

Poor Prospects for 1962 Harvest

Weather conditions brought about serious damages to crops, which may bear heavily on the results of this year's agricultural production, according to Radio Warsaw. While to the south of the Carpathians, in Hungary, drought prevails (cf. Hungarian Sit. Rep. June 1), Poland has been suffering from continuous rain, floods and hail storms in May. By June 1 about 200,000 hectares of crops had been destroyed, and this figure may increase further, for the weather, instead of improving, deteriorated in the last few days, with snow recorded for the first time in June in the western parts of Poland. Particularly affected by bad weather are the central areas of Poland, including Warsaw voivodship, where about 75,000 hectares have been destroyed. The regime is doing its best to make good the losses by assisting the peasants with special subsidies. Thus, in addition to indemnities paid by state insurance agencies, the KERM (Economic Committee of the Council of Ministers) assigned 10 million zloty in non-repayable loans for the purchase of sowing seed, fertilizers, fodder, etc. With the original sowing season delayed already by about two or three weeks through a late spring, the latest measures aimed at resowing flooded soil will greatly depend on the efficiency of distribution of seed and fertilizers, which -- as known from past experience -- does not necessarily belong to the strong points of the Communist system.

Some agricultural commentators of Radio Warsaw still do not sound too pessimistic. They point out -- and with some justice -- the fact that the key period determining Polish crops does not necessarily fall in May and June, but in the two crucial months of July and August.

Deflation Continues

The deflationary policy established at the Ninth

CC Plenum in November 1961 begins to bear heavily on the standard of living of the Polish worker, as is illustrated by the latest data published in "Biuletyn Statystyczny" No. 4 (April 1962).

While the average wage was 1,667 zloty in 1961, it dropped to 1,629 zloty in the first two months of 1962. At the same time the general retail price index rose from 98.1 in March 1961 to 105.2 in March 1962, i.e. by 7.1 per cent, while the corresponding index of food prices jumped by 13.7 per cent from 96.2 to 109.9.

It should be mentioned that the deflationary policy was initially introduced at the Third CC Plenum in October 1959, and that it continued throughout 1960. Inflationary tendencies became evident in 1961, particularly in the second half-year. They were stopped in November 1961.

Centralization of Cultural Awards

The Ministry of Culture and Arts has established three grades of prizes for literature, film, music and painting, Minister Tadeusz Galinski revealed in a Radio Warsaw interview May 29. These prizes will be awarded for the first time on July 22, i.e. on the Polish Communist Independence Day.

The Minister admitted that in the previous years prizes for these fields of cultural activity were awarded by various institutions, such as voivodship and even district people's councils, associations and newspapers, but "there were too many of these prizes". The criteria, Galinski stated, applied for these prizes were so different that it could only cause "misunderstandings". "Our cultural policy stipulates full creative freedom". But we always talk about the necessity of making a choice of the works for mass distribution." The Ministry awards will contribute toward shaping this choice, Galinski stressed. What will happen to the prizes heretofore awarded by local government, associations,

etc? These bodies retain the right to put forward their candidates to a special jury set up by the Ministry of Culture and Arts.

Galinski implied that there exists also a possibility of a re-establishment of the State Prizes discontinued after 1956.

A detailed paper on the subject is in preparation.

English Better Studied than Russian

Of 413 candidates tested in their knowledge of the Russian language at an entrance examination to a university, only one obtained a good mark, while 112 knew the language to a sufficient and 300 to an insufficient degree. The respective figures for the English language were 103, 8, 41 and 54. These results were given by Antoni Prejbisz in the professional monthly pertaining to university life, "Zycie Szkoły Wyzszej" No. 3/1962. Prejbisz stressed that the examination standard adopted for that particular test was rather liberal. In spite of that, only 33 per cent of the examined have obtained positive results (good and sufficient) on an average. Almost 73 per cent of the candidates failed in Russian, 69 per cent in French, 59 per cent in German and 52 per cent in English.