

---

## PROBLEMS

---

### *Land Reforms in Poland (1764-1870)*

Janina Leskiewicz

Warsaw, Polish Academy of Sciences

Historians have devoted particular attention not only to the origins and spread in Poland of seigneurial farms based on the labour of peasant-serfs, but also to the reforms which led to the abolition of the social organization of this type of production. The period here demarcated by two specific dates, which although somewhat artificial are those traditionally adopted by Polish historians,<sup>1</sup> starts with the revival of political life on the accession of Stanislaw Augustus Poniatowski (1764) and the acceleration of the rate of reconstruction after the decades of wars, destruction, epidemics, and general demographic, economic and cultural decline. It also coincides however with the catastrophic first partition (1772) by which large portions of the territories of Poland and Lithuania were ceded to Austria, Prussia and Russia. The Poland that remained — and in particular the central regions — was a poor agricultural country with only a few weak industrialized areas. The principal characteristic of its agriculture was cereal monoculture combined with primitive animal husbandry. The cultivation of the four principal cereals occupied roughly 85% of the arable land, the highest percentage being accounted for by rye (or in the mountainous regions by oats) and the lowest by wheat.<sup>2</sup>

The system prevailing in the greater part of the territory was serf economy, which had been established in the 16th century and was marked by an intense degree of exploitation of the peasants due to a heavy increase

---

<sup>1</sup> Mentioned by I. RUTKOWSKI in *Historia Gospodarstwa Polskiego* (Economic History of Poland), vol. II, Poznan, 1950.

<sup>2</sup> *Zarys historii gospodarstwa wiejskiego w Polsce* (Abstract of the History of Farms in Poland), vol. II, Warsaw, 1964, p. 163 ff.

in the services due to the landlord and to a reduction in the average acreage of peasant farms. Money-rents only prevailed in a few areas. Villages or individual farms that were obliged to pay a tribute in money (*czynsz*) did exist however, though with differing intensity, all over the country. Yet a considerable percentage of formerly cultivated land was unfarmed. It was this situation which provided the starting point for a new era dating from the 1760's, which was to bring economic and social progress; a progress however which, despite the achievements attained, was, comparatively speaking, in fact a further regression.<sup>3</sup>

The 'sixties and 'seventies of the 19th century, with which this survey closes, witnessed a series of political activities which differed considerably in each of the occupied Polish territories, yet in social and economic terms brought to the Polish countryside a definitive even if delayed implementation of the reforms which led to the transfer of the land to peasant ownership. These reforms made the peasant the real owner of the land he occupied, removed the last vestiges of feudal servitude and opened the way to the attainment of citizens' rights.

At the same time however the differences between one region and another, in terms of the degree of development of the Polish countryside, and therefore of the peasants' standard of living, became even more pronounced. In analysing economic growth, with the object of understanding the principal development trends visible in terms of production and of the formation of a new structure of Polish society, this proves to be a particularly problematic period; no less complex and involved than the contemporary political history of the Poles, who were to lose their national independence, just at that moment when they had begun to develop as a modern community.

The successive partitions of Poland (1772, 1793, 1795), the short life of the little independent Polish states of the 19th century, the changing conditions of the provinces into which the Polish lands were grouped within the frontiers of the occupying countries (with differing and varying degrees of political and economic independence) make the century examined here full of contradictions. Side by side with the development of capitalist industry there was the reinforcement of the divisions between the various states; side by side with tendencies and movements which looked to the integration of the Polish lands there was a growing tendency toward separation and subjection to the economic institutions of the occupying countries. The general political situation of the period therefore presents the historian with a great many problems, as well as enormous methodological difficulties deriving from the destruction of a considerable part of the archives<sup>4</sup> and

---

<sup>3</sup> W. KULA, *Kształtowanie się kapitalizmu w Polsce* (Formation of Capitalism in Poland), Warsaw, 1955.

<sup>4</sup> *Straty bibliotek i archiwów warszawskich w zakresie rękopiśmiennych źródeł histo-*

from the removal of the documents which were saved to the archives of the bordering states.

Unlike the period of Enlightenment whose achievements (which were all the more striking because they preceded the decay of the state) have attracted the attention of many historians, including economic historians, the problem of the economic growth of the Polish lands in the 19th century has aroused the interest of only a few scholars. The attention of historians in the period between the two world wars was focused mainly on the question of the struggle for independence, on the struggle against the Russianizing and Germanizing policies of the governments of the occupying states. At the same time, however, the development of socio-economic history as a subject in its own right (previously it had been subordinated to the history of law) did not fail to influence the study of the agrarian history of the 19th century. In this the outstanding personalities of two scholars proved decisive: Franciszek Bujak (1875-1953) and Jan Rutkowski (1866-1949). Their monographic studies do not in fact cover the 19th century, but the historical schools they founded, with the application of their modern research methods, embrace the whole history of the Polish countryside within the scope of their studies from the colonization of the Middle Ages to the economic problems of today. Jan Rutkowski's last work, a manual in two volumes on the economic history of Poland up to 1918,<sup>5</sup> reflects the author's great learning, and is still to-day a valuable source of information for the XIXth century.

