A Paradise behind the Curtain

Selling Eastern Escapes to Scandinavians

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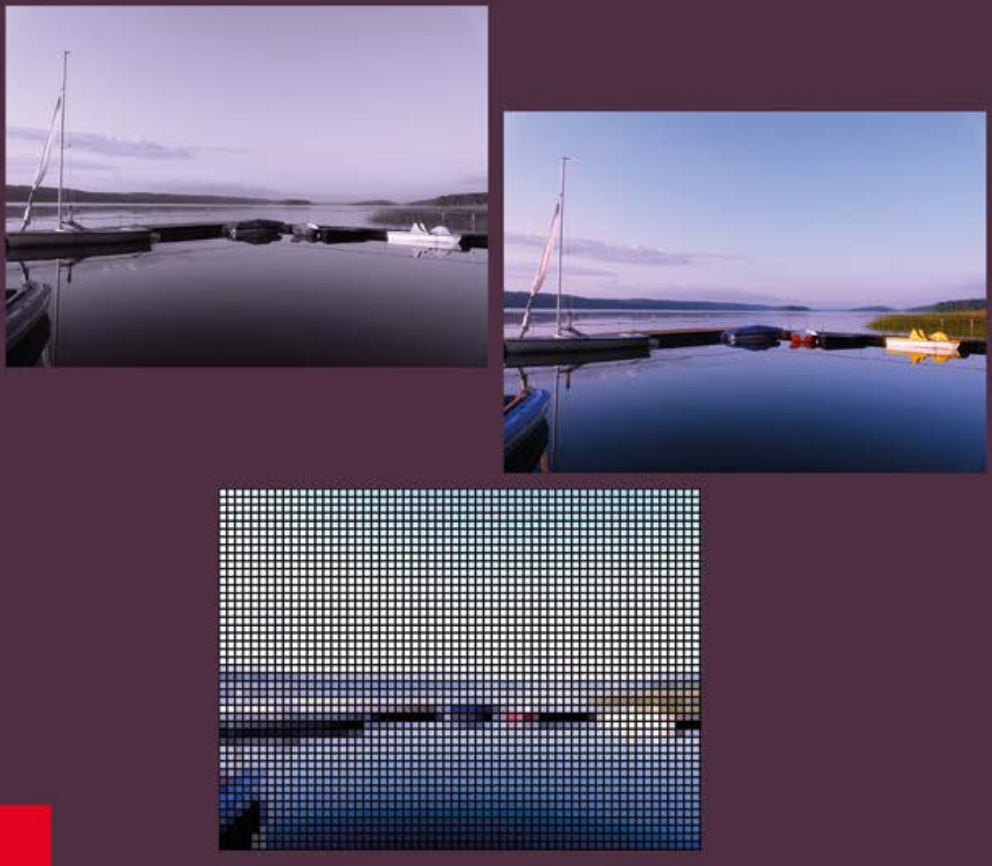
Touristische Sehnsuchtsorte in Mittel- und Osteuropa von 1945 bis zur Gegenwart



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Sune Bechmann Pedersen

A Paradise behind the Curtain: Selling Eastern Escapes to Scandinavians

When someone in the 1980s picked up an English or American mainstream tourist guidebook to Eastern Europe, a quick glance at the first pages would suffice to understand that this was an unusual tourist destination. Frommer's *Eastern Europe on $25 a Day* (1987) stated that 'it is largely unexplored by Westerners'.[1] The Rough Guide's 1988 edition on Eastern Europe (covering Hungary, Romania, and Bulgaria) informed the reader that it was 'a region whose potential most Westerners have yet to recognise'.[2] While this would also have been valid for many other corners of the world at this time, the unequivocal message was that Eastern Europe remained a unique, unexplored, and rather exotic region. In 1988, Penguin Books issued *A Guide to Central Europe*, which claimed to be 'the first guide since 1915 to attempt to describe the cities of what was once the Habsburg empire'.[3] The foreword to Fodor's 1987 guide to Hungary completes the picture. It announced that the previous guide to Hungary had been published twelve years earlier in 1975. In the meantime, tourism 'was not sufficient to keep an annually updated work afloat. For five years we were without any separate book on any Eastern European country'.[4] Although the preface also celebrated that tourism to the 'Eastern bloc countries' was currently on the rise, with Hungary in a leading position, the reader of any of these mainstream guidebooks would quickly understand that Eastern Europe was not on the Western tourist's beaten track.

The guidebooks' depiction of Eastern Europe as an unlikely destination for western tourists in the 1980s was quite right. Western visitors generally accounted for less than ten per cent of any East European country's total number of

1 Hadley, Morris H. / Tanner, Adam: Frommer's Eastern Europe on $25 a Day. New York 1987, p. 1.
2 Richardson, Dan / Denton, Jill: The Rough Guide to Eastern Europe: Hungary, Romanian and Bulgaria. Bromley 1988, p. 4.
3 Bassett, Richard: A Guide to Central Europe. London 1988, p. 1.
4 Fodor's Hungary. London 1987, p. vii.

