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POLISH STATISTICS DAY

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In response to the initiative of 29th Session of the United Nations, March 9 has been declared the NATIONAL DAY OF POLISH STATISTICS. The Main Council of the Polish Statistical Society in agreement with the Committee for Statistics and Econometrics of the Polish Academy of Sciences and the Governor of the Central Statistical Office agreed that the Day was to commemorate the anniversary of the first General Census ordered by the Four Year Sejm on 9 March, 1789.

The first national population censuses, which appeared in Poland in the second half of the 18th century, were connected with a growing interest in population issues in the times of Enlightenment. In 1777 the first census of urban population was held and it was repeated several times since then. Ten years later a one-day census of Warsaw population took place; it was supposed to provide data on the number of inhabitants and their socio-occupational structure. The census encompassed residents of particular houses who registered by name.

In his speech delivered on 9 March, 1789 a deputy for the Sejm – Fryderyk Józef Moszyński (1737–1817) pointed at inequalities in tax burden among voivodships, and disproportions in the representation of the country in the Sejm. His thesis was illustrated by a precisely compiled calculation table which was presented to the deputies and which „showed the overall picture of the Republic of Poland, including not only smokes but also a proportion of souls, a multitude of incomes and distances of the state”.

Moszyński claimed that “the wealth of the state cannot be measured by the affluence of several aristocratic families and several thousand of rich citizens but it rather should be measured by settlements and wealth of towns and country, prosperous trade and flourishing crafts”. The statistical measure of imposing tax for military purposes, which was proposed by Moszyński in the Sejm, “was absolutely unique in character and it was used nowhere else either before or after that time,,. In order to provide objective calculation of value of goods in a given powiat (district) Moszyński proposed a statistical method based on the following data:

- value of land and property in the powiat on the basis of deeds of sale recorded in district books in the last 11 years which was representative enough for making calculations

- number of smokes obtained from treasure tariffs both alienated in the last 11 years and those which were not subject to purchase-sale transactions.

The information allowed the Treasury Commission to make calculations based on the value of the alienated goods and provide a precise estimation of the value of goods in a given poviat taking into account the proportion between the alienated goods and the total.

Fryderyk Józef Moszyński was a keen supporter of the so-called co-equation, that is a fair fiscal system which imposed taxation of profits obtained from landed and church properties.

Thanks to Moszyński's efforts the Four Year Sejm (1788–1792) passed an important legal act, which was a milestone for the development of public statistics in Poland. The document of 22 June, 1789 known as "Inspection of smokes and population register" became in fact the first ever national census in Poland. It encompassed the rural and urban population whereas landed gentry and clergy were excluded. The categories included in the register were: sex, occupation and social status which differentiated between sons (below and above the age of 15) and daughters in the family.

As it was mentioned above, regular population censuses started to be carried out in the 18th century. The national census was conducted in Sweden in 1749 and Poland followed in 1789. The Polish census preceded the first one organized in the United States in 1790, the census of 1795 in the Netherlands and in many other European countries.

The census of 1789 included not only the number of population but also its social and occupational structure. Although the census intended for tax and military purposes did not encompass „the privileged classes”, i.e. the gentry and the clergy, it became the basis for estimating population of the Republic of Poland at the end of the 18th century. The Four Year Sejm ruled that the natural movement of population should be constantly registered as of 1 January 1790.

The census lasted for nine months and it continued well into the year 1790. The urban and rural populations were registered separately; they were also divided into followers of Christian and Jewish religions. The representatives of landed gentry took an active part in the census; they gave overall numbers of inhabitants of particular village in register papers. Young single men were divided into two groups – one included the persons up to the age of 15, and the other – men of the age 15 and above. The division was connected with the conscription to be held at that time. However, the conscription combined with insufficient experience of census takers prevented proper execution of orders of the state authorities. The results of register of smokes and population, which were presented by Fryderyk Józef Moszyński at the forum of the Parliament in April 1790, were published as a special supplement to the "Trade Daily" later the same year. The census was of summary character, that is it showed the number of inhabitants populating towns and villages of the Republic of Poland. In 1790 a register by name was also taken on the whole territory of Poland.

Simultaneously with the work conducted on the population census, Moszyński presented and implemented his idea of making the church authorities responsible for establishing and keeping records of births and deaths, in order to update the figures obtained in the census. It is worth stressing that those registers were also to encompass gentry.

The statistical tables presented by Moszyński acquired him the name of „an outstanding statesman „not only in Poland but also abroad. T. Korzon, who was quite reluctant to praise Moszyński, had to admit that „his numbers of space and population were of highest possible level of reliability; not only the ones obtained from official registers but also those based on speculation” (1 smoke – 6 souls) and which he accepted as the basis for the estimation of the population of Poland in the period of the Partitions.

Moszyński was a pioneer of the Polish statistical thought of the second half of the 18th century. His numerous initiatives led to establishing a well-functioning system of registering population and non-cash elements of the national economy. The general census of 1789, keeping constant records of the natural movement of population, and the inspection of smokes provided a sound foundation for national registering and statistics. It was much needed during his lifetime, and much appreciated in the years to come.

