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## **A CHEAP IMITATION, OR TOURIST INNOVATION? POLISH TOURISM DURING STATE SOCIALISM THROUGH EASTERN AND WESTERN EYES**

On one typically cold Wednesday in January, a newspaper published a seemingly ordinary account of two cities on opposing sides of the German-Polish border:

A sign in Frankfurt (Oder) points the way to a bridge over the river: “To the Border”. Pedestrians pull out their ID, [at which] border guards quickly glance. [The pedestrians] stroll over the bridge, look down at the languidly flowing river, yet to carry ice, and reach for their ID when they reach [the other side]. A customs card is not necessary[;] payment slips are not filled out [...]. [In Stubice] Frankfurters mosey. Mothers with their children, many young people, go by the school just to “check things out”. Stubice, it is said, promenades into Frankfurt.<sup>1</sup>

Everything, it seems, was normal on the border. At least, it would be if this account was from the recent past, when Poles and Germans have enjoyed lax travel regulations as members of the Schengen Zone within the European Union. But the article’s author, Ursula Rebetzky, was not writing in 2009, rather 1972.

One can learn many things from this apparently unspectacular account. At least partially, it dispels commonplace views of life behind the “Iron Curtain”, a phrase which – like the “East bloc” more generally – suggests that the Soviet

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<sup>1</sup> U. Rebetzky, *Spaziergang über die Grenze* (A Walk over the Border), “Neues Deutschland” (henceforth ND), 12 Jan. 1972, p. 1.

Union and its post-War satellite states stood opposed like a fortress to implicit adversaries both within and without.<sup>2</sup> Indeed, as citizens of Poland were quick to notice, crossing the border became easier as it gradually opened in the early 1970s. On 25 November 1971, officials from Poland and East Germany signed an agreement to allow citizens of each respective country to travel without visas or passports, and Czechoslovak authorities would soon agree to similar regulations.<sup>3</sup> This open border project, called the “Borders of Friendship”, was arguably the most ambitious move towards unorganized travel in the history of the East bloc.

But despite the novelty of the project, it was a logical next step in Poland. In many regards, Polish authorities were at the nexus of tourist innovation in the East bloc. Starting in 1956 – shortly after Khrushchev’s (ironically famous) “Secret Speech” – a variety of actors worked to promote Poland as a land of tourism; in contrast to socialist modes of travel, Polish officials and virtual lobby groups worked to increase both organized and unorganized tourist opportunities. Due to the unique environment within which Poland found itself in the post-War era, it would become a country which tolerated – indeed supported – the masses to travel outside the framework of the state-run and -organized programs.

This paper is designed to give a brief montage of Polish travel culture, as well as international reaction to Polish travel culture during state socialism. First, I briefly explore two highlights of tourism politics during state socialism in Poland, showing how political changes affected the nature of travel for everyday citizens in ways unique from other countries in the East bloc. In travel politics, the relationship between citizen and authority was, as I show, reciprocal (instead of top-down): even if decisions made in the upper echelons of power affected the daily life of citizens, actions of everyday tourists brought officials in Warsaw to discuss how projects were working. As the regime became more open to notions of unorganized and international travel, the tourist also increasingly brought authorities to negotiate the terms of travel.

The second aim of this paper is to explore briefly how tourist innovations in Poland were seen and understood both in the East and the West. I do that utilizing specific actors – namely, authorities and journalists. In the East (which, in the interest of space will be limited primarily to the German Democratic Republic, or East Germany), some of Poland’s developments in tourist travel were embraced both officially and behind closed doors. But much of the time, as will be shown, innovations were only hesitantly accepted; they were

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<sup>2</sup> Cf. J. Langer, *New Meanings of the Border in Central Europe*, [in:] *Border, Region and Ethnicity in Central Europe*, ed. G. Éger and J. Langer, Norea Verlag, Klagenfurt 1996, p. 50.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. J. Feron, *Two Red Nations in Travel Accord*, “New York Times” (henceforth NYT), 28 Nov. 1971, p. 17.

quickly altered to better suit would-be “socialist internationalism;” or they were criticized from the very beginning.

To balance this focus on East bloc, intra-state politics, I also draw on Western (primarily American) sources – that is, newspaper reports and official state documents – to show how, when they took anything more than cursory note of developments in Poland, they tended to describe tourist developments as being ideologically motivated. But (as I show in the concluding section) widely-circulated publications in Poland were generally very moderate, and frequently quite open about problems and criticism of tourism politics. Hence the irony, that while sympathizing with the plight of individuals stuck in state socialism, the Western press overemphasized elements they saw as being political, and as such, peculiarly converged with the views of Poland’s communist neighbors. In the environment of the Cold War, Polish tourist developments were surprisingly advanced, while both her Eastern and Western counterparts misinterpreted Poland’s aims of economic development in the realm of the tourism as either ideologically misguided, or outright subversive.

