

The number of horses declined by 45%, cattle losses were 60%, the pig population dropped 72% and 63% of the sheep were lost. In addition, 20 percent of the houses and farm buildings were burned down by Nazi or Soviet troops.⁵ Hence, the foundation on which agriculture was to grow after the war was very weak.

In 1944, land reform was one of the first socialist changes undertaken by the new communist government. Land reform affected all landowners with more than 50 hectares, new farmers could not own more than 5 hectares of agricultural land. Over one million rural families benefitted from land reform: the majority were landless rural families, agriculture workers, small tenants and owners of small farms. The reform created 814,000 new farms and enlarged 254,000.⁶

In 1948, Poland came under Stalinist influence. The government of President Bierut became heavily dependent of Soviet authority. Those who disagreed were expelled or censured. Wlaksylaw Gomulka, a prominent member of the Polish communist party, an advocate of private agriculture and a fervent believer in the existence of a distinctive Polish socialism, was among the most outstanding examples.

Following the Stalinization of Poland, the Polish government nationalized the Catholic church land, and all small peasants plots were forced to merge into cooperatives. The entire rural infrastructure was absorbed by the communist government. Prices, allocation of outputs,

⁵O'Hagan, p 70.

⁶O'Hagan, pp 71.