

The politics of tourism in Hungary focusing on the first decade of the Kádár era

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Summary of the dissertation (abstract)

The dissertation focuses on the most significant momentums in the development of tourism in Hungary and on the politics of tourism between 1956 and 1966. Moreover it outlines premises and certain international trends. As long as our project is successful the dissertation gives an insight not only in the happenings of that ten-year's tourism but it also contributes to understand how the system operates and why certain things happened in the subsequent years.

The review of the Hungarian tourism until the Second World War and the tourism- politics of the Horthy era revealed the international competitiveness of Hungary. The chapter which studies the period from which the communists gained power until 1956 focuses on the unfavourable changes that happened due to the soviet type of state system and the bureaucratic state economy. The new leaders of the country stigmatized the tourism of the former period as 'bourgeois'. The decisions were ideologically motivated in this period, which resulted in a politics that denied and liquidated tourism. The attitude of the leaders to tourism in the Kádár era was determined by this heritage.

While several socialist countries, such as Bulgaria and Romania, started development in tourism from the early 1950s in order to push the advantage from international tourism, Hungary was a bit late, due to the revolution in 1956, and was also rather cautious in joining the competition for Western tourists. Uncertainty was characteristic of the 'Kádár leaders' until the early 1960s. This uncertainty was supported by the two principal branches of tourism- politics: the analysis in the administration of tourism and in the development of tourism. However there had been a significant change in the judgment of the sector from 1963. Changes of the circumstances and the economic situation made tourism important again.

The study in the state system proved that the corruption which was a typical feature of the system pervaded the touristic corps. The informal deals and the special compromises obstructed the development of an effective system. Charge was taken by the inter-trade portfolio which had control over the important relations of the branch and was strong enough to make favourable deals.

The flaws of the system had an impact on the development of tourism. The sector was lagging behind and the project of developing tourism was not based on professionalism. Instead of problem solving strategies a simplified approach was used focusing on quantity, which in the long run undermined development.

The start of tourism meant a huge challenge, though the economic and political situation after 1956 inspired the development of tourism, to the politicians who were used to the isolation politics of the Rákosi era. The free development of tourism was obstructed by the question of state security.

The need for development demanded the redefinition of the former political practice and the review of certain ideologies. Besides, the politics in tourism followed the variations which occurred in the political system itself, in some periods it was flexible while in others it was more rigid.

In the studied period the attitude of the party leaders meant a measure until the fall of the system. The positive evaluation of opening to the Western countries, the emphasis on the economic significance of tourism and the restriction of the sector based on ideology and state-security became principles.

Although Hungary made some success in the early 1960s in developing tourism due to the international relief and the dynamically increasing number of travellers a huge price had to be paid. The efficiency of the branch had slightly increased beside the extensive traffic development, the purchase of foreign currency resulted in the exploitation of the values of nature and infrastructure.