Immediately after the second world war the groups of economic historians trained by these two scholars were able to launch successfully large-scale research undertakings, due to the enlarged network of universities and agencies of the Polish Academy of Sciences.

The development of agrarian research benefited from the fact that political history has to some extent lost ground to economic and social history, with a particular emphasis being given to class struggles. The situation has however been changing for some time. Strictly economic problems have only been studied on a large scale in very few centres (e.g. Poznań). In the research programmes of the principal scientific centres there has been a clear move in favour of the study of social structures and cultural change, as well as a greater interest in contemporary history. Nevertheless the material available for the agrarian history of the period of the reforms is most impressive. But the difficulties facing the historian of this period make detailed local studies necessary, with the consequence that the subject matter itself becomes

---

*rycznych* (Damages Suffered by the Historical Manuscripts in the Warsaw Libraries and Archives), vol. II, Warsaw, 1956.

<sup>5</sup> Ample information on the organization of historical studies in Poland is contained in the publication: *La Pologne au XII<sup>e</sup> Congrès International des Sciences historiques à Moscou*, I-II, Warsaw, 1970.

broken up. Quantitative conclusions in terms of growth processes are too often founded on fragmentary and often approximate and disputable estimates, although statistical surveys started at the beginning of the 19th century.

The transformation of the agrarian structure of the Polish lands took place in differing degree and at different moments in the various territories that made up Poland. It has not so far been possible to draw up a general set of conclusions mainly for this reason. Here mention will only be made of research problems however; problems which have not always been thoroughly examined, which are sometimes often highly questionable and the object of controversies regarding both methods and sources, but which are in any case of outstanding importance for the period examined in this essay.<sup>6</sup>

\* \* \*

Essays based on the Marxist concept of the historical process directed scholars' attention to the development of productive forces not only in industry, but also in agriculture. These tendencies were fostered by the acquisition by the State of the economic records of many of the landed estates. Historians were thus able to make use of the ledgers and journals of the agricultural estates of the different regions of Poland; these are particularly plentiful for the second half of the 18th century and sometimes cover long periods without interruption. It is interesting to note that the type of farming economy based on the labour of peasant-serfs called for a well organized system of administration and management, and provide exceptionally plentiful documentation.<sup>7</sup> These sources were therefore processed by a number of researchers who carried on the sort of monographic study of landed property started back in 1910 by Jan Rutkowski.<sup>8</sup> The range of the problems considered was gradually extended.

During the last war the Archives of the Treasury (*Archiwum Skarbowe*) suffered serious losses, but fortunately the inquests (*lustrationes*) of the crown

---

<sup>6</sup> J. TOPOLSKI, *Badania historyczno-gospodarcze w Polsce* (Economic History Research in Poland), « RDzSiG », vol. 25, a. 1963, pp. 9-45; W. STANKIEWICZ, *W sprawie dróg rozwoju kapitalizmu w rolnictwie* (The question of the lines of Capitalist development in Agriculture), « Kwart. Hist. », LXXVII, 1969, n. 3, pp. 684-701; see ST. HOSZOWSKI, *Usefulness of the History of Prices in Economic Research of the Late-Feudal Poland*, in « *Studia historiae oeconomicae* », vol. 5, 1970, pp. 3-18; I. KOSTROWICKA, *Methoden der Typologie der Landwirtschaft und Historische Untersuchungen*, ibidem, pp. 19-39 and H. MADUROWICZ-URBANSKA, *The Spatial Aspect in Agrarian History Research*, ibidem, pp. 41-52.

<sup>7</sup> For instance the economic papers in the archives of the Wilanów estates for the period 1800-1944 (but mainly for 1800-1864) occupy 250 linear metres.

<sup>8</sup> J. RUKOWSKI, *Klucz brzozowski biskupstwa przemyskiego w XVIII w.* (The Brzozów Estates of the Bishopric of Przemyśl in the 18th Century), Cracow, 1910.

lands carried out in the years 1564-5, 1616, 1664-5 and 1789 are still practically intact. The inquests, which were made for tax purposes, contain much valuable information concerning the seigneurial and peasant farms which operated on these estates. The *lustrationes* have become the object of a monumental edition already numbering 29 volumes<sup>9</sup> and are extensively used in monographic studies. In research based on both of the above types of sources, the principal emphasis is placed on the problem of Poland's cereal producing capacity, which provides an indispensable index for establishing the overall volume of production, the respective volume of production for trade and for consumption, and lastly the national income, the fundamental component of which was cereal production. Production yield, in the documents of the period, was calculated on the yield of a single seed. This problem, which is far from unimportant, became the subject not only of various theories, but also of many bitter controversies. These controversies centre around both the assessments of the sources and the methods used to process them, in particular the application of statistical methods. Some scholars, among them A. Wyczański<sup>10</sup> and above all A. Wawrzyńczykowa,<sup>11</sup> in the attempt to construct comparative synthetic indices for different periods and areas, take as a basis data drawn from the inquests on the crown lands, so establishing the average harvests for each of the regions examined. Others, however, such as L. Żytkowicz, deny the value of these fiscal sources which were largely based on the estimates made by earlier inspectors. Żytkowicz<sup>12</sup> denies also the value of these arithmetic averages and has attempted to establish the maximum and minimum harvest yields, and their fluctuations, by comparing in simple tables crop yields drawn from the smallest possible economic units, and on the basis of the most uncomplicated sources which are the accounts kept for the seigneurial farms.