#### A BACKGROUND IN THE POLITICAL CHANGES OF POLAND, 1956 AND 1970

Poland witnessed one surprising political change in summer and fall of 1956, and another transition in late 1970. As workers in Poznań took to the streets to demand bread and wages, authorities in Warsaw and Moscow decided to remove Edward Ochab and elect Władysław Gomułka – who was considered a moderate and (more importantly) was generally popular amongst Poles – as the first secretary of the Polish United Workers’ Party (Polska Zjednoczona Partia Robotnicza, PZPR).<sup>4</sup> Just over a decade later, the same popular figure had become a pariah, and was criticized (especially on the side of the *inteligencja* and students in 1968, but eventually by workers when he decided to raise the price of meat in 1970) for the stagnate economy in Poland. After the bloody repression of strikes in Gdańsk, he was forced to resign to Edward Gierek, who was to provide for economic growth (largely through Western loans) and improved living conditions. Like in 1956, the introduction of a new first secretary brought a general liberalization and relaxation of hard-line politics, and Poland gained a reputation for being the moderate in the socialist bloc regarding censorship, the availability of Western media, and the right to celebrate religion.

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<sup>4</sup> For background on the events of 1956 and 1968-1970, cf. T. Torańska, *Oni (Them)*, Agencja Omnipress, Warszawa 1989, pp. 180-237; cf. also A. Paczkowski, *Pół wieku dziejów Polski* (Half a Century of Polish History), Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, Warszawa 2005, p. 203.

Both of these developments were also transformative for tourism politics, especially since tourism was (at least partially) seen as a way of placating an unsatisfied society. Keeping in mind that Soviet bloc travel – both at the international and at the national level – consistently focused on the officially sponsored vacation, on group travel (from workplaces and institutions) and/or travel agency offerings, the novelty of changes in late 1950s and early 1970s was that influences from outside the upper ranks of the party were able to open officials to the idea that unorganized travel should be promoted.<sup>5</sup> In these two eras of internal upheaval, would-be lobby groups from within the country and officials from outside the country managed to receive government support for what would otherwise be almost unthinkable projects. As long as the projects could be explained in newspeak, and as long as they were profitable, Polish officials were willing to liberalize travel.

### INNOVATION I: AUTOSTOP, AUTOSTOP, GET UP AND GO!

In 1957, a reporter at the popular magazine “Dookoła Świata” had been receiving letters from readers confused about regulations to go hitchhiking (or, in Polish, *autostop*). On the one hand, he had heard that young people who had traveled via *autostop* had been well-received on the Polish road (at times, they even received a free meal or hotel room). On the other, police would give drivers (and hitchhikers) tickets for traveling with unknown persons. What were young people to do?<sup>6</sup>

Journalists from a popular, pulp-magazine and radio personalities convinced authorities to approve of a state-sponsored hitchhiking program.<sup>7</sup> The first of its kind, the so-called *Akcja Autostop*, or Autostop Program, brought tens of thousands to the Polish road. All that was necessary to travel was a

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<sup>5</sup> Traditionally in state socialism, organized travel was intended to guarantee workers with experiences in order to rejuvenate the socialist citizen. Traveling in groups, scholars argue, provided authorities with the means of controlling visitors from the guilty pleasures. Cf. M. Majowski, *Polska Ludowa zaprasza: Polityka turystyczna w czasach Edwarda Gierka* (The People’s Republic of Poland Welcomes You: The Politics of Tourism in the Edward Gierek Era), Wydawnictwo TRIO, Warszawa 2008; cf. also P. Patterson, *Dangerous Liaisons: Soviet-Bloc Tourists and the Temptations of the Yugoslav Good Life in the 1960s and 1970s*, [in:] *The Business of Tourism: Place, Faith, and History*, ed. P. Scranton and J. Davidson, University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia 2007, pp. 186-212; finally, cf. also Ch. Noak, *Coping with the Tourist: Planned and ‘Wild’ Mass Tourism on the Soviet Black Sea Coast*, [in:], *Turizm: The Russian and East European Tourist under Capitalism and Socialism*, ed. A. E. Gorsuch and D. Koenker, Cornell University Press, Ithaca 2006, pp. 281-304.

