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**Nomads and rangers  
of Central and Eastern  
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# **NOMADS AND RANGERS OF CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPE**

**Krystyna Iglicka**

### **ABSTRACT\***

Paper describes and analyses the phenomenon of shuttle mobility from the countries of the former Soviet Union into Poland during the decade after the collapse of the communist system. It is emphasized that along with the development of the network and institutions created by both pendular migrants and receiving societies this kind of mobility transforms slowly into migration. It is proposed to consider pendulum movements as an ephemeral population phenomenon of the transition period in the CEE region. The term primitive mobility is introduced. Both official statistics and results of the surveys on the Polish eastern border and in Warsaw agglomeration were used in this study.

There were many factors initiating migration but probably never in a history of a mankind pioneers were petty-traders. This happens in Central Europe after a decade of the collapse of the communism. The aim of this paper is to describe and analyse the phenomenon of shuttle mobility from countries of the former USSR into Central Europe (Poland particularly) during the transition period. Furthermore it will emphasise that along with the penetration of central European markets by pendular migrants and along with the development of network and institutions created by them shuttle mobility transforms slowly into migration.

Political, social and economic transformation which took place in CEE region after 1989 influenced also the changes in the mechanisms and patterns of migration and shuttle mobility is one of the best examples of the mutations in population movements. The mass scale and the character of this mobility have taken anyone by surprise. The mass presence of foreigners in Poland (primarily foreigners from countries that used to be a part of the Soviet Union) in the context of the expansion of NATO and European Union has created both dilemma and challenges for European and Polish migration policies.

Both official statistical data and survey findings were used in this study. The paper reports some of the results of the original empirical research 'The economics of the petty-trade on the Eastern Polish border'<sup>1</sup> carried out by the author in 1995 and 'Immigrants in Poland'<sup>2</sup> conducted by the Center of Migration Research at the Institute for Social Studies of the University of Warsaw in 1996.

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According to the general typology of migration there are five broad classes of migration, designated as primitive, forced, impelled, free and mass (Petersen, 1966, p: 54). Contemporary Europe experiences all but one of them. Primitive migration which, denotes a movement related to man's inability to cope with natural forces, shortage of food or water is not visible.

I would like to point out here that the kind of shuttle mobility experienced by CEE after the collapse of the communism, characteristic for transition period, and in my opinion ephemeral, may be to some extent classified as primitive migration since (simplifying) it

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<sup>1</sup> This study was carried out thanks to the financial support of the Research Support Scheme grant no: 539/94 at the University for Open Societies in Prague.

was a shortage of basic goods for living that initiated this process. In other words, the attention is paid to the fact that when systems collapse very old and forgotten types of demographic and social behaviours may revive with a new strength. Because however, these old-new mobility behaviours fail to fulfil two basic criteria usually inherent in the definition of migration, i.e. the legality (or registrability) of flow and a minimum (intended or actual) duration of stay (or permission to stay over certain time-span) I suggest here to consider the term primitive mobility rather than primitive migration.

The fall of the communist system and the slow sometimes painful birth of the new one have generated phenomena which were completely unexpected both by people and governments in West, Central and East European countries, namely the new spatial mobility of people of the former Soviet bloc countries. At the beginning this mobility was perceived mainly as a threat. Then it turned out to have many positive effects. As Morokvasic and de Tinguy have pointed out at the beginning of 1990s;

‘The most characteristic of the post 1989 migrations, and the least known in the West, are the circulatory migrations or commuting of tourists; these involve various types of income-generating activities, mostly trading. They existed on a limited scale before the rise of the iron curtain. These ‘tourists’ stay for periods ranging from several hours to several months. Given their visibility on street corners and markets, these movements nourish fears of invasion among Central Europeans’ (Morokvasic, de Tinguy; 1993, pp. 253-4).

These unexpected geographic population movements recorded in statistics on border traffic shows that the number of arrivals of foreigners to Poland between 1989 and 1999 grew more than 10 times (from 8.2 millions to 88.6 millions) (see table 1). It is clear that the increase in the spatial movement of foreigners across Poland’s borders was far more dramatic than it was for Poles (Iglicka, forthcoming). The influx of foreigners from Germany and the former Soviet Union has been largely responsible for this growth. However, only a small percentage of the flow from Germany can be perceived as migration since people arriving from there are mainly tourists.

