."⁸⁰

When the collectivization programme was announced, Polish agriculture was at a low level of development. Its intensity depended greatly on human labour. This situation was transferred to cooperative farms which did not receive adequate assistance from the state for technical reconstruction. The development of cooperative farms was based on simple cooperation, and this restricted the growth of agricultural production. Moreover, the level of employment on cooperative farms was low. In 1950 it was 15.3 persons per 100 ha. of arable land, compared with 27.6 persons on individual farms.⁸¹ The poor work organization, combined with a trend to limit one's efforts in collective work, resulted in the fact that cooperative farmers were less involved in their tasks than individual holders. Owing to the lack of substitutes in the form of an adequate number of machines and productivity increasing equipment, production intensity on collective farms was low, which affected the general level of agricultural output.

Another group of reasons responsible for the failure of collectivization can be referred to as economic-organizational factors. For many years the establishment of cooperative farms was

⁸⁰ T. HuneK, *Spółdzielczość...*, pp. 55 - 56.

⁸¹ T. Adamowski, J. Lewandowski, *Rolnictwo polskie w dwudziestopięcioleciu* [Polish Agriculture in the Last Twenty-Five Years], Warszawa 1970, p. 74.

improvised owing to the lack of a full catalogue of regulations governing their functioning and their relations with the environment. Such basic questions as the members' contributions to collective farms were not fixed; the procedure of establishing contributions in stock, account workdays and working hours lagged interminably. The lack of managing personnel and agro- and zootechnical staff caused great difficulties. One of the handicaps was that rich peasants who knew how to run large farms were not admitted. The discipline was poor: in 1954 one-third of the members did not contribute the obligatory 100 workdays. Another important problem was the low participation of the cooperative farmers' families in collective work.⁶² Many errors were committed in investment policy. The general level of credits was low, but owing to subjective factors some farms were overinvested while others were completely neglected.

A great problem for the cooperative farms was to introduce such a structure of cultivation and stock-breeding which would correspond to social needs. The area under industrial, leguminous and fodder crops was gradually increased while the area under cereals and potatoes was decreased, which indicated a trend towards the intensification of vegetable production. Owing to better fertilization, the yields of cereals were higher in cooperative farms than in individual holdings, the difference being the greatest in the yields of wheat and barley (Table 2). On the other hand cooperative farms faced serious problems with the labour-absorbing cultivation of sugar beet, and especially potatoes, the yields of which fell far below those achieved in individual holdings.

Among the important setbacks of cooperative farming was the poor development of collective stock-breeding. In 1955, collective farms held 27% of the stock of cattle achieved by individual holdings per 100 ha. of arable land, 34% of their stock of pigs, 39% of the stock of horses and 52% of the stock of sheep (Table 3). The immediate reason for the stagnation of livestock breeding was the insufficient production of fodder and inadequate zoo-

⁶² Cf. R. Zambrowski, H. Chełchowski, *W walce o rozwój spółdzielni produkcyjnych* [The Struggle for the Development of Cooperative Farms], Warszawa 1950, pp. 16 ff.; S. Kuziński, *Niektóre...*, p. 19

technical care, which was also responsible for the low productivity of animals. At the same time the livestock breeding by cooperative farmers on their individual plots was well developed. In 1955, their stock of cattle was 30⁰/₀ higher, of pigs 40.5⁰/₀ higher and sheep 32.1⁰/₀ higher than in cooperative farms.⁸³ The high individual livestock breeding was often achieved by feeding private animals with collective fodder.

Table 3. Number of Animals per 100 Hectares of Arable Land in 1955

Specification	Cattle	Pigs	Sheep	Horses
Cooperative farms	12.0	18.7	11.3	5.8
Individual holdings	43.8	55.0	21.7	14.9

SOURCE: *Rocznik statystyczny, 1957*, p. 128.