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foreign visitors.[5] In most cases, the figure was probably even significantly smaller.[6] Nevertheless, East European governments, their state tourist agencies, and western travel companies made efforts throughout much of the Cold War to turn Eastern Europe into a site of western tourism.

This chapter traces the marketing of Eastern Europe in Scandinavia from the Second World War to the fall of Communism. It is a history of eastern governments and western businesses and their varying efforts to integrate Eastern Europe in the international travel industry. So far, only a few studies have explored the phenomenon, usually focusing on a single eastern case.[7] A more comprehensive history of western tourism to Eastern Europe is still to be awaited as transnational tourism during the Cold War era and the general implications of Eastern Europe's opening for western tourists remain understudied subjects.[8] This chapter starts bridging the lacuna. It does so by combining a general overview of western tourism to Eastern Europe during the Cold War with a study of two selected focus areas: The first focus concerns western tourism to Czechoslovakia. Czechoslovakia is a particularly interesting case as the country that generally received most western visitors during the Cold War. The second focus area is eastbound tourism from Scandinavia. Taking tourism statistics again as a point of departure, Scandinavia is another case worth studying in the context of this chapter. Compared to other western countries, Scandinavia accounted for a disproportionally high share of western tourists to Eastern Europe. In 1974, for instance, the three Scandinavian countries provided 10.5 % of the West European visitors to Romania – equalling France and second only to the Federal Republic of Germany. With an 18.5 % share of the Western visitors to Czechoslovakia the same year, Scandinavia ranked third after the FRG (40 %) and

5 Eastern Europe is used as synonymous with the Eastern bloc countries, leaving Albania and Yugoslavia – two countries with widely different tourist histories – outside the general scope of the chapter.

6 Statistical data on tourism is fraught with methodological problems. Definitions and calculation methods have varied considerably between countries and over time, and especially so in Eastern Europe. Hall, Derek R. (ed.): Tourism and Economic Development in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. London 1991, p. 13–17.

7 For instance, Salmon, Shawn: Marketing Socialism: Inturist in the Late 1950s and Early 1960s, in: Gorsuch, Anne E. / Koenker, Diane (ed.): *Turizm: The Russian and East European Tourist under Capitalism and Socialism.* Ithaca 2006, p. 186–204; Bren, Paulina: Tuzex and the Hustler: Living It Up in Czechoslovakia, in: Idem / Neuburger, Mary (ed.): *Communism Unwrapped: Consumption in Cold War Eastern Europe.* New York 2012, p. 27–48; Dragomir, Elena: Hotel Intercontinental in Bucharest: Competitive Advantage for the Socialist Tourist Industry in Romania, in: Miklóssy, Katalin / Ilič, Melanie (ed.): *Competition in Socialist Society.* New York 2014, p. 89–106. The recent PhD thesis by Adelina Stefan provides a rare exception: Vacationing in the Cold War: Foreign Tourists to Socialist Romania and Franco's Spain, 1960s–1970s (unpublished PhD, University of Pittsburgh, 2016).

8 Mikkonen, Simo / Koivunen, Pia: Introduction: Beyond the Divide, in: Idem (ed.): *Beyond the Divide: Entangled Histories of Cold War Europe.* New York 2015, p. 1–19, 7.

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Austria (23 %), but way above Italy (6 %), France (4 %), and the UK (2 %). The overall picture was identical. The FRG accounted for 42 % of all western visitors to Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Poland, and Romania combined. Austria ranked second with 19 % and Scandinavia third with 11 %.[9]

Drawing on a varied and so-far neglected body of sources including tourist brochures, travel magazines, guidebooks, postcards, travel journalism, government archives, and oral history interviews, the chapter argues that Eastern Europe never disappeared off the atlas of Scandinavian tourist desires. Contrary to the vision of tourism in Eastern Europe contained in the Anglo-American guidebooks cited above, the countries behind the Iron Curtain attracted millions of western visitors and were regularly advertised as attractive destinations much like any other destination on offer throughout most of the Cold War. Ideological reservations often succumbed to the economic advantages on either side of the East–West divide. Since its inception in 1929, Intourist, the Soviet state tourist agency, had openly sought to boost the Soviet economy through the export of tourist experiences.[10] The East European tourist agencies at times preferred dealing with commercial travel businesses in the West that offered larger guests numbers than the smaller travel agencies run by western Communist Parties.[11] The motivations of western travellers to the East are more difficult to ascertain. However, judging from oral history interviews, travel journalism, and advertisement, ideological convictions cannot account for the full scale of the phenomenon. Cheap pleasures and enchanting new views also contributed to making Eastern Europe a destination for western mass tourism from the 1960s.

