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THE RURAL FAMILY: THE SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC CONTEXT AND ITS CHANGES

Abstract

The meanings and roles of rural families are changing in connection with political, economic and social transition of society. Family roles were tied with the processes of collectivisation and after 1989 with reversal privatization and transformation of agriculture. Before 1989, theoretical concepts were shaped by the ideological intentions of socialistic rural and agricultural development. Since 1989, they have been drawn from the democratic principles of social development. The rural family has been influenced by the Czech economic situation since joining the EU until the present. This paper, based on statistical data and published sociological studies, reflects the stages of the development of the rural family.

Key words: Czech countryside, rural family, social and economic context

INTRODUCTION

The meanings and roles of rural families are changing according to the political, economic and social transformations of society. The metamorphoses of the rural family role within the context of Czechoslovak reality have been linked with the most important milestones of rural development, such as the impact of the agrarian crisis, establishment of the Czechoslovak Republic, land parcel reform, the world crisis that proceeded the Second World War, post-war collectivization of agriculture, and the regressive settlement of ownership rights through the privatisation and transformation of agricultural production after 1989. Before 1989, theoretical concepts had been shaped by the ideal associated with

the development of socialistic agriculture and the countryside. However, since 1989, they have been moving toward the democratic principles of society. Since becoming an EU member, concepts are affected by the economic situation of the Czech countryside.

Although the stability of marriages and families was partly eroded during the 20th the beginning of the 21st century, there is no doubt about the economic, social and emotional importance of the family. Currently there are 580 000 incomplete families in the Czech Republic (growth since 1961 shows 43 percent). Their number appears to be increasing parallel to the increasing ratio of unwed couples, who live together and bring up children. Despite this fact, "marriage" and "family" are often seen at the top of the value scale found in public opinion research or sociological investigations, even ahead of education, financial security, and religion (Hošek, 2010). Although rural life and the style of rural partners' cohabitation have rather more traditional features than their urban counterparts, the fundamental changes occurring in contemporary lifestyles also have a strong influence on rural families.

Theoretical concept and family significance in the private farm – the economic necessity of collaboration and coexistence¹

Concepts including the importance of family collaboration and co-existence and their influences on the development of contemporary rural societies have been observed since the birth of rural Sociology. The life and survival of private farms at the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century depended on the necessity of all family members cooperation. Their roles were determined by age, position inside the family, their potentiality and ability, size of the farm, the level of its facilities, traditional patterns of behaviour and dealings in community as well as other factors.

Descriptions of family life in the countryside as the pivotal economic and social unit appear in the majority of European and American textbooks and scientific publications independent of geographical authors' localisation at the time (e.g. Thomas, Znaniecki, 1918; Bláha, 1925; Fenomenov, 1925; Gillete, 1928; Hodža, 1930; Hertl, 1931; Furdík, Takáč, 1933; Šmakalová, 1936; Galla, 1937, 1939; Landa, Pański, Strzelecki, 1939; Hájek, 1937; Laur, 1937; Štefánek,

¹ Pieces of knowledge introduced in this paper resulted from solution of research project Ministry of Local development WD-13-07-1 „Social capital as a factor influencing the regional disparities and regional development“.

1945; Gusti, 1968 and many others). It can be said that in the development of rural Sociology defined by the essential elements of economic and social functionality of rural space, the family has been considered the most important keystone of all activities. J. Chalasiński in 1928 wrote: *Sociology, ethnology as well as social history ...show not only the coexistence of technical and a certain forms of life in groups, but also existence of very strong stimuli to human activity, stimuli which result from the social relations... Impetus forcing the person to technic-economic activity is linked to the social role of individual. They provide this activity regardless on the subjective wishes of human* (In: Piotrowski, 1963, p. 170–202). The rural family made stability possible by earning and accumulating the substances of living such as farmland, real estate and current assets, and by using those substances to maintain themselves, either by buying, renting, selling or using them as a mortgage deposit. Family property was donated or inherited, either by one heir or was purposefully divided among more heirs. It meant social safety for the elderly and the ill through the institution of the “rent-charge”–obligation arising under the agreement of new farmer towards the previous one. The needs of the family were superior to wishes and needs of all its members. The family was not only a source of safety for them but also it authoritatively fixed their social status and role. The social status of rural families was determined especially by the extent of their property; social status could also be influenced by other family qualities, such as education, religion, ability of neighbourliness, etc., although they presumably resulted from their economic fruitfulness and by their social power.

Social stratification of the rural population reflected strictly segregated social ranks. Their relationships were specified by existing habits and coexistence manners, which were handed down across generations. Vertical advancement through social ranks was difficult. To penetrate into a higher level required successful business, profitable marriage or inheritance. Families (as economic units) controlled marriage very rigorously. The literature coming from this era was full of unhappy love stories of couples with inequality in their property. Also the heritability of farmland and property was subjected to diverse pragmatic approaches at different ages. Either the property was inherited by one of the descendants, mostly the oldest son or daughter, but if not, it was divided among male descendants. In the case of inheritance, the descendant had to settle the property through paying off his siblings in order not to weaken the farm. The division of farmland was always influenced by the need for all sons to farm to avoid military duty. Each European country set up rules of law and property settlement that guaranteed the stable state in different historical eras (the

importance of similar rules increased in times of war). Thanks to the amount of rural space, rural families and private farms held significant economic power.

