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Grzegorz SANECKI

orcid.org/0000-0003-1271-7431

EARLIER AND PRESENT-DAY MIGRATORY MOVEMENTS OF POLISH PEOPLE

Гжегож САНЕЦЬКИ

МІГРАЦІЙНІ ПРОЦЕСИ У ПОЛЬЩІ: МИНУЛЕ І СЬОГОДЕННЯ

У статті представлено стислий огляд історії міграції поляків від середньовіччя до наших днів. Різні хвилі міграції розкрито із зазначенням їх причин, розміру і основних напрямів. Особливий акцент зроблено на аналізі еміграції після 1989 року, у період трансформації суспільного устрою в Польщі. Акцентовано увагу на позитивних і негативних наслідках цього явища, тенденціях, що спостерігаються в міграційних процесах.

Ключові слова: міграція, еміграція економічна, імміграція, рееміграції, мотиви міграції, наслідки еміграції.

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МИГРАЦИОННЫЕ ПРОЦЕССЫ В ПОЛЬШЕ: ПРОШЛОЕ И НАСТОЯЩЕЕ

В статье представлено краткий обзор истории миграции поляков от средневековья до наших дней. Различные волны миграции раскрыто с указанием их причин, размера и основных направлений. Особый акцент сделан на анализе эмиграции после 1989 года, в период трансформации общественного строя в Польше. Акцентировано внимание на положительных и отрицательных последствиях этого явления, тенденциях, наблюдаемых в миграционных процессах.

Ключевые слова: миграция, эмиграция экономическая, иммиграция, реэмиграции, мотивы миграции, последствия эмиграции.

Introduction

The phenomenon of migration of the Polish is not new, because it took the preceding few centuries. However, the contexts of socio-economic and

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political motivations accompanying people making decisions about leaving the country were not always the same. Consequently, over the years it can be perceived different types of emigration of our citizens out of the country (or the Polish lands).

Among the European countries, Poland has the least immigrant foreign citizens in relation to its native population. Migration movements had the most common direction «outside» the country. In other words, «the problem of international migration from the perspective of Polish comes down almost entirely to the outflow of Poles» [7, p. 12]. According to the survey by A. Chodubski – conducted in 1994 upon the scope of world migration – «migratory movements particularly notes the presence of Poles. They rank fourth after the Chinese, Germans and Italians in terms of size as a national community residing outside of its own country. It is estimated that 25 million people with Polish origins is the part of world population» [3, p. 55]. Obviously, the size of the Polish community abroad had to be preceded by a multi-annual, or even centuries-old tradition of migration.

The concept of migration

The concept of migration is derived from the Latin «*migratio*», meaning literally hike (or resettlement) and the verb «*migrare*» (wander, resettle) [see: 12; 6]. R. Bera writes that «migration or migratory movement is a whole shift, which leads to a change of residence of moving from the place of origin or place of departure to destination or arrival» [2, p. 77]. P. Kraszewski states that «migration is based on a permanent or temporary (periodic) leaving by individuals – or groups, and even the whole societies – places of their primary residence and moving to another place». At the same time the author notes that real migration are not «periodic changes of places connected with tourism, recreation or health, as well as job, military service, studies, business, family matters, participation in conferences, congresses, symposiums, training courses and various missions, sporting events, etc.» [13, p. 11].

Various authors of works dealing with this subject indicate on motives causing migrations of people. This approach develops J.M. Beshers in his theory of the decision to migrate [18, p. 39]. The author argues that the decision to migrate affects largely the principle of maximizing benefits. This means that an individual decides to leave the place of his or her former residence in a situation where the benefits of migration will exceed the costs or losses resulting from it. Therefore it should be concluded that an important element of the debate on the decision to emigrate is undoubtedly the quality and standard of the future life.

Analyzing important motives for making the decision to migrate, one should pay attention to two groups of factors having significant importance to this issue. The first group are called push factors, that is, those that cause a desire to leave a specified area (e.g. a polluted environment, insecurity, poor

accessibility of the site, lack of jobs, etc.). The second group are pull factors, i.e. the characteristics of the target area, that encourage the arrival (e.g. attractive for tourists surroundings, good transport links to the city centre, closeness to many service points, higher standard of living, friendly legislation, a higher salary levels, the availability of jobs, etc.). Nowadays, people migrate primarily for work. Employment abroad has become the worldwide commonplace [see: 21, pp. 41 – 42].