The poor economic results, especially in livestock breeding, affected the cooperative farmers' incomes. These were low and in view of inflationary trends the development of cooperative farms did not guarantee that their real value would rise. In 1955 the incomes amounted to 1,921 zlotys per one ha. of arable land.⁸⁴ Nor did the payments in kind contribute to a major improvement in the living standards of cooperative farmers. Out of the incomes distributed in 1955, one cooperative family received on the average 20.5 quintals of cereals and 5.9 quintals of potatoes.⁸⁵ This low level of payments in kind was a stimulus to develop production on individually owned small plots as much as possible. The low incomes of cooperative farms were caused not only by inadequate work efficiency, but also by the fact that in spite of reductions the level of their contributions to the state was high. The economy of cooperative farms was affected particularly strongly by the quota deliveries of agricultural products. In 1954 the quota of

⁸¹ Calculated on the basis of *Rocznik statystyczny, 1957*, p. 140. Cf. also H. Słabek, *Powikłania polskiej kolektywizacji rolnictwa 1954 - 1956 [The Complications of the Polish Collectivization of Agriculture 1954 - 1956], "Dzieje Najnowsze", 1986, No. 1, p. 46.*

⁸⁴ T. Hunek, *Spółdzielczość...*, p. 141.

⁸⁵ *Rocznik statystyczny, 1957*, p. 141.

⁸⁶ A. Kostecki, *Główne...*, p. 146.

compulsory deliveries by the cooperative farms amounted on the average to 49.7% of their total production and as regards livestock to as much as 80.5%.⁸⁷ The excessive deliveries undermined the economy of cooperative farms, jeopardized the development of the fodder base and hampered collective livestock breeding.¹⁷ The large burdens were the reason why cooperative farms were always late in meeting their financial obligations. They lagged behind the schedule in the payment of taxes, the credit rates and dues for services rendered by the State Machine Stations.

In the new political conditions which arose in the middle of 1956, not only peasants, but also some economists and practicians came out against cooperative farming. As has been mentioned above, the attitude of the peasants was mainly due to their opposition to the forms and methods in which collectivization was being carried out.⁸⁸ Another reason was that after merging their land the peasants did not experience a sufficient improvement in their living standards and working conditions, which frequently even deteriorated.

The attitude of peasants was convincingly described in April 1956 by Władysław Bieńkowski, a PUWP activist, who wrote: "Contrary to a district or voivodship activist, the peasant is not interested politically in cooperative farming. He represents the sound (yes) opinion based on economic calculation."⁸⁹ If this was so, accession to a cooperative farm which worked badly and had poor economic results could not but arouse frustration. This feeling was multiplied by the lack of self-management, the inaptitude of the managers and frequent interferences from outside. As Bolesław Strużek, an agricultural economist, said "the constantly increasing dependence of cooperative farms on party and administrative authorities, a phenomenon which was particularly strong in the case of cooperative farms of the higher type of statutes, made the peasants feel convinced that they were being 'expropriated'."⁹⁰

⁸⁷ Statement by J. Teplich, in: *O nowy...*, p. 47.

⁸⁸ Cf. J. Popkiewicz, *Spółdzielczość produkcyjna na przelomie. Na przykładzie Dolnego Śląska [Cooperative Farming at the Turning Point, with Lower Silesia Serving as an Example]*, Wrocław 1959, p. 98.

⁸⁹ *O nowy...*, p. 14.

⁹⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 85.

In the second half of 1956, representatives of the state administration were over-zealous, as at the beginning of the collectivization programme, but this time in the criticizing and dissolving of cooperative farms. Under the influence of the peasants, backed by the political apparatus, a liquidation rush flared up in October 1956. By the middle of November 75⁰/₁₀₀ of the cooperative farms had been dissolved, mainly in the western and northern voivodships.²¹ At the end of 1956, the number of cooperative farms was