CZECH COUNTRYSIDE AT THE END 19TH AND AT THE BEGINNING 20TH CENTURY

The Czech countryside evolved as a part of the Austro-Hungarian monarchy at the end of the 19th century. Farm production was affected by the market and combined with growth of the population as a result of changes after the revolution of 1848. In the second half of the 19th century we can see the increasing importance of agricultural enlightenment, which was based on notable technical and technological advances in farm production and growth of productivity (Kubačák, 1994). Agricultural organisations popularly known as “economic associations” and used for extending agricultural progress, played a special role in the development of farming and the countryside. The focus of these associations was production and economic issues, but the aim of their getting together was also perceived as economic defence. Hence cooperative farming was developed (Kubačák, 1994).

The second agrarian crisis, in the last quarter of the 19th century, revealed the dark side of the quickly growing farm production. The crisis was caused by overproduction, limited European agricultural markets and increased competitiveness of farm production from the USA. The Czech countries were also affected even though they were in the most industrial part of the Austro-Hungarian monarchy, and it affected the performance of agriculture. The crisis had the greatest impact on small farms with only few hectares. The continuing agrarian crisis evoked greater proprietary differentiation with the consequence of social stratification of the rural population. From data about the settlement of property, we can see that 37.6% of all land was owned by landowners which comprised a mostly “post-Bílá hora (catholic) nobility”, who were a foreign, almost exclusively Catholic, nobility which only established itself in the country after the collapse of the Protestant uprising in 1620, called the “Bílá Hora rebellion”. On the other hand, there were 594,033 small farms of up to 2 ha (68.4% of all farms) and they were farming only on 5.65% of all farmland (Vavřík, 1992).

TABLE 1. Number and structure of the farm in Czech in 1896.

Groups according area of land in ha	Number of the farms		Area of land in ha	
	Count	Percentage	Count	Percentage
0 – 2	594,033	68,4	286,351	5,7
2 – 5	109,544	12,6	364,794	6,9
5 – 10	62,963	7,2	454,136	8,9
10 – 20	61,346	7,1	874,668	17,3
20 – 50	36,119	4,2	1013,505	19,9
50 – 100	2,897	0,3	188,363	3,7
Over 100	1,548	0,2	1908,948	37,6
Total	808,402	100,0	5073,401	100,0

Source: Franěk Rudolf: Některé problémy sociálního postavení rolnictva v Čechách na konci 19. a počátkem 20. století, Praha 1967.

In general, small farms were not able to support a family. Therefore, the incomes of family members were combined; farmland was cultivated by women and older children mostly whereas men looked for other ways to earn money, such as on other farms, in industry or building an industry such as hired labour for different jobs. The Czech word “kovorolník” (metal farmer) became a common idiom to represent this kind of economy. The uncertainty associated with their livelihood affected the family lives of peasants. The economic depression worsened social conditions in the overpopulated agricultural countryside leading to a consequential increase in the rate of migration and emigration. Internal immigration was mainly from Slovakia to the Czech countries, from economically undeveloped regions to the industrial ones and from the countryside to towns. Migration counter-balanced to a certain extent a faster population increase in Slovakia and other less developed areas (Slepička, Hošková, Ronnas, Sjöberg, 1989).

TABLE 2. Average Annual Population Increase in Czechoslovakia in the Inter-war Period. Per thousands.

Country	1920–1924	1925–1929	1930–1934	1937
Czech Lands	8,5	6,0	4,3	1,5
Slovakia	15,9	13,1	11,3	8,6
Czechoslovakia	10,3	7,7	6,0	3,2

Source: Historická statistická ročenka CSSR. Prague, SNTL ALTA, 1985.

Foreign migration was aimed at the western European countries (coal-fields in Germany, France, Belgium) and mostly at the USA. Between 1922–23 alone, 100,000 people emigrated abroad, mainly from the poorest regions of Czechoslovakia. Emigration was by far heaviest from Slovakia, where 4.8% of the population left between 1922–23, as compared to 1.2% in Moravia and Silesia and 1.0% in Bohemia (Slepička, Hošková, Ronnas, Sjöberg 1989). We should remember from sociological literature the work of authors Thomas and Znaniecki on this phenomenon – the Polish farmer in Europe and America (Thomas, Znaniecki 1918).

Migration also proceeded from countryside to cities in Czechoslovakia. Slovakia, in comparison with Czech agrarian regions, has survived the most significant migrations of rural population towards cities where people found easier sources of livelihood.

TABLE 3. Urban and Rural Population in Inter-war Czechoslovakia by Regions. Percentages. Index 1921= 100.

Region	Urban		Rural		Index	
	1921	1930	1921	1930	Urban	Rural
Czech Lands	45,7	47,8	54,3	52,2	102	103
Slovakia	23,9	26,1	76,1	73,9	121	108
Czechoslovakia	40,7	42,6	59,3	57,4	104	113

Source: A. Boháč: Obyvatelstvo v Československé republice. Československá vlastivěda. Řada II. Národopis, Sfinx, 1936. In: Slepička, A., Hošková, E., Per Ronnas, Örjan Sjöberg: Rural Czechoslovakia: Patterns of Change under Socialism. Studies in Economics and Geography, Research Report No. 7, The Economic Research Institute, Stockholm School of Economics, ISSN 1100-1283, 1989.

The most serious consequence of the keen social differentiation was the massive debt borne by small farmers at the end of the 19th and at the beginning of the 20th century. One impact of the depression was that the farming population became heavily indebted. In 1936, their total debt peaked at 36,000 million crowns, representing an annual interest of 105 million. There was a substantial increase in the number of farms that had to be put up for forced sale. In 1923–1926, 3,631 farms were sold in this way; in the 1930–35 period the number reached 129,843 (Choma, 1978).

