

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Land reform in the Second Polish Republic

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Abstract

When Poland was re-established as an independent state one hundred years ago, one of its political priorities was to implement a land reform, as the ‘agrarian question’ was an extremely sensitive socio-economic problem. In Poland at that time, two thirds of its inhabitants made their living by working in the agricultural sector. A ‘land craving’ phenomenon was notorious, as was rural poverty, especially among smallholders. On the other hand, almost half of the total area of farmland in the Second Polish Republic was held by huge landowners. The situation led to ever louder political calls for land redistribution to peasant smallholders. The Land Reform Implementation Act of 1920, and its amendment of 1925, laid legal foundations for land redistribution. By the Second World War, 2,654,800 hectares of land had undergone redistribution, as a result of which 734,100 new farms were established. However, this land reform did not achieve its goal, namely the empowering of efficient smaller farms, as quantitative analysis showed a continuing process of agricultural land fragmentation.

Introduction

On 11th November 2018 Poland celebrated the 100th anniversary of regaining independence. This historic event marked not only the re-establishment of the Polish state which was absent from world maps for more than 123 years, but also meant a comprehensive development of uniform state administration through a difficult process of consolidating the three different administrative systems of the hitherto partitions (Russian, Austrian and Prussian), to make them function as one in terms of law and order. The centennial is a good occasion to ponder the beginnings of the re-established state of Poland as well as to visit Polish agrarian issues of that time.

During the one hundred years since its re-establishment as an independent state, Poland went through five different periods: the interwar period, that is, the Second Polish Republic (1918–39), the World War Two period (1939–45), the People’s Republic of Poland (1945–89), post-communist transformation leading to the establishment of the foundations for the Third Polish Republic (1989–2004) and finally, Poland in the European Union (2004–present). These hundred years also featured several challenging institutional reforms, which involved modifications of the hitherto operating institutions or setting up new ones to ensure the social and economic development of Poland. Land reform pertained to key changes in each of the above-mentioned periods, agriculture playing a central role in the national economy.

This article is an analysis of the first land reforms in the Second Polish Republic after the re-establishment. They were started in 1920 by the Land Reform Act,¹ which provided for redistribution (*parcelacja*) of land of each and every large agricultural estate for the sake of smallholders’ farm development.

Land reform was almost a universal issue in Europe at the time and concerned not only Poland. This was so, for example, in Great Britain, which had a very different historical course, although the ‘agrarian question’ consisted of similar problems of high concentration of land in relatively few hands, and a ‘land hunger’ among others. In John Bateman’s famous study, *The Great*

Land-Owners of Great Britain and Ireland (1883), just over four thousand families owned more than half of England and Wales, while 95 per cent of the population had no land at all.² This fuelled social unrest, and the right to vote was also property dependent. The end of the nineteenth century in Britain was a time of agricultural depression: responding to falling prices, there was a decrease in arable area in preference for livestock and dairy production, for which there was growing urban demand. This contributed to land reform. Comparable effects were occurring across Europe, and into the twentieth century. Interwar rural depression often accentuated them further.

The fate of British farm workers and small-scale farmers was problematic, for they did not have much opportunity or money to buy land, and many great landowners avoided disposing of land.³ Such land was often an object of luxury trading, linked to considerations such as hunting or social prestige, which sustained land prices. Land demand was not matched by supply, which is one reason why state interference in land sales became necessary, an issue accentuated by emigration and the rural exodus to cities. In Victorian Britain, land reform was not widely undertaken, although it became a salient electoral issue – for example, Joseph Chamberlain was elected in 1885 on promises of ‘three acres and a cow’.⁴ Among the measures related to land reform was the Allotments Act of 1887. It authorised Sanitary Authorities to purchase and lease land for distribution among agricultural workers who, however, were to maintain their main occupation – as a hired farm worker.⁵

Interest in land reform in Britain increased at the beginning of the twentieth century, partly due to the Liberals’ victory in the 1906 election. This brought a greater state role in social affairs. One of the manifestations of New Liberalism was its commitment to land reform, which had the support of twentieth-century statesmen such as David Lloyd George and Winston Churchill. Churchill, then a Liberal MP, wrote in his book *The People’s Rights* (1909) about the ‘evils of an unreformed and vicious land system’.⁶ The solution to this social ‘evil’ in Britain became increased taxation of land. Chancellor David Lloyd George proposed such a tax in the People’s Budget of 1909, with well-known political consequences and attendant debates about property rights. Such major issues of land reform affected many European countries, and had often – as in Ireland, Scotland, Wales, France, southern Italy or Finland – done so for many decades. Against this wider European context and its enormous historiographical debates, let us turn to the situation and events in early twentieth-century Poland.

‘The agrarian question’ in the Second Polish Republic

At the start of the re-establishment of the Polish state, land reform was one of the key social issues, and as such it occupied the very top of all socio-political agendas. At that time the Polish countryside was suffering greatly from extreme overpopulation. According to various estimates of that period, the overpopulation of rural areas ranged from two to ten million inhabitants.⁷ This was a genuine army of people who were obsolete for agriculture. The scale of overpopulation was visible more clearly when compared to the total population of rural areas (in 1921): 20,250,000 rural inhabitants and 16,181,600 people making their living from farming.⁸

The surplus of agricultural population was also visible in terms of population density: 1 km² was inhabited on average by 45.1 individuals who maintained themselves by working in the agricultural and forestry sectors.⁹ The regions of Poland varied in economic terms, with Galicia (the part of Poland formerly incorporated to Austria-Hungary) featuring the poorest economic development; for example, in the Rzeszów area (Lviv province) agricultural population density on agriculturally utilised land amounted to 156.8 inhabitants per 1 km².¹⁰

Excessive population density deepened the so-called ‘craving for land’ phenomenon, namely, a lack of land. One of the founders of land reform in the Second Polish Republic, Józef Poniatowski, wrote that ‘a lack of land in Poland results by far from mere agricultural population

density in today's socio-economic conditions, all the defects of the agrarian structure which are historical consequences regardless of overpopulation only aggravating the situation'.¹¹ Economists of the interwar period agreed that land stock was not enough to improve the agrarian system of Poland; and because land as such is inflexible, it was also impossible to relieve 'craving for land' entirely or even to a great extent.¹² According to Władysław Grabski: 'The statistics reveal that neither the current nor any other reform of the agrarian system at all, regardless of how much land redistribution it envisaged, may bring Poland to a situation in which there is no more overpopulation and poverty and the number of smallholders and landless peasants would only be insignificant.'¹³