Table 4. The Breakdown of Cooperative Farming in 1956

Specification	Number of cooperative farms			Index December 1956 December 1955
	December 31 1955	June 1956	December 31 1956	
Poland	9,694	9,975	1,534	15.8%
Voivodships				
Białystok	325	298	22	6.8%
Bydgoszcz	1,040	1,146	156	15.0%
Gdańsk	441	436	47	10.6%
Katowice	125	137	65	52.0%
Kielce	190	188	96	50.5%
Koszalin	411	625	16	3.9%
Kraków	228	229	64	28.1%
Lublin	424	424	140	33.0%
Łódź	415	381	123	29.6%
Olsztyn	532	524	41	7.7%
Opole	522	534	38	7.3%
Poznań	1,293	1,391	423	32.7%
Rzeszów	347	358	79	22.8%
Szczecin	718	725	17	2.4%
Warszawa	361	390	141	39.1%
Wrocław	1,678	1,680	41	2.4%
Zielona Góra	512	509	19	3.7%

SOURCE: S. Jarecka-Kimłowska, *Polityka* ..., p. 94; and the author's own calculations.

²¹ S. Jarecka-Kimłowska, *Polityka* ..., p. 93; K. Robakowski, *Spoleczno-polityczne problemy rozwoju spółdzielczości produkcyjnej w Polsce w latach 1944 - 1956* [The Socio-Economic Problems of the Development of Cooperative Farming in Poland in the Years 1944 - 1956], Poznań 1986, pp. 135 ff.

less than 16% of the number recorded in December the preceding year (Table 4).

Cooperative farms of Type III, that is those in which ties with the cooperative were the strongest, were dissolved extremely quickly. It can be assumed that their speedy dissolution was a protest against the former pressure to set up collectives of higher types. Collectivization in the Recovered Territories, that is, in the Szczecin, Wrocław, Koszalin, Zielona Góra, Opole and Olsztyn voivodships, as well as in the northern part of the Białystok voivodship, suffered a complete defeat in 1956 (Table 4). It meant also a political and economic defeat, for a feasible reconstruction of individual farming required a large financial outlay.

Dissolution was resisted by the cooperative farms which were set up on the parcelled out land and those where landless families constituted the majority. A relatively large number of cooperative farms survived in the areas where the process of collectivization took place more slowly, surmounting difficulties, that is, in the Katowice, Kielce, Warsaw and Lublin voivodships. This group also included the Poznań voivodship which, as has been said above, enjoyed favourable conditions for collective farming.

In analysing the failure of collectivization, economists pointed out various reasons. Strużek emphasized that the relationship between the state and cooperative farms was wrong, since commercial ties had been discarded in favour of political administrative commands. He pointed to the unsound isolation of cooperative farms from individual holdings and the growing antagonism between the socialized and the private sector in agriculture. He expressed a low opinion of the extensive character of production in collective farms and the underdevelopment of livestock breeding.⁸² According to Wiktor Herer, the weakness of cooperative farms was due to the fact that they had not become modern enterprises using the proper agrotechnical methods but remained a cooperation of individual holdings which failed to reach the proper level of production intensity.⁸³

At the end of 1956, Jerzy Tepicht, one of the leading co-authors

⁸² *O nowy...*, pp. 84 ff.

⁸³ *Ibidem*, p. 139.

of the collectivization programme, made a criticism of the collectivization policy. He condemned both the rate and the method of transforming agriculture. He criticized the practice of not taking into account the specific features of the individual regions, which made it impossible to make use of all the possibilities for collectivization. He pointed to the lack of a proper organizational superstructure of cooperative farms, a lack caused by the fear that this might lead to the emergence of a great social force. He called for structural changes which would protect cooperative farms from outside interference and from attempts to conduct concealed private enterprises.⁹⁴

Bieńkowski seems to have aptly characterized and evaluated the collectivization policy pursued in the first half of the 1950s. He laid stress on the erroneous and harmful practice of dividing the transformation of agriculture into two separate and opposing processes, political and economic, in which political work was to promote collective forms of farming while economic measures were to dissuade peasants from individual farming.⁹⁵ On the basis of the available material one can add that political measures clearly predominated. Though they were concentrated on the establishment of cooperative farms, they also exerted the decisive influence on the attitude of the state to individual holders. Political measures were to replace the economic and psychological unpreparedness for solving one of the basic questions of the transitional period : the transformation of small-commodity agriculture according to the needs of the socialist system.

(Translated by Janina Doroszowa)

⁹⁴ *Ibidem*, pp. 54 ff.

⁹⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 14.