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LAND REFORM OF THE POLISH NATIONAL LIBERATION COMMITTEE

With the present state of studies it would be very difficult to present all the aspects of the land reform decreed by the Polish National Liberation Committee, in a single article. This article will, therefore, deal with three most important problems of the subject. The first part is devoted to the standpoint of the government parties with regard to the reform; the second part consists of an analysis of the attitude towards the reform of the State administration organs and various sections of the community, the peasants in particular, and describes the part played by them in the implementation of the reform; the third part describes the influence of the reform on the post-war changes in the structure of agriculture.

The most of the article is devoted to the second of the three above mentioned problems. The limited space and the scarcity of accessible sources made it advisable to concentrate on the presentation of the attitude of peasants-smallholders to the reform. The attitudes of other social groups are considered in so far as they influenced the smallholders' views on the reform.

THE ORIGIN AND SUBSTANCE OF THE POLISH NATIONAL LIBERATION COMMITTEE DECREE OF SEPTEMBER 6, 1944 ON LAND REFORM

In mid-August, 1944, Party and government authorities raised again the question of the land reform promised in the July Manifesto.

In a circular dated August 14, 1944, the Lublin district Committee of the Polish Workers' Party¹ recommended to Party members in the district that, at plenary sessions of the people's councils, they should initiate resolutions demanding that 'land reform be given immediate effect'.² The circular also con-

¹ During the first month after the liberation, the occupation-time territorial divisions were still used by the Polish Workers' Party.

² Archives of the Lublin Voivodship Committee of the PUWP. Circular of the Central Committee of the Polish Workers' Party of August 14, 1944 *To All Members of the Party*.

tained instructions to the effect that the people's councils should appoint land reform committees which would make registers of the estates affected by the reform. Nominal rolls of those entitled to benefits under the reform were to be compiled (according to the circular) by farm labourers' and land distribution committees specially appointed for the purpose. These committees were also to distribute land. The land distribution committees were to be supervised directly by the people's councils and land offices, should the latter be formed in the future. The land offices were to play an auxiliary part only. The actual powers were left to social institutions, the members of which were recruited from peasant committees and councils.

Next day after the issue of the circular, a draft decree concerning the setting up of voivodship and district land offices was discussed at a joint plenary session of the National People's Council and the Polish National Liberation Committee.³ According to Article 1 of the proposed decree, the head of the Agriculture and Land Reform Department was to perform his tasks in the sphere of State protection over agriculture through the voivodship and district land offices. Social control in matters of agriculture and land reform was to be exercised by the people's councils acting through their committees. The committees (central, voivodship and district) were to be presided over *ex officio* by the head of the Agriculture and Land Reform Department and the chiefs of the voivodship or district land offices respectively. The members of the committees could speak only in an advisory capacity. The proposed decree restricted the powers of the committee members to the right to be kept informed about activities of the land offices without the possibility to intervene directly.⁴ Besides, the land offices were made independent of local administration authorities. They were directly subordinated to the Agriculture and Land Reform Department of the Polish National Liberation Committee.

This arrangement might easily weaken control over the land offices and in practice lead to their complete independence. This fact was giving rise to serious concern and many doubts, all the more justified as the Agriculture Department was at the time headed by Andrzej Witos whose attitude towards the land reform proposed by the Polish National Liberation Committee was very much reserved, and the land offices were staffed with pre-war civil servants, generally hostile to the Polish National Liberation Committee at the time.

In the course of the discussion on the draft decree fears were expressed lest the land offices should be made the only or the principal executors of the land reform. It was demanded that social and economic institutions should be given clearly determined powers in this sphere. A. Witos, who submitted the report

³ Dziennik Ustaw RP [Journal of Laws of the Polish Republic], No. 2, item 4, 1944.

⁴ Cf. S. Nowiński, M. Warda, J. Wiszniewski, J. Różański, *Systematyczny przegląd ustawodawstwa Polski Odrodzonej* [Systematic Review of the Laws of Liberated Poland], Warszawa 1946, p. 434.

on the proposed decree, was not inclined to consider these demands justified.⁵ In the end, the proposed version was approved unchanged, but with the following resolution, formulated by Stanisław Skrzyszewski, member of the Polish Workers' Party: 'When approving the Polish National Liberation Committee decree of August 15, 1944, concerning the organization of the voivodship and district land offices, the National People's Council calls on the Polish National Liberation Committee to ensure the widest possible participation of social and political elements in the countryside in the speediest possible realization of the land reform.'⁶

On September 6, 1944, the Polish National Liberation Committee published the Land Reform Decree. The decree provided that the land reform should be put into effect⁷ so that the expropriation of big landowners might not cause concern of owners of small and medium-sized properties in towns and in the country, fearing they would in turn be expropriated from their estates. Land should be distributed so as to exclude every possibility of misunderstandings among peasants as to the lasting character of their individual ownership of both formerly possessed and newly acquired lands. Allowances should be made for the fact that during the war a large part of Polish big landowners had been subjected to reprisals by the occupant, and that some of them had taken part in armed resistance in Poland, or fought in the ranks of the Polish armed forces abroad. These general directives had been reflected in the provisions of the decree concerning such important matters as the grounds for and the scope of the expropriation, the methods of distribution of land and the eligibility for allocations of land.

In accordance with the decree, the Land Fund, controlled by the Agriculture and Land Reform Department, had been formed. The land reserve available for distribution consisted of State-owned estates, confiscated properties of non-Polish citizens of the German Reich and of Polish citizens of German nationality, as well as of people rightfully sentenced for high treason, collaboration with the occupant or other offences against the Polish National Liberation Committee decree of August 31, 1944. Liable to expropriation were properties owned by natural or artificial persons, exceeding 50 hectares of cultivated land or (in the Poznań, Pomorze and Silesia voivodships) with their total area exceeding 100 hectares, irrespective of the area of cultivated land. These estates were to be

⁵ Archives of the Council of State (later abbreviated to SAKRP). Minutes of the National People's Council of August 15, 1944.

⁶ *Ibidem*. It is characteristic that objections against the draft decree were voiced by a member of the Peasant Party, and the first congress of 'Wici', held in Lublin on August 27 and 28, fully supported the resolution concerning the decree ('Wici', September 17, 1944, *Wiciowe posłanie*).

⁷ These points have been formulated (for the first time, as it seems) by the Union of Polish Patriots early in 1944 (Archives of the Party History Institute, IV/B—1/49 *Proposed Directives for the Land Reform* worked out by the Economic Study Bureau of the Union of Polish Patriots).

taken over by the State, without compensation, and used for land reform purposes. Under the decree, the expropriated were to be granted old age pensions the amount of which was determined not by the size of their land but by their attitude towards the Nazi occupant. The decree of September 6, 1944 nullified all legal and factual divisions of estates effected after September 1, 1939. Estates belonging to the first two of the above mentioned categories of owners were liable to expropriation irrespective of their size. As regards the last mentioned category, the area limit varied according to localities, as it has been mentioned before. There were a number of reasons for this differentiation.

The 'directives for land reform' worked out and proposed by the Union of Polish Patriots early in 1944,⁸ and later taken into account in the realization of the reform by the Central Committee of the Polish Workers' Party, pointed out the necessity to raise the limit of the area liable to expropriation in the western voivodships. It was argued that in these areas the Germans treated Polish landowners with a special brutality, that a considerable proportion of farms between 50 and 100 hectares in these voivodships belonged to rich peasants and not landlords, that many of them were owned by Germans and would be taken over in any case. Finally, it was probably taken into account that the share of these farms in agricultural production was considerable, and the hunger for land and the overpopulation of the country were not so strongly felt there.

Not included in the Land Fund were church properties, irrespective of their areas, most probably on account (as it appears from the 'directives') of the anti-Nazi attitude of a considerable part of the clergy, and the desire to avoid conflicts with the Church and everything that might offend religious feelings.⁹ The decision about the future of the Church property was left by the decree to the future Sejm.

Among the purposes of the land reform the first place was given (by both the July Manifesto and the decree) to the allocation of additional land to smallholders, and the second place to the creation of new farms. In practice, the available land had been distributed for both these purposes, although not all small farmers had been given additional land. This order of priority was not accidental, however. It had probably been dictated by political reasons;¹⁰ by the wish to emphasize that the Polish National Liberation Committee did not ignore the inte-

⁸ See above.

⁹ These arguments can be found in the directives concerning the land reform, issued by the Union of Polish Patriots. It is likely that they had been accepted by the authors of the decree, too.

¹⁰ There were no serious differences of views within the Peasant Party as to the principle itself. In the programme declarations and all the Press articles dealing with these problems the views were formulated similarly; preference among those entitled to land was given to peasant-farmers. In the declarations and Press articles of WRN, PS and RPPS, the formation of new farms for former labourers from the estates was considered the most important. Heated discussions and sharp conflicts over the question what categories should be entitled to allocations of

rests of the peasants and that, in the course of the reform, it would take them into account and thus satisfy the traditional demands of the peasant parties that peasant-farmers should be given land in the first place.

