

PolandAgriculture -- Farm-Splitting ContinuesRadio Warsaw

The agricultural commentator Alojzy Sroga indicated in a farm program yesterday that new measures were in the offing which would tend to curtail the systematic subdivision of Polish farmland which has been particularly noticeable since 1950 or thereabouts. The problem of farm-splitting is therefore by no means a new one, but one which has persistently defied solution. According to Sroga, 604,000 new farms came into being in the 1960-1958 period and that, despite the decrees promulgated since that time which were designed to curb the family division of land, the process of division and subdivision continues, so that at the present time the number of newly-registered farms has reached circa 700,000. (This would bring the total number of Polish peasant farms to nearly four million.) The worst aspect of the farm-splitting trend, from an economic point of view, is that most of the new holdings are too small to be (profitably) mechanized. Of the 700,000 new holdings which have come to being since 1950, some 455,000 have less than three hectares of land. It is also often the case that a peasant's field is separated by a considerable distance from his family farmhouse, making for significant wastage of manhours and horsepower. Then too peasants sometimes own two or three small tracts, each separated from the others, resulting in the same waste of time and effort.

The regime has every right to feel concern over these developments, since no country could hope to reach its maximum agricultural production potential with the same predominance of dwarf farms as exists in Poland. But here, as always, the regime is confronted with the apparently insuperable stubbornness of the Polish peasantry with respect to government interference in their affairs. The government wants to mechanize the countryside, mainly through the Agricultural Circle program with its investment organ, the Agricultural Development Fund. To the peasantry, mechanization has come to mean the harbinger of ultimate collectivization, it appears that the majority of peasants will continue to go to any lengths to thwart that possibility. In the instance of farm-splitting, it would be difficult to discount the probability here that a great number of peasants are quite deliberately reducing the size of their farms, through sale and inheritance, in a

conscious effort to stave off the threat of ultimate collectivization. Some of them might even admit that, in theory, mechanization would mean higher production and a higher standard of living for all concerned -- but they are patently opposed to accepting material advances at the price of creeping government control over agriculture.

The family division of farms actually creates serious economic difficulties for Poland. Mechanization is being delayed, the horse population grows with the number of new farms and, as Sroga points out, the old byword "Maciek made it, Maciek ate it" doesn't supply the market and the lucrative food exports fall off as a result.

Sroga promised at the end of his broadcast to discuss steps which might be taken to prevent further land division "some other time". It may be that Sroga will eventually outline proposals toward the solution of this problem which will later take the form of laws. Mieczyslaw Mieszcankowski, writing for "Zycie Gospodarcze", has been similarly "preparing the public" on this question for the past year.

In brief outline, Mieszcankowski wants a general reform of the Inheritance Law. He proposes that the lion's share of farmers' inheritance in terms of cash and land to fall to the heirs who remain in agriculture, with the heirs who are engaged in non-agricultural work to receive lesser shares. These latter heirs would not receive any land or equipment, but would be compensated in cash payments and loans from a sort of Inheritance Compensation Fund to help them establish themselves in the cities. Should more than one heir elect to remain in agriculture, the main heir would inherit the farm in question, while the others would be compensated (and could receive loans) from the Inheritance Compensation Fund. These secondary heirs would then be in a position to acquire a land holding of their own -- but the original family farm could not be split up (unless it were very "large"). The burden of financing the Inheritance Compensation Fund would fall, however, to the peasantry itself, under Mieszcankowski's scheme. The proposal is that farms would be obliged by law to make deposits on their account into the fund. The payments would in actual fact take the form of compulsory savings. The extent of these deposits is to be in proportion to the value of the property in question.

Mieszcankowski offers no concrete suggestions, on the other hand, as to how he expects the peasantry to be able

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to afford to pay into the Inheritance Compensation Fund (while in some cases paying into the Agricultural Development Fund as well), maintain present tax payments and eliminate so-called tax arrears all at the same time.

We must wait and hear Sroga's suggestions.

Brief Items

Democratic Party Plenum - A DP plenum will open in Warsaw on July 8, with a discussion of Party cells on the agenda.

Manpower Shortage -- The port of Gdynia is currently seriously short of longshoremen, with some thirty ships waiting to be unloaded.

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Pouched: *Garrulaphys* for Poland. *Microgaster* for Poland, red. The population grows with the number of seeds and.

Tygodnik Powszechny 18.6.61 - STOMMA S.: What Are We Expecting? (speech delivered in the Sejm 18.5.61; Church-State relations)

Trybuna Ludu 13.6.61 - KLINGERT J.: General but Onesided, (exploitation of electric power in the countryside)

Zycie Szkoły Wyzszej -May 1961 - GOLANSKI h.: The Tasks of the Institutions of Higher Learning in the Preparation of the Refomr of the Educational System

Zycie Warszawy 11-12.6.61 - KOPALINSKI W.: For the Sake of the Nation's Eyes and Ears (on teaching arts in general and trade schools)