

Exporting holidays: Bulgarian tourism in the Scandinavian market in the 1960s and 1970s

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In the second half of the 1950s, socialist Bulgaria sought to join the new global business of mass tourism. Although lacking a comprehensive strategy, a long-term plan, or even a coherent concept of tourism, the ambition to develop a tourist hub with international outreach and large hard-currency profits was there from the start. In pursuit of this ambition, both tourism's infrastructure and institutional network mushroomed, and by the mid-1960s the contribution of international tourism to the Bulgarian economy was acknowledged to be indispensable. Hosting capitalist tourists who paid with hard cash was the only way to compensate, at least in part, for the trade deficits Bulgaria incurred vis-à-vis their home countries.

Investment in recreational facilities first appeared on the agenda of the Bulgarian Communist Party (BCP) in the mid-1950s, under two different motivations. Providing holiday leisure for the masses was integral to the social reforms in the aftermath of de-Stalinization, under the new ideological slogan of "satisfying the growing material needs" of Bulgarian workers.¹ Yet, the subsequent boom in resort construction was also prompted by economic pragmatism, and was geared towards meeting the demands of a foreign clientele. Reflecting these heterogeneous incentives, government strategy from the onset differentiated "economic tourism" from "social tourism."² While the latter was a socialist welfare service for the domestic public, economic tourism predominantly targeted foreign visitors from the socialist bloc and beyond.³

Shaped by divergent operational logics and administered by separate agencies, facilities for the two categories of holidaymakers—high-paying foreigners and state-subsidized locals—developed side by side, yet apart from one another. The rift, both social and spatial, became unbridgeable as domestic and international holiday travel grew, tourism evolved into a distinct sector of the Bulgarian economy, and the administration of its assets was compartmentalized between multiplying organizations. The agencies in charge of modern holiday facilities gradually withdrew from service provision for locals to focus on what their management successfully promoted as "exports in situ," a form of foreign trade that not only complemented the traditional sort, but yielded higher profits and substantially improved the country's balance of payments.⁴ Emulating the operation of foreign-trade organizations, Bulgarian tourist enterprises diversified their activities beyond resort development and hotel management into all kinds of business partnerships abroad.

In foreign trade, Bulgaria lagged behind the other socialist regimes in Central and Eastern Europe in gaining access to the Western markets, but its international tourism fared much better in the new global mass tourism industry.⁵ Keeping pace with worldwide developments, Bulgarian tourism succeeded not only in placing the country on the European tourist map, but also in inventing itself from scratch as an economic sector catering to the new phenomenon of mass tourism.

This chapter discusses the institutional development of Bulgaria's international tourism as a peculiar variant of a foreign-trade operation, and examines its intrinsic advantages and limitations compared to commodity exchange.⁶ I analyse the development of international tourism in Bulgaria from the mid-1950s onwards, and particularly its positioning in the institutional landscape of the socialist economy, to show how commercial tourism advanced

from the margins of the national economy (where it suffered from a precarious dependence on the output of more privileged sectors) to its centre, as an economic sector in its own right, entitled to higher standards and priority supply from the country's heavy and light industries. To illustrate this development, I focus on Bulgaria's economic cooperation with Scandinavia. International tourism being one pillar in Bulgaria's economic cooperation with the West in general, it pays to examine tourist deals with the Scandinavian countries in order to highlight the different ways in which the entanglement of tourism, trade, and diplomacy played out in the changing Cold War context.

The birth of Bulgaria's international tourism: Balkantourist in the late 1950s

In 1966, shortly before the start of the summer season, the Research Institute of Radio Free Europe (RFE) began a lengthy report on "Vacationland Bulgaria" with an unexpected geographical leap:

One would think there was very little in common in the way of statistics between the United States and Bulgaria. Quite the contrary, for, in the field of tourism, both countries entertained over one million foreign tourists during 1965. The comparison ends here, however, for Bulgaria has, for many years, been a country isolated and virtually inaccessible to the rest of the world ... But things are very different now. Bulgaria, during the past two years, has made a volte-face and has energetically entered the competition for Europe's tourists, especially for those from the West carrying wallets-full of foreign currency.⁷

Bulgaria had hit the 1 million visitors mark, with the number of westerners for the first time exceeding that of guests from other Soviet-bloc countries. As surprising as this might have been for Western commentators, for the Bulgarian government it signified a decade of painstaking work to develop international tourism finally bearing fruit. In 1966—the year when RFE threw the spotlight on Bulgaria's thriving holiday business—the national tourism administration, hitherto a low-ranking directorate under the Council of Ministers, was upgraded as the Committee on Tourism (CT), an autonomous branch of government. With this institutional reform, tourism gained the legal status of a separate sector of the state economy; its management had aspired to such recognition ever since it was permitted to operate internationally.⁸ Although the CT was also put in charge of domestic "social tourism," it was its international activities that raised its legislative standing and shaped its subsequent policies. International tourism and its increasing differentiation from domestic "social tourism", moreover, was what had spurred the sector's growth in the preceding decade.

In the early post-Stalinist years, the business of international tourism was largely delegated to Balkantourist, a small enterprise set up in January 1948 as the successor to a travel bureau that had specialized in the sale of international train tickets before the Second World War. Given the negligible number of tourists to Bulgaria in the immediate post-war period, the enterprise barely stayed afloat, and its operations dwindled because of obsolescence and its troubles maintaining its properties.⁹ In 1954, a state decree authorized Balkantourist to sign contracts with foreign travel agencies, including companies in capitalist countries.¹⁰ Since its re-establishment back in 1948, Balkantourist had been affiliated to the Ministry of Foreign Trade (MFT), and once it resumed business it was only natural to profile itself as a peculiar type of a foreign-trade organization.

To market Bulgaria abroad as a holiday destination, the government focused on the Black Sea coast, taking its cue from Mediterranean countries such as Yugoslavia and Italy, while simultaneously aspiring to compete with what they offered.¹¹ Seaside resort development in Bulgaria started modestly with the modernization of an old resort near the port city of Varna.

Previously known as “St Constantine and St Elena”, it was now renamed Varna Resort—and later again Druzhba (friendship). At the end of 1956, the holiday complex had seven hotels with just over 1,000 beds; a year later, when investment had increased threefold, 10 new hotels and 500 accommodation units described as “little cottages (tents)” were being built to welcome another 2,268 guests.¹²

To gauge whether the investment had paid off and the resort warranted further development, the government commissioned the Central Statistical Directorate to evaluate Varna Resort’s revenue from foreign holidaymakers, which it did by meticulously calculating the hard-currency income relative to domestic-currency costs. It used indicators modelled on the performance assessment of foreign trade, and based solely on tangible and countable items such as hotel beds, food products, and purchased goods. The bottom line of the Directorate’s report was that compared to Bulgaria’s foreign trade the earnings of tourism cost only one-quarter of the expenditure on goods production for export, which led it to conclude that Bulgaria’s international tourism had “great benefits” for the state economy. Yet, the report also underlined the low number of Western visitors, who were a direct source of hard currency, unlike socialist citizens whose bills were settled through bilateral clearing agreements. At this stage, foreign guests in Varna Resort came predominantly from the socialist bloc (nearly 70% from Czechoslovakia alone) while westerners accounted for merely 2% of the total number of visitors and an even lower share of revenue, 0.3%.¹³

