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## THE PEASANT IN POLISH SOCIETY 1945 - 1970

The subject matter of the article is defined by the subtitles : 1. the access of peasant children to schools, 2. the role played by migrants to towns and by peasants having two occupations, 3. the share of agriculture in the economy of the country, 4. the incomes and consumption of the peasant population. These questions do not exhaust the subject, but I think that they concern important issues.

### THE ACCESS OF PEASANT CHILDREN TO SCHOOLS

In the postwar period completion of a secondary or a higher school has, to an ever greater extent, become a condition for social promotion. Hence the rush to education. The opportunities of peasant children, though incomparably greater than ever before, were limited in the period under review, as compared with their aspirations and with the chances of the young people in towns. There was inequality even at the level of primary education, an inequality which seriously affected the peasant children's start towards the education and occupation they wanted to have.

The eradication of the accumulated results of long neglect and of war damage was a slow process. In spite of the efforts and indubitable achievements, as late as in the 1957/58 school year over 20 per cent of the pupils in the countryside attended incom-

plete schools. Owing to the lack of accommodation and the severe shortage of teachers, these schools often carried out a curtailed curriculum in joint classes. As they were situated in villages which were often poor and isolated from the outside world, they were not conducive to the intellectual development of teachers and pupils. The graduates of the incomplete schools encountered great difficulties even in finishing the seventh grade.<sup>1</sup>

Peasant children had to fulfil various duties (animal grazing, weeding, looking after small brothers and sisters, etc.) and usually had no time or peace in which to do their homework. A peasant family offered fewer opportunities for the development of intellectual interests and aspirations and had less understanding for them. This difference in conditions found a reflection in statistical figures. In the mid-1950s, the chance of rural school graduates continuing their education was only half of the chance which children in towns had.

The road to higher studies was relatively the most difficult for the peasant youth. Unlike their contemporaries brought up in non-peasant families, most of the peasant children attended the further education schools (basic vocational schools) which did not give them the right to enter any school of higher learning or those which allowed them to take an entrance examination only at certain types of school (technical secondary schools). Peasant children also had less favourable conditions for attending secondary schools.

The proportion of rural youth in the total number of graduates of various types of schools was very uneven; in the years 1955 - 1965, it ranged from 50 per cent (in basic vocational schools) and 43 per cent (in secondary technical schools) to 28 per cent (in general education secondary schools). As M. Kozakiewicz has rightly pointed out, the result was that the main and the most rigid selection barrier and the greatest inequality in start was experienced at the secondary school level.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> M. Falski, *Problemy małych szkół podstawowych na wsi* [The Problem of Small Primary Schools in the Countryside], "Wiś Współczesna," 1961, No. 5.

<sup>2</sup> M. Kozakiewicz, "Równy start" młodzieży wiejskiej [The "Equal Start" of Rural Youth], "Wiś Współczesna," 1966, No. 5.

Not all the graduates of full secondary schools applied for admission to universities. For many reasons the percentage of peasant children wishing to continue their education was the smallest.

The pupils of provincial schools, who came mostly from the countryside, did not have the proper conditions to overcome the limitations of rural life. Pupils from the countryside had only fleeting contacts with cultural values, almost exclusively through the teacher and books. After school hours the pupils, even those living in a hostel, to say nothing of the day pupils, reverted to the village customs and way of thinking. Many a graduate of a provincial school was unable to express his thoughts, simple as they were, mangled his mother tongue and had sometimes never seen a big city.

Being aware of their limitations, and also because of other difficulties, a large part of school graduates from small towns were content with the education they had obtained.<sup>3</sup> These were mostly graduates of secondary technical schools, mediocre pupils from poor families and, above all, peasant children. Young people from the countryside who sought admission to a higher school accounted for only 18 per cent of all the candidates, a much lower percentage than might have been expected from the proportion of rural youth among the graduates of general education secondary schools (28%). The chances of those who sat for a university entrance examination were not even. Pupils from the countryside or provincial schools were worse prepared, through no fault of their own. The principle of competitive examinations meant that this part of the youth did not have an equal start. This is why in the first postwar years efforts were made to make up for this inequality by a system of special preferences, unknown in prewar Poland.

The aim of the class policy in the admission of candidates was to increase the share of peasant and working class youth among students. The proportions which the individual social groups were

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<sup>3</sup> R. Malinowski, Z. Mikołajczyk, *Udział młodzieży chłopskiej w szkołach wyższych* [The Participation of Peasant Youth in Higher Schools], "Wieś Współczesna," 1965, No. 9.

to have been fixed at the beginning of the 1950s. In order to secure the required proportion of the peasant and working class youth, preference was given to these two groups during the examinations, and with these groups in mind Preparatory University Studies (USP) were set up. After going through a crash course in the secondary school curriculum, the USP graduates were admitted to all lines of study without an entrance examination. Young people who had earned the diploma of "leader in study and social work" were also exempted from the university entrance examination. Until 1955, no critical analysis had been made of the system of admission to universities as the authorities hoped that the increased proportion of peasant and working class youth would lead to the early formation of a new intelligentsia, ideologically linked with the new political system. It was believed that this system of admission had great merits as it gave social promotion to the young generation of workers and peasants, secured the inflow of new creative forces into science and culture, and redressed the injustice and wrongs which had been the lot of generations of people from "the lower social orders". The situation changed in 1956. During the discussion started at that time demands were put forward for the abolition of class preferences since as was asserted, the right proportions of candidates from working class and peasant families could be secured through natural selection; this could be ensured by the evening of the financial possibilities of the individual social groups and the raising of the level of primary and secondary education. The main argument advanced for the abolition of the existing system of preferences was that profound transformations were taking place in the structure and consciousness of the intelligentsia and the intermediate social strata through the absorption of a large number of people from working class and peasant milieus.

As a result, the regulations for admission to universities were sharpened and competitive entrance examinations were introduced at the most attractive lines of study. In this "free competition", the percentage of peasant children among the newly admitted students decreased rapidly (23.3 per cent in 1954/55, 19.8 per cent in 1956/57, 17 per cent in 1962/63 and 15.6 per cent in 1969/70). The same, though to a lesser extent, applied to the working class

youth. This was also a result of the drop in the attractiveness of higher studies, brought about by the wage policy which gave preference to physical over intellectual work.

