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HIDDEN UNEMPLOYMENT IN POLISH INDUSTRY (1945–1956)

Abstract: One of the main factors determining the weakness of the socialist economy was the phenomenon of hidden unemployment, which means excessive employment in industrial plants in relation to needs. This phenomenon should be considered in two aspects: economic and social. The aim of this article is to determine the economic and social consequences of the phenomenon of hidden unemployment in the Polish economy in the first years after the WWII. The article is based on the literature on the subject, as well as source research conducted at the Archives of New Records and the Archives of the Institute of National Remembrance in Warsaw. To analyze the socio-demographic characteristics of the staff of four industrial plants, the personal files of employees collected in the plant archives were used. The research conducted indicates that one of the main sources of weakness of the socialist economy was the situation on the labor market, and especially the phenomenon of over-employment. In the economic sphere, it meant that the dominance of an excessive number of low-skilled workers in the composition of the industrial workforce resulted in poor labor productivity, abysmal production quality, non-compliance with standards in technological processes, destruction of work ethics, poor discipline, increased personnel turnover, etc. It is a measure of the irrationality of the system that the employment of a significant proportion of these workers was not the result of either economic or social necessity, but a consequence of the erroneous economic development model adopted, based on the use of low-skilled and poorly paid labor. In social terms, however, the employment of these people meant that the communist regime could count on relatively considerable public support among them. Authoritarian, non-democratic parties (such as the PPR and PZPR), appealing to populist slogans and fomenting conflicts with other social groups corresponded in terms of their programs and modus operandi to people with high levels of authoritarian attitudes.

Keywords: Hidden unemployment, industrial workers, labor market, over-employment

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INTRODUCTION

Czesław Bobrowski, in a sketch written in 1983: *The Legacy of the Past 1945–1980* summarizing the defects of the “real socialist” economy in Poland, identified overemployment as one of the main “long-standing chronic diseases” afflicting it. Indeed, there was a “private reserve army of labor” in industrial plants, which was “a derivative of other ailments,” including “slow technical progress, unsatisfactory labor organization, and low mobility of industrial workers.” In turn, overstaffing caused further pathologies such as a lack of action “toward modernizing technology and labor organization” (Bobrowski, 1991: 156–158). This peculiar “squaring of the circle” was not a peculiarity of the Polish economy alone, but characterized all Eastern Bloc countries. This is demonstrated by the research of Janos Kornai (Kornai, 1985: 345) who observed a paradoxical phenomenon in socialist countries, because on the one hand, the labor market was characterized by a shortage of labor, while on the other hand there was an excess of labor in the workplace, which Kornai called “unemployment in the workplace”.

According to the definition, “hidden unemployment” occurs “when removing a certain number of labor units from a combination of factors does not reduce the production volume or even causes it to increase. The statement that there is hidden unemployment in a given economy is thus equivalent to the thesis that the marginal productivity of labor is equal to or close to zero, or may even be negative” (Góra and Rutkowski, 1990: 421). At the same time, there is no doubt that hidden unemployment was only possible in economies where the industry was nationalized and profitability was not the criterion for evaluating the performance of enterprises.

The labor market in socialist countries was based on two fundamental principles:

- full employment was the realization of the ideological slogan of empowering the working class and freeing it from the threat of unemployment;
- among the growth factors, employment was the cheapest and most readily available factor of production (Dach, 1993: 15).

This meant that there was a supply-side approach to managing labor resources. A good illustration of this perspective is provided by the assumptions of the three-year plan in Poland, launched in 1947, which, in

the field of employment, set itself the task of:

1. maintaining the state of full employment as a supreme postulate,
2. striving to transform the organization of labor (replacing skilled workers with apprentice workers, men with women as well as technical training),
3. shifting the surplus population of the countryside to industry (Górski, 1947: 787).

At the same time, there is no doubt that the ideological aspect played an important role in the policies implemented at that time. In the industrial plants, there was, as Bobrowski put it, “a policy of open factory gates” because, in “the first postwar years it was unthinkable to allow overt urban unemployment.” There was a kind of “obsession” with the pre-war overpopulation of the countryside, which had to be reduced by all means, and the “highest virtue” was to “employ every person reporting for work” (Bobrowski, 1985: 179; 1991: 155). This, of course, meant a deterioration in the composition of the industrial workforce. Indeed, recruitment to work was taking place among groups that had no experience in factory work. According to Kornai’s research, this consisted, in all socialist countries albeit in different proportions, of 6 groups: previously unemployed (*Offene Arbeitslosigkeit*), hidden unemployment (*latente „versteckte“ Arbeitslosigkeit*), those employed in family businesses, mainly in rural areas (*Arbeiter in Familienbetrieben*), declassed persons (*Die „Deklassierten“*), housewives (*Hausfrauen*) and those appearing on the labor market due to natural demographic processes (*Bevölkerungswachstum*) (Kornai, 1995: 228–229).

The reliance of industrial development in socialist countries on the groups indicated above represented a clear regression with regard to the economies of highly developed countries. Ralf Dahrendorf pointed out that by the end of the 19th century there was a tendency for the qualifications of industrial workers to deteriorate, with unskilled laborers clearly becoming the dominant group. They were recruited from among rural dwellers, labor activation of juveniles and women, and in some countries from immigrants. In contrast, the role of artisans and skilled laborers continued to diminish. These trends were related to the peculiarities of the industrialization processes of the time based on a narrow division of labor and heavy industry. In the twentieth century, especially since the 1930s, the opposite trend became apparent. The number of skilled workers grew, the category of under-skilled workers emerged, while the role of unskilled workers began to shrink. This was associated with the spread of technical innovations and the new philosophy of industrial organization

(Dahrendorf, 2008: 52–55; Widerszpil, 1965: 87). After World War II, in the Eastern Bloc countries that imitated the Soviet, essentially nineteenth-century type of industrialization, there was also a regression to the model of functioning of the working class that was appropriate for this phase of development, i.e. the domination of the industry by low-skilled and poorly paid manual workers.

As a result, the Eastern Bloc countries, including Poland, achieved a relatively high level of labor force participation very quickly. In 1950, the ratio was 49.6%. Only socialist countries showed such a high level, while in France it was 43.8%, West Germany 46.1%, the United States 39.4%, Italy 43.9, Denmark 48.3% and Great Britain 44.7%. Twenty years later in 1970, the rate in Poland had risen to 51.9%, while in most capitalist countries it had fallen and in none did it get to 50% (Dach, 1976: 58). By 1985, the working population in our country accounted for 58.5% of the total population, and this was more than 10 percentage points higher than in Germany (44.5%), Great Britain (47%), France (43.7%) and the US (48.4%) (Nowicki, 1990: 116). Employment in the national economy grew correspondingly, from 5.06 million in 1950 to 17.16 million in 1984, of which 12.19 million worked in the socialized economy (Nowicki, 1990: 117).

The paradox lies in the fact that, at the same time, the Polish economy showed a constantly unmet demand for labor. Except for the second half of the 1960s, labor offices showed a greater labor supply than demand (Table 1; Zjawiona, 2004: 101). If there was unemployment in the People's Republic, it oscillated within the limits of so-called natural unemployment. Of course, this conclusion does not invalidate the conclusions of researchers including Paweł Grata (2018: 204–213), Jerzy Kochanowski (2017: 117–131) or Marcin Zaremba (2012: 233–246), who point out that in different periods and regions of the country, unemployment was important in shaping public sentiment. These researchers also rightly emphasize that the situation of women in the labor market was much worse than that of men. It must be stressed that, in the opinion of some circles, the actual situation on the labour market was far worse. In 1957, in the pages of *Robotnik*, published in London, it was estimated that in 1955 the number of job-seekers amounted to 153.5 thousand (with a job supply of 46.4 thousand), in 1956 respectively: 191,000 and 48,100; 1957: 283,000 and 97,700 ('Zielona księga', 1957). Mieczysław Kabaj (1957), on the other hand, estimated unemployment in November 1956 at 177,764, including 143,990 women and 33,774 men.