According to various estimates, the reform-eligible land stock was to range from one million hectares to more than three million hectares (account being taken of land improvement).¹⁴ Józef Poniatowski cited the biggest estimates: they took account of 3,600,000 hectares for distribution, which would correspond to 600,000 new farms of approximately six hectares each. However, he believed that a distribution of even such a huge area would not contribute significantly to the reduction of obsolete population surplus: 'we can expect that intentional use of the land stock . . . may reduce overpopulation by a mere 300–400 thousand agricultural families in real terms. Comparing to the need, in terms of a surplus of 1.5–2 million families, this is insufficient.'¹⁵ Despite that, the common opinion of agricultural economists was that land reform was worth carrying out due to its importance from humanitarian and socio-political points of view.¹⁶

'The agrarian question' in the Second Polish Republic was reflected by poverty among peasants. The Galicia peasants, due to extreme overpopulation of those areas, suffered the most severe poverty. Such a large surplus of peasants on too little land resulted in a vicious circle of insufficient productivity and inadequate consumption. One of the researchers of that problem, Stanisław Szczepanowski, described this situation as follows: 'Each Galicia peasant works for a quarter, and eats for a half of a man and Galicia peasants work poorly because they eat poorly, and they cannot eat better because they work too little.'¹⁷ Next to the information that the average longevity in Galicia is 27 years [*sic!*] he put the following comment: 'the original cause of death is not some sort of epidemic, but lack of food, i.e. starvation – in other words, this is not death as a consequence of an epidemic, it is death as a consequence of starvation'.¹⁸

A heartbreaking description of Polish rural poverty can be found in *Peasants Diaries*¹⁹ compiled as a result of a contest announced in 1933 by the Institute of Social Economy. The staple diet of peasants in the interwar period included potatoes; and meat was eaten for Christmas and Easter. According to an author of one of the diaries: 'potatoes are the most important in our diet, we eat mostly potatoes and we eat them twice a day so a saying is popular in the country that for breakfast one has potatoes and borscht, and for dinner one has borscht and potatoes'.²⁰ Potatoes were eaten more frequently than the 'daily' bread. According to one diarist: 'There are an awful lot of families where bread is baked only during the harvesting season . . . and later only for big church holidays, i.e. four or five times a year, and school kids are given a couple of baked potatoes as their school snack rather than a piece of bread.'²¹ Lack of sugar was a particular dietary shortage, frequently mentioned by peasants. One diarist writes: 'Throughout the year I bought only 1 kg of sugar for Easter.'²² Another commodity, the shortage of which was felt greatly, was salt, but not even the white variety, the red salt fed to cattle: 'I use cattle salt for my cooking, as it is cheaper than table salt.'²³ However, the shortage of dairy products, meat or eggs was not caused by lack of those commodities on a farm, but by the need to sell them in order to obtain money for purchasing industrial goods. One of the diarists wrote: 'Sometimes the family eats eggs once a year for Easter.'²⁴

During the interwar period, the rural population lacked not only food, they also lacked clothes. Poor people managed as they could by mending and altering old garments: 'We do not buy clothes in shops as we do not have any money. Our clothes are 50% patches. We also alter shoes from old to new with wooden soles, as during the Great War.'²⁵

Peasants' poverty also manifested itself in their accommodation. Here are some examples of living conditions: 'Brother lives in one lodging place with no proper floor, only earthen floor,

so humidity is awful. Another lodging place is inhabited by me and my mother, whom I maintain.²⁶ Another diarist writes: ‘There are houses in our village where five people sleep in one bed, so legs are mingled with heads when one looks at it.’²⁷ Peasants also had no money for doctors or medicines, and they had problems with paying due taxes. Peasants’ living situations were clearly not at all satisfactory in social or economic terms.

Franciszek Bujak described the agrarian system in Poland in the following way: ‘Our system is unsatisfactory and unhealthy. We are dealing with an open “agrarian question”. If we want to build a strong, durable state which is able to develop, we must first of all repair the agrarian system.’²⁸ He was a supporter of thoughtful and calm policy rather than revolutionary changes. Those words were especially resonant in a state in which three quarters of the population lived from farming. The author considered peasants as the strongest force of the nation, and believed that they should have as much land as necessary for satisfying basic existential needs as well as higher levels of living. Land reform understood as land redistribution was considered by him as necessary and useful not only for peasants, but also for the whole nation and society. He understood it as the Polish national interest: ‘Land reform is a refurbishment of the nation’s existence and foundations.’²⁹ Bujak called for a mature preparation of reform, so as to contribute to the economic development of society as a whole.

For Wiktor Bronikowski the reform was also an element of the Polish *raison d’état*. He wrote that ‘a good agrarian system is of key importance for a modern democratic state. Economic strength and sufficiency of particular units makes a state powerful. Thus, in an agricultural country, the wellbeing of smallholders conditions the wellbeing of the whole national economy.’³⁰

The agrarian structure of the 1920s

The agrarian structure of a re-established and united Poland was reflected in the statistics of the First Population Census of the Republic of Poland, which was held on 30th September 1921. Following the regaining of independence, it was the first attempt at collecting information about population and the socio-economic structure of the consolidated Polish territories. However, one should not interpret the data too literally due to the census imperfections, which were elaborated on by Mieczysław Mieszczankowski.³¹ One such imperfection was a failure to include two regions: Upper Silesia and a part of Vilnius County in the census.

The results of the 1921 Census revealed land concentration: farms of more than fifty hectares (which accounted for less than 1 per cent of all farms) accounted for almost half (47.3 per cent) of the agricultural land of Poland. On the other side there was the largest group of more than two million unsustainable small farms of up to five hectares, which accounted for more than 60 per cent of all Polish farms. This group of farms comprised two subgroups, which were almost identical in terms of number (slightly more than one million) and percentage (slightly more than 30 per cent): farms with an area of up to two hectares and farms with an area of between two and five hectares. Within the first subgroup of those micro-farms, approximately a third accounted for farms the size of which did not exceed half a hectare.³² Thus, it can be noted that the farm structure in Poland at the beginning of the 1920s was much polarised; and the number of medium-sized farms was relatively small.