<sup>6</sup> A. Piwoński, *Więcej utonęło, niż zginęło na drogach* (More Drowned than Died on the Road), [in:] *Autostop polski. PRL i współczesność* (Polish Hitchhiking: The People’s Republic of Poland and Today), ed. J. Czupryński, Korporacja ha!art, Kraków 2005, pp. 19-23; cf. C. Gmyz, *Licencja na podróżowanie. 50. urodziny autostopu* (License to Travel. 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Autostop), “Wprost”, no. 1227, 2007, p. 24.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

Autostop booklet which cost relatively little (the program, after all, was designed for youngsters). Inside the booklet, coupons with a designated amount of kilometers gave hitchhikers the possibility to travel with a driver. The hitchhiker would receive a free ride, and the driver would receive monetary reimbursement for gasoline.

Historical contingency informed authorities and eventually led them to support an unplanned and unorganized tourist project under state socialism. At the end of World War II, the great powers had agreed that a post-War Polish state would be moved approximately two hundred miles west, allowing the Soviet Union to incorporate lands and cities which had (at least for the Poles) been considered major cultural centers. In return, the new country was to receive areas of Silesia, Pomerania, and West Prussia (“Ziemie Odzyskane”, the Reincorporated Territories) as a buffer against any future aggression from the West. For obvious reasons, the logistical, social, and psychological problems incorporated with moving large populations from east to west were huge; a decade after the War, post-War Polish authorities were desperate to make their population believe in the longevity and legitimacy of the new national borders.<sup>8</sup> But efforts were initially hindered by the fact that Poland, if it were to become a model socialist country, should avoid “nationalistic” socialism focused on the state, and should embrace “international proletarianism”. All that would change after the transition in power which led to the “Gomułka Thaw”. Thereafter, it was decided that a focus on historical patriotism intertwined with socialist ideals could lead the people to believe in the nationalistic credentials of the Party.<sup>9</sup>

Part and parcel of this project would be to bring citizens from the center to the periphery. Tourism was ideal in this regard: if the government could get the tourist to cities like Wrocław or Zielona Góra, then the western areas of Poland would be genuinely “nationalized”. Hence, Autostop’s initial success can be explained by the program’s ability to incorporate travel destinations (as promoted in “Dookoła Świata” and the radio program *Muzyka i Aktualności*) in the “Reincorporated Territories”: each year, organizers would promote travel to areas across Poland, although consistent emphasis was made to encourage youngsters to see the unknown West (of Poland).<sup>10</sup> Additionally, Autostop was profitable and inclusive, and even encouraged foreigners to utilize the extra space in their Western automobiles to transport hitchhikers.<sup>11</sup>

The Autostop program proved to be immensely popular: popular songs and films were made around or incorporating the Autostop movement, and international visitors to Poland made note of the unique opportunity they had to

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<sup>8</sup> Cf. H. Boockmann, *Deutsche Geschichte im Osten Europas: Ostpreußen und Westpreußen*, Siedler, Berlin 1992; G. Thum, *Die Fremde Stadt* (The Foreign City), Siedler, Munich 2003.

<sup>9</sup> T. Curp, *A Clean Sweep? The Politics of Ethnic Cleansing in Western Poland*, University of Rochester, Rochester 2006.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. J. Czupryński, op. cit.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

travel cheaply (and, given the state of rail in early state socialism, rapidly). But while the Autostop movement had a consistent following, it was not until the 1970s that organizers made an exerted effort to expand the program beyond nation-state borders. As I will show later, it was another political change in power which led to an attempted tourist innovation not only in Autostop, but in the East bloc, in general.

## INNOVATION II: THE BORDERS OF FRIENDSHIP

Władysław Gomułka's replacement by Edward Gierek after strikes in Gdańsk in 1970 was not unique. Like the "Thaw" which followed Khrushchev's denunciation of Stalin and Stalinist tactics in 1953, the early 1970s was witness to leadership changes in nearly all communist bloc countries (and, indeed, throughout the world). In East Germany, Walter Ulbrecht was ousted for Erich Honecker in 1971; and in Czechoslovakia, Alexander Dubček was notoriously forced out of office through Warsaw Pact countries' occupation in 1968.

Shortly following the change in state leadership, citizens of Poland awoke to the news that, after a meeting with party leaders on the Crimean Peninsula in November 1971, Polish authorities had agreed to open borders to unrestricted travel to East Germany on New Year's Day, 1972. Borders would be opened to Czechoslovakia soon thereafter. As of 1 January 1972, all that was needed to cross the border was the police-issued personal identification card, which, since the ID was necessary for citizens as basic identification, could not be withheld from anyone. This project, called the "Borders of Friendship", was an open border project between the three neighbors.