The disparity between the aims and the results of some of the changes introduced after 1956 became more and more evident. This was indirectly admitted by Stefan Żółkiewski, Minister of Higher Education, who in a speech made in 1959 at the Third Congress of the Polish United Workers' Party, said: "The struggle for the appropriate social composition of the student youth cannot start at the entrance examination. In the higher forms of secondary schools young people of working class and peasant origin account for just over 40 per cent of the total number of pupils, while in higher schools their percentage is already over 50 per cent. Higher schools cannot improve the index of the youth's social composition if this index does not rise adequately in secondary schools".<sup>4</sup>

The way indicated by Stefan Żółkiewski was right but — at least in the opinion of the disappointed people — only in so far as it was realistic. However, reality did not confirm the earlier prognoses; on the contrary: the social make-up of pupils in secondary schools, especially general education secondary schools, was changing to the disadvantage of the peasant and partly also the working class youth. The earlier announcements that things would change for the better turned out to be an illusion, which was all the more irritating as the inequality of start was assuming an extreme form. At the beginning of the 1960s, the children of working class and peasant families had, respectively, a fourfold and a twelvefold smaller chance of reaching university than the children of the intelligentsia.<sup>5</sup>

The percentage of peasant children at universities was the highest in the first half of the 1950s, but even then it was relatively low in the most attractive higher schools (art, journalistic and medical schools). Within each university school the number of peasant children was the highest in the faculties and branches

<sup>4</sup> See "Nowe Drogi", 1959, No. 4, p. 364.

<sup>5</sup> M. Paschalska, *Zażegnować czy podniecać niepokój* [To Avert or to Incite Unrest], "Wiś Współczesna", 1959, No. 12.

of study which were the least popular<sup>6</sup> and where competition was therefore not so strong.

Desiring to counteract these unfavourable trends, the authorities launched the slogan "a thousand schools for the thousandth anniversary of the Polish state". To help peasant youth, a special fund was set up to build schools and pupils' hostels. In view of the great differences existing among pupils in their possibilities of acquiring education and in their level of general erudition, the system of social preferences was re-introduced with some modifications in 1965. Peasant and working class children applying for admission to university were, in addition to the marks they were awarded during the entrance examinations, to be given additional points for their social origin.

Many members of the intelligentsia, especially those who had just joined this group, felt themselves to have been wronged and harmed by these regulations. They did not realize that "the social premium", as M. Kozakiewicz rightly pointed out, "only partly evened the differences in the candidates' preparation and intellectual level, differences which were not their fault and which resulted from the difficulties and less favourable educational opportunities at lower levels (primary and secondary schools)". Arguing with the opponents of "the social premium", Kozakiewicz emphasized that "the creation of a new hereditary intelligentsia that would consolidate from one generation to another, some sort of 'intellectual dynasties', could not be a principle of the cultural policy of a socialist state." He was for a continuous inflow into the intelligentsia of representatives of workers and peasants, regarding this solution as nearer to "the egalitarian ideals of socialism."<sup>7</sup>

The opponents of "the social premium" asserted that at least those young people from worker and peasant families who won admission thanks to the additional points (they accounted for less than 5 per cent of the admitted students) would not fulfil their

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<sup>6</sup> Z. Mikołajczyk, E. Patryń, *Udział młodzieży chłopskiej w szkołach wyższych* [The Participation of Peasant Youth in Higher Schools], "Wiś Współczesna", 1963, No. 10.

<sup>7</sup> M. Kozakiewicz, "Równy start" młodzieży..., p. 85.

professional tasks so well as those who had failed to gain a place only because they were not socially privileged. They also assumed that in view of the surplus of candidates there was nothing wrong in peasant children dropping out, if only because their parents had a holding of their own and were able to secure their future. According to them, class preferences depreciated the cultural and professional level of the intelligentsia and this would conflict with the interests of society as a whole and of the state.

However, the defence of the government decision, undertaken in the name of social justice, often ignored the counter-arguments and thus only strengthened their influence, at least among the intelligentsia. Extremely important in this situation were the opinions expressed by the sociologist J. Szczepański, who examined the working of school mechanisms from the point of view of the national interest. Szczepański attached the greatest importance to talent, and not to preparation, since in most cases the deficiencies of the latter could be made up for. Taking into account the fact that exceptionally talented individuals appear in all social groups with more or less the same frequency, he concluded that the talent inherent in the young generation of peasants was used to an insignificant extent. Recognizing that the proper use of talent was an increasingly important factor of economic growth, he demanded that talent should be promoted by the guaranteeing of a wider access to schools to rural youth. He pointed out that it was not the peasant children who were in a privileged situation, in spite of the additional points they received, and that not only those directly interested, but also the state had to pay a high price for the deficiencies of rural schools.<sup>8</sup>

#### THE ROLE OF IMMIGRANTS TO TOWNS AND OF PEASANTS WITH TWO OCCUPATIONS

In spite of the difficulties discussed above, more and more peasant children completed schools above the primary level. The

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<sup>8</sup> J. Szczepański, *Gospodarowanie zasobami zdolności* [*The Utilization of Talent*], "Wiś Współczesna", 1968, No. 9.

proportion of this group of people among the migrants to towns increased even more rapidly: according to M. Pohoski's research, some 40 per cent of the migrants had an education above the primary level in 1957. Out of the 4 million people who had come to towns from the countryside by 1970, 60 per cent belonged to this group. These figures may not be quite accurate but, nevertheless, as far as education was concerned, migrants from villages did not compare unfavourably with the other groups of the urban population.

As early as 1957, the percentage of people with an education higher than the primary level was not much lower among the newcomers from the countryside than it was among the whole urban population. The only significant difference was the relatively high percentage of migrants without a full primary education. However, as the time went by (immediately after the end of the war also elderly people, who were the least educated, moved to towns), this difference was reduced.<sup>9</sup>

The rise of the educational indices of migrants was all the more important as they made up a large percentage of the total number of people working in towns. According to K. Zagórski, as late as 1972 almost every fourth (23.5%) gainfully employed person in large towns (with a population of over 50,000) had come from the countryside.<sup>10</sup> In smaller towns this percentage must have been even higher.