In 1921, apart from the First Common Population Census, a census of large agricultural estates was carried out. Farms exceeding fifty hectares were considered large agricultural estates. The census concerned private property in a narrow sense, as it comprised estates rather than farming businesses (farms).³³ The data collected point to the fact that large private agricultural estates were dominant and accounted for nearly three quarters of large agricultural estates in general. The area of state-owned land was a third of that;³⁴ it comprised chiefly forests (managed by the State Forestry Department), which accounted for 89.4 per cent of state-owned land.³⁵ However, private estates also featured a considerable (although much smaller than in the case of state-owned land) share of afforested land

within private landed structures, namely 38.3 per cent, which was nearly two percentage points more than the percentage of farmland. The particularly extensive character of farming was noticeable in large latifundium estates exceeding one thousand hectares (represented for example by the family estate of the Zamoyskis, the biggest estate of the Second Polish Republic, which amounted to 190,279 hectares). One can observe the following regularity: the larger the estate area, the smaller the share of farmland, and the bigger the share of forests. In general, estates exceeding one thousand hectares accounted for 60.5 per cent of large private estate land.³⁶

The analysis of the First Population Census and the census of large agricultural estates shows that the population of interwar Poland suffered from a 'craving for land' felt on the one hand in overpopulated areas inhabited chiefly by peasants owning unsustainable farms, and on the other hand on large estates, the size of which significantly exceeded the needs of their inhabitants. The situation of peasant farmers was aggravated by intensively patchworked land ownership structures. The 1921 Census data showed that 46.8 per cent of farms below fifty hectares consisted of individual plots of land scattered between plots of land owned by other farmers. In some cases one farm consisted of twenty or even more detached parcels of farmland. Nearly every fourth farm included six to ten individual parcels.³⁷ On top of that, one should not forget about the existing commons, 58.9 per cent of which accounted for pastures, and 14.5 per cent for forests.³⁸

The difficult situation of Polish peasant farmers and the agricultural sector was aggravated even more by the destructive consequences of the Great War (1914–18). Nearly 90 per cent of rural areas were destroyed as a result of combat actions, 1,650,000 outbuildings and other buildings were totally destroyed. The percentage of destroyed family houses and outbuildings reached 22 per cent of their total number. Cattle herds were reduced by 30 per cent.³⁹ It is no wonder that 'the agrarian question' became one of the key socio-political problems of those times.

Towards land reform

The unfavourable structure of farmland in the Second Polish Republic, as well as the social need for land reform, required that the government promptly solve the 'agrarian question', especially given that the first years of regained independence were overshadowed by the Russian revolution, which had an impact on the Polish population. Revolutionary tendencies became more and more evident, social tension in rural areas was growing and calls for radical economic reform were ever louder. According to Wojciech Roszkowski,⁴⁰ on 5th November 1918 the first Soviet of Workers' Deputies was formed in Lublin, and the following day radical peasant leaders proclaimed a revolutionary Republic of Tarnobrzeg. A mass rally held on 6th November 1918 in the Tarnobrzeg market square reportedly attracted thirty thousand peasants who heard an inauguration address of the Reverend Eugeniusz Okoń. In his address the priest attacked big landowners and called on peasants to abolish manors and to distribute land. Okoń called: 'You – farmer, and you – worker . . . take a deep breath, as from now on your oppressor is going to bow to you. You have the right to demand that your claim be satisfied at once, and if they are unwilling, you've got your clubs.'⁴¹ The Soviet Workers' Deputies organised mass strikes, manors were taken over, and landless peasants who demanded power for the people started deforestation.

During the night between 6th and 7th November 1918 a Temporary People's Government of the Polish Republic was formed in Lublin, headed by Ignacy Daszyński, who issued a manifesto to the Polish people, announcing the taking over of the government until a convention of a Constituent Assembly (Constituent Sejm) and the carrying out of land reform.⁴² On 11th November 1918 a truce between the Entente and the German Empire was signed at Compiègne. Poland reacted on the same day by issuing an address to the Polish nation about surrendering power over the military to Józef Piłsudski, who was very popular at that time.⁴³ On the same day The Temporary People's Government of the Polish Republic provided Piłsudski with their resignation.

The issue of convening the Constituent Sejm as a legislative power in a re-established democratic Poland was treated as an absolute priority. The state could be formed and land reform could be carried out only after the necessary state administrative structure and democratic institutions had been established. In his first decree, Józef Piłsudski appointed Ignacy Daszyński prime minister, underlined an important role of the Constituent Sejm in a democratic reborn state, and announced that the Sejm be convened as quickly as possible, within several months.⁴⁴

Based on the decree concerning universal polls to the Constituent Sejm,⁴⁵ the date of the first election to the Sejm was set for 26th January 1919. The election turnout was very high and amounted to 90 per cent.⁴⁶

The Constituent Sejm started its first session on 10th February 1919. Almost four months following its first convention, on 3rd June 1919, the issue of land reform was raised for the first time. It was considered an important state matter. Starting the debate was chiefly due to Wincenty Witos – a peasant from Wierzchosławice, who was a chief politician of the peasant movement. On 20th February 1919 he had submitted a bill on modification of the agrarian system of Poland, and on March 1919 he became Chairman of the Agrarian Committee in the Sejm.⁴⁷ It is worth pointing out that during the debate on land reform, after the Polish Peasant Party ‘Wyzwolenie’ was amalgamated with the Polish Peasant Party ‘Piast’, the united Polish Peasant Party became the most powerful force in the Sejm (27.6 per cent).

‘A battle for peasants’ in the Polish Sejm

The debate on land reform started on 3rd June 1919. Poland did not yet have a constitution and its borders were not yet finally delimited due to the war with the Bolsheviks (1918–21). Despite the political situation, the Sejm treated the reform as a priority. According to the Agrarian Committee’s reporter Jan Dąbski: ‘Land reform is the most crucial contemporary issue for our state. The solution of this issue will have impact not only on our economic future, but also on our political future.’⁴⁸ The parliamentary debate on land reform focused around redistribution of land from large private estates for the sake of peasant farms and it triggered heated social discussion. The debate reflected an ongoing social dispute⁴⁹ between the supporters and opponents of large estate redistribution and it was a manifestation of ‘a battle for peasants’.

Let me elaborate on two characteristic addresses, the first one delivered by the supporter of land redistribution, Jan Dąbski (reporting MP) on the first date of the debate, namely 3rd June 1919, and the second one delivered on 13th June 1919 by Stanisław Chaniewski, a big landowner who was against the reform in its proposed form.⁵⁰

Jan Dąbski, MP – Vice President of Polish Peasants Party ‘Piast’ – understood land reform not only as an economic project, but also as a ‘huge national project, a big state reform’,⁵¹ due to the fact that the reform focused on farmland.

He noticed a certain universal regularity, namely that ‘each war period was followed by a period of big social reforms’.⁵² Thus, in his opinion, a big land reform ‘was imminent’. In his fervent speeches he underlined that ‘this magnificent zeitgeist flowing across the nations, the spirit of reforms which is invoked to satisfy masses of working people, shall not only lead us in the future, but it is already moving our masses’.⁵³ According to Dąbski, Polska could not stand behind and it must, as other European nations,⁵⁴ carry out the reforms, and even more precisely, it must pre-empt other nations and serve as a role model for reforms. He mentioned land reform in Romania, Yugoslavia, Germany, Czechoslovakia and Hungary, where count Karolyi ‘gave his estate away voluntarily to be cut with the knife of compulsory redistribution’.⁵⁵

According to Dąbski, Poland had an advantage over other nations in that it enjoyed ‘deep and passionate attachment of our peasants to land’.⁵⁶ Dąbski explained the attachment as a spiritual and even mystical relationship of a Polish peasant to land, his bond with land and willingness to farm the land regardless of the circumstances and – as a consequence – his craving for land, which

should be satisfied by the reform. 'And this is why this good instinct of our peasants should be turned to the benefit of the state and land should be given to them.'⁵⁷ Giving land to peasants was critical, according to Dąbski: 'Regardless of whether those reforms are painful for anybody or not, we have to carry out this great project, because this is what our country needs.'⁵⁸ He criticised the agrarian structure of Poland; according to him it was the worst in Europe, especially in Galicia, where the situation was the most difficult due to farm fragmentation.