Tourism in the ruins of Europe

To fully appreciate Eastern Europe's role in the post-war Scandinavian leisure culture, it is necessary to first consider the ways in which the Second World War shaped the tourist outlook on Europe. The Second World War interrupted the internationalization of the European tourism industry but it did not stop people from dreaming about a holiday abroad. The right to two weeks of paid holiday had been secured for everyone in Denmark and Sweden in the late 1930s, and in a

9 Cambau, Denise: Travel by Westerners to Eastern Europe, in: *ITA Bulletin* 1976/40. The total population of Denmark, Norway, and Sweden was 17 million in 1974. FRG's was 62 million.

10 Salmon, Shawn Conelly: To the Land of the Future: A History of Intourist and Travel to the Soviet Union, 1929–1991 (unpublished PhD, University of California, Berkeley, 2008), p. 32.

11 Bechmann Pedersen, Sune: From Communist Party Venture to Pan America Agent: Folkturist as a Failed Instrument in the Cultural Cold War. Paper presented at the conference "Machineries of Persuasion: European Soft Power and Public Diplomacy during the Cold War", Aarhus University (19–20 January 2017).

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drive to foster a healthy leisure culture, the labour movements in the two countries established travel cooperatives and published edifying leisure magazines advocating social democratic internationalism.

In 1943 in neutral Sweden, the travel cooperative Reso's member magazine *Fritiden* [Leisure] asked its readers about their travel plans after war's end. Subsequent editorials repeatedly expressed a longing for peace and the resumption of pre-war tourism patterns. A language school advertisement encouraged the readers to prepare for the open world of the future and offered lessons in a variety of European languages including Russian.[12] As the peace inched closer, a *Fritiden* editorial insisted that 'Swedes must travel to Europe as soon as possible' and demanded the gates to the world opened. The readers of the magazine were invited to nurture dreams of holidays everywhere beyond the Swedish borders. Although only a small fraction of the readership could realistically afford a holiday outside the Scandinavian countries, the magazine still featured articles about the likely tourist destinations of the future including the Soviet Union.

In Nazi occupied Denmark, the thirst for international travel was also expressed on the pages of a holiday catalogue by Dansk Folkeferie, the Danish labour movement's travel cooperative.[13] Like their international counterparts, Dansk Folkeferie and Reso imagined how foreign travel would help build international understanding and avert future wars. *Fritiden* sought 'to seriously learn and to build friendship with the war-tormented people!'[14] Tourism to the battlefields was explicitly discouraged as unethical sensationalism. An article recounted with disdain the hordes of souvenir-hunting tourists that had swarmed the trenches after the end of the First World War. In interwar Germany, Scandinavians attracted by the weak currency were despised as 'Valutaschweine.'[15] This time, however, tourism was supposed to foster friendship and contribute to a lasting peace in post-war Europe.[16]

Compared to the destruction wrought across the European continent, neutral Sweden and 'friendly occupied' Denmark emerged from the Second World War practically unharmed. After five years of strict travel regulations and censored news from the outside world, reconnecting with the continent was a matter of

12 *Fritiden* 1944/5, p. 3. All translations from Danish, Dutch, German, and Swedish are mine.
13 Warschawsky, Anja: Folkeferie – ferieformer, ferieindhold og dannelsesidealer 1938–1988 [Holiday for the People – Holiday Types, Holiday Content and Education Ideals 1938–1988], *Arbejderhistorie* Vol. 5 2008/2. The catalogue is undated. Probably published between 1943 and 1945.
14 [Ohlson, Ivan]: 'Öppna porterna mot världen!' [Open the Gates to the World!], in: *Fritiden* 1945/1, p. 5.
15 *Fritiden* 1945/1, p. 5; *Fritiden* 1944/1, p. 4–10.
16 The Danish holiday catalogue expressed identical visions. Warschawsky, Folkeferie, 2008, p. 5.

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government concern and public attention. By the summer of 1946, England and France opened to Scandinavian tourists. Direct sleeping cars linked Copenhagen with Paris and Stockholm with Warsaw. Coaches connected Scandinavia with Czechoslovakia, France, and Switzerland. In August 1946, Reso organized a conference with representatives from the USSR, France, Switzerland, and the Scandinavian neighbours.[17] In Czechoslovakia, the democratically elected government of 1946 sought to bring back foreign tourists to the country's famous spa resorts. Before the 1947 season, it eased the visa regulations so foreigners including Scandinavians could stay for up to two months.[18] In June, it floated the idea of a bilateral tourist agreement with Denmark that would trade spa treatments for luxury goods but the coup in February 1948 halted the talks.[19] The West Bohemian spa resort Carlsbad (Karlovy Vary) had once been a gathering point of Europe's aristocracy. By the early 20th century, however, it also catered to middle-class tourists as was humorously portrayed on period postcards and in the popular Danish novel *Knagsted* published in 1902.[20]

Reso jumped at the new opportunities in Czechoslovakia and organized package tours to Prague and Carlsbad for the 1947 season. Belgium, the Netherlands, France, and Switzerland also featured among that year's offerings. 'This year we also travel *to Europe!*'[21], *Fritiden* proudly proclaimed in the spring of 1947. The tours were organized to 'provide as good an impression as possible of the visited country, while also providing opportunity for rest, recreation, and entertainment.'[22] In reality, however, travelling on the continent took its toll. Hotels were scarce and the infrastructure ailing after the war. An English magazine reported on the coach connection between southern Sweden and Prague that lasted three strenuous days since 'the German highways are still full of potholes or are composed of that peculiar rough cobbling that makes the wheels seem as if they were shod with iron'.[23]