Table 1. The labor market in Poland from 1955 to 1989

Years	Number of job seekers (in thousands)			Vacancies (in thousands)			Number of job vacancies per jobseeker (in thousands)		
	Women	Men	Total	Women	Men	Total	Women	Men	Total
1955	20	11	31	7	39	46	0.4	3.5	1.5
1960	30	7	37	7	40	47	0.2	5.7	1.3
1965	54	8	62	12	41	53	0.2	5.4	0.9
1970	71	8	79	9	31	40	0.1	3.8	0.5
1975	13	2	15	30	65	95	2.3	32.5	6.3
1980	7	3	10	29	69	98	4.1	23.0	9.8
1985	3	1	4	65	201	266	21.7	201.0	66.5
1989	6	4	10	58	196	254	9.7	49.0	25.4

Source: own statement based on statistical yearbooks of the Central Statistical Office (*Rocznik Statystyczny*, 1968: 72; 1980: 62; 1987:78; 1991: 108).

To some extent, this resulted in a greater labor force participation of women in socialist countries. Indeed, according to Kornai's research, in the group of women between 40–44 years of age in all socialist countries, the percentage of economically active women in 1985 oscillated around 90% (Poland 84.7%, the Soviet Union 96.8%), while in Western European countries it was 55.6% (Kornai, 1995: 231). At the same time, one of the main factors prompting women to take up work was their material situation. There is a simple relationship the lower the income in the family the greater the labor activation of ladies (Dach, 1976: 63).

The situation was bizarre at the end of the communist era. As late as the second half of the 1980s, moments before the emergence of large transition-related unemployment, the average monthly number of job vacancies reported by establishments ranged from 300,000 to over 400,000, with the number of job seekers oscillating around 5,000. In 1989, there was an average of 25.4 jobs waiting for each job seeker (male: 49, female: 9.7) (Hausner, 1989: 21; 1992: 17; Zjawiona, 2004: 101).

In this context, it is possible to formulate a thesis that one of the main sources of weakness in the socialist economy was the labor market situation, especially the phenomenon of hidden unemployment. Verification of this thesis in relation to the PRL economy requires answers to 4 questions:

- what was the genesis and scale of hidden unemployment;
- how over-employment affected the composition of the labor environment;
- what were the social and economic effects of hidden unemployment;
- to what extent can the phenomenon of hidden unemployment be categorized as a “long-duration” phenomenon in the socialist economy?

We will focus our analysis on Polish industry in 1945–1956. This is because it was the most important sector of the economy of the People’s Republic of Poland, and the economic mechanisms formed at that time remained valid until the end of the “real socialism” system.

ORIGINS AND SCALE OF HIDDEN UNEMPLOYMENT IN THE INDUSTRY

The first decade of the so-called People’s Republic of Poland saw a radical increase in industrial employment (Table 2). As early as 1946, the number of employed workers exceeded the 1937 figure by 40%, with the number of white-collar workers increasing by almost 75% and laborers by 37%. By the end of the six-year plan, the number of the latter had increased by 625% (from 71,833 people in 1937 to 448,996 in 1955), and that of laborers by 285% (from 786,952 to 2,246,615). Overall, the number of industrial workers increased by 314% (from 858,785 people to 2,695,611), with the share of white-collar workers as a proportion of the total workforce rising from 8.4% before the war to 16.7% by the end of the six-year plan (*Statystyka przemysłu...* 1956: 11).

Table 2. Dynamics of employment in Polish industry from 1937 to 1956

Industrial workers	Blue-collar workers	1937=100	White-collar workers	1937=100	Total	1937=100
1937	786952	100.0	71833	100.0	858885	100.0
1945	607846	77.2	71356	99.3	679279	79.1
1946	1076788	136.8	125621	174.9	1202546	140.0
1947	1291153	164.1	151859	211.4	1443176	168.0
1948	1420688	180.5	182788	254.5	1603657	186.7
1949	1530172	194.5	205862	286.6	1736034	202.1
1950	1779753	226.2	258847	360.3	2038826	237.4
1951	1912704	243.1	300426	418.2	2213373	257.7
1952	1981286	251.8	341253	475.1	2322791	270.4
1953	2084420	264.9	388145	540.3	2472830	287.9
1954	2153242	273.6	427057	594.5	2580573	300.5
1955	2246615	285.5	448996	625.1	2695896	313.9
1956	2414365	306.8	446562	621.7	2861234	333.1

Source: own compilation based on *Statystyka przemysłu...*, 1956: 11; *Rocznik statystyczny...*, 1968: 88.

Paradoxically, the first symptoms of over-employment became evident even before the war ended. This was publicly acknowledged by Minister Hilary Minc, who said, at the Industrial Council in May 1945, “We realize that in almost all branches of our industry, there is a considerable amount of redundant labor that we could do without in terms of production interests”. He estimated its scale at about 50% of the industrial workforce at the time (‘Narada...’, 1945; AAN, KC PRR, 295/VII/34). Economists gathered around Edward Lipinski, who edited the Bulletin of the Institute of National Economy at the time, put the matter much more radically. Indeed, analyzing the situation at the end of 1945, they stated that, already as of then, employment in enterprises had approached “the so-called technical point of optimum, at which the productivity of each enterprise is at

its highest." Increasing it must have meant "entering a phase of rising costs and declining productivity." There was even a decline in productivity in November and December of 1945, which was the result of both industrial shutdowns due to shortages of coal and rising employment. At the same time, "an increase in the efficiency of workers" was considered one of the important factors in raising production (AAN, CUP, 1781: December 17; Iwaszkiewicz, 1948: 12; Chumiński, 2015: 55).

This situation also became a matter of concern for the CUP, which in April 1946 notified the Ministry of Industry about the drastic increase in employment, especially among white-collar workers (AAN, CUP, 1781: April 11). In response to this letter, the director of the Planning Department of the Ministry of Industry on April 17, 1946, admitted "there is no doubt that the ratio of white-collar workers to blue-collar workers is too high and this must be remedied." The same was true of the large "number of non-production physical workers" whom "a given plant could lay off without much harm to production. This last issue is of great importance and should be resolved as soon as possible." Among the reasons for this, he cited "Unfortunately, the average level of white-collar workers is lower than it was before the war; this requires an increase in their numbers to do some work." Also, the centralization of the economy resulted in an increased demand for white-collar labor. Excessive employment was also explained by humanitarian considerations, since "the failure to regulate a whole range of social issues to date (old-age pensions, widow's wages, etc.)," caused these people to be employed so that they would have some source of income. However, decisive steps were announced to improve the situation (AAN, CUP, 1781: April 17).

Despite the criticisms of this situation among specialists, it remained a persistent phenomenon. The situation in industry, moreover, reflected a broader phenomenon characteristic of communist states, not only over-employment, but also widespread bureaucratization. Suffice it to say that in the case of railroads, for example, in 1946 employment in Poland exceeded 360,000, and was 85% higher than in 1938 (194,500) (Rose, 1947: 213; *Mały rocznik...*, 1939: 189). Particularly, unfavorable changes were taking place in the number of white-collar workers. In 1945, for instance, their number, compared to 1938 increased from 323,100 to 385,700. This meant that while before the war, white-collar workers accounted for 15%, in relation to workers after the war they accounted for as much as 26% (ZUS data on insured workers). In 1947, just the number of planned posts in public administration was 252,000, com-

pared to 165,000 in 1939, with a much larger population. In the following years, the number of white-collar workers continued to grow. By 1948 there were already 915,800, more than 180% of what it was in 1938 (at the same time, the increase in the employment of laborers was about 45%; AAN, KC PPR, 295/XI/442; Rose, 1947: 213). The increments were especially true for the central bureaucracy. Indeed, while before the war it numbered 63,430 people in Poland, by 1947 it had doubled and was already 127,024. Particular growth occurred in the economic ministries, as the pre-war Ministry of Industry and Trade employed in 1939 1,889 people, and the post-war ministries responsible for the same range of issues already had 12,743 employees (AAN, CUP, 1782).