A speech in a totally different mood was delivered by Stanisław Chaniewski from the Constitutional Labour Club (KPK). He criticised the fact that land reform was regarded as a priority and he disapproved of how promptly it was to be implemented. However, what he especially deplored was the very essence of the reform, which was summarised ironically by him in the following way: 'Take the land away from one and distribute it among the others and that's it.'⁵⁹

He argued for a comprehensive reform, which he understood as a well thought out national agrarian policy rather than a policy reduced to mere redistribution of land among peasants: 'redistribution of huge landowners' estates regarded by the majority of the Committee members as land reform, is only a tiny bit thereof.'⁶⁰ He was expressly against expropriation claiming that 'Expropriation is a powerful argument, which compromises ownership – the principle which has hitherto formed the foundations of not only our society, but all the civilized societies.'⁶¹ The speaker expressed his surprise that the MPs 'so light-heartedly' welcomed expropriation – 'that negation of the ownership right' – as if they had already forgotten their *nota bene* rightful claims made not so long ago against the Prussian and Russian occupiers who kept expropriating the Poles. He reminded all those present that 'the end may not change moral qualifications of the means. Legally sanctioned unlawfulness shall not become a law.'⁶² He also warned that: 'If we compromise the principle of ownership, we shall remove a strong pillar by which our social system is supported.'⁶³ Thus, Stanisław Chaniewski was arguing strongly for the protection of ownership: 'Ownership may not be tampered with.'⁶⁴ He regarded expropriation as harmful to landowners.

As a result of the Constituent Sejm debates, a resolution on land reform⁶⁵ was passed on 10th July 1919. It was passed by a majority of only one vote,⁶⁶ and, although the reform could not be started as the resolution was not the same as a statute, it became the first legislative document that expressly referred to changes of the agrarian system in Poland, the forerunner of which it was. The parliamentary debate about it was continued in 1920 during the Polish-Bolshevik war. In July 1920 the Red Army offensive was intensified with the Bolsheviks capturing the Polish cities of Mińsk, Vilnius, Grodno and Pińsk, where they started to organise their government structures. Poland risked losing its freshly regained independence. A fear was felt, reinforced by a real threat, that Polish peasants would support the Bolsheviks in anticipation of land redistribution; so in order to avoid this, the land reform bill was passed promptly thanks to an agreement achieved under such a threat by previously arguing parliamentary factions. According to Stanisław Kutrzeba: 'in the time when Russian Armies were marching through Poland, the Sejm unanimously . . . passed the land reform implementation bill (15th July 1920). The battle was over. This unanimity allowing the bill to be passed, due to such a context of fear, is a convincing proof of how much hope the reform raised.'⁶⁷

Legislative acts concerning land redistribution

Two basic legislative acts concerning land redistribution were passed in the Second Polish Republic: the Act of 15th July 1920 on Land Reform Implementation,⁶⁸ and the Act of 28th December 1925 on Land Reform Implementation.⁶⁹

According to the first statute, the property to be managed by the Central Land Property Office was to include not only state-owned land, but also big private estates and certain church estates. Compulsory buy-out of private property was started. A maximum size of farm was fixed (180 hectares, except for 60 hectares in industrial and urban areas and 400 hectares in the east of Poland and in certain areas formerly occupied by Prussia). Owners of large estates subject to

compulsory buy-outs could keep one *folwark* (a farm with outbuildings). As to the buy-out price, it was statutorily fixed to half of an average market price paid for estates of similar size located in the area concerned. This meant only partial compensation.

The provision concerning partial compensation was contrary to the Constitution of 17 March 1921, according to which ownership was protected by law and it could be terminated or limited only with full compensation.⁷⁰

New legislation, which eliminated this inconsistency, was passed in the form of the Land Reform Implementation Act of 28th December 1925, according to which the agrarian system of Poland should be based on farms of various types and sizes, which would be owned by their holders and which shall be capable of efficient production. This vision was to become realised by means of enlarging micro-farms and the establishment of new independent ones. To this end, state-owned land, certain church property and property of some other public institutions, along with surplus land of large landowners, were to be divided into parcels and redistributed among peasants. The Act provided for a land area limit of 180 hectares, which was not subject to expropriation (in industrial and urban areas this limit amounted to sixty hectares, and in the eastern borderlands to three hundred hectares). The annual land redistribution quota or requirement amounted to 200,000 hectares. According to the Act, the quota was to be complemented by redistribution of private land. Compulsory buy-outs were to follow in case the quota could not be fulfilled. Payments for land, subject to compulsory buy-outs, were to be made partially in cash and in state debt securities in gold, according to their nominal values, and partially in other debt securities according to their current values, but not lower than 70 per cent of nominal values of these securities. The system of payment for this land reform was relatively complex. The Act also provided for principles of redistribution, types and area of new farms.

Statistical results of redistribution

As a result of the reform, by 1938, 2,654,800 hectares of land had undergone redistribution into 734,100 parcels, 153,600 of them becoming so-called independent colonies (that is, farms), and the rest being additional parcels established as a result of subdivision of land between neighbours, special parcels and other parcels.⁷¹ The share of newly established farms (that is, independent farms) in the total area of land subject to redistribution amounted to 53.9 per cent, and the average landed area of such a farm amounted to 9.3 hectares (the average area of so-called additional parcels amounting to two hectares).⁷²

The land parcelled in the period 1919–38 was acquired by 629,900 people, of whom 90.3 per cent were farmers. Among those, 71.6 per cent were running under-subsistence farms.⁷³

According to the Land Reform Implementation Act of 1925, redistribution could concern state-owned or private land. According to the data, the land acquired by farmers who were running farms of up to fifty hectares in the period 1919–38 originated mostly from private property (70.2 per cent of land), the rest coming from the state-owned stock.⁷⁴

In the first years of regained independence, political and economic conditions were not yet stable, which had an unfavourable effect on economic policy and redistribution in general, and especially that concerning private land (land supply was limited). According to Mieczysław Mieszczankowski: ‘State land served in those years as a type of safety valve within the society, as it tamed revolutionary moods of the peasant masses.’⁷⁵ This is why mostly state-owned land was subject to redistribution.

