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THE VALUE OF WORK FOR AN INDIVIDUAL IN THE STATE-OWNED  
FARM MILIEU

1. Introduction

Work belongs to fundamental activities of man. Human work is included in the set of the most important values in different ethical systems. The theses considering work as one of the most important human and civic values are also among the fundamental premises of the socialist system.

"Well-done occupational work" is also one of the important factors, crucial for economic progress and social development. There is no way to overestimate the role of this factor while analysing social-economic situation of Poland.

The aim of the article is an attempt to answer the question: to what extent "occupational work" is a value for a selected occupational group of Poles. Thus, one of the social variables, related - more or less directly - with the condition of economy, will be analysed. By determining the values which form a system of reference of employees, indicating the place of a "good occupational job" in it and by analysing the types of values connected with work, appreciated by employees, one wants to determine the position of occupational work among the values of life of a selected group of people living and working in the period of the social-economic crisis.

The issues undertaken in the article, are thus contained in the sphere of problems concerning motivation for work. However, it is to be pointed out that a new model of motivation is concerned here, in which instead of the needs, the values are taken

into account. As X. Gliszczyńska notices "The notion of value allows for diverting the considerations of exemployees' aspirations from the problem of satisfaction. Instead of speaking of needs and the degree of their satisfaction, contemporarily, the values which are appreciated by employees and the attainability of these values in the occupational milieu have been dealt with. [...] The values that employees aim at are interpreted objectively, and the productivity of labour preceding their attainment depends also on the fact whether they are attainable in the occupational milieu, and what is more, at the cost of the productivity of their own work"<sup>1</sup>.

Thus, it has been acknowledged that values have an essential effect upon behaviour. They form a system of reference which serves an individual to analyse the reality and to control one's own conduct. What constitutes the object of important and permanent aims and aspirations recognized by man has been regarded as a value.

The attention was focused on the occupational work of employees employed in the state sector of agriculture. The work in farming has a number of specific features that distinguish it from other spheres of production of man. As F. W. Mleczek notices "in farming, a production process planned even in the best way contains not one, but many unknown quantities. Apart from variable human behaviour which requires flexible action also in other production activities, one has to do here with surprises on the part of vegetable and animal organisms [...] and surprises on the part of the whole habitat. [...] Therefore, a good agricultural producer, on each organizational level must have knowledge of chemistry, technology and biology in order to make correct diagnoses; he must feel responsible for all the production processes on his farm"<sup>2</sup>.

Work in agriculture is also characterized by diversity and variable intensity of activities in the cycles: daily, weekly and yearly. The peculiarities of the farm work indicated are most

<sup>1</sup> X. G l i s z c z y ń s k a, Motywacja do pracy (Motivation for work), Warszawa 1981.

<sup>2</sup> F. W. M l e c z k o, Wieś i rolnictwo na granicy epok (The Rural Milieu and Agriculture at the Turn of Two Epochs), Warszawa 1978.

entirely felt by peasants through work on their own farms they not only determine their own identity in front of themselves but also in front of their own group-neighbours and other villagers. Thus, the peasant farming conditions force certain behaviour and "characterologic" features as: diligence, perseverance, honesty, but also submission to the forces of nature<sup>3</sup>.

The occupational situation of a worker on a State-Owned Farm cannot be a replica of the situation of a peasant or a farmer, it is also different from the situation of a co-operative farmer; would it be possible, however, to ascertain that it is identical with the situation of a worker in a factory? It seems that the answer to this question should be negative.

Polish agriculture - as regards ownership relations - is composed of three sectors: 1) individual farms, comprising about 75% of farmland, 2) co-operative farms (about 4% of all the farmland) and 3) state sector i.e., State-Owned Farms, comprising over 18% of the whole farmland.

State-Owned Farms were formed after World War II from part of the farmland obtained as a result of the breaking up large landholdings and from part of farmland formerly belonging to the Germans in the western and northern territories of Poland. Their main task was, at first, to bring free land into cultivation and to play the role of an agriculture centre - of the model agricultural production. Starting from 1957, state farming - based on the profitability principle - was to become the agriculture obtaining high commodity production and providing peasants' farms with seeds, seed-potatoes and livestock. In 1981, the tasks connected with an increase in profitability were brought into prominence (the three "S's" principle - self-dependence, self-governing, self-financing). The realization of this principle caused a decrease in the number of unremunerative enterprises from 51% in 1979/1980 to 15% in 1982/1983.