The problem of overstaffing was all the more serious because, with exorbitant industrial employment plans, they were repeatedly exceeded. For example, in 1948, it was exceeded by 27,515 people i.e. 2.3% above targets. Significantly, the overruns were particularly large among clerical workers. The wastefulness of the labor force is also evidenced by the fact that the number of planned employee hours was exceeded to an even greater extent. In this case by as much as 8% (blue-collar workers 6%, white-collar workers 25%). And if one were to take into account the overtime worked in industrial plants, then 82,670 full-time positions for physical workers and 9436 for white-collar workers would still have to be added to the actual workforce, about 7.5% more than in 1948 (AAN, CUP, 868).

However, it is very difficult to determine what the actual scale of overemployment in industry was like in the first few years of Poland's socialist economy. It was significant, however, given that in 1949 the volume of pre-war production (within the new borders) had not yet been reached, even though the volume of employment exceeded the number of workers at the time by almost $\frac{1}{4}$ (326 thousand people) i.e. 1736 thousand in 1949, and 1410 thousand in 1937. Not until 1950, according to estimates by economic historians, did industrial production reach the level of 1938 (within the new borders). The problem, however, is that this was achieved with an employment of 628 thousand workers, i.e. about 45% higher than the pre-war level (average employment in 1950 was 2038.6 thousand) (Wilczewski, 1986: 229; Jankowski, 1989: 228–230; Jezierski and Leszczyńska, 1999: 418–426).

The sources of overemployment in industry are accurately captured by the results of a survey conducted by the CUP at several hundred plants in 1947. It stated,

compared with the pre-war period in 1946 and 1947:

- (a) a general numerical increase in absolute and relative numbers of workers employed in investment and basic repairs in all workplaces regardless of their manufacturing nature;
- (b) universal absolute and relative numerical growth of workers employed in economic departments;
- (c) universal absolute and relative numerical growth of office workers
- (d) a widespread shortage of engineers and technical workers everywhere;
- (e) numerical growth of workers in relation to the size of production (AAN, CUP 3201: 6).

In addition to objective factors influencing the increase in employment, such as the need for repairs, the fusion or expansion of factories, the factories' taking over of many social tasks, the expansion of factory guards, or their performance of activities formerly carried out by separate enterprises (such as transportation), etc., had an impact. However, the main factors causing the increase in employment were a decline in work culture, low productivity, lack of sufficiently skilled workers, relaxation of discipline, and especially "an increase in absenteeism of workers in all departments." The increase in employment among white-collar workers was explained, among other things, by a decline in professional skills, the bureaucratization of plant operations and the low productivity of administrative staff. The shortage of skilled workers was explained by "the deportation of a significant number of professionals to work in Germany, from where only some people returned," "the discontinuation of vocational training of higher grades during the occupation," "the murder of an active element of society by the Germans and in concentration camps, consisting in the lion's share of professionals," "the transition of some professionals to independent gainful employment or other professions as a result of the changing living conditions during the occupation," the acquisition by Poland of plants „not existing in the country" for which there was a lack of qualified personnel (AAN, CUP 3201: 11–12).

During the period of the Six-Year Plan, the situation not only did not improve but actually deteriorated significantly. Of course, it is difficult to determine what the scale of overemployment in Polish industry was at its end. However, it can be thought that if one were to assume the pre-war productivity then almost all of the increase in employment at the time could be dispensed with without much damage to the volume of production. The results of a 1953 study by the Department of Economic

Sciences of the Polish Academy of Sciences on the estimation of labor productivity growth reserves in large and medium-sized industries (excluding mining) are symptomatic. The study covered plants employing 309,000 workers and producing about 20% of global output. They showed that the employment reserve in the industry as a whole was if one were to equate productivity levels to the best plants in the industry, as much as 615 thousand people, or more than 80% of the growth in industrial employment that occurred between 1949 and 1953. Even if one were to take into account the average productivity level in individual branches, the employment reserve was 400 thousand people. In some industries, the situation was downright dramatic. For example, in plants producing cotton cloth if one were to equate to the productivity of the best plants in the industry (i.e., those producing $\frac{1}{4}$ of total output) the reserve of employed was 60%, plants producing machine tools 51%, crude iron 59%, sulfuric acid 65%, and so on. In light of these data, it is not surprising to conclude that there is “a great waste of labor,” “a high level of own costs in a large part of industry,” and “the possibility of siphoning off a large part of the labor force and lowering own costs as a result of technical reconstruction of obsolete plants and improvement of labor organization in them.” It was therefore postulated, “Under these conditions, tolerating a state of affairs in which a large part of the industry’s labor force, with its production habits and qualifications, is used in an unreasonable, inadequate manner cannot last much longer.” Attention was also drawn to the erroneous strategy of favoring the construction of new plants at the expense of the modernization of existing plants, for “the efficiency of technical reconstruction of obsolete plants is much greater than the construction of new plants, especially if we take into account existing shortages in the area of labor force” (AAN, PKPG, 330; Karpiński, 1958: 63; Chumiński, 2015: 71–72).

The scale of hidden unemployment is illustrated by the situation in the mining industry. In 1956, it was estimated at 62.6 thousand people (i.e. 22.8% of the workforce), however, if the pre-war productivity of Polish miners were taken into account, hidden unemployment was 72.7 thousand people (26.5%) (Więcek, 1965: 58). According to other data, in the national economy as a whole, the number of workers employed in the six-year plan increased by 2232 thousand, of which about 500 thousand, or almost $\frac{1}{4}$, was unnecessary employment (Karpiński, 1958: 63). The increase in employment and the coupled hidden unemployment meant a fundamental change in the composition of the industrial workforce.

CHANGE IN THE COMPOSITION OF THE INDUSTRIAL WORKFORCE ENVIRONMENT

We will illustrate the scale and effects of the change in the composition of the employee environment after the war using data from 4 plants. In Wrocław, the employees of the State Water Meter Factory (now the Welding Apparatus Company "ASPA") and the Confectionary Center No. 1 (now the Clothing Industry Plant "Intermoda" and the Clothing Industry Plant "Otis" – the plant is currently not in production) were the subject of the analysis. From among the establishments of Krakow, we chose the established in 1923. Wytwórnia Sygnałów i Urządzeń Kolejowych S.A. (since 1953 the plant was called Foundry Machinery Factory – the plant has been liquidated) and Krakowskie Zakłady Przemysłu Odzieżowego (now Vistula Group S.A.). In total, we have information on 17,800 employees, including 16,124 laborers and 1,676 white-collar workers (women 8915 and men 8885). The key issue, of course, is the question of the representativeness of the data we have. It is certainly difficult to consider them as meeting the criterion of a representative sample, but given that we have information on about 0.7% of all industrial employees at the end of the six-year plan, they can be considered to reflect some general trends.

To illustrate the changes taking place, we will treat industrial workers before World War II as a kind of benchmarking. We will compare them with those employed in 1945–1949 and 1950–1956. We will take into account such variables as environmental background, level of education, length of service and party affiliation. This is because these characteristics reflect one's ability to perform labor duties as well as political stances.