As the socio-political situation became more stable, redistribution gained pace. Between 1922–31, which were the ‘golden years’ of the reform, the greatest amount of land was redistributed: 65.8 per cent of private land and 70.8 per cent of state-owned land, which was redistributed in the entire 1919–38 period.⁷⁶ The absolute peak was observed between 1926–8, that is, during the years of economic prosperity. In those years, on average 227,500 hectares per year underwent

redistribution, as compared to an average of only 82,200 hectares per year in the first three years of reform (1919–21).⁷⁷

The process slowed down considerably due to the world economic crisis, especially between 1932–6. In 1932 only 74,100 hectares went into redistribution, and in 1934 only 56,500 hectares. This was due to the low level of income in agriculture, which translated into lower demand for land. According to Czesław Noniewicz,⁷⁸ an average income from farm production in 1934/1935 amounted to 37 per cent of the income generated in 1927/1928.

Land demand was also conditioned by the 'land craving' phenomenon, that is, peasants' desire for land possession. Land hunger influenced land prices in all districts of Poland, but the influence varied from region to region. The most intensive aspiration for land was observed in the southern part of Poland, where according to statistics, arable land redistribution amounted to 0.45 hectares per farmer (in the western part of Poland, except Silesia, it was 0.97 hectares).⁷⁹ Peasants' pressure for land acquisition was strong also because for them land did not only mean capital, but 'a workshop which ensured at least a certain level of economic independence . . . For the sake of that independence our peasants are ready for big sacrifices'.⁸⁰

The prices paid to farmers for agricultural products as well as the prices of industrial goods purchased by farmers also played a significant role in land demand. From the onset of the world economic crisis, since 1929, the prices of agricultural products fell twice as quickly as the prices of industrial products. In the crisis years (1930–6) the differential decline between sector prices consistently exceeded thirty percentage points.⁸¹ Later this gap was narrower: in 1937, the difference was fourteen points; in 1938, it was twenty-one points; and in 1939, it was twenty-eight points.⁸²

Loan interest was another factor to affect land purchase. In the interwar period the loan price was quite high. According to Mieszczankowski,⁸³ the official short-term loan interest rate amounted to 24 per cent in the beginning of 1926; in the following years it was gradually lowered to 11–13 per cent (1930–2); from 1933 it was on a stable 9.5 per cent level.

The combination of the above-mentioned and other circumstances occurring during the period of land reform resulted in regular downwards and upwards trends: in some years the area subject to redistribution exceeded 200,000 hectares, and in some other years, due to lack of demand for land, the statutory annual redistribution quota target was not achieved. Due to the economic crisis, the slower pace of redistribution and Poland's financial situation, from 1931 the land redistribution target was lowered – for example, the 1933 quota was set to 80,500 hectares and in 1934 it was 75,000 hectares.⁸⁴

However, with time, the land stock was depleted. According to Marian Dütz,⁸⁵ in 1937 the land stock that should have been subject to a better redistribution plan amounted to mere 614,300 hectares. Needless to say, until that year the land stock subject to reform was almost totally depleted in the eastern provinces, and it was significantly reduced in central and southern provinces, which made the reform efforts relatively more intensive in the west. In those provinces that featured the least overpopulation, a settlement action was started according to the policy of minister Józef Poniatowski. However, the scope of the action was inadequate to the needs of the villages located in the overpopulated areas.⁸⁶

The effect of redistribution on changes in agrarian structure

An analysis of the effects of redistribution on changing agrarian structure will tell us whether the objectives of the reform – namely the establishment of new independent farms capable of efficient production and enlargement of under-subsistence micro-farms to the size of independent and efficient units – were achieved.

In the years under analysis, large properties (over fifty hectares) as well as state-owned property decreased in size for the sake of small private farms (of less than fifty hectares). The share of the

latter in the total area of arable land increased by 7.8 percentage points while the share of the former decreased by 6.1 points. Land area owned by the state decreased by 1.7 points. Those changes contributed to the increase of the share of farms below fifty hectares from 51.7 per cent to 59.5 per cent of the total arable area.⁸⁷ Their arable area increased by 2,920,000 hectares (by 13 per cent). At the same time the arable area of large private farms decreased by 20.1 per cent, and the commons area decreased by 9.8 per cent.⁸⁸

It has to be pointed out that not all the increase in the area of peasant farms meant real increase in the property held. Some portion of that increase accounted for land assigned for abolished easements,⁸⁹ and another relatively small part originated from the abolition of common land (a nominal increase). Of the 3,176,400 hectares by which the area of peasant family farms increased in the period 1918–38, the major part was the land acquired as a result of redistribution (79.5 per cent), but a considerable part included land acquired as a result of abolished easements (18.7 per cent). An insignificant portion (1.7 per cent) accounted for land obtained as a result of abolishment of common land.⁹⁰

One has to remember that inheritance also played a considerable role in the establishment of new farms. This is confirmed by the results of a questionnaire survey by the Institute of Social Economy. It appears that during the period 1920–34, out of the total number of farms surveyed (4,742), 43.1 per cent did not change their area size, 38.1 per cent of farms increased or decreased their area, and 18.8 per cent were newly established farms.⁹¹ Among the latter, 72.2 per cent were inherited farms, subject to area change via inheritance processes, and only 6.3 per cent were established as a result of redistribution.⁹² The conclusion made by Konstancy Czerniewski is clear and unequivocal: ‘Changes in the agrarian structure of Polish farms are heading towards division of farm structure below the level of self-subsistence. This is because of inheritance law.’⁹³

One has to add that Mieczysław Mieszczankowski,⁹⁴ in his compilation of data concerning all Poland, presents a bigger percentage of newly established farms as a result of redistribution, 13.4 per cent, including relatively the largest percentage in the west of Poland, 34.4 per cent, and the lowest percentage in the south, 9.5 per cent. These figures confirm a general observation that in the interwar period it was division of farms as a result of inheritance that was a chief factor in new farm formation.

A land transfer account during the years of land reform in Poland (by farm size) confirms that the process of farm fragmentation was under way.⁹⁵ In the group of farms with areas not exceeding two hectares, as much as 45.4 per cent (from among the 1,382,400 hectares in 1938) were newly established farms. About half of this number (24.8 per cent), although still comprising many newly established farms, accounted for farms the size of which ranged from two to five hectares. Comparatively, the percentage of newly established farms in the twenty to fifty hectares group was only 3.8 per cent. Thus, land reform did not stop the process of farm fragmentation.⁹⁶

The analysis of changes in the structure of farms below fifty hectares in Poland confirms their growing trend in the Second Republic. In 1921–38 the total number of farms grew by 1,051,000 (by 23.3 per cent), and although the number of farms in all size groups increased, in general terms the smaller the farm size, the faster the increase of such farms. The difference in the growth among the two extreme groups was quite considerable. The zero to two hectares group increased by 36.4 per cent, the two to five hectares group by 34 per cent, and the ten to twenty hectares group by 18.9 per cent. The twenty to fifty hectares group expanded by only 8.6 per cent (under a quarter that of the zero to two hectares group).⁹⁷

Regarding the structure of newly established farms, for the zero to two hectares farms it was 35.1 per cent, for two to five hectares farms it was 36.9 per cent, for ten to twenty hectare farms, 6.5 per cent, and for twenty to fifty hectare farms, 0.7 per cent. This arguably means that the smallest farms saw the biggest increase in absolute numbers. Thus, redistribution did not contribute to optimal development of the number of independent efficient farms.