The workers of the agricultural state sector constitute an interesting occupational category of about 500 000 people. Thus is a very differentiated category - especially as regards the level of education (from incomplete elementary education to uni-

<sup>3</sup> J. S z c z e p a ń s k i, *Korzeniami wrosłem w ziemię* (I Look Root in the Land), Katowice 1984.

versity education); professional qualifications, social origin (the workers come both from the families of farm workers, peasants, industrial workers and white-collar workers), work and life conditions. The specificity of this category is also determined by - untypical for Polish agriculture - occupational situation, i.e., employment in a state enterprise. Thus, farm workers belong to the working class and before the agrarian reform they were the most underprivileged group in the proletariat (especially as regards their access to education, culture, and their financial position). Consequently, this category had a low status among other groups of Polish society. At present - using the data from the studies presented - no inferiority complex of employees of the State-Owned Farm as compared with the Co-operative Farm or the individual farm has been observed. However, low self-estimation of the employees' own position (especially a financial one) in comparison with other categories in the global society has been found - the employees under investigation of the State-Owned Farms placed themselves in the middle position in the society.

The data presented are taken from the studies carried out in three State-Owned Farms situated in the mid-western part of Poland. They were the enterprises obtaining - on a national scale - good production results (thus, they were neither the best nor the weakest farms), of the size a little larger than the national average (the farms studied had, on the average, 4700 hectares of arable land in comparison with the average area of 3220 hectares). 383 employees have been analysed (i.e., 20,6% of all the persons employed) selected by the method of systematic sampling. The population presented are mostly: men (84% of the whole set), manual workers (80%), of low education level, at the age up to 35 (51% of the whole); hence, farm workers predominate.

## 2. The values appreciated by the employees

The values have been considered in the context of an individual's aspirations. The employees were asked to select and arrange five - most important for them - goals in life from

among eleven, given in Table 1. The values have been selected on the basis of the piloting studies.

Table 1

Arrangement of the values selected per cent  
(sum of the values indicated - 100%)

Value	Indications per cent
Successful family life	17.0
Care of one's health	14.7
Good occupational job	12.6
Gaining other people's esteem and respect	11.4
Growing rich	11.1
Safe and peaceful life	10.7
Acting according to one's own convictions	6.1
Education	5.4
Social activity	4.3
Abiding by religion and morality rules	4.2
Seeking pleasure in life	2.5
T o t a l	100.0

Thus, the values selected most often were the ones connected with: 1) the family (indicated by over 80% of the employees), 2) health (indicated by 70%) and 3) occupational work (indicated by over 60% of the employees). It is worth pointing out that "successful family life" (over 40% of the indications) and "growing rich" (over 31% of all the indications) found their first place among the other values indicated. Hence, the values connected with the family life, occupational work and wealth are predominant; gaining other people's esteem and respect was frequently important as well.

The fundamental variable, differentiating their choice was the level of education. The workers of lower level of education more frequently pointed to the values connected with: health, financial achievements, safe and peaceful life and social acti-

vity. On the other hand, "gaining other people's esteem and respect", "acting according to one's own convictions", "successful family life" and "good occupational job" were more often appreciated by people having higher education.

Table 2

Features of the work done acc. to the number of indications  
(per cent)

Features of one's own work	Per cent of
Very useful for the enterprise	88
Self-dependent and responsible	75
Convenient hours	75
Varied and interesting	71
Badly paid	66
Well organized	65
Requiring qualifications	64
Earnings independent of the whole team work	60
Mechanized	56
Physically hard	54
Harmful to health	52
Giving no chance of promotion in the enterprise	49
Safe as regards health	46
Giving chance for promotion in the enterprise	45
Physically light	43
Non-mechanized	39
Earnings dependent on the whole team work	32
Badly organized	30
Requiring no qualifications	29
Well paid	29
Monotonous and boring	23
Insufficiently self-dependent and responsible	21
Inconvenient hours	20
Less useful for the enterprise	6

However, it is difficult to determine to what extent the differentiation found is the result of the real dissimilarity of the values internalized by particular groups, and to what extent it expresses only the knowledge of the standard of an "educated man" who should aim at "higher values" presented by people with higher education.

