

K. Rejman

*PhD, Rector of Bronislaw Markiewicz State
Higher School of Technology and Economics in Jaroslaw, Poland*

K. Prendecki

*Państwowa Wyższa Szkoła
Techniczno-Ekonomiczna w Jarosławiu, Poland*

SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC PROBLEMS OF RURAL AREAS. HISTORICAL AND MODERN CONDITIONING

The article presents research issues related to the social and economic situation of the villagers at the Polish countryside. The authors present both historical aspects and contemporary life in rural areas. Particular attention was focused to issues of economic life in the countryside, with particular emphasis on conditions that result from the agricultural policy of the European Union.

Keywords: *rural population, socio-economic development of agricultural policy.*

Рейман К., Прендецькі К. ТЕНДЕНЦІЇ СОЦІАЛЬНО-ЕКОНОМІЧНОГО РОЗВИТКУ СІЛЬСЬКОЇ МІСЦЕВОСТІ. ІСТОРИЧНІ ТА СУЧАСНІ ПЕРЕДУМОВИ

У статті досліджено економічні і соціальні проблеми польського населення в селі. Автори представляють як історичний так і сучасний аспекти життя в сільській місцевості. Особливу увагу приділено питанням економіки країни з акцентом на умови, які є результатом сільськогосподарської політики Європейського Союзу.

Ключові слова: *сільська місцевість, населення, соціально-економічний розвиток, сільськогосподарська політика.*

1. The rural social issues in the public discourse

A social issue seems to be the most interesting seems and it should be analysed in depth. The battle to introduce a fair division of goods takes place also today, although they are heard from many directions. On a global scale there are the voices of alterglobalists who cannot understand that wealthy countries not only pay extra to their food (allowances and subsidies) but also skilfully decline import of farm products from the Third World countries, causing their impoverishment. A cow in the EU has a greater income than half of the people living on earth. On national grounds one asks questions – what does the solidarity principle and the fact that a poor old-age-pensioner paying tax sponsors a wealthy farmer whose prosperity accounts for millions of zlotys have in common?

Payments within the Common Agricultural Policy were to help poor farmers. In reality, within the agricultural policy food industry, billionaires from European families, owners of castles, hunting areas, ponds, aristocrats and even the queens of Great Britain and Denmark increased their profits. Also known British confectionery industry Tate & Lyle and Nestle obtained financial aid.

Can we call a solidarity a payment for so-called farmer on the land of whom there was a golf course? In Dolnośląskie the holder of karting circuit obtained the union money, and in Mazury the owner of the land with the runway and the owners of recreational lands who claimed them to be agrarian ones. Polish farmers could trick the European union payments out of four millions of zlotys within two years.

The problem of the right to work was not also solved. Especially when we talk about former post State Agricultural Farms and we deal with the generation of the rejected – the underclass. In the 1950s their world was shown as incomprehensible and bleak, and people living there as simple who do not take care of aesthetics of the area[14]. The visiting student recalls: “I expected to see stupid and drunk people who it is difficult to talk to. Although they most often talk about relations in State Agricultural Farms, they are sometimes interested in other problems, for example politics. They have a peculiar view of the world. It is true that almost everyone drinks a lot.”[14].

Where is lack of activity and suitable qualifications there is the inclined plane: parents drink and young people start to get involved in criminal activity. Milton Friedman, an outstanding Nobel Laureate who has died recently, postulated that the children who are rejected are included in the educational programmes and trainings, teaching them faith in themselves and entrepreneurship. In the USA the program ‘Great Society’ had measurable and positive effects of activation of the rejected.

2. Historical basis of the rural dwellers problems

The peasant issue appeared at the very beginning of the class system. In the works of belles-lettres the peasant problem appeared in the 16th century to be placed on the highest level of the public discourse in the 18th century and become the subject of the social analyses.

In these circumstances we could look into a long-standing problem of peasant misery. Is it the case that ‘a peasant will not let go’ („chłop żywemu nie przepuści”), as the song by Kazimierz Grześkowiak goes and ‘a

peasant is power' as the host in *Wesele* used to say? Peasants have never led an easy life. „There has never been peasant power in Poland. On the contrary: at first peasants were villeins, then second class citizens. They stopped being treated instrumentally only after the Second World War, except for the Greater Poland and the former crown lands, where it had happened before. It was this degradation of the peasantry accompanied by stuntedness of Polish third state, which was the underlying cause of most of historical misfortunes that fell on Poland and to this day represent its debasement”[15]. The basic issues making up a rather stereotypical image of a peasant are as follows:

2.1. He was constantly offended. Since the Middle Ages the term widely recognised as pejorative -'churl' has been used to refer to peasants; named after one of the three sons of Noah. Later, even Henryk Sienkiewicz used the words: „You churls, go and use fork for dung! That would suit you better than a sword”[12], or „God, you see that, and you do not act - such churls drink honey.” The term 'churl' appears in books by Sienkiewicz quite frequently.