Once the financial profitability of international tourism was confirmed by the data, resort development was extended to previously non-urbanized coastal areas, and the large-scale construction of entire holiday resorts from scratch was soon as much an investment priority as that of new industrial combines.¹⁴ By the end of the 1950s, Sunny Beach and Golden Sands—the resorts that would become the face of the Bulgarian tourism brand—opened for business. Their speedy completion and modern architecture was acclaimed in party plenums, and the modern standard they epitomized was replicated in smaller holiday developments along the Black Sea coast.¹⁵ Results were swift. In 1957 Bulgaria had attracted 16,776 foreign holidaymakers, all of them accommodated in Varna Resort; in 1959 their number surged to 62,200, and two years later it rose again to 120,000.¹⁶ Tasked with increasing its financial gains exponentially, Balkantourist sought to attract more Western tourists, and formed a separate management section for “Capitalist countries.”¹⁷

To monitor its profit generation from foreign tourists, the government regularly appointed inter-ministerial commissions with representation from the commercial, financial, and banking branches of the state bureaucracy. The complex nature of Bulgaria’s tourism finances compared to manufacturing and trade led to disagreements over the proper method of measuring tourism profits. However, even though the audited organizations found the accounting models rather conservative, the numbers confirmed that tourism yielded higher returns than exports did.¹⁸ In fact, tourism was the only source of invisible earnings that promised to offset the persistent trade deficit with the West.

International tourism was bound to foreign trade not only strategically but also institutionally. As Balkantourist still lacked a network of travel bureaus abroad, it relied on foreign-trade representation to broker its offers to foreign agencies.¹⁹ Yet, from the outset Balkantourist’s management complained that this style of doing business was inadequate: Bulgarian trade envoys lacked specialized expertise to promote tourism in Bulgaria, and moreover seemed less interested in securing tourism deals, which were an addendum to their annual plans for commodity trade.²⁰ Arguing for the urgency of establishing its own bureaus abroad, Petar Ignatov, Chief Director of Balkantourist, explained in a report to his supervising minister:

The nature of the tourist trade—unlike the other [trade in goods] which works mainly by way of one-off deals—requires constant contact with both the travel bureaus that attract tourists and the tourists themselves, combined above all with unremitting attention from the moment services were offered and purchased until the moment when [the tourists] left our country.²¹

Yet, it was to the advantage of tourism to be coupled to foreign trade, and while lobbying for more operational autonomy, Ignatov also did not miss the chance to push tourism in trade talks, even advocating that tourists be added to the annual commodity lists in bilateral trade protocols.²²

Although without the institutional network of foreign trade, tourism was quite successful in setting its own rules of commerce. From early on, it managed to circumvent official exchange rates by securing special “premiums” on tourists’ hard currency, and by strengthening its purchasing power with “service discounts.”²³ Border regulations were another area where Balkantourist vied to legalize tourist exemptions, with the result that visa formalities were increasingly liberalized from 1959 onwards, often in disregard of mounting protests from the powerful security apparatus.²⁴ Transportation, and especially air traffic, was crucial to the growth of tourism, and Balkantourist succeeded in negotiating its own preferential tariffs with the national aviation authorities.²⁵ All in all, without having had much standing in the state bureaucracy, in just a few years Balkantourist had managed to shed its inherent structural and ideological restraints in order to contend for its share of international mass tourism.

The entanglement of international tourism and foreign trade: Economic and institutional growth in the 1960s

When negotiating with higher-ranking administrative bodies for the further easing of travel regulations, Ignatov regularly pointed to the upsurge in tourism globally, arguing that Bulgaria’s participation in this dynamic market would secure much-needed hard currency. Such forecasts were invariably supported by comparisons of some sort, often quite crude, of the profitability of foreign trade and tourism; fundamentally reductionist for both trade and tourism, they revealed a good deal about the theoretical difficulty of embedding commercial tourism into a socialist economy, and the pragmatic challenges of organizing its business. In a planned economy, with its materialist mindset and contempt for services as unproductive labour, it was goods that mattered, and calculations of profitability usually boiled down to production costs and hard-currency returns.²⁶ So while government commissions compared occupancy rates in holiday facilities to sales of goods, the director of Balkantourist did his best to inflate the beneficial ratio of tourism to foreign trade based on the low share of goods (25%) in the overall expenditure in tourism, disregarding capital investment and service provision as seemingly cost-free intangibles.²⁷

While arguing that the product offered was akin to commodity exports in terms of its contribution to the economy, Balkantourist’s management was well aware that marketing tourism was nothing like trading goods, at least not from the viewpoint of consumption. Emphasizing the “service” nature of tourism might not have been the right angle to safeguard its better position in the socialist economy, yet service was indeed what made the tourist’s experience satisfactory or not. Ultimately, service was the yardstick by which the customer evaluated the products that Balkantourist offered. Raising the quality of this “product”—that is, of tourist services—was in many ways beyond the control of the service provider alone. It was dependent on the quality of production and supply in a myriad of other sectors: architecture and construction for building hotels modern enough for Western tastes; urban planning and sanitation for maintaining proper standards of cleanness, water supply, and sewerage during the seasonal spike in the summer; transportation for bringing people in and helping them move

around the country; heavy and light industry for the supply of furniture and appliances, foodstuffs and souvenirs, cosmetics and fabrics, beyond the mass production for the domestic market and above its level; labour and education policies for the stable employment of adequately trained personnel in hotels, restaurants and tourist shops. None of these crucial conditions was easy to come by, and Bulgaria's tourism management engaged in painstaking negotiations with the respective ministries to bridge the gap between what was customary for the local population and what the foreign tourist expected to find.²⁸

Unlike exported goods that reached Western customers in the familiar setting of their local supermarket, in tourism it was the other way round, as consumers were brought to the product, thereby exiting their comfort zone. The tourist "product" could not be fully detached from the broader environment of socialist Eastern Europe, not even behind the gates of the resort complex. Illustrating this dilemma, in 1959, a Swiss tourist sent a lengthy account detailing all the deficiencies in service she had encountered during a holiday trip around the country. Thickly underlined by the administrator who reviewed her letter, she concluded that bad service made tourists "suddenly feel as if in an alien environment," and further explained the profound difference between cultural exoticism and cultural shock in a strikingly colonial language: "The tourist has no trouble accepting the customs of the visited country no matter how different from his own. For example, he will not be offended to see in front of the house a Negro who gulps gruel with his bare hands. But in any country he goes, even in Africa, the tourist wants, in the hotel as well as in the restaurant, to find his own habits."²⁹ While recognizing the overwhelming problems with the services they provided, Balkantourist lacked the institutional weight to tackle them across the board.