Like Autostop, the open border project was hugely popular. On 30 October 1976, the secretary of the Central Committee of the Polish United Workers' Party (KC PZPR) reported that there was "systematic growth" in trans-national travel on the part of Polish citizens, regardless if they went on duty, for sports, or as private tourists.<sup>12</sup> What followed was a more detailed account of the nature of this travel. The report stated that from 1971 to 1975, there were a total of 35,695,600 trips to foreign countries. Of those, more than 80 percent (29,994,000) were to the GDR or Czechoslovakia from 1972 to 1975. There were more than 1 million more tourist visits departing from Poland in 1972 than in 1955-1971, *combined*; private, tourist travel had grown 1100 percent from 1970.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>12</sup> *Biuletyn informacyjny Sekretariatu Komitetu Centralnego Polskiej Zjednoczonej Partii Robotniczej* (henceforth BI KC PZPR), 272 VI from 30 Oct. 1976, p. 18, Hoover Archives (henceforth HA).

<sup>13</sup> BI KC PZPR 272 VI from 30 Oct. 1976, p. 19, HA. From 1955 to 1971, there were 9,032,200 reported travels outside of Polish territory. In 1972 alone, there were 10,600,000. Cf. *Główny Urząd Statystyczny, 1955-1972*, Główny Urząd Statystyczny, Warszawa 1973, as well as in P. Sowiński, *Wakacje w*

Through mass rallies, border festivals, and official declarations, authorities promoted the open border as a development of “really existing socialism”. Upper-level, diplomatic “manifestations” were perpetuated throughout the 1970s and 1980s as figures of the state visited each respective country. At Comecon general meetings and at party conventions, Czechoslovaks, East Germans, and Poles would shed praise on their counterparts for taking “further steps” to incorporate each respective community.<sup>14</sup>

Like other transnational open border projects, the “Borders of Friendship” aimed partially at creating economic equality between member states, but it was also intended to provide citizens with new vacationscapes in lieu of travel to the West.<sup>15</sup> In contrast to other agreements, however, the “Borders of Friendship” included two of the most restrictive states regarding independent travel (that is, Czechoslovakia and East Germany). It was also unique due to the disproportionate size of the countries: Poland – with a population of thirty million – was double the size of its reciprocal partners and gained more from the ability to travel across open borders.

## REACTIONS TO POLISH AUTOSTOP

If East Germany was the “showplace of socialism” in the Soviet bloc, Poland was, unwittingly, the “laboratory of socialism”, as these highlights of tourist development reveal. Not only were individuals in the Polish People’s Republic more likely to purchase print media forbidden in almost all other socialist countries, they could also go hitchhiking and travel abroad at rates larger than in other socialist countries. As might be expected, the reaction towards liberalized travel in the West and the East differed. But, regardless if in East Germany or the United States, foreigners consistently perceived moves to relax travel regulations as being primarily politically motivated, equating Polish moves to moderate travel laws with larger, pan-bloc politics.

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*Polsce Ludowej. Polityka władz i ruch turystyczny (1945-1989)* (Vacation in the People’s Republic of Poland: Regime Politics and the Tourist Movement (1945-1989)), Wydawnictwo TRIO, Warszawa 2005, p. 287. Cf. also the Tables below.

<sup>14</sup> Cf. the Communiqué from Horst Sindermann (a figure who would later become one of the most outspoken adversaries of the open border) concerning the 27<sup>th</sup> Comecon Plenum in Prague, in ND, 9 June 1973, p. 2. One fantastic piece of propaganda was published to open the official summer season in 1972: on the first page of the 25 June issue of “Trybuna Ludu” (henceforth TL), an image of a train full of happy train travelers is juxtaposed to an image of Honecker and his foreign minister walking across the “Border of Friendship” with Gierek and his minister. As if through vicariousness, the regimes’ subjects could perform international diplomacy through travel into the brother-land. By tying the open border to the heads of state, even individual travel was perceived as being friendly, communist, and anti-imperialist.

<sup>15</sup> For vacationscapes, cf. O. Löfgren, *On Holiday: A History of Vacationing*, University of California Press, Berkeley 1999.

