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## Politics and Tourism: Sentimental Tourism' Development in East-Central Europe

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### Abstract

Among numerous terms describing goals and reasons of undertaking a tourist journey the term »sentimental tourism« was introduced within the last few years. Equivalent, in the American literature is »the roots syndrome tourism« or »ethnic tourism«. In German literature such equivalent is not yet commonly established, but the term »Heimattouristik« is used. The essence of the matter is a visit to the birth place performed by an emigrant or his/her descendant, or in a broader sense, the visit to the country of his/her ancestor. This kind of tourism has existed since a long time, but in East Central Europe it was recently intensified and become important income source. The subject of the sentimental tourism is a specific group of people who once have left their country for good. These people differ because of different time and different circumstances of their emigration. This facts are essential in determining their sentiment to the »old country«. From that point of view, the potential participants of the sentimental tourism in the area of East-Central Europe can be divided into following categories: (1) emigrants to the non-European countries from the time of the great economic migration, (2) emigrants from the time of the WW2, (3) displaced persons of the period of the WW2, (4) post-WW2 displaced people, (5) post-WW2 emigrants. The total number of such potential sentimental tourists can be estimated roughly with close to 50 million people.

**Keywords:** political geography, tourism geography, sentimental tourism, Poland

## Introduction

Among numerous terms describing goals and reasons of undertaking, the touristic journey, a term of the sentimental tourism was introduced, within of the last few years. The essence of the matter is a visit to the birth place, performed by an emigrant or his/her descendant, or in a more broad sense the visit to the country of origin of a given person or the visit to the country of his/her ancestor. This kind of tourism has existed for a long time but in East-Central Europe it intensified and became important only after 1980 and especially after the division of Europe into eastern and western political blocs as a result of the Second World War.

Sentimental tourism involves a specific group of people who once have left their country for good. This is the basic trait of that group. But these people differ because of different time of their emigration and different circumstances of their departure from the home country. These facts are essential 'in determining their sentiment to the old country. From that point of view, the potential participants of sentimental tourism in the area of East-Central Europe can be divided into six categories.

## Migrations from the territory of modern days Poland

### 1.

Emigrants to the non-European countries from the time of the great economic emigration, initiated along with the economic development of North and South America and Australia, and lasting until the beginning of the Second World War. In the case of the earliest emigrants, one can speak about their descendants rather, who are well anchored in their new countries. A Large number of them have already lost the language of their ancestors, and the desire to visit the old country is more a matter of curiosity than a sentiment. Partly, it is also in compliance with the fashion of the search of roots.

### 2.

Emigrants from the time of the Second World War. That period also includes 2-3 years previous to the war and a few years after its termination. The main reason of emigration in that period was a Right from the enemy and persecution, and after the war it was fear of the punishment for the collaboration

with enemies, or the punishment for the committed war crimes. A large group of people have refused to return to their home countries that fell into the Soviet domination. An additional trait of that emigration was its voluntary character (free choice) though forced under dramatic circumstances.

- a. Chronologically, the first group consisted of German and Austrian Jews which, just before the war, decided to emigrate from that zone of threat. In respect of numbers it was not a large group of mainly wealthy people anticipating the tragic development of political events.
- b. In the latter part of the war, a large group of emigrants was formed by the Ukrainians that retreated, along with German troops, from the Soviet Ukraine and the pre-war territory of Eastern Poland. It was a flight from returning communism and often resulted from fear of possible repression for collaboration with Germans. The majority of these emigrants moved later to Canada and the United States. Similar emigrants but in smaller numbers moved from Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia.
- c. In Germany, at the end of war an emigration (flight) of Nazis started. That emigration was directed mostly towards South America.
- d. A group of several thousand people were the soldiers of the Polish Armed Forces in the West, which decided not to return to the communist dominated Poland. Among all the groups mentioned so far, this particular group of people was the most sensitive to the problem of home-sickness. But the general political situation was unfavorable for a journey to the home country, at least during the next 25-30 years.

All participants in these events, still alive, classified as the Second World War emigrants are at present at least 70 years old and older.

### 3.

Displaced persons of the period of the Second World War constituted a group of people, which moved from their homes against their wish. That kind of migration affected citizens of all countries occupied by Germany and the Soviet Union. In Germany, a few millions of forced workers were settled. These were single persons separated from their families left at home. In the Soviet Union were persons arrested and imprisoned as well as entire families forcibly displaced to the Russian North and to the Asiatic republics. There were inhabitants of the eastern half of Poland as well as Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia and Northern Bessarabia (present Moldavia) detached from Romania by the Soviet Union.

After the war, some workers have returned from Germany to their homes, some of them decided to stay in Germany or emigrated out of Europe. This last group have not decided to return to their home countries as they had, after the war, a communist regime. Persons sent into exile to the Soviet Union were trying to re- turn to their countries but only Poles were able to do it, because they were not officially considered as Soviet citizens. Instead, Lithuanians, Latvians, Estonians and inhabitants of Moldavia have remained in exile for many more years.

