

THEMED TRAVELS IN RZESZOW TERRITORY DURING THE POLISH PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC (1945-1989)

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Abstract:

Cultural tourism as a widespread and multidimensional phenomenon contributes to cultural travels having highly different motives. Among them, themed travels can be distinguished, which are based largely or mostly on one theme derived from the broadly defined culture. Themed travels are usually associated with visiting specific places, and often include in-depth historical or cultural information about them. In the Polish People's Republic, a variety of trips was organized, many of which could fit well into the current definition of themed travels, especially those related to traversing all kinds of tourist hiking trails. In Rzeszow Territory at the time, all sorts of such trips became popular and they followed designated trails with the objective of emphasizing various aspects of material or spiritual culture, or specific historical themes. One of the most popular forms of traveling were themed rallies organized by the boards of PTTK (Polish Tourist and Sightseeing Society) branches in Rzeszow Territory and committees dealing with cycling and motorized tourism. Their main themes were monuments of a given era or those related to the history of a particular place, as well as sites important from the standpoint of a given region's history.

INTRODUCTION

Cultural tourism is a concept defined by many authors who account for various aspects of culture in their considerations. There are definitions focusing on the content and scope of cultural tourism, others that focus on cultural values, and still others concentrated on demand or cultural offerings of this subset of tourism¹. One of the universal and so-called "broad" definitions is an explanation given by Andrzej Kowalczyk, who states the following: "Cultural tourism, *sensu largo*, can be defined as all forms of tourist behavior since tourists' underlying needs and preferences always arise from cultural aspects [...], regardless of whether such behavior is the result of them showing interest in the so-called cultural values, or any other type of tourist values (e.g. those relate to nature)"².

Cultural tourism is a widespread and multidimensional phenomenon, which is why cultural travel may have highly different motives. One type of such trips is themed travels whose programs are based largely or mostly on one theme derived from the broadly defined culture. Themed tourism is often associated with discovering or creating new routes or trails based either on proven schemes or different social facts, such as historical and cultural events³. Themed travels, therefore, come down to visiting specific places and often include in-depth historical or

¹ Mikos v. Rohrscheidt A., Turystyka kulturowa – wokół definicji, Turystyka Kulturowa www.turystykakulturowa.org, No. 1/2008 (XI 2008), pp.11-14

² Kowalczyk A., Współczesna turystyka kulturowa – między tradycją a nowoczesnością [in:] A. Kowalczyk, ed. Turystyka kulturowa (spojrzenie geograficzne), University of Warsaw, Warsaw 2008, p. 14

³ Mikos v. Rohrscheidt A., Turystyka kulturowa. Fenomen, potencjał, perspektywy, GWSHM Milenium in Gniezno, Gniezno 2008, pp. 83-84

cultural information about them⁴. According to Zbigniew Kruczek, "tourist trail" is "a route designated in tourism space for the needs of visitors (not always marked), leading to the most attractive places (sites)"⁵. According to the current definition, meanwhile, "tourist trail" is "a natural or specifically designated route, usually marked, that serves touristic purposes"⁶. Tours and rallies organized in Poland after World War II fit well into the current definition of themed travels, especially those related to traversing all kinds of hiking trails.

THEMED TRAVELS

In the period following World War II, in Poland, popular became all sorts of themed travels. The majority of them were tours organized in groups, sometimes as well individually, and they followed designated tourist trails. Their main objective was to emphasize various aspects of material or spiritual culture, or specific historical themes.

The 50's brought with them first ideas in the context of organizing themed travels. The main initiator of such events in the region concerned was the Polish Tourist and Sightseeing Society (PTTK) in Rzeszów. Its 1954 booklet, entitled „*Piękno Ziemi Rzeszowskiej*”, contained an item called "Wycieczka po Rzeszowie w 600-lecie istnienia Rzeszowa". The list comprised sites incorporated in the itinerary, offering a brief explanation as to why a given site was important. According to the booklet, the oldest monuments were 14th- and 15th-century synagogues and a 15th-century brick building with numerous floors, located at Kosciuszko Street. It was suggested that visiting those sites allowed one to deepen the knowledge about the history of the city of Rzeszów and the people living there in the old days. As per Market Square, recommended was a historic house with a museum inside. Further, it was vital to visit the 17th-century Gothic-style City Hall, the Piarist College and the Lubomirski Summer Palace. These were other objects closely linked with the city's history, which simultaneously made it possible to better know Rzeszów's past. In terms of modern buildings, recommended were the following: The WSK House of Culture, Workers' Housing District and the Monument of Gratitude at Victory Square. Those sites were supposed to demonstrate how the present created a new history of the city⁷.