The statistical data mentioned before enables one to picture the rural family lifestyle of the past. The workload depended mainly on the size of farm, mode of operation (production), intensity of farming, technical equipment and the

number of members of a family. *The smaller the farm, the higher quantity of work was expounded on 1 hectare of the farmland.... The working load was the most intensive in small-scale production because small peasant was trying to gain higher incomes through higher intensity of his work and also through higher number of work hours on insufficient small area of the farmland. Using of existing and new productive technique was made for him impossible because of the facts the machinery technique could not be operated on small and fragmented area and also of the fact of money shortage – as draught force could he use only cattle...* (Lom, 1979, p. 28).

The agrarian crisis intimidated farmers into extremely high work performance. The number of worked hours was 4000 per year in the smallholder farm families. But the women worked more hours than anyone else because they took care of the family and household. They worked from dark to dark; during Winter from 5 o'clock to the late evening; during Summer from 4 o'clock in the morning till 9–10 p. m. (Lom, 1979). Because big farmers could afford to buy technological farm machines and to employ staff, we can estimate their work load as about half in contrast to others. The working week was interrupted only by Sunday's rest, when visiting a house of worship allowed some religious and social life. The hours worked were structured in other ways during the winter. Farm animals required everyday care, but the Winter inactivity of crop production enabled household members to devote time to other activities such as repairing buildings and tools, working on handicrafts and also education in Winter farm-schools.

The wives of peasants were obviously very busy especially on the small farms. During their youth they helped their parents with farming, working in the household and also taking care of younger siblings and grandparents. After marriage they took care of their own children. Rather than being cared for, as they aged, they helped their children on the farm and in the household. Families were multigenerational; many children were born, but high child mortality constrained the size of families.

The households of peasants who owned farmland were different to those who did not own farmland. Only farmers with more than 10 ha could afford to employ outsiders rather than rely on family members. They either rented hired hands, for spring crop and autumn work, or they employed menials and hinds. Stable boys and girls were mostly young unmarried people from other small farms or from families that did not have land. They lived on the farms of their employers, ate together with the family and had rigorously-defined discretions and duties. The work filled the entire day and they had only one leisure day per week (more often only a half day). Menials were given clothing and shoes one or two times

a year – a monetary reward was the exception. Stable boys and girls were hired mainly for a year at the beginning of New Year till Christmas. Resignations and new contracts were fixed during Christmas days.

The status of menials in the farmer's family was different. In some places, they were treated as a member of the family and relationships with the family were good. But in other places they had an uncertain status and farmers didn't abide by the contract conditions – their treatment was very hard and cruel (other members of the farmer's family could also be cruel). This treatment of labour resulted from the social structure of the village in this era. These practices were established in that time because of the demand for labour coming from villages and near surroundings, but also, poor families had to find a livelihood for their members who would not inherit and work on the farm. Before girls got married, they had left either for employment on other bigger farms, in the cities (as domestic help); learning a handcraft (as a trainee) or they had joined a monastery. Until they had taken the monastic vow, they could leave the monastery and return to their family or get married. They shared in running the monastery and its activities (for instance nursing and caring services) during their stay in the monastery. The partial descriptions in literature and remembrances of witnesses have resulted in explicit information about economic conditions in families. Members of the family helped each other out and confined their personal life to the needs of family (care about orphan children, old and ill members of the family and so on).

“Hinds” refers to a social group, and they were employed only by big farmers. They lived in hind-flats (mainly belonging to owner of farm), which were a component of the estate or were situated in its narrow surrounding. They got a part of their salary as money and the rest as gratuity. The men worked as coachmen, fodderers or sometimes they had a more important position such as, for example, granger while the women worked in animal and crop production, helped in the household, etc. Their social status was high, but their economic dependency was obvious because if they lost their employment (the reason did matter), they also lost their living. In contrast to menials, they were not considered a part of the farmer's family.

Male members left their homes and migrated or emigrated for jobs. This left women and older children responsible for both the farm and the household. Many men fought in the Austrian army during the First World War, with an accompanying huge waste of life. Those who survived went back home with poor health. Their absence during the war was covered by women; women cultivated farmland, harvested crops, took care of the family and the household. Except for

a few special cases, there are no descriptions of the lives of these families in the sociological literature. They appear only in the remembrances of witnesses.

The economic impact on the countryside had begun to take effect after the great political changes which took place with the founding of the independent Czech Republic in 1918. The complicated situation of the rural population continued during the early years of the new republic.

Although people were expecting to get rid of privation ...the reality showed to be another because country was threatens by starvation without its blame. The war got through all reserves of foods, raw materials and products, destroyed and got weak all produce machinery. The farmlands during the war were bad cultivated and the insufficient crop was almost consumed in autumn. Austrian government exported supply of food into the countries more symphatic for it. There were a long winter and spring between present and futures moment of new crop on the farmland... Satisfaction of National people's committee from gaining liberty was disturbed by fear of starvation. They didn't underestimate the fact of coming up against dangerous. They were afraid of wildness evoking by hungry and its removal from homes towards the streets. (Peroutka, 1933, p. 241).

Securing a food-supply for the population was the most important need during the post-war months. As the situation appeared to be very similar to the "domination of producers over consumers", it was not possible for Czechoslovaks to develop any policy other than defending consumers through this extended and difficult system. (Peroutka, 1933).

Families had to stay together in order to earn a living. They became essential economic and social units. The hopes of small farmers combined with land reform beginning in 1919 were fulfilled only partly. About one third of the farmland was owned by the aristocracy (mostly post-Bílá hora nobility) and churches. Social strain was also accented by racial problems. The land reform was very radical because the law allowed one to possess farmland from 150 ha and any kind of land over 250 ha. It allowed the appropriation of up to 500 ha of farmland to "public welfare". However, in the regions where was a high interest in land, could be confiscated farmland over 50 hectares. The estates were taken over financial compensation.

