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FOREIGN TOURISTS' VISITS TO POLAND IN 1980s

LES VISITES DES TOURISTES ÉTRANGERS  
EN POLOGNE DANS LES ANNÉES 1980

PRZYJAZDY TURYSTÓW ZAGRANICZNYCH DO POLSKI  
W LATACH OSIEMDZIESIĄTYCH

The statistical analysis of tourism into Poland should be preceded by a few introductory remarks concerning definitions and methodology, as they are of considerable importance when it comes to making comparisons between Polish data and the data from other countries. The term „foreign tourist” used in Polish statistics corresponds in fact to the term „a person arriving from abroad” recommended by the World Tourism Organisation (WTO). According to their definition, such a person is any person who comes to a country different from the one where he or she lives permanently, for various reasons except taking up a job payed for in this country<sup>1</sup>. The above definition refers to both the „tourists”, i.e., people who spend at least 24 hours or one night in the country they visit, and the „excursionists”, who do not meet this condition. Therefore in the Polish statistics foreign tourists are, practically speaking, all foreigners who cross the border of the country (with the exception of the people staying in the Polish borderland, who regularly commute to work<sup>2</sup>. This makes comparisons between countries difficult because in international statistics the group of „tourists” is clearly distinguished from the vast number of the „people arriving from abroad”, which, in the case of Poland is impossible.

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<sup>1</sup> *Provisional Guidelines on Statistics of International Tourism*, UN Publ. Sales N° E. 78 XVII 6.

<sup>2</sup> In: *Definicje podstawowych pojęć z zakresu turystyki*, „Zeszyty Metodyczne GUS” Warszawa 1979, nr 30.

Until the end of the 1980s the statistics of foreign tourists' arrivals was based on the division into socialist and non-socialist countries, which hardly comes to consideration nowadays. The range of the analysis of the arrivals cannot be the same at this point because there was no uniform statistical documentation. Only the citizens from western countries were asked to supply information about the purpose of their visit and to give the name of the place of their destination in Poland — only they were required to show border passes to the immigration officers. In 1989 the above policy was abandoned in regard to all foreigners, so information about purposes of their visits and their territorial distribution ceased in 1988.

In the 1970s, particularly in the second half of the decade, Poland's tourist exchange with other countries was developing extremely well. In that period five times more foreign tourists arrived in Poland than before, most of them coming from socialist countries, mainly from East Germany. Such a large increase in arrivals in Poland was possible owing to the liberalization of the formalities connected with crossing the border between Poland and other socialist countries (except USSR and Albania). The identity card was a sufficient document to enter Polish territory and visa requirements between Poland and Sweden, Finland and Austria were lifted.

Regression in tourist arrivals in Poland came in 1980, when the figures dropped by 20.3% compared to the previous year. It was due to a difficult political situation in the world, caused by the war in Afghanistan and the boycott of the Olympic Games in Moscow, as well as by massive strikes in Poland. Tourist exchange came to a virtual standstill in December 1981, when martial law was imposed in Poland. Severe limitations put on arrivals in Poland meant suspending the agreements with socialist countries about the privileges in travel to Poland as well as introducing visas for the citizens of all other countries. In 1982 the number of arrivals from the socialist countries to Poland dropped by 83.6% compared to 1980. At the same time the number of arrivals from western countries decreased by 66.6%.

In 1983 the number of foreign tourists coming to Poland started to grow gradually, with the exception of 1986 — the year of Chernobyl disaster, when there were less visitors from western countries. In 1989 the numbers reached 8.2 million, i.e. 16.3% more than in 1980. Between 1983 and 1989 the average annual rate of the increase of arrivals was 28.7%.

Tourists from East Germany, who constituted over a half (54.8%) of the total number of the people coming to Poland, were in the lead as far as arrivals from the socialist countries in 1980 were concerned. But

Table I

Foreign tourists' arrivals in Poland 1980—1989 (in thousands)

Visites des touristes étrangers en Pologne dans les années 1980—1989 (en milliers)

Years	Total number of arrivals	Dynamism of arrivals 1980 = 100.0	Arrivals from	
			socialist countries	other countries
1980	7,079.0	100.0	6,205.3	873.7
1981	2,171.6	30.7	1,596.3	575.3
1982	1,404.0	19.8	1,015.8	388.2
1983	2,402.1	33.9	1,759.5	642.6
1984	2,997.1	42.3	2,235.2	761.9
1985	3,436.2	48.5	2,650.1	786.1
1986	3,848.2	54.4	3,105.3	742.9
1987	4,776.4	67.5	3,834.2	942.2
1988	6,195.6	87.5	5,092.1	1,103.5
1989	8,232.6	116.3	6,644.8	1,587.8

Source: GUS (Central Bureau of Statistics) data.