Another popular form of themed travels were themed rallies. The PTTK Board in Rzeszów had many such proposals in their offer. One of the first rallies was "I Młodzieżowy Rajd Szlakiem Zamków Średniowiecza" ("1st Youth Rally following the trail of medieval castles") held on 27-29 May 1956. It promoted the idea that the participants had a unique opportunity to enrich their knowledge about the Middle Ages in the region⁸. The PTTK committees dealing cycling and motorized tourism also recognized the need to develop those types of tourism, linking it closely with the development of civilization. During one of the meetings of the Committee of Motorized Tourism, functioning under the PTTK Main Board, held on 13 May 1959 in Warsaw, it was stressed that thanks to the development of motorized tourism, tourists gained a quick and convenient access to culture. It was also indicated that it was necessary to first get to know one's own country, and only then exchange with tourists from abroad should occur. It was pointed out that tourists should be "distinguished by their tourism education"⁹. Special tour routes were designated for motorized tourists in Rzeszów Province. All of them ran through one or another site important from the standpoint of the city's history or culture, such as: *Łańcut* (castle tour), *Jarosław* (historic buildings at the Market Square), *Przemysł* (Casimir Castle, Clock Tower), *Biecz* (city walls, towered house) *Gorlice* (brick houses at the market, orthodox church), *Sanok* (museum with open-air space), *Zagórz* (monastery) *Krosno* (parish basilica), *Przeclaw* (castle),

⁴ Współczesne formy turystyki kulturowej, group work, rd. K. Buczkowska, A. Mikos von Rohrscheidt, Poznań Academy of Physical Education 2009, p. 127

⁵ Kruczek Z., Polska. Geografia Atrakcji turystycznych”, Proksenia, Krakow 2010, p. 294

⁶ Słownik poprawnej polszczyzny, ed. H. Zgólkowa, vol. 41, Wydawnictwo „Kurpisz”, Poznań, 2003, p. 365

⁷ APRz., Regulaminy, mapy, opisy tras wycieczkowych, stacje turystyczne, preliminarze 1954-1959, PTTK in Rzeszów, unit 371, sign.217

⁸ APRz., Sprawozdanie z zadań planowych na III kwartał 1956 r. Zarząd PTTK Oddział Rzeszowie, unit 371, sign. 32

⁹ APRz., Protokół z zebrania Komisja Turystyki Motorowej ZG PTTK odbytego w dniu 13 V 1959 r. w Warszawie, unit 371, sign. 106

Baranów Sandomierski (castle), *Ustrzyki Górne* (panoramas), *Jabłonki* (place of remembrance dedicated to Gen. Świerczewski) and *Lesko* (castle)¹⁰.

The itinerary of the PTTK Regional Board in Rzeszów for 1959 included three themed events: Departmental Motor Rally following the trail of historic castles (Łańcut, Krasiczyn, Baranów), Cycling Rally under the name „*Poznajemy zabytki Łańcuta*”, Regional Cycling Rally following the trail of Rzeszów Territory monuments¹¹. The 1959 report on the activities of the Regional Committee of Cycling Tourism, functioning under the PTTK Regional Board, indicates further efforts to explore the heritage of Rzeszów Territory. These were three raids: two “local” as they gathered mostly local participants, and one international where cyclists from partner countries were also invited. The rallies aimed to bring the participants closer to the sites according to designated routes, extending not only through Rzeszów Province, but also areas located in the neighboring provinces: Rzeszów – Niebylec – Prządki - Zamek Odrzykoń – Węglówka - Strzyżów oraz Rzeszów – Strzyżów – Jasło – Biecz – Gorlice – Sękowa – Żmigród - Dukła (local rallies) i Dukła – Krosno – Odrzykoń – Prządki – Krasiczyn – Przemyśl – Jarosław - Łańcut - Rzeszów - Tarnów – Rożnów - Nowy Sącz – Krynica – Rytro - Stary Sącz – Krościenko – Szczawnica – Czorsztyn – Nidzica - Nowy Targ – Poronin – Zakopane - Morskie Oko (international rally)¹².