2.2. He was not enlightened, innovative or educated. Feliks Koneczny in his book entitled "The saints in the history of the Polish nation," wrote the following words: „Folk education in Poland gradually deteriorated. No absolute government wanted folk education and folk schools were not established. In Galicia the government conscripted to the army each peasant at the age of twelve, who was known to have learnt to read and write, because they were considered dangerous, revolutionary peasants. Peasants living in Congress Poland, until 1830 the most enlightened (for this region remained under Polish reign for the longest time), began to regress in education. Not to mention Galicia, which was under foreign government since 1772. Priests could not educate, because they were persecuted by the government, on suspicion of <revolutionary operations>”[5]. Galician peasants, mostly illiterate, were not susceptible to technical innovations due to lack of knowledge and used simple tools that had not changed for centuries, eg wooden plow. They were so simple that they hid the acquired clocks and watches from people because they were regarded as a strange thing and luxury. Hence the famous adage „Give a peasant a watch” (meaning - they will not be able to make use of it) ”[6].

2.3. He was browbeaten. It is impossible not to agree with anthropologist Ludwik Stomma, who wrote about the attitude of 'serfdom', a term that still existed in the Second Polish Republic (interwar Poland), highlighting the fact that „centuries of humiliation left their imprint”. A prominent folk activist Wincenty Witos said: "Peasants lived every day with trepidation and fear accompanying them at all times. They were scared of the military policeman, the vogt, the clerk. Peasants feared the forester, tallyman, overseer and would not dare raise their eyes to the priest, teacher or steward.[7]”

2.4. He lived in an overcrowded village. Historian Feliks Koneczny notes that ignorance was combined with terrible poverty: “All classes have impoverished. The growth of the rural population accumulated again in the home village, finding no income or occupation in neighboring poorer and poorer cities and towns. There were so many people in the village that half of them

would be just enough to cultivate the land; thus it has involuntarily taught people laziness, and not having sufficient activities for the whole day, they tended to pass their time in the tavern, and things got worse and worse. Impoverished manor houses gave fewer and fewer benefits and peasants increasingly relied on those benefits and what began was the animosity between the two social classes” [7].

2.5. The system was wrong. Sociologist Edmund Lewandowski concludes: "The manorial-villein system preserved the extensive forms of production and shaped negative attitudes to work, the nobility got accustomed to idleness and the peasants to botch. The peasants hated their work so much that after their enfranchisement they fell into passivity, apathy, and drunkenness" [8]. Journalist Rafał A. Ziemkiewicz in "Polactwo" depicts that this state of affairs has survived to this day, and has its roots mainly in failed farms which are at the mercy of the state: " Lordships were responsible for their peasants just as a shepherd is responsible for his flock. For the majority of its inhabitants Poland is a farm like that, the authority - any authority – are a sort of landlord esquires with their entourage of Treasury economists and other overseers, and they are - grooms in their four-flat buildings. The landlords have to think for them, dress them, pay them, give food to them, delegate and watch over" [16].

2.6. He was lazy. Already in most ancient Old Polish "class satire " there are portrayed conflicts emerging in the then economic reality of Polish countryside. It described a farmer's cunning, who repeals the duties:

And they do falsely indeed:

Barely going out at noon

Their plow idle on the land, clattering its share:

Apparently that plow will not plow.

2.7. "He had a national consciousness issue. An interesting description can be found in Stanisław Grodziski: "The research on the history of Polish countryside is pretty telling, court books are an important illustration of the period between the sixteenth and the eighteenth century. What may be striking is the fact that these rich sources remain completely silent about the annexation in 1772 and its specific circumstances. Last wills and testaments or peasant disputes were still recorded and gradually in this or that book, a year or even three years after the annexation, there appear references to Austrian legal standards, a new tsarist rule, and its individual representatives. The conclusion is straightforward: country life flowed its own course, and the very fact concerning a change of nationality reached the peasants' consciousness rather slowly. The distance between the king and the peasant is equally great in every country" [6]. Norman Davies notes: "I once read a diary of the Galician folk activist, mayor of a city of the Second Polish Republic, who was born in Tarnów as a serf in the Austro-Hungarian empire. He did not know he was a Pole. He was told that there are Poles somewhere. But it was mainly the nobility or some people living by the Vistula. It was not him. And not his family. Only at the age of 20 when he learned to read did he find out that he spoke and read Polish, which meant that he was a Pole " [3].