During this discussion I. Rychlikowa's work<sup>13</sup> came out. It was based on an impressive range of sources, of annual accounts which do, however, contain some gaps due to the state of preservation of the records of sowings and harvests in the period 1764-1805 and up to 1840, although the defi-

<sup>9</sup> *Lustracje dóbr królewskich XVI-XVIII w.* (Inquests on the Crown Lands in the 16th-18th Centuries); the first volume was published in 1959.

<sup>10</sup> A. WYCZAŃSKI, *Le niveau de la récolte des céréales en Pologne du XVII<sup>e</sup> siècle au XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle*, Première Conférence Internationale d'Histoire Economique, Stockholm, 1960, pp. 385-390; *Id.*, *O badaniu plonów zbóż w dawnej Polsce* (Studies on Cereal Harvests in Old Poland), «KT HKM», a. XVI, 1968, n. 2, pp. 251-270.

<sup>11</sup> A. WAWRZYŃCZYKOWA, *Stan badań nad wysokością plonów w rolnictwie polskim XVI-XVIII w.* (The State of Research on Poland's Agricultural yields in the 16th to 18th century), «KT HKM», a. VIII, 1960, n. 1, pp. 101-117.

<sup>12</sup> L. ŻYTKOWICZ, *Ze studiów nad wysokością plonów w Polsce od XVI do XVIII w.* (Studies on Poland's Agricultural yields from the 16th to the 18th century), «KT HKM», a. XIV, 1966, n. 3, pp. 457-490.

<sup>13</sup> I. RYCHLIKOWA, *Produkcja zbożowa wielkiej własności w Małopolsce w l. 1764-1805* (Cereal Production of the large estates in Little Poland in 1760-1805), Warsaw, 1967.

ciences are more limited for the latter period. These accounts cover 40 estates scattered over practically the whole of the Polish Republic with, however, a marked concentration in Little Poland. The author sets herself the task of « establishing the extent of the harvest fluctuations, defining the trends in the evolution and dynamic of the harvests, and illustrating the nature of harvest fluctuations on the various estates and in the various regions which she takes into consideration ».

The yield (ratio of grain harvested to grain sown) and the fluctuation of the harvests are established by the author on the following basis: she calculates the arithmetic averages, the area subject to fluctuation, typical variations, and coefficients of fluctuation. The analysis of the normal fluctuation of the harvests is expressed in coefficients which correlate the harvests in the different regions, in which the effective value of these differences is established (Student-Fisher's *t* formula).

The criticism of Rychlikowa's work stressed the dangers that beset the historian who reduces historical material to a mere mathematical index, and showed how thoroughly and minutely the data fed to computers must be analysed.<sup>14</sup>

The study of yields and harvest trends has not been divorced from general economic problems. It is in this, unquestionably, that the merit of W. Kula's studies lies.<sup>15</sup> In the monographs and articles recently published, among which is also Rychlikowa's work, increasing attention has been given to the interdependence of yields, harvest movements, and cereal prices: the relation between the quantity of marketable product and the size of the harvests; and the interdependence of profits and harvest fluctuations. These subjects are discussed on the basis of sources for the 16th to the 19th century.<sup>16</sup> For more recent times, the controversy over the first years of the 19th century<sup>17</sup> is particularly keen. In these years high cereal prices kept up with an evident increase in harvests. Was this improvement in agricultural

---

<sup>14</sup> M. RÓZYCKA-GLASSOWA, *O niektórych metodach statystyki matematycznej w historii rolnictwa* (Some Methods of Mathematical Statistics in the History of Agriculture), « KT HKM », a. XVI, 1968, n. 2, pp. 299-316.

<sup>15</sup> W. KULA, *Problemy i metody historii gospodarczej* (Economic History; Problems and Methods), Warsaw, 1963; Id., *Teoria economica del sistema feudale; Proposta di un modello*, Einaudi, 1970.

<sup>16</sup> I. RYCHLIKOWA, *Perspektywy badania plonów w drugiej połowie XVIII i pierwszej połowie XIX wieku na terytorium Małopolski i Polski środkowej* (Research Projects of Harvests in the Second Half on the 18th and First Half of the 19th Century in Little and Central Poland), « Studia historyczne », a. XII, 1969, n. 3, pp. 311-366.