The prices of the first post-war package tours to the continent were well beyond the capacities of blue-collar workers. The all-inclusive two-week tours to

17 Internationell flaggprakt vid Brunnen [International flag splendour at Brunnen], in: *Fritiden* 1946/5, p. 39, 50.

18 Memorandum by the Czechoslovak embassy in Copenhagen, 15 February 1947, Rigsarkivet [Danish National Archives, DNA], Udenrigsministeriet [Ministry of Foreign Affairs], Gruppeordnede sager [Group-sorted files], 36 Tjek.

19 DNA GS 90 D 25.

20 Wied, Gustav: Knagsted. Copenhagen 1967 [1902]; Postcard archive of the Royal Library of Copenhagen.

21 I år reser vi också ut i Europa! [This year we also travel to Europe!], in: *Fritiden* 1947/3, p. 30. Emphasis in the original.

22 Ibid.

23 N.L.: By Bus from Sweden to Prague, in: *The Commercial Motor* (31 January 1947), available at <http://archive.commercialmotor.com/article/31st-january-1947/34/by-bus-from-sweden-to-prague> [15.10. 2018].

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Czechoslovakia, France, and Switzerland offered by Reso in 1947 cost from 525 to 615 Swedish crowns per person, or around ten per cent of the annual average income of a male industry worker.[24] Meanwhile the armchair traveller could rely on the travel journalism of newspapers and magazines like *Fritiden* to nurture the curiosity. Bombed out Germany was a common subject of travel writing – most memorably in the newspaper articles of Stig Dagerman published as *German Autumn* in 1947.[25] The following year, the Danish satirist Nold traversed the continent for five months and wrote with great wit of his experiences as a traveller in both Eastern and Western Europe.[26] By this time, though, the Cold War tensions had escalated and put an end to the Scandinavian tourist industry's attempts to include the Soviet Union and Czechoslovakia among their offerings. At the same time, the Marshall Plan's support of tourist industries helped shift the focus away from the Eastern states forced by Stalin to refuse the American initiative.[27] The efforts to integrate Czechoslovakia and the Soviet Union on the post-war holiday map still deserve attention despite their short-lived nature. Some areas behind the Iron Curtain used to be important tourist destinations for westerners and this had not been forgotten roughly ten years later when the borders were reopened. Bulgaria and Romania might have been uncharted territories to the Scandinavian tourist, but Budapest and Prague, Leningrad and Moscow were not.

The rise to power of communist governments across Soviet-dominated Europe complicated the communication lines with Scandinavia, but the Iron Curtain was never fully impenetrable. The Communist parties were eager to fight bourgeois influences from the West, but they also strove to maintain connections with the friendly Communist parties and intellectuals in the capitalist camp.[28] Recreational visits of westerners in Eastern Europe were limited to the select few on good terms with the regimes, but some degree of international trade and business connections was also maintained with neutral Sweden and with Den-

24 *Fritiden* 1947/3, p. 31, 35; Statistisk årsbok 1949, table 201, p. 241.

25 Dagerman, Stig: Tysk höst [German Autumn]. Stockholm 1947. See also Östling, Johan: Sweden after Nazism: Politics and Culture in the Wake of the Second World War. New York 2016, p. 242–55.

26 See for instance Nold: 'Et Kik bag Jerntæppet' [A Peek behind the Iron Curtain]. Aarhus Stiftstidende (9 July 1948).

27 Zuelow, Eric G. E.: A History of Modern Tourism. London 2015, p. 149–55. On the Marshall Plan and the French tourist industry, see Endy, Christopher: Cold War Holidays: American Tourism in France. Chapel Hill 2004.

28 On Czechoslovakia and the West in the 1940s and 1950s, see Šmidrkal, Václav: The Image of "Real France": Instrumentalization of French Culture in the Early Communist Czechoslovakia, in: Mikkonen / Koivunen (ed.): *Beyond the Divide*, 2015, p. 177–195; on Soviet friendship societies in the West, see Grossmann, Sonja: Dealing with "Friends": Soviet Friendship Societies in Western Europe as a Challenge for Western Diplomacy, in: *Ibid.*, p. 196–217.