2.8. Polish rulers forgot about him. All citizens are equal under the law. So are the peasants. This idea was unfortunately missing in the Constitution of May 3 [15]. The answer to the May law act and its fourth article was peasants' discontent on the territory of the whole Poland. This document didn't change anything concerning the peasants. As the foreigners noticed, a peasant after the enacting of the Constitution still remained a slave [11]. The situation of Polish peasants was compared to the situation of black people working in plantations [11].

2.9. It was better under the invaders. The situation of Silesian peasants before joining these areas to Prussia was similar to the abject poverty of the Polish peasants. After incorporating Silesia to Prussia their situation improved. The Silesian peasant, contrary to the Polish countrymen knows where he can go to complain against his oppressor. Silesian peasants are very happy with connecting Silesia to Prussia. The peasants living in Prussia had more freedom than those living in Poland, therefore massive numbers of them were escaping from the Republic of Poland to Prussia [9]. On the other hand the Austrian state used a trick defending peasants in conflict with the aristocrats. In this way the Austrians received (in the eyes of peasants) an opinion of peasants' advocates against aristocratic exploitation. The memory of Josephine colonisation was still living among Galician peasants over decades. For a very long time they remembered the good emperor and the anti-peasant attitude of Polish aristocracy [9].

2.10 They were forced to emigrate. However, it did not improve their situation. Józef Chałasiński in "Kultura amerykańska" ("American culture") writes about their living conditions: "After the father came here, he had to bring the swine from the town on foot. The huts were even worse than the henhouses in the aristocratic estates. All people kept cows, many hens, some also had about 50 ducks. They lived here, 20 people in one room, ten of them worked during daytime, some at night, so when they lay on the floor they were lying like rats, one next to another" [1].

3. Real socialism in the countryside and in the III Republic of Poland

There are many stereotypes and myths about the country and farming and they, until this day, arouse emotions. A sociologist Krystyna Lutyńska made a successful attempt to show the power of a stereotype: "it is better to live in the country than in the city". She carried out research among workers the communist Polish People's Republic. The workers' answers were the following: people in the country have their own food ("they don't have to queue"), they have their own houses ("they live in villas"), they have luxurious objects ("they have no trouble with buying the most necessary things"), they are owners and are independent ("they have freedom, are independent and have no bosses"), they are privileged ("the State yields to them-pays them well"), working in the country is easy ("currently all work is done by machines-they don't have to work themselves"), they trade food ("they charge workers more for the food they sell"), they prosper ("they have money, they live like in paradise"). Naturally the opinion of the country people was completely different.

A common stereotype concerns a belief that living conditions in the countryside are healthy. At the time of the control of wells in 1979 out of 100 thousand studied only 3.4% had good water, 28% uncertain and 68.6% bad [13]. In 1978, the fittings of the houses were checked - 6.4% of houses had all fittings, while in the town 50.2%. Central heating: 17.9% in the country, in the town 57.8%, water supply: 37.8% in the country, in the town 88.2%, toilets: 21.9% in the country, in the town 71.4%, bathrooms: in the country 27.8%, 71.4% in the town, hot water: in the country 27, 2%, in the town 71.4%, gas: in the country 22.6%, in the town 74,3% [13].

But on the other hand, sociological studies conducted at the beginning of the 1990s show that four out of five farmers believe that the best period for them was just the 1970s.

How to reconcile the free market with mentality of patron - clientelistic approach to socio - economic reality. And continuous pressure on the state intervention, creating a special niche for a selected group with passion for equal needs and satisfying them to the same degree. Rural sociologist Krzysztof Gorlach claimed that the farmers issue became a matter of a social problem, a source of social disorder resulting in various conflicts in society and within the political system [5]. Let's look at the titles of the newspaper articles only from the years 2000 - 2007 which say a lot about the image of the Polish agriculture:

"Between Guadeloupe and Brazil", Wprost, 13/05/2001, "The combine of Europe", Polityka, 23 February 2002, "Done in the earth", Wprost, 15 September 2002, "Pig on the chain," On February 23, "Aid independent of production ", Rzeczpospolita, 6/27/03, "A swine hill is growing ", Rzeczpospolita, 12.06.03, "CAP dies!" Wprost, July 6, 2003, "Too much bureaucracy" Rzeczpospolita, 11.13.03, "The quadrature of a swine hill ", Wprost, July 6, 2003, "Fewer farms, more plots ", Rzeczpospolita, 02.02.04, "Investments in open-air museum ", Wprost, June 13, 2004, "the group holding corn "On 25 January 2004," How the EU agricultural budget is swindled", Gazeta Wyborcza, 22.09.2004, "How to swindle in the European Union ", Gazeta Wyborcza, 21.09.2004, "We, the exploiters of the Third World ", Gazeta Wyborcza, 14.12.2003, "Common policy of the rich " , Rzeczpospolita, 07.11.2005, "Expensive excess milk", Rzeczpospolita, 10.01.2006, "Do not subsidize agriculture", Gazeta Wyborcza, 04/08/05, "Objective: fewer farmers," Rzeczpospolita, 09.13.06 "Agriculture milks taxpayers" Rzeczpospolita , 06/09/06, "Subsidies for something that does not exist," Rzeczpospolita, 08.03.07, "Why does everyone pay for farmers. Farmers should pay taxes," Gazeta Wyborcza, 28/05/07, "Farmers are growing, the treasury not", Rzeczpospolita, 07.08.07, "Farmers in groups earn more", Gazeta Wyborcza, "Who will pay more for agriculture ", Rzeczpospolita, 29.06.2005, "Alms for the landlord", Wprost, 22/10/06

In addition, a farmer is portrayed as poor, drunken, lazy and benighted. Rural sociologist Barbara Fedyszak-Radziejowska often quoted well-known intellectuals and politicians who referred to the Polish countryside with undisguised scorn: "the Polish countryside and farmers are no longer attractive when things are going as they

should. Success does not attract media attention in Poland. Farmers are much better "sold" as a scapegoat of the Polish transformation, or "troublesome class" operating in a free market and longing for a welfare state of the Polish People's Republic "[4].

Is our 'return to Europe' most delayed by the backward Polish village? According to Barbara Fedyszak-Radziejowska, who is carrying out the research on the situation in the Polish countryside it is the other way round. Polish village today is closer to Europe than many critics of its backwardness. It was able to take advantage of most of the opportunities created by European integration - from opening up the market for Polish products to the use of funds for adaptation and assistance. It is mobile in applying and nearly half of the owners of farms with an area exceeding 15 hectares consider some investments in their farms and household. Fortunately, rural bitterness has passed. One lives better after joining the European Union - every other farmer admits that.

Yet, the report of the Supreme Chamber of Control is not favorable. Tomasz Cukiernik made his analysis very carefully [2]:

1 As a result of 10 years of subsidies to organic fruit and berry crops which cost more than 708 million zlotys, the crop effectiveness fell stunningly - from 15 to 1 ton of fruit per hectare.

2 The acreage increased as many as seven times - mostly non- fruiting, because subsidies were granted to the plantation without the requirement to obtain crops. The farmers planted trees in order to get funding without harvesting.

3 Within 10 years of subsidizing organic orchards and berry crops, more than 14.5 thousand farmers have benefited. The aid was granted under the Rural Development Plan for 2004-2006 and the Rural Development Program 2007-2013. Although during the first years of the subsidies it was visible that in no way do they revive production growth, yet the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development did not change the rules of their allocation.

4 Before starting the program for 2007-13, one still does not make the grant money from the requirement to obtain the yield. It was only in 2014, after 10 years of payment of inefficient subsidies, one introduced the most obvious record - the aid will depend on crops and only those farmers will get them who demonstrate and document the crops, e.g. on the basis of invoices for the sale of fruit.

5 The Supreme Chamber of Control audit findings indicate that most organic fruit and berry crops were set up with one purpose: to get grants. The Supreme Chamber of Control audit showed how this mechanism worked. For organic crops, fruit and berry one could get from 650 zlotys to 1800 zlotys per hectare per year, with the majority of farmers benefiting from subsidies collecting the highest rate.

6 The key condition for obtaining funds was to keep harvesting for 5 years. The farmers did so and they kept

harvesting formally for 5 years. However, as the Supreme Chamber of Control pointed out that the plantations were usually neglected: plants had been grown in unfavourable conditions (e.g. in wet and poor soil), and because of no fencing, they were exposed to damage on the part of wild animals.

7 Only slightly more than half of the farmers getting funds who were controlled by the Supreme Chamber of Control had any crops. The rest did not gather any harvest from their seemingly ran yet very real subsidized organic farms. Most farmers gave up or intended to give up harvesting the moment they stopped being subsidized.

8 The funds were supposed to support organic farming, yet the organic fruit was sold merely by 6 in 20 controlled farmers, not even every year. None of the inspected organic farms proved that the sale had a constant character and there were crops only from some years or seasons. The Supreme Chamber of Control estimated that organic fruit sold only 3-5 percent of the acreage that inspectors checked. The remaining fruit was sold as conventional produce.

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