The farmland parcel reform had been continued almost until 1936. At that time, the hardships of the appropriation laws began to soften and, in practice, were starting to make exceptions for larger farmers.

TABLE 4. Results of land parcel reform in Czech till the end of the year 1936.

	Expropriation of farmland			
	Whole land		Farmland	
	In ha	Percentage	In ha	Percentage
Whole land used for parcel reform	1614810	100,0	546,212	100,0
New owners	746,192	46,2	390,746	71,5
Giving back to old owners	797,217	49,4	150,891	27,6
Useable land for reform	71,401	4,4	4,575	0,9

Source: Statistická ročenka 1938, p. 55.

Approximately 49.4% of appropriated land was given back to previous owners. Of the land that could have been used for reform, 4.4% of whole land and 0.9% of farmland was not.

TABLE 5. New owners after land parcel reform in Czech till the end of year 1936.

	Rationed land			
	Whole land		Farmland	
	In ha	Percentage	In ha	Percentage
Total	746 192	100,0	390 746	100,0
Rationed till 30 ha	319 642	42,8	279 953	71,6
Remaining farms	114 100	15,3	99 443	25,5
Other bigger objects	312 450	41,9	11 350	2,9

Source: Statistická ročenka 1938, p. 56.

Despite the real balance of land parcel reform and recognizing that original laws are different, the configuration of Czech and Slovak villages changed. Small farms were increased up to 5 hectare and there was an increased ratio of agricultural small-scale production to Czechoslovak's agriculture. The significance of agriculture was considerable in the First Republic, because it had become an important part of the domestic economy. The promising era of the development of the Czech countryside and farming was interrupted by the beginning of fascism and the Second World War, which brought great economic waste and too much human suffering once again.

If we were to describe this era according to the viewpoint of the rural family, then we would see that their economic self-sufficiency was based on surviving

during difficult periods. The family had to solve the problem of temporary and long-term absence of its members, mostly men, who migrated for jobs. The family had to ensure livelihood in this era of war and to make their peace with death or permanent handicaps of men who had been drafted into the army. The family took over their work during their absence and made the best of it during the upbringing of children. It helped men with re-entry into their lives when they returned from the First World War. The family carried debts in periods of crises. Duties towards members of the family were compensated by certainty of mutual help. The tasks of rural families were very similar during the II. World war and their cohesion helped them survive these times.

COLLECTIVIZATION AND ITS ROLE IN THE DESTRUCTION OF THE FAMILY

The beginning of the post-war period was affected by two political decisions resulting from the power of victory and from another evolving problem of the Czechoslovak government at this time: (a) the inclusion of the Czechoslovak republic into the block of socialist countries, although at first this was not perceived negatively because the political, economic, and social implications were not clear, and (b) the withdrawal of about 3 million Germans from the Czech border regions combined with confiscation of their property. This affected all mixed marriages and Czech or German families who had lived and worked together here for centuries. Repopulation of these border areas was dramatic. Uninhabited farms and farmlands were rationed to Czech and Slovak citizens and to repatriates from other countries. The ration of farmland was limited to up to 13 ha, which was enough to nourish the average family at this time. Coming to the border region and gaining the confiscated property meant a significant social rise for many families. Between 1945–1948 almost all menials, farm workers and hinds vanished. Either they became private middle farmers or they left to work in industry. Primarily because of these property changes, another parcelling of farmland occurred. The number of the small nonmarket farms with an area of up to 1 ha was increased. Some who had been small farmers became middle-sized farmers. Middle-sized farmers became economically and socially the strongest social group of the countryside – they owned more than 51% of the farmland at this time (Vavřík, 1992).

Consequently, the socialist orientation of the Czechoslovak republic and the pressure of the Communist party were largely toward nationalization of private

and cooperative property. Cooperative farming had begun to appear in Czech countries at the end of the 19th century. It significantly helped recovery during the agrarian crises and also the worldwide crisis in the thirties. In the period of the Second World War, cooperative farmers were sharing their food-supply especially with the German population, but also with that part of the Czech population in the occupied protectorate. Good economic performance and strong encouragement of the rural population both had a long tradition in the Czechoslovak republic

At the beginning of 1946, instructions were established at the VIII. Congress of Communist Party concerning the general cooperative economy and particularly, cooperative farming (Protokol VIII. sjezdu KSČ).

After February of 1948, the era of building the “socialistic economy” in Czechoslovakia began. Ninety-five percent of all industry, all banking, foreign trade and practically all domestic wholesale, on which the cooperative economy depended, were nationalized. Part of the retail network and part of farm production, ensuring estates, municipal and public good, belonged to the Socialist sector. Transport was also partially nationalized. However private small-scale production and the farms of big farmers and landowners persisted in the countryside, and private factories and larger businesses dominated in the cities.

Because of the political and economic situation, expropriation was not practically possible. The displacement of Germans along with waves of emigration and migration of the rural population to the cities led to the beginning of a labour shortage. Such an extreme step would mean a decline of market production and a threat to the food-supply.

Overall, efforts to propagandize didn't evoke interest in cooperative farming in the countryside. Small peasants and lacklands, gaining land after land parcel reform or in the post-war period, didn't want to limit their independence or to revoke it for the benefit of collective forms of farming. Hence, another way was chosen – constraint and repression of the larger farms in the countryside through increased supply and taxes, price disadvantages, reductions of rations and so forth. It was supposed that property could easily be taken from peasants because they would not be able to fulfil all of their duties:

We have to enforce filling of all national and public liabilities of capitalistic layers in the cities and also in the countryside. In case of treasonous and unlawful activities of these elements is necessary to penalize them through property fines. (Gottwald, 1949, p. 287).