We will begin our analysis by presenting data on place of birth (Table 3). People born in rural areas had much greater problems adapting to factory work. Researchers dealing with social issues even formulated a thesis about a kind of "custom and culture" "peasantization" of the working class in the first decades of the People's Republic of Poland. Rural origin influenced the attitudes and behavior of the working class. There is no doubt that for first-generation workers, without the peculiar cultural background associated with upbringing in a working-class family, adapting to the demands placed on industrial workers was much longer and more difficult. Such traits of theirs as lack of regularity, discipline, and order at the workplace were noted, but also a tendency to be submissive and

to please superiors (Słabek, 2004: 172). This did not go unnoticed in the ability of the labor community to defend its interests, the scale of acceptance of the authoritarian system, the partisan nature of factory crews, the level of work efficiency, staff fluidity, etc. Also white-collar workers with so-called social advancement, in a significant percentage coming from the countryside and holding clerical positions, constituted a group that Jan Szczepański (1959: 18–22) characterized in this way, “The low level of education, economic dependence and service dependence within the institution cause the masses of office workers to be deprived of political and social independence.” And Janusz Janicki (1974: 313–314) added,

The central silhouette of the bureaucracy becomes “the man without corners”. Conformism is a component of a peculiar official subculture. It affects the way officials behave on the nature of relations between them, on the basis of their views – at least for external use” (see also: Chumiński, 2021:109–110).

In this context, it is worth emphasizing that before the war the percentage of industrial workers born in the countryside was 14,1% (45.6%) lower than among all those taking up work in the surveyed plants in the years 1945–1956 (59.7%). However, there are no significant differences between men and women. What is significant, if we distinguish two sub-periods, i.e. the years 1945–1949 and 1950–1956, is a clear increase in the percentage of people born in the countryside over time. While in the first period it was 56.1%, in the years of strenuous industrialization it was as much as 63.6%. While in the case of workers, compared to the interwar period, the percentage of those born in the countryside was higher by 14.8% (47.1% before 1939; 61.9% between 1945 and 1956, and 66.1% during the six-year plan), the percentage of white-collar workers was higher by 5.8% (32.4% before 1939, 38.2% after the war, and 41.4% in the six-year plan) (Chumiński, 2018: 14–22).

In light of these data, it seems reasonable to assume that in the case of pre-war workers, especially laborers, self-recruitment to the profession (i.e. from the natural increase in working families) played a much greater role. Often, taking up a position in a factory required the recommendation of family members already working there, or people enjoying authority in the environment. There were created multigenerational family clans working in the same companies for many years (Nowak, 1995: 66, 85). This was different after World War II, where the main reservoir of labor was the rural population, pauperized representatives of petty bourgeoisie, increased professional activation of women and adolescents.

Table 3. Birthplace of employees of the Wrocław and Kraków plants employed in the years 1945–1956

Specification	Birth environment									
	City							village	% data	total
	up to 10 thousand inhabitants	%	10–50 thousand inhabitants	%	50–100 thousand inhabitants	%	over 100 thousand inhabitants			
People working in the factory before 1939	87	6.3	132	9.5	26	1.9	427	632	45.6	1387
Women	20	5.6	31	8.7	5	1.4	121	153	43.1	355
Men	67	6.5	101	9.8	21	2.0	306	479	46.4	1032
Employed in the years 1945–1949	639	6.8	799	8.5	207	2.2	2130	5254	56.1	9361
Women	326	7.3	436	9.7	98	2.2	1006	2464	54.9	4491
Men	313	6.4	363	7.5	109	2.2	1124	2790	57.3	4870
Employed in the years 1950–1956	574	6.8	469	5.6	111	1.3	1536	5365	63.6	8439
Women	284	6.4	246	5.6	51	1.2	752	2836	64.1	4424
Men	290	7.2	223	5.6	60	1.5	784	2529	63.0	4015

The second important criterion for evaluating employees is the level of education. It has a major impact on their productivity and adaptability to new conditions (this is especially true for workers from rural areas; Koralewicz and Ziółkowski, 2003: 32). This is because people with a minimum level of education are only capable of performing simple and repetitive work. Opportunities to increase productivity are limited by bio-psychological factors. It is only after completing basic education that you can increase your productivity, especially through faster and more effective adaptation to technological and organizational changes or the use of new tools in the production process (Orczyk, 1985: 36).

The second important aspect related to the level of education relates to attitudes of the poorly educated. It results in a greater tendency to authoritarian submission and conformity, and this also means easier acceptance of non-democratic systems. It was this group that constituted the main support base for the PPR and PZPR governments in Poland.

In this context, it should be emphasized that pre-war industrial workers were better educated than those who took up jobs in the post-war years (although this applies only to men). The education index (Table 4; Strzelecki, 1974: 207–208) is relevant in this respect.¹ In general, for employees employed before the war, it was 7.28, for the years 1945–1949 7.12 and 1950–1956 7.04. For men, it was: 7.7, 7.39 and 7.26 respectively, and for women, it was 6.07, 6.84 and 6.83 respectively. This means that the group of people with education below the primary level amounted to 28.4% of those who had worked before the war, and 32.2% after the war. If we add people who have completed primary school education, these percentages increase to 58.1% and 64.7%, with the largest disparities between people with vocational education, before the war 20.7%, after the war 11.3% and higher education: 2.3% and 1.3% respectively.

These figures seem all the more meaningful if we consider that before the war the common form of preparation for a profession was so-

¹ The indicator is the weighted arithmetic average of the occurring education categories. The calculation was made according to the formula proposed by Zbigniew Strzelecki (1974) where: $W\acute{s}r = \sum NiKw / N$, where $W\acute{s}r$ – average educational level of the crew; Ni – number of employees with a given educational level (i = educational level); Kw – conversion factor for a given educational level by years of education; N – crew size. There are assigned the following weights to the individual education levels: illiterate – 0, up to grade 4 – 3, grades 5–6 – 5.5, completed primary – 7, incomplete vocational – 8, complete vocational – 9, incomplete technical and general secondary – 9, complete technical and general secondary – 11, incomplete higher education – 13, higher education – 15.

Table 4. The level of education of workers employed in the Wrocław and Kraków plants in the years 1945–1956

Level of education	Employees in the factory before the year 1939	%	Employees in the years 1945–1949	%	Employees in the years 1950–1956	%	Total number of employees in the years 1945–1956	%
Without education								
Women	17	1.2	67	0.7	42	0.5	109	0.6
Men	7	2.0	33	0.7	24	0.5	57	0.6
	10	1.0	34	0.7	18	0.5	52	0.6
Primary education up to 4 grades								
Women	211	15.4	1224	13.2	1149	13.7	2373	13.4
Men	83	23.4	607	13.6	604	13.7	1211	13.6
	128	12.6	617	12.8	545	13.7	1162	13.2
Primary education up to 5–6 grades								
Women	161	11.8	1570	16.9	1649	19.7	3219	18.2
Men	71	20.1	805	18.0	959	21.8	1764	19.9
	90	8.9	765	15.9	690	17.3	1455	16.5
Full primary education								
Women	406	29.7	3123	33.6	2619	31.2	5742	32.5
Men	125	35.3	1782	39.9	1514	34.4	3296	37.1
	281	27.8	1341	27.8	1105	27.7	2446	27.8
Incomplete vocational education								
Women	57	4.2	527	5.7	715	8.5	1242	7.0
Men	15	4.2	259	5.8	300	6.8	559	6.3
	42	4.2	268	5.6	415	10.4	683	7.8
Full vocational education								
Women	283	20.7	1155	12.4	847	10.1	2002	11.3
Men	20	5.6	284	6.4	336	7.6	620	7.0
	263	26.0	871	18.1	511	12.8	1382	15.7
Incomplete secondary technical education								
Women	3	0.2	14	0.2	60	0.7	74	0.4
Men	0	0.0	1	0.0	19	0.4	20	0.2
	3	0.3	13	0.3	41	1.0	54	0.6

Table 4. (cont.)