Conclusion

The results of the land reform showed as numbers: the redistribution of 2,654,800 hectares of land and the establishment of 734,100 new farms may justify a statement that land reform in the Second Polish Republic certainly sought to achieve its objectives.

The economists of the Second Republic were aware of the fact that even if all the land of big farms was subject to redistribution, it was not enough to make all the family farms self-subsistent. Despite this, the subsequent ministers of agriculture consistently implemented the reforms, as in their opinion they could partially alleviate the socio-economic problems of rural inhabitants. The land reform was consistently implemented despite insufficient and unsatisfactory results.

To sum up, one can say that in the Second Republic, the scale of positive changes in farm structure was relatively small. First of all, land redistribution did not result in a clear improvement of ownership structure and size of farms. Farm fragmentation was still the most evident feature of interwar Poland though these increasing small farms, while perhaps not agriculturally or economically an optimal solution in terms of the range of possible distributions of agrarian structures, did at least help to assuage the well-documented land craving among rural inhabitants, and contributed also to stave off landed protests, unrest and Bolshevik sympathies of those on the land.

The progress and results of the reform could have been maximised and more durable if the non-agricultural sector had been better developed, as it would have absorbed the surplus population from the agricultural sector, had a sufficient number of rural inhabitants migrated to industrialised urban areas. Instead, the presented increase of the number of smallest farms was chiefly a result of farm fragmentation caused by overpopulation of rural areas and lack of possibilities for the rural population to work outside agriculture. This process overlapped with an increased rural population. During 1921–38 the rural population in Poland grew by 4,144,000,⁹⁸ a growth of 17 per cent, and the increase of the agricultural population in 1921–31 amounted to 2,334,281,⁹⁹ (12.6 per cent).

Lastly, but not least, the potential results of the agrarian reforms are not truly known, as they were not completed. The Second World War effectively halted the process of land reform in the Second Polish Republic.

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Notes

- 1 Land Reform Implementation Act of 15th July 1920, in *Dziennik Ustaw [Journal of Laws]*, No. 70 (1920), item 462.
- 2 Bateman's summary table from 1883 shows how the 4,217 Peers, Peeresses, Great Landowners and Squires owned eighteen million acres: 'A Guide to Modern Domesdays' <<https://whooownsengland.org/2017/03/05/a-guide-to-modern-domesdays/>> [accessed 5th November 2019].
- 3 Biegeleisen, *Reforma rolna głównych państw europejskich [Land Reform of Major European Countries]*, Vol. I. (Warsaw, 1924), p. 96.
- 4 'A Guide to Modern Domesdays'.
- 5 Biegeleisen, *Reforma rolna głównych państw europejskich [Land Reform of Major European Countries]*, pp. 118–19.
- 6 'A Guide to Modern Domesdays'.
- 7 Zdzisław Ludkiewicz, *Podręcznik polityki agrarnej [Agrarian Policy Manual]*, Vol. I (Warsaw, 1932), pp. 28, 30, 89.
- 8 Central Statistical Office of the Republic of Poland, *Rocznik Demograficzny [Demographic Annals]*, 1945–1966 (1968), pp. 5, 70.
- 9 Ludkiewicz, *Podręcznik polityki agrarnej [Agrarian Policy Manual]*, p. 87.
- 10 Jerzy Michałowski, *Wież nie ma pracy: Wywiad społeczny w powiecie rzeszowskim [No Jobs in the Country: Social Interview in Rzeszowski Powiat]* (Warsaw, 1935), p. 68.
- 11 Józef Poniatowski, *Przeludnienie wsi i rolnictwa [Overpopulation of Agriculture and Rural Areas]* (Warsaw, 1935), p. 64.
- 12 See also Władysław Grabski, *Materiały w sprawie włościańskiej [Materials on Peasantry Issue]*, Vol. I (Kraków, 1907); Władysław Grabski, *Oświata ludu i sprawy agrarne w Polsce [Peasants' Education and Agrarian Issues in Poland]* (Warsaw, 1929); Józef Poniatowski, *Przeludnienie wsi i rolnictwa [Overpopulation of Agriculture and Rural Areas]*.
- 13 Grabski, *Oświata ludu i sprawy agrarne w Polsce [Peasant's Education and Agrarian Issues in Poland]*, p. 9.