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mark despite its NATO-membership.[29] The Danish government was keen to maintain communications with its traditional German export market and heavily subsidized a train line between Copenhagen and Berlin.[30] The complex and cumbersome visa regulations of the Soviet Occupation Zone (SOZ) restricted the traffic on the route. Obtaining permission to travel through the SOZ (and the GDR after 1949) was similarly difficult and the journey generally unpleasant. In February 1950, the Danish ambassador to Prague reported that travelling on the direct train from Copenhagen to Prague via Berlin was made so disagreeable by the Soviet officials that 'people are reluctant to use this travel route more than once in a lifetime.'[31] Those who could afford to fly over eastern Germany to avoid the bureaucratic maze faced equally complex visa regimes in other parts of Eastern Europe. For instance, visitors to Czechoslovakia after the coup could apply for an entry permit but this did not entail the permission to leave the country again. Instead, an exit permit had to be applied for after arrival in the country – and obtaining this could take several days. As a result, short-term business visits were rendered next to impossible.[32] For good reasons, travelling to Communist Europe at the height of the early Cold War became known as an ordeal.[33] Only the members of officially invited delegations could trust that their journey across the Iron Curtain would proceed somewhat smoothly as their hosts usually took great care to impress them with the advances of the socialist society.

The delegation visits in the late 1940s and early 1950s frequently resulted in travel accounts published as books or newspaper articles. These accounts provided a unique source of knowledge about the Communist world and received a fair amount of publicity.[34] At the same time, the general isolationism of the Soviet

29 Kristensen, Lasse: Tjekkoslovakiets eksempel – ungkommunistisk dannelse i begyndelsen af den kolde krig [The Example of Czechoslovakia – Youth Communist Education at the Beginning of the Cold War], in: *Arbejderhistorie* 2008/2–3, p. 39–51. For instance, Danish fish export to Czechoslovakia continued after 1948. See also Boje, Per / Rostgaard, Marianne / Rüdiger, Mogens: Handelspolitikken som kampplads under Den Kolde Krig [Trade Policy as a Battleground during the Cold War]. Aalborg 2012.

30 Memorandum, 28 July 1950, DNA GS 90 DAN 2/28.

31 DNA GS 90 DAN 2/28.

32 Complaints from travellers, memoranda from the Danish embassies in Prague and Vienna, and report from the Swedish–Czechoslovak chamber of commerce, DNA GS 36 Tjek.

33 With the exception of Yugoslavia, which welcomed western tourists between 1945 and 1948, and again – and on a larger scale – from the 1950s. Tchoukarine, Igor: The Yugoslav Road to International Tourism: Opening, Decentralization, and Propaganda in the Early 1950s, in Grandits, Hannes / Taylor, Karin (ed.): *Yugoslavia's Sunny Side: A History of Tourism in Socialism (1950s–1980s)*. Budapest 2010, p. 107–138.

34 On Danish (and some Swedish) travel writing about the Soviet Union in the early Cold War, see Vyff, Iben: Øst, vest – hvilken fremtid er bedst?: Danskere på rejse i USA og Sovjetunionen i 1950erne [East, West – what future is best? Danes travelling in the USA and the Soviet Union in the 1950s] (PhD, Roskilde University, 2007).

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Union stoked frustrations. In an editorial titled 'Iron Curtain tourists' from May 1954, the conservative Danish daily *Jyllands-Posten* called for the Iron Curtain to become like any other border: open to travellers prepared to spend money on a visit to a foreign country. The newspaper was confident that Denmark would easily triumph over the Soviet Union in a comparison of living conditions in the two countries.[35] Also the editor of the Danish centre-left daily *Politiken* lamented the obstacles to reaching an objective assessment of the situation in the Soviet Union.[36] After years of partisan reporting from the East, the interest was substantial when the Communist states took steps to reopening the tourist traffic.

The opening of Eastern Europe to the West

In early April 1953, just a month after Stalin's death, the official Soviet travel agency Intourist conveyed to Dansk Folkeferie that it seriously considered resuscitating pre-war travel connections. Hordes of interested customers immediately approached the company when the news broke, but they would have to wait for another couple of years.[37] Shortly before the Geneva summit in July 1955, which constituted a significant improvement in superpower relations, the Soviet authorities re-established contacts with tourist agencies in Britain, Norway, Italy, and Sweden.[38] In June 1955, it became front-page news that Danish tourists would soon be able to visit the Soviet Union. In August, the actual arrival of the first contingents of foreign tourists in the Soviet Union since the Second World War also hit the front page of Danish newspapers.[39] British and French football fans travelled to see their heroes play against Soviet teams and a small group of Swedes came to see 'the sights of the town' as a Moscow newspaper put it.[40]

The Swedes travelled with Reso, which proudly boasted about its pioneer

35 Jerntæppe-Turister [Iron Curtain Tourists], in: *Jyllands-Posten* (3 May 1954). All Danish newspaper articles retrieved through Mediestream: <www2.statsbiblioteket.dk/Mediestream> [24.11.2016].

36 Quoted in Vyff, Danskere på rejse, 2007, p. 263.

37 Mange vil til Sovjet [Many Want to Go to the Soviet Union], in: *Information* (8 April 1953). The Soviet overtures to Denmark were noticed in Britain and sparked efforts by the British Holiday Tourist Association to obtain passage to the Soviet Union for British tourists. National Archives, London, Foreign Office, FO 371, 106579.