The social and occupational status of the newcomers was reflected in the type of work they did. It can be safely assumed that every third white-collar worker was from the countryside. The percentage of white-collar workers was much higher among migrant-women (47.2%) than among men (31%).<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> J. Piotrowski, *Struktura robotniczej załogi w jednej z fabryk warszawskich* [The Structure of the Workers' Staff in a Warsaw Factory], Warszawa 1961.

<sup>10</sup> K. Zagórski, *Rozwój, struktura i ruchliwość społeczna* [Social Development, Structure and Mobility], Warszawa 1976, p. 153.

<sup>11</sup> Calculated on the basis of M. Pohoski, *Migracje ze wsi do miast* [Migrations from the Countryside to Towns], Warszawa 1963. In a sample of 216 women examined in 1960 by the Centre for the Examination of Public Opinion, 33.8% of the migrants of peasant origin had white-collar jobs and

Generally speaking, the position of the migrants was no worse than that of people from working class families. According to K. Zagórski, there were relatively more white-collar workers among the migrants in 1972. In the earlier period, for which no relevant data exist, the difference could not have been great but it probably appeared as early as at the end of the 1950s. These data emphasize rather the contribution of peasant children to the general development of the country (a subject to be discussed later) than their status in towns, whether better or equal.

Sociological studies, unfortunately not very numerous, have pointed to the many difficulties which embittered the life of newcomers from villages, especially during the first few years of their work. It was especially young people, unfamiliar with life in towns and with their new trade, who had a difficult beginning. Adaptation to work and town life was a complex and rather prolonged process. The acquirement of an independent position in town sometimes exacted a high individual and social price.<sup>12</sup>

Compared with the migrants to towns, the people who remained in the countryside but worked exclusively or additionally outside agriculture had a decidedly lower education and lower qualifications.

In a group studied by the Institute of Agricultural Economics and by M. Pohoski 45.5 per cent of the men living in the countryside and working in towns did not have a full primary education (compared with 28.1 per cent among the migrants). It is charac-

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66.2% blue-collar ones; Anna Preiss-Zajdowa, *Z problematyki stosunku kobiet do pracy i zawodu* [Women's Attitude to Work and Occupation], "Wiś Współczesna", 1963, No. 7, p. 79. These indices seem to be a little too low.

<sup>12</sup> Such was the situation found by the author in the Mazurian Lighting Equipment Works at Wilkasy near Giżycko, the Bentwood Furniture Factory at Zywiec, the Mechanical Works near Warsaw, the Olsztyn Municipal Building Works, W. Osińska, *Z problematyki adaptacji młodzieży wiejskiej do przemysłu* [The Adaptation of Rural Youth to Industry], "Wiś Współczesna", 1962, No. 9. See also M. Jarosińska, *Adaptacja młodzieży pochodzenia chłopskiego do klasy robotniczej* [The Adaptation of the Youth of Peasant Origin to the Working Class], "Wiś Współczesna", 1963, No. 10.

teristic that the proportions among women were opposite, but the difference was much smaller.

The disproportion was still greater as regards the type of work; out of 100 men with two occupations and migrants white-collar work was done by 14 and 31 respectively. No such differences existed among women, every second of them, in either group, being engaged in office work.

The sons of peasants were the largest group among white-collar workers in the years 1945 - 1959. Among women this situation lasted until 1969. This means that the peasantry was the main source of recruitment of the new intelligentsia.

The situation was similar as regards men taking up physical work. The rapid increase in the number of workers up to 1959 was possible thanks to the mass inflow of peasants' sons. From 1959 on, the growth of the working class was achieved mainly on its own class basis. A specific feature was evident as regards women workers, for the inflow of girls from the countryside was much higher than that of boys; out of the men and women taking up physical work in 1955 - 1959, 43.8 per cent were peasants' sons and 71.1 per cent peasants' daughters. Peasants' daughters predominated among the women-workers starting work in 1970 - 1972.

What were the qualifications and the social status of the migrants compared with the situation of other social groups? According to a simplified criterion expressed by the percentage of white-collar workers among those starting work after the war, comparisons, though differentiated, were on the whole favourable for the migrants. Out of the peasant and working class children who started work in 1945 - 1972, 28 per cent of the men and 38 per cent of the women of peasant origin and 22 per cent of the men and 44 per cent of the women of working class background held white-collar jobs in 1972. As regards qualifications, the position of peasant children was less favourable both among the white and blue-collar workers. Owing to the low qualifications of peasant-workmen, that is men working additionally outside their own holdings, peasants' sons accounted for a higher percentage of unskilled workers; contrary to the situation of blue-collar workers of working class origin, unskilled workers decidedly pre-

dominated in this group. This applied to both industrial and building workers.

Differences could also be noticed as regards the individual branches and sections of employment. In the more exclusive branches of industry the sons of workers were in the majority. The same can be said of the various trades; for instance, more peasants' sons were employed as carpenters and framework knitters than as locksmiths, turners and foremen. Many men from the countryside worked as car, bus, tractor and combine drivers, lumbermen and other forestry workers.

In white-collar jobs, the distribution of peasant children was very uneven, in accordance with their distribution in various types of schools, a subject we have already discussed. Peasant children predominated in agricultural services (agronomy, veterinary service, etc.). They were the largest group in education (almost every second teacher was of peasant origin) and among foresters. A much smaller number, or only a few, worked as lawyers, physicians and scientific workers.<sup>13</sup>

As late as 1968 every third employee of the non-agricultural sections of the economy was of peasant origin. The sons and daughters of peasants accounted for 40 per cent (37% and 41% respectively) of all the workers employed in industry, the building trade and kindred occupations. A particularly important role was played by peasants with two occupations, who at the end of the 1950s accounted for at least a quarter of the total number of blue-collar workers employed in the non-agricultural sections of the economy.

The use of the existing peasant labour force was the starting point for, and not the result of, increased investments.<sup>14</sup> At first the scale of investments depended mostly on additional employment, which accounted for 54 per cent of the increase in industrial production in the years 1950 - 1955 and for 25 per cent as late as 1956 - 1960. One of the reasons why the specific socialist accumu-

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<sup>13</sup> K. Zagórski, *Rozwój, struktura...*, p. 136.

