

The Rural Unemployment in Poland*

A study of the problem of unemployment in the rural areas in Poland should take into account two basic groups of their inhabitants and, namely, the landless population (inclusive of the former State Farm workers) and the peasant one (defined in the present paper as 'persons sharing the household with the user of an individual farm'). The position of the two groups is not identical.

It is also worth mentioning that in Poland, the right to get registered as an unemployed is held by the person who:

- 1) has not reached the age of 60, if a woman, and of 65, if a man;
- 2) has not acquired the right to retiring pension, or disability pension, who does not get a rehabilitation allowance;
- 3) who is not an owner or possessor (whether independent or dependent) of an agricultural property — in the meaning of the provisions of the Civil Code — with an arable land area exceeding 2 conversion hectares or, of a specialized farm yielding an income higher than that derived from 2 conversion hectares;
- 4) is not covered by social security and pension system on account of permanent occupation as household member on the farm as specified above, and
- 5) who has not taken up economic activity outside agriculture.

The situation of the unemployed rural population in Poland is characterized by appearance therein of the following specific phenomena:

a) A large part of the unemployed population was being occupationally inactive for more than 12 months. Besides, a considerable rate of those people were being unemployed for the period as long as 1–3 years. To employ them after such a long time would require their being subject to the process of a specific kind of reeducation.

b) A considerable part of the unemployed rural population — relatively larger than in town — make the young people. Moreover, above two thirds of the rural unemployed are below the mobile age limit (i.e. 45 years).

c) At the same time, however, the rural unemployed are characterized by a low degree of mobility. Their weak inclination to move from one locality to another results from shortage of financial means wanted to pay for a flat

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in the new place (in the old one that cost — mostly of residence in the own house — was borne by the family still living there), as well as from the deficit of flats nation-wide.

d) The average educational level of the people ranking among the rural unemployment is lower than that of their counterparts in town: no less than 20 per cent of them have at most but primary education. Creating of new jobs for them is a serious problem.

e) A substantial part of the unemployed rural population — ca 150,000–200,000 people — make persons resident in the settlements of the former State Farms. Those settlements have become a kind of ghettos of the unemployed, since they are inhabited mainly by former workers of the said Farms who have lost work as a result of their liquidation. Situated away from the towns, and on the periphery of economic life, the settlements do not give their inhabitants any chance of alternative employment and thus turn into the centres of the poorest population having scant possibility of improving its lot.

Some light on the situation of the unemployed rural population has been shed by the results of the farm census carried out, by means of sampling procedure, in 1994. The survey embraced the persons exercising the functions of head of the household including the user of an individual farm. One of the questions posed was whether any of the members of the household concerned had lost work in the years 1990–1994 or was looking for a job on June 30th, 1994. A part of the persons who were unemployed on the day of the census had the right to get registered as unemployed at the regional labour office. The remaining ones can be treated as redundant on the farms what is tantamount to disguised unemployment.

The research findings have shown that the number of job seekers amounted to 451,500 in June 1994; however only 128,900 of them were entitled to get registered as unemployed; 322,500 came from farms with more than 2 conversion hectares in area and were not qualified for being thus registered. Consequently, they should be ranked among the category of disguised unemployment.

The registered rate of unemployment in Poland's rural areas amounted to 1,157,900 at the end of 1994.

It is worth complementing the information above with the following data.

In the rural areas in Poland there lived in 1994:

- 35.8 per cent of the total population of active working age (i.e. aged 18–59/64);
- 38.2 per cent of the country's total population;
- 40.4 per cent of the total population in 0–17 years age bracket;
- 43.5 per cent of the total population of retiring age and ca 50.0 per cent of the total unemployed population.