It seems worth reminding here that in 1789 the territory of Poland was equal to 520 square kilometres, and according to the data taken down, Poland had 1,434,919 smokes (the notion of smoke can be compared to the notion of household understood as household of either the peasantry or the bourgeoisie), and it was populated by 7,660,787 inhabitants. However, the census did not include the gentry and the clergy, whose estimated numbers were equal to 750–800 thousand.

Polish census of 1789 is ranked among one of the most pioneer undertakings when modern censuses are considered. Therefore, Fryderyk Józef Moszyński – an economist, a statistician, a political activist and a statesman – fully deserves to be called the father of the public statistics. He was also the author of a project according to which organizations representing different religions were obliged to register births and deaths in the whole population, including the gentry, and to compile and send in annual reports on natural movement of population to the bodies of the state administration (Cf. Konferowicz (1961)).

The next two censuses were taken in 1808 and 1810 in the Duchy of Warsaw. They were the general (full) population censuses which encompassed the condition of population and its socio-occupational structure. In order to examine and evaluate the census data the Statistical Office, directly subordinate to the Ministry of Internal Affairs, was established in Warsaw in 1810. The population censuses were not organized in the first half of the 19th century.

A real breakthrough in population censuses came in 1853 when the International Congress of Statistics in Brussels recommended that general population censuses should be based on uniform rules and conducted every 10 years.

Not always were those rules followed by many of the European countries. In the second half of the 19-th century only a few towns and provinces organized their local population censuses in the Kingdom of Poland – for instance the Radom Province (1868) and Warsaw (1882). The first general population census in the Kingdom of Poland was conducted as late as 1897, and it was simultaneously the census of the whole Russian Empire. Demographic characteristics such as religious affiliation, marital status, education and socio-occupational structure were investigated.

In Galicia of the first half of the 19th century mainly the conscription censuses were carried out; they were meant to gather and examine information related to men of military age. The first ever population census was conducted there in 1857 to be followed by the subsequent censuses of 1869, 1880, 1890, 1900 and 1910. The censuses conducted in Galicia were taken by name, and they included a wide spectrum of demographic, socio-occupational and religious characteristics, as well as physical and mental defects. Moreover, the first two censuses also examined nationality.

On the territory of Poland under the Prussian rule the censuses were taken every three years, starting from 1816 until 1867. The next census was held on 1 December, 1871 and since that time they were organized every five years.

The results of population censuses conducted on the territory of Poland under the supervision of statistical offices of the three Partitioning Countries (Austria, Prussia and Russia) at the end of 19th and the beginning of 20th century were in many respects incomparable due to various statistical methods and ambiguous terminology used by them. It was extremely difficult to make comparisons of numerical data on different social and economic issues related to those territories.

After Poland had regained its independence in 1918, the Central Statistical Office conducted two general population censuses: on 30 September, 1921, and 9 December, 1931. The basic characteristics investigated in those two censuses were: sex, age, marital status, nationality (only in the census of 1921), religion, mother tongue, literacy, education level, primary and secondary source of income, place of residence and register of housing buildings.

The results of the population census of 1921 provided information not only related to demographic and socio-occupational structure of the population, but also to national and religious structure of each particular town or village, what was presented in the form of register in alphabetical order. Another register, compiled with the use of data gathered during the 1931 census, was already ready to go to press but it was destroyed in 1939.

The Central Statistical Office had planned to carry out a population census in 1941 yet those plans were never put into operation because of the outbreak of the World War II.

When Poland was under the Nazi occupation the German authorities conducted the general summary population census on 1 March, 1943.

In the post-war period seven general population censuses were conducted on: 14 February, 1946; 3 December, 1950; 6 December, 1960; 8 December, 1970; 7 December, 1978; 6 December, 1988; and 21 May–8 June, 2002.

The 1946 census was the summary census and it only examined the general condition and structure of population according to three age groups (below 18 years of age, 18–59 years, and 60 years or above). The results of the census presented the age structure of the Polish population after the World War II. The first three censuses encompassed a range of problems similar to the problems included in the pre-war censuses. The socio-occupational characteristics were examined in a more detailed way, however, there were no questions about nationality, religion or mother tongue.

When compared with 1950, the census carried out in 1960 investigated the marital status of the population in more detail. In the census of 1970 the questions about place of birth, and field of education were introduced, and for the first time fertility rate was examined with the use of the representative method. The fertility study was repeated in the census of 1988. Disability, both in the biological and legal sense, was investigated in 1978 and 1988.

The census of 2002 encompassed not only residents living permanently and temporarily but also houses and buildings. Fertility rate among Polish women was examined again.

Due to the fact that a lot of information gathered in general population censuses became outdated very quickly, the Central Statistical Office conducted additional population censuses with the use of the representative method (the so called „microcensuses”) on 30 March, 1974, 6 December 1984 and in 1995. They contained all the main characteristics (including disability), which were used in the previous censuses to describe population structure.

The year to come, 2011, will be the year when the next National Census of Population and Housing will be conducted. It is worth stressing that it will be the first general census since Poland became the member state of the European Union. A number of obligations which result directly from this membership include – among other things – the necessity to provide socio-demographic and socioeconomic information at the time and range defined by the European Commission.

The General Census provides the most detailed information on the number of population, its territorial distribution, socio-demographic and occupational structure, as well as socioeconomic characteristics of households and families, housing conditions and resources at all levels of the territorial division of the country: national, regional and local.

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