Migrating is inscribed permanently in the content of the ethos of the human species, that evidence have been found in the oldest written artifacts of many human cultures. In our cultural circle, as one of the first «migrant» people – rather in a symbolic sense – should be considered a biblical couple of Adam and Eve, who were «condemned» to abandon their original homeland – Paradise. The same source, i.e. the Old Testament provides many examples of mass movement of «the chosen people» on a very distant places (e.g. exile in Babylonian captivity and the exodus from Egypt to the Promised Land).

Definitely, as the great waves of migration should also be considered the displacement of huge masses living at different periods of history the European continent. For example, one of this kind was the migration of Slavic tribes that arrived from Asia to Europe thousands years ago. Slavic people have divided and moved quite a long time before they reached the relative status quo, which enabled the formation of the foundations of statehood of various Slavic tribal groups.

Historical migrations of Polish people

The beginnings of Polish emigration started in the thirteenth century, but its dimensions were still very insignificant [9, p. 11]. The first major wave of emigration started in the sixteenth century, when «outside the Republic of Poland (...) there were about one million Polish people» [16, p. 152]. The Poles emigrated then mainly for educational, scientific and commercial reasons. In the XVII century, the phenomenon of emigration in the Polish society remained at a relatively low level. The breakthrough came during the partitions of Poland. There were waves of migration, related to specific historical events, such as uprisings for national liberation [10, p. 5].

From the first half of the nineteenth century the first wave of emigration motivated purely economic took place. However, it reached its largest size in the second half of the century and in the early twentieth century (apogee in the years 1890 – 1914) [10, p. 5].

Mass migrations swept areas of all three partitions. The most spectacular (in terms of its size) seems to be the «Galician» emigration. A significant portion of these emigrants headed for the Americas, mainly due to liberal immigration policies of target countries (mostly the United States and Brazil). Equally large magnitude had the emigration to Germany, but trips to this country were typically seasonal. According to estimates, in the period running from

the last 25 years of the nineteenth century to 1914, the migration took «a minimum of 3 million 700 thousand people (...). The First World War and the postwar period added another 5 million migrants, the vast majority of the rural population» [9, p. 12].

Despite regaining independence in 1918, the phenomenon of emigration still remained at a high level. Polish exodus «was caused by the ravages of war in industry and agriculture, procrastination of (...) ground reform and dearness of land. (...) Overall, during the period from 1918 to 1938 on the Polish emigration has managed to more than 2.2 million people» [5, p. 224]. About 61 % of the total number of emigrants went to European countries, while about 39 % directed to overseas [5, p. 224].

In the interwar period there was also noted the phenomenon of return migration. However, «despite the fact that over a million people have returned from continent trips (...) the set of scales of twenty years of the interwar period accounted for more than one million Poles who stay permanently outside the country» [10, p. 7]. Large scale of emigration was also the result of conscious moves from the government. High unemployment and lack of ideas to the reduction of it led authorities of the country to consider emigration as an effective instrument to combat this phenomenon. An expression of this was to minimize the administrative and bureaucratic procedures, accompanying the efforts of citizens to travel abroad.

During the Second World War, as well as after its completion, migratory movements were caused by flee from the war, or the result of political changes and repatriation movements. These movements concerned people deported to Germany to work, prisoners of war, or even people deported from the former eastern Polish territories to the Soviet Union.

The years 1939 – 1948 are called «the black decade», not only because of the forceful resettlements, but also on their massive character. The end of this type of compulsory emigration coincided with the rise of the communist Polish United Workers' Party. At the same time was leaded very restrictive passport policy of the state and unprecedented sealing the borders. In the year of constitutional creation of the Polish People's Republic (1952), the Ministry of Public Security has authorized the departure in the majority of officials and dignitaries of state and the Party (mainly to «fraternal socialist countries»). In the same year only 50 citizens got permission to go to «Western countries» [19, p. 10]. The emigration of the Poles was significantly slowed down by the government also because of the high demand for manpower for the country's reconstruction after the war and the development of the industrial economy [20, pp. 63 – 65].