Liquidation of agricultural farms meant, above all, the destruction of rural families. Methods applied in the Soviet Union became a good model for the intensification of class struggle. Owners of farms with an area over 20 ha were

classified as rural richmen – this limit was lowered to 15 ha later. And at the same time specialists were to find “other criteria different from area of land in order to define capitalistic fiends” (Kaplan, 1993). The category of rural richmen could be defined by anybody and thus was opened the way of unlawfulness, crimes and settlement of personal hostility. By 1948 and 1949, many peasants were not able to obtain supplies they had ordered. Rural families were almost decimated by wide scales of penalizations. Thanks to access to the archives, it is possible to more exactly determine, such details as the numbers of executed farmers, the number who died in prison or died a short time after release because of the inquisition and imprisonment, the range of expropriation of property and the number of violently displaced and chased families.

Hundreds of thousands of farmers and their families were persecuted. Penalties meant not only economic sanctions such as fines or blocking of bills, but also interruptions in the supply of energy, loss of vouchers for buying soft goods or shoes, forced thresh-out and buy-out, banned slaughter of pigs for self-consumption, banned hunting, forced buy-out of agricultural machines, forced tenancy, forced barter of land, banned employment of a strong labour force, expropriation of property and many more. The peasant very often became a casualty of provocations ; they were accused of such crimes as purposefully spreading animal and plant diseases, sabotage and robberies of their (own) property. Farmers who were convicted lost their civil rights and almost all their property was confiscated. Furthermore, members of their families were punished – they were thrown out of work, children could not attend schools above elementary level, they were criticized and humiliated, and the majority of these families were moved to places far from their previous residences. Peasants who were released from prison could not go back to their villages (or they risked imprisonment again) and they were required to work far away from their families. Imprisoned farmers also had to sign a statement about how well they were treated during their stay in prison, and, of course, they could not talk to anybody about their experience there.

Terror towards the chosen farmers grew in intensity and the rural population was scared; however, many of them tried to help wanted peasants and farmers. Those involved in the class-struggle were often disabled workers and handicraftsmen or others looking for political advantages or specific power positions. Peasants, who stayed on farms and had made a living through hard and intensive farm work, resented waste, disorder and theft of property. These were usually subjected to persecution and subsequent confiscation of property.

There is little empirical data from this time. Persecution was interpreted by the official press as deserved revenge on the enemies of building socialist agriculture. The phraseology of journalists became more and more aggressive and churlish. “Rural richmen” and “enemies of folk” were subsequently labelled “terrorist clique”, “traitors”, “agents”, “saboteurs”, “perverts frenzied by moneymaking”, “bloodsuckers”, “hamsters”, “the Green international sprouts”, “disruptive elements”, “leeches”, “cosh-boys” or “murderers”. There was neither an independent press nor any empirical research. Nowadays information comes from police protocols, inquiry protocols and from witness accounts (Jech, Majerová, 1999).

Attacks were focused on families that had a natural authority in the village connected with their social status. They were often long-term residents. *My parents were the 7th generation on the land. Wedding announcements and obituary notices said: peasants. (HZ)*

Although rich farmers were mentioned, it did not mostly succeed in evoking hatred from less wealthy peasants against them. Villages were relatively coherent. *If I remember our earlier village, we had there all sort of things, there we had exercised almost all villagers, there the amateur’s darmatized, fire brigade there was, and it was so lovely village. That time was not television, only a few people owned a radio, people came together to the ceilidh. If anybody slays a pig, the neighbour or other one obtained the sausage; the life was such, after which I miss today(JD).*

Political pressure was graded and it was being emphasized systematically to people that the farmers who were exploiting and profiting from their work were responsible for their lower level of living. Of course *In every village, there was a certain group of people, who understood and wanted to understand the Communist Party ideology. (ZT)*

That propaganda was doubtlessly efficient and the idea of the displacement of rich farmers by some layers of the rural population met with certain understanding. *They all imagined – that they would move over to those farms and would become lords. (HZ)*

Sanctions towards persecuted families were severe hardship with drastic impacts. *We were turned out and daddy was sentenced to the forfeiture of all property. Also, he was banned for life to return to the village and also sentenced for 20 months and I do not know precisely, but he was also fined for about 20,000. Even if they had taken everything from him, still there was that penalty. (AK)*

“Again, there was the legal court with the terrible judge. The barrister estimated the sentence at least at five years. During the proceedings, at the midday break,

I tried to persuade two judges from the people at the lunch in a pub. I explained to them, how everything happened. My husband was sentenced for a year and a half together with confiscation of all property including clothing. He was devoid of civil rights and was forbidden the stay in the village forever. My property was not confiscated. They made the women sign that they gave up property. Stalin died then and they had obviously forgotten me in the confusion. (MM)

My husband said – let them take all, only our lives they gave us. Let them leave us together. But they did not leave us. They locked him up. It was said that they would also lock up me – in 1949 our daughter was born. They didn't lock me up. (MF)

Imprisonment of parents, displacement of residence, confiscation of property, exclusion from work and from education – all these facts made rural families on one hand more coherent, especially in cases of widespread fear among them, but on the other, it meant trauma and life long consequences.

My parents lived together 55 years, but we were like the children from divorced marriage. Throughout our youth, our dad was not at home. He was in Litoměřice prison, we were there once, than there rode only mom... Dad was too uncommunicative, he never talked about prison, I don't know, I didn't know him inwards. We talked with mum about it, mum was frightened always and forever she is afraid (HZ).