Unlike the July Manifesto of the Polish National Liberation Committee, the decree did not include owners of medium-sized farms in the category of those entitled to additional allocations of land. This omission is usually explained by the fact that in 1944, because of the very modest reserve of land, out of all proportion to the needs, the legislator did not think it possible to allocate land if only to a part of the owners of medium-sized farms. As it can be judged by the course of the discussion on the draft decree, this circumstance had been considered. However, it was not the only one, and probably not the most important. The decree was to cover the whole territory of Poland, i.e. including the western territories where the disproportion between the reserve of land and the demand for land was practically non-existent. Besides, less than a month after the decree had been approved, i.e. at a time when it was known that, in 1944, land would be distributed only in the areas to the east of the Vistula where the hunger for land was most painfully felt, the Polish National Liberation Committee restored the right for allocations of land to certain groups of owners of medium-sized farms. In 1944, owners of medium-sized farms were allocated more than 2.5 per cent. of the total area of distributed land (4,800 hectares), thus only insignificantly reducing the available reserve of land. When looking for the reason why the owners of medium-sized farms had been excluded one cannot ignore the attitude to the question of distribution of land of the Polish Workers' Party, the strongest political party which played the leading part in the Polish National Liberation Committee. In the declaration of the Central Committee of the Polish Workers' Party of March 1, 1943, it was proposed to distribute land only to 'peasants smallholders.'¹¹ Although documents issued during the second half of 1943 included the slogan 'Land for peasants and farm labourers,'¹² the word 'peasants' probably meant only the smallholders and the landless (this is at least what some party activists think). It seems that the attitude prior to the second half of 1943 had not been finally abandoned before October 1944.¹³

land were noted within the Communist Party of Poland. With a view to winning over the peasants by emphasising the general democratic aims of the struggle, the Communist Party of Poland, at its 2nd Congress in 1923, proclaimed the slogan: 'Land for the peasants without compensation'.

¹¹ *Kształtowanie się podstaw programowych PPR w latach 1942—1945* [*The Shaping of the Polish Workers' Party Programme in the years 1942—1945*], Warszawa 1958, p. 95.

¹² See *ibidem*, p. 147. 'The Provisional Government will distribute land to the peasants and farm labourers' (From the programme declaration of the Polish Workers' Party of November 1943). Identical formulations can be found in the manifest of the democratic social, political and military organizations in Poland of December 1943 (p. 466) and in the programme declaration of the National People's Council of January 1, 1944 (p. 471).

¹³ Owners of medium-sized farms were indirectly mentioned as participants in the distribution of land in the documents of the Polish Union of Patriots and the Polish National Committee.

This can partly explain the fact that the members of the Polish Workers' Party accepted the suggestion that only smallholders and landless should be entitled to allocations of land.¹⁴

The decree allocated land as individual property,¹⁵ and at a price, which was intended to give the new owner the sense of perpetuity of his possession. The price of the allotted land was to amount to the equivalent of the total annual yield of the allotted area, paid in yearly instalments during 10 to 20 years. Landless peasants could have the payments deferred for 3 years. The allotted land was free from debts and other obligations.

The decree entrusted the execution of the land reform to State institutions and social representations. A very important part was entrusted to the land offices. It was their right and duty to take over landed estates and put them under State management. According to the decree, the land offices were to work out plans of the distribution of land and lists of the buyers of plots. The land offices were to put the buyers in possession, and decide on the way to allocate livestock and other possessions of the former estate. Commune land reform commissions were appointed for co-operation with State authorities in the execution of the land reform. The commissions were instructed to make out nominal rolls of those entitled to allocations of land. The commissions were also empowered to share in decision on the lists of buyers made by the land offices. However, the decree did not make it clear how that 'share in decision' was to be understood. Neither did it name the authority to which complaints against the land offices decisions should be addressed, nor which would decide on controversial matters.

In practice, commune commissions were not in a position to influence the pol-

On the other hand, the declarations of the Central Committee of the Polish Workers' Party (of November 1943) and of the National People's Council refer to the subject only in vague terms. There is no indication that the Polish Workers' Party gave to the formulations of the Communist Party of Poland a meaning different from that given to them by the Polish communists before the war, when the slogan 'land for the peasants without compensation' was understood as demanding that only the landless and smallholders should be given land by the revolutionary authorities.

¹⁴ This solution was proposed by a part of the members of the Polish Socialist Party and the Peasant Party. As it can be supposed, the former represented the view of at least a majority of their party. Both before the war and during the occupation all the socialist groups were in favour of allocating land only to the landless and smallholders. On the other hand, the views of the Peasant Party — the authors of the motion — were rather isolated. Their views were in a striking opposition to the substance of the agrarian programme, which had been worked out and accepted by the peasant movement long before.

¹⁵ The decree (Article 14) restricted the property rights as regards land distributed under the reform. The farms formed under the land reform could not be partitioned, sold, leased or mortgaged. The restrictions were applicable only to newly formed farms. According to the later generally accepted view, it was the intention of the legislator to prevent speculative deals in the distributed land, particularly sales of newly acquired land to richer farmers.

icy of the land offices. In the two decrees, of August 15 and September 6, 1944, the conception of executing the land reform through administrative measures, first of all with the help of the pre-war agrarian administration machinery, was predominant. We could venture the opinion (based on later statements of Roman Zambrowski, among other things)¹⁶ that the method of realization of transformations in agriculture, as defined in the decrees, was to some extent inconsistent with the spirit of people's democratic agrarian revolution. These facts make us ponder on the reasons for which the Polish National Liberation Committee (including the Central Committee of the Polish Workers' Party) had accepted the provisions of the decree in question, concerning the execution of the land reform.

The views on this question included in the Polish Workers' Party programme of 1943,¹⁷ in the above mentioned circular of the Lublin District Committee of August 14, 1944, and in the resolution concerning the decree of August 15, 1944, seem to rule out the possibility of the Polish Workers' Party leaders having failed to notice the above mentioned shortcomings. It seems that the provisions of the decree had been accepted for the following reasons: at the early stage of organization of the State machinery it was difficult to foresee what institutions would be able best to fulfil the tasks connected with the distribution of land. The people's councils, which had just been established, were still at early stages of their organization and politically weak. Anti-landlord feelings were still not quite evident in the countryside. In the circumstances, some of the activists had illusions that it was necessary and possible to carry out the land reform through the land offices, and that it was unnecessary or impossible to use consistent revolutionary means.¹⁸ Perhaps some of the politicians of the

¹⁶ See 'Głos Ludu' of December 9, 1944. From a speech by R. Zambrowski.

¹⁷ The declaration of the Central Committee of the Polish Workers' Party dated November 1943 reads in part: 'The Provisional Government distributes land among the peasants and farm labourers, in consultation with their representatives. It approves the expropriations effected by the peasants and farm labourers after the occupant had been chased away'. (*Kształtowanie się podstaw programowych PPR...* [*The Shaping of the Polish Workers' Party Programme...*], p. 147).

¹⁸ This supposition seems to find confirmation in the statements made by W. Gomułka and R. Zambrowski, who was authorised by the Political Bureau of the Polish Workers' Party Central Committee directly to supervise the implementation of the decree. 'There is no doubt', Gomułka said at a session of the PWP Central Committee on October 9, 1944, 'that we must revise our activities in the rural areas above all. There is no doubt that we shall be able to give effect to the reform only if we give to it the impetus of a social revolution in the countryside. We must have no illusions that the formal change on the post of the head of the department [the dismissal of A. Witos] will help to remove the shortcomings, if we fail to mobilize all the forces of our Party...' (Minutes of the session of the PWP Central Committee of October 9, 1944. Archives of the Party History Institute). R. Zambrowski stated: 'The fact that a revolutionary reform cannot be put into effect with the use of a reactionary administration apparatus, which the land offices were in part, could not at first be realized well enough within the PWP. Neither was it realized that the land reform could not be given effect if the whole matter was not entrusted to the peasant

democratic bloc of parties, mainly because of the necessity to strengthen the anti-fascist national front, thought it unadvisable to oppose A. Witos and his followers from the Peasant Party which was at that time launching the conception of carrying out the land reform with the use of administrative and centrally controlled methods.¹⁹ The competence of the land offices could have been revised and restricted (which in fact was eventually done).

The size of plots of land to be allocated under the land reform presented a separate problem in the decree. In its opinion on the size of plots the Central Committee of the Polish Workers' Party was probably guided by the earlier directions and findings of the Economic Research Bureau at the Union of Polish Patriots. It had been assumed there that land should be allocated to all who were entitled to it. Consequently, in view of the varying proportion of the reserve of land to the actual needs in different parts of the country, the size of the allocations should be made the same for the whole of the country. The Union of Polish Patriots was of the opinion that none of the groups entitled to allocations of land could be privileged, and that land should be allocated so as to help reduce the differences in the size of farms, at least in the groups which would receive land under the reform. After having assessed the national total of the land reserve (6,728,000 hectares)²⁰ it was decided to allocate land to all the smallest farms, so as to make them up to 5 hectares. The same acreage should be allocated for new farms. One-third of the total number of medium-sized farms was to be given 3 hectares each, on the average. The allocation of land to peasants in accordance with these provisions required 6,134,000 hectares. The remaining 594,000 hectares of arable land were to be put under State management.²¹

masses themselves, to the organs elected by them [...] Finally, it was not realized that the land reform could not be put into effect if the Party failed to mobilize its members for this purpose. (R. Zambrowski, *Reforma rolna [The Land Reform]*, Warszawa 1945).

¹⁹ This is, as it seems, indicated by the fact that up to October 1944 the conceptions of the 'ROCh' group of the Peasant Party were only very mildly criticised in the PWP Press; that PWP Central Committee appealed to Peasant Party leaders in exile to return to Poland and reach agreement; that A. Witos, as a delegate of the National People's Council, participated in the August talks with Mikołajczyk in Moscow. Evidently, the Polish National Liberation Committee believed at that time that it was possible to come to terms with the 'ROCh' group leaders.