### 3. The values connected with occupational work

"A good occupational job" was selected as a value by over 60% of the employees, most frequently being placed at the top, i.e., in the second or third place. The frequency of choice increased with the level of education - it was indicated by 57% of the employees with elementary education, and 90% with university education, the latter placing this value higher than other employees. Thus - in general, at the high index of choice of a "good occupational job" as a value - it is more often selected by the employees having a higher level of education.

For the majority of people, one of the fundamental functions of work is its instrumentality; more than half the employees considered "earning as much as possible and growing rich" as the most important aim of the work done, while 30% "earning as much so as to make a living". This aim was pointed out by the workers and the employees of younger age.

However, other functions of work were indicated as important for oneself: for over 47% of the employees gaining the esteem and respect of others - through the work done - was important (more often selected by the employees with higher education, also by younger ones); for a considerable number of the employees it was also important to "find pleasure in doing work" (more important for the employees with university education). Not only the manner of doing work was important, but also its effect: "to be satisfied with the results of one's own work and satisfy those whom these effects are to serve".

The employees pointed also to the non-pay functions of work; through work they would like to: 1) "do something for next generations" (32% of the whole), 2) "do something for the whole

society" (over 28%) and 3) "create a distinguished enterprise" (28%).

Ethical-moral justification for the duties concerning work appeared, e.g. "To avoid remorse", "because it is generally accepted", "because it is a duty". The majority of the employees considered the following qualities very important in their work: veracity, honesty, comradeship, diligence, thrift and economy. Do the employees studied manifest such qualities in everyday life? To what extent do they realize the values declared in the work done? Do they protest in the situations that infringe these values? They are the questions requiring further analyses.

#### 4. Perception and valuation of the work done

It has been stated above that the majority of the employees studied of the State-Owned Farms included "a good occupational job" in the set of their most important goals in life. In this context, the evaluation of the work done is interesting - how these employees perceive particular aspects of their own work - its content, organisation, physical milieu, time of work, pay, chances for professional promotion. They could select, from among 24 features, 12 that describe the work done by them in the most proper manner.

The majority of the employees regarded the physical conditions of the work done as disadvantageous (i.e. their work is physically hard, non-mechanized and harmful to health): their own work was perceived in this way by the workers. At the time, the majority of the employees regarded the work done as: a) useful for the enterprise, b) self-dependent and responsible (more often older people thought so), c) done at convenient hours, d) varied and interesting (most often it was evaluated so by the drivers and tractor-drivers, while most seldom by the office workers and unqualified workers). The type of the work done has turned out to be the main variable differentiating the assessment of the situation of the work done.

For the majority of employees, the fact that work is "varied and interesting" has turned out to be the most positive

feature of the work done. Such features as "mechanised" or "safe for health" were placed after it. However, the choices were dispersed.

A better agreement was found in the opinions on the features that the workers did not like; the following features were named: badly paid, badly organized, physically hard and harmful to health.

Summing up, it is to be pointed out that the employees paid special attention - from among the features of the work done to: a) pay, b) physical conditions of work and c) diversity and variety of work.

### 5. Conclusion

The data presented above should be treated rather as an inspiration for further analyses than the material serving formulation of final conclusions.

The answer to the fundamental question of the article is susceptible to various interpretations. "Good occupational work" is treated as a value (i.e. is perceived as one of their most important goals in life) by over one half of the employees. It is not perceived as a value, especially by the employees of the lowest education who do simple and physically hard work. Thus, strong positive relationship between the level of education (and as a result - type of the work done) and treating occupational work as one of the most important values of their own should be emphasized. Hence, differences have been found in the way the work is treated by all the employees of the State-Owned Farms analysed; it is to be noted, however, that in each occupational group, the majority points to "good occupational work" as one of their most important goals in life. Of course, it would be interesting to know to what extent "good occupational work" is what is felt to be a value (thus, the value is attractive in the emotional sense) for the employees, and to what extent it is an accepted value (i.e., we are convinced that it has an objective value)<sup>4</sup>.

<sup>4</sup> S. Ossowski, *Dzieła (Writings)*, vol. III, Warszawa 1967.