<sup>17</sup> D. RZEPNIEWSKA, *Gospodarstwo folwarczne na Mazowszu 1795-1805* (Landlords' Farms in Mazovia 1795-1805), Warsaw, 1968; see the review by B. GROCHULSKA, « PH », 60, 1969, n. 3, pp. 602-605; see also B. GROCHULSKA, *La conjoncture du blocus continental en Europe*, « APH », vol. 21, Warsaw 1970, pp. 123-139 and by the same author: *Sur la structure économique du Duché de Varsovie (1807-1813)*, « Ann. hist. Révol. fr. », a. 36, 1964, n. 3, pp. 349-363.

productivity the consequence of a highly favourable market trend which lasted for some years or were they the continuation of the increases that had already been evident at the end of the preceding century? Were they merely the result of exceptionally favourable weather conditions? The study of agricultural yields is also often linked to attempts to establish the marketing opportunities for the cereal harvest.

As yet there is no conclusive solution to the problem of the effect that the first partition and the loss of access to Danzig had on the opportunities of the various Polish regions for marketing cereals, although, in the light of the information examined by Rychlikowa and then analyzed in the subsequent polemic by Mielczarski,<sup>18</sup> a decrease in river traffic and a switchover to the production of alcohol by the magnates became clearly recognizable after 1772.

The most serious shortcoming of these researches is that they are based on material drawn exclusively from the big landed estates. This leads to an exaggeration of the proportion of the bulk of cereals destined for the market and also to an exaggeration of the importance of the *propinatio* (production and sale of alcohol) in the country's economy. On the small noble estates there was no alcohol production but this is often forgotten under the influence of the surviving sources which refer mainly to magnate latifundia and not to collections of noble small-holdings.<sup>19</sup>

Studies of the laws regulating production and the movement of prices, as of the reciprocal interdependence of these processes, deal almost exclusively with the 18th and beginning of the 19th century and therefore the period in which the feudal economy was still fully operative. For the whole of the period examined here, on the contrary, there has been a marked progress in our knowledge of the distribution of crops and of the structure of vegetable production. Western Little Poland,<sup>20</sup> Silesia,<sup>21</sup> the Principality of Warsaw

---

<sup>18</sup> ST. MIELCZARSKI, *O prawidłowa analizie rynku zbożowego w Małopolsce w drugiej połowie XVII w.* (Accurate Analysis of the Cereal Market in Little Poland in the Second Half of the 18th Century), «PH», vol. LVIII, 1967, pp. 670-678.

<sup>19</sup> *Première Conférence Internationale d'Historie Economique*, op. cit., J. LESKIEWICZ, *Sur le niveau et les composants du revenu foncier en Pologne du XVI<sup>e</sup> au XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle*, pp. 409-414; M. SZCZEPANIAK, *Spożycie piwa i gorzałki oraz dochody feudalne z propinacji na wsi wielkopolskie u schyłku XVII w.* (Consumption of Beer and Brandy; Feudal Income from the Production and Sale of Spirits in the Countryside in Great Poland in the Last Part of the 18th Century), «RDİSIG», vol. 29, a. 1968, pp. 87-104.

<sup>20</sup> H. MADUROWICZ i A. PODRAZA, *Regiony gospodarcze Małopolski Zachodniej w drugiej połowie XVIII wieku* (Economic Regions of Western Little Poland in the Second Half of the 18th Century), Wrocław, 1958; also H. MADUROWICZ-URBAŃSKA, A. PODRAZA, *L'économie régionale polonaise au XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle. En Petite Pologne. Essai de régionalisation*, «Ann. Econ. Soc.», a. 18, 1963, n. 2, pp. 318-328.

<sup>21</sup> J. JANCZAK, *Rozmieszczenie produkcji roślinnej i zwierzecej na Śląsku na przełomie XVIII i XIX w.* (Distribution of Vegetable and Animal Produce in Silesia between the End of the 18th and Beginning of the 19th Century), Wrocław, 1964.

(1806-1812)<sup>22</sup> and the Kingdom of Poland (1818-1864)<sup>23</sup> and Great Poland<sup>24</sup> have been studied in this way. The scant awareness of statistical techniques in the territories depending politically on Russia is responsible for the fact that many aspects are still very unclear in these areas. Further research is required in the first place on the change from a three crop variation culture to pluriennial crop rotation.<sup>25</sup> This switchover did not take place simultaneously on the lands of the nobles and on those of the peasants and varied between one region and another, but in general terms its adoption was typified by the brisker development of the western lands and the backwardness of the northern and central-eastern lands of the Kingdom of Poland.

Recently the results of surveys of the growth of livestock production, carried out practically simultaneously for all parts of the Polish territory, have also been published. Also of great importance for an understanding of the condition of Polish agriculture are the publications dealing with the problems of the mechanization of production, and the use and diffusion of farm machines. Interesting observations in this field are made in the works of M. Glassowa.<sup>26</sup> A precise calculation (based on the ledgers of the Wilanów estate) of the number of men employed on a hectare of arable land in the middle of the 19th century, during the various agrarian cycles, allows Glassowa to calculate the productivity of labour (of the peasant-serf and of the labourer) and the degree of economic efficiency apparent on the introduction of machinery. These calculations eloquently illustrate the obstacles facing a backward country undertaking a modernization of production methods.