²⁰ In fact (if we accept the figures given in the 'Statistical Year-Book' for 1949 as accurate), the available area of land in the old territories amounted to 3,102,000 hectares, and in the recovered territories 4 million hectares of land had been distributed among individual farmers under the resettlement schemes, up to January 1, 1949 ('Statistical Year-Book', 1949, p. 58, table 5). So, the area available for distribution among peasant families was only slightly larger (by some 374,000 hectares) than estimated by the Union of Polish Patriots.

²¹ The necessary area of land, as estimated by the Union of Polish Patriots, amounted to 6,134,000 hectares. This estimate was based on the number of farms and their acreage in 1931. In fact, the required area was slightly larger because the actual number of repatriated families resettled in the recovered territories exceeded 200,000, as against 150,000 estimated by the Union of Polish Patriots. The resultant difference amounted to some 250,000 hectares, which means

The Union of Polish Patriots, and later the Central Committee of the Polish Workers' Party assumed that it would be impossible to move Polish settlers to the recovered territories directly after the liberation. On the other hand, it was thought inadvisable for political reasons, and indeed impossible to wait with the distribution of land in old territories until the time when resettlement in the recovered territories could be started. In the circumstances, it was proposed to carry out the reform in two stages: directly after the liberation of a given area all available land should be distributed, within the limit of 5 hectares of medium quality land for a single allocation; after the frontiers had been formally demarcated and conditions in the recovered territories stabilized, a great resettlement operation should start; it would cover repatriates and all those who were willing to exchange undersized farms in their home districts for 5-hectare allotments in the recovered territories.

The above described directions had found their reflection in the decree. According to it, the size of the new farms, and the acreage up to which the undersized farms were to be enlarged, depended on the quality of soil and on the area of land available for distribution. However, a single allotment could not exceed 5 hectares of medium quality land. Considering that in some areas of the old territories it would be impossible to allot land up to 5 hectares to all the entitled, the decree provided that owners of undersized farms should be given the right to additional land, up to 5 hectares, after the liberation of the Western Territories.

There were differences of views within the Polish National Liberation Committee as to the size of allotments. First of all, in connection with a large disproportion between the area of land available for distribution and the number of entitled, a number of problems arose and different ways to solve them were proposed. In the event of immediate distribution of land in the liberated territories, the authorities would have unavoidably been faced with the alternative: whether to allocate larger plots and, consequently, only partly satisfy the hunger for land of a small proportion of the peasants, or to try and distribute land among a larger number of the peasants, at the cost of drastic reductions of the size of the allotments. Some members of the Polish National Liberation Committee (a part of whom — a group of the Polish Socialist Party members — argued that it was inadmissible to change the figure announced in the July Manifesto, and the others — a group of the Peasant Party members — were motivated by their concern for the economic effects of the land reform) proposed that the 5-hectare limit should be maintained, and the number of those entitled to allocations of land confined to farm labourers and owners of undersized plots.²² The Polish Workers' Party proposed that the required area of land was actually 6,350,000 hectares, and the difference between the available and the required acreage was approximately 370,000 hectares (594,000 hectares according to the Union of Polish Patriots estimate).

²² Out of the Peasant Party representatives in the Polish National Liberation Committee, A. Witos was in favour of 5-hectare and larger allotments (in his statements of August and September). He attached much importance to the economic aspect of the land reform and did not think

kers' Party group of members of the Polish National Liberation Committee opposed this solution for they thought it unfair to smallholders, and politically dangerous. They declared themselves in favour of distributing land to the largest possible number of peasants, both landless and smallholders, and of reducing the area of allotments accordingly (in principle within the limits of 2 to 3 hectares of medium quality land).²³

The Polish Workers' Party group also rejected the suggestion of a member of the Peasant Party, intended to find a compromise between the two opinions and to increase the total area of land available for distribution by the take-over of all farms exceeding 35 hectares. It was argued that this suggestion, if accepted, could bring rich peasants to the side of landlords and cause fears even among the other peasants who would not feel safe on their properties and might lose confidence in the Polish National Liberation Committee programme as a whole. After discussion, it was finally decided that the area of newly established and enlarged farms could not exceed 5 hectares of medium quality land. Thus, only the maximum area of the allotments was fixed and their actual size remained undefined.

The rigid 5-hectare limit imposed by the decree, and above all the rule that even after all the Polish territories had been liberated those entitled to land would be given no more than 5 hectares of medium quality land was neither justified nor realistic, as it appeared later. It only proved that, in accordance with the conceptions earlier worked out by the Union of Polish Patriots,²⁴ the authors of the decree were in 1944 inclined to think in terms of absolute numbers of allotments, irrespective of their acreage, as a safe means of winning over the largest possible number of peasants for the new government, without proper consideration given to the needs and purposes of the agrarian reform as a whole, and with no allowance made for specific features of various areas of the country.

From the distance of time it seems doubtless that the majority of the Polish National Liberation Committee had not made a penetrating study of the proposal from the Peasant Party group, concerning the size of allotments (5 hectares and more) and the inclusion of owners of medium-size farms. These proposals, difficult to put into effect in the areas to the east of the Vistula, proved quite realisable on a national scale and, therefore, could probably have been incorporated in the decree.

it was advisable to form 2 or 3-hectare farms. See A. Witos an article in 'Dziennik Ludowy' of September 6, 1945).

²³ Archives of the Office of the Council of Ministers, File 3. Minutes of the Polish National Liberation Committee of September 5, 1944. No substantiation for the PWP objections can be found in the minutes. This can be probably explained by the conciseness of the minutes.

²⁴ Cf. the earlier quoted 'directives' worked out by the Social and Economic Study Bureau of the Union of Polish Patriots.

THE ATTITUDE OF THE PEASANTS TOWARDS THE LAND REFORM

The attitude of the peasants to the land reform was varying. Until mid-October 1944 it was different than during the following period of time.

Farm labourers in the Lublin region, after having declared their full support for the Polish National Liberation Committee's initiative as regards the reform, started preparations for its immediate realization as early as August or September. In August, they formed the first farm committees. In September, farm committees were being set up all over the country. They protected many estates against looting. They elected delegates to the commune land reform committees.²⁵ During the early period the attitude of the peasants was quite different. Only those most politically conscious publicly demanded that the distribution of land should start forthwith.²⁶ Relatively small numbers of peasants took part in the preparations for the partition of estates, either directly or through the commune people's councils. This period of passivity was the longest — until November — among the peasants in the Białystok region and in the most districts of the Lublin voivodship. It found its expression in the fact that nearly all the commune committees for the land reform were organized there by the people who were unconnected with the country, that peasants generally kept themselves away from meetings where the reform was discussed, that they frequently refused to accept the plots allocated to them, even as late as the end of October. This last aspect of the question will be dealt with in more detail later.

There were three principal reasons for which those entitled to allocations of land, during the early period refrained from making attempts at an immediate implementation of the decree. Ever more numerous acts of terrorism on the part of underground organizations cannot be ignored as an important factor hampering the revolutionary initiative of the peasant masses, but the frequently expressed

²⁵ At a congress held in Lublin on September 10, the delegates of the farm labourers passed a resolution fully supporting the land reform decree ('Rzeczpospolita' of September 11, 1944, *Delegaci bezrolnych radzą* [*Debates of Delegates of the Landless*]). A similar attitude was adopted at a congress of farm labourers and small farmers of the Lublin voivodship (September 17, 1944). According to a report of the General Section of the Information and Propaganda Department 'the congress showed that farm labourers *en masse* determinedly supported the programme of the Polish National Liberation Committee. Farm committees, controlling and preventing abuse in the estates, have been established. In a large majority of the districts farm labourers have elected their delegates to the commune land reform committees' (Archives of the Ministry of Agriculture, File 170/3. Information note of the Information and Propaganda Department — General Section — for the Premier, dated September 18, 1944).

²⁶ These demands were put forward at a congress of small farmers in Lublin on July 25, 1944 ('Rzeczpospolita' of August 26, 1944, J. Blug, *Konferencja drobnych rolników w Lublinie* [*Small Farmers' Conference in Lublin*]); (at the first congress of 'Wici' held in Lublin on August 27—28, 1944 ('Wici' of September 17, 1944)); at a congress of the Peasant Party in the Liberated Territories held on September 17—18, 1944 ('Zielony Sztandar' of October 6, 1944, *Report from the First Congress of the Peasant Party in the Liberated Territories*).

view ascribing the August and September passivity mainly to terror seems hardly acceptable. This view can be disproved by the fact alone that even in the Lublin region terrorist activities had a local character and, in principle, at that time were not expressly directed against the land reform workers. Later, when terrorism was considerably intensified and directed against the participants in and organizers of the distribution of land, peasants entitled to benefits under the reform did take an active part.

A more important part in hindering the land reform was played by sabotage, the lack of publicity for the decree and sluggish preparations for the partition of estates. In the Białystok and Lublin voivodships, the land offices had taken over only a small part of the estates. In those under State management, administrative posts were often occupied by people openly hostile to the most active farm committees and to the land reform in general. In some cases executive posts were given to former owners or managers. In a number of districts of the Lublin voivodship, land commissaries took advantage of the fact that the decree had omitted to define the powers of the farm committees and refused to recognize them, or even dissolved the most inconvenient ones. In some districts, commune authorities failed to make the decree known to the peasants. Moreover, some of them commented on the decree in terms hostile to the Polish National Liberation Committee.