- 14 Poniatowski, *Przeludnienie wsi i rolnictwa* [*Overpopulation of Agriculture and Rural Areas*], p. 133.
- 15 *Ibid.*
- 16 *Ibid.*, p. 239.
- 17 Stanisław Szczepanowski, *Nędza w Galicji w cyfrach i program energicznego rozwoju gospodarstwa krajowego* [*Poverty in Galicia in Statistics and a Programme for Energetic Development of National Economy*] (Lviv, 1888), p. 22.
- 18 *Ibid.*, p. 55.
- 19 L. Stróżecka, ed., *Pamiętniki chłopów: Wybór* [*Peasants' Diaries: A Selection*] (Warsaw, 1954).
- 20 *Ibid.*, pp. 148–9.
- 21 *Ibid.*, p. 9.
- 22 *Ibid.*, p. 247.
- 23 *Ibid.*
- 24 *Ibid.*, p. 313.
- 25 *Ibid.*, p. 167.
- 26 *Ibid.*, p. 2.
- 27 *Ibid.*, p. 59.
- 28 Franciszek Bujak, *O naprawie ustroju rolnego w Polsce* [*On Improvement of the Polish Agrarian System*] (Warsaw, Lublin and Łódź, 1918), p. 1.
- 29 *Ibid.*, p. 90.
- 30 Wiktor Bronikowski, *Drogi postępu chłopu polskiego* [*Progress of the Polish Peasant*] (Warsaw, 1934), p. 63.
- 31 Mieczysław Mieszczankowski, *Struktura agrarna Polski międzywojennej* [*Polish Agrarian Structure in the Interwar Period*] (Warsaw, 1960), pp. 17–18.
- 32 Central Statistical Office of the Republic of Poland, *Rocznik Statystyki Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej* [*Statistical Annals of the Republic of Poland 1925/1926*] (1927), p. 106; Mieszczankowski, *Struktura agrarna Polski międzywojennej* [*Polish Agrarian Structure in the Interwar Period*], p. 19.
- 33 Central Statistical Office of the Republic of Poland, *Statystyka Polski: Wielka własność rolna* [*Polish Statistics: Large Agricultural Estates*] (1925), p. vii.
- 34 *Ibid.*, pp. viii–ix.
- 35 Mieszczankowski, *Struktura agrarna Polski międzywojennej* [*Polish Agrarian Structure in the Interwar Period*], p. 20.
- 36 Central Statistical Office of the Republic of Poland, *Statystyka Polski: Wielka własność rolna* [*Polish Statistics: Large Agricultural Estates*] (1925), p. 1.
- 37 See also Central Statistical Office of the Republic of Poland, *Kwartalnik Statystyczny* [*Statistical Quarterly*] 1925 (1925), Vol. II, Book 4, p. 585.
- 38 Central Statistical Office of the Republic of Poland, *Statystyka Polski: Pierwszy Powszechny Spis Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej z dnia 30 września 1921 r. Grunty wspólne, T. XII, Zeszyt 2* [*Polish Statistics: First Polish Census dated 30 September 1921, Commons, Vol. XII, Book II*] (1927), p. 25.
- 39 Jerzy Gościcki, 'Dziesięciolecie rolnictwa [A Decade of Agriculture]', in M. Dąbrowski, ed., *Dziesięciolecie Polski Odrodzonej 1918–1928* [*The Decade of Poland Reborn*] (Kraków and Warsaw, 1933), p. 943.
- 40 Wojciech Roszkowski, *Historia Polski* [*History of Poland*], 1914–1990 (Warszawa, 1992), p. 18.
- 41 J. Ambrozowicz, ed., *Republika Tarnobrzewska w świetle faktów i dokumentów* [*Tarnobrzeg Republic in Light of Facts and Documents*] (Rzeszów, 1982), p. 10.
- 42 Roszkowski, *Historia Polski* [*History of Poland*], 1914–1990, p. 18.
- 43 *Dziennik Praw Państwa Polskiego z 29 listopada 1918* [*Journal of Laws of the State of Poland of 29th November 1918*], No. 17 (1918), item 38.
- 44 *Dziennik Praw Państwa Polskiego z 29 listopada 1918* [*Journal of Laws of the State of Poland of 29th November 1918*], No. 17 (1918), item 40.
- 45 *Dziennik Praw Państwa Polskiego z 28 listopada 1918* [*Journal of Laws of the State of Poland of 28th November 1918*], No. 18 (1918), item 46.
- 46 Andrzej Jezierski and Cecylia Leszczyńska, *Historia gospodarcza Polski* [*Economic History of Poland*] (Warsaw, 1998), p. 237.
- 47 Maksymilian Stanulewicz, 'Reforma rolna jako próba regulacji stosunków agrarnych w Polsce [Land Reform as an Attempt at Regulating the Agrarian System of Poland]', in E. Borkowska-Bagieńska and W. Szafranski, eds, *Reformy rolne w Polsce międzywojennej i powojennej: Prawo–realizacja–skutki–problemy repriywatyzacyjne* (Poznań, 2008), p. 20.
- 48 'Stenographic Transcript from 44th Session of the Constituent Sejm dated 3rd June 1919', Maria Curie Skłodowska University (UMCS), p. 28 <<http://dlibra.umcs.lublin.pl/dlibra/docmetadata?id=7486&from=publication>> [26th March 2019].
- 49 A broad study of rural issues by Maria Dąbrowska entitled 'Rozdroże' ['Crossroads'] may be an example of the dispute. In her study the author criticises rich landowners opposing the reform as 'acutely shortsighted people who are permanently unable to see the paramount importance of peasants for Poland'. See Maria Dąbrowska, *Rozdroże: Studium na temat zagadnień wiejskich. Moja odpowiedź. Refleksje nad polemiką z Rozdrożem* (Warsaw, 1987), p. 87. This book triggered a stormy discussion among the big landowners' intellectual elite, to which Dąbrowska belonged.

50 It is worth pointing to an analysis of big landowners' criticism of land reform based on the idea of compulsory expropriation, conducted by Włodzimierz Mich based on landowners' publications between 1918–39. See Włodzimierz Mich, *W obliczu wywłaszczenia: Kwestia reformy rolnej w publicystyce ziemiańskiej 1918–1939* [Facing Expropriation: Land Reform Issue in Landowners' Publications] (Lublin, 2001), pp. 43–98. In the chapter 'Genuine Land Reform', Mich presents landowners' ideas on how to amend the bill. They suggested revamping the agrarian system through making farms sustainable, farm consolidation, amelioration and indivisibility of peasant farms. The corrections also concerned land redistribution; the landowners were against forced expropriation for the sake of evolutionary changes by means of voluntary redistribution. They also proposed launching a process of internal colonisation combined with shifting the population surplus to less intensively populated areas. The landowners' concept of 'genuine land reform' also included acceleration of Poland's economic development, including intensification of agricultural production and creation of non-agricultural jobs, chiefly in the industrial sector (Mich, *W obliczu wywłaszczenia*, pp. 99–196).

The analysis of landowners' publications shows that landowners did not only limit themselves to opposing land reform bills, but they also had certain suggestions in this respect and they wanted actively to participate in the work on the reform. A Decision of the Committee of Polish Landowners' Associations on agrarian policy dated 22nd March 1919 is an example of such a position. The Decision concerned voluntary redistribution of 1,500,000 morgen over five years. The Parliamentary Agrarian Committee was, however, against this proposal, which resulted in rejection of the latter by the Sejm (Mich, *W obliczu wywłaszczenia*, p. 104). However, landowners' arguments did not influence significantly the final contents of the Agricultural Reform Act.

51 'Stenographic Transcript of the 44th Session of Constituent Sejm Held on 3rd June 1919', p. 33.

52 *Ibid.*, p. 28.

53 *Ibid.*

54 While land reform was being discussed in Poland, some other countries were already implementing such reform. For example, in Romania the first pieces of agricultural legislation concerning the land of the former Romanian Kingdom were passed in December 1918 (Act No. 3681, dated 14th December 1918, about expropriation of large estate landowners, and Act No. 3697, dated 15th December implementing Act No. 3681, dated 14th December 1918, about expropriation of large estate landowners in the area of the Romanian Kingdom). The following Acts were passed for Besarabia and Transylvania and the remaining lands formerly occupied by the Hungarians. For more, see Adam Rose, *Reformy rolne w Europie Środkowej po wojnie światowej* [Land Reforms in Central Europe following the Great War] (Warsaw, 1925), p. 124, and Wojciech Roszkowski, *Land Reforms in East Central Europe after World War One* (Warsaw, 1995), pp. 110–12.

55 'Stenographic Transcript of the 44th Session of Constituent Sejm Held on 3rd June 1919', p. 31.

56 *Ibid.*, pp. 28–9.

57 *Ibid.*, p. 30.

58 *Ibid.*, p. 31.