<sup>14</sup> This assertion was for the first time formulated in such a clear way by J. Pajestka, *Pierwsza faza rozwoju ekonomicznego Polski* [*The First Stage of Poland's Economic Development*], "Ekonomista", 1959, No. 2.

lation made possible a very quick rise in investment outlays (an over twofold rise between 1949 and 1953) was that it was based on a mass employment of people who knew how to work hard and demanded only the minimum pay.

There were various opinions about the productive role of workers with two occupations in industrial works. Favourable opinions were often countered by extremely negative ones. Generally speaking it can be said that as the years went by, peasants with two occupations became no less efficient than the other workers. Peasant-workmen, who had been accustomed to hard work from childhood and who did not clock-watch, may have found it more difficult to fulfil their technical norms, but they made up for this by more intensive work and longer hours. This is indicated by the fact that there was no difference in the pay of workers from town and those from the countryside if they were doing the same job.<sup>15</sup>

For many reasons the work of peasant-workmen was cheaper. To begin with, people with two occupations had a small share in the social consumption fund. Peasant-workmen did not benefit from the supplementary payments contributed by work places and the state for such services as crèches, nursery schools, youth centres and houses of culture. They did not encumber the part of the budgets destined by work places for rest and entertainment. They belonged to that socio-occupational category for whom free time meant the beginning of other work, carried out in their own holdings.

The postwar plans for housebuilding and the development of heavy industry could be forced through and executed because of the inflow of labour force from the countryside. Moreover, the wives and grown-up daughters of peasant-workmen did not seek jobs in town, did not queue up for agricultural produce and food-

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<sup>15</sup> J. Marek, *Zróżnicowanie społeczno-zawodowe ludności wiejskiej zatrudnionej poza rolnictwem* [*The Socio-Occupational Differentiation of the Rural Population Working outside Agriculture*], Warszawa 1976, p. 144. Cf. also A. Dzień, *Łłopi-robotnicy w przedsiębiorstwie i gospodarstwie rolnym* [*Peasant-Workmen in Business Concerns and Agricultural Holdings*], Warszawa 1973.

stuffs and, what was no less important, did not seek a flat in town. Thanks to this, preference could be given in the distribution of investment outlays to production investments in the iron and steel industry, the heavy machines industry and especially in mining.

Judging by press reports, some peasant-workmen received wages below their qualifications and the work they did. Some work places took advantage of the peasant-workmen's ignorance and reticence in demanding their due. Peasant-workmen with great achievements and large profits from agriculture were the object of envy even if they were leading workers. Many of them were not taken into account in promotion, the distribution of bonuses and additional earnings. The situation was unique: the peasant-workman often could not expect recognition because he worked in both a work place in town and on his farm. Meanwhile, a peasant-workman, even an average one, produced in sum more than a farmer or a worker and his share in the creation of the national income was even higher. This share consisted of the value of production on the farm and in the work place plus the difference between peasant-workmen and workers in the amount of contributions received, minus the difference in the value of production achieved on the average by a farm of a peasant-workman and that of a farmer. Even if we assume that the productivity of a peasant-workman was 10 per cent lower as a workman and a farmer, the total value of his work was much higher than the value of the work done by a farmer with a similar area of land. Moreover, although in farms of comparable area the consumption of a peasant-workman family was higher, its share in accumulation was higher because a peasant-workman participated in it both as a farmer and a worker.

Many one-sided opinions about peasant-workmen were current not only in their work places. The population of villages in which peasant-workmen were few usually resented them and voiced exaggeratedly negative opinions about them. The attitude to peasant-workmen in factories was similar. What is even more important: their neighbours in the village did not want to know them because they were workers and their fellow workers because they were farmers. Critical opinions concerning only one

aspect of the work of the peasant-workmen were groundlessly generalized, often leading to misunderstanding and the creation of false stereotypes.

#### THE SHARE OF AGRICULTURE IN THE ECONOMY OF THE COUNTRY

In addition to the transfer of labour force, the agricultural population also took part in the development of the non-agricultural branches of the economy in other forms. In this respect the capacity of agriculture depended first and foremost on its share in the national income and consumption.

In the light of data published by the Central Statistical Office (GUS), the contribution of agriculture to the national income decreased steadily and was rather low at the end of the 1950s and 1960s (24% in 1960 and 13% in 1970). However, these estimates were uncertain in so far as the estimated value of agricultural products and industrial goods did not correspond to their real value. The realized value of a product was calculated on the basis of its price. However, the difference between the price and the real value of a product could not be exactly defined. Consequently, in the opinion of some economists the accepted value of the national income produced by the individual branches of the economy was, in a way, only conventional. When writing of the data published by the Central Statistical Office in 1964, M. Pohorille said: "Comparisons show that the value of goods produced by industry is higher than that contributed by agriculture. In fact, however, we do not deal with value but with prices. In other words, we state that at certain prices of agricultural and industrial goods, the net production per head is higher in industry than in agriculture. We have found ourselves in a vicious circle. A farmer's work is estimated to be of lower value than that of people employed in other branches of the economy because it is less efficient, and on the other hand it is less efficient because its value is estimated to be lower." Pohorille went on: "In the light of Marxist definitions (concerning the productivity of work—H.S.) it would be justifiable to ascribe a higher value to the work

of an industrial worker than to that of a farmer if the work of the former was more intensive (or lasted longer) and was of a more complex character than the work of the latter."<sup>16</sup>

Moreover, the value of net production per one person employed in agriculture depended (in addition to prices) on the way of counting the number of employed people. The basis of the GUS estimates and their results met with equally far reaching reservations. In individual holdings the GUS statistics distinguished: "farming" persons, i.e. those running their own farms, "helpers" from among the family members, and "supported" family members. The question was even more obfuscated by the inclusion of elderly people (over the age of 60), housewives, some categories of children, people with two occupations, etc. in the number of people employed in agriculture. According to Z. Tomaszewski — who was not alone in expressing this view — the Central Statistical Office simplified the question by identifying "the number of people employed in agriculture" with "the number of people working in agricultural holdings" (the latter were a much more numerous group). In Tomaszewski's view this led to a considerable lowering of the results of agriculture.<sup>17</sup>

Until more or less the 1960s, the share of agriculture in the economic development of the country, though generally underestimated, was not denied by anybody. An animated discussion and a closer look at the question followed J. Tepicht's publications.