In 1963, a new government body, the Chief Directorate for Tourism (CDT), was established under the Council of Ministers. Its primary mission was to coordinate all economic activities in the field of tourism with those in other sectors of the economy, and to actively pursue international cooperation. Balkantourist—along with other organizations in charge of tourist accommodation, restaurant catering, and specialized travel—was subsequently switched from the MFT to the CDT as an enterprise specialized in international tourism. Shortly after the reshuffle, Balkantourist was finally authorized to set up its own network of tourist bureaus abroad.³⁰ In 1965, Balkantourist's prerogatives expanded further when it was rebranded as an Incorporated Trade Enterprise for International Tourism, with its own budget. In addition to its previous activities, it could now operate bureaux de changes in resorts, stations, airports, international hotels, and at border checkpoints; organize day trips for foreign guests abroad (with destinations such as Istanbul, Odessa, and even Cairo); arrange re-export and compensatory deals; help establish foreign travel bureaus in Bulgaria; and set up joint ventures specializing in tourism in the West.³¹

From the very beginning Balkantourist used a concept of tourism that implicitly was limited to the profit-generating category of holidaymakers, but the definition was at the same time broad enough to include any type of travel, regardless of its actual purpose. Transit mobility, which generated income from visa fees as well as spending on the road, thus accounted for a substantial share of Bulgaria's international tourism, adding hundreds of thousands of visitors to the statistics along with hard-currency revenues. Though geographically distant from Western tourist markets, Bulgaria benefited as a crossing point for seasonal workers from Turkey and the Middle East travelling to Western Europe and back. More than a ruse to boost tourist numbers, transit travellers were perceived as a crucial segment that required different services and infrastructure investment beyond the resort complexes.³² In 1965, when 1 million foreign tourists visited the Bulgarian "vacationland," as RFE reported it, in fact only 98,593 out of 634,756 Western "tourists" were in Bulgaria on holiday. The rest were all transit passengers,

most of whom were Turkish citizens.³³ Parallel statistics based on hotel occupancy showed that, despite specifically targeting foreigners, “economic tourism” in reality catered predominantly to Bulgarian nationals.³⁴ As the operational concept of “economic tourism” was quite elastic, defined by financial receipts and not by purpose of travel, the data on Bulgarian “tourists” (aggregated by hotel check-ins) was inflated by all sorts of official trips, just like the number of “foreign tourists” (counted by border entries) was significantly boosted by transit passengers.³⁵ Yet, as the annual plans for the fledgling tourism sector prioritized the increase of hard-currency receipts, the reform of “economic tourism” remained firmly dedicated to making Bulgaria more attractive to Western visitors.

At the Ninth Party Congress in November 1966, the BCP leadership made much of tourism as a highly efficient sector of the national economy.³⁶ A month later, the CDT was replaced by the CT, which was given the rank of a ministry in the next round of administrative reform in 1973.³⁷ Even before the CT acquired a ministerial status, its functions had greatly expanded, intersecting, often competitively, with many other economic areas—large-scale construction, transportation, light industry and retail, various supplementary services, and, as soon as specialized tourism colleges were founded, even higher education. The supervisory role of the CT was also boosted by being put in charge of all tourism-related activities run by ministries, city councils, and economic units.³⁸ Moreover, capital investment in international tourism was legally qualified as a “national priority”, and thus elevated to the same level of importance as central government buildings and major socialist monuments.³⁹

Resort developments soon expanded beyond the Black Sea coast. Mountain resorts with winter sports facilities such as Aleko-Vitosha, Pamporovo, and Borovets extended the calendar for international tourism. Various forms of specialized tourism were also on offer: congresses, balneological treatments, hunting expeditions, and weekend breaks. By then, it was a given for the tourism administration that the resort boom was driven by an influx of foreigners, and responsibility for domestic “social tourism” was largely relegated to employers. At the national conference to mark the International Tourist Year in 1967, a high-ranking tourism official hailed the country’s recreational base as servicing exclusively foreigners, and the role of the Bulgarian worker as producer rather than consumer:

What the imagination of Homer gave birth to in the Bronze Age [*sic*]—his fascinating protagonist Hephaestus building with his magic hammer palaces of gold on the slopes of Olympus—today in our country, our people actually created along the Black Sea coast, on the slopes of the Rila and Rhodope Mountains, an entire necklace of golden palaces, and delivered them for the needs of international tourism.⁴⁰

By 1969, international tourism brought in hard-currency revenues amounting to 5% of trade exports, and was thought would grow to 20% in the next five years.⁴¹ At the time, Bulgarian exports were still primarily structured around agricultural products and processed fruit and vegetables, which faced rising trade barriers in their main markets in Western Europe due to the consolidation of the customs union of the European Economic Community (EEC). While a serious impediment to Bulgaria’s foreign trade, it was also an opportunity to further highlight the economic importance of tourism. Instrumental comparisons of profitability vis-à-vis foreign trade focused even more directly on the circulation of goods. In its report for 1970, the CT included a lengthy appendix to demonstrate that basic foodstuffs (fresh and canned fruit and vegetables, meat, alcoholic beverages, etc.) yielded three- to tenfold higher profits in hard currency when sold domestically to foreign tourists than when exported to Western buyers by the foreign-trade organizations.⁴²

In the early 1970s, international tourism, framed as “export in situ,” took on new significance as a segment of the national economy following new EEC restrictions on bilateral trade between

member states and the Eastern bloc. In 1970, the CT submitted its first comprehensive strategy for the development of the tourist sector over the next five-year period. Reporting on the recent surge of the tourist industry worldwide, not just in Bulgaria, the CT Chairman Petko Todorov requested an accelerated expansion of the material base of international tourism, because according to his estimates the demand for Bulgarian holidays in capitalist markets already exceeded availability. For the five years of its existence, the CT had witnessed a surge of 219% in economic tourism measured by hotel occupancy—from 8,909,000 nights in 1965 to 19,544,000 in 1969—outpacing dramatically the growth of social tourism (from 10,190,000 to 12,506,000 nights). While Bulgarians still dominated “economic tourism” (thanks to short leisure trips, cheaper tourism options in the country’s interior, and domestic business trips by public officials, artists, scholars and so on), in the so-called “seasonal base”—meaning the facilities solely for holiday use—the share of foreign customers was a steady 80% throughout the later 1960s, when data collection allowed for such disaggregation.⁴³ Due to its recognized contribution to the national budget, the CT was now authorized to use 2% of its own hard-currency receipts (in addition to 1 million convertible lev of export revenues from the MFT) to import consumer goods to meet foreign tourists’ needs.⁴⁴

Over and above the statistics that were mobilized specifically to demonstrate the accomplishments of the tourist sector, however, the documents reveal a parallel success story, perhaps even more impressive albeit often overlooked, of institution-building. Since its foundation, the CT had managed to intervene in numerous long-established sectors of Bulgaria’s planned economy, setting entirely different production standards, priority quotas, and supply lines solely to advance its international operations. From carpentry and faience manufacturing all the way to the construction of highways and dams, international tourism set its own agenda in the national economic plan.

Breaking ground in the Scandinavian market: The cooperation of foreign trade and international tourism

From the late 1950s onwards, as part of its opening up to the West, the Bulgarian state intensified both its economic and its political contacts with Scandinavia, a region that it had had little interaction with in the formative years of state socialism and prior to the Second World War. As these efforts coincided with the pioneering steps to develop international tourism at home, it naturally played a part in Bulgaria’s advances to the Scandinavian countries. While the Bulgarian diplomatic corps saw Sweden as the stepping stone in the region, the tourist agencies thought Denmark would be their entry point to the Scandinavian market. At the time Bulgaria only had a diplomatic mission in Stockholm, though in 1957 the resident ambassador was also accredited to Denmark and Norway.⁴⁵ A year later, however, Bulgaria signed an Air Transport Agreement with Denmark, and Copenhagen became one of the few Western European airports in the Bulgarian civil aviation network. The agreement also led to the establishment of an office of the Bulgarian airlines (later named Balkan) in Copenhagen, around the time when Bulgaria also opened a trade mission there under a bilateral trade agreement signed in 1959.⁴⁶

Though political contacts between the Scandinavian countries and Bulgaria were minimal, the legation in Stockholm still played a role in advancing the national objectives of economic cooperation. Tourism was a particularly suitable niche for the ambassador’s broad diplomatic mandate, because the large travel companies covered the entire Scandinavian region. In 1959, the legation informed the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) of the Swedes’ and Danes’ growing interest in holiday destinations in Bulgaria, and particularly the new Varna Resort.