#### 4.

Post-war displaced persons, which can be called the treaty displaced persons were Poles, Germans, Czechs and Slovaks moving from their home land because of the post-war changes of the boundaries of Poland, Germany, Czechoslovakia, Romania and the Soviet Union, set up according to the agreement reached between the Soviet Union and Western powers. It was a mass migration involving many millions of people. From the part of pre-war Eastern Poland, that was incorporated into the Soviet Union, almost all Germans were forced to move. Later, during 1950-1989, former German citizens still living in Poland were allowed to emigrate, if they decided to do so. From the Czech part of the Sudety Mountains almost all Germans were expelled. They constituted a large group of about 3 million persons. From incorporated to the Soviet Union part of the pre-war Eastern Poland, almost entire Polish population was deported to Poland. Those people were settled on the so called Regained Territories of western and northern Poland. From the formal point of view this emigration was voluntary. From the former Romanian Bukovina, incorporated into the Soviet Union, Poles emigrated to Poland. Polish settlement at Bukovina dates from the time of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. From the Transcarpathian Ukraine (former Transcarpathian Ruthenia) taken by the Soviet Union from Czechoslovakia, emigrated Czechs, Slovaks and Hungarians living in this region before the war.

#### 5.

The Post-war emigrants moved from the East-Central European countries during the entire period after the Second World War, although this flow was limited by restrictions and obstacles imposed by the communist governments. Nevertheless, during the period of 1956-1981, three waves of mass emigration occurred. They can be considered as a mass escape using the opportunity of the large scale unrest and dramatic political events known as The Hungarian

Revolution of 1956 and Czechoslovak Revolution of 1968. Short periods of opened boundaries with Austria and West Germany made possible desertion of many thousands of people who later have applied for immigration, mainly to Canada, the United States, Australia and South Africa.

This long history of emigration from the East-Central European countries brought many millions of people to many countries of the world. In the largest immigration countries of the world, like the United States, Canada and Australia, a following number of citizens confirm their East-Central European origin (see Table 1). All this mass of people, at present citizens of many countries still recognizing their ethnic origin, is a potential source of sentimental tourism.

**Table 1. Number of citizens of Australia, Canada and The United States admitting their East-Central European origin**

	NATIONALITY	AUSTRALIA	CANADA	UNITED STATES
1.	Austrians	*	266 800	865 000
2.	Bielorussinas	*	1 050	*
3.	Bulgarians	*	4 755	*
4.	Croatians	60 731	41 550	544 000
5.	Czechs	9 178	43 180	1 296 000
6.	Estonians	*	12 980	*
7.	Germans	115 315	911 560	57 947 000
8.	Hungarians	29 128	100 725	1 528 000
9.	Lithuanians	*	74 250	820 000
10.	Latvians	7 528	11 495	*
11.	Macedonians	61 410	15 180	*
12.	Poles	64 924	272 810	9 366 000
13.	Russians	23 637	38 225	2 953 000
14.	Romanians	*	28 655	*
15.	Slovaks	*	15 945	1 883 000
16.	Slovenians	*	8 050	*
17.	Serbs	23 264	13 085	*
18.	Ukranians	12 237	406 645	741 000
19.	Yugoslavs	42 000	*	258 000

Sources: *Demographic Yearbook 1993, UN New York, 1995;*

*US Bureau of Census, 1990 Census of population.*

\* = no data in quoted statistics.

## **“Pilgrimage” to places of origin**

Besides of that, there are at least two other groups of potential tourists undertaking a journey for emotional reason. The first one constitute the Jews living in Israel and visiting places of martyrdom of the Jewish nation. To the former German concentration camp Auschwitz-Birkenan (at the city of Oswiecim - Poland), every year the 'March of the Living' is organized, with about 5 -7 thousand participants. Individual Jewish sentimental tourism is minimal because very few Polish Jews survived the war and since that time more than 50 years have past. The second group embraces Poles, Germans and Russians visiting the military cemeteries scattered across East-Central Europe. The third group embraces Poles (but not only) traveling to Rome to the Polish Pope.