59 'Stenographic Transcript from 49th Meeting of the Constituent Sejm dated 13th June 1919', UMCS University, p. 20 <<http://dlibra.umcs.lublin.pl/dlibra/docmetadata?id=7520&from=publication>> [26th March 2019].

60 *Ibid.*, p. 24.

61 *Ibid.*

62 *Ibid.*, p. 25.

63 *Ibid.*

64 *Ibid.*

65 *Dziennik Urzędowy Ministerstwa Rolnictwa i Dóbr Państwowych* [Official Journal of the Ministry of Agriculture and State Property], No. 13 (1919), item 1.

66 Stanisław Kutrzeba, *Polska Odrodzona* [Poland Reborn], 1914–1939 (Kraków, 1988), p. 167.

67 *Ibid.*

68 *Journal of Laws of 1920*, No. 79, item 462.

69 *Journal of Laws of 1926*, No. 1, item 1.

70 Act of 17th March 1921 – Constitution of the Republic of Poland. *Journal of Laws of 1921*, No. 44, item 267.

71 Central Statistical Office of the Republic of Poland, *Mały Rocznik Statystyczny* [Small Annals of Statistics] (1939), p. 71.

72 *Ibid.*

73 *Ibid.*

74 Mieszczankowski, *Struktura agrarna Polski międzywojennej* [Polish Agrarian Structure in the Interwar Period], p. 69.

75 *Ibid.*, p. 70.

76 *Ibid.*, p. 69.

77 Central Statistical Office of the Republic of Poland, *Mały Rocznik Statystyczny* [Small Annals of Statistics] (1939), pp. 70–1.

78 Czesław Noniewicz, *Rozwój gospodarki chłopskiej* [Development of Peasant Economy] (Białystok, 1996), p. 42.

79 Konstanty Czerniewski, 'Zagadnienia struktury agrarnej [Agrarian Structure Issues]', in E. Strzelecki, K. Czerniewski, R. Jabłonowski and K. Bentlewska, eds, *Struktura społeczna wsi polskiej* [Social Structure of Polish Rural Areas] (Warsaw, 1937), p. 81.

80 Stanisław Grabski, *Ekonomia społeczna* [Social Economics] (IV): *Gospodarstwo i przedsiębiorstwo* [Farm and Business] (Lviv, Warsaw and Kraków, 1927), p. 44. The author provides an example that 'peasants holding 3–4 morgens of land,

which accounted for approx. 40 per cent of the Little Poland population, were ready to give away all their earnings generated for a few years of hard work in American factories to get 3 or 4 morgens of land of the neighbouring farm'. In *ibid.*

81 Mieszczankowski, *Struktura agrarna Polski międzywojennej* [*Polish Agrarian Structure in the Interwar Period*], p. 315.

82 *Ibid.*

83 *Ibid.*, p. 317.

84 Marian Dütz, 'Plany parcelacyjne i ich wykonanie w latach 1926–1937 [Land Redistribution Plans and Their Implementation between 1926–1937]', *Rolnictwo* [*Agriculture*], X, Vol. I, Book 1 (1938), p. 60. According to the Land Reform Implementation Act of 1925, the annual redistribution quota was to amount to 200,000 hectares for the first ten years of reform. According to Marian Dütz, only the first four Land Redistribution Plans were set according to the statutory target. The target was lowered pursuant to the Land Redistribution Plan Implementation Act of 25th February 1932 (*Journal of Laws* 1932, No. 25, item. 216), in *ibid.*

85 *Ibid.*, p. 55.

86 In the period 1935–8, 2,814 independent settlements were established in Pomerania, of which 677 (24 per cent) were acquired by the settlers from overpopulated Cracow province, which also acquired 466 (25 per cent) of 1,747 settlements in Greater Poland (Franciszek Żmizdiński, *Realizacja reformy rolnej na Pomorzu, 1920–1938* [*Implementation of Land Reform in Pomerania*] (Warsaw and Poznań, 1978), p. 155).

87 Mieszczankowski, *Struktura agrarna Polski międzywojennej* [*Polish Agrarian Structure in the Interwar Period*], p. 67.

88 *Ibid.*

89 Easements were the most popular in this part of Poland, which was under the Russian partition and there, their size was the best recorded. In 1864, almost half, as much as 49.6 per cent of the peasant farms, served the right to easements (Ludwik Krzywicki, *Serwituty w 1912* [*The Easements in 1912*] (Warsaw, 1918), pp. 53–4). As a result of the appearance of the expropriation of peasants issued by the Tsar, the mutual consent of the two sides and for remuneration began to endure easements so that in 1912 'only' 99,725 peasant farms used them (*ibid.*, p. 53) (against 344,898 benefiting in 1864). After Poland regained independence, the case of easements was taken up by the Polish authorities. The first pioneering Polish easement act was adopted in 1920 (only for the former Congress Kingdom) (*Journal of Laws* of 1920, No. 42, item 249). This act permits the liquidation of easements from office by coercion.

90 *Ibid.*, p. 68. Common lands were of particular importance for small-scale farms (because they 'allowed [families] to support a cow as a provider'). (Mieszczankowski, *Struktura agrarna Polski międzywojennej* [*Polish Agrarian Structure in the Interwar Period*], p. 28). In Poland under three partitions they covered 1,505,938 ha (9.4 per cent of the area of smaller ownership); the majority of them were permanent pastures (Central Statistical Office of the Republic of Poland, *Statystyka Polski: Pierwszy Powszechny Spis Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej z dnia 30 września 1921 r. Grunty wspólne, T. XII, Zeszyt 2* [*Polish Statistics: First Polish Census dated 30 September 1921, Commons*] (1927), Vol. XII, Book. II, p. 3, and *Roczniki Statystyki Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej 1925/1926* [*Statistical Annals of the Republic of Poland, 1925/1926*] (1927), p. 106). Their decline in the interwar period was gradual, but very slow.

91 Czerniewski, 'Zagadnienia struktury agrarnej [Agrarian Structure Issues]', p. 123.

92 *Ibid.*, p. 125.

93 *Ibid.*, p. 132.

94 Mieszczankowski, *Struktura agrarna Polski międzywojennej* [*Polish Agrarian Structure in the Interwar Period*], p. 360.

95 *Ibid.*, p. 363.

96 Growing farmland fragmentation was to be prevented to a certain degree by an Act of 14th April 1937, on limiting the sale of property established as a result of redistribution (*Journal of Laws Year 1937*, No. 36, item 272).

97 Mieczysław Mieszczankowski, *Rolnictwo II Rzeczypospolitej* [*Agriculture of the Second Polish Republic*] (Warsaw, 1983), p. 94.

98 Central Statistical Office of the Republic of Poland, *Rocznik Demograficzny* [*Demographic Annals*] 1945–1966 (1968), p. 5.

99 *Ibid.*, p. 70.