The embassy in Stockholm had been approached by the chief executive of the Scandinavian subsidiary of Wagons-Lits Cook, and Balkantourist did not fail to note such a promising business opportunity. It highlighted Scandinavia alongside traditional tourist providers such as Austria and West Germany as a market in need of more concerted exploitation.⁴⁷ Stationing representatives in the West independently of the trade missions was still wishful thinking, but Balkantourist sought to forge personal ties with foreign travel agencies through business trips to the region. In 1959, Petar Ignatov proposed opening a handful of foreign bureaus, including one in Sweden, while simultaneously sending business delegations to eight Western countries, including all the Nordic countries barring Iceland.⁴⁸ The green light for such initiatives depended on the MFT, which was reluctant to sideline its own envoys. Ignatov's bold demands were rarely fulfilled, but a compromise was usually found, which was why a year later he was given official permission to invite foreign travel bureau representatives to Sofia to gain first-hand experience of Bulgarian resorts and Balkantourist's business style. Danish company representatives were among Balkantourist's first Western guests.⁴⁹

Barred from setting up its own branches abroad, Balkantourist began to collaborate with the Bulgarian civil aviation authorities, which already had a small international network. In 1960, the two organizations put together several all-inclusive tours for fortnight-long stays at Bulgarian seaside resorts. These offers were only marketed in three or four Western European countries, but Copenhagen was a key hub from the outset. The Copenhagen–Varna package was promoted across the entire Nordic market by soliciting options for regional transfers with Scandinavian aircraft from the other three capitals plus Bergen, Gothenburg, Kristiansand, and Stavanger.⁵⁰ At the time, the flight time from Copenhagen to Sofia alone was over 13 hours, followed by a domestic flight to the coast a day later. This made a Black Sea holiday quite a feat for Scandinavian holidaymakers, especially if they lived outside the Danish capital, and in fact the first Danish tourists registered by the MFA date from 1962.⁵¹

Meanwhile, commerce between Denmark and Bulgaria was growing. Once the MFT had set up shop in Copenhagen in 1960, bilateral trade between the two countries increased in the first two years from \$0.6 million to \$1.2 million. By 1965 it had grown to \$3.8 million, with Bulgaria's trade deficit skyrocketing from \$216,000 in 1960 to over \$2 million in 1965.⁵² The country's weak exports could not pay off the costs of high-tech imports of factory machinery and equipment from Denmark, but tourism represented a potential remedy.

Acknowledging that Bulgarian airlines' small aircraft and infrequent flights did not add to the attractiveness of all-inclusive tours from Copenhagen, Balkantourist looked for new partners in the Scandinavian market. This strategy became possible once tourism had been hived off from the foreign-trade sector (with the establishment of CDT in 1963). In 1964, Balkantourist signed its first contracts with two Danish travel companies with an all-Scandinavian reach, Startour and Jørgensens. In 1965–1966 alone, the number of Danish package tourists in Bulgaria doubled (from 1,219 to 2,533) and the revenues from this tourist flow almost tripled. A year later, the two Danish companies' package holidays took 4,503 Danes to the Black Sea coast, with a proportionate increase in revenue.⁵³ At a point when the Bulgarian resorts still counted Western holidaymakers in the tens of thousands, Scandinavian visitors had a visible presence. Moreover, the Bulgarian tourist management noted that the Scandinavians, who enjoyed high living standards, generally spent more money on their holidays. In fact, a few years later, Swedish tourists were estimated to bring in the highest hard-currency revenues per tourist.⁵⁴

Under the management of CDT, Balkantourist was finally authorized to set up its own network of foreign bureaus in the mid-1960s, and it began with sixteen, nine of them in Western Europe, including both Sweden and Denmark.⁵⁵ Balkantourist's ambitions did not end there, and soon

the enterprise was vying for bilateral tourism agreements with the UK, Benelux, and Scandinavia where “our interests are big.”⁵⁶ Thus far, economic cooperation with Denmark had run ahead of active intergovernmental relations, and economic ties were effected by a few business-minded in Bulgaria’s trade missions abroad and the small-scale tourist enterprise at home. A breakthrough in the diplomatic stalemate between Bulgaria and Denmark came in 1967 with an exchange of visits between the foreign ministers, Ivan Bashev and Jens Otto Krag.⁵⁷ As a result, the two governments signed several new agreements testifying to their mutual desire for greater cooperation in various fields including trade and tourism. The Agreement on Economic, Industrial and Technological Cooperation laid the ground for the establishment of a bilateral agency, the Mixed Bulgarian–Danish Commission for Economic, Industrial, and Technical Cooperation (MBDC). The MBDC met annually to discuss proposals for joint industrial projects, educational exchanges for specialists, the transfer of technical know-how, and industrial assistance, and then matched the offers and requests with suitable organizations in their respective countries.⁵⁸

Similarly, the Agreement for the Suppression of Visas aimed to improve Bulgaria’s position in the Danish tourist market.⁵⁹ Though this relaxation worked both ways, it had less impact on the mobility of Bulgarian citizens, who still faced formidable obstacles in exiting their own country. Indeed, the flow of travellers between the two countries remained disproportionate, so that in 1972, for example, the number of Danish visitors to Bulgaria was twenty times greater than the number of Bulgarians travelling in the opposite direction.⁶⁰

Tourism had been on the Bulgarian MFA’s agenda for the talks with Krag, although less prominently so than trade. The Danish government, however, had its own motives for raising the issue, inquiring about the possibilities for private Scandinavian companies to develop their own resorts on the Bulgarian coast. Bulgaria had already made legal provision for joint ventures with foreign capital (in trade as well as tourism), but so far such companies were only permitted on foreign soil, and with majority holding rights remaining in Bulgarian hands. Allowing foreign ventures to operate in Bulgaria was an entirely different matter, and highly sensitive politically because it challenged the fundamental socialist principle of state ownership. The MFA nevertheless committed itself to taking this question in consideration, and seemed to be positively inclined.⁶¹

As a result of the intergovernmental talks, the importance of economic cooperation with Denmark was reaffirmed and the plan targets were significantly increased. For the CT, this meant a projected threefold increase in Danish tourists in the coming three years (1968–1970).⁶² However, this was the very period when tourist numbers from Denmark plummeted. The foreign representatives cautiously attributed this to the devaluation of the Danish krone and increased taxes, which had hit the tourist market hard and sent some travel agencies into bankruptcy. Among them was Jørgensens, which had accounted for the greatest number of Danish tourists in Bulgaria.⁶³

The invasion of Czechoslovakia by the Warsaw Pact in 1968 was deliberately downplayed by the reports, although its impact was arguably more significant. In fact, Startour cancelled its tours to the country indefinitely after the invasion. Just as international politics could boost tourism, the opposite proved also to be true. Mirroring the Danish government’s decision to rescind its invitation to the Bulgarian leader Todor Zhivkov to visit in September 1968, Startour publicized the cancellation of its tours in the Danish media as a political rather than a business decision.⁶⁴ Instead of tripling as planned, by 1969 the number of Danish tourists in Bulgaria had dropped to one-third of the 1967 level. Yet even in such a poor year, tourism still kept its weight in the balance of payments. In 1969, the CT reported its hard-currency income by country

relative to export revenues from bilateral trade: revenues from Danish tourists were estimated to make up 9% of Bulgarian exports to the Danish market, while those from Swedish tourists amounted to 26% of Bulgarian exports there.⁶⁵