In the West, one journalist lamented prior to 1956 that, “all [...] contacts [between citizens of each respective bloc] seem doomed to remain artificial and constrained as long as the basic conflict of ideologies persist[ed]”.<sup>16</sup> The possibility to fulfill tourists’ desires to travel, so the author concluded, was bleak at best. As such, the sudden move in 1957 to create a legal hitchhiking program in Poland, ushering increased mass-movement on an individual level, was puzzling. Journalists, Sovietologists, historians, and lay observers watched Poland with great interest because of possible economic and, more importantly, political implications, especially when it was speculated that the program would be extended to other Eastern European countries if it proved successful. James Feron, a long-time journalist in Eastern Europe for the “New York Times”, reflected that Poland’s tourism projects were “practical”, and concluded that the projects revealed “growing demands within the bloc for improved living standards and consumer products, and this may open the way to flexibility and ultimate solution of the bloc’s major economic problems”.<sup>17</sup> Tourism authorities were, in the eyes of the West, pushing the borders of the acceptable in the East, and all the while questioning Moscow’s authority in internal affairs.

Years after the Autostop program had been established, journals published in the West would advertise the liberty to hitchhike as a sign of Poland’s openness and willingness to break from the rules so common in the East bloc. In the international magazine advertising Polish daily life and culture, “Poland”, Waldemar Żukrowski wrote that Autostop was like “river of young people bubbling with joy”. After giving hitchhikers a ride in Poland, he continued, “[t]hey thank for the lift with a song, a smile and some girls even with a kiss”.<sup>18</sup> Similarly, cartoons and advertisements promised foreign audiences bright prospects for “natural encounters” in Poland.<sup>19</sup>

Indeed, Poland was the only country in Europe to have a long-lasting, organized hitchhiking program.<sup>20</sup> As such, it comes as little surprise that citizens from neighboring socialist countries would travel to Poland in order to hitchhike legally and inexpensively.<sup>21</sup> The popularity of hitchhiking also crossed borders: in a 1965 interview for a youth magazine in Czechoslovakia, the head of the Czechoslovak Youth Organization (ČSM), Miroslav Zavadil, suggested

<sup>16</sup> “News from behind the Iron Curtain”, vol. 5, no. 1 (1956), p. 12.

<sup>17</sup> J. Feron, *Comecon’s Aim: More Integration*, NYT, 21 Jan. 1972, p. 17.

<sup>18</sup> W. Żukrowski, *A Shadow, like Green Water*, “Poland”, no. 84, 1961, p. 35.

<sup>19</sup> J. Czupryński, op. cit.

<sup>20</sup> While hitchhiking programs were eventually initiated in Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, and in some areas of the Soviet Union, they were generally short-lived. A. Wróblewski, *Autostopem po Polsce i Czechosłowacja* (Hitchhiking across Poland and Czechoslovakia), “Światowid”, no. 4, 1964, p. 9; cf. A. Wasilewicz, *Autostop? – Cudowna rzecz!* (Hitchhiking? Super!), “Światowid”, no. 11, 1964, p. 12, T. Rycerski, *Czymierch autostopu?* (Is It the End of Hitchhiking?), “Światowid”, no. 19, 1961, p. 21.

<sup>21</sup> *Autostop Gazeta Nr. 1* (Hitchhiking Gazette No. 1), “Dookoła Świata”, 6 July 1958, n.p.



that Czechoslovakia legalize hitchhiking, since, as he said, “there [were] already many positive experiences from Poland”.<sup>22</sup>

Despite this positive endorsement, regimes in the East were cautious when it came to adopting the Polish innovation in their own country. Even with official visits from youth group officials, not to mention representatives from and enthusiasts of the autostop program, authorities in Czechoslovakia and East Germany found the autostop movement objectionable for a variety of reasons, and refused to initiate or maintain a transnational hitchhiking program.

The first (but by no means primary,) reason autostop could never be initiated in East Germany or Czechoslovakia was pragmatic: the highways in both countries were not safe for hitchhikers. Poland, in contrast, only had “express roads” which, with their low speeds and broad shoulders, were more amenable to “thumbing”. Additionally, as opposed to Czechoslovakia and especially East Germany, authorities in Poland did not have to worry about hitchhikers finding a way to escape to the West.<sup>23</sup>

But the major reason why East German and Czechoslovak authorities did not approve of autostop was political: they considered any attempt at self-organization with greatest caution and suspicion.<sup>24</sup> While Polish hitchhikers were able to utilize successfully the relatively brief window of opportunity after Gomułka’s ascension to power, East German and Czechoslovak youngsters were forced to avoid cautiously drawing the attention of officials to this form of travel.

Ironically, it became ever-more difficult for youth organizations in East Germany and Czechoslovakia to create a state-sponsored autostop program due to the liberal reputation it had attained in Poland and in the West over the years.<sup>25</sup> Recognizing the program as ideologically questionable and logistically uncontrollable, East German and Czechoslovak officials would assure that Poland would remain an island of legalized hitchhiking.