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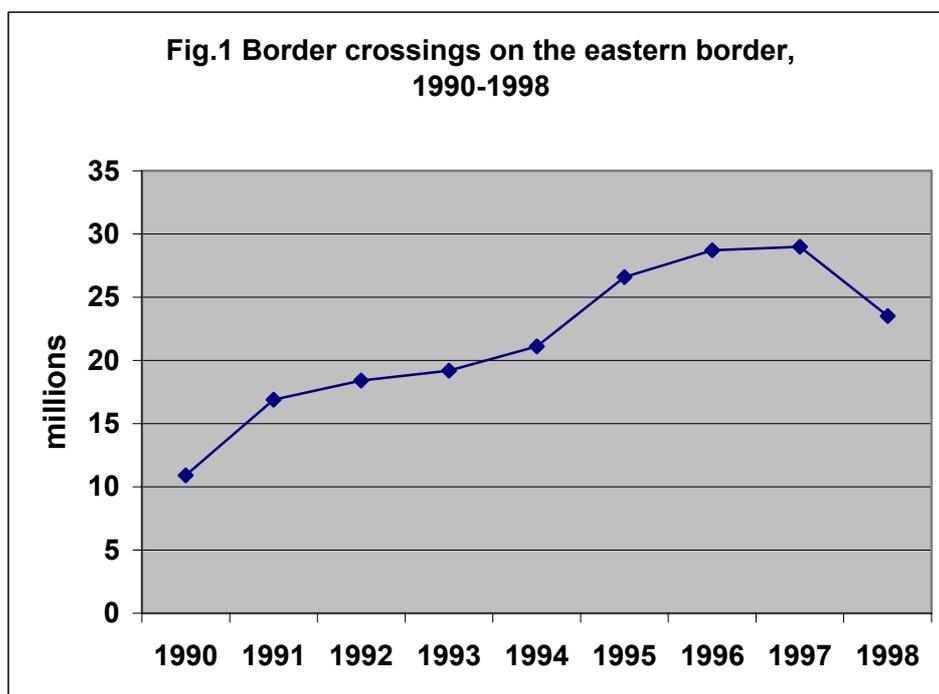
<sup>2</sup> This project was ordered by the Ministry of the Interior and financially supported by the Polish Scientific Committee.

**Table 1.** Departure of Poles and Arrivals of Foreigners (in millions), 1985-1996

Year	Departures of Poles			Arrivals of Foreigners			Ratio of Departures to Arrivals
	Actual number	1985 = 100	Previous year = 100	Actual number	1985 = 100	Previous year = 100	
1985	6.3	100	-	3.4	100	-	188
1986	7.3	114	114	3.8	113	113	191
1987	8.5	133	116	4.7	139	123	179
1988	9.9	155	116	6.2	182	131	159
1989	19.3	302	195	8.2	241	133	235
1990	22.1	346	114	18.2	534	231	121
1991	20.8	325	94	36.8	1080	202	56
1992	29.3	458	141	49.0	1437	133	60
1993	31.4	491	107	60.9	1787	124	52
1994	34.3	535	109	74.4	2178	122	46
1995	36.1	573	105	82.2	2414	110	44
1996	43.5	690	124	87.5	2573	108	49
1997	48.6	771	111	87.8	2582	100	55
1998	49.3	782	101	88.6	2605	101	55

Source: Central Statistical Office, various years (own calculations).

As far as numbers of visitors from the former Soviet Union are concerned in 1989 fewer than 3 million of them entered Poland. Their number more than doubled the next year and continued to grow up to more than 14 million in the peak year 1997 (Stola, forthcoming a). In January 1998 Polish authorities complying with commitments arising from the forthcoming EU enlargement changed the Aliens Law<sup>3</sup> and regulations on documents for entry to Poland. This immediately affected movements from Belarus and Russia as Ukraine and Lithuania had signed new agreements on visa-free movement with Poland. With new, more strict entry regulations<sup>4</sup> and the Russian crisis in 1998 the numbers dropped; to date (mid-1999) this trend has not reversed (Stola, forthcoming b).



<sup>3</sup> Alien Law is a comprehensive document that regulates: 1) entry, exit, transit and residence of foreign nationals; 2) activities of the state and competence of various government agencies with relation to migration; 3) rights of foreigners in accordance to the international standards; 4) repatriation of ethnic Poles (Stachanczyk 1998, Jagielski 1997).

<sup>4</sup> Citizens from the former USSR do not need visa in order to visit Poland. They still benefit from the old Polish-Soviet agreement signed in 1979. According to this agreement the only requirement to enter Poland is a voucher and an invitation from a Polish citizen. Till 1998 these were possible to buy for few dollars at kiosks on eastern border. The more strict policy means that Border Guard started to control whether the required documents are not false and whether the tourists hold a required, minimal quota of money.

Citizens of the former Soviet Union do not come to Poland to enjoy recently obtained freedom of movement. Most movements are a side effect of a sick post-Soviet economy and take a form of 'shuttle' mobility which lasts from 3 to 7 days and is mainly for the purpose of trade. The remainder comes to work.