There was no denying that 1968 was disastrous for international tourism in Bulgaria. The previous year, the government had temporarily lifted visas to mark the International Year of the Tourist, and this special provision had then been extended to 1968. Nevertheless, a drop of 12% in the number of Western tourists and 17% in tourist revenues was registered by the CT.⁶⁶ As the repercussions from the invasion of Czechoslovakia began to hit, the BCP mobilized the diplomatic corps to improve Bulgaria's image. In May 1969, the Politburo passed a resolution calling for greater liaison with the Scandinavian states, and Bulgaria finally opened an embassy in Copenhagen. With the assistance of the diplomatic corps, the CT managed to sign new contracts with two Danish travel companies (Spies and Danropa) and to restart its work with Startour. The new partnerships secured the return of 4,600 Danish holidaymakers to Bulgarian resorts in 1970.⁶⁷

Bulgarian–Danish tourist partnerships in the 1970s: Opportunities and failures

In the 1960s, Bulgaria had mainly targeted Danish tourists through the travel programmes of Scandinavian tour operators. In the 1970s, the CT began to pursue a more active role in the management of the tourist groups. In the 1960s, bilateral partnerships had been negotiated by the small team of four representatives of Balkan Airlines and CT stationed in Copenhagen.⁶⁸ In contrast, in the 1970s new actors on the Bulgarian side became involved in brokering international tourism, while direct personal contact with foreign firms was replaced by more complex partnerships that required the coordination of multiple bureaucratic apparatuses.

One actor joining the promotion of Bulgarian resorts in Denmark was the newly opened Bulgarian embassy in Copenhagen. Working with the trade envoy, the chargé d'affaires launched a number of initiatives to diversify their tourist partnerships and reach out beyond the large travel companies, which were seen as monopolizing the market and undercutting their Bulgarian partners.⁶⁹ One of the embassy's first successes was with Folketurist, a travel bureau that had close ties to the Danish Communist Party. Folketurist mainly organized holidays to Eastern Europe, "above all to popularize the socialist countries" as their director said during his meeting at the embassy. Folketurist had previously sent 500–600 people in groups to Bulgaria by selling Startour and Jørgensen package tours, but Spies, Bulgaria's main partner in Denmark, refused to take additional groups contracted by external travel agencies. Folketurist expressed interest in expanding in Bulgaria by chartering its own flights, having already established similar programmes in the German Democratic Republic (GDR), the USSR, and Romania, where it sent several thousand people a year. Certainly, the partnership was an attractive prospect for Bulgaria. Folketurist's interest in specializing in low-season holidays for trade unionists, young people, and party activists fitted well with Bulgaria's attempts to stagger the holiday rush. The broader interest in exploring the country, encouraged by Folketurist's semi-political profile, also chimed with the new Bulgarian strategy for diversifying its international tourism.

The only problems that the Bulgarian embassy encountered in its preliminary negotiations with Folketurist were the company's competition with Spies and its complaints about the high prices of the Bulgarian airlines compared to the Scandinavian carriers. In his efforts to convince Folketurist's management to concentrate on Bulgaria, the Bulgarian chargé d'affaires found an unexpected ally in the Bulgarian Central Committee of Anti-Fascist Fighters, which,

coincidentally, had invited Folketurist's director to a meeting in one of Bulgaria's seaside resorts.⁷⁰

Political expediency and the bonds of socialist solidarity could advance as much as injure business interests. In their efforts to increase profits, the Bulgarian tourist agencies adopted a business model that had less to do with the socialist credo than with capitalist entrepreneurship. Yet, there were limits to the official tolerance of activities at variance with their ideological commitments. The collaboration with Swedish Folkturist illustrated this, for once it had failed to meet its financial obligations to Balkantourist and Balkan Airlines and the two Bulgarian agencies threatened to take legal action, the Central Committee of the Swedish Communist Party appealed to the Bulgarian embassy in Copenhagen to prevent the company's bankruptcy. Under pressure from the MFA, the CT withdrew its ultimatum and agreed to reschedule Folketurist's debt, against its own best interests.⁷¹

Apart from such overlaps—and contradictions—between economic and political interests, the attempt by various arms of the Bulgarian bureaucracy to work together often suffered from a lack of coordination, and business deals were more likely to be undermined by incompetence than by political reasoning. On many an occasion, the involvement of institutions at home jeopardized what Bulgaria's foreign representatives achieved, bringing a certain dissonance to Bulgarian–Danish negotiations. While the CT officials abroad concentrated on actual deals, and saw them through from beginning to end, their superiors would often fly in to sign the contract without taking the time to study the specific conditions or the nature of recent business relations. In 1972, for example, the CT delegation for the annual renewal of the tourist contract with Spies, the largest in Denmark, obtained “deplorable results” in the words of the local representative. By restarting negotiations from scratch instead of simply signing the agreement that had already been approved, the delegation seriously disrupted the smooth operation of this long-term deal. Moreover, during its visits to Copenhagen, the delegation did not even keep the embassy and the trade mission in the loop.⁷² This led to the Danish company not only rejecting the new demands, but cancelling all the groups that were already confirmed for the coming year.

Upheavals because of poor coordination were most frequent in the work of the MBDC. Under the supervision of two government bodies—the Danish Committee on Industrial–Technological Cooperation and the Bulgarian State Committee for Science and Technical Progress—the MBDC was expected to provide a stable framework for bilateral economic relations by facilitating partnerships between Bulgarian state enterprises and Danish private companies. The MBDC's objectives gave it considerable scope; however, it soon became clear that the national delegations, having different economic goals, also had very different priorities for the MBDC. This clash seemed insurmountable, blocking any real way forward, which led the chairman of the Danish party to threaten a boycott of the annual sessions. The crux of the problem was that the Bulgarian side avoided committing itself on trade (largely because it dared not interfere with foreign trade's parallel chain of command), and focused instead on industrial assistance. In contrast to the passivity of the Bulgarians, the Danes, who were not only state officials but also private entrepreneurs, were keenly interested in finalizing deals that could guarantee a financial return.⁷³

The Bulgarian side of the MBDC was tasked with increasing machinery exports, and tourism was not initially on its agenda. This perhaps explains one of the Bulgarians' first serious gaffes. At the second session of the MBDC in 1969, the Bulgarian delegation was informed of ongoing negotiations between the Bulgarian airline company and a Danish architect for a seaside hotel. Recognizing the potential of this contact to grow into a larger economic cooperation venture,

both parties to the MBDC agreed to set up a special commission with broader institutional participation, including the Bulgarian ambassador and Danish MBDC delegates, and possibly enlisting the help of Scandinavian Airlines System (SAS).⁷⁴ By the end of the following year, the Danes had fulfilled their commitment, but the Bulgarians remained silent and even failed to pay the architect for his work. At this point, the head of the Danish party, Knud Hannover, brought the issue to the attention of the Bulgarian embassy in Copenhagen.⁷⁵ In response to the latter's diplomatic memo on the issue, the Bulgarian MBDC party informed the MFA that "there is no trace in the Bulgarian part of the Commission of the matter that the memo discusses, it is neither known which is the Danish firm in question, nor which Danish representatives have come to Bulgaria in this regard, nor with whom they have held negotiations. The efforts made to learn something about this issue did not yield any results."⁷⁶ The issue kept coming up for at least a year, with no progress on the Bulgarian side to resolve it, to the growing irritation of their Danish counterparts.⁷⁷ That was the tipping point for the Danish Chairman, and soon after he threatened to dismantle the MBDC.