## REACTIONS TO THE BORDERS OF FRIENDSHIP

When, in 1972, leaders decided to initiate “the Borders of Friendship”, and when the popularity of the open border project surpassed even officials’ highest

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<sup>22</sup> *Dvě hodiny u předsedy ÚV ČSM Miroslava Zavadila – devatenáct odpovědí na otázky mladého světa* (Two Hours with the President of the ÚV ČSM Miroslav Zavadil – Nineteen Answers to Questions of the Youths’ World), “Mladý svět”, no. 45, 1963, n.p. Cf. *Autostop ochorel* (Hitchhiking Fell Ill), “Smena”, vol. 18, no. 225 (19 Sept. 1965), n.p. Many thanks to Zdeněk Nebřenský for this reference.

<sup>23</sup> *Zentralrat der FDJ. 46 Sitzung des Sekretariats am 25 Mai 1972. Zum Tagesordnungspunkt Nr. 16. Betrifft: Standpunkt zu Fragen des “Autostop”.* (Central Council of the FDJ. 46 Meeting of the Secretariat on 25 May 1972. Concerning Topic 16 of the Day. Regarding: Position Concerning the Question of “Hitchhiking”.) Bundes Archiv Berlin (henceforth BArchB), DY/24/8475.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*; cf. also *Dvě hodiny u předsedy ÚV ČSM Miroslava Zavadila*, op. cit.

estimates, the press in the East was certain to enunciate and embrace the development as proof of the success of socialism. In Edward Gierek's published speech in Berlin at the Ninth Party Congress of the Socialist Unity Party (SED), open border policies were reported to have been "decided upon jointly", and was of "historical significance", since it "bound the peoples together". In return, first secretary of East Germany, Erich Honecker, praised having bound the "socialist neighbors", ushering in a "higher level" of "cooperation and co-existence".<sup>26</sup>

In the first year of the open border project, the number of travelers to and from member states were relatively proportional, suggesting to authorities that the project was equally successful in each country. Within a year's time, however, the ratio of travelers between Poles, Czechoslovaks, and East Germans going abroad was significantly weighed towards the People's Republic (see Tables 1-3). In and of itself, that would not be a problem. Nevertheless, as Western reporters to the open border project quickly noted, after nearly a generation of relatively liberal travel (starting with the legal hitchhiking program), Polish travelers were much more savvy, and knew how to utilize liberalized travel to their advantage. People were traveling abroad, but they were not necessarily promoting "international proletarianism"; instead, they were purchasing hard-to-find goods, exchanging currency on the black market, and traveling to non-communist countries, creating networks of informal markets.<sup>27</sup>

The Western press – overlooking the fact that, while Poles were traveling to East Germany and Czechoslovakia to buy goods, their counterparts' citizens were frequently pursuing the same "unorthodox pleasure" – took two different approaches to Poles' role in the "Borders of Friendship". Through allusion, reporters would first liken Polish consumers to crazed, almost animalistic consumers: "Millions of Poles swarmed into East Berlin and other cities to buy up whatever goods they could find".<sup>28</sup> The other approach the West had towards the mass movement of unorganized tourists abroad was to conclude that Poles were acting as pseudo freedom fighters; in ways not usually reported on, they were acting out against the shortage economy, upholding what was seen as the "natural" law of capitalism (namely, entrepreneurialism), and were challenging

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<sup>26</sup> *Protokoll der Verhandlungen des IX. Parteitages der Sozialistischen Einheitspartei Deutschlands* (Protocol of the Meeting of the Ninth Day of the Party of the Socialist Unity Party of Germany), vol. 1, Berlin 1973, pp. 1-3; cf. Communiqué from Horst Sindermann, op. cit.; S. Gersdorff, *Bei Freunden in Bydgoszcz* (With Friends in Bydgoszcz), ND, 3 June 1973, n.p.; Polska Agencja Prasowa (henceforth PAP), *Zakończenie wielkiego spotkania młodzieży Polski i NRD* (Conclusion of the Large Meeting of Polish and GDR Youth), TL, 31 May 1972, p. 1.

<sup>27</sup> This was by no means limited to small circles: everyone, it seems, knew of what to buy where, and, by 1974, officials in Poland estimated that approximately forty percent of gross imported goods came to the country on the "grey market". Cf. P. Sowiński, *Turystyka zagraniczna a czarny rynek w Polsce (1956-1989)* (Foreign Tourism and the Black Market in Poland (1956-1989), [in:] *Socjalizm w życiu powszednim: Dyktatura a społeczeństwo w NRD i PRL* (Socialism in Everyday Life: Dictatorship and Society in the GDR and People's Poland), ed. S. Kott, M. Kula and Th. Lindenberger, Wydawnictwo TRIO, Warszawa 2006, p. 193.