There were two big waves in the 'history' of petty-trading from the East into Central Europe. At the beginning of the 1990s people arriving from the former Soviet Union came to Poland in order to sell cheap and poor quality goods from their home countries. They returned with hard currency i.e. dollars or German marks. In 1993 when the price relation between Poland and the former Soviet Union changed they started to buy goods in Poland. Massive purchases of goods have been made, mainly of clothing, shoes and electronic equipment and these are later sold at a profit in the home countries (Iglicka, forthcoming).

**Table 2.** The value of expenditures made by foreigners from neighbouring states in Poland, 1994-1996

Country	1994 (in mln PLN*)	1995 (in mln PLN*)	1996 (in mln PLN*)
Belarus	456.9	778.1	1184.7
Czech Republic	421.2	512.5	870.7
Germany	3628.2	4470.1	4965.6
Lithuania	116.4	130.7	118.8
Russia	109.2	84.0	138.9
Slovakia	133.7	160.3	251.3
Ukraine	317.8	578.2	1248.9

\* 1 US\$ = 2.9 - 3.4 PLN

Source: Ruch graniczny i wydatki cudzoziemców w Polsce, 1994-1996, 1997.

Besides an easy access to Polish territory, migrants have also a relatively easy access to Poland's informal labour market (Stola, forthcoming b). An estimate made on the basis of a survey conducted in Ukraine and Poland in 1995 suggests that there may be more than 500,000 Ukrainians who during travelling to Poland work illegally. A great majority of them

are petty-traders who as a side effect of their trade activities engage in a various, usually very short work contracts<sup>5</sup> (Okólski, 1998). According to the Polish Ministry of Labour and Social Policy's estimates there are about 100,000 –150,000 foreigners working illegally each year in Poland (Informal Labour Market, 1995). Majority of them comes from the 'East'. Although, according to that estimate, a substantial proportion of those people are seasonal workers, it probably omits foreigners who were employed for a very short period of time, e.g. for two weeks or shorter (Okólski, 1998).

There were three major factors that contributed to the rapid expansion of spatial mobility of rangers and nomads into Central Europe. We may list them here as: 1) the economic crisis in the countries of the former Soviet Union which caused tremendous shortages of basic products to live; 2) overvalued and artificially maintained by the governments exchange rate between dollar and ruble and, 3) an easy access to the West (Poland).

As it was mentioned before there were many positive sides of this flux. For several years, citizens of the former Soviet Union visiting Poland to shop fostered local economic growth. Foreign demand for textile and leather products was one of the main factors, for instance, behind the boom in the growth of small, private textile and shoe businesses (Okólski, 1996). A very good example of the 'international petty-trade' arising in Poland since the beginning of 1990s is the example of the Warsaw Bazaar (Sword, 1999). With growing participation of foreigners from the East (not only citizens of the former SU but Asians as well – almost 60 per cent of customers at the fair are foreigners), the bazaar turned into a huge, predominantly textile-oriented market place. In 1995 the estimated turnover was more than US\$ 500 million and this made the bazaar one of the biggest Polish enterprises from the point of view of the turnover. The Warsaw Bazaar gives employment to over 6,500 people. Caution estimates show that at least 3,000 are foreigners (Kozłowski, 1999). But altogether the Warsaw Bazaar activities (including factories supplying the fair) give employment to as many as 60,000 people (Okólski, 1996, p.16). The other important

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<sup>5</sup> The estimate for 1995 shows that migrants with valid work permits constituted only 0.2 per cent of that figure (Okolski, 1998).

fact is that the Warsaw Bazaar and other bazaars created for needs of traders from the East are considered to be a schooling and a first leg on the ladder for would-be entrepreneurs from the former USSR who will go on and create more orthodox and established businesses (Sword, 1999, p. 165).

When new, more strict policy regulations towards the flux from the East were introduced in January 1998 sales at big bazaars in eastern and central Poland declined dramatically. This immediately caused a heavy lobbying of Polish traders and manufacturers who made Polish government reconsider certain regulations (Stola, forthcoming a). As a result the costs of tourists' vouchers and a required at the entrance to Poland minimal quota of money were lowered.

As far as negative effects of the mass presence of foreigners from the former USSR are concerned one can observe a new and dangerous phenomenon – crime. And this is mainly crime committed on foreigners by foreigners. Visitors from the former SU arrive in Poland not with credit cards or checks, but with cash. They are an easy target for criminals who, for the most part are also citizens of the former USSR (Iglicka, forthcoming). Statistics depicting crime amongst foreigners do not indicate a big scale phenomenon<sup>6</sup> but they do indicate a growing trend in most serious crimes (including armed robbery and homicides) committed especially by Ukrainians. Thus, whereas in 1992, citizens of the former USSR comprised 17.5% of all foreigners who were charged with a crime and faced judicial proceedings, in 1993 they made up 65.5% of which 10-20 per cent were serious crimes. These tendency was maintained between 1994 and 1997, whereas in 1998 it increased to 70% (Iglicka, forthcoming).