38 Gorsuch, Anne E.: All This Is Your World: Soviet Tourism at Home and Abroad after Stalin. Oxford 2011, p. 11.

39 DSB forbereder Sovjet-Rejser [DSB Prepares Soviet Journeys], in: *Jyllands-Posten* (8 June 1955); Russerne venter Turist-Invasion [The Russians Expect a Tourist Invasion], in: *Berlingske Aftenavis* (8 August 1955).

40 English translation of *Vechernyaya Moskva* (5 August 1955), Riksarkivet [Swedish National Archives, SNA], Utrikesdepartementet [Ministry of Foreign Affairs], I7.Er.

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Fig. 1: The Swedish photographer Georg Oddner travelled with the first Reso party to the Soviet Union after the Second World War. © Georg Oddner/ Malmö Museums.

achievement.[41] However, Reso was far from the only western operator interested in a share of the Soviet market. The dominant Swedish players, Nordisk Resebureau and Nyman & Schultz, had carefully followed the development and the latter prepared a wide-ranging Soviet programme for 1956. Acting in the 'spirit of Geneva', Intourist had closed deals with 25 foreign travel companies by January 1956.[42] The travel cooperatives associated with the Western labour movements were natural partners. However, spurred by the interest in hard currency and good publicity, Intourist also collaborated with traditional commercial

41 Lunds universitetsbibliotek [Lund University Library, LUB], *Reso Semesterhandbok 1956*, p. 79.

42 Memorandum by the Swedish embassy in Moscow, 11 January 1956. SNA UD I7.Er.

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operators such as Nyman & Schultz with whom they had worked since the 1930s.[43]

At the close of 1954, news had also begun to circulate of an impending reopening to western spa guests of Carlsbad and the nearby spa town of Marienbad (Mariánské Lázně). A Danish diplomat visited the facilities and reported that significant improvements were badly needed before western tourists could possibly be persuaded to return.[44] Nevertheless, spa retreats were advertised in the West throughout 1955, and contacts were reportedly established with travel companies in Austria, England, France, and the US.[45] Starting in March 1956, Czechoslovakia began issuing two-week tourist visas to western tourists. Čedok, the Czechoslovak state travel bureau, prepared thirteen hotels for western guests and invited forty representatives of various western travel companies to the country with Denmark and Sweden among those to whom Čedok made its overtures.[46]

In the 1956 season, Reso offered package tours not only to Leningrad and Crimea, but also to Budapest, the Black Sea coast of Bulgaria, and West Berlin including visits to East Berlin and Potsdam in East Germany proper. However, the autumn uprising in Hungary and its brutal suppression by the Red Army curbed the Scandinavian interest in a holiday in Eastern Europe the following season.[47] Hungary and Bulgaria disappeared from the catalogues, but Nyman & Schultz nevertheless introduced Czechoslovakia as a new destination in 1957. The presentation avoided all references to contemporary politics. Instead, the catalogue highlighted that the country's 'innumerable art treasures' and 'wonderful nature' had earned the country a place among 'Europe's famous tourist countries' a long time ago.[48] The package tour included visits to sights such as the Karlštejn castle, the Macocha abyss, and the Bohemian spas, which all enjoyed a fine pedigree as tourist attractions. The advertisement of Czechoslovakia as a traditional destination was even more apparent when Reso returned to the country in 1958. The destination was hailed as 'far too familiar to need further description'.[49] Reso's 11-day package tour differed somewhat from Nyman & Schultz's programme. It catered to the tourists curious to gather first-hand impressions of a socialist society with a 'Czechoslovakia of today' excursion to modern industrial cities like Ostrava and Gottwaldov (Zlín). The companies thus

43 Salmon, Marketing Socialism, 2006, p. 189. Correspondences between the Swedish Foreign Office and Nyman & Schultz, September 1955, SNA UD I7.
44 Report by the Danish embassy in Prague, 8 December 1954, DNA GS 90 Tjek 10.
45 Report by the Danish embassy in Prague, 23 September 1955, DNA GS 90 Tjek 10.
46 Report by the Danish embassy in Prague, 13 April 1956, DNA GS 90 Tjek 10.
47 *Reso verksamhetsberättelse 1957*, p. 15. LUB.
48 *Nyman & Schultz Privatresor: Resenyheter 1957*, p. 99. LUB.
49 *Reso Semesterhandbok 1958*, p. 52. LUB.

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seem to have divided the market between them with Nyman & Schultz branding the country's traditional attractions and Reso appealing to those more interested in the country's contemporary development. However, Reso's programme also entailed visits to old castles and palaces and a chance to enjoy the Czechoslovak nature. In both cases, the programmes promised unguided strolls in Prague.