The intensity of migration flows has increased over the years 1960 – 1970. Then dominated migrations for work purposes. The estimated number of people leaving the country at that time reached nearly 250,000. The main

driving force of emigration of the Poles was then (and in early 80s) liberalization of passport policy [5, p. 225].

Due to the socio-political changes in the years 1981 – 1988 («Solidarity» movement, martial law), there was one of the major waves of emigration of the Poles. Among emigrating people about 16 % were those with a higher education, while the share of such individuals in the total population of Polish was then only 8 % [11, p. 3]. For obvious reasons the introduction of martial law (limitation of civil rights), inhibited the legal external migration. At that time, as a result of previous emigration outside Poland stayed about 500 thousand people. After the ending of martial law, state authorities again started to tolerate labour migration of the citizens. As a result, in the period 1983 – 1989 Polish emigration was about 128 thousand people [5, p. 225].

Contemporary emigration and its consequences

The major breakthrough in terms of the size and nature of the Polish emigration took place with the starting of the political transformation after 1989. Socio-political changes meant that in 1991 – 95 nearly 118,000 Polish citizens have emigrated permanently (mostly to Germany, USA and Canada) [5, p. 225].

In subsequent years a further waves of economical migration of the Polish people have been noticed. At the same time it increased the percentage of emigrants among people with higher education. In addition, about 25 % of leaving were young people, aged 25 – 29 years (for the period 1998 – 2001) [11, p. 3]. Outflow of young, well and highly educated personnel was caused by high unemployment in the country and the growing awareness of immediate Polish accession to the European Union.

After 1 May 2004 there is observed further dynamic growth in economic migration of our citizens. Due to the accession to the European Union, the countries of the «old fifteen» become the main destinations of migration of Poles. The factors causing increased migration were and still are: pretty bad situation on the home labour market, higher wages in EU countries, the opening of labour markets to workers from the new EU members, facilitating the movement of communication (e.g. low-cost airlines) and the growing aspirations of the society. The size and directions of the temporary emigration of Poles after the first 10 years of the XXI century illustrate the quotation below.

«It is estimated that at the end 2011 around 2060 thousand inhabitants of our country were staying temporarily beyond the Polish borders, about 60 thousand more than in 2010 (2,000,000). In Europe in 2011 there were more than 1750,000 people (in 2010 about 1685,000) the vast majority, about 1670,000, were Polish immigrants resided in the EU member states. (...) Among EU countries, most of the people still were in the UK (625 000), Germany (470 000), Ireland (120 000) and the Netherlands (95 000)» [1, p. 2].

The mass and dynamic emigration of the Poles in recent years, brings specific consequences for the whole society and the economy of the country. The positive aspects of modern exodus of the Poles are perceived. They embrace the decline in unemployment rate, the acquisition new skills and foreign languages competence by leaving people, the influx of earned abroad money to the families of immigrants in the country (consumption capital stimulating domestic demand), investing accumulated funds in the development of native private business enterprise (investment capital) etc.

The phenomenon of re-emigration intensifies benefits directly from the same emigration. Generally speaking, the total positives of the two co-occurring phenomena in the macro-scale for the «sending country», means:

- «an increase in professional competences and overall life potential of migrants thanks to the experience acquired abroad, increasement of their innovation, mobility, knowledge of a foreign language, pro-investment attitudes;
- an increase in trade and production of goods, purchased by re-emigrants with shopping oriented attitude on so-called status symbols, mainly cars, education, houses;
- an overall increase in the quality of life in the country of origin;
- increased sense of social security of migrant populations, who were leaving as a result of marginalization, particularly of insecurity and a low standard of living;
- return of the young generation, which mainly creates a wave of migration and is a key demographic potential of the country» [8, p. 61].

These benefits of the emigration of Polish citizens cannot overshadow of the threats. In fact, some of these profits are quite doubtful and questionable. The negative consequences of this phenomenon apply to the economic and the social, lastly educational sphere. The most important of them are mentioned below:

- observable shortage of manpower in specific sectors of the national economy today;
- depletion of the budget by the lack of tax revenues, which are paid by emigrating people abroad;
- progressive threat to the functioning of the pension system stemming from the coincidence of two processes – the ageing of the population and the outflow abroad of mostly young people;
- wastage of production and creative potential of outgoing people (increasing numbers of highly educated and skilled people), which harnesses the target countries of emigration;
- waste of the cost of education (Polish employees are praised for high qualification, which get in their native country).