Contrary to other national groups entering Poland from the East it may be legitimately claimed that a bulk of persons holding Belarussian, Russian or Ukrainian passport arrested on illegal crossing of Polish border might had been involved in any kind of illegal transborder activity but trafficking. As a matter of fact, with an importance exception of people from Moldova the incidence of apprehensions of foreigners from neighbouring countries was on decline (Okólski, 1998). As far as migrants believed to be major clients of traffickers are concerned, table 4 shows the respective numbers.

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<sup>6</sup> Official annual police registers indicate that the number of crimes committed by foreigners in relation to the total number of foreigners entering Poland is rather low. Police registers record approximately 20,000 judicial proceedings concerning crimes committed by foreigners yearly. The reason is simple: someone living illegally, working illegally and/or conducting business illegally is not likely to file a report with the police if he/she is attacked and robbed.

**Table 3.** Purchases made by foreigners at the Polish Bazaars

Bazaar	Foreign Customers (% of Turnover)	Of which wholesale (%)	Amount (in mln PLN based on 1996 turnover)*
Kostrzyn	93	0	112 (9)
Cedynia	93	0	150 (8)
Ślubice	92	0	175 (7)
Cieszyn	91	0	46 (14)
Swinoujście	88	0	62 (12)
Legnica	87	0.1	348 (4)
Białystok	83	22	432 (3)
Gubin	82	0	90 (10)
Zgorzelec	80	0	72 (11)
Przemysł	67	10	60 (13)
Warsaw	58	32	870 (1)
Tuszyn	31	29	589 (2)
Rzgów	24	14	204 (6)
Gluchów	19	19	238 (5)
Kraków	1	0	13 (15)

\*1 US\$ = 3.4 PLN

Source: Institute of Research on Market Economy, 1996, Selected Aspects of Functioning of "The European Fair" in the Stadion X-lecia in Warsaw.

**Table 4.** Trafficked foreigners detained on the borders (major national groups), 1995-1996

Country of origin	1995	1996	Increase (per cent)
Moldova	639	1,067	67.0
Armenia	1356	1010	-25.5
Afghanistan	459	867	88.9
Iraq	372	626	68.3
Sri Lanka	201	609	203.0
India	772	484	-37.3
Pakistan	257	443	72.4
Bangladesh	118	219	85.6

Source: Okólski, 1998, p. 18.

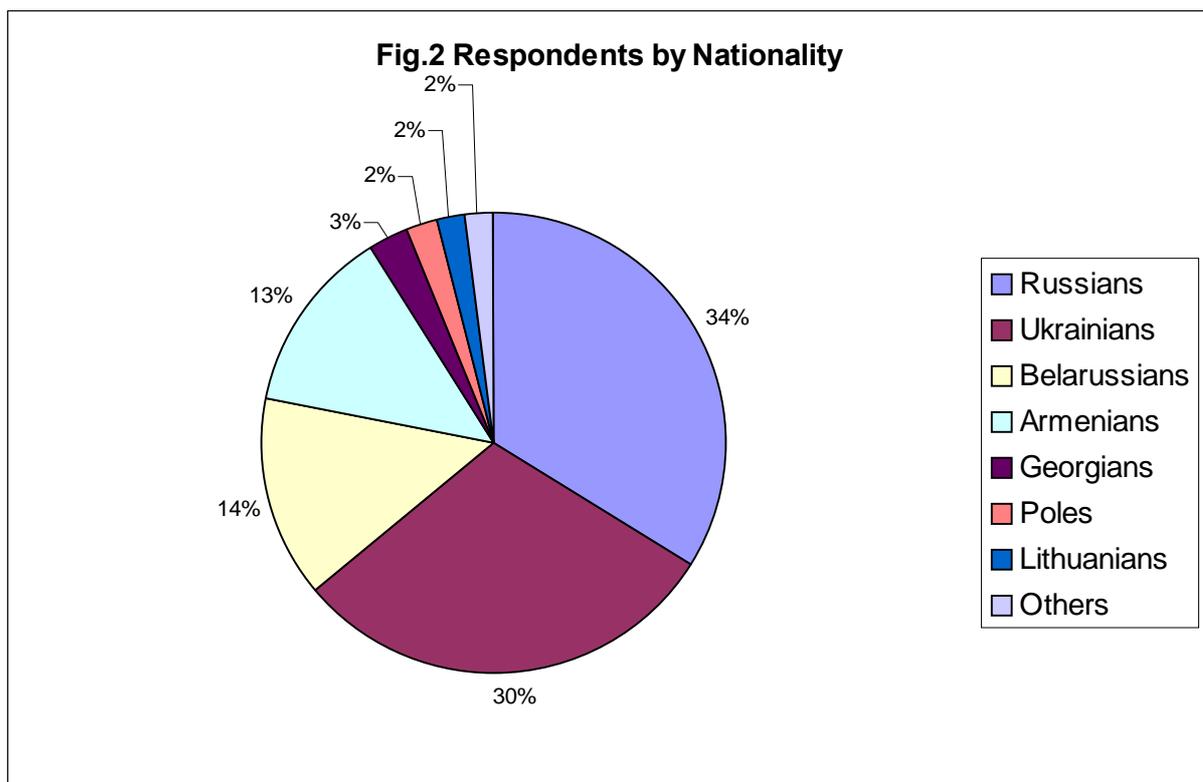
In 1996 local administrative units issued 5,087 decisions to expel foreigners whose stay in Poland was considered unwanted by the authorities. This meant a 59 per cent increase in relation to the previous year. Here persons from the former USSR constituted the majority. The leading nationalities were namely: Ukrainian, Armenian, Bulgarian, Romanian, Bangladesh, Indian, Sri Lanka, Belarussian, Moldovian, Pakistan and Russian (Okólski, 1998).

