

INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION IN EUROPE: POLISH PERSPECTIVE

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INTRODUCTION

Speculating about the future is both an attractive and risky activity. It is attractive since it allows one to depart from analytical rigour for the sake of using casual knowledge and intuition, whatever available. It is risky because chances of making a good prediction are very slim. One method to improve on the latter score is to apply scenarios. They spread out the results and dilute the author's responsibility.

Such an approach is followed in this brief paper. In its first section an attempt is made to interpret some basic data on immigration to, and emigration from Poland during the last four-and-a-half decades against selected concepts pertaining to human migrations in general. Once their utility in explaining the past is proved, these concepts are returned to in the second section where they help to estimate the likely size and directions of migrations to, and out of Poland during the 1990s. This is done on the basis of a few assumptions focusing on alternative developments in Europe as factors determining the scale and nature of international migrations.

FOUR RULES CONCERNING MIGRATIONS

The first rule /which applies largely to migrations motivated by economic factors/ concerns the substitution between internal and international population flows. It claims that the scale of emigration is related to the absorptive capacity of urban labour markets within a given country. Conversely, the introduction, or elimination of barriers to international migrations, tends to be

reflected in the changing volume of internal, rural-to-urban flows.

The second rule is the simple demographic interdependence between the population age composition and its mobility potential. As the well-known Rogers-Castro scheme demonstrates, for the age category of 20-29 years, the propensity to migrate is several times higher compared to the mean migration rate. Once a large cohort such as the baby-boom generation of the 1950s, enters the quoted age brackets, it produces a wave of migration, internal, international, or both.

The third rule relates to political and ethnic aspects of spatial population mobility and provides for an increase of foreign migrations in the situations of international boundary change as well as boundary opening. In the former case moves tend to be of involuntary character, while vice versa is generally true in the latter situation. In both cases /and also under political unrest/ such movements involve primarily ethnic minorities.

The fourth rule goes back to economic factors of migration and seeks to link fluctuations in the volume of population outflow from a given country to changing disparities in living standards at the international level, in particular the position of the country of migrations origin vis-a-vis their traditional destination areas.

This short description falls naturally short of giving a fair justice to the rich and extended field of migration theory. Nevertheless, it can hopefully provide a useful framework for the description and interpretation of the pattern of foreign migrations to and out of Poland between the early 1950s and the late 1980s; it may also offer a basis for discussing likely migration patterns

during the 1990s.

The relevant data pertaining to the recent period are summarized in Table 1. Generally, data on international migrations are not very reliable, and this is certainly true of the content of Table 1. These data are derived from the national current population register and include those moves that involve permanent domicile registration in Poland by immigrants, and cancelation thereof by emigrants. The flows tend to be generally underestimated on the emigration side, mainly because some moves, considered illegal at the time of migration, were either not reported, or entered the population register with a time delay. Data for the 1980s are estimates by the Governmental Population Commission /Latuch, 1989/. These data include both the traditional "permanent migration" category, as well as a large category of migrants who, having declared their stay to be of a temporary character at the time of migration, have remained abroad permanently.

As the figures demonstrate, periods with large international migrations alternate with low mobility periods. The huge flows during the years immediately following the Second World War were caused by boundary shifts and involved massive movements of the German and the Polish populations. The cold war period of the early 1950s saw a virtual freeze on foreign migrations. It coincided with the first phase of extensive industrialization that resulted in the net transfer of some 1.5 million people from rural to urban areas. Political liberalization following the Polish October of 1956, brought about a wave of emigration by the remaining ethnic Germans, which was compensated for by the repatriation of some quarter of a million Poles from the Soviet Union, made possible at

Table 1. Poland: Population Immigration and Emigration, 1945-1988

Time period	Inflow /in 000 /	Outflow /in 000 /	Balance /in 000 /
1944/45 - 1950	3820	4003	- 184
1951 - 1955	17	18	- 1
1956 - 1960	261	360	- 99
1961 - 1965	14	90	- 76
1966 - 1970	10	134	- 124
1971 - 1975	9	84	- 75
1976 - 1980	7	142	- 135
1981 - 1984	5	209	- 204
1985 - 1988	7	554	- 547

Sources: Demographic Yearbook /various years/; Gawryszewski /1990/; Latuch /1989/.

the time of N.S.Khrustchew. The emigration to Germany, carried out by the Red Cross, was practically discontinued after some two years /to be resumed during the 1970s/, when ethnic Poles were found to constitute an increasing share among the migrating population /for a case study, see Sakson, 1986/. The subsequent years of 1961-1965 were characterized by a relatively small volume of international flows and, by another peak of internal, mostly rural-to-urban migration.