Ideological volatility of Bulgaria's international tourism

Many of the problems with the organization of Danish tourism in Bulgaria were caused by poor coordination among the institutions mired in the bureaucratism of its socialist command economy. However, tourism behind the Iron Curtain also faced problems that were quite mundane in essence, but took on an ideological form that sparked political reactions and sometimes even public panic. Such incidents were at times caused by random, unforeseeable factors, at other times by business disputes, but in either case their unexpected escalation into an ideological clash highlighted the possibility, real or imagined, of Western holidaymakers in Eastern Europe caught in the crossfire of Cold War antagonism. On some occasions, the Western press was quick to resort to ideological clichés, inciting public fears of the authoritarian environment of socialist Eastern Europe where Western tourists could find themselves vulnerable to state harassment and repression. The Bulgarian institutions, for their part, were overly sensitive to what they viewed as "hostile propaganda," and often suspected political orchestration when there was none.

More than any other form of cooperation across the "Iron Curtain," East-West tourism was influenced by the conflicting impulses of the Cold War and detente. It brought people from both sides of the divide together, and its role as emissary in securing a peaceful coexistence was a frequent trope in the rhetoric of tourism. In 1966, for example, Petko Todorov, Chairman of the CDT, opened his report to Todor Zhivkov with the usual reference to the global surge of international tourism, which led him to the somewhat bizarre conclusion that "In one year alone, in the orbit of international tourism, [we see] more people taking part, of their own free will and with best intentions, than the number of those involved in the entire Second World War."⁷⁸

While Bulgaria's trade and tourist partnerships in the Danish market in many ways developed in parallel, complementing one another, there was one significant difference in their operation, which became painfully clear after the events of 1968. Although both types of business deals were negotiated across the Iron Curtain between like-minded professionals, whose pragmatic interests superseded ideological disagreement, tourist contracts were far more volatile, ideologically speaking. Unlike exports of consumer goods, a tourist product tailored to the Western client and sold to the Danish market had to be consumed "behind enemy lines." Bulgarian resorts were designed to shelter foreign guests from their surroundings, but any rise in geopolitical tension impacted on the tourists' sense of safety. This was also the case with far more trivial holiday disruptions such as flight delays or road accidents.

In 1969, when Western tourists still had the Warsaw Pact invasion of Czechoslovakia fresh in their minds, a road accident caused by a Danish tourist coach received a great deal of attention in both the Danish media and Bulgarian diplomatic correspondence. The Danish driver, who was the owner of the travel bureau that had arranged the excursion, hit a little girl on the road (causing injuries leading to concussion) and was subsequently detained while the accident was investigated.⁷⁹ The 24-day arrest of a Danish citizen was covered extensively in the Danish press, where his personal account of police harassment and interrogation under torture became the main story.⁸⁰ This took on political overtones because of the driver's insistence that the Bulgarian prosecution suspected a political conspiracy was behind the accident, and that his interrogators had tried to force him to admit a political motivation. The Danish side of the story thus echoed Cold War spy-novel tropes of authoritarian harassment, while for the Bulgarian diplomatic service the "hostile press campaign" smacked of a propaganda operation."⁸¹

This two-sided ideological rhetoric completely overshadowed the more prosaic aspects of the story: the concerns of a Danish small businessman at the financial loss incurred by his arrest, and the fears of a country desperate to attract Western tourists about its effect on prospective customers. In the same turbulent year, the CT affiliate in Stockholm reported on another incident that threatened to hurt its work in the Swedish market: the news of an outbreak of jaundice at Sunny Beach was circulating among the Swedish travel firms.⁸² In a response marked "extremely urgent", the MFA instructed the embassy to immediately put out a denial of what it was to describe as a "malicious rumour."⁸³

Ideological rhetoric and pragmatic considerations played a role, sometimes purely opportunistically, in regular business deals in the tourist sector. At the end of the 1960s, the relationship with Startour was one example of this interplay between business strategy and political rhetoric. In 1968, the company announced its refusal to do business with Bulgarians in protest at the invasion of Czechoslovakia. The following year, the Bulgarian embassy reported another cancellation by the company, which had apparently resumed its business in Bulgaria after all. However, the ambassador, who communicated Startour's grievances and tried to save relations with the company, explained that they had cancelled because of the competition from Bulgarian state agencies, which were targeting Danish customers directly by undercutting Startour's prices.⁸⁴

In the years that followed, Scandinavian participation in the Bulgarian tourist sector expanded. In 1975, more than 45,000 Scandinavians visited the country.⁸⁵ Business disputes occasionally escalated into public mudslinging, complete with Cold War stereotypes. In 1975, for instance, Tjæreborg Rejser, the largest Danish tour operator with branches throughout Scandinavia, decided to terminate its partnership with Balkan Airlines. At this point Tjæreborg accounted for around 70% of Danish tourists in Bulgaria and for an added contingent of West Germans flown by Balkan (around 5,500 tourists).⁸⁶ Tjæreborg found Balkan's timetables inconvenient, and somehow the disagreement spiralled into open conflict. The West German news magazine *Stern* published a lengthy piece on the matter, opening with a swift political judgement: "[This is] how the bureaucrats from the Eastern bloc (socialist countries) spoil the holiday break of German tourists."⁸⁷ Bulgaria took its publication as evidence of "an attempt to use this case for political purposes and to blackmail our country."⁸⁸

The Bulgarian authorities saw the ideological card as one played to weaken their position in business deals or to damage the economic interests of the country. However, in the context of detente they also sought to exploit it to their benefit. The new phase of European cooperation heralded by the Helsinki Accords of 1975 promised new opportunities for East-West tourism. While the Bulgarian regime viewed the "third basket" of the Final Act with growing suspicion

for its humanitarian focus, the CT welcomed the inclusion of tourism under the rubrics of both economic cooperation and human contacts.⁸⁹ The promotion of international tourism featured in both second and third baskets, in recognition of “the interrelationship between the development of tourism and measures taken in other areas of economic activity,” and of tourism’s contribution to “the growth of understanding among peoples, to the improvement of contacts and to the broader use of leisure.”⁹⁰ For the CT, this recognition encouraged a new approach to attract Western visitors, one relying on diplomatic channels far more than on commercial partnerships, and on intergovernmental agreements rather than business deals.

Conclusion

In placing Bulgaria’s tourist boom against the Cold War backdrop, RFE’s 1966 report quoted earlier in this chapter speculated on whether opening up to the West might soon be halted because of the political risks it posed to an authoritarian regime with anti-capitalist zeal, or whether the financial incentives would prevail over ideological fears. Tackling the political implications of Bulgaria’s new economic course, as represented by its Western-oriented tourist industry, the report even suggested that it might be symptomatic of a larger process of “polycentrism, desatellization and the attenuation of the Cold War upon the Eastern European countries”.⁹¹ This hypothesis was soon proved wrong when in 1968 the Warsaw Pact tanks rolled into Czechoslovakia and Bulgarian troops were mobilized to join in the invasion. Domestically, the crackdown on the Prague Spring put an abrupt end to tentative reforms of Bulgaria’s planned economy, and the country’s economic liberalization was largely curtailed.⁹²

However, RFE’s more pessimistic scenario—that political expediency would dictate that Bulgaria downscale its tourist services for westerners—was not warranted either. While its post-1968 domestic policies were no doubt shaped by concern at the political risks that opening up to the West posed to regime stability, international tourism enjoyed the unwavering support of the party apparatus throughout the 1970s. The expansion of recreational services for foreign guests, primarily westerners, remained an economic priority. While Bulgaria welcomed an ever-increasing number of holidaymakers from non-socialist countries, its political system remained firmly in the orbit of the Soviet Union and there was no intention to pursue any form of “desatellization.”