The dominant fear was for children. They were exposed to hardship, lack of safety and poor living conditions, regardless of their age. *The worst moment of those years was one Sunday, when a group of women was waiting in front of the prison for visits. A lady came and said that she knew something terrible, that they were going to take away our children and would re-educate them. Then, I was trembling and felt a terrible fear. After a while, during the visit, I had to keep it secret and carry it alone, so that my husband did not feel still worse there. (MM (number of Page- it is quotation of non-published interviews – Karel Jech, Věra Majerová: The Liquidation of the Czech and Slovak Class of Private Farmers in the Context of the So-called Collectivisation of Agriculture. Group Research Support Scheme Grant No. 1649/233/1998. Part of Qualitative Sociological Research – Věra Majerová, Praha 1999).*

The persecutions have tailed off since the mid fifties. During the IX. Congress of the Communist party, directions were issued for finishing the socialist reconstruction of villages. The beginning of the sixties brought political modulation with a more moderate political approach in the Soviet Union. Resistance to cooperative farming was broken and private farming was substituted throughout cooperative farms and state farms.

TABLE 6. Structure of the Agricultural Labour Force in ČSSR in 1948 and 1980 (%).

Sector	1948	1980
Private sector	94,5	1,7
Co-operative sector	3,4	70,4
State sector	2,1	26,5
Affiliated agricultural enterprises	-	1,4
Total	100,0	100,0
Total in absolute numbers	2 221 691	897 567

Source: Slepíčka, A.: Některé teoretické problémy přetváření venkovského prostoru. Územní plánování a urbanismus, 1987:4. In: Slepíčka, A., Hošková, E., Per Ronnas, Örjan Sjöberg: Rural Czechoslovakia: Patterns of Change under Socialism. Studies in Economics and Geography, Research Report No. 7, The Economic Research Institute, Stockholm School of Economics, ISSN 1100–1283, 1989.

In the continuing years, there was partial removal among sectors, but the number of persons in agriculture remained unchanged. Only 0.49% was private farmers in 1989 because with age, farmers eventually left farming. Collectivization was the basis for intensification and specialisation of farm production. But the typical farm-family, combined with private farming through living and entire sense of its life, practically ceased to exist. A return to the previous way of life was not possible.

CHANGE OF RELATIONSHIP IN SOCIALISTIC AGRICULTURE

Violently collectivized cooperative farms didn't record good economic performance. The level of a cooperative farmer's living was low, indebtedness of cooperative farms grew and incomes stayed below subsistence level. In order to survive, cooperative farm families were allowed a certain area of farmland for private farming – "private plot" (mostly 0.5–0.6 ha). On this private plot, plants for self-consumption and feed for self-farmed animals were grown. This arrangement was supposed to be only temporary, but because of continuous shortages in the food supply for the population, it persisted until 1989. During the establishment of state farms, a model for the functioning of socialist agricultural production was defined. Thanks to collectivization and variations of co-operative agriculture production, state farms served as a tool for solving some problems. They filled a compensatory function on the economic and the social level by such means as taking over farmland with no production, cultivation of confiscated big farms

and taking over economically poor farmers' co-operatives with no ability to farm. This was all enabled through considerable state subsidy. This kind of help to state farms typically losing and therefore they returned back to the intended function of innovation (Suchý, Vrba, 1958; Burian, 1970).

Although the beginnings of socialist farming were very difficult, successive consolidated farms and rural families finally adapted to the new reality. Socialist large-scale production created a change in the position of rural families and their members. The creation of a socialist form of agriculture and a socialist lifestyle in the rural population was based on "industrialisation" and "growing together of cities and countryside". Farm work was to become comparable with industrial work – for example delimited hours of labour, equipment, techniques and new technologies, use of labour forces, improvement of the working environment and other parameters. Members of rural families were employed in agriculture composed by co-operators or farmers in state farms. The careers of men and women evolved both interdependently and separately. The position of women was changing: *While on one hand is given basic supposition of successful large-scale production due to defragmentation of farmland and combination of productive instruments, on the other side it is stayed prompt need to improve age and expertise of workers in agriculture It was no small role that farm-women played in this process. They composed 53% of all workers in this branch. The content of their occupation was changed: distinctively separated household and job. Wide all-encompassing activity of farm-women in the past became superfluous. Requirements for expertise now had rather vertical than horizontal character: universality was superseded by specialisation* (Burian, 1970).

In fact, the living and work conditions of women were more complicated than those of men. Housework needed a considerable expenditure of time, because the quality of services needed for households was insufficient in the countryside. The majority of work had to be done by hand. A private plot and farm required everyday care. Women had less expertise than men; therefore they did manual work more often. According to the research mentioned above, between 1966–1970, women worked an average of 48.2 hours a week in agriculture and, at the same time, spent 47.1 hours a week in the household or private plot. This means that women worked an average of 13.6 hours daily (including Sundays and feasts). From this research, we can also see that 71% of women in this period did not take paid holidays and two thirds of 29% of women who had a holiday stayed at home – working at home. In fact, the difference seems only to be that peasants could organize their own work in private farms, but it was combined with all the risks and responsibilities for bad decisions. However, on the state

side, the mistaken decisions of socialist leaders were paid through the national budget in the socialist conditions of agriculture².