Tepicht's stand, expounded for the first time in 1961, boiled down to the statement that peasant "... agriculture did not finance socialist industrialization in our country (it neither could nor had to)", as "it did not go, and is unable to go, beyond reproductive investments." Tepicht formulated his pessimistic theory on the basis of information contained in the Statistical Yearbooks; he said that net production per person in agriculture was three times lower and personal incomes 30 per cent lower than in the

<sup>16</sup> M. Pohorille, *Interwencjonizm w rolnictwie kapitalistycznym* [*Interventionism in Capitalist Agriculture*], Warszawa 1964, pp. 66 - 68.

<sup>17</sup> Z. Tomaszewski, *W sprawie wkładu rolnictwa do dochodu narodowego* [*The Contribution of Agriculture to the National Income*], "Wies Współczesna", 1958, No. 6.

other branches of the economy, as a result of which the economic surplus per one person employed in industry was about 12,000 zlotys and in agriculture a mere 2,000 zlotys. Returning to this subject six years later, Tepicht maintained the opinion that Polish agriculture was unable to contribute to investments, for after meeting the minimal needs of peasant families and financing its own "reproductive investments" it had no surplus left.<sup>18</sup>

Some economists disputed Tepicht's theory, drawing attention to several important facts. They pointed out that industry and agriculture were not separated by a wall. Agriculture also had a part in creating net value in industry, since a part of the net agricultural production was transferred to the processing industries. Owing to high sale prices and the very low prices paid for the purchase of raw materials, the value of net production per one person employed in the food and agricultural industry was in 1955 more than four times higher than in the light industry and seven times higher than in the chemical industry; accumulation in the food industry accounted for 29 per cent of the industrial accumulation; the share of the food industry in the total industrial production was surprisingly high (nearly 33 per cent in 1950 and almost 25 per cent in 1960); in 1962 this industry, employing about 400,000 people, gave a production worth 196,000 million zlotys while agriculture, employing about 10 million people, had a total production worth 252,000 million zlotys, that is, only 26 per cent higher.<sup>19</sup>

It was also pointed out that the state revenue from industrial works could not be compared with the taxes paid by individual peasants because the former constituted the entire financial accumulation of these works while fiscal contributions were only

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<sup>18</sup> J. Tepicht, *Doświadczenia i perspektywy rolnictwa polskiego* [*The Experiences and Prospects of Polish Agriculture*], Warszawa 1961, p. 5; idem, *Problemy teorii i strategii w kwestii rolnej* [*Questions of Theory and Strategy with Regard to Agriculture*], Warszawa 1967, p. 8.

<sup>19</sup> T. Hunek, *O trwałości gospodarki chłopskiej* [*The Durability of Peasant Farming*], "Wiś Współczesna", 1966, No. 7; S. Felbur, *Problemy wzrostu produkcji rolniczej w Polsce* [*Questions Concerning the Growth of Agricultural Production in Poland*], Warszawa 1972.

a part of the accumulation in peasant agriculture. Without trying to solve questions which are still controversial, one can probably say that Tepicht's estimates were clearly too low.

In the first half of the 1960s, the encumbrance borne by the peasant economy to pay for the investment outlays on the national economy increased quickly and together with the peasants' own investments amounted to well over 10,000 million złotys. The peasants' contribution, lowered as it was — excluding the value produced by agriculture and achieved by industry — accounted for 9 per cent of the value of outlays spent on investments in the entire national economy.<sup>20</sup> In the 1950s, the relative share had been much higher but it would be difficult to say how much higher.

Both sides taking part in the dispute seemed to be partly right. Although, contrary to Tepicht's assertion, the peasants produced a considerable surplus used by the state, this was not achieved without cost and self-denial. As Tepicht aptly pointed out, a large part of this surplus, especially in the first half of the 1950s, had been paid for by the limitation of peasant consumption and the reduction of peasant investments to the minimum.

For quite a long time agriculture had to solve mutually contradictory problems. Industrialization, especially in its initial phase, called for the countryside's increased participation in national accumulation while on the other hand, it was necessary to raise production and consumption because the people who were flowing *en masse* from the countryside to industry consumed much larger quantities of agricultural produce. In view of the stagnation of production, which was the result of inadequate investments, the supplies of marketable agricultural products were raised through the regulation of peasant families' consumption.

The countryside also bore a part of the costs of industrialization by transferring land for this purpose. It has not been

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<sup>20</sup> M. Piotrowicz, *Udział ludności chłopskiej w finansowaniu inwestycji* [*The Participation of the Peasant Population in the Financing of Investments*], "Wieś Współczesna", 1966, No 12 (the calculations are based on GUS statistics).

possible to exactly evaluate this form of the financial contribution made by peasants. However, the general opinion was that land was underpriced, especially in the 1950s, and that the taking over of land for investment purposes was a specific form of draining agriculture financially. This has been stated by some economists as well as sociologists.<sup>21</sup>

In addition to its direct contribution to accumulation, agriculture stimulated the rate and, to some extent, also the directions, of industrialization in an indirect way.

The relatively low prices paid by the state for agricultural products, the low investments in peasant farms and the high place occupied by foodstuffs in the consumption of the population and in exports made it possible to devote a large part of the national income to industrial investments and to a much quicker development of the industrial branches producing means of production.

Owing to the low prices paid to agricultural producers, workers, having access to cheap foodstuffs, agreed to the stabilization of wages at a low level; this increased the possibility of accumulation in the non-agricultural sections of the economy.

The investment outlays made in individual peasant holdings in the years 1946 - 1956 were also very low compared with the value of national investments (6.3%). No noticeable change in this situation occurred until the beginning of the 1960s. In the years 1954 - 1962, peasants increased production without any great additional engagement of the productive forces of industry. Industry had at its disposal exceptionally high investments and almost the whole of its own production (nearly 97%).

The ratio between the value of agricultural and industrial investments was favourable to agriculture only during the period of economic reconstruction (1:0.9). In the following periods this ratio was drastically reversed and was as follows: 1:4.3 during the period of the Six-Year Plan and 1:3.3 and 1:2.9 during the first and the second five-year plan periods. A comparison with other

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<sup>21</sup> H. Chołaj, *Cena ziemi w rachunku ekonomicznym* [*The Price of Land in the Economic Calculus*], Warszawa 1966; J. Szczepański, *Rola chłopów w rozwoju społeczeństwa polskiego* [*The Role of Peasants in the Development of Polish Society*], "Wieś Współczesna", 1966, No. 10.

countries shows that industrial investments were given a great chance in Poland at that time.