Yet another upward turn in the intensity of population movement out of Poland occurred during 1968-1969 when power clashes within the ruling party produced an exodus of a large part of the Polish-Jewish community, the size of which had been estimated at some 80 thousand following the Second World War. The early 1970s witnessed a return of low international migration levels together with an upswing of high internal /both rural-urban and interurban/ migration, a result of the second phase of industrial expansion pushed for by E.Gierek and his team.

The late 1970s marked a beginning of the economic decline and social and political crisis which, with some ups and downs, continued throughout the 1980s. This period was characterized by a very steep decrease of international migration /by one-third between 1978 and 1988/ and a several-fold increase of foreign outmigration. This outflow was particularly large in 1981, and after 1985, when liberal passport policies were introduced. During 1986-1988 the net population loss /within the 18-64 years category/ due to international migration was twice as high as the corresponding demographic increase. With regard to countries of destination, about 45 percent of emigration was accounted for by the Federal Republic of Germany

and another 15 percent by the United States of America. Some 382 thousand immigrants from Poland were granted citizenship in the FRG between 1980-1988. Many more have remained there on a temporary or an illegal status.

Let us now return to the four simple rules described earlier in this section. Rule number one wins a clear support in the light of the content of Table 2*. Large international migrations are typically associated with relatively small internal population flows and vice versa. The early 1950s and the early 1970s are the most pronounced cases of the dominance of internal migration, while the late 1950s and the 1980s were characterized by a great importance of international movements.

Rule number two is not directly applicable to an interpretation of the changing intensity of foreign migrations; see Table 3. During the 1970s, a growing share within the total population of the 20-29 age category /the demographic echo of the baby boom of the 1950s/ coincided with foreign migration growth. However, during the late 1980s population outflow abroad was raising sharply at the time when the size of the mobile population category kept decreasing. This points to the ascendancy of political and economic over demographic factors of emigration from Poland over the recent past.

Regarding rule number three, one may observe that boundary opening is a sufficient condition for an increase of foreign migration, as it was in the late 1950s. When coupled with a political unrest, it tends to produce a major migration wave, as it did in 1981. Finally, rule number four is not allowed to operate independently of the previous one. In other words, it holds true under relatively liberal exit and entry conditions for international migration,

Table 2. Interdependence between Emigration and Internal Migration in Poland

Emigration Level	Internal Migration Level	
	High	Low
High	1956-1960	1981-1984
	1976-1980	1985-1988
Low	1951-1955	1966-1970
	1961-1965	
	1971-1975	

Sources: Table 1; Demographic Yearbook /various years/.

Table 3. Interdependence between Emigration and the Share in the Total Population of Age Group 20-29 years

Emigration Level	Share of Age Group 20-29 years	
	High	Low
High	1976-1980	1985-1988
	1981-1984	
Low	1971-1975	1961-1965
		1966-1970

Sources: Table 1; Demographic Yearbook /various years/.

Table 4. Interdependence between Emigration and GNP Change in Poland

Emigration Level	GNP Change		
	Fast Growth	Slow Growth	Decrease
High		1956-1960	1976-1980
		1985-1988	1981-1984
Low	1951-1955	1966-1970	
	1961-1965		
	1971-1975		

Sources: Table 1; Statistical Yearbook of Poland /various years/.

such as those prevailing during the 1970s and the 1980s. Nevertheless, it does find some empirical support in view of the content of Table 4.

PROSPECTS FOR THE 1990s

Sociological studies reveal a persisting preference for emigration among young people in Poland. Once they take shape, such images tend to be long-lived, although the volume of actual migration decisions may diminish, or fluctuate over time. What do our simple migration rules suggest in this respect?

Let us begin with the demographic "demand for migration", i.e. the evolving age composition of the population. Unlike during the 1980s, the 1990s will witness a growing absolute number, as well as an increasing share within the total population, of the age group of 20-29 years. This increase represents an outcome of high birth rates prevailing in Poland during the late 1970s and the early 1980s, combined with a large size of the parent cohort /mostly those born during the baby-boom decade of 1950s/.