<sup>28</sup> *Gierek Troubled by New Accords*, NYT, 24 June 1973, p. 8.

state socialism in general. Poles were not “smuggling” as much as they were calculating “operations”.<sup>29</sup>

In the East, Czechoslovak and East German governments were chagrined at such behavior, and would hold top-secret meetings in order to discuss the actions of their third counterpart. Czechoslovak customs agents were discouraged at the fact that their Polish counterparts were acting too “liberally” when it came to controlling their borders. What made Poland’s travel robustness so problematic was that the East Germans, Czechs and Slovaks did not understand why they could not enjoy the same degree of liberalization as Poles.<sup>30</sup>

Hence, on the eve of the strikes which eventually led to the creation of Solidarity in Poland, East Germany and Czechoslovakia moved to restrict Poles’ freedom of movement. As of November 1980, Poles would need a written invitation, visa, and passport to move beyond her borders. The Polish press, understandably, exported responsibility to Berlin and Prague when reporting the closure.<sup>31</sup>

## CONCLUSION: THE MODERN STATE AND UNORGANIZED TOURISM

Poland’s approach to national and international tourism, as can be seen by these two examples (although many others can be listed), was markedly different than tourism politics in other East bloc countries.<sup>32</sup> Already in the mid-1950s, the regime was more open and willing to approve innovations in tourism; it was also consistently ‘raising the bar’ on the forms of travel open to their citizens.<sup>33</sup>

Today, on the twentieth anniversary of the fall of communism, it is important to interrogate commonplace perceptions of state socialism, which suggest that life behind the ‘Iron Curtain’ was uniformly restrictive and repressive. Of course, the communist state had more instruments at hand to repress dissident opinions, and it used these instruments far more frequently against its own population than other governments. It was also chronically inefficient eco-

<sup>29</sup> *East Germany and Poland Restore Currency Curbs*, NYT, 22 June 1980, p. 6.

<sup>30</sup> *Vermerk auf Ersuchen des Leiters der Zollverwaltung der CSSR* (Notes on the Request of the Head of the Customs Police of the CSSR), BArchB, DL 203 21-00-01, p. 3-4.

<sup>31</sup> PAP, Communiqué, TL, 31 October 1980 p.1.

<sup>32</sup> Cf. M. Majowski, op. cit.; P. Sowiński, *Wakacje*; M. Hartwich, *Das Riesengebirge als mehrfach angelegene Landschaft. Tourismus und Identität nach 1945* (The Great Mountains as Multiple Use Landscape: Tourism and Identity after 1945), unpublished PhD dissertation, Europa-Universität Viadrina (Frankfurt/Oder) 2010.

<sup>33</sup> Already in the mid-1970s, for example, the Polish tourist office Orbis was offering more trips to exotic destinations like Egypt and Syria than to the GDR. Cf. advertisements in “Światowid”, 13 Feb.1975, p. 2, and “Światowid”, 12 Mar. 1974, p. 2.

nominally, and refused to reform so as to streamline dated technologies and methods. Nevertheless, when analyzing areas beyond traditional historiography – that is, beyond international relations and upper-level politics – individual socialist states appear much more flexible and willing to reform.

Indeed, when it came to reports on tourism in Poland itself, reporters and journalists were, in contrast to their Eastern and the Western counterparts, remarkably candid and frequently biting in their critique. The lack of social solidarity led many hitchhikers, for example, to complain in the 1950s that despite socialist rhetoric, everyday people were actually quite unwilling to help their country's brethren get around. "In a country, where [...] everyone [was] only looking for 'greenbacks'", wrote one hitchhiker, one could not expect to be picked up; hitchhiking was a form of transportation which even peoples' republics could not bolster, at least according to the author, due to innate tendencies to expect "hard currency" for "any services" whatsoever.<sup>34</sup> Concerning the "Borders of Friendship", scholarly journals were open, on the one hand, about the doubts the public had towards a new population of German travelers ("if they could", concluded one inhabitant concerning the Germans, "they would take away our land again; one can see it in their eyes".)<sup>35</sup>

Poland was increasingly drawn to the economic nature of tourism. Not only was the tourism industry, *turystyka*, far-more developed in Poland than in other countries, but also officials came to understand that tourist travel was something which significantly aided the home economy. For that reason, to give just one example, the Autostop program was allowed to commence in the summer of 1981 and 1982: even while General Wojciech Jaruzelski, having introduced martial law in December 1981, was imprisoning thousands of Polish Solidarity activists (thereby creating an atmosphere of fear and restriction), the annual Autostop program – which consistently brought in returns to state coffers – was allowed to continue.