Compared with overall consumption, in as late as 1957 agriculture still used a small part of industrial production for its own production purposes : 8 per cent of the production of the chemical industry, 4.9 per cent of the building materials, 3.9 per cent of the production of the machine and metal industries, 3.5 per cent of the production of the power and fuel industries. This consumption was even lower in the case of other industries. In 1961 agriculture used only some 3 per cent of the total industrial production. This low index was due not so much to the rapid increase of industrial production, which did in fact take place, as to stagnation in the use of industrial products by agriculture.

Between 1957 and 1962 depreciation and the resources purchased from the non-agricultural sections of the economy (industry, transport, trade) accounted for about 20 per cent of the general material costs of agricultural production. In the case of individual farming this percentage was of course lower, for individual farms had from twice to five times less technical equipment than the cooperative and state farms.<sup>22</sup>

In 1957, the share of purchased materials and services in the costs of production amounted to 15.5 per cent, of which in individual holdings to only 9.7 per cent, and in 1971 it was 35.5 per cent and 29 per cent respectively. In this respect the situation in Poland was different from that in other socialist countries. At the beginning of the 1960s, this index in Czechoslovakia and the German Democratic Republic was 60 per cent, in Bulgaria and Hungary it was nearly 50 per cent and in Rumania 36 per cent (in 1967). These great differences were a result of the varying solutions applied in the agricultural system and of specific phenomena of a demographic and socio-economic nature.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> This applies to 1967, see A. Woś, *Miejsce rolnictwa w gospodarce polskiej* [The Place of Agriculture in the Polish Economy], in: *Rolnictwo w trzydziestoleciu Polski Ludowej*, Warszawa 1974.

<sup>23</sup> B. Strużek, *Rolnictwo a rozwój gospodarczy kraju: funkcje polityki rolnej* [Agriculture and the Economic Development of the Country—the Functions of the Agricultural Policy], in: *Polityka rolna PRL*, Warszawa 1974, pp. 65 - 66.

In view of the relative surplus of labour force in agriculture and the repeated perturbations in the foodstuff market, the agricultural policy was aimed first and foremost at increasing production, not work productivity. It was not by accident that a major and constantly increasing role was played by the chemical industry (mineral fertilizers) and a relatively insignificant one by the electric and machine industry (tractors and machines). Polish agriculture was still in the stage of traditional development. In this situation the money and material saved on investments for the industries serving agriculture could be used for the development of the non-agricultural sections of the economy.

Similar possibilities were offered by the fact that the share of foodstuffs — that is, products of agriculture and of the food and agricultural industry — predominated in the consumption fund (not less than 60 per cent in the 1950s). Consequently, agriculture exerted a great influence on market stability. It had to satisfy the rapid pressure of the population on foodstuffs, a pressure caused not only, and perhaps not even so much, by the previous low consumption as by shortages of services and industrial consumer goods. The concentration of investments on heavy industry at the cost of the underdevelopment of services and industrial branches producing for the market was possible because from the middle of the 1950s the development of agricultural production had kept pace with the real growth of wages. Nor had agriculture failed as a source of raw materials for industry from the mid-1950s. In the mid-1960s, about 30 per cent of the total value of agricultural production was used as raw material for industry. About one-seventh of the total costs of materials and services in industry was accounted for by home-grown agricultural raw materials (in the food and agricultural industry from 50.5% to 59%). In the individual branches of industry taken separately agriculture held the first place as a supplier of raw and primary materials as late as the second half of the 1960s. Another thing that was very important was that as late as 1957 about 85 per cent of the agricultural raw materials used in industry were home grown and only 15 per cent were imported. These proportions were extremely favourable from the point of view of the entire

national economy. Trade with foreign countries in agricultural produce was, on the whole, advantageous, too.

The export of foodstuffs and agricultural products was for a long time the main source of foreign currency because it was difficult to obtain it for other Polish goods, and moreover the share of agricultural goods in the total value of exports was high (as late as the 1960s it was 54 per cent in the exports to the EEC countries). Poland's currency needs, connected first and foremost with the purchase of new industrial technologies in the west European countries, frequently determined not only the direction of exports but, to a large extent, also their volume. Almost all the exported agricultural products and foodstuffs were sent to the western states (e.g. in 1958, 84.3% and 91.3% with regard to animal products). In some periods, in particular in the years 1951 - 1953, the share of foodstuffs in the total value of exports was very high, in spite of the severe food shortages in the internal market.

With the exception of the years in which the crops were very poor, Poland, on the whole, had had a favourable balance in trade in all agricultural products until 1970. As regards trade in industrial goods for agricultural production, the situation was opposite. As a result, the final total balance was unfavourable.<sup>24</sup>

The decrease in the share of agricultural products and goods for agriculture in the total value of Polish imports was more rapid than the analogous drop in exports. In addition to the rather undesirable restrictions on fodder and grain imports, restrictions were also imposed on the import of goods which were indispensable for technical and biological progress in agriculture. The reduction in the import of goods for agriculture had its limits for their share in the total value of imports was in any case several times lower than in the highly developed countries (2.4% in 1962).

Agriculture is, or soon will be — the economists differ on this point — in a situation where its development must be supported by other sections of the economy. During the period which we have discussed, the situation was different. Nobody questions the fact

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<sup>24</sup> F. Tomczak, *Rolnictwo Polski Ludowej [Agriculture in People's Poland]*, Warszawa 1969, pp. 60, 94, 135, 139

that during that period agriculture participated in the costs of the industrialization of the country, the only controversial question being the scale of this participation, which is difficult to define accurately.