Sabotage of preparations for the distribution of land did not meet with counteraction of democratic parties.²⁷ At the end of September, the few existing local party organizations were unable either to exercise effective control over the land offices or to launch a large scale propaganda campaign in support of the land reform decree. Attempts at setting up peasant institutions, empowered by the decree to participate in the partition of estates, were made only very occasionally and information about the decree that was reaching the countryside from the Polish National Liberation Committee sources was very scanty.²⁸

Protracted preparations, effectively and very often with impunity sabotaged by many of the former officials, as well as the helplessness and inactivity of the democratic parties resulted in a large proportion of those entitled to benefit under the land reform refusing to believe in or doubting of the fulfilment of the promises given by the Polish National Liberation Committee.²⁹ There was a grow-

²⁷ Up to October, the Peasant Party and the Polish Socialist Party did not succeed to organize their local branches in the districts. The Polish Workers' Party, too, had only very few local organizations at the time.

²⁸ See Central Military Archives, vol. 34, p. 100. Report from an Inspector of the Central Army Political Board dated October 11, 1944, Nisko and Kolbuszowa districts. Central Military Archives, File 74, p. 11—12. Report from an Inspector of the General Section of the Central Army Political Board dated September 30, 1944; Central Military Archives, File 34, p. 59.

²⁹ See W. Gomułka, speech at a conference of the PWP activists on November 12—13, 1944 (Archives of the Party History Institute). R. Zambrowski, report submitted at a conference of

ing conviction that the new authorities lacked strength, or even that they would not last long.

The third reason, by no means less important, was the fact that, with anti-Soviet and anti-communist complexes persistent in the Polish community, including certain groups of peasants, reactionary propaganda was temporarily achieving the desired effects. In view of frequent endeavours of land commissaries to exempt from the partition as much as 25 per cent. (or more) of the total acreage belonging to the Land Fund,³⁰ some peasants were inclined to believe widely circulated rumours that the land reform would constitute a preliminary step towards an early collectivization and that post-partition remnants would be affected in the first place.³¹ The view that it was allegedly advisable or even necessary to postpone the land reform until the end of the war was becoming more and more widely accepted in certain peasant circles.³² Underground organizations temporarily succeeded in raising and intensifying opposition against the decree among some of the entitled to benefit under the reform, and in undermining confidence as to the aims and character of the reform and the intentions of its initiators.

Towards the end of October, under the influence of numerous new factors (to be dealt with later) a radical change occurred in the peasants' attitude to the land reform. The peasants joined in working on the implementation of the reform, first of all in the Rzeszów region and the Puławy (Lublin voivodship) and Mińsk Mazowiecki (Warsaw voivodship) districts.

The voivodship plenipotentiary for land reform affairs in Rzeszów reported on November 2: 'peasant activity growing and assuming dimensions of a powerful mass movement, all peasant groups are gradually joining. Mass participation of peasants in the committees, also directly in the partition of land. Groups of peasants debating all day. They insist on the right to distribute land

the PWP activists in Lublin on November 12—13, 1944 (Arch. of the PHI) and a speech at the Peasants' Congress ('Trybuna Wolności' of January 14, 1944). Views of the peasants published in the 'Department of Agriculture Bulletin.'

³⁰ In the Białystok voivodship, the Voivodship Land Office proposed to exempt 25% of land belonging to the estates (Arch. of the PHI IV/A—III3, p. 34, Report from the PWP Regional Committee in Białystok of October 1944); In the Jarosław district (Rzeszów voivodship) — 20% (Arch. of the Ministry of Agriculture, File 170/3. Note for the Premier from the General Section of the Information and Propaganda Department dated September 18, 1944/; in the Krasnystaw district — 30%. Archiver of the Lublin Voivodship Committee of the PUWP, File 91. Report from members of the executive of the PUWP Voivodship Committee on an inspection tour of October 1944).

³¹ It seems to be proved by the questions frequently addressed to officers of the Army Political Board at village meetings (Central Military Archives, File 74, p. 109, 164).

³² These demands were often put forward by soldiers during the discussions (Centr. Mil. Arch. File 31).

by themselves. Village meetings by the dozen.’³³ The plenipotentiary for the Puławy district wrote in a report early in November that interest in the land reform had been markedly growing among peasants, that delegations from various areas were coming to see the plenipotentiaries, asking for explanations, instructions and assistance in surveying work; land distribution committees were spontaneously formed by peasants.³⁴ Even in some communes of the Łuków district, where particularly serious difficulties had been experienced in the realization of the reform, the population demanded that the decree should be immediately implemented, and took part in the making out of nominal rolls of those entitled to benefit under the reform.³⁵

The growing active participation of peasant masses in the partition of estates was equally convincingly proved by the progress achieved. During the first two weeks in the Rzeszów voivodship 44 estates had been partitioned.³⁶ Between October 24 and 27 this number increased to 79,³⁷ and during the next two weeks (October 27—November 10) as many as 157 estates were partitioned and work was still in progress in another 92 estates.³⁸ Compared with the first fortnight the rate of progress increased nearly sixfold.

The partition of estates in the Lublin voivodship progressed much slower. Up to November 10, in the Rzeszów voivodship, the partition of 98.5 per cent.

³³ Archives of the Rzeszów Voivodship People’s Council. Report from the voivodship plenipotentiary for land reform affairs dated November 2, 1944. In the last days of October, peasants from the Jarosław district of the Rzeszów voivodship were the most active helpers in the partition of estates. In his report to the General Section of the Central Army Political Board, dated November 6, 1944, 2nd Lieutenant Chomicki wrote that ‘peasants and farm labourers are partitioning land on their own initiative where surveyors have not yet arrived [the commune of Chłopic]. They come in crowds to land reform meetings and demand land [. . .] They receive the speakers enthusiastically, and speak themselves, thanking the Polish National Liberation Committee for allocations of land. In the estate of Pełkinie the meeting unanimously decided to allot a one-hectare plot to the district plenipotentiary of the PNL. After the completion of partition work in the estate of Kidałowice, members of the partitioning committee volunteered to help in the partition of other estates’ (Centr. Milit. Arch., File 74, p. 116). ‘Trybuna Wolności’ reported that towards the end of October 400 peasants worked in the partitioning committees and surveying teams in that district (‘Trybuna Wolności’ of October 30, 1944, S. Romaniuk, *Reforma rolna w powiecie jarosławskim [Land Reform in Jarosław District]*). In the Przemyśl district, peasants showed much activity at the end of October (Arch. of Rzeszów People’s Council. Report from Przemyśl District PWP Committee of November 4, 1944).

³⁴ Archives of the Ministry of Agriculture, File 755/27.

³⁵ Centr. Milit. Arch., File 74, p. 84. Report from an inspector of the General Section of the Central Army Political Board on a tour of the Łuków district (from October 23 to October 28, 1944).

³⁶ ‘Land Reform Bulletin’ [later abbreviated to BRR] of October 24, 1944. *Parcelacja w woj. rzeszowskim [The Partition of Estates in Rzeszów Voivodship]*.

³⁷ BRR of November 2, 1944. *Wykaz majątków rozparcelowanych i w parcelacji za czas do 27 X [List of Estates Partitioned or in the Course of Partition up to October 27]*.

³⁸ BRR of November 16, 1944. A list of the estates partitioned in the Rzeszów voivodship up to November 10, 1944.

of all estates affected by the reform was already completed or in progress.³⁹ In the Lublin voivodship, according to information from 14 districts, only 65.5 per cent. of the estates earmarked for partition were partitioned or undergoing partition.⁴⁰

THE CAUSES AND THE NATURE OF THE CHANGE IN PEASANTS' ATTITUDE

Early in October, the Central Committee of the Polish Workers' Party, changing its tactics regarding the land reform, adopted the following attitude: special plenipotentiaries of the Polish National Liberation Committee for land reform matters should be appointed and given most of the powers now belonging to the land offices; land reform matters should be dealt with by poorest peasants and the widest possible participation of peasants in the early implementation of the reform should be assured; those entitled to benefits under the land reform should be given the necessary assistance of the working class and the democratic parties in the implementation of the reform.⁴¹

These points were incorporated in the Polish National Liberation Committee instruction of October 11, 1944 concerning the accelerated implementation of the land reform.⁴² On the strength of this instruction the Polish National Liberation Committee plenipotentiaries for matters of the reform (each with two deputies) were appointed for all voivodships and districts. The voivodship plenipotentiaries and their deputies were to be appointed by the head of the Agriculture and Land Reform Department, and the district plenipotentiaries and their deputies by the appropriate voivodship plenipotentiaries, after consultation with the chairman of the voivodship people's council. The land offices

³⁹ Up to December 20, 253 estates were partitioned in the Rzeszów voivodship (Archives of the Office of the Council of Ministers, File 6/48. Report from the deputy chief of the Agriculture and Land Reform Department, S. Bieniek, of December 20, 1944). Up to November 10, 249 estates were partitioned or in the course of partition (BRR of November 16, 1944).

⁴⁰ 'Zielony Sztandar' of December 4, 1944, *Wyniki reformy rolnej w woj. lubelskim* [*Land Reform Results in the Lublin Voivodship*].

⁴¹ See: Appeal from the PWP Central Committee of October 3, 1944, *Wszyscy do pracy w realizacji reformy rolnej* [*Everyone to Help in the Implementation of the Land Reform*], ('Trybuna Wolności' of October 12, 1944). Minutes of a conference of PWP activists in Lublin on October 10 and 11, 1944 (Arch. of the Party History Institute, IV/A—III/3, p. 35); the earlier quoted minutes of the PWP Central Committee of October 9, 1944 (Arch. of the Party Hist. Inst.); an instruction of the PWP Central Committee of October, 1944 (Arch. of the Party Hist. Inst., 295).