The advertisement of Czechoslovakia as a familiar destination demonstrates the unique strength of Czechoslovakia's 'brand' compared to its competitors in the eastern camp. No other country behind the Iron Curtain was advertised with the same confidence. It shows the durability of its tourist attractions established in the 19th century and their persistent allure despite adverse political situations. Carlsbad was such a household name that when the town was cut off from its western clientele in the early Cold War, spa hotels in Italy, Luxembourg, and Switzerland invoked its name, advertising themselves as 'the Italian Carlsbad', 'the Carlsbad of the West', and 'on par with Carlsbad'.[50]

The use of the Czechoslovak aristocratic heritage for tourist purposes was never anathema, not even at the height of Stalinism.[51] Although the party line considered the nobility parasitic exploiters of the working class, the cultural policy still allowed for the touristic use of their confiscated castles and chateaux. The point was to convey party ideology through exhibitions, signage, and guided tours, but in reality, visitors were sometimes met with messages that did not adhere to the official interpretation.[52] Nevertheless, pioneers on summer camps would go on excursions to picturesque sites like Pernštejn castle in the 1950s – an example of how romantic notions of nature and recreation thrived inside the Party.[53]

While the general diplomatic relations between East and West improved in the late 1950s, it still took a while before Čedok and Intourist were joined in their ambition to attract western visitors. In 1958, Hungary, Romania, and Bulgaria were described in the Danish press as inaccessible for tourists. East Germany only permitted transit travel and business visits to trade fairs while Poland issued

50 The advertisements appeared repeatedly in the Dutch *Algemeen Handelsblad* and *Nieuw Israelietisch weekblad* in the 1950s. Dutch newspaper advertisements retrieved through Delpher: <http://www.delpher.nl/> [24.11.2016].

51 Somewhat paradoxically, Stalin also went to great lenghts to preserve the imperial heritage of Leningrad. Maddox, Steven: Saving Stalin's Imperial City: Historic Preservation in Leningrad, 1930–1950. Bloomington 2015.

52 Giustino, Cathleen M.: Open Gates and Wandering Minds: Codes, Castles, and Chateaux in Socialist Czechoslovakia before 1960, in: Idem et al. (ed.): *Socialist Escapes: Breaking Away from Ideology and Everyday Routine in Eastern Europe, 1945–1989*. New York 2013, p. 48–72.

53 Letters and diaries of Dutch participants at Czechoslovak pioneer summer camps, 1956–1962. International Institute of Social History, Amsterdam, Archief Uilenspiegelclub. 50.

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eight-day visas.[54] The following year witnessed a rising Danish interest in travel to the Soviet Union. Hungary opened the door and Bulgaria became accessible through German travel companies. Newspapers of all stripes covered the increased tourist possibilities. The friendlier attitude towards westerners was perceived as evidence of Khrushchev's "peaceful coexistence" theory, which marked a definitive and much welcomed farewell to Stalinism.[55]

Swedish companies remained in the lead of the race to offer eastern destinations to western travellers. Stays in West Berlin with excursions to East Berlin (and sometimes East Germany) were routinely offered by Reso and Nyman & Schultz since 1956 and 1957 respectively. Nyman & Schultz began offering tours to Bulgaria in 1958 and with the introduction of Romania in Reso's portfolio in 1961, package tours to all the East European countries were offered on the Scandinavian market. The visibility and accessibility of the East European destinations increased with the opening of state travel bureau offices in the 1960s. Čedok opened an office in Copenhagen in 1961. Intourist and Bulgaria's Balkantourist followed suit in 1963, and the year after, the Polish Orbis opened an office. By the early 1970s, all the East European state travel bureaus had offices in both Copenhagen and Stockholm.

New companies also entered the market for holidays in Eastern Europe. In 1961, the Swedish company Folkturist was founded aiming 'to swell the number of tourists for the socialist countries'.[56] Folketurist, its Danish equivalent, had seen the light just a few months earlier and throughout the period the two companies would collaborate closely. Their political allegiances were evident. In the 1962 catalogue of Folkturist, the company offered its services to 'workers and clerks, artists and scientists, old as well as young'. Its package tours aimed to 'broaden the views' and increase knowledge about other people's 'style and standard, labour and culture' – much in line with the internationalist ideals espoused by the Scandinavian labour movement and expressed in *Fritiden* around 1945. However, the companies also appealed to the market for leisure tours. 'Relaxation and recreation' was also listed among the prominent aims of the tours.[57] The emphasis on leisure and entertainment was reflected in the catalogue's offerings. It included seaside holidays to Hungary's Lake Balaton, the

54 Det er dyrt at rejse som turist i Sovjetunionen [It Is Expensive to Travel as a Tourist in the Soviet Union], in: *Lolland-Falsters Stifts-Tidende* (12 February 1958).

55 See for instance: Hvor tager man hen i feriens glade dage [Where to Go in the Happy Holidays], in: *Folketidende (Ringsted, Sorø, Haslev)* (28 May 1959); Jensen, Vagn: Et pund smør koster mere end en teaterbillet [A Pound of Butter Costs More Than a Theatre Ticket], in: *Aktuelt* (24 May 1959); Bonde-Henriksen, Henrik: Derfor aabnes grænserne [Thus the Borders are Opened], in: *Berlingske Tidende* (7 December 1959).

56 Application for associate membership of BITEJ, 5 March 1976, Arbetarrörelsens arkiv och bibliotek [Swedish Labour Movement's Archives and Library], Folkturist-Baltor, 4306/4.