#### THE INCOMES AND CONSUMPTION OF THE PEASANT POPULATION

The level of peasant incomes, as it was presented, was very uncertain because mass statistics had of necessity to use simplified figures. The fact that the purely agricultural population could not be separated from the very numerous group of people with two occupations complicated the question still further. Of course, the statistics of the Central Statistical Office did not include in the agricultural incomes the income derived by family members from non-agricultural sources, but at the same time it provided no information on how peasants settled accounts with family members who did not work in agriculture but remained in a joint household; this opened the field for arbitrary interpretations. Out of necessity, the incomes of the non-agricultural population were compared with this part of the peasants' incomes which the peasant families spent on consumption and non-productive investments (especially housebuilding). At best, the situation of the purely agricultural families was generalized by the arbitrary assumption that persons with a non-agricultural source of income contributed to the common household a value equal to that of the products they consumed. But even casual observation made it clear that the earnings of a peasant-workman or a worker who did not help in farming, but remained in the common household, were usually — as has been pointed out by C. Bobrowski — higher than the cost of his upkeep, thus increasing, or constituting the whole of, the sum of money at the disposal of a peasant family.

The establishment of a comparable part of income, that is, the part spent on consumption, encountered many difficulties and often was only an estimate. Natural consumption, which accounted for about a half of the consumption fund of a peasant family, was calculated on a rather vague basis: the approximate value of

sold products (approximate because some of the products were sold on the free market) was deducted from the approximate value of production and the result was divided between farm use and natural consumption. The prices in which natural consumption was calculated might have increased the scale of the error. The evaluation of natural consumption in the prices paid to farmers by the state (and not in retail prices) was a matter of no significance if the aim was to demonstrate the growth of peasant incomes, but led to a lowering of peasant families' incomes and consumption when comparisons were made between the situation in towns and the countryside.

Some phenomena which though not formally concerning the incomes of peasants had an influence on their use were elusive from the statistical point of view. For instance, a moratorium on payments to family members, while not changing the total income, modified the ratio between a peasant income and this part of it which was used for consumption. The Agricultural Development Fund, which was established in the second half of the 1950s and which replaced the duty of compulsory deliveries by that of saving money for village investments, did not increase the incomes of peasant families either, but having the prospect of gaining access to mechanization through an agricultural circle, they were able to use some of the additional funds to increase consumption.

Last but not least, the comparing of the incomes of the non-agricultural population, or its part, with the average agricultural income (its part spent on consumption) blurred the differences between the families who derived their income solely from agriculture and those with mixed incomes.<sup>25</sup> In view of these reservations, the number of which can be increased, we must treat with caution most of the data which will be referred to.

Not adequately exhaustive and reliable analyses were made for the years 1950 - 1955 since economists did not have the necessary statistics at their disposal. Nevertheless, it was generally as-

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<sup>25</sup> C. Bobrowski, *Dochody wiejskie* [Incomes of the Agricultural Population], "Wieś Współczesna", 1962, No. 7 and *idem*, *Sytuacja gospodarcza Polski* [Poland's Economic Situation], *ibidem*, 1962, No. 3.

sumed that the 1930 level of incomes had not been reached until 1955. The period of the first five-year plan (1956 - 1960) witnessed a steady, though uneven, rise in incomes. This theory was however at variance with the general feelings and the calculations which indicated that the highest growth rate of consumption was recorded by the peasant families. According to L. Zienkowski, the peasants' consumption in 1960 was 2.5 times higher than in 1937, the increase for the other groups of the population being about 1.6 fold.<sup>26</sup>

The prevailing opinion was that in the second half of the 1930s the incomes of farmers (per person) amounted to from 40 to 50 per cent of the incomes of the non-agricultural population and to 60 - 66 per cent of the incomes of working class families.<sup>27</sup> These differences were undoubtedly reduced in the postwar years but opinions differ as to how great a reduction this was. For instance, according to Z. Tomaszewski, in 1960 the consumption fund of the non-agricultural population was 11.9 per cent higher and in 1970 13.1 per cent higher than that of the agricultural population.<sup>28</sup> Other authors have estimated the incomes of peasants at 75 - 77 per cent of the non-agricultural population or at 66 - 70 per cent of the incomes of industrial workers.<sup>29</sup>

<sup>26</sup> L. Zienkowski, *Dochód narodowy Polski 1937 - 1960* [The National Income of Poland 1937 - 1960], Warszawa 1963, p. 198.

<sup>27</sup> C. Klärner, *Dochód społeczny wsi i miast w Polsce 1929 - 1936* [The Social Income in Towns and the Countryside in Poland 1929 - 1936], Lwów 1937, p. 23 (in 1936, 40.8%); L. Rzewowski, *Rolnictwo a rozwój ekonomiczny kraju* [Agriculture and the Economic Development of the Country], "Ekonomista", 1965, No. 5 (30 - 40% of the incomes of the non-agricultural population and 50 - 60% of the incomes of workers). L. Beskid, *Warunki życia klasy robotniczej* [The Living Conditions of the Working Class], in: *Klasa robotnicza w społeczeństwie socjalistycznym*, Warszawa 1979, p. 212 (in 1937, 45 - 50% of the incomes of the non-agricultural population and 66 - 75% of the incomes of workers).

<sup>28</sup> Z. Tomaszewski, *Przeobrażenia ustrojowe w rolnictwie Polski Ludowej* [Structural Transformations in Agriculture in People's Poland], Warszawa 1974, p. 41.

<sup>29</sup> E. Gorzelak, *Uwagi o dochodach ludności rolniczej* [Remarks on the Incomes of the Agricultural Population], "Wieś Współczesna", 1962, No. 4, p. 22; idem, *Problematyka dochodów ludności rolniczej* [Questions Concerning the Incomes of the Agricultural Population], "Wieś Współczes-

The phenomenon of undernourishment disappeared from the Polish countryside in the 1940s. For thousands of peasant children this meant that bread was no longer kept locked away in cupboards but was left lying on the table. The 1950s witnessed a gradual appearance on peasant tables of more valuable foodstuffs, in addition to potatoes and cereals. These changes were noticeable in particular in the first half of the 1950s. This may seem surprising but it can be explained.

The drop in the incomes from agricultural production was, to some extent, compensated by a rather intensive migration to towns and by the rapidly spreading habit of having two occupations. Also at that time the peasants decidedly gave preference to consumption over farming investments and, in addition, the poor market of industrial consumer goods could not compete effectively with the purchase of foodstuffs. This does not mean that the countryside did not record progress in other fields of consumption.