⁴² The Government argued that it was necessary to speed up the partitioning of estates because it was the only way to prevent the destruction of the estates, and because only the partition of land, if only in some parts of the country, could convince the peasants of the whole country that they would really receive land this time ('Barykada Wolności' of November 9, 1944. An interview with Premier E. Osóbka-Morawski).

were put under control and supervision of the plenipotentiaries,⁴³ and their functions restricted to purely technical matters (surveying and assessing the value of plots, etc.). The plenipotentiaries were empowered to dismiss employees who 'sabotaged or hindered the implementation of the decree on the land reform.'

The above mentioned instruction set up village committees for the partition of land. The partition plan was to be worked out by the committees under the supervision of the entitled to allocations of land. Special meetings of all concerned were to be called for that purpose. The instruction rectified the mistake of the decree and laid down that owners of medium-size farms (5 to 10 hectares), fathers of large families, should be also entitled to allocations of land. It also emphasized that, in spite of the lack of surveyors, the partition and distribution of land should begin forthwith.

Early in October, leaders of the Polish Union of Patriots started a fierce political battle with the Peasant Party group 'ROCh' and with representatives of the peasant movement who were conciliatory towards that group. In consequence, the polemic with the criticism of the land reform formulated by a part of peasant leaders was becoming ever more uncompromising and violent.⁴⁴ Continued in the Press, in leaflets and at mass meetings it assumed the size of a great political campaign. It was in this atmosphere that the National People's Council, on October 7, 1944, recalled A. Witos from the post of the head of the Agriculture and Land Reform Department, and replaced him with Osóbka-Morawski, Chairman of the Polish National Liberation Committee.

The changes in the Agriculture and Land Reform Department, the conference of activists of the Polish Workers' Party and its resolutions, as well as the instruction issued by the Polish National Liberation Committee marked a turning point in the implementation of the reform. New, revolutionary methods and means

⁴³ In an instruction for the voivodship and district land offices, dated October 16, 1944, the Agriculture and Land Reform Department explained that 'the land commissaries should immediately carry out all the instructions of the PNLC plenipotentiaries for land reform' (Archives of the PUWP Voivodship Committee).

⁴⁴ An appeal issued by the PWP Central Committee on October 13, 1944 reads in part: 'Agents of landlords and enemies of the land reform are easily recognisable. They say that the land reform is premature, that we should wait with the reform until it is passed by the *Sejm*'. 'Right-wing members of the Peasant Party say that the decree does not satisfy the needs of the countryside, that land should be given only to peasants, that farm labourers should be excluded, etc.' 'The same people [right-wing members of the Peasant Party] who cheated the peasants in 1920 with the famous land reform, are now stealthily persuading the peasants that the PNLC land reform is not good'. 'Mikołajczyk and his followers, allied to the reactionary circles of *Sannacja* and landlords, should like the 1920 affair to repeat. This is why they promise 10 and 15-hectare plots to peasants, though they know that this is a swindle because there is not enough land'. ('Trybuna Wolności' of October 12, 1944. Appeal from the PWP Central Committee *Wszyscy do pracy w realizacji reformy rolnej* [Everyone to Help in the Implementation of the Land Reform], of October 3, 1944).

were used. Władysław Gomułka stated in this connection: 'There is no doubt that we shall be able to give effect to the land reform only if we give it the impetus of a social revolution in the countryside [...] The formal change on the part of the head of the Department will not accelerate its course or remove shortcomings, if we fail to mobilise all the forces of our Party [...]

'Formerly, emphasis was placed on the State element, headed by Witos [...]. Now, it is being shifted to the mass element. This is a radical difference.'⁴⁵

The tendency of those entitled to benefit under the reform to remain neutral observers was overcome as a result, among other things, of the deprivation of the land offices of their powers, which had been granted to them by the decree, and of the ending of sabotage practices in which some of them had been engaged. But the improvement resulted chiefly from the intensified and wide-spread activities of workers' and military land reform brigades formed all over the country, mostly on the initiative of the Polish Workers' Party, in the second half of October. The brigades, which numbered more than 2,000 members in 1944, started a nation-wide explanatory campaign and arranged hundreds of meetings of peasants.

Within a few days, the plenipotentiaries and the brigades evicted the owners and many administrative employees from the estates.⁴⁶ The effect was immediate: very often peasants applied for allocation of land on the very next day.⁴⁷ Even in the areas where the implementation of the decree was the easiest, the brigades initiated and helped to organize elections for the first village land reform committees and committees for the partition of land,⁴⁸ and in many districts⁴⁹ where most serious difficulties were experienced in the implementation of the decree, they organized all the committees, at first by their own efforts.

⁴⁵ Arch. of the Party Hist. Inst. The earlier quoted minutes of the PWP Central Committee sitting of October 9, 1944.

⁴⁶ See Centr. Milit. Arch., File 74, p. 119: Report from an inspector of the Central Army Political Board for the period from October 20 to November 15, 1944; File 74, p. 146: Letter from the voivodship plenipotentiary for the land reform in Lublin to the district plenipotentiaries, dated November 28, 1944. Arch. of the Party Hist. Inst. 295: Minutes of the PWP conference held in Lublin on November 12 and 13, 1944. Arch. of the Party Hist. Inst. IV/A—III/3, p. 34: Report from Białystok Regional Committee for October 1944.

⁴⁷ The influence of this fact on the peasants' decision to take part in the partition of estates is unanimously emphasized by the democratic Press, and relations and reports from PWP activists.

⁴⁸ See Centr. Milit. Arch., File 74, p. 66, 83, 84, 87, 95, 116: Minutes of election meetings of commune land reform committees.

⁴⁹ See Centr. Milit. Arch., File 74, p. 135: Report from Major Burgin, Chief of the Army Political Board of 1st Armoured Corps, dated November 23, 1944. Centr. Milit. Arch., File 289, p. 13: Report from the General Section of the Central Army Political Board for the period from December 1944 to February 1945. Centr. Milit. Arch., File 34, p. 59: Report from Major Szyr, Chief of the General Section of the Central Army Political Board, dated November 29, 1944. Centr. Milit. Arch., File 74, p. 96 and 97: Report from Warrant Officer Ławrykowski for the General Section of the Central Army Political Board, on a visit to the Łuków district on October 18—22 and 23—28, 1944.

The brigades made the partition of the first estates, including those in the areas where the peasants were most favourably disposed towards the reform.⁵⁰ As soon as the brigades, together with farm labourers, started the partition and distribution of land, the peasants were faced with the alternative: to accept allotments at once, or to lose them. Mostly, for fear of losing their chances, those entitled to benefits under the reform, were declaring their desire to acquire land, although they were running the risk of displeasing the reactionary camp. That was a very significant and important feature everywhere in the liberated territories in 1944.

In the Białystok voivodship 'the people were at first indifferent to or outright distrustful of the reform and did not signify their wish to acquire land. As soon as the partition of the estates, announced by the Polish National Liberation Committee had been rapidly put into effect, this attitude changed radically.'⁵¹ According to the opinion of Żółkiewski, an officer who played a leading part in the implementation of the reform in the Tomaszów and Zamość districts (Lublin voivodship) 'at first only very few people applied for land. Whole villages were resigning their allocations. Only recently, when they could see that the estates were really being partitioned, they all began to ask to be put on the list.'⁵² Chief of a military land distribution brigade in the Krosno district (Rzeszów voivodship) wrote: 'After our arrival, the people showed very much reserve at first. However, when they saw the surveyor and his assistants measure the land and later allot plots to the people as their property, the peasants began to swarm in and to put their names on the list for land.'⁵³ In the Jarosław district of the same voivodship, peasants from many villages, who had done nothing to prepare the partition of land before the arrival of the brigade, after the first few estates had been partitioned by volunteers, greeted them 'with joy and relief, very pleased that they will not be left out.'⁵⁴ Similar reports had been received from the majority of the districts.

During the first stage of the reform the difference in the attitude towards the reform of those entitled to allocations of land consisted chiefly in that the

⁵⁰ See Centr. Milit. Arch., File 74, p. 87: Report from an inspector of the General Section of the Central Army Political Board for the period October 18—22, 1944. Centr. Milit. Arch., File. 74, p. 116: Report from an inspector of the General Section of the Central Army Political Board dated November 6, 1944. Centr. Milit. Arch., File 74, p. 87: Excerpt from a report from Training Battalion of 2nd Engineers Reserve Regiment.

⁵¹ Arch. of the Ministry of Agriculture, File 755/22: Report from the Voivodship Land Office to the Ministry of Agriculture and Land Reform, dated November 14, 1944.

⁵² Centr. Milit. Arch., File 340, p. 2: Report for the period from October 16 to November 28, 1944.

⁵³ Centr. Milit. Arch., File 74: Report from the General Section of the Central Army Political Board based on reports from soldiers detailed to assist in the partition of estates (dated December 2, 1944).

⁵⁴ 'Trybuna Wolności' of October 30, 1944: from an interview with Bojarski, chief of a land reform brigade.

proposed allotments were either rejected or accepted. The rejection cases were more frequent in the Białystok and partly Lublin voivodships. They were much less common, in fact exceptional, in the Rzeszów voivodship. The consent to accept the allotment was at that time the maximum peasant contribution to the reform. Participation in the implementation of the land reform decree was still uncommon, even in the Rzeszów voivodship. In November, active participation of the peasants in the partition of estates was growing in all areas, unevenly though. The Rzeszów voivodship was still in the lead as regards the scope and intensity of these activities. This found its expression in the numerous, very often lasting many hours, meetings at which lists of the candidates for allotments were made out,⁵⁵ in the way of making the lists, often by the peasants concerned, in accordance with their own sense of justice; in the refusals to obey the official decisions which were considered unjust by the majority; in the cases of spontaneous distribution of land; in the formation of peasant brigades for the distribution of land (as at Jarosław)⁵⁶; in the active part the peasants took in meetings and celebrations connected with the end of the distribution of land and the presentation of documents confirming the allocation of land.