Table II

Arrivals of tourists from socialist countries in Poland 1980—1989 (in thousands)

Visites en Pologne des touristes des anciens pays socialistes dans les années  
1980—1989 (par pays)

Country	1980	1982	1985	1987	1989
Total	6,205.3	1,015.8	2,650.1	3,834.2	6,644.8
including:					
Bulgaria	67.4	12.4	34.9	47.8	55.3
Czechoslovakia	1,549.0	203.5	561.3	992.9	1,502.6
East Germany	3,403.1	262.0	716.5	925.1	1,194.8
Romania	39.8	10.4	79.7	27.8	18.8
USSR	716.8	465.3	930.9	1,166.3	2,899.1
Yugoslavia	87.1	13.0	94.4	186.6	248.0

Source: GUS data.

in that year the number of arrivals from the USSR was growing gradually and in 1989 the majority of tourists in Poland came from there (43,6%). Among the people coming from western countries between 1980 and 1989 the citizens of West Germany constituted the majority (1980 — 34,6%; 1989 — 40,9%).

The seasonal character of foreign tourists' arrivals in Poland has always been very stable. The arrivals in the third quarter of the year

Table III

Arrivals of tourists from western countries in Poland 1980—1989 (in thousands)  
Visites en Pologne des touristes des pays occidentaux dans les années 1980—1989  
(par pays)

Country	1980	1982	1985	1987	1989
Total	837.7	388.2	786.1	942.2	1 587.8
including:					
Austria	37.5	17.4	29.6	37.9	75.5
France	68.8	31.5	44.2	54.2	74.8
USA	39.8	13.1	43.6	50.8	96.3
West Germany with West Berlin	302.2	133.4	321.3	380.4	649.6
Great Britain	38.5	14.5	26.2	33.4	46.4
Italy	34.7	11.7	23.4	34.6	59.7
Scandinavia	142.0	56.7	105.1	102.2	227.0

Source: GUS data.

Table IV

The seasonal character of foreign tourists' arrivals to Poland — 1980—1989 (percentage of arrivals in the third quarter of the year against the total number of arrivals throughout the whole year)

Saisonnalité des visites en Pologne des touristes étrangers (part des visites en 3<sup>e</sup> trimestre dans le total des visites pendant toute l'année) dans les années 1980—1989

Specification	1980	1982	1985	1987	1989
Total	45	40	39	40	39
including:					
socialist countries	46	39	40	40	39
other countries	39	44	38	40	39

Source: Author's calculations based on GUS data:

(July, August, September) made up 39—40% of the total number of arrivals throughout the whole year. Only in 1980 this percentage was slightly higher — 45%.

Between 1980 and 1989 there were considerable changes in arrivals as far as means of transport at different border crossing points are concerned. Tourists from the socialist countries started using trains more



often than cars. On the other hand, tourists from other countries started travelling less by train or plane in favour of the car.

Table V

Division of foreign tourists' arrivals in Poland according to different means of transport crossing the border (in %)

Structure des visites en Pologne des touristes étrangers par moyen de transport utilisé passer la frontière (en %)

Kinds of border crossing points	Socialist countries		Other countries	
	1980	1989	1980	1989
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
including:				
rail	21.5	45.0	17.3	10.6
road	76.7	54.4	44.5	61.6
airports	1.3	1.4	25.8	17.9
sea	0.5	0.2	12.4	9.9

Source: Author's calculations based on GUS data.

As it has already been mentioned, until 1989 information about purposes of visits was required only from the tourists coming from western countries. Therefore the analysis of arrivals according to their purposes must be limited to this group of countries only and to the year 1988 inclusive.

Table VI

Division of arrivals of tourists from western countries to Poland according to their purposes 1980—1989 (in %)

Structure des visites en Pologne des touristes des pays occidentaux d'après le but de leur arrivée dans les années 1980—1989 (en %)

Specification	1980	1986	1988
Total number of arrivals	100.0	100.0	100.0
purposes:			
transit	9.5	12.8	9.7
tourism	39.4	29.2	35.2
private	26.4	30.1	20.2
business	17.2	10.6	17.0
other	7.5	17.3	17.9

Source: Author's calculations based on GUS data.

Foreigners come to Poland mainly for tourism, then for private visits and, lastly, on business. The division of arrivals according to purposes in 1988 is very similar to that in 1980, which proves its stability. At the time of crisis in tourism in Poland after the introduction of martial law, the number of arrivals for tourism decreased. With time, however, the purposes of arrivals went back to previous proportions.

Foreign tourists' arrivals in Poland between 1980 and 1989 went through significant quantitative and structural changes. The economic crisis in Poland, as well as political tensions in the world in the years 1980—1982, and the contamination of a part of Polish territory after the Chernobyl disaster in 1986 have proved that international tourism can be affected by many different factors.

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