Bringing the city and countryside closer together resulted in an introduction of city patterns such as household facilities, dressing, kind of entertainment and spending of leisure time into rural life. There is no doubt that the life of farmers and the rural population was being improved. The needs of society were changing and the differences among cooperative farms and state farms were being reduced. The socio-demographic structure of workers in state farms was being created in a different way than it had been in cooperative farms. The majority of staff in state farms gained from the acquisition of remuneration. Therefore employees came from other regions and they were not linked to the village where they lived as strongly as the others. The staff of state farms were not a solid labour force. Although they had a higher socio-demographic status than co-operators, the productivity of state farms was lower (Krůček at al, 1977).

Deficiencies in the economy of the socialistic mass-production companies, difficulties with the supply of food for inhabitants or insufficient services were not considered as failure; instead, they were interpreted as partially removable dysfunctions on the way towards socialism in a temporary era. Soviet examples were often given as suggestions of exemplary solutions (Jankovová, 1975; Pročňuk, Šepelova, 1975).

The rural family was a part of the labour force in rural areas, and its independence and meaning was moved from the economic to the private sphere. The recommendation concerning rural families was connected with improving the work conditions of occupied women and with enabling them to harmonise their work and motherhood roles. *...women's employment in agriculture is not only important economic phenomenon (necessary to ensure farm production), but also there are social phenomena which are interfering in family life, level of living conditions, quantity of leisure time, care of children, relationships in family and the personal development of working women... to ensure implementation of social policies pose large requirements for state investments. For instance: investments in children's pre-school institutions, in school meals, in development of transportation, in health service..., ...arrangements of population policy comprise prolongation of maternity leave, extension of labour-law security of*

² Pieces of knowledge introduced in this paper resulted from solution of an institutional research intention MSM 6046070906 "Economics of resources of Czech agriculture and their efficient use in frame of multifunctional agri-food systems".

women-mothers, financial contributions and other fundamental arrangements for all of society (Krůček, 1977).

The state has taken over families, that is, the state controls both the work and private life of families. *All suggestions, concerning extra-work life of women, are intended to change the structure of women's activities in the household (which has to be done after work). It doesn't mean only reduction of work and extension of leisure time, but also these changes are combined with the creation of conditions for women's self-realisation and coherent development of their personalities. Due to this process, women are not so isolated by their devotion to the family; they can now also share public and social life* (Krůček, 1977, p. 102).

The majority of recommendations were well-intended suggestions concerning working women and the improvement of their living conditions, but they were made at a time of economic troubles in the socialist economy. Gender inequalities persisted in work, in the traditional division of labour in household and in the role of women in the family. Despite this, education of the rural population was increased and each subsequent generation of women was more qualified and more emancipated.

Of course, the nature of mutual cooperation among partners in the family was changing. The way of life of the socialist rural family required a heavy work load on private, economically-significant, family farms. But also, for many people, it meant a means of self-fulfilment and presented the possibilities for independent decisions. The limited possibilities concerned with enterprise, education and travel promoted activities that could satisfy the intellectual and creative potential of rural families: improvement of the family house and flat, care of garden and plants, breeding farm animals, and activities in hobby organisations and clubs. Such rural families were also characterized by reciprocal help among relatives and generations in the family, lower divorce rate, and greater significance of the division of labour in the family and household.

THE CONTEMPORARY RURAL FAMILY

The improvement in life conditions had economic limits in the countryside in the seventies and eighties. At the end of the eighties, it was apparent that the development of the socialist system had surpassed its zenith. There were increasing economic problems of companies and state, natural resources were used up and the ecological conditions of life deteriorated, the system of redistribution of means was complicated and not clear, and corruption, protectionism and nepotism

had increased. It was made worse by the state of health of the population and by poor moral aspects concerning attitudes towards work (Majerová, 2000). Czechoslovakia had belonged to countries with the widest levelling of incomes and egalitarianism in rewarding qualification and performance in Europe until the end of the eighties. Society was homogenized in accordance with “constringency of socio-economic position and life way” towards the average. (Machonin, Tuček, 1996)

The year 1989 brought fundamental political, economic and social change. There was talk about returning property and farmland, about redressing grievances, and about the possibility of private entrepreneurship and other life opportunities that had been brought about by the transformation of business and the revival of the countryside. Hopefulness was blended with uneasiness; there was great uncertainty about what the changes meant for individuals and for families. It was assumed by the previous government and the mass media that there would be a return to private farming in agriculture beginning in 1990. But reality was different. The character of the rural family and its way of life had changed. Minimally, there were two generations with no experience with private enterprise. Privatisation was late, property restored to families was in bad condition, and existing laws concerning enterprise hampered instead of encouraged business. People did not have financial resources for investment, supplier-customer relations and entrepreneurial experience. The rural population mostly preferred the establishment of some kind of agricultural companies. The bewildered approach of farmers to a private economy was confirmed through the work of researchers working independently of each another (Hudečková, 1991).

Private farming was supposed to change the way of life in families, but the generation of young people thought differently. There were positively-evaluated changes concerning new possibilities for voluntary decisions, the democratic development of society, travel abroad and education. But there were also anxieties concerning the everyday life of individuals and families, growing prices, eventual lowering of the level of living, social shakeouts and unemployment (Majerová, 1990). Loss of employment in agriculture was a serious problem – mostly in regions with agriculture as the main or prevailing resource of livelihood. Those who were not limited to a particular segment of the economy, such as drivers, tractor drivers, repairmen and administrative staff, had the best positions in the labour market, because they could find jobs more easily both in and outside of agriculture (Majerová, 1992). Transformation accelerated the horizontal and vertical mobility of the rural population and helped to extend the self-supply

behaviour strategies of agricultural families in the nineties (Horská, Spěšná, 1994).