During the final stage of the land reform campaign, active participation was noticeable of a part of the peasants in the struggle against the groups hostile to the reform and to the Polish National Liberation Committee, and in the support for the people's government and the democratic parties.

Faced with growing terrorism, turned either directly (in the districts of Sokółka, Biała, Łuków, Włodawa, Kraśnik, Tomaszów, Przemyśl and Rzeszów) or indirectly (the districts of Puławy and Zamość) against those engaged in the implementation of the land reform, peasants from a number of communes in the Puławy district were passing resolutions condemning the National Armed Forces (NSZ) and the underground units of the Home Army (AK).⁵⁷ In the Mińsk Mazowiecki district, in November, they informed the security authorities about the location of underground units. The atmosphere created in the course of the partition of land was so much unfavourable to the underground activities⁵⁸

⁵⁵ Arch. of the Rzeszów Voivodship People's Council, Files of the Agriculture Department: Reports from the voivodship plenipotentiary dated November 2, 1944, and from the PWP District Committee in Przemyśl, dated November 4, 1944.

⁵⁶ Report from an inspector of the General Section of the Central Army Political Board, dated November 6, 1944 (Centr. Milit. Arch., File 74, p. 116).

⁵⁷ Centr. Milit. Arch., File 74, p. 40, 66, 91: Minutes of meetings devoted to land reform problems of the end of October.

⁵⁸ Underground political and military organizations, associated with the *émigré* government in London were active at that time. They included the 'ROCh' group of the Peasant Party led by S. Mikołajczyk, the 'Wolność, Równość, Niepodległość' [Freedom, Equality, Independence] group led by Arciszewski, Pużak and Zaremba, the Nationalist Party, the Labour Party, the Home Army and others. All these groups opposed the Polish National Liberation Committee and its land reform.

that 'the landlords and the bands disappeared altogether.'⁵⁹ In the Rzeszów voivodship, too, peasants 'declared their political standpoint,' in some cases 'drove away Home Army units' and 'denounced whole Home Army organizations' to the security authorities.⁶⁰ In the circumstances, as a representative of the Home Army admitted, in December the Home Army units were literally 'melting away' and were not in a position to undertake 'any planned and organized action.'⁶¹ Growing numbers of Home Army members were leaving cover. A number of Home Army commanders were looking for a way to come out in the open and to reach an understanding with the authorities of the Polish National Liberation Committee. Not only rank-and-file members but also leaders of the 'ROCh' group of the Peasant Party and of the Peasant Battalions were abandoning illegal political and military centres.⁶² The peasants, on a relatively

⁵⁹ Arch. of the Party Hist. Inst., 295: Minutes of the PWP conference held on November 12 and 13, 1944. (From a statement made by the Warsaw voivodship delegate).

⁶⁰ Arch. of the Rzeszów Voivodship People's Council: Report from the voivodship plenipotentiary (for November 1944).

⁶¹ Stenographic report of the 6th session of the National People's Council, p. 194). Quoted from a speech of W. Zawadzki.)

⁶² In the Biłgoraj area, where Peasant Battalions declared their support for the London government in July and August 1944, refused to co-operate with the Polish National Liberation Committee and opposed it actively, late in November and in the beginnings of December the district organization of the 'ROCh' Peasant Party issued special declarations in which it condemned the activities of the Home Army and the London government. (The declarations were signed by five commanders of 'Żywią' military organization and three political leaders of 'ROCh'. Stenographic reports of the 6th session of the NPC, p. 196. W. Konopka quoted the declaration in his speech). 'The district headquarters of Peasant Battalions issued an order dated December 1, 1944, dissolving all the units and recommending to officers and other ranks of Peasant Battalions that they should immediately (before December 31, 1944) enlist in the Polish Army. Archives of the Office of the Council of Ministers, File 19. Note for the Premier — undated (probably of the first days of December) and unsigned (most likely from the Information and Propaganda Department). Both the declaration of 'ROCh' and the order of Peasant Battalions appealed to their members to start working on the rebuilding and consolidation of a new, democratic Poland, under the leadership of the Polish National Liberation Committee. Also the Puławy District Command of the Peasant Battalions (in a declaration published at that time) categorically dissociated itself from 'the people of the underground' and branded as 'enemies of the Polish nation all those who sabotage the orders of the State authorities, and persuade people to desert the Polish Army' (Arch. of the Office of the Council of Ministers, File 9. Note for the Premier from the Information and Propaganda Department, of January 2, 1945). The order of the Peasant Battalions was signed by the commander of the Peasant Battalions political section, two commanders of the LSB (People's Security Service), and deputy district commander of the KB (Security Corps).

In the Węgrów district, the Peasant Battalions came into the open in January 1945. Many of their soldiers joined Militia. (Related by Władysław Okulus, former member of 'ROCh' group at Węgrów, and recorded in September 1958 by Dobrowolski, a student of the High School of Social Science).

In the Krasnystaw district, as early as the first weeks of September, 'ROCh' representatives declared their access to the Peasant Party and recognized the National People's Council and the

large scale, supported the National Liberation Committee, particularly in the organization of local authorities and the build-up of the Polish armed forces.

In defiance of the underground instructions to boycott the commune people's councils, the councils had been established everywhere in November and, with a few exceptions, were functioning well. They were becoming organs of the truly people's government, and gaining for themselves general confidence among the country people, politically non-organized.⁶³ According to unanimous Press reports and relations from the Polish Workers' Party committees 'many peasants volunteered for the Army,' very often after the distribution of land, especially in the Rzeszów voivodship.

In November and December, the membership of the democratic parties (the Peasant Party, the Polish Socialist Party and particularly the Polish Workers' Party) was rapidly growing. In July, 1944, out of the 20,000 members of the Polish Workers' Party some 15,000 were in occupied territories and 5,000 in liberated territories. At the end of December, 1944, 12,000 out of the total of 30,000 were in occupied territories and 18,000 in liberated territories (including about 11,700 peasants).⁶⁴

Polish National Liberation Committee as the only legal authorities. Thirteen of them became members of the Peasant Party district executive ('Zielony Sztandar' of December 1, 1944: *Zjazd w Krasnymstawie* [*Krasnystaw Congress*]). The district conference of the Peasant Party at Tomaszów Lubelski also sided with the PNCL and broke with the London government ('Zielony Sztandar' of January 28, 1945).

In the Kraśnik district, the Peasant Party intensified its activities 'and old leaders of the occupation days declared their readiness to co-operate' at the time of the land reform. (Archives of the Lublin Voivodship Committee of the PUWP, File 91: Report from a member of the PWP Voivodship Committee executive dated November 22, 1944). At Biała Podlaska the first district conference of the Peasant Party, also attended by former members of the 'ROCh' group, widely discussed problems of the land reform (Arch. of the Lublin Voivodship Committee of the PUWP, File 91: report from a member of the PWP Voivodship Committee executive dated November 21, 1944. See also a report from the PWP District Committee at Biała, dated December 11, 1944). The Peasant Party organization in the Węgrów district was formed in similar circumstances, (Arch. of the PUWP Voivodship Committee, 'Reports' File: Report from the PWP the District Committee at Węgrów for the period from November 1 to December 31, 1944).

No similar information is available from the Rzeszów voivodship. Nevertheless, the fact that it was in this voivodship that the largest proportion of former members of 'ROCh' and Peasant Battalions took an active part in the partition of estates seems to support the hypothesis that the processes characteristic of the Lublin voivodship also occurred there. This was indirectly confirmed by General Okulicki, Commander-in-Chief of the Home Army, who admitted on October 26, 1944 (prior to the above described events) that the followers of the PNLC had 'some successes in Peasant Battalions, particularly in the Lublin region' ('Polskie Siły Zbrojne' ['Polish Armed Forces'], vol. III, p. 911).

⁶³ The proportion of non-party members in the commune people's councils exceeded 50% as a rule.

⁶⁴ W. Góra, N. Kołomejczyk, *Z materiałów o rozwoju organizacyjnym PPR w drugiej połowie 1944* [*Materials Concerning the Development of the PWP Organization in the Second Half of 1944*], 'Z pola walki', No. 1 of 1958, p. 138 etc.

If we assume that the above presented material is not accidental or non-typical, we can formulate at least two conclusions, which are in all probability correct.

1. The active participation of the peasants in the partition of land, at the end of 1944, which changed later into the general support for the Polish National Liberation Committee, was most evident in the Rzeszów voivodship and in the districts of Puławy and Mińsk Mazowiecki in other voivodships.

2. In the areas where peasants took no active part in the partition of land, a large proportion of those who had been given land failed to declare themselves clearly in favour of the Polish National Liberation Committee. It was not before 1945 that they did so, at the time of determined attacks the underground counter-revolutionary organizations launched against the land reform.

PEASANTS ATTITUDE TOWARDS REFORM IN LIBERATED TERRITORIES IN 1945

In 1945, the supreme Party and State organs placed special emphasis on these aspects of the land reform policy which could be expected to encourage as active as possible participation of peasants in the land reform campaign, and to result in their close association with the new political and social system.

The Central Committee of the Polish Workers' Party categorically warned the Party organizations and authorities against 'doing the land reform campaign for the peasants' and against 'giving' land to them.⁶⁵ It was pointed out that the partition of the estates should be initiated and executed by those entitled to land.⁶⁶ The leaders of the Polish Workers' Party pointed to the inadmissibility of repeating last year's mistakes in the allocation of land. Special attention was called to the necessity to respect the rights to land of the owners of medium-sized farms, on an equality with the other groups of peasants.