As can be seen from the works quoted, the post-war period has appre-

---

<sup>22</sup> B. BARANOWSKI, *Struktura produkcji roślinnej w Ksiestwie Warszawskim* (Structure of Vegetable Production in the Kingdom of Warsaw), Wrocław, 1966.

<sup>23</sup> I. KOSTROWICKA, *Produkcja roślinna w Królestwie Polskim (1815-1864)* [Vegetable Production in the Kingdom of Poland (1815-1864)], Warsaw, 1961.

<sup>24</sup> J. ŁUKASIEWICZ, *Uwagi na temat systemów rolniczych w Królestwie Polskim w drugiej połowie XIX w.* (Observations Concerning the Agricultural Systems of the Kingdom of Poland in the Second Half of the 19th Century), «KHKM», a. XIII, 1965, pp. 571-582.

<sup>25</sup> J. K. JANCZAK, *Zmiany w stanie ilościowym i rejonizacja hodowli w Poznańskim w XIX i na początku XX w.* (Changes in the Extent and Distribution of Livestock Farming in various zones in the Region of Poznan in the 19th and Early 20th Century), Warsaw, 1969; T. SOB CZAK, *Zmiany w stanie ilościowym i rejonizacji hodowli na ziemiach Polski środkowej w. XIX w.* (Changes in the Extent and Distribution of Livestock Farming in various zones in the Lands of Central Poland in the 19th Century), Warsaw, 1961.

<sup>26</sup> M. ROZYCKA-GLASSOWA, *Organizacja i wydajność pracy w rolnictwie wielkiej własności przed uwłaszczeniem* (The Organization and Productivity of Labour in Agriculture on the Big Estates before the Allocation of the Land to the Peasants), Wrocław, 1970; see also J. BARTYŚ, *Początki mechanizacji rolnictwa polskiego* (The Beginnings of Mechanization on Polish Farms), Wrocław, 1966; ST. BOROWSKI, *Esquisse du développement de la mécanisation de l'agriculture dans la Grande Pologne des années 1807-1918*, «Ergon», vol. 4, 1964, pp. 535-541.

ciably improved our knowledge of agrarian production in Poland and this is certainly largely due to the creation in 1953 of the Institute of the History of Materialistic Culture of the Polish Academy of Sciences (*Instytut Historii Kultury Materialnej PAN*). The series *Studia z dziejów gospodarstwa wiejskiego* (Studies on the History of Agricultural Estates) published by this institute and the *Zarys dziejów gospodarstwa wiejskiego* (Abstract of History of Agricultural Estates) compiled collectively on its initiative have considerably expanded, above all in the universities, the range of works of this kind. The principal study centres are at Wrocław (Breslau) under the direction of Prof. Inglot, and a Łódź under the direction of Prof. Baranowski, as well as at the Institute of the Polish Academy of Sciences (*Instytut Historii PAN*).

\* \* \*

2. The central problem of the period considered in this essay is that of land reforms — their effectiveness, aims and implementation. A great deal depended on the solution of the so-called «peasant question»: the increase in agricultural production indispensable for an expansion of the country's demographic potential, the creation of a reserve of workers without which industry could not be developed, the integration of the peasants in the process of the formation of a modern country and the participation of the peasants in the battles for national liberation. This sort of problems formerly came within the field of interest not only of economic historians, but also of the representatives of the history of law<sup>27</sup> and of political history.<sup>28</sup> A number of post-war studies have greatly enriched the literature on this subject. For the most part, however, these are too localized and parochial, and lack any general framework.<sup>29</sup> In an attempt to arrange the results of these findings, however, three types of reforms can be distinguished: 1. the reforms carried out by the landowners on their own estates; 2. the state reforms carried out on the demanial lands; 3. the reforms applied to the entire country. Chronologically these processes were almost simultaneous, but of course with different speeds and with varying intensity. The distinctions derive not so much from varying merit (though this too was a factor of

---

<sup>27</sup> M. KNIAT, *Dzieje uwłaszczenia włościan w Wielkim Księstwie Poznańskim* (The History of the Allocation of Land to the Peasants in the Grand Duchy of Poznań), Poznań, vol. I; II, 1939, 1949.

<sup>28</sup> S. KJENIEWICZ, *Sprawa włościańska w powstaniu styczniowym* (The Peasant Question in the January 1863 Rising), Wrocław, 1953.

<sup>29</sup> More comprehensive studies of the changes in the agrarian structure in the 19th century are only available for Great Poland.

importance) as from the sources. Because each type is reliant on a particular type of documentation, the different types of reform are very often the object of specific monographic studies.