In the late 50's and early 60's, there were also some themed proposals for cyclists and motorcycle aficionados. One of them was the Regional Cycling Rally following the trail of Rzeszów monuments organized by the Regional Committee of Cycling Tourism in Rzeszów in 1959¹³. Another one was Poland's 2nd National Rally celebrating the anniversary of Dukieliszczyzna battles, organized by the Krosno Branch in 1960. This rally was supposed to remind the participants the bloody battles with the Nazis that took place in 1944 in the so-called "Valley of Death"¹⁴. Similar events were supervised by the Regional Committee of Motorized Tourism, functioning under the PTTK Main Board in Rzeszów. One of the statutory tasks of that committee was to develop motor tourism in the province, through, *inter alia*, events such as the Regional Motor Rally following the trail of Subcarpathian monuments¹⁵, the Rally celebrating the anniversary of Dukieliszczyzna battles, or the Regional Motor Rally following the trail of Subcarpathian monuments. This type of rallies gave its participants the opportunity to learn about the history and heritage of the region¹⁶. In addition, the work plan for 1960 included the Regional Rally in Krasiczyn, organized by the Przemyśl Branch¹⁷. Another interesting offer for tourists of all sorts was the Rally following the trail of Rzeszów Castles, held on 2-8 July 1961¹⁸. Themed events with a touch of culture were organized also for skiers. The available reports by Rzeszów's Regional PTTK on the ski-related activities are mainly concerned with the 60s. Skiers would partake in such rallies and trips to explore the heritage and achievements of civilization. The destinations included: Stalowa Wola, Rzeszów, Przemyśl, Krosno¹⁹, Iwonicz and Rymanów, Prządek and Odrzykoń, and Solina²⁰. Przemyśl's Regional PTTK, meanwhile, arranged for a

¹⁰ APRz, Plan pracy, protokoły, informacje, imprezy, skład osobowy, PTTK w Rzeszowie. Komisja Turystyki Motorowej, unit 371, sign. 106

¹¹ APRz, Plany i kalendarz imprez Okręgowych Komisji Turystycznych za lata 1958-1960, zespół 371, sygn. 29

¹² APRz, Sprawozdanie z działalności Okręgowej Komisji Turystyki Kolarskiej przy Zarządzie Okręgu PTTK za rok 1959, unit 371, sign. 29

¹³ APRz, Plan pracy Okręgowa Komisja Turystyki Kolarskiej 1958, unit 371, sign. 109,

¹⁴ APRz, Plan pracy Okręgowa Komisja Turystyki Kolarskiej 1960, unit 371, sign. 109,

¹⁵ APRz, Plan pracy na rok 1960, PTTK w Rzeszowie. Komisja Turystyki Motorowej, unit 371, sign. 106

¹⁶ APRz, Plan pracy na rok 1960, Okręgowa Komisja Turystyki Motorowej ZG PTTK, unit 371, sign. 106

¹⁷ APRz, Plan pracy Okręgowej Komisji Turystyki Kolarskiej w Rzeszowie 1959, unit 371, sign. 109,

¹⁸ APRz, Wojewódzki Urząd Kontroli Prasy Publikacji i Widowisk w Rzeszowie. PTTK w Rzeszowie 1954-1972, unit 47, sign. 296

¹⁹ APRz, Sprawozdanie z działalności narciarskiej Okręgu PTTK Rzeszów w sezonie 1968/1969, unit 371, sign. 93

²⁰ APRz, Sprawozdanie z Komisji Turystyki Narciarskiej przy Oddziale PTTK Przemyśl w sezonie 1968/69, unit 371, sign. 93

special skiing trip Przemysl - Hołubnie whose program included visiting Lipownica forts²¹, and another skiing trip Przemysł-Grochowce²², where forts also were visited²³.