Level of education	Employees in the factory before the year 1939	%	Employees in the years 1945–1949	%	Employees in the years 1950–1956	%	Total number of employees in the years 1945–1956	%
Full secondary technical education								
Women	31	2.3	92	1.0	210	2.5	302	1.7
Men	0	0.0	1	0.0	81	1.8	82	0.9
	31	3.1	91	1.9	129	3.2	220	2.5
Incomplete general secondary education								
Women	45	3.3	513	5.5	330	3.9	843	4.8
Men	15	4.2	291	6.5	200	4.5	491	5.5
	30	3.0	222	4.6	130	3.3	352	4.0
Full general secondary education								
Women	114	8.3	818	8.8	600	7.2	1418	8.0
Men	18	5.1	366	8.2	342	7.8	708	8.0
	96	9.5	452	9.4	258	6.5	710	8.1
Incomplete higher education								
Women	7	0.5	82	0.9	49	0.6	131	0.7
Men	0	0.0	25	0.6	9	0.2	34	0.4
	7	0.7	57	1.2	40	1.0	97	1.1
Higher education								
Women	31	2.3	107	1.2	118	1.4	225	1.3
Men	0	0.0	17	0.4	17	0.4	34	0.4
	31	3.1	90	1.9	101	2.5	191	2.2
Total								
Women	1366	100.0	9292	100.0	8388	100.0	17680	100.0
Men	354	100.0	4471	100.0	4405	100.0	8876	100.0
	1012	100.0	4821	100.0	3983	100.0	8804	100.0
Education rate								
Women	7.28	-	7.12	-	7.04	-	7.08	-
Men	6.07	-	6.84	-	6.83	-	6.84	-
	7.7	-	7.39	-	7.26	-	7.33	-

Source: see as in Table 3.

-called apprenticeship, which, however, did not favor formal education. The situation changed in the 1930s, as a candidate for employment in industry was usually already required to have completed a vocational high school. This was undoubtedly a result of the development of Polish industry. According to Janusz Żarnowski's estimates, in the 1930s some 300,000 Polish workers worked in modern industries and factories. At the same time, it is worth noting that the intelligence level of male youth entering vocational schools before the war was higher than average (*Warunki życia...*, 1929: 44–46; Kączkowska, 1935: 32–33; Żarnowski, 1999: 110, 173–174).

In this context, it is not surprising that among pre-war workers (although this is mostly true for men) the preferred choice of political party was the PPS. In this group, one in four men (25%) chose a socialist party while among those taking up work in the years 1945–1948, only 13.4% did. In the latter group, the PPR was the preferred choice (men 24.7%, women 32.7). This is significant because, according to numerous studies by social psychologists, there is a close relationship between low social status and the extent of support for radical, anti-democratic groups and those appealing to populist slogans. In this context, it is clear that accession to the ruling PPR, which was a party of power, brutally exercising it for that matter, was made primarily by those categories of workers who, from the point of view of socio-demographic characteristics, deviated *in minus* from the general workforce. Accession to the PPS, on the other hand, was the domain of workers who constituted the elite of the labor community (Chumiński, 2015: 163).

The last element we will consider is the length of service of workers with pre-war work experience and those taking jobs after the war (Table 5). Remaining employed in the same workplace for a long time is one of the important factors indicating attitudes toward labor obligations. Itinerant individuals, especially if they worked for less than one year, tended to be a burden on the establishments and remained more like workers in spe, rather than full-fledged members of the workforce.

For the purpose of our analysis, we have identified 5 categories of employees: those employed for up to 1 year (we will denote them in the table as working up to 1 year); those working up to 3 years, which consisted of those employed for 2 or 3 years (in the table up to 3 years); and further up to 5 years, up to 10 years and over 10 years, respectively.

Table 5. Seniority of employees of the Wrocław and Kraków plants 1945–1956

Seniority	Up to 1 year	%	Up to 3 years	%	Up to 5 years	%	Up to 10 years	%	Over 10 years	%	Total
Workers in factories before 1939											
Women	753	54.9	201	14.7	112	8.2	118	8.6	187	13.6	1371
Men	206	58.7	58	16.5	29	8.3	23	6.6	35	10.0	351
	547	53.6	143	14.0	83	8.1	95	9.3	152	14.9	1020
Employees in the years 1945–1949											
Women	6258	67.6	1183	12.8	623	6.7	477	5.2	711	7.7	9252
Men	3136	70.4	513	11.5	293	6.6	236	5.3	277	6.2	4455
	3122	65.1	670	14.0	330	6.9	241	5.0	434	9.0	4797
Employees in the years 1950–1956											
Women	5191	61.7	1394	16.6	538	6.4	518	6.2	769	9.1	8410
Men	2476	56.2	851	19.3	326	7.4	298	6.8	452	10.3	4403
	2715	67.8	543	13.6	212	5.3	220	5.5	317	7.9	4007
Total number of employees in the years 1945–1956											
Women	11449	64.8	2577	14.6	1161	6.6	995	5.6	1480	8.4	17662
Men	5612	63.4	1364	15.4	619	7.0	534	6.0	729	8.2	8858
	5837	66.3	1213	13.8	542	6.2	461	5.2	751	8.5	8804

Source: see as in Table 3.

Here, too, the pre-war employees stood out positively. While in this group the percentage of those who worked for up to 1 year after the war was 54.9%, among all those employed as much as 64.8%, while among those who took up employment in the years 1945–1949 – 67.6%, and 1950–1956 – 61.7%. This was mainly due to the lower liquidity of women (a decrease from 70.4% to 56.2%; in the case of men it increased from 65.1% to 67.8%). These figures are not surprising. With the start of the six-year plan and investment mainly in heavy industry, employment opportunities for men grew. In the case of women, these opportunities have been undermined by the neglect of the light industry, which was the main employer of women. The situation was different when we consider the long-term employees, i.e. employees between 6 and 10 years and over 10 years. In this case, they accounted for 22.2% of the pre-war senior workers (up to 10 years 8.6% and 13.6% over 10 years). In the total number of employed persons, they constituted respectively: 14%, 5.6% and 8.4%.

Based on the cited data, it is possible to formulate a thesis that the mass hiring of workers after the war, recruited from various social groups, resulted in a “lowering” of their quality. The fact that a significant portion of the “new” workers came from the countryside, were poorly educated, prone to changing jobs, resulted not only in greater susceptibility to communist indoctrination, but also negatively affected the way they performed their labor duties. Most of these workers can be categorized as “authoritarian-unproductive” (Chumiński, 2015: 135–137). The scale of the negative changes can be seen especially when we compare this group with pre-war employees. At the same time, it is worth noting that, particularly in the first decade after the war, excessive employment in industry was not due to social and economic needs. The situation on the labor market shows that unemployment was not a significant problem at the time (it oscillated nationwide at the level of the natural rate of unemployment), although it was certainly acute in some regions of Poland or for certain groups of workers (especially women).

SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC IMPACT OF HIDDEN UNEMPLOYMENT

At the 11th plenum of the Central Committee of the Polish United Workers' Party, held in early 1958, one of the main issues was the efficiency of the economic system. According to the consensus opinion of the dignitaries of the period responsible for these issues, it was already grossly diverging not only from capitalist countries, but even from socialist countries. Stefan Jędrychowski lamented

the main reason was that, with the low qualifications of a large part of the workers and poor organization of labor, annual increases in production were achieved to a much greater extent by increasing employment rather than by increasing labor productivity. Between 1952 and 1956, the share of labor productivity growth in industrial production growth ranged from 50–70% from year to year, while in countries such as Czechoslovakia, Italy and France it averaged 75–100% (AAN, KC PZPR, 237/II/21: *Jędrychowski*).

In Jędrychowski's opinion, many plants were not only overstaffed, with low labor productivity, excessive consumption of raw materials, poor quality of production, and poor organization of work, but also had a "defective employment structure, consisting, among other things, in a disproportionately young age structure of the staff with little experience and low qualifications" (AAN, KC PZPR, 237/II/21: *Jędrychowski*).

Party functionaries were shocked by the workers' attitude to their labor duties. Leon Wudzki lamented that "the miner now in the period of workers' power works worse, as in the time of the tsars, and in a very high percentage worse than he worked during bourgeois, sanationist Poland" (AAN, KC PZPR, 237/II/21: *Wudzki*). If someone had already worked well in the Polish industry, they were "old" workers, with pre-war seniority. In this group, however, the method of managing the industry was particularly opposed, which, as Edward Gierek admitted at the next meeting of the Central Committee of the Polish United Workers' Party,

we do not yet create good organizational conditions in the workplace and thus, with the existence of goodwill in the employee, we hinder the full effectiveness of his work. In our Silesian region, for example, a large part of the conscious crew, especially among the older generation of workers, judge this fact extremely harshly but fairly and charge for this state, not without reason, the technical intelligentsia and the methods of managing our industry (AAN, KC PZPR, 237/II/22).