Let us take first the private reforms, even if their importance and range of influence are the more restricted. The fundamental research source in this field is the landlords' account books: ledgers, journals, statements, etc. Attention tends to be centred on the causes which motivated the reorganization of landed estates in periods of economic depression and economic growth, either in order to obtain higher returns as the writers Rychlikowa<sup>30</sup> and Rzepniewska<sup>31</sup> attempt to demonstrate, or to acquire greater social prestige for «civic» merits as Rostworowski<sup>32</sup> convincingly claims (describing the improvements effected and the economic results achieved on both seigneurial and peasant farms).

Two tendencies can be seen in the reforms towards the end of the 18th and beginning of the 19th century. The first was to improve the existing feudal economic system, preserving its previous structure. The improvement of the administrative apparatus of landed property and a closer control over estate activities, the organization of holdings and of peasants' obligations to ensure their more rational exploitation (as on the Wilanów estates of the Potocki family, the Puławy estates of the Czartoryski family, etc.) are all initiatives pointing to the vitality of the seigneurial farms based on the serf-system, although there is often talk of crises already apparent in the 17th century.<sup>33</sup> The most extensive picture of improvements of this kind, based on the example of the Puława estate, was provided in 1914 by I. T. Baranowski<sup>34</sup> and the more recent studies have only been able to confirm their wider diffusion.<sup>35</sup> This is certainly a controversial question, however, and calls for further research.

The second tendency is seen in the reforms abolishing serfdom in favour of a system of rent-paying tenancies (*czynsz*). In the 18th century abolition of serfdom very often involved the destruction of the seigneurial farms

---

<sup>30</sup> I. RYCHLIKOWA, *Produkcja towarowa wielkiej własności ziemskiej w Małopolsce w l. 1764-1805* (Marketable Production of Latifundia in Little Poland in 1764-1805), Warsaw, 1968; Id., *Gospodarka panów na Łańcucie* (Seigneurial Economy at Łancut), Łancut, 1970.

<sup>31</sup> D. RZEPNIEWSKA, *op. cit.*

<sup>32</sup> E. ROSTWOROWSKI, *Reforma pawłowska Pawła Ksawerego Brzostowskiego (1767-1795)* [Reform on the Pawłów Estates of Paweł Ksawery Brzostowski (1767-1795)], «PH», vol. 44, 1953, pp. 102-152.

<sup>33</sup> J. LESKIEWICZOWA, *Dobra osieckie w okresie gospodarki folwarczno-pańszczyźnianej XVI-XIX* (The Osieck Estates in the Period of Late Feudal Economy in the 16th to 19th Centuries), Wrocław, 1957.

<sup>34</sup> *Wieś i folwark* (The Peasant and the Seigneurial Farm), Warsaw, 1914.

<sup>35</sup> J. LESKIEWICZOWA, *Próba analizy gospodarki dóbr magnackich w Polsce* (An attempted Analysis of the Economy of the Magnates' Estates in Poland), Warsaw, 1964.

(*folwark*). The lands were transferred to the peasants against payment in money. Theoretically the transfer benefited both the landlords (thanks to the liquidation of excessive management costs and the transfer of the risks entailed in agricultural production to the peasants) and also the peasants through their greater personal and economic independence and the greater rural autonomy. In fact, however, the effect of the reforms mainly depended on two factors: the level of land prices and the absorption capacity of the market which provided an outlet for the sale of the products of the peasant farm.

Gaps in the sources make it impossible to indicate to what extent land tenure reforms of this kind were lasting. There can be no doubt, however, that the number of peasant farms held in simple lease increased considerably in the 18th century, especially in the western regions. This was also largely the result of colonization.<sup>36</sup> The settlers were usually obliged to make payments in money to the owner of the land. This phenomenon has been studied in a separate work by W. Rusiński.<sup>37</sup> The 19th century saw the spread of a different type of lease which left the seigneurial farms intact, but replaced serfs by salaried labour. Particularly famous were the reforms carried out on these principles between 1833 and 1864 on the huge indivisible and inalienable Zamoyski estates which covered over 374,000 hectares and contained 120,000 persons. The archives of these estates, which are exceptionally rich, despite war damages, have provided a basis for many detailed studies,<sup>38</sup> such as the lengthy monograph by R. Bendera<sup>39</sup> on the reforms of the mid 19th century. The reforms, carried out by A. Zamoyski, were based on the assumption that the land belonged to the seigneur, and that the peasant was merely a tenant on a long lease; that it was only necessary to create self-sufficient peasant farms which could bear the cost of the rent, and that the poorer farms should be wound up. This concept of structural change was accepted in principle by the progressive (!) members of the Kingdom of Poland's rural nobility. Czepulis<sup>40</sup> has devoted a study to the ideology of this rural gentry in the 1850's and 1860's.

The reforms allotting land to the peasants, promulgated in February 1863

---

<sup>36</sup> *Dzieje Wielkopolski, pod. red. J. Topolskiego, t. I de 1793 r.* (A History of Great Poland edited by J. TOPOLSKI, vol. I up to 1793), Poznań, 1969, pp. 815-857.