It is also to be pointed out that for part of the employees (including workers) work is not only external compulsory necessity to obtain means of satisfying elementary needs, but also profound life necessity, a means of self-realization.

The employees set different hopes on work and attribute different functions to it. The work was generally accepted as useful for the enterprise, the activities done were often estimated as self-dependent and responsible, varied and interesting, taking place at convenient hours. The diversity of assessment was especially related to the type of the work done.

Chances of realizing their own goals through work in a given enterprise are perceived much more critically by the employees. Only every third employee considers them sufficient. Whereas, less than half thinks that better and more efficient work increases chances to realize these goals. This phenomenon is no doubt bound with the lack of sufficiently distinct - in the consciousness of the employees studied - relationship between the situation of the whole enterprise, the efficiency of the work done and their own situation (especially financial one). A situation of insufficient association of individual employees' interests of the whole enterprise occurs here, especially in the elementary sphere. This causes a reduction in the interest in the work done, and as a consequence a decrease in the work efficiency and a tendency "towards mediocrity". This phenomenon is additionally intensified by a decrease - on a global scale - in the level of consumption as a result of the economic crisis.

The above considerations of the farm work would be incomplete without an attempt to relate it to the peasant farming. According to D. Gałaj (1985)<sup>5</sup>, the specificity of peasant's work is determined by the fact that it is perpetual work (i.e., the nature forces the peasant family into perpetual readiness for work - this duty has the strength of absolute imperative for the farmers). However the fact that it is work on his own farm, for himself and his own family brings out additional motivations for intensive farming, hence for hard work yield-

<sup>5</sup> D. Gałaj, Kwestia chłopska - próba definicji (The Peasant Question an Attempt at the Definition), "Wies i Rolnictwo" 1985, No. 1.

ing the best production results possible and prestige in the milieu.

Of course, the result of farming is also determined by a number of other elements, both objective as well as the following: knowledge, skill, will, common sense, aspirations and ambitions and goals in life of the employees and farmers. Organisational conceptions of the agriculture constitute, in a way, an external frame, while both individual farms and State-Owned Farms can be run well or badly<sup>6</sup>.

For the employees of the State-Owned Farms, work ceases to be perpetual (although the laws of nature act here in the same way) - the majority considers their own working hours convenient. As a result, possibilities of meeting more diversified needs arise; thus, a process of overcoming one of the most substantial drawbacks of the peasant's farming is taking place. As compared with the peasant farm, the mechanism motivating for more efficient work operates worse on the State-Owned Farms; initiative and enterprise of the employees is also weaker. The reinforcement of these mechanisms is a necessary condition of development and a chance of increasing farming efficiency of the State-Owned Farms.

In conclusion, a relatively high position of occupational work among the values of life should be pointed out again; on the other hand, however, the conviction of part of the employees of frailty of mechanism motivating for better and more efficient work is to be emphasized.

Andrzej Pilichowski

WARTOŚĆ PRACY  
DLA PRACOWNIKÓW PAŃSTWOWYCH GOSPODARSTW ROLNYCH

W artykule podjęto zagadnienie stosunku pracowników rolnictwa uspołecznionego do wykonywanej pracy.

Analiza danych zebranych w trzech kombinatach Państwowych Gos-

<sup>6</sup> J. S z c z e p a ń s k i, Koncepcja rozwoju rolnictwa a przyszłość chłopów (The Concept of Agricultural Development and the Future of Farmers), "Wieś i Rolnictwo" 1985, No. 1.

podarstw Rolnych w 1984 r. umożliwiła sformułowanie następujących wniosków:

1. Wartości cenione przez pracowników wiążą się zwłaszcza z konkretnie rozumianym, "dobrym" życiem osobistym jednostki.

2. Fizyczne warunki pracy większość pracowników określa jako niekorzystne.

3. Największe znaczenie - spośród cech wykonywanej pracy - pracownicy przywiązywali do: a) zarobków, b) fizycznych warunków pracy, c) zróżnicowania i urozmaicenia pracy.

Rodzaj powyższej oceny pracy w znaczący sposób wpływał na oceny szans zrealizowania - poprzez pracę w PGR - zamierzeń życiowych pracowników.