Rural families adapted, but differences in Czechoslovakia, and later in Czech society, were growing. Research into vertical social differentiation concerning the perception of social status by groups in the years 1984 and 1993 (Machonin, Tuček, 1996, p. 221) gives a number of facts such as *while basic and only one axis of differentiation is position in employment in 1984... and society is agreed with kind of profession, then the situation is different in 1993. Besides employment position is it possible to survey other axes of society settlement: property (rich / poor), moral (honest / dishonest), politically in sense of use ante-November position (communist / the others) and idea of national perception by several groups. It certainly occurred distinct shifting towards class or at least dichotomy view on society.* Although in 1984, agriculture, an important component of the rural population, was placed within one of the better off sectors of society, for many reasons, by 1993, it was found to be among those least well off (Machonin, Tuček, 1996, p. 222).

The situation of rural households (also families) was different from households in the cities³. *More members (2.49 at average) in rural families and fewer economically active members are typical for rural households in contrast of city households (2.18 at average). They achieve substantially lower incomes than people in big cities (86.2% of gross incomes and 87.2% of net incomes). The lower rate of income among entrepreneurs is distinctive in terms of the composition of their income ...contrary to the higher rate of social incomes that contained, primarily, higher rations of national social support. People living in rural areas also draw lower pensions lower. It is combined then with totally lower total amount of social income in rural families in terms of absolute value* (Spěšná, at al., 2009, p. 47).

There are still socio-demographic differences between contemporary rural and city populations, but they are not that great. The rate of abortion is lower in the countryside than in the cities (22% of all rural women; the rural population is about a quarter of all the Czech population). The same number of children are born in the countryside as in the cities; the divorce rate is higher in the cities: about 79% in the cities with rate on 3 quarters of all population in Czech and 21% in countryside).

³ Family means a group of persons in relative association. Household means a group of persons mostly relative which lives and housekeep together.

Within social groups in the rural population there are economic and social differences, modified to some extent by gender stereotypes. The traditionally high employment rate of women has made some women feel more independent. The social group “women in household” has practically become extinct. This group is represented now only by women on post-maternity leave; that is, by women who stay at home and take care of young children and, occasionally, to care for ill or old members of their family. They combine this care with partial work activities in the personal economy or in temporary or part-time jobs. Men and women build their professional careers separately; mutuality appears more significant only when they work together as entrepreneurs. A new trend in contemporary Czech society is the substitutability of both parents during the upbringing of small children. Paternity leaves are not used very often now, but families (incl. rural families) are beginning to calculate which income is most important for the family. Requirements for the equalisation of women in all aspects of life, including work, are shaped through the economic environment more distinctly than through trying to affect public opinion for their benefit.

The Czech countryside is developing similar to Czech society, and Czech society follows with little delay after European and world trends. The contemporary Czech rural family involves elements that are perceived as indicators of the “crisis of family”, including the increased rate of non-married couples and the number of extramarital children. Also, the divorce rate has grown extremely high. We cannot deny that, as a social and economic institution, the family is still at the top of value ladder accepted by society. However, it is no longer clear for the contemporary generation how they will build and maintain the family. Evelyne Sullerotová, perhaps a little belletrist but very concisely, specifies the different phases of development of European families:

- The marriage boom of the forties and fifties in the 20th century,
- The subsequent shift of partnering to younger ages,
- The economic troubles of young families,
- The increasing divorce rate,
- Democratization inside the family and individualization of children in the sixties resulting in the flower revolution,
- Generations refusing a “commune” as an alternative to the family,
- The economic and social weakness of independent families due to state paternalism,
- The decline of the birth rate and the marriage rate,
- The increasing age of primiparas,
- Looking for models of social coexistence outside official institutions,

The growing rate of extramarital children and children moving back in with parents after having lived independently (Sullerotová, 1998).

The current situation of rural families after accession to the EU is a continuation of this trend. Czech society emerged into a broader economic and social space through EU accession. An important factor is the possibility of EU funding, which helps to improve the living condition of rural population. Aside from the economic asset, however, there is also the creation and stabilization of cooperation among social development actors, including rural families.

The closeness of rural community has vanished; however, the extent of frankness regarding non-rural factors is still a subject for discussion. The material aspect of local specifics maintenance is the subject of particular proceedings within the EU Rural Development Program. However, the social aspects do not have similar simple solutions.

CONCLUSIONS

Until now, it has been typical for the rural household to have more members (2.49) than their urban counterparts (2.23), however, their share of economically active persons is lower. Rural inhabitants earn considerably lower incomes than urban inhabitants (91.4% gross and 92.3% net incomes). During 2009, the effects of the economic crisis became evident on the Czech labour market. The average registered annual rate of unemployment reached 8.0%, whereas the previous year, it came to 5.4%. (Zpráva o stavu zemědělství za rok 2009, MZe ČR, 2010, p. 66). The situation of rural households, and then also the rural families, deteriorated. Not only does the significantly lower educational level of the rural population limit their employment but there are also not enough qualified jobs in rural space (Zpráva o stavu zemědělství za rok 2009, MZe ČR, 2010, p. 68–69). Social inequalities persist also in the pensions. Rural inhabitants have lower pensions; which also means a lower volume of social incomes in rural areas. Although the cost of living is perhaps not so high, transport costs to school, shops and work are growing. The economic crisis concerns the rural areas to a deeper extent.

Contemporary families are shaped by both traditional and modern features. There is no doubt that the family represents an indicator of societal development. It is shaped through the economic situation of the state, existing legislature, the range of state social support and faddish trends. It is not out of the question that all the economic pressure will tend again to reinforce the significance of the family.

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