Innumerable masses of Poles came out of the war exhausted and, literally, in rags. Those who returned to their homes in areas where heavy fighting had been waged did not even find the proverbial bare walls. Until about the middle of the 1950s, people had been making good their losses in clothing and elementary household equipment, and the outlays on clothes and footwear occupied a high position in the peasants' budgets. The period when a limited number of shoes regulated the school attendance of many peasant children came to an end and the years came when thousands of the children who had previously had to wear the cast off clothing of their elder brothers and sisters experienced the joy of getting new clothes. It became possible to pay more attention to the previously neglected needs.

In the final years of the 1950s, the peasants were so much better off that they could increase their outlays on health and

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na", 1967, No. 4, p. 15; Z. Adamowski and J. Lewandowski, *Rolnictwo polskie w dwudziestopięcioleciu Polski Ludowej* [Polish Agriculture in the Twenty-Five Years of People's Poland], Warszawa 1970, p. 177; W. Herer, *Rolnictwo a rozwój gospodarki narodowej* [Agriculture and the Development of the National Economy], Warszawa 1962, p. 213.

hygiene and a little later also on education and culture. Finally, at the beginning of the 1960s the share of outlays on gifts and dowries increased markedly in household budgets. Between 1955 and 1963, the greatest increase (in absolute figures) was recorded in the outlays on bicycles and motorcycles (an almost eightfold rise) and on education and culture.<sup>30</sup>

Compared with the prewar period, great progress was also made in the countryside in the sphere of health and hygiene. This was confirmed by research conducted in the 1950s. However, great deficiencies could still be noticed. Young people in the countryside developed physically more slowly than their contemporaries in towns; they were shorter, weighed less and had a lower motorial capability.

Out of the pathological phenomena observed among village children and young people, the most dangerous were unattended contagious diseases, caries which could have been stopped by earlier dental care, rheumatic diseases, for which frequently no cure was undertaken, defects in the build and posture of the body, widespread skin and verminous diseases as well as pediculosis. Physicians attributed this sad situation to bad diet, low level of physical training in rural schools, bad living conditions and inadequate medical care.<sup>31</sup>

On the other hand, the death rate (per 1,000 inhabitants) decreased steadily; it dropped from almost 4 per mill in 1936/38 to 1.4 and 1.2 in 1955 and 1959. In 1959, the infant mortality rate was 49 per cent lower in the whole country than in 1936 - 1938, and in the examined agricultural communes about 53 per cent lower.<sup>32</sup>

The housing situation, a very important sphere of living conditions in general, was very uneven. The differences increased after 1939 as a result of war destruction and migratory move-

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<sup>30</sup> H. Chojnacka, *Poziom i zmiany w spożyciu ludności rolniczej w Polsce* [The Level and Changes in the Agricultural Population's Consumption in Poland], "Wieś Współczesna", 1961, No. 1.

<sup>31</sup> Z. Podlaska, J. Serejski, *Zagadnienia zdrowia młodzieży wiejskiej* [The Health of the Rural Youth], "Wieś Współczesna", 1960, No. 6.

<sup>32</sup> H. Rafalski, *Stan zdrowia ludności wiejskiej* [The Health of the Rural Population], "Wieś Współczesna", 1961, No. 11.

ments. In the western and northern territories, the situation as regards the size of flats and the number of people per room was more favourable. It was the worst in central and southeastern Poland. Only intensive housebuilding could eliminate this shortage. After the regression in the years 1951 - 1954, building work in the countryside was markedly speeded up; in 1959, twice as many houses (42,773) were built in the countryside as in 1955. Unfortunately, in the next period the rate of building work, inadequate as it was to meet the expectations and needs, slowed down. But the quality of the new houses was a revolutionary achievement. The standard of only 10 per cent of the new houses was classified as insufficient and 23 per cent as very good.

Even in the years when the number of new houses dropped, their size increased; in 1965, the average house built in the countryside was 51 per cent bigger than in 1955. The change in standards, itself worthy of attention, was only one manifestation of the peasants' new, quickly growing aspirations. Although two-room flats predominated (60%), larger peasant families aspired to three- and four-room flats and usually managed to build them. Peasant-workmen mostly built two-room flats, but with accommodation for one or two rooms in the attic. 26 per cent of the interrogated farmers wanted to have a bathroom, even though bathrooms were still a rarity, except in suburban areas.<sup>28</sup>

The part of income which the agricultural population spent on the upkeep of their families was on an average much lower (by 20 - 25%) than what the non-agricultural population expended on this. In reality this difference might have been greater, if we remember that more was spent on the education of a peasant child and on the frequently practised financial aid to children who had migrated to town and were already independent (dowry, contribution towards a flat, purchase of good furniture, etc.). As the infrastructure in the countryside (lighting, water supply, sanitation) was on a much lower level, the households were more poorly equipped (washing machines, refrigerators, vacuum clean-

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<sup>28</sup> M. Trawińska-Kwaśniewska, *Z badań nad społecznym problemem budownictwa* [Research into the Social Problem of Building], "Więść Współczesna", 1962, No. 6, pp. 71 - 72.

ers, radios, television sets), and the network of services and shops was less satisfactory than in towns, the rural population (especially women) had less free time than the inhabitants of towns. Consequently, the differences in the quality of life between rural and urban families were much greater than their incomes might have indicated. For six months in the year, the members of a peasant family, including children and old people, were frequently overworked, and for lack of time neither watched television nor listened to the radio; they did nothing to cure their diseases and ailments and ate hastily prepared meals.

Compared with the prewar period, the advance made by peasants in consumption was undoubtedly one of the greatest and most obvious achievements of postwar Poland, but the new situation of peasant families was complex. The best conditions were enjoyed by that part of the peasant population, especially young people, who participated in a so-called vertical promotion (a switchover to a non-agricultural occupation). The family members who remained in agriculture were on the whole also able to buy the goods which the urban population had at their disposal but it was often only a potential ability. Contrary to the situation in the prewar period, the majority of farmers had enough money to buy decent clothing, newspapers, books, radios and household equipment but the purchase of the goods either had no sense (no possibility of using them) or was made for the sake of prestige and not for the purpose of using the purchased object (expensive furniture, clothes kept in rooms which were unaired for weeks, construction of large multistorey houses with many rooms). In any case, life in the countryside and on a farm in particular was very inconvenient. The rush to towns did not result fortuitously nor was it a passing craze.

*(Translated by Janina Dorosz)*