In the 60's, Rzeszów's Regional PTTK continued organizing themed rallies. One of the major events became the Central Millennial Bieszczady Rally 1962 in Ustrzyki Górne held on 3-5 August 1962. The rally perfectly fit into the series of events planned to celebrate the important anniversary of one millennium of the Polish State. The organizers estimated that the rally garnered the attention it did because it enjoyed the participation not only of locals from Rzeszów Territory, but also tourists from other parts of the country²⁴. Two more interesting themed rallies took place in 1965. One was the Spring Rally following the tourist trail of "Iskra" battles in the Sandomierz Basin, held on 8-9 May 1965²⁵. The other, co-organized with Rzeszów's Regional PTTK, was the National Millennial Tourist Rally to Przemysl, and it took place on 18-20 June 1965 – it was yet another rally celebrating an important anniversary²⁶.

In the following year, PTTK's offering was expanded to include the Spring Tourist Rally following the trail of guerrilla battles "Wiosna w Puszczy", 7-8 May 1966²⁷. The itinerary for 1968 comprised the Vistula Night Rally to Baranów Sandomierski²⁸, 2nd Regional Rally to Jabłonki (place of death of Karol Świerczewski *vel* "Walter") and 5th Provincial Rally following the Trail of Heroes to Jabłonki. Among the events targeted to specific professional groups, another themed event was planned, namely the Tourist Rally of the Association of Polish Teachers into Bieszczady and to Jabłonki. The same itinerary also included an event in memory of another great Pole from Rzeszów Territory – the Łukasiewicz Canoeing Trip (down Vistula and Dunajec)²⁹. The inventor of the oil lamp was the protagonist of another themed rally set out four years later by another professional group into Beskid Niski on 13-15 October 1972 – i.e. 3rd Oil Men Mountain Rally under the name of Ignacy Łukasiewicz³⁰.

Themed events with cultural accents were also organized by the Regional Committee of Trade Unions in Rzeszów, despite the fact that body dealt primarily with sports. A 1961 document lists four central events planned by the committee in cooperation with PTTK and other organizers of mass events. All were to be organized under the general theme of celebrating the millennium of the Polish State and the year of Rzeszów Territory. Among these events were, *inter alia*, the Millennial Rally to Przemysl on 15-16 May 1966, a mass event including walking, climbing, lowland hiking, motor-car, cycling and canoeing routes. The event was attended by up to 800 people who at the same time had the chance to find out about the history of Przemysł. Another themed event was the Rally following the route of Grody Podkarpackie, from Lesko, through Rymanów, Dukla, Krosno, Jasło, Gorlice, Szymbark and Biecz, all within 2-4 July 1961. This particular gathering was attended by 165 people. The racers had the chance to see the sites associated with the early history of the region. The third major event was the 3rd National Rally to Dukla held on 20-22 July 1961, dedicated to the fallen soldiers of the Soviet and Czech troops. The route included walking, cycling and motor trails, and was attended by 600 people. On this occasion, it was noted that the majority of trips were done using the newly opened convention belt from with a border crossing through Barwinek³¹. In 1962, organized were the Millennial Tourist

²¹ Entrenchment of the Gate „Na Lipowicy”, Wysockiego Street, ziem.-mur., 1873-1880, partially offset after 1975

²² Fort GW V "Grochowce" – built between 1882-1886 as a typical artillery single shaft fort. It was partially blown up in 1915 following the second siege of the Przemysl Fortress and partially demolished between 1920 and 1930

²³ APRz, Sprawozdanie z Komisji Turystyki Narciarskiej przy Oddziale PTTK Przemysł w sezonie 1968/69, unit 371, sign. 93

²⁴ APRz, Wojewódzki Urząd Kontroli Prasy Publikacji i Widowisk w Rzeszowie. PTTK w Rzeszowie 1954-1972, unit 47, sign. 296

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ APRz, Regulaminy zlotów i rajdów turystycznych, unit 371, sign. 220

²⁷ APRz, Wojewódzki Urząd Kontroli Prasy Publikacji i Widowisk w Rzeszowie. PTTK w Rzeszowie 1954-1972, unit 47, sign. 296

²⁸ APRz, Imprezy ogólnopolskie i okręgowe PTTK Rzeszów 1968 r., unit 371, sign. 202

²⁹ Tamże

³⁰ APRz, Wojewódzki Urząd Kontroli Prasy Publikacji i Widowisk w Rzeszowie. PTTK w Rzeszowie 1954-1972, unit 47, sign. 296

³¹ APRz, Pismo Wojewódzkiej Komisji Związków Zawodowych w Rzeszowie do Centralnej Rady Związków Zawodowych. Zespół Kultury Fizycznej w Warszawie z dnia 28 VII 1961, unit 35, sign. 214

Rally into Bieszczady, the Rally following the trail of Ignacy Lukaszewicz in Beskid Niski, and the Regional Tourist Rally celebrating the millennial anniversary of the Polish State in Łańcut³².