<sup>37</sup> WŁ. RUSIŃSKI, *Osady tak zwane olenarów w dawnym województwie poznańskim* (Settlements of the «Olenary» (Dutch) in the Old Vojevodate of Poznan), Poznań 1939-Gracow 1947; K. CIESIELSKA, *Osadnictwo «olederskie» w Prusach Królewskich i na Kujawach* («Olederskie» (Dutch) Settlements in Royal Prussia and in Kujawy), vol. IV, n. 2, Poznań, 1958, pp. 219-256.

<sup>38</sup> See the works of: J. BARTYS, R. ORŁOWSKI, Z. PAZUREK and Cz. RAJCA.

<sup>39</sup> R. BENDER, *Reforma czynszowa w Ordynacji Zamoyskiej 1833-1864* (Lease Reform on the Zamoyski Estates 1833-1864), Lublin, 1969.

<sup>40</sup> R. CZEPULIS, *Mysł społeczna twórców Towarzystwa Rolniczego 1842-1861* (Social Attitudes of the Creators of the Agrarian Association, 1842-1861), Wrocław, 1964.

by the National Government formed after the rising in January of that year, and the later tsarist *ukases* of 1864, led to the final recognition of the peasants' right to the land they farmed, and provided a total contrast to Zamoyski's initial concept of reform.

Studies on the reforms on the domanial lands in the last decades of the Republic provide fresh information on the attempts to « improve » the serf economy<sup>41</sup> in the 19th century. These studies deal in particular with the lands of the Polish Crown, where the problem was of particular importance due to the great area covered by this property and to the delay with which the reform transferring ownership to the peasants was carried out. Z. Stankiewicz<sup>42</sup> has been studying the administrative documents for the Crown lands — or at least that part that has survived — for many years. These documents make it possible to follow the process of the abolition of serfdom and the reinforcement of the peasants' rights, and also to understand the economic condition of the peasant population, their social conditions, the struggles for the abolition of serfdom and for possession of the land, but unfortunately only in a few parts of the country. In Kieniewicz's valuable work there is an attempt to devise a general statistical picture of the development of the new rentier economy.

The agrarian reforms effected by the State, which were started by Maria Teresa and continued by Josef II, on the Polish lands subject to Austria aimed, like the contemporary Prussian reforms, at the « improvement of the serf system », but unlike the private reforms their chief intent was to defend the peasant population against exploitation by the gentry. The agrarian laws of the occupying states were of particular interest to historians in the period between the two world wars, the most thorough study being that of Roman Rozdolski; its publication, at Lwow (Leopol), in 1939 was interrupted by World War II, and it did not appear until 1962. In the period since the last war, however, research has been centred mainly on the reforms allocating land to the peasants; reforms which, although praised by earlier historians, have been bitterly criticized by Marxist historians. In the implementation of these reforms the latter saw not so much a process which allotted the land to the peasants, as a process which deprived them of the land that should have been theirs, as the seigneurial farms continued to exist. The Marxist historians have also attacked the formal-juridical historiography which preceded them.

The laws allotting land to the peasants (the first of which was the

---

<sup>41</sup> A. GRADOWSKA, *Ostatnie lata działalności sadu Referendarskiego Koronnego* (Last Years of the Law Courts of the Kingdom), Wrocław, 1971.

<sup>42</sup> Z. STANKIEWICZ, *Reformy czynszowe dobr skarbowych w Królestwie Polkim* (Lease Reforms on the Crown Lands of the Kingdom of Poland), Lodz, 1968; *Id.*, *Dobra porzadowe w Królestwie Polskim* (Former Crown Lands of the Kingdom of Poland), « PH », vol. 61, 1970, pp. 476-489.

Prussian edict of 1811 and the last the Tsarist *ukase* of 1864) have also been examined in relation to the general economic and social conditions on the Polish lands. This line of study was started by S. Śreniowski.<sup>43</sup> Examining the 1815 land reforms in the Kingdom of Poland, the writer gives predominance to class strife as the factor which led to the gradual abolition of feudal privileges and to the transfer of the land they worked to the peasants. A number of detailed studies,<sup>44</sup> aided by the publication of various series of documents,<sup>45</sup> have illustrated the growing resistance shown by the peasants and the revolutionary situation in the countryside. The numerous monographs by Rychlikowa, Leskiewiczowa, Chlebowczyk, Różycka-Glassowa, Rzepniewska, Topolski and others<sup>46</sup> have also provided a better understanding of the economic problems of the large landed estates in the 18th and 19th century, of the tendency to farm directly as much of the peasants' land as possible while simultaneously making every effort to increase productivity which in turn called for the substitution of serf by paid labour. All these factors were closely connected in the attempted solution of the agrarian question, although in degrees which differed in each part of the occupied Polish territories.