The Provisional Government accepted the principle of granting additional land to undersized farms up to 5 hectares, and not up to 2 or 3 hectares as in 1944. The Ministry of Agriculture instruction dated March 1, 1945 explained that should the available amount of land prove insufficient for allocation of land up to 5 hectares to all the entitled, the following directions should be followed: the largest possible number of farms should be given land up to 5 hectares; the rest of the entitled, including the landless, should be given the right to apply for land in the western and northern territories.

As a result of the good use made by the authorities of the past experience

⁶⁵ See PWP Central Committee instructions concerning the implementation of the land reform on the newly liberated territories, dated February 22, 1945 and March 15, 1945 (Arch. of the Party History Institute, 295).

⁶⁶ *Ibidem*. See also H. Chelchowski's speech at a conference of the PWP district secretaries held in Kielce between February 28 and March 1, 1945 (Minutes in the archives of the Kielce Voivodship Committee of the PUWP).

and of a number of new, more favourable circumstances, the part played by the peasants in the implementation of the reform had grown considerably in comparison with 1944.

In 1945, in the Warsaw voivodship, no appreciable numbers of cases of rejection of allotments were noted, with the exception of the Płońsk and Działdowo districts.⁶⁷ In the other areas of the Warsaw voivodship, and in the Kielce and Cracow voivodships refusals to accept land allocated under the reform were very few and far apart.⁶⁸ In the Płońsk district, according to an account of a former deputy plenipotentiary for the land reform, land was willingly accepted by everyone.⁶⁹ 'We had not a single case of a peasant refusing to accept land,' wrote the plenipotentiary for the Kielce voivodship.⁷⁰ 'No tendency to refuse land was noted in any of the districts,' reported the Cracow Voivodship Committee of the Polish Workers' Party.⁷¹

Compared with the last year's position, the participation of peasants in activities connected with the reform seemed wider, at least in the Kielce and Cracow voivodships.⁷² In some districts peasants proposed partition of the estates on their own initiative, which was something unheard of in 1944, with the exception of very few isolated cases. At Mała Wieś (Płock district) the land partition committees started distributing land directly after they had received instructions, without having waited for surveyors.⁷³ There were more similar cases.⁷⁴ In many localities in the Busko district peasants provisionally

⁶⁷ Arch. of the PUPP Voivodship Committee: Report from an instructor of the PWP Voivodship Committee dated April 10, 1945.

⁶⁸ In the Busko district, only at Wojcza the land partitioning committee was reluctantly elected because of a rumour that the land reform decree was to be rescinded (Arch. of the Agricultural Economy Institute (Abbr. IER), File 'Busko District': from an interview made on August 6, 1952 with J. Siwy, former district plenipotentiary for the land reform in the Busko district). In the Płock district (according to a relation of the former plenipotentiary) only footmen and overseers refused their allocations of land in a number of cases.

⁶⁹ Arch. IER, File 'Zęgoty, Płock District': interview made on August 23, 1952 with the former deputy plenipotentiary for the Płock district.

⁷⁰ Arch. of the Party Hist. Inst., IV/A—III/21, doc. 15: Report from the voivodship plenipotentiary for the land reform, dated April 23, 1945.

⁷¹ Arch. of the Party Hist. Inst., IV/A—III/22, doc. 23: Report from the Cracow Voivodship Committee of the PWP.

⁷² This becomes well understandable if we consider the fact that many of the factors which in 1944 discouraged the peasants from the participation in the partition of land (the weakness of the PNLC, the prestige of the *émigré* government headed by Mikołajczyk, the ignorance of the PNLC intentions, etc.) were no longer at work. In the new political situation there were less reasons for the peasants to conceal their desire to acquire land and it could be openly manifested by them.

⁷³ Arch. IER, File 'Zęgoty, Płock District': from an interview made on August 23, 1952 with the former deputy district plenipotentiary in Płock, Porzęcki.

⁷⁴ *Ibidem*.

partitioned and distributed land on their own, without surveyors.⁷⁵ They were finding the estates liable to be partitioned, unaided by anybody.⁷⁶ Five estates in the Jędrzejów district were partitioned by the peasants themselves.⁷⁷ In the Włoszczowa district, too, 'very often peasants partitioned and distributed land by themselves.'⁷⁸ According to an appreciation of the Cracow Voivodship Committee of the Polish Workers' Party, the activity and support of the peasant masses were much more wide-spread in 1945 than in 1944.⁷⁹ A similar opinion was expressed by the plenipotentiary for the Kielce voivodship⁸⁰ and the plenipotentiary for the Kozienice district,⁸¹ as well as the Agriculture Department of the Łódź Voivodship Committee of the Polish Workers' Party.⁸²

The activity of poorer groups of peasants is also well proved by the fact that, under its pressure, the plenipotentiaries had to defend the rights of the owners of medium-sized farms and to depart from the original principles.

Although resettlement possibilities in the Recovered Territories were in 1945 much better, those entitled to allocations of land were not inclined to reno-

⁷⁵ Arch. IER, File 'Busko District': from an interview made on August 6, 1952 with J. Siwy, former district plenipotentiary for the land reform at Busko.

⁷⁶ *Ibidem*.

⁷⁷ Arch. of the Party Hist. Inst., IV/A—III/21, doc. 15: Report from the voivodship plenipotentiary for the land reform in Kielce (dated April 23, 1945).

⁷⁸ Arch. IER, File 'Moskarszew, Włoszczowa District': from an interview made in August 1952 with Dr. Ślusznik, former district plenipotentiary for the land reform at Włoszczowa. The atmosphere of those days is described in a relation of a plenipotentiary. At Irządze (Włoszczowa district) the commune land reform committee debated for 24 hours. 'It was tragic', relates the former district plenipotentiary, 'that there was not enough land for everyone. The committee assessed the total acreage available [...] All the villages wanted to benefit under the reform. Nominal rolls of all the peasants in the village were read at the meeting and it was in that way that those entitled to land were nominated. There were some 140 of them after the first reading. It was clear that all of them could not be given land. Arguments began whom to exclude. Another list was made up at the next meeting. It still contained some 100 names. The meeting lasted from 3.40 p.m. to 8 a.m. 72 names were left after the third reading. Meanwhile, surveyor Ząbek was dividing land into one-hectare plots, consulting the plenipotentiary and marking the plots on the plan. A secret meeting followed, at which the numbers of plots were entered against the names. As soon as this became known the village went up in riot. People were coming with complaints. Some wanted to beat up the chairman of the land partitioning committee'. (*Ibidem*).

⁷⁹ Arch. of the Party Hist. Inst., IV/A—III/22, doc. 23: Report from the Agricultural Section of the Cracow Voivodship Committee of the PWP.

⁸⁰ Arch. of the Party Hist. Inst., W/A—III/21, doc. 15: Report from the voivodship plenipotentiary dated April 23, 1945. The comparison was based on own experience. Most of them performed the functions of the land reform plenipotentiaries also in 1944.

⁸¹ Arch. of the Kielce Voivodship People's Council: Report from the plenipotentiary for the Kozienice district, dated March 17, 1945.

⁸² 'During the whole period of the land reform, feelings of the peasants were running high. Strong desire to acquire land. More activity than in the Lublin region at one time' (Arch. of the Party Hist. Inst., 295: Report from the Agricultural Section of the PWP Voivodship Committee dated May 1945).

once allotments from neighbouring estates. In the Warsaw and Kielce voivodships they were prepared to accept smaller allotments to make it possible to give land to all the entitled. 'Hundreds of peasants are asking for a single hectare', wrote the plenipotentiary for the Kozenice district.⁸³ 'They were everywhere clamouring for land,' reported the voivodship plenipotentiary in Kielce.⁸⁴ There was a continuous flow of petitions and delegations asking that 'one-hectare plots should be allotted but to everyone.'⁸⁵ In view of the limited amount of land available, the strong and general desire of all the entitled to get it made it impossible to implement the principle of allocating land up to 5 hectares, if a conflict with poorer peasants was to be avoided and the owners of medium-sized farms were not to be excluded. In the circumstances, some of the voivodship plenipotentiaries decided to abandon the originally planned principle of five-hectare allocations. The Kielce voivodship plenipotentiary, for instance, wrote, in his instruction for the district and village plenipotentiaries, dated March 10, 1945: 'The district and village plenipotentiaries must realize what they are doing. They ought to know that it was farm labourers, smallholders, landless and owners of medium-sized farms who waited for land and wanted to buy it. Therefore, land should be given to all these categories. It is the desire of the democratic Polish Government that everyone of them should be given land, and the land reform should be so effected. In some communes owners of medium-sized farms are refused land. The responsible plenipotentiaries will be punished for that, because they sabotage the land reform. They play into the hands of the reactionaries, cause discontent among the owners of medium-sized farms and, consequently, discourage them from co-operation with the government.'⁸⁶ The instruction recommended that:

1. families of farm labourers and of the landless, numbering less than five persons, should be given plots of two to three hectares;
2. undersized farms should be given land up to three hectares;
3. small and medium-sized farms should be given one hectare of arable land or half a hectare of pasture each;
4. all the categories of the peasants entitled to allocations of land must be given land in accordance with the above principles, but only in the villages nearest to the estate.⁸⁷

In the other voivodships of the pre-war Polish territory (with the exception of the Poznań, Bydgoszcz and Gdańsk voivodships) the same difficulty had

⁸³ Arch. of the Kielce Voivodship People's Council: Report from the district plenipotentiary at Kozenice, dated February 17, 1945.