According to Okólski (1998, p. 18) on the basis of readmission agreements with neighbouring countries Poland expelled over 2,400 foreigners (of whom 1,860 to Ukraine, 383 to Lithuania and 178 to Russia). In comparison to previous year expulsions to these three countries increased by around 43 per cent (between 1994 and 1996 by 182 per cent).

This general picture of trends in shuttle mobility into Poland was studied more thoroughly in some surveys. First survey was conducted in summer 1995 at the two biggest border's crossing points i.e. Terespol and Medyka on the eastern Polish border and had almost exclusively a quantitative character. The questionnaire was applied to a random sample of 792 citizens from the former USSR of which women constituted the majority (56

per cent). Although interview sample included a large number of well educated people (11 per cent of the total sample was of completed post secondary education level and 19 per cent was of post secondary not completed) more than 60 per cent of respondents described themselves as unemployed. Closer questioning revealed that being out of work was often a matter of a personal choice and a strategy for living, since respondents felt that commuting between borders is more financially worthwhile.

The occupational cross-section of both employed and unemployed taken as a whole showed that the largest single group was formed by engineers (16 per cent), followed by teachers (10 per cent). Monthly salaries declared by the respondents were between US\$ 25 and US\$ 230. This depended on profession and a country of origin. In comparison to this, net profits from one travel to Poland amounted to 40-50 per cent of the expenditures on goods and were on average US\$ 790 (for the sub-sample of women) and US\$710 (for the sub-sample of men) (Iglička, 1999).



The interview sample consisted of respondents of nine nationalities inhabiting nine different countries (see figure 2). Russians and Ukrainians were the most visible groups (34 per cent and 30 per cent respectively). They were followed by Belarussians (14 per cent) and Armenians (13 per cent). Other nationalities constituted 3 or 2 per cent of the sample. As far as the place of residence is concerned two trends were visible. Firstly, respondents from regions located close to the Polish border constituted a very large element of the sample secondly respondents from big cities were also frequently met.