From the early 1960s, socialist Bulgaria pursued an ambitious programme of international tourism that targeted particularly Western visitors who could contribute to the country’s hard-currency revenues. The aims behind the tourist boom were closely linked to the country’s economic policies, and especially its foreign trade, but the means to that end bound the tourist sector to diplomatic and foreign-policy endeavours. In Bulgaria’s tourist partnerships with Denmark, the triangle of trade, tourism, and diplomacy took on different shapes over time. In the early 1960s, tourism assisted foreign trade, and the two together were instrumental in establishing relations with Denmark, thus paving the way for high-level intergovernmental relations towards the end of the decade. In the 1970s, the tourist sector continued to act as a vehicle of national image-making, but, reciprocally, the diplomatic service became a promoter of international tourism. The close links between tourism and diplomacy, however, showed up in less advantageous ways too. Tourism behind the Iron Curtain was easily hampered by any event that could be framed as symptomatic of East–West political divergence.

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¹ Elitza Stanoeva, "Sotsialisticheskata targoviya v Balgariya (1954–1963): Ideologiya, distsiplina i marketing" [Socialist trade in Bulgaria (1954–1963): Ideology, discipline and marketing], *Sociological Problems*, no. 3–4 (2015).

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³ For subsidized domestic tourism as a proletarian social right, see Wendy Bracewell, "Adventures in the Marketplace: Yugoslav Travel Writing and Tourism in the 1950s–1960s," in *Turizm: The Russian and East European Tourism under Capitalism and Socialism*, ed. Anne E. Gorsuch and Diane P. Koenker (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2006), 251; Igor Duda, "Workers into Tourists: Entitlements, Desires, and the Realities of Social Tourism under Yugoslav Socialism," in *Yugoslavia's Sunny Side: A History of Tourism in Socialism*, ed. Hannes Grandits and Karin Taylor (Budapest: CEU Press, 2010); Duncan Light, "'A Medium of Revolutionary Propaganda': The State and Tourism Policy in the Romanian People's Republic, 1947–1965," *Journal of Tourism History* 5, no. 2 (2013), 189–94.

⁴ Another form of "export in situ" developed across the Eastern bloc was the hard-currency shop. For the history of the Bulgarian hard-currency shop, Corecom, see Rossitza Guentcheva, "Mobile Objects: Corecom and the Selling of Western Goods in Socialist Bulgaria," *Balkan Studies* 45, no. 1 (2009).

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- ³³ The transit passengers were divided into three main categories: 69% were Turkish guest workers in Western Europe (which represented more than half of all Western visitors), 19% were Middle Eastern guest workers (mainly from Syria, Jordan, and Lebanon), and 22% were Western holidaymakers en route to Turkey (mainly from Austria, Germany, and the UK). An additional category of incoming Westerners, accounting for around 5% of the total, were on business. Notes from the Committee for State Security on the Report by the Minister of Finance and the Chairman of CDT regarding the increase of foreign-currency revenues of international tourism, 8 December 1965, TsDA, f. 136 (Council of Ministers), op. 42, a.e. 90, l. 31–2.
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- ⁴³ Report of Petko Todorov, chairman of CT, to the Chairman of the Committee for Economic Coordination regarding the Conception for the development of sector “International and internal tourism” during the sixth five-year plan 1971–1975, 8 August 1970, TsDA, f. 310, op. 5, a.e. 6, l. 4, 11, 43–5.
- ⁴⁴ Ordinance 140 of the Committee for Economic Coordination, 1 April 1970, TsDA, f. 310, op. 5, a.e. 1, l. 22.
- ⁴⁵ I am grateful to the Danish embassy in Sofia for some materials on the Danish–Bulgarian diplomatic relations.
- ⁴⁶ Letter from the Bulgarian embassy in Copenhagen to Petar Mladenov, Minister of Foreign Affairs, 17 November 1973, TsDA, f. 1477 (Ministry of Foreign Affairs), op. 29, a.e. 1057, l. 13.
- ⁴⁷ Letter from MFA to Balkantourist, 16 April 1959, TsDA, f. 310, op. 2, a.e. 263, l. 273.
- ⁴⁸ Report of Petar Ignatov, chief director of Balkantourist, to the Minister of Trade regarding action measures for developing international and domestic tourism in Bulgaria, undated, TsDA, f. 310, op. 2, a.e. 262, l. 37, 40.
- ⁴⁹ Information on the work of Section “Capitalist Countries” during the first quarter of 1960, undated, TsDA, f. 310, op. 2, a.e. 287, l. 82.
- ⁵⁰ Price-setting of all-inclusive tours, undated, TsDA, f. 310, op. 3, a.e. 16, l. 1; Letter from Bulgarian Civil Aviation to Balkantourist, 14 May 1960, TsDA, f. 310, op. 3, a.e. 16, l. 105.

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- ⁵¹ Table of the flight costs and the revenues from flight tickets for the all-inclusive tours in 1961, 20 February 1961, TsDA, f. 310, op. 3, a.e. 16, l. 104; Information on the development of tourist relations between Bulgaria and Denmark, 26 December 1969, TsDA, f. 1477, op. 26, a.e. 1015, l. 9.
- ⁵² Information on the political, economic, industrial and scientific-technical relations between Bulgaria and Denmark, February 1973, TsDA, f. 1244 (Council of Mutual Economic Assistance), op. 1, a.e. 6781, l. 5; Information on the implementation of Politburo Resolution 168 of from 18 April 1967 and Resolution 430 from 31 October 1967 for the development of the relations between Bulgaria and Denmark, TsDA, f. 1477, op. 26, a.e. 1015, l. 4.
- ⁵³ Information on the development of tourist relations between Bulgaria and Denmark, 26 December 1969, TsDA, f. 1477, op. 26, a.e. 1015, l. 9.
- ⁵⁴ Tourist relations between Bulgarian and Sweden, 25 May 1973, TsDA, f. 1477, op. 29, a.e. 2996, l. 5. In their analyses based on external data for global trends in tourism, foreign trade experts highlighted Denmark, Sweden and Switzerland as having the highest standards of living and highest spending on tourism. Emil Georgiev, "Sastoyanie i perspektivi na zapadnoevropeyskiya turisticheski pazar" [Status and prospects on the West-European tourist market], *Vanshna targoviya* 3 (1969), 12.
- ⁵⁵ Report of Petko Todorov, chairman of CDT, to Todor Zhivkov, Chairman of the Council of Ministers, regarding some problems of the development of international tourism in Bulgaria, 7 October 1966, TsDA, f. 136, op. 42, a.e. 61, l. 69.
- ⁵⁶ Protocol of National convention on questions of tourism organized by the CT, 25 April 1967, TsDA, f. 310, op. 5, a.e. 5, l. 4.
- ⁵⁷ Information on the political relations between Bulgaria and Denmark, undated, TsDA, f. 1477, op. 25, a.e. 867, l. 113–14.
- ⁵⁸ Letter from the Council of Ministers, 6 June 1969, TsDA, f. 1477, op. 26, a.e. 1020, l. 10.
- ⁵⁹ Agreement on suppression of visas between Denmark and Bulgaria, 15 August 1967, TsDA, f. 1477, op. 25, a.e. 880, 1–5.
- ⁶⁰ Letter from the Minister of Foreign Affairs and the Chairman of CT to the chargé d'affaires in Denmark, 11 April 1973, TsDA, f. 1477, op. 29, a.e. 1058, l. 2.
- ⁶¹ Program for enlargement of commercial ties, industrial and scientific–technical cooperation between Bulgaria and Denmark, undated, TsDA, f. 1477, op. 26, a.e. 1015, l. 21.
- ⁶² *Ibid.* 20.
- ⁶³ Information on the development of tourist relations between Bulgaria and Denmark, 26 December 1969, TsDA, f. 1477, op. 26, a.e. 1015, l. 9.
- ⁶⁴ Letter from the Bulgarian embassy in Oslo to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 23 August 1968, TsDA, f. 1477, op. 25, a.e. 867, l. 221–2; Information on the development of tourist relations between Bulgaria and Denmark, 26 December 1969, TsDA, f. 1477, op. 26, a.e. 1015, l. 10.
- ⁶⁵ Report of Petko Todorov, chairman of CT, to the Chairman of the Committee for Economic Coordination regarding the conception for the development of sector "International and internal tourism" during the sixth five-year plan 1971–1975, 8 August 1970, TsDA, f. 310, op. 5, a.e. 6, l. 166.
- ⁶⁶ Report on the work of the representatives of the CT abroad in 1968 and their main tasks for 1969, undated, TsDA, f. 310, op. 5, a.e. 110, l. 5–10.
- ⁶⁷ Information on the development of tourist relations between Bulgaria and Denmark, 26 December 1969, TsDA, f. 1477, op. 26, a.e. 1015, l. 10.
- ⁶⁸ Letter from the Bulgarian embassy in Copenhagen to Petar Mladenov, Minister of Foreign Affairs, 17 November 1973, TsDA, f. 1477, op. 29, a.e. 1057, l. 13.
- ⁶⁹ Report on the work of the representatives of the CT abroad in 1968 and their main tasks for 1969, undated, TsDA, f. 310, op. 5, a.e. 110, l. 22–3.
- ⁷⁰ Memo on a meeting with Folketurist signed by the CT representative and the chargé d'affaires, 7 September 1970, TsDA, f. 1477, op. 27, a.e. 1115, l. 4–6.
- ⁷¹ Letter from the deputy minister of foreign affairs to the general director of the Bulgarian airlines Balkan, 12 September 1969, TsDA, f. 1477, op. 25, a.e. 2666, l. 7; Letter from the Bulgarian Civil Aviation to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 29 September 1969, TsDA, f. 1477, op. 25, a.e. 2666, l. 9; Letter from the CT to the deputy minister of foreign affairs, 15 October 1969, TsDA, f. 1477, op. 25, a.e. 2666, l. 11. On the operations of Folketurist in Eastern Europe, see Sune Bechmann Pedersen, "Eastbound Tourism in the Cold War: The History of the Swedish Communist Travel Agency Folketurist", *Journal of Tourism History* 10, no. 2 (2018).

