

MOVING BORDERS OF CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPE

HISTORICAL NOTES:

I. Austria-Hungary:

- A. Austrian/Hungarian Ethnic Groups: Czech, Slovenian, Slovak Croatian, and Austrian & Sudeten Germans.
- B. Possible Austrian/Hungarian Ethnic Groups: Polish, Romanian, Ukrainian, Rusyn, and Italian.
- C. Austro-Hungarian history:
 1. Austrian Germans powerful in area since early Middle Ages.
 2. Hungarian monarchy established nearby by 1000 AD, under the Arpad dynasty of kings.
 3. Eventually, because of weak kings, war with the Turks, the Hungarians lose most of their land; the Austrians take control: "The Austrian Empire."
 4. In turn, the Austrians lose power, because of war, and the Hungarians demand autonomy:
 5. In 1867, the dual monarchy of Austria-Hungary is created in which the groups share power. It will rule until WWI

II. Poland:

- A. Historical Kingdom of Poland:
 1. In the Middle Ages, a very large kingdom of Poland is established in eastern Europe, covering the area of several modern countries: Lithuania, Belarus, Ukraine, etc.
 2. Eventually, Poland declines, loses strength; reasons:
 - a. No natural borders, many ethnic groups.
 - b. Many leaders that had little interest in Polish unity.
 - c. Poland was surrounded by powerful neighbors
 3. By the later 18th century, Poland had been divided up by its neighbors, Russia, Prussia, and Austria and disappears.
- B. In the late 19th century, when much immigration occurs, there is no Polish nation. Therefore, Polish immigration is from Germany, Russian, and Austria-Hungary.

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III. Germany:

- A. Originally, what today is Germany was a series of small and medium semi-independent states, nominally ruled by the “Holy Roman Emperor.”
- B. These states were the homelands of the German who left for the New World in the 18th century.
- C. By the time immigrants left in the 1830's and 1840's, many of these states had combined. (Napoleon had eliminated dozens of them!)
- D. As the 19th century advanced, one German state, Prussia, slowly came to dominate first, the north German area and eventually added the rest.
- E. In 1871, the Prussian leadership creates the German Empire which lasts until World War I.
- F. As a result of losing both World Wars, Germany loses much of her eastern territories.
- G. Besides the inhabitants of the German nation and the Austrian Germans, there were communities of German speakers scattered throughout eastern Europe.
 - 1. Many of these communities had been there since the Middle Ages, having been invited there by rulers to create new towns and economies.
 - 2. After World War II, the inhabitants of many of these communities were forced to flee, because of their association with the Nazi regime.

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IV. Russia:

- A. By the beginning of the 19th century, Russia had used its military might to conquer the following (modern) countries: Finland, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Belarus, Ukraine, and (part of) Poland.
 - 1. Some of these countries gained their independence after World War I: Finland, Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia, and Poland.
 - 2. The rest would have to wait until the dissolution of the Soviet Union in the 1980's, to gain independence.

Some hints:

- A. Find the Wiki on [familysearch.org](https://www.familysearch.org) for the specific country being researched and read the relevant information!
- B. It is important to find out when your ancestors left their homeland.
- C. Be sure to understand what is going on in that country at that time, and what name it had.
- D. Remember: place names are different in different languages:
 - 1. Hungary is “Ungarn” in German and in Hungarian, it is “Magyarország.”
 - 2. Austria is “Osterreich,” in German. etc.It is important to do a little checking before researching a specific area.
- E. The website for finding towns/villages in the German Empire is meyersgaz.org

Paul Hadzima
phadzima@gmail.com

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