Poland's national tourism bureau, Orbis, still supported and offered organized tourist offerings, but it was also willing to deviate from normative examples in, for example, the Soviet Union or the GDR. Poland aimed at buttressing an industry which could compare to its counterpart socialist Yugoslavia, in Spain, or in Cuba. Understanding that supporting unorganized tourist offering would lead to greater profits at home, and that leniency towards their own citizens abroad could provide a safety valve, officials condoned unorganized (and non-ideological) travel. Ironically, the Western media consistently underlined the political nature of liberalized travel, and in so doing, converged with other

<sup>34</sup> *WIWAT-STOP!* (Autostop Lives!), "Dookoła Świata", 7 Sept. 1958, n.p.

<sup>35</sup> A. Kwilecki, *Badania socjologiczne na pograniczu Polski i NRD* (Sociological Study on the Border between Poland and the GDR), "Sprawy Międzynarodowe", no. 7-8 (1973), p. 145-146; A. Kwilecki, *Problematyka socjologiczna ruchu granicznego i kontaktów ludnościowych Polska-NRD* (Sociological Problems of Border Movement and Contact between the Peoples of Poland and the GDR), "Przegląd Zachodni", no. 4 (1974), p. 399-404.

East bloc countries in their understanding of the meaning of tourist travel. For their part, Poland's communist neighbors were hypersensitive towards any change to traditional notions of travel and tourism, and refused to adopt travel innovations.

In many ways, the effects of Poland's tourist innovations are clear. The autostop movement, for example, continued long after the transition to capitalism. Likewise, travel to foreign countries bolstered entrepreneurship after the transition to a free-market democracy. Socialist Poland's tourist industry, which went from insignificance in the 1940s only to gain prominence in central committee meetings behind closed doors in the 1970s and 1980s, was innovative, and managed to create a population accustomed to liberal, relatively non-ideological travel in an era best known for iron curtains and concrete walls.

## TABLES

Table 1. 1977 Foreign tourism: Arrivals from other Comecon countries.

From	GDR	Poland	CSSR	Hungary	Bulgaria	Romania
To the GDR	–	6,690,000 (39%)	2,000,000 (12%)	310,000 (2%)	103,000	17,243
To Poland	5,789,000 (55%)	–	2,182,000 (21%)	759,000 (7%)	84,000	42,000

Table 2. Foreign tourism: Arrivals in Poland from the GDR.

(Year) 1970	1972	1975	1976	1980	1981
(unreliable deviation, ca. 700,000)	6,619,107	5,752,000	4,257,000	3,784,000	1,522,000

Table 3. Foreign tourism: Arrivals in the GDR from Poland.

(Year) 1970	1972	1975	1976	1980	1981
539,000	10,033,901	6,112,000	5,607,000	3,403,000	371,000

Table 4. Foreign tourism: Arrivals in Poland.

(Year)	1970	1972	1973	1974	1975
Total	1,888,000	8,339,000	6,912,000	7,893,000	9,320,000
From Socialist Countries	1,610,000	7,964,000	6,350,000	7,221,000	8,553,000

1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981
9,623,000	10,545,000	10,695,000	9,131,000	7,080,000	2,172,000
8,839,000	9,611,000	9,712,000	8,115,000	6,205,000	1,594,000

Sources for Tables: BI KC PZPR 272 VI from 30 Oct. 1976, p. 19, HA. From 1955 to 1971, there were 9,032,200 reported travels outside of Polish territory. In 1972 alone, there were 10,600,000. See: Główny Urząd Statystyczny, *Rocznik Statystyczny* (Statistical Yearbook), Główny Urząd Statystyczny, Warszawa 1973-1987; Staatlichen Zentralverwaltung für Statistik, *Statistisches Jahrbuch der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik* (Statistical Yearbook of the German Democratic Republic), Staatlichen Zentralverwaltung für Statistik, Berlin 1972-1981; P. Sowiński, *Wakacje*, p. 287; N. Ropers, *Verständigung mit Polen durch Reisen und Kontakte?* (Understanding with Poland through Travel and Contact?), Grünewald, Mainz 1989, p. 112; D. R. Hall, ed., *Tourism and Economic Development in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union*, Halsted Press, New York 1986, p. 191.

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