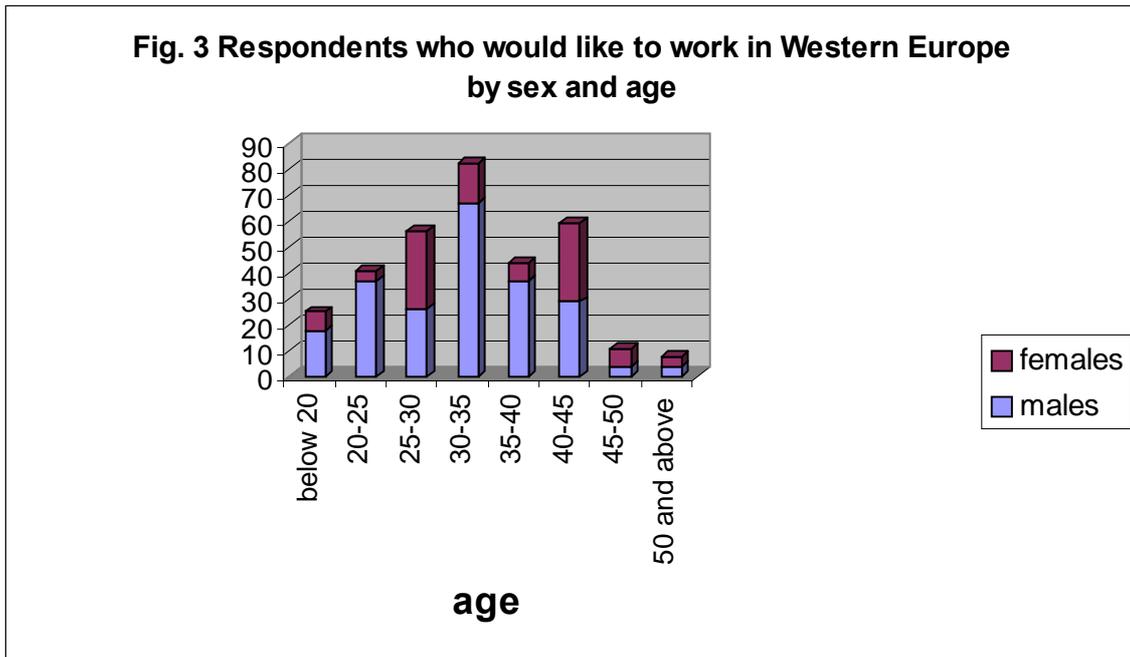
For 70 per cent of the respondent the primary aim of the current trip was to trade, for 15 per cent it was to seek employment. Petty-traders were mainly women, whereas among job-seekers men prevailed significantly. In statistical terms the analysis of frequency of visits to Poland by the respondents showed a strong right-hand asymmetry of distribution, since the average number of visits amounted to 13.35 while median was 5 and dominant 1. Therefore the strategy of spatial mobility employed by former Soviet citizens was characterised by a high frequency of movement which made the gap between monthly salary and monthly profit even wider (Iglicka, 1999).

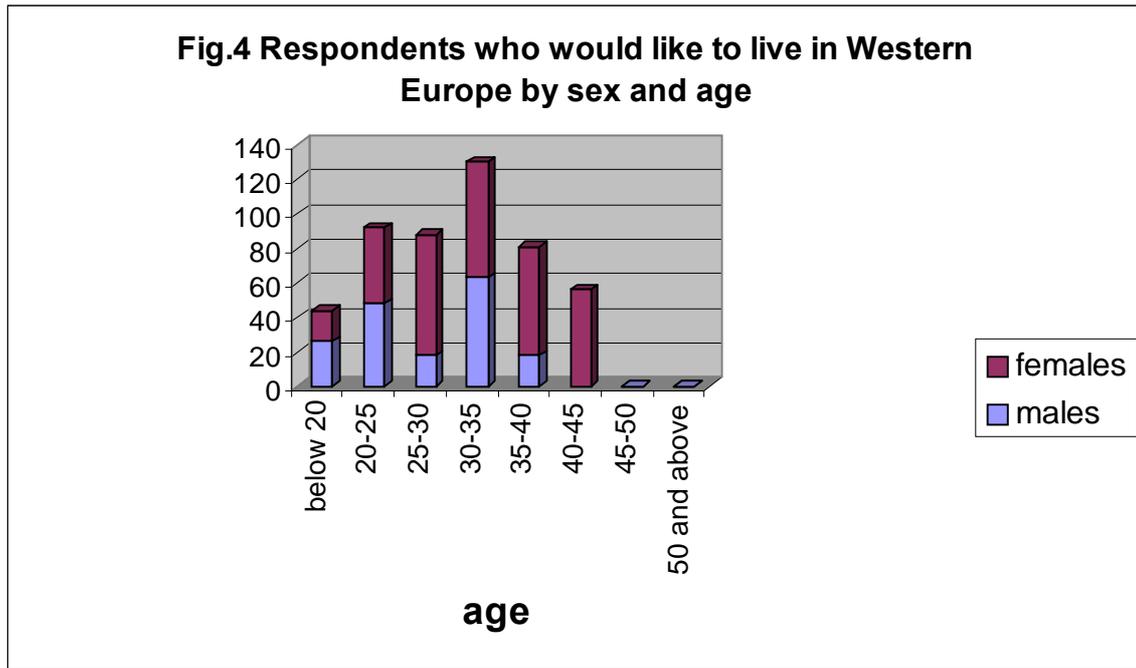
‘I am a neuropathologist and love my job, which I do not want to leave. However, my salary is not enough to live. That is why on Fridays after work I take bus and with my bags full of goods I go to Poland. Early on Saturday morning I am already at the bazaar, and in the evening Sunday I am back at home. The income is small but allows me to keep my head above the water for a while’ (Khomra, 1994, p.147).