How many of the prospective migrants will move within the country, and how many may be expected to search for destinations outside Poland? At present /i.e. end of 1990/ the potential for internal migration is quite slim owing to a very limited labour market pull of the major cities. The Upper Silesian conurbation, the traditional main hub for internal migrations in Poland, is facing difficult restructuring and adjustment processes which may result in its role being changed from a large net gainer to a net loser in interregional migration exchange. Other big industrial centres,

in particular Łódź and Cracow, are in a not much better position, as they share with the Upper Silesia many of the grim economic and ecological problems. The relatively vigorous labour markets of Warsaw, Poznań and Gdańsk discourage the prospective migrants due to an acute housing shortage resulting in exorbitant costs in the private rental submarkets.

Since the absorptive capacities of Poland's large urban areas are likely to remain quite limited over the next several years at least, migration abroad may often see to be a reasonable alternative. In the case of Upper Silesia, a sizeable outflow of the population to Germany, based on existing family links, can be expected to continue throughout the 1990s. Unlike during the 1980s, this outflow has little chance to be compensated for by internal immigration. The region is actually facing a prospect of a net migration loss, if not an absolute population decrease over the decade.

The political and ethnic factors of international migrations should be losing their importance in the near future, at least so far as emigration is concerned. Ethnic minorities in Poland /Ukrainians and Germans being the largest groups/ are in the process of regaining their identity and public recognition. These are conditions adding to stability of ethnic communities rather than their gradual erosion and transfer abroad, provided no drastic, adverse economic changes take place.

Internal economic factors will hopefully counteract, rather than stimulate emigration from Poland during the 1990s. The transition from centrally-controlled to market economy, initiated in 1989, has so far brought a decrease of the mean real income and has created effective unemployment. It has also produced large income differen-

tials. However, among those negatively affected are mainly the otherwise immobile groups, including the retired, the unskilled, and parents with three and more children. For many of the potential migrants the economic opportunities within the country have actually expanded. At the same time, the attractiveness of hard-currency earnings has decreased in relative terms. The purchasing power /in Poland/ of 1 US dollar went down to 18 percent, and of 1 DMark down to 25 percent of their initial values between December 1989 and January 1991. Also, a wide array of imported consumer goods have become available to those paying with the local currency. Actually, informal-sector jobs in Berlin or New York have lost much of their earlier appeal to Polish workers and professionals.

As we can see from the above discussion, the main internal factors likely to foster emigration from Poland during the 1990s include the demographic momentum and the limited capacity of Poland's major cities to absorb migration streams originating in rural areas and in smaller towns. On the other hand, the development of a pluralistic society together with a relative appreciation of the Polish currency are factors that may work in the opposite direction. As to external factors, the immigration laws of the main receiving countries put increasingly a bonus on specific characteristics of migrants. These relate, in the case of the Federal Republic of Germany to the ethnic background, while in the case of the United States and Canada - to migrants' family ties and their professional skills.

Taking all these considerations into account one may anticipate a continuation of emigration from Poland during the 1990s, but at a lower level in comparison with the 1980s. Also, migrations are

likely to be more selective, involving primarily persons with close family links in the country of destination, as well as those possessing specific skills. An outflow of the magnitude of some 50 thousand persons a year may be partly compensated for by an immigration of ethnic Poles from the Soviet Union, as well as some rather limited return migration of Poles from Western Europe and North America.

Such a migration scenario assumes a continuity of political and economic trends established in 1989-1990, and a prospective association of Poland with the EEC. However, two alternative scenarios have also to be considered. One of those might happen if Poland's transition to market economy proved unsuccessful which would result in a drastic drop in the level of welfare, a rise of unemployment, and, perhaps, political instability. Under such circumstances the freedom to travel abroad might be impaired by stiffening visa requirements, but the pressure to emigrate would grow, bringing the nature and the magnitude of this phenomenon closely to the levels observed during the peak emigration years of the 1980s.

Still another scenario to be considered derives from the expected future migrations out of the Soviet Union. The scale of this outflow is estimated to lie between 3 and 10 million during the 1990s, depending on the economic and political situation in the country of origin /see IOM, 1990/. The involvement of Poland in this process might mainly be that of a land of transit. Large transit flows would certainly have adverse effects upon local transportation and environment as well as possible destabilizing effects with regard to the economic and political system at large.

Out of the three scenarios listed the first one can be

interpreted as both the most advantageous and most plausible. Conversely, a combination of scenarios two and three would be a most disastrous alternative. This is Poland's perspective, but it should also be shared by other countries in the region, both East and West.

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*Note:

Contingency Tables 2, 3 and 4 are built using the following assumption: for each variable there is an equal number of observations in the "high" and "low" /or, "fast" and "slow"/ categories. Emigration level is defined as absolute number of emigrants during a given time period.