It must come as a bit of a surprise to party activists because the problem of loosened labor discipline, increased personnel turnover or low labor productivity had been around since the beginning of the socialist economic system, and these phenomena almost exemplarily corresponded to the effects of hidden unemployment described by economists.

Negative phenomena in the field of work appeared almost immediately in Poland. Already in June 1945, in the socialist *Robotnik*, journalist Rudolf Lessel (1945) published an article 'Bijemy na alarm' ['We are sounding the alarm'], in which he compared the effectiveness of Polish workers before and after the war. He wrote: "In the years before 1939, a Polish worker worked efficiently for a capitalist entrepreneur", he even claimed that he was "better than a foreign worker". However, this attitude toward labor duties was not confirmed after the war – for as he pointed out:

a glance back – at our pre-war production – would give an optimistic view of what should be happening in our industry today. One would have expected that the worker in democratic Poland, working to rebuild the country he co-owns, would have doubled, or even multiplied the intensity of his work to accelerate this rebuilding, to improve his own and his brothers-countrymen's livelihood. Unfortunately, this optimism would not be justified. The Polish worker today works rather badly (Lessel, 1945).

However, this opinion is hardly surprising given that productivity in the mining industry at the time was about 27% of the pre-war level, and in the textile industry about 16%. Between 8% and 20% of crews did not come to work every day. Tardiness, so-called "gigs" and theft were commonplace, and making enterprises profitable would require raising prices from 16 to 20 times (Lessel, 1945; *Ogólnopolska...*, 1945: 41–42). In 1947, only as much as 25% of working time was unused due to poor organization and relaxed discipline. According to Czesław Chmielewski (1947: 913), "the effective working time of a laborer or clerk is actually less than 6 hours a day." This was due to "the failure to observe the principle that this is what one is in the factory or office to work for." As a result, only in industrial plants in the so-called Recovered Territories employing more than 300,000 workers, the monthly loss of man-hours amounted to 10 million, which meant an annual loss of production worth 12 billion zlotys.

Table 6. Labor productivity in some branches of industry in 1937 (within the former limits) and in 1949 (within the present limits)

Specification	1937	1949	Percent 1937/1949
Mining industry – hard coal mining per day of underground workers	2680	1826	0.68
Iron ore mines – annual production per one employee in tons	115	99	0.86
Iron and steel industry – production of steel per worker in tons	39.3	31.3	0.80
Sawmills – production of sawn timber per worker in cubic metres	116	104	0.90
Cement plants – production of cement per one worker in tons	331	329	0.99
Textile industry – production of fabrics per one worker of the industrial group in metres	2470	1960	0.79
Sugar factories – production of sugar per employee in tons	29	20	0.69
Tobacco industry – production of tobacco products per employee in tons	2.8	2.2	0.79

Source: own calculation based on Fiejka, 1961: 63.

The scale of the problems and the authorities' inability to solve them are illustrated by data on basic economic parameters at the end of the three-year plan. In 1949, labor productivity in basic industries was significantly lower than before the war. It was 68% in the mining industry, 79% in the textile industry, 80% in the iron and steel industry, and 69% in the sugar industry (Table 6). An expression of the erosion of the work ethic was the increased turnover of personnel. Indeed, compared to the pre-war period, it was significantly higher in industry (Iwaszkiewicz, 1948: 20). According to estimates, in the years 1946–1948 about 1.54 million people left work, and 1.84 million were admitted. In 1949, 620,500 out of 1,389,000 employees in industry left work, i.e. 44.7%, of which 44.8% in plants subordinated to the Ministry of Mining and Energy, 40.5% to the Ministry of Light Industry, 30.3% to the Ministry of Heavy Industry (Table 7). A disproportionately high percentage was among those employed in agricultural and food industry plants. Due to the seasonality of production, the percentage of those laid off was as high as 145.9% (AAN, PKPG, 3368: *Phynnosc*).

Table 7. Crew Fluidity in State-Owned Industry in 1949

Specification	Total number of employees	Number of people dismissed from work	Liquidity percentage – dismissed to employed
Ministry of Mining and Energy	349792	156850	44.84
Ministry of Heavy Industry	403203	122201	30.31
Ministry of Light Industry	557214	225862	40.53
Ministry of Agricultural and Food Industry	79242	115615	145.9
Total	1389451	620528	44.66

Source: own list based on: AAN, PKPG, 3368: *Phynność*.

It is also worth quoting slightly more detailed data presenting information on time not worked by employees in state industries. In 1949, 266.7 million hours were missed, of which sick leave accounted for 4.1% and unexcused absenteeism 1.3%. Taking into account that the value of production per worker-hour could be estimated at 5.24 pre-war zlotys, the losses amounted to 1397 million zlotys. This also meant that 35.4 million hours were missed without justification in 1949, resulting in a loss of 185.5 pre-war zlotys (i.e., 1.15% of the value of industry output in 1949), and on average 16,096 people did not come to work each day (AAN, PKPG, 3368: *Notatka; Wstępne sprawozdanie*). The highest incidence of unexcused absenteeism was in plants under the Ministry of Mining and Energy at 34 hours per employee, or 1.34% concerning hours worked (including mining at 39.9 hours and 1.51%), in plants under the Ministry of Heavy Industry at 30.6 hours (1.25%), the Ministry of Light Industry at 21.8 (0.91) and the Ministry of Agricultural and Food Industry at 13.3 (0.53%) (see: Table 8; AAN AAN, PKPG, 3368: *Godziny*).

Table 8. Hours worked and missed by one worker in state industry in 1949 (in hours)

Specification	Number of employee – hours per employee		
	Hours worked	Hours missed – unjustified	Percentage of hours missed to hours worked
Ministry of Mining and Energy	2525	34.0	1.34
Ministry of Heavy Industry	2445	30.6	1.25
Ministry of Light Industry	2395	21.8	0.91
Ministry of Agricultural and Food Industry	2480	13.3	0.53
Total	2448	26.3	1.10

Source: own list based on: AAN, PKPG, 3368: *Godziny*.

The six-year plan period has not brought any improvement, even though drastic measures were taken and adopted on 19 April 1950. The Law on the Safeguarding of Socialist Labor Discipline, Introducing Drastic Penalties for Unjustified Absenteeism (including Imprisonment; Dz.U. 1950, No. 20, item 168). It can be estimated that between 1950 and 1955, approximately 800,000 cases were brought before the courts, of which approximately 350,000 were sentenced by the courts (Chumiński, 2012: 39–47). At the same time, it should be emphasized that court cases are only the proverbial tip of the iceberg of those punished under the Socialist Labor Discipline Act. The number of reprimands with warnings, deductions from salaries due and transfers to lower graded work managed by the company in the entire economy went into millions. Nevertheless, in 1956, as at the beginning of the six-year plan, it was widely complained about the low level of labor discipline and high staff fluidity. Data on the number of working hours of workers in an industrial group are illustrative in this respect. In 1956, every worker in the state industry did not work 297.5 hours (including 108.2 hours due to sick leave and 14.6 hours due to unjustified absences). This forced the plant management to over-use overtime, as each worker had 131.2 overtime hours. These accounted for more than 6% of the total hours worked (2172 hours) in 1956. A measure of the ineffectiveness of the repressive method of improving working discipline is the fact that along with the reduction of penalties, pathological phenomena automatically increased. Suffice it to say that in 1957 the

number of hours abandoned rose in the state industry to 331.6 hours, i.e. by 11% compared to 1956, and unjustified hours by 39% (from 14.6 hours to 20.3 hours). It is worth emphasizing that the problem of low discipline was not present in the case of private or cooperative enterprises. In the latter period, there were only 3 unjustified hours per worker, and 76.3 in the case of sick leave (*Rocznik Statystyczny Przemysłu...*, 1967: 434; Pisarski, 1957; Rosiak, 1957).