An equally important problem is the outcome of the reforms allotting land to the peasants. How much land did the peasants obtain and at what price; what were the payments to the landlord, the proprietors of the land, the compulsory surrenders of land given as indemnity, the increases in govern-

---

<sup>43</sup> *Uwłaszczenie chłopów* (The Allocation of Land to the Peasant), Warsaw, 1956; Id., *Studia nad prawem i stosunkami agrarnymi Królestwa Polskiego 1831-1864* (Studies on Agrarian Relations and Legislation in the Kingdom of Poland 1831-1864), Warsaw, 1963.

<sup>44</sup> S. KIENIEWICZ, *Sprawa włościańska*, op. cit.; Id., *Ruch chłopski w Galicji 1864* (Peasant Movement in Galicia in 1864), Wrocław, 1951. Not only have many special studies been devoted to the peasant class struggle but — what is more important — this fundamental problem has been continuously kept in mind by scholars of the history of the Polish countryside as well as by those studying the processes leading to the formation of contemporary society; *Walka klasowa w Królestwie Polskim (1815-1864)* (Class Struggles in the Kingdom of Poland 1815-1864), Warsaw, 1969; *Studia z dziejów wsi małopolskiej w drugiej połowie XVIII w. pod. red. C. Bobińskiej* (Studies on the History of the Countryside in Little Poland in the Second Half of the 18th Century edited by C. Bobińska), Warsaw, 1957; K. GRONIEWSKI, *Problem rewolucji agrarnej w ideologii obozów politycznych w latach 1864-1871* (Problem of the Agrarian Revolution in the Ideology of the Political Groups in 1846-71), Warsaw, 1957.

<sup>45</sup> *Materiały do dziejów uwłaszczenia w Królestwie Polskim* (Sources for the History of the Allocation of Land in the Kingdom of Poland) edited by ST. ŚRENIOWSKI, K. ŚRENIOWSKA, Wrocław, 1961, p. 509; *Chłopi i sprawa chłopska w powstaniu styczniowym* (Peasants and the Peasant Question in the January 1863 Rising) in *Powstanie styczniowe. Materiały i dokumenty* (The January Rising. Material and Documents), Warsaw, 1962.

<sup>46</sup> A particularly important work in this field is the study by S. BOROWSKI, *Kształtowanie się rolniczego rynku pracy w Wielkopolsce w okresie wielkich reform agrarnych 1807-1860* (The Formation of the Agricultural Labour Market in Great Poland in the Period of the Great Land Reforms 1807-1860), Poznań, 1963.

ment taxes, etc.? To what extent did these reforms serve to reinforce the traditional agrarian structure and increase the differences between the various parts of the country? What was the pattern of peasant and noble land ownership at the conclusion of the reforms and the progression, notwithstanding some survivals of the old system, to a capitalist economy? And what was the internal structure of the peasant class which in this period was subject to a phase of population growth (literature concerning this problem is particularly rich)?<sup>47</sup> To these very important questions only partial answers are so far available.<sup>48</sup>

The difficulties standing in the way of a general analysis derive not only from the political partition of the Polish lands, but also from the general tendency shown by economic historians to confine studies within chronological limits dictated either by political events or by laws. For example, there are no comparative studies of the periods before and after the fall of the noble Republic, or before and after the reforms transferring land to the peasants. The decisive events in Polish history have then placed an artificial limitation on the subjects dealt with. From this derives in turn the lack of a wider comparative understanding of the importance of these events in the development of the Polish countryside. The projects drawn up by various study centres for a more comprehensive approach to the history of Polish society, which include the history of the peasants, of the agricultural countryside, and of materialist culture provide an idea of present orientation and should inspire studies which will fill the most important gaps in our knowledge of the period considered.

Recent research in the field of agrarian history has been centred above all on the fifty years which preceded the first World War. Works on the development of the peasant movement are particularly numerous, and many of the results are published in the series *Studia z dziejów ruchu ludowego* (Studies on the History of the Peasant Movement) and in *Zarys dziejów ruchu ludowego* (Abstract of the History of the Peasant Movement).

There are also a number of studies of conditions in the countryside towards the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th century, in particular on emigration, which was by then a permanent mass phenomenon.

---

<sup>47</sup> Besides Borowski's works already cited, mention must also be made of the highly original researches by K. ORZECOWSKI, author of the essay: *Chłopskie posiadanie ziemi na Górnym Śląsku u schyłku epoki feudalnej Studium historycznoprawne* (Peasant Land Ownership in Upper Silesia in the Last Years of the Feudal Era; Historic-juridical Study), Opole, 1959; S. BOROWSKI, *Esquisse du développement de la mécanisation de l'agriculture dans la Grande Pologne des années 1807-1918*, « Ergon », vol. 4, 1964, pp. 535-541.

<sup>48</sup> See the works by the following authors: J. CHLEBOWCZYK (for the Silesian territory in the Cieszyn area); K. ORZECOWSKI (Lower and Upper Silesia); J. JASIŃSKI (Varmia); K. GRONOWSKI (The Kingdom of Poland); S. BOROWSKI and W. JAKÓBCZYK (Great Poland); J. WOJTCWICZ (The Pomerania of Danzig). More recent studies on Galicia, which formed part of the Habsburg Empire, are lacking.