Some developments in the strategy of shuttle mobility were already observed in the survey. Some respondents who at the beginning of 1990s treated petty-trade as a temporary means of making a living found a legal employment in their home countries (set up firms based on the trade network connections in Poland). In some other cases the strategy of shuttle mobility led to permanent employment (illegal) in the Polish-Belarussian, Polish-Russian or Polish-Ukrainian black markets.

The results of the survey did not indicate that Poland was perceived by the respondents as a destination area. They perceived it rather as a very good area for ‘learning about being abroad’, conducting and building up businesses and, perhaps most important, building up networks, which in the future may let them infiltrate the grey economic zones of Western Europe (Iglicka, 1999).

As many as 51 per cent of the respondents expressed their intention to work in the Western Europe. Here males predominated slightly (see figure 3) whereas among 62 per cent of respondents who wanted to settle abroad females were in majority (see figure 4).





Generally speaking well-educated respondents preferred to work abroad and less-educated respondents preferred to settle there (Iglicka, 1999). The interdependence between education level and attitudes towards working abroad (Western Europe) showed a moderate dependence (Cramer coefficient  $V = 0.347$ ) whereas the interdependence between education of the respondents and willingness to settle in Western Europe was rather weak ( $V = 0.297$ ).

The second study, which was conducted by the Center of Migration Research of Warsaw University in 1996 pertained to the much smaller quota-target sample comprising 156 unregistered 'migrants' in Warsaw agglomeration only<sup>7</sup>. These were foreigners working in Poland or generating income from conducting trade or providing services without any official documents permitting them to do so. Due to a lack of means of carrying a random sample and due to a lack of credible data, the criteria concerning proportions of respondents by origin, sex and activities conducted by the respondents, were established by researchers. It was decided that approximately 80 per cent of the respondents should consist of citizens

<sup>7</sup> There were in fact three categories of foreigners who were studied in this project. These were: foreigners with permanent residence permit (102 respondents), foreigners with visa with work permit (102 respondents) and 'unregistered' immigrants i.e. petty-traders or seasonal workers without any official documents enabling them to work or to trade (156 respondents). In this paper I describe the findings from the third sample only.

of the former USSR, women were to comprise 40 per cent and no less than half of the respondents were to be persons working in Poland (Jazwinska, 1997a).

Findings from this survey confirmed some of the results of the survey conducted on the border. Very young (up to 24 years of age) and young people significantly dominated among the respondents. Persons with secondary education prevailed since they constituted more than 45 per cent of the sample. More than 80 per cent of the interviewees came from big cities. The most common reason for which respondents came to Poland was ‘the example set by the acquaintances’ (40 per cent) and possibility of earning well (32 per cent).

**Table 5.** Respondents according to reason for coming to Poland (%)

Reason	Respondents (%)
Previous trip(s) to Poland	4.6
Close proximity	19.2
Inexpensive transportation	8.6
Easy to obtain documents	3.9
Following the example set by the others	40.0
Easy to find work	7.9
Possibility of earning well	31.6
Standard of living in Poland	7.9
Poor situation in country of origin	5.9
Other	7.2
Absolute number	156

Source: Jazwinska, 1997b.

Contrary to the findings from the border survey more than 20 per cent of the interviewees responded that they plan to stay for ‘more than a year’, ‘as long as possible’ or ‘permanently’ in Poland. Many respondents in this survey expressed they desire to work in the West but added that this was not possible because of the difficulties in obtaining visa.

**Table 6.** Respondents according to plans for remaining in Poland (%)

Duration of stay	Respondents (%)
Several days	18.0
1-2 months	9.1
A month or two	11.0
Several months	18.5
Approximately a year	3.1
Several years	3.9
As long as possible	12.0
Permanently	4.2
Hard to say	20.1
Absolute numbers	156

Source: Jazwinska, 1997b.

This may indicate that some respondents, and especially those with already established network and connections in Poland, having realised restrictions in West European policy towards mobility from the 'East', consider possibility of long-term or permanent emigration to Poland. This may also mean that in the second half of 1990s primitive mobility converts into typical migration in Central European buffer zone.

Also official statistical data indicates an increasing tendency of people from the former USSR applying for permanent residence permit (PRP) and work permits. Although it is not possible to prove that these are just the people who started arriving in Poland as petty-traders, the mass character of shuttle mobility inclines me to the assumption that many of them did.