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- ⁷² Letter from the Bulgarian embassy in Copenhagen to MFA, 11 January 1972, TsDA, f. 1477, op. 28, a.e. 1102, l. 1–7.
- ⁷³ Information on the political, economic, industrial and scientific-technical relations between Bulgaria and Denmark, February 1973, TsDA, f. 1244, op. 1, a.e. 6781, l. 8.
- ⁷⁴ Protocol of the Second session of the MBDC, 22 August 1969, TsDA, f. 1477, op. 26, a.e. 1020, l. 15.
- ⁷⁵ Memo signed by the trade representative and the first secretary at the Bulgarian embassy in Copenhagen, 25 January 1971, TsDA, f. 1477, op. 27, a.e. 1107, l. 19.
- ⁷⁶ Information on some issues of Bulgarian–Danish economic cooperation, undated, TsDA, f. 1477, op. 27, a.e. 1107, l. 25.
- ⁷⁷ Information regarding the meeting on 29–30 June [1971] between representatives of the Bulgarian and Danish parties at the MBDC, TsDA, f. 1477, op. 27, a.e. 1107, l. 145; Letter from the Bulgarian embassy in Copenhagen to Vladimir Ganovski, chairman of the Bulgarian party at the MBDC, 17 September 1971, TsDA, f. 1477, op. 27, a.e. 1107, l. 157.
- ⁷⁸ Report of Petko Todorov, chairman of CDT, to Todor Zhivkov, Chairman of the Council of Ministers, regarding some problems of the development of international tourism in Bulgaria, 7 October 1966, TsDA, f. 136, op. 42, a.e. 61, l. 63.
- ⁷⁹ Cable from the Bulgarian embassy in Copenhagen to the MFA, 10 June 1969, TsDA, f. 1477, op. 25, a.e. 889, l. 4.
- ⁸⁰ The Bulgarian tourist representative in Copenhagen sent a sample of translated publications from *Ekstra Bladet* (7 June 1969; also two separate materials from 9 June 1969) and *Berlingske Tidende* (9 June 1969). Letter from the CT representative in Copenhagen to the deputy chairman of the CT, 12 June 1969, TsDA, f. 1477, op. 25, a.e. 889, l. 6–11.
- ⁸¹ Letter to the Bulgarian embassy in Copenhagen, 3 July 1969, TsDA, f. 1477, op. 25, a.e. 889, l. 5.
- ⁸² Cable from the Bulgaria embassy in Stockholm to the CT and MFA, 19 June 1969, TsDA, f. 1477, op. 25, a.e. 2666, l. 4.
- ⁸³ Cable to the Bulgarian embassy in Stockholm, undated, TsDA, f. 1477, op. 25, a.e. 2666, l. 5.
- ⁸⁴ Letter from the Bulgarian embassy in Copenhagen to the MFA and CT, 10 May 1969, TsDA, f. 1477, op. 25, a.e. 897, l. 4.
- ⁸⁵ For a comparison, that year, Bulgaria received 216,974 visitors from West Germany, its largest tourist provider, 74,911 from the UK, 62,463 from France, 43,074 from Italy, 17,850 from Belgium. Yet, compared to these countries, the Scandinavian inflow stood out with its higher share of organized tourists and a much lower share of transit passengers. Report on the work of the CT representatives in 1975 on the fulfilment of the hard-currency plan of international tourism and the main tasks for 1976, TsDA, f. 1230, op. 1, a.e. 64, l. 22–33.
- ⁸⁶ Letter from the Bulgarian embassy in Copenhagen to Tano Tsolov, Chairman of the Commission for Economic and Scientific-Technical Cooperation, 4 October 1975, TsDA, f. 1244, op. 1, a.e. 8100, l. 95.
- ⁸⁷ Transcript translated from German (from *Stern* magazine, no. 23, 26 May 1976), TsDA, f. 1244, op. 1, a.e. 8142, l. 34.
- ⁸⁸ Letter from the Bulgarian embassy in Copenhagen to Georgi Pavlov, deputy chairman of the Commission for Economic and Scientific-Technical Cooperation, 10 June 1976, TsDA, f. 1244, op. 1, a.e. 8142, l. 33.
- ⁸⁹ Elitza Stanoeva, “Bulgaria’s 1,300 Years and East Berlin’s 750 Years: Comparing National and International Objectives of Socialist Anniversaries in the 1980s”, *CAS Working Paper Series 9/2017*, pp. 29–30.
- ⁹⁰ CSCE, *Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe Final Act* (Helsinki: 1975), pp. 32, 41.
- ⁹¹ Vacationland Bulgaria: The Tourist Boom, J.V. Storojev, 24 February 1966, HU OSA 300-8-3-15923, p. 1.
- ⁹² Martin Ivanov, *Reformatorstvo bez reformi: Politicheska ikonomiya na balgarskiya komunizam 1963–1989* [Reformation with no reforms: **The Political Economy of Bulgarian Communism 1963–1989**] (Sofia: Ciela, 2008).