Geographical distribution and directions of that tourist flow can be relatively easily determined. First of all, all countries having representatives mentioned in Table 1, can expect visitors from abroad in proportion adequate to the total number of emigrants from the given country. This flow can be particularly large in Poland which is a potential area of both incoming and outgoing sentimental tourism. This is a result of the earlier mentioned redrawing of international boundaries in this part of Europe and the large number of people affected by these changes. Consistently, this zone of intensive tourist flow should be extended on neighboring countries, particularly to the east. So, elderly present inhabitants of Western Poland (born in pre-war Eastern Poland) are visiting the present Ukraine and Lithuania, for sentimental reasons. Several centers of such tourism can be distinguished, like the city of Lwow and a few larger cities of Western Ukraine and the city of Wilno (Vilnius) in Lithuania. This present day capital city of Lithuania is visited by Poles in great numbers, as a worship place of Our Lady of Ostra Brama and the site of numerous historical and artistic relics of the past related to the Polish history of that city. Rural areas of the Ukraine and Bielorussia are much more rarely visited because Polish emigrants of rural origin are much less interested in tourism, in general, and furthermore an individual journey across The Ukrainian and Bielorussian countryside is still difficult and troublesome. In the nearest future, the Polish tourists will visit Polish war cemeteries, currently constructed in Kharkov and Mednoje in The Ukraine and in Katyft in Russia. The same kind of sentimental tourism is a reason for visiting Polish war cemeteries at Monte Casino and Ancona in Italy.

German sentimental tourism is directed towards the western and northern parts of Poland, settled by Germans before the Second World War. Former war refugees and displaced persons are the main participants of these touristic trips. In addition family tourism is developing rapidly (in both directions) and participants are members of the German national minority in Poland visiting their relatives living in Germany as well as Germans visiting their relatives in Poland. This kind of tourism is concentrated particularly in the Opole region and in Upper Silesia. The German group is potentially numerous because in the post-war deportation and later emigration from Poland (up to 1989) about 4,2 million Germans were involved and in addition about 3 million people have fled from the approaching front, still during the war. A similar area of interest of German sentimental tourism can be the Czech part of the Sudety Mountains, as well as the entire border zone along the German-Czech boundary, where Germans used to live in large concentrations, before the second World War. About 3 million people were forced to move and their expulsion have produced a large number of potential sentimental tourists. Another possible area of German tourism is Lithuania and particularly the region of Klaipeda city (Memel) with the large pre-war concentration of German and Protestant population. Theoretically and a longer time perspective, German sentimental tourism might be of interest among Volga Germans settlement in Russia. They were dispersed during the last war but now they are trying again to organize their life at old places.

Jewish sentimental tourism as a mass movement is directed towards the places of holocaust of the Jewish nation and toward monuments of Jewish culture in Poland. The most visited places might be the largest Nazi concentration camps like Auschwitz-Birkenau (Oswiecien) and Majdanek. Up to now less known, but most important from the point of view of Jewish holocaust, is the concentration camp in Belzec near Tamow Lubelski where about 1,9 million of Jews, from many countries of Europe, were killed. This number of Jewish victims is larger than it was in Oswiecien. Worth seeing are monuments of Jewish culture concentrated in Krakow as well as old Jewish cemeteries preserved in a few places in Poland, like in Wroclaw.

## Conclusion

The above presented questions have only a very general character and the aim of this paper is just to introduce the problem which should be investi-

gated in detail. Further research should answer the question how large a portion of the entire population of emigrants and their descendants may be really interested in sentimental tourism. One has to remember, that figures quoted in this paper and many other commonly available statistics are very inaccurate and careful verification is necessary.

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## Politika in turizem: sentimentalni turizem v vzhodni Srednji Evropi

### Povzetek

Med številni pojmi, ki opisujejo vzroke za potovanja iz prostočasnih nagibov se je v angleško besedoslovje pred kratkim vrnil tudi termin »sentimentalni turizem«. Američani so že poprej ta pojav pogosto poimenovali s pojmom »turizem h koreninam« oziroma »etnični turizem«. V nemščini sorodne termina v jezikoslovje še niso uvedli navkljub temu, da že dalj časa uporabljajo pojem »domovinski turizem«, ki nekako označuje sorodno vsebino. V bistvu gre za turistično potovanje, ki nekdanjega emigranta oziroma njegovo sorodstvo ter nasledstvo vodi v kraj njegovega rojstva. Ta vrst turizma je že dolgo znana, v Vzhodni Evropi pa se je nedavno (v osemdesetih in devetdesetih letih 20.stoletja) okrepila in postala pomeben vir zaslužka. Osebe, ki oblikujejo take turistične skupine so nekoč živele na tem območju. Skupine se med seboj



razlikujejo predvsem glede na obdobje in vzroke emigracije. Omenjeni dejavniki opredeljujejo tudi odnos teh turistov do »stare domovine«. V glavnem ločimo naslednjih pet skupin oseb, ki se vključujejo v ponudbo »sentimentalnega turizma« na območju vzhodne Srednje Evrope: (1) izseljenci, ki so zapustili Evropo v obdobju velikih selitev na prelomu iz 19. v 20. stoletje; (2) emigranti iz obdobja druge svetovne vojne; (3) preseljene osebe iz obdobja II. svetovne vojne; (4) preseljene osebe iz obdobja tik po II. svetovni vojni; (5) ekonomski in politični migranti iz obdobja po II. svetovni vojni. Okrog 50 milijonov oseb bi lahko šteli k potencialnim oblikovalcem »sentimentalnega turizma« v vzhodni Srednji Evropi.