The Mountain Tourism Committee was another body engaged in the organization of themed travels. In 1973, during the Przemyśl Rally, it decided to organize the route "1873-1973 Wierchy Polskie 1000", dubbed the millennial trail of mountain tourism. At the same time, the committee joined the organization works on the 10th Spring Rally in Bieszczady³³. Throughout the 70's, the activity of PTTK in Leżajsk and District PTTK in Mielec significantly increased. The report of the latter for the year 1972 considered the following to be the best events that took place in Rzeszów Territory: 2nd Rally following the trail of *Crimson Rose* in Krzemienica and 4th Rally "Szukamy Kwiatu Paproci" in Borowa, above Wisłoka. Apart from physical activities, the participant could learn about popular literature. The report on the activities of the District PTTK in Mielec for 1973 contains very detailed data which shows that on 31 December 1973 the Department comprised 14 circles and 607 full members, as well as 37 school circles that organized various hiking, skiing, cycling, motor, sailing, kayaking and motor-boating events, with many of them being themed. Among the highest-rated were two themed events held in Rzeszów Territory: 3rd Rally following the trail of *Crimson Rose* in Radomyśl Wielki and 5th Hike-down "Szukamy Kwiatu Paproci" in Pława³⁴. Another event in Mielec was the 1974 rally celebrating the day of the liberation of Mielec, with the route running through Kamionka, Blizne and Mielec. The rally was supposed to become an annual event organized by the Department of the District PTTK in Mielec and its participants had the opportunity to learn some facts from the history of the city³⁵.

Another organization that made it easier for tourists to partake in themed events was PTTK in Ropczyce, responsible for organizing the celebration event of the 30th anniversary of the People's Republic in 1974. That branch developed a program of action in this field and planned to continue holding the so-called anniversary rallies. One of the most interesting themed events was the annual rally following the trails of peasant battles, held in 1977-1979. Other important themed rallies were organized throughout the 80's. In 1982, inaugurated was the Youth Tourist Rally "Śladami sławnych ludzi" ("In the Footsteps of Famous People"). The first one of them was organized on the hundredth anniversary of Władysław Sikorski's birth. During the event, the participants could visit the sites linked with the general's birth and stay in that area. The next rally of this kind was dedicated to Wilhelm Mach. Within two days, the participants of the rally visited W. Mach's family home and his memorial room, and spent the night in the room of writers. Another themed rally took place in the years 1988 - 1989 and it was the Youth Cycling Rally "Śladami Akcji V" ("Following the Action V"). Its main points were the monument and the historical cellar located on top of the Hill of Death in Pustków, huge bunkers and neo-Gothic style church in Ocieka, concrete roads built by prisoners and launcher pieces in Blizna. Additionally, during the rally, the youth could meet interesting people, e.g. war veterans³⁶. Both rallies were intended to bring young people closer to the history of the region.

CONCLUSION

Themed travels that took place in Rzeszów Territory during the Polish People's Republic required of the organizers to seek new ideas and search for new trails. The examples indicate that many of them were held successfully and became popular among those tourists who wanted to not only travel, but also gain knowledge about the cultural heritage of the region, its important historical events or famous people from Rzeszów Territory. The program of those trips was based largely or mostly on a particular theme, often cultural heritage and historical events. The trips were usually planned for specific groups, such as skiers or cyclists, who in addition to practicing their passion, could simultaneously learn more about a particular subject.

³² APRz, Imprezy i akcje masowe, spartakiady organizowane z inicjatywy WKZZ 1962, unit 35, sign. 271

³³ APRz, Protokoły Komisji Turystyki Górskiej 1957-1977, Protokół z dnia 10 II 1973 r., unit 371, sign. 116

³⁴ APRz, Sprawozdanie z działalności Oddziału Powiatowego PTTK w Mielcu za rok 1972, unit 1258, sign. 649

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ XXX lat Oddziału PTTK Ropczyce 1970-200, ed. W. Chmura, PTTK Ropczyce, Ropczyce 2001, p. 17-70