Staff fluidity in the socialized industry also remained high. In the years 1955–1956, 1,559.7 thousand industrial workers left the labor force (in 1955, 781.8 thousand and 1956, 777.9 thousand). This meant that in 1955 38.1% of all employees gave up work, a year later 36%. In those years, 891,4 thousand and 912,2 thousand were employed (total of 1,803,6 thousand). The situation in the mining industry was especially dramatic. During the six-year plan, the mines hired 610,000 people, of which only 62,000 remained for a long time (changing jobs were referred to as “shoe collectors” because “they get mine shoes and advances after they arrive and go on looking for happiness”). This means that the mine crews exchanged 2,5 times (Więcek, 1965: 58).

In this context, it is hardly surprising that by the end of the six-year plan, the so-called natural productivity rates (calculated as the quotient of output and employment) were lower than before 1939. This applies, for example, to the textile, steel, and mining industries (coal mining and oil extraction – more than every third Polish worker was employed in these three industries). In the case of coal mining (assuming 1937 = 100), in 1954 productivity per worker was 80, metallurgy 73, textile industry 84, and paper industry 90. The situation in mining, in particular, was significant where the productivity level in 1957 was lower than in 1913. And as one party activist lamented, despite “crazy leaps in technical progress, new equipment and machinery,” the amount of output per miner in the “tsarist times when there was still no electricity in the mines no augers were used, etc.,” was higher by almost 100 kg (AAN, KC PZPR, 237/II/21: Wudzki).

A synthetic measure of the backwardness of the Polish economy is the meager share of labor productivity growth in output growth. It is worth quoting a summary by Mieczysław Kabaj illustrating the situation in several European countries between 1948 and 1955. In the case of France, there was 9.6% of industrial output growth per 1% increase in employment, in Sweden 26%, Italy 45%, West Germany 5.5%, the Soviet Union 4.1% and Poland 3.4%. This meant that the share of labor productivity

growth in output growth in Poland was 71%, and this was the lowest compared to all the countries mentioned (France 90%, Sweden 96%, Italy 98%, West Germany 82%, Soviet Union 76%; Kabaj, 1958).

HIDDEN UNEMPLOYMENT – THE PHENOMENON OF “LONG DURATION” IN THE SOCIALIST ECONOMY

The phenomenon of over-employment was a persistent one in Polish industry. Władysław Gomułka surprisingly, but accurately presented the sources of this phenomenon at the 11th Plenum of the Central Committee of the Polish United Workers' Party (PZPR) in 1958. It is difficult to deny the first secretary's point when he pointed out, among other things, the low qualifications of workers and the related tendency to “substitute quality for quantity,” “bloated reporting” forcing the employment of a large number of administrative workers, poor work organization, and determining the need for workers on the basis of production capacity rather than their actual use. However, he considered the economic administration's total disregard for production costs to be the most important cause. In the “pursuit of the execution of production plans,” “surplus labor” was hired as a precautionary measure to “make up” for the backlog created by the irregularity of production. As a result, Gomułka said,

We have such an absurd situation that a serious part of the workers may not work productively for half a month or for 20 days, and in the last days of the month they make up for it with overtime hours (AAN, KC PZPR, 237/II/21: *Gomułka*).

According to Antoni Alster, the then deputy minister for internal affairs, Gomułka, reportedly even claimed that “it is worthwhile for workers who are not needed at the factory to have their salaries sent home to them, as long as they do not disturb the work” (AIPN, BU, 1585/219).

In the reality of a socialist economy, however, it is not surprising that even a correct diagnosis of the phenomenon did not mean that it could be effectively combated. For under Gomułka, despite the attempts made, not only did it fail to reduce over-employment, but it even worsened. The first action to rationalize employment was taken in 1957. According to the declaration, 40,000 white-collar workers were to be reduced that year,

and in the entire five-year plan around 100,000 people (AAN, KC PZPR, 1684). In turn, in 1963–1964, the so-called R-actions “to detect overstaffing and dismiss inefficient workers” were implemented in cooperation with the unions. Nevertheless, from 1960 to the early 1970s, the average rate of employment growth was 3.7% per year, or 109,100 and the number of workers in socialized industry increased between 1960 and 1970 by 1,057,000 (i.e. from 2949,000 to 4006,000; Dach, 1976: 33, 51; *Rocznik statystyczny...*, 1980: XXXVIII).

The increase in employment is an excellent illustration of one of the main weaknesses of the socialist economy – the planning tender. The factories always made greater demands for labor than was envisaged in the central plan. In 1968, summing up the work on the assumptions of the employment plan, it was stated:

A clear evidence of the continuing tendency in workplaces towards excessive increase in employment and the failure of enterprises to take the initiative to switch to more intensive methods of management is provided by the drafts of the economic plan for 1968, submitted by enterprises, which deviate in a fundamental way from the guidelines of the 5-year plan and the 2-year plan.

Suffice it to say that in the second half of the 1960s, precisely in 1965 and 1966, a total of over 89,000 people were employed in the socialized economy, far more than originally planned (with the number of non-productive workers increasing above all). In 1967–1968, on the other hand, the plan was to employ 289,000 people, while enterprises and institutions reported demand for 502,000 employees, also exceeding the planned increase in the wage fund by PLN 8 billion (15 billion was planned), but expectations were for 23 billion). In industry alone, departmental proposals amounted to 154,000 people, i.e. 4% of the workforce. Consequently, “This would mean an increase in labor productivity of only around 2.4%, which is much less than in previous years. The proposals illustrated above, being unrealistic and failing to meet the necessary needs of the national economy, could, obviously, not be accepted” (AAN, KC PZPR, 237/V/677: 89).

As a result, between 1961 and 1969, the share of labor productivity growth in industrial production growth compared to other European countries was dramatically low. Needless to say, it amounted to 58%, while in France 86%, West Germany 80%, Italy 84%, and Great Britain 100% (Dach, 1976: 23). This means that extensive growth factors dominated Poland, the key one being the policy of full utilization of labor resources.

A separate problem is the quality and modernity of the goods produced. To a large extent, this was the result of the adopted model of economic development based on the use of a low-qualified and poorly remunerated labor force. The scale of neglect can be seen when one compares industrial products manufactured in Poland with those produced abroad. According to Bolesław Jaszczuk, the management of Polish factories experienced a "shock", because "for many of them it turned out that the products they had been considering as leading-edge turned out to be obsolete and uneconomical when confronted with foreign products." An illustration of this was the share of unprofitable goods in exports, disposed of at dumped prices. In 1967, as much as 43.6% of industrial goods were sold to capitalist countries at a loss, in the case of agri-food goods 43%, machinery 24.5%, and surprisingly as much as 22% of fuels and raw materials. What is more, in the case of machinery and industrial goods, the Polish industry was unable to fulfill the export plans assigned to it (AAN, KC PZPR, XIA/1385).

In the 1970s, due to increased investment processes, it was not so much overstaffing that became a concern for the authorities, but, mainly, the fear of a labor shortage. It is true that a survey of staff was carried out in 1974, but the results were rather curious. Out of a total of 9,252,800 employees, over-employment was estimated at 118,900, i.e. 1.3% (39,200 white-collar workers and 79,700 blue-collar workers), of whom 58,266 were in industry (in plants subordinate to the Ministry of Mining and Energy, out of 696,000 employees, only 6,000 were said to be redundant, in heavy industry factories, out of 661,000, about 8,300, and in machinery industry out of 844,600 11,000, light industry out of 668,500 10,900; AAN, KC PZPR, XI/729: *Zestawienie*).