The importance of the abovementioned risks cannot be ignored even though recently observed decrease in the growth of foreign trips and the

phenomenon of return migration, caused by the economic crisis and maybe by Brexit in close future.

In the near term it should not be expected a rapid reduce emigration of Poles. This thesis can be based on assumptions drawn from observation of the pace of economic and civilization changes of our country, and also is confirmed by empirical studies regarding life plans of high school and academic students [17]. Another conclusion concerns recently observed changes of objectives and nature of emigration. Their directions with high probability will remain and develop in the future. It seems that they can be recognized as the following continuums:

➤ from obligation to voluntary – less and less often decision to leave is the result of a different kind of pressure and more frequently is an autotelic decision, free in choosing the target, the time and the nature of emigration;

➤ from «blind» trips, without any idea of what to expect to the advantage of experience and support of earlier immigrants. Today emigrants are from the beginning supported by migration networks;

➤ from political and economic to pro-development (education) character – because of gradually improved living conditions of the Poles, the longer stay abroad is often motivated by the needs for enrichment of knowledge, testing skills, learning or improving a foreign language etc.;

➤ from the expectation of the short-term benefits to building a coherent plan of life – young people with high aspirations treat the trips abroad mainly as a part of planned strategy that make up the consistent implementation of their life plan;

➤ from the «spontaneity» of decisions and unpreparation to functioning as an immigrant to rational planning staying abroad – more and more Polish try to get information on the rights and duties of immigrants in the destination countries;

➤ from low to high ambitious emigration projects – emigrating Poles are increasingly less likely to approve of low-paid work proposals, unattractive and unprestigious positions. There has also be observed striving to find employment in their acquired profession, which in the recent past were rare cases.

Along with the transformations of the forms of contemporary Polish emigration, there are new types of immigrants. This is an interesting typology of Polish immigrants living in London, based on research by J. Eade, S. Drikwater and M. Grapich:

a) «storks» – a type of circular economic migrants, leaving the family in the country for at most a few months, but repeatedly. They represent about 20 % of all migrants;

b) «hamsters» – are people leaving once in order to earn a certain amount of money for a specific purpose. It is estimated that they account for around 16 % of migrant workers;

c) «seekers» – most often young people, who treat their trip in terms of adventure and look for different possibilities to reap the benefits of their emigration. They constitute the largest community among currently traveling to London (about 42 %);

d) «settlers» – are leaving the country with the intention of staying abroad permanently. According to cited research they are approx. 22 % of all Polish immigrants [14, p. 126].

Current migrations are less and less nature of the one-time movements related to the change of residence, and they take increasingly the form of short-term and multiple (circulation) mobility.

Summary

Today, for foreign emigration decide mainly Polish people, who are active, bold and not afraid to take risks. «The desire to go abroad more often relates to young people, 18 – 34 years old, well educated, working in trade and services, earning better than average. So these are the Poles, who are really the most energetic and creative social group» [4, pp. 57 – 58]. Besides, they are also individuals who are not afraid of movement within the host country. Depending on the changing situation, they are willing to settle in large urban agglomerations, as well as in less urbanized and rural areas. For the good functioning abroad also important are often worked out for a long time migration networks, i.e. the contacts and relationships with people with long experience, which are often a source of support for the «new» emigrants.

Summing up the above historical view of migrations of the Polish population, it should be noted that in general, processes of emigration always dominated over immigration movements. «During last six decades nearly 4 million inhabitants have left our country permanently, while arrive about 1.9 million. (...) With the accession of Poland to the European Union, where one of the main values is (...) the free movement of people, the processes of emigration intensified» [15, pp. 306 – 307].

The increasing incidence of non-material motives to leave the country seems to be important for the image of the contemporary Polish emigration. Further evolution of our citizens migration movements depends on changes of the social, economic and political situation and of course on the migration policy of the government, which today – as it seems – only maintains the status quo.

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