⁸⁴ Arch. of the Party Hist. Inst., IV/A—III/21, doc. 15: Report from the Kielce voivodship plenipotentiary, dated April 23, 1945.

⁸⁵ *Ibidem.*

⁸⁶ Arch. of the Kielce Voivodship People's Council.

⁸⁷ *Ibidem.*

to be overcome. It was necessary to reconcile the principle of five-hectare allocations with the instruction that all the categories of the peasants should be treated equally and their initiative should not be hindered.

Both in 1944 and in 1945, the participation of the peasants in the distribution of land varied in its extent in different areas. It would take a separate and more detailed study to describe the character and, what is most important, the causes of these differences.

THE STRUCTURE OF FARMS FORMED OR ENLARGED UNDER THE LAND REFORM

In the pre-war Polish territory the proportion of land covered by the land reform was 15.7% (32.4% in the west-central part and 13% and 11% in the south-central and south-eastern part respectively).

1,210,000 hectares of land belonging to former estates in the pre-war Polish territory were distributed up to 1949.⁸⁸ Out of this amount peasants received 34% and farm labourers and other landless 65.1%.⁸⁹ In the voivodships where the allocations were larger the proportion of peasants was relatively small (Gdańsk 10%, Bydgoszcz 16%, Poznań 17%), while it was the highest in the voivodships where the allocations were small (Rzeszów 83% and Kielce 69%).⁹⁰

Among the peasants who received land the largest group was that of smallholders (29.94% of the total allocation).⁹¹ It was only in the Rzeszów voivodship that undersized farms held the first place as regards the number of land allocations.⁹² Some 400,000 families from the pre-war Polish territories were given land under the resettlement schemes. Up to 1948, in the pre-war Polish territory 2,022,108 hectares of land were distributed under the land reform and resettlement schemes.⁹³ In 1947, the State farms owned 255,500 hectares of cultivated land,⁹⁴ which constituted 11.2% of the cultivated land of the ex-German and other estates. In the pre-war and recovered territories taken together, the State transferred to peasants 6,070,100 hectares on the basis of the decrees of September 6, 1944 and September 6, 1946.⁹⁵

Because of the lack of statistics it is very difficult to make an analysis of the

⁸⁸ 'Statistical Year-Book', 1949, p. 55, table 4B.

⁸⁹ Calculated in accordance with the data from the Central Statistical Office (the source as above).

⁹⁰ Calculated in accordance with the data from the Central Statistical Office ('Statistical Year-Book', 1948, p. 39, table 2C).

⁹¹ Data from the Social Structure Section of the IER, table 2.

⁹² *Ibidem*.

⁹³ 'Statistical Year-Book', 1948, p. 39, table 2C, p. 41.

⁹⁴ 'Statistical Year-Book', 1948, p. 43, table 4B.

⁹⁵ *Wieś w liczbach* [*Countryside in Figures*], Warszawa 1954, p. 16.

influence the division of large estates had on the structure of farms in the pre-war Polish territory. We can only try and make some estimates.

It is possible to define the structure of the newly formed farms in more detail on the basis of the sample studies on the origin of farms established after 1944, made by the Agricultural Economy Institute, and of the figures showing the number of newly formed farms published by the Central Statistical Office.

As it appears from the calculations based on these figures, in the pre-war Polish territories more than 55% of new farms did not exceed five hectares.⁹⁶ The newly formed farms had no appreciable direct influence on the improvement of the structure of agriculture. However, the structure was more rational than before the war when undersized and small farms constituted 64.6% of all the farms as early as 1921.⁹⁷ In 1939 this proportion was undoubtedly larger still, and the difference between the structure of old and newly formed farms still more marked, to the advantage of the latter.

The importance of the land reform for the increase in the number of medium-sized farms can be clearly seen not only on the example of the formation of farms but also of the changes in the area of the farms existing before the years 1944—1945.

In the pre-war Polish territories 233,900 peasant farms (not counting the landless) increased their area through allocations of land. The accretion totalled 412,500 hectares.⁹⁸ The average increase per undersized farm was 1.5 hectares and per small or medium-sized farm 1.9 hectares. Because of the lack of information it is difficult to make a more accurate calculation of the number of small farms which exceeded five hectares owing to allocations of land, or to assess how many of them were promoted to the rank of medium-sized farm.

However, it can be cautiously assumed that at least 55.5% of the farms which benefited from full and additional allocations exceeded five hectares.⁹⁹ In view of these facts, the opinion (widespread enough) that the distribution of land had adversely influenced the structure of peasant farms in the pre-war Polish territories, can hardly be accepted as justified.

⁹⁶ Calculated on the basis of IER materials *Badania struktury społecznej wsi polskiej* [*Studies on Social Structure of the Polish Countryside*], chapter 'Ruch w dziedzinie własności i posiadania ziemi' ['Changes in Land Property and Possession], Warszawa 1950, p. 9, table 3c (*Structure of Newly Formed Farms*) and table 4 of 'Statistical Year-Book' 1949, p. 55 (number of allocations for farm labourers and landless by voivodships).

⁹⁷ 'Statistical Year-Book', 1955, p. 104, table 3.

⁹⁸ 'Statistical Year-Book', 1949, p. 55, table 4B.

⁹⁹ Taking into account instructions of the voivodship plenipotentiaries as to the area of additional allotments, and the average size of allocations to smallholders ('Statistical Year-Book', 1949, table 4D), it was assumed that the proportion of small farms benefiting under the land reform which increased their acreage to more than 5 hectares, was 100% in the western voivodships, 50% in Warsaw and Białystok voivodship, 25% in Łódź voivodship, 10% in Lublin voivodship, and 0% in Kielce, Cracow and Rzeszów voivodships.

Since the large majority of the newly formed farms in the recovered territories were of medium size, the land reform resulted in a marked improvement in the structure of land ownership on a national scale. This can be convincingly proved by a comparison between the new structure in 1950 and the position of 1921.¹⁰⁰ It will appear from the comparison that the proportion of farms not exceeding two hectares was reduced from 33.9% in 1921 to 25.9% in 1950. The proportion of undersized and small farms taken together decreased in 1950 to 7.4%. At the same time, the farms of this category increased their acreage from 14.8% in 1921 to 24.9% in 1950. Farms of 5 to 20 hectares constituted 41.5% in 1950 as against 30.1% in 1921. The increase in the proportion of land belonging to them was still larger (from 30.8% to 68.2% of the total acreage). In fact, the advantageous influence of the land reform on the structure of farms was greater than it could be deduced from the above quoted figures and estimates, for the changes that had occurred during the period from 1921 to 1944—1945 considerably deteriorated the position.¹⁰¹

In the post-war years, the number of rural proletariat was considerably reduced in all parts of the country (six times on a national scale). The majority of former farm workers moved to the State farms, to towns or to their own farms which they received either under the land reform or resettlement schemes.

The situation of those who are still proletarians has also changed. In consequence of a considerable outflow of manpower from the rural areas, the financial situation of hired labourers in the country has been steadily improving. Also the social position of the country proletariat has changed thanks to the prestige of the People's Government, protecting the exploited.

At the time of the land reform and resettlement, the position of the owners of medium-sized farms was strengthened; in most areas they became dominant personalities of the countryside. The owners of medium-sized farms became the largest peasant group (from 47% of the total number of peasant farms in the west-central part of the country to 67% in the north-eastern part, in 1950). The share of the medium-sized farms in the supply of agricultural produce has grown to an important size (from 60% of marketable agricultural production in the west-central part of the country to 87% in the western part, in 1950). The best part of the means of agricultural production is in the hands of the owners of medium-sized farms (in various areas 54% to 82% of land, 63% to 88% of horses, and 55% to 87% of machines belonging to individual farms, in 1950).¹⁰²

¹⁰⁰ See 'Statistical Year-Book', 1955, p. 104, table 5.

¹⁰¹ In 1939 farms up to 5 hectares accounted for 67.9% of the total, i.e. 11% more than in 1950. Cf. C. Madajczyk, *Burżuazyjno-obszarnicza reforma rolna w Polsce 1918—1939* [Bourgeois Land Reform in Poland 1918—1939], Warszawa 1956, p. 378.

¹⁰² Bogusław Gałęski, *Z badań nad przemianami społeczno-ekonomicznymi struktury wsi w Polsce Ludowej*, [Studies on Social and Economic Changes in the Structure of the Countryside in the People's Poland] 'Myśl Filozoficzna', 1956, No. 6, p. 46.

During the post-war years, the number of large peasant farms (20 to 100 hectares) has diminished in the whole country, both in absolute and relative figures. In 1921, there were 87,620 farms of this category. This number dropped below 40,000 in 1950. Their proportion was 2.7% in 1921,¹⁰³ and only 1.1% of the total number of peasant farms in 1950.¹⁰⁴ Within the new frontiers of Poland the absolute and relative number of large peasant farms has been more than halved.

Apart from liquidating the remnants of feudalism in the country, the land reform considerably restricted capitalist exploitation, both through the allocation of land to the landless and smallholders and the abolition of the estates, and the weakening of the group of peasants-capitalists. Through the changes in the social structure of the countryside to the advantage of the working peasants, the land reform laid the foundations for the transformations of the agricultural system in the direction of socialism.

(Translated by Jerzy Eysymontt)

¹⁰³ According to the agricultural census of 1921.

¹⁰⁴ According to data from the Central Statistical Office ('Statistical Year-Book', 1955, p. 105, table 5).