In parallel, as early as the first half of the 1970s, alarms were sounded about the depletion of labor resources. It was pointed out that there was a clear and deepening trend of declining growth in human resources over the next three to five years. Whereas in 1972 there were 1.2 jobs per job seeker, by 1974 the ratio had risen to 6.4, with men reaching an "unprecedented level of 80.6." The culmination of the difficulties was to fall in the second half of the 1980s, when the increase in resources between 1986 and 1990 was to account for only 160,000 people, i.e. 0.8% respecting the total labor force (between 1971 and 1980 the increase was to be 3,116,000, and between 1981 and 1985 430,000; AAN, KC PZPR, XI/729: *Propozycje*; Kokotkiewicz, 1989: 62).

These concerns were formulated in a situation of huge wastage of labor. According to Paweł Glikman's estimates, in 1980, the rate of hidden

unemployment in the Polish economy was 26.7% and in industry 29.7%, while in 1989 it was respectively: 20.9% and 29.1%. In some industries, the situation was downright catastrophic: in 1989, hidden unemployment was 37.1% in the coal industry, 37.8% in the fuel industry, 38.2% in the energy industry, 33.5% in the iron and steel industry, 47.6% in the food industry, etc. (Glikman, 1993: 27–30). *Nota bene* even the drastic drop in production in the 1980s did not reduce the demand for workers. As late as the second half of the 1980s, the average monthly number of vacancies reported by factories ranged from 300,000 to more than 400,000, with the number of job seekers oscillating around 5,000. Hidden unemployment became fully apparent after the change of the economic system in 1989. It turned out then that about 4.5 million jobs did not exist in a free market economy (Karpiński, 2008: 114).

Shocking were the results of a study by Józef Nowicki, who estimated that in 1985, out of 12,452,000 employees in the socialized economy, hidden unemployment amounted to 6226,000. This consisted, among other things, of 2,001,000 “charitable employment” concerning administrative staff, mainly, women. Suffice it to say that by the end of 1981, there were some 4 million people employed in the economic administration. There were 150,000 units headed by directors, each of whom had 3 deputies. It was a 600,000-strong management with hundreds of thousands of office workers. The other components mentioned by Nowicki are the “artificially” shortened working time of 1,996,000 people, unused working time of 1,606,000, “overpopulation” of the state administration of 187,000, unnecessary expansion of security forces of 250,000, students in schools for the unemployed 186,000 (Nowicki, 1990: 63–72, 119).

It is hard not to agree with Nowicki, who summed up the differences between a market economy and a centrally planned economy in the field of employment as follows:

1. In the former, unemployment was overt and ranged from a few to several per cent. However, this was mostly frictional and technological unemployment, whereas in the socialist economy “hidden unemployment” was structural unemployment, constituting a permanent and ever-increasing burden of the centrally planned economy.
2. The costs of unemployment under the two systems were diametrically opposed. In a market economy, the unemployed received a handout that provided only the bare minimum of subsistence. This provided an incentive to look for work. In socialist establishments,

the “hidden unemployed” received the same wage as those actually working. He was therefore “vitally interested in maintaining his status quo”. Consequently, handling “unemployment in a centrally planned economy, which (...) does not officially exist, is incomparably more costly than handling unemployment in a market economy”.

3. The third difference has an ethical dimension. In a market economy, it is mainly the worst workers who are at risk of losing their jobs, who are dismissed because of their low qualifications and motivation to work. Which means that “Unemployment in capitalism fulfils a mobilizing and educative role, regardless of individual mistakes or even wrongs that may occur”. In a socialist economy, “free riders” suffer no consequences. The fact that “a miscreant, a drunkard or a thief of public property, draws the same emolument as a highly qualified, efficiently working, honest person, has a highly demoralizing effect on others” (Nowicki, 1990: 71–72). As a result, in the socialist economy we note a widespread phenomenon of the erosion of work ethic, symbolized by the saying “whether you stand or lie down, you deserve two thousand”.

Table 9. GDP per employee in Europe, Japan and non-European highly developed countries in the years 1870–1990 (in Geary-Khamis dollars from 1990)

Countries	Year				
	1870	1913	1950	1973	1990
Australia	10241	14180	17714	29516	36682
Austria	4053	7512	7994	26971	38240
Belgium	6420	9581	14125	31621	44939
Denmark	4612	9139	14992	28867	35503
Finland	2546	4829	8704	23575	33817
France	4051	7458	11214	31910	45356
Spain	–	6001	5727	23346	36801
Netherlands	7201	10710	14719	34134	40606
Ireland	–	–	–	19778	36820

Table 9. (cont.)

Countries	Year				
	1870	1913	1950	1973	1990
Japan	1359	2783	4511	23634	37144
Canada	5061	11585	20311	35302	39601
Western Germany	4414	7824	9231	26623	34352
Norway	3520	6218	12492	26578	38588
USA	6683	13327	23615	40727	47976
Sweden	3602	6688	13813	28305	33920
Switzerland	4566	8657	19019	35780	41229
Great Britain	7614	11296	15529	26956	35061
Italy	3037	5412	8739	25661	36124
Czechoslovakia	–	4741	7262	14445	17263
Eastern Germany	–	–	6782	15608	9317
Poland	–	–	4776	10276	11575
Romania	–	–	1985	7230	7389
Hungary	–	5007	5288	11649	13933
USRR	–	3593	5986	11795	14999

Source: Maddison, 2006: 349.

One of the measurable effects of over-employment was the very low productivity of those working in the socialist economy (Table 9). As late as 1950, the value of output per employee was 7,262 dollars in Czechoslovakia (the most economically developed country in the bloc). (in 1990 dollars rate), i.e. 62.9% of the value of production in Western European countries (11,551 dollars). In 1973, the ratio was 51.4% (14,445 to 28,019) and in 1990 it was only 46.1% (17,263 to 37,476). In the case of the Soviet Union, the decrease was respectively: 51.8% (\$5,986), 42% (11,795) and 40% (14,999), and Hungary 45.8% (5,288), 41.4% (11,649) and 37.2% (13,933). It is worth comparing these relationships in relation to the Polish and Spanish economies.

In 1950, the value of production per employee in our country was 4,776 dollars, i.e. 83% of the productivity of an employee in Spain (5,727), in 1973 only 44% (10,276 and 23,346 respectively) and in 1990 31.5% (11,575 and 36,801). The relationship looked even worse if one were to juxtapose the socialist countries with the most efficient economy in the world in 1990 – the United States (the value of output per employee was \$47,976). In the case of Czechoslovakia, the value of output in 1990 was 36% of output per person in the United States, in the Soviet Union 31.3%, in Hungary 29%, in Poland 24.1% and in Romania 15.4% (Maddison, 2006: 349).

CONCLUSION

In summarizing the factors determining the weakness of the socialist economy, Bobrowski used the medical term “cumulative process of distortion”, meaning “the production of new conditions by already existing conditions” (Bobrowski, 1991: 165). Among the main pathological factors, he mentioned over-employment. This phenomenon should be considered in two aspects: economic and social.

In the economic sphere, it meant that the predominance in the industrial workforce of an excessive number of low-skilled workers resulted in poor labor productivity, abysmal production quality, non-compliance with standards in technological processes, destruction of work ethics, poor discipline, increased staff turnover, etc. It is a measure of the irrationality of the system that the employment of a significant proportion of these workers was not the result of either economic or social necessity, but was a consequence of the mistaken economic development model adopted, based on the use of low-skilled and poorly paid labor.

In social terms, however, the employment of these people meant that the communist regime could count on relatively considerable popular support among them. Authoritarian, undemocratic parties (such as the PPR or the PZPR), appealing to populist slogans and fomenting conflicts with other social groups corresponded to the program and with their modus operandi to those with high levels of authoritarian attitudes. However, it is difficult not to agree with Jan Lutyński, who a few years ago formulated the conclusion that the proverbial *homo sovieticus* was not only the “product and mainstay” of real socialism but also the source of its slow destruction and decline (Lutyński, 1990: 210).

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