According to the official data since the beginning of 1990s a growing trend in application for permanent residence permit (PRP) has been noticeable. If we look at the nationality of foreigners granted this permit we see that the most numerous nationalities

come from the East and especially from countries of the former Soviet Union; Ukraine, Russia and Kazakhstan. However, the increased numbers of people who arrived from Kazakhstan reflects the flow of ethnic Poles who thanks to the repatriation resolution issued by the Polish government in 1996 obtained rights to migrate to Poland. Polish communities in Soviet Union (and especially in Kazakhstan) were a result of post-war border changes and earlier forced migration reaching as far back as to the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

**Table 7.** Foreigners granted the permanent residence permit (PRP) in Poland according to the most numerous nationalities, 1993-1998 (%)

Country	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998
Ukraine	15	21	19	22	23	24
Russia	11	12	11	10	8	7
Belarus	7	6	7	7	8	7
Germany	5	5	6	5	4	4
Vietnam	4	4	7	9	8	10
Kazakhstan	1	2	8	8	15	10
Lithuania	3	3	2	3	2	2
Armenia	1	2	2	2	2	5
Total (absolute numbers)	1964	2457	3051	2844	3973	1567

Source: Poland – statistical data on migration 1994-1998, 1999.

Since 1990 there has also been an increasing influx of foreigners arriving into Poland to work. Local, voivod Labour Offices have issued yearly 10,000 to 15,000 work permits for foreigners working for Polish employers. Those employed legally came from 93 countries and included all continents. Again there has been observed a considerable predominance of citizens of the new states that were formerly a part of the Soviet Union.

**Table 8.** Visas with work permit granted in 1994-1998 by most numerous nationalities (%)

Country	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998
Ukraine	13.0	14.0	15.8	15.2	13.1
Vietnam	11.0	13.0	14.6	17.8	15.1
Russia	8.5	7.5	7.6	6.5	5.6
USA	7.0	7.0	6.0	5.3	4.1
China	7.8	7.0	7.8	6.5	6.7
Great Britain	7.0	7.0	6.0	5.0	5.0
Belarus	5.0	3.5	3.0	3.3	4.0
Germany	4.6	5.0	6.0	6.0	5.5
Total (absolute numbers)	8690	9057	7019	8978	10505

Source: Poland – statistical data on migration 1994-1998, 1999.

The other interesting phenomenon as far as immigration is concerned is a phenomenon of mixed marriages and particularly an increasing number of foreign women (from the former Soviet Union) married to Polish resident.

**Table 9.** Mixed marriages; Polish husband, foreign wife – by nationality of wife:  
1990-1996 (selected years)

Nationality of foreign wife	1990	1993	1995	1996
Ukraine	-	189	331	340
Russia	-	139	119	151
Belarus	-	54	95	104
Lithuania	-	23	41	40
Armenia	-	-	27	28
Latvia	-	-	6	10
Kazakhstan	-	-	13	11
USSR	255	-	-	-
Germany	370	85	61	63
Vietnam	-	-	15	42
USA	88	63	46	33
United Kingdom	14	-	-	-
Canada	-	20	17	15
Others	184	181	149	140
Total	911	754	920	977

Source: Central Statistical Office, various years.

**Table 10.** Mixed marriages: Polish wife, foreign husband – by nationality of husband, 1990-1996 (selected years)

Nationality of foreign husband	1990	1993	1995	1996
Germany	1494	876	748	698
USA	263	204	185	138
Netherlands	-	101	120	111
United Kingdom	44	74	100	92
Italy	67	85	102	86
Vietnam	-	60	45	79
Ukraine	-	67	89	108
Armenia	-	-	44	64
Ex USSR	211	-	-	-
Canada	-	69	46	43
Belgium	-	-	41	41
Sweden	179	72	48	46
France	63	62	63	76
Others	1108	650	833	687
Total	3329	2323	2320	2177

Source: Central Statistical Office, various years.

It is not possible to state what percentage of these marriages is false (if any) but a sudden growing trend may suggest that there may be some other factors (than traditional) shaping a rapid willingness of foreign women to marry Polish men.

The future of the migration flows depends on the stability of the central and eastern European economies, social and political changes in the countries of the former Soviet Union but all above it depends on the Polish (European Union) migration policy. Brussels and Berlin have already made it clear that strengthening control on Poland's eastern border – the future border of the Union – should be a priority task in Polish preparations for the accession (Stola, forthcoming b). On the other hand one should not forget that the process of globalisation of market economy brings dualization of central European labour markets thereby increasing the mobility of people and circulation of capital and goods. A case of German, French, Dutch, and other western economies of the 1970s happens now in CEE region. Although the western European labour market is becoming increasingly constrained by restrictive immigration policies one should not forget that central European labour market might need foreign labour. Positive aspects of the presence of immigrants in Poland are the fundamental socio-demographic traits of these societies. The young age of migrants as well as their being in the possession of a trade or occupation mean that there is a great potential, which should be taken advantage of by the local labour markets.

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