57 *Folk-Turist 1962*, p. 1. LUB.

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Black Sea coasts of Bulgaria and Romania, and to the Baltic shores of East Germany. Only the tours to Leningrad, Moscow, and Prague highlighted modern features that could be attributed to the socialist society – for instance, impressive new sport arenas. In later years, the programme would sometimes include clearly politicized tours such as May Day trips to East Berlin, Moscow, and Leningrad, and study trips to East Germany, Albania, and Vietnam. Nevertheless, recreational sun and sea package tours to Eastern Europe remained a stable of their portfolio and accounted for a large share of their revenue.[58]

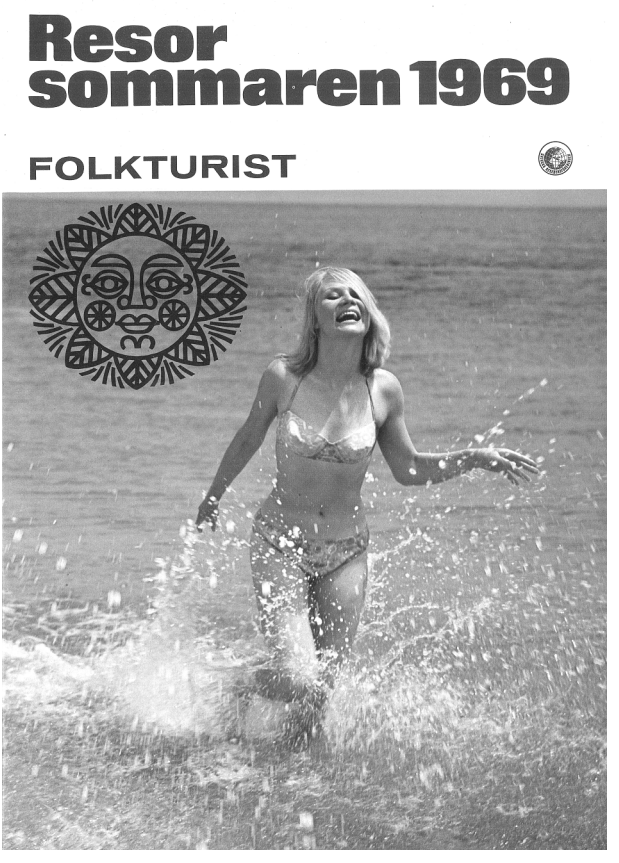

Fig. 2: With holiday catalogues like this, the Swedish Communist Party's travel agency tried to sell Eastern Europe as a sun and sea paradise. Small print collection, Lund University Library.

58 Bechmann Pedersen, Folkturist, 2017.

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Guiding tourists to Eastern Europe

The statutory right to paid leave – extended to three weeks in the early 1950s and to five weeks in the late 1970s – enabled Scandinavians to leave on long surface journeys to mainland Europe before the era of cheap airfares. The combined push effect of long holidays, rising purchase power, good language skills, and unimpressive summer weather, made Scandinavians go on holiday abroad in large numbers. A Danish Gallup poll from 1960 reported that one third of the population had spent a holiday abroad at least once after the war. Polls conducted annually the following decades showed that around thirty per cent of the surveyed Danes planned to spend their summer holiday abroad every given year.[59] The package tour was the perfect technology for the inexperienced tourist going abroad for the first time. When accommodation, meals, and transportation are taken care of, the inconveniences and risks associated with foreign travel are greatly reduced.[60] At the same time, western package tours were popular with the East European states as it helped them exert social control over the tourists. In East Germany and the Soviet Union, they accounted for the overwhelming majority of tourists throughout the Cold War. Moreover, full board remained the norm in the two countries as it minimized the contamination of locals with western fads. In comparison, half-board became more widespread on the sun and sea tours to Bulgaria and Romania in the 1980s.[61]

The new opportunities for western tourists to visit countries in Eastern Europe stimulated a demand for information about the practicalities of such journeys and the attractions they offered. A market thus emerged for new and up-to-date guidebooks. The essence of the modern tourist guidebook is to provide reproducible patterns of travel. The guidebook helps direct the stream of foreigners and their tourist gaze.[62] Through its inclusions and silences, it in-

59 "Gallup 1960: Danskernes sommerferievaner", available online via the University of Aarhus: <http://danmarkshistorien.dk/leksikon-og-kilder/vis/materiale/gallup-1960-danskernes-sommerferievaner/> [01. 12. 2018]; further polls published by "Ugens Gallup" were accessed via <https://www2.tns-gallup.dk/nyhedscenter/meningsmaalinger.aspx> [18. 04. 2019].

60 Kopper, Christopher M.: The Breakthrough of the Package Tour in Germany after 1945, in: *Journal of Tourism History* Vol. 1 2009/1, p. 67–92; Kaiserfeld, Thomas: From Sightseeing to Sunbathing: Changing Traditions in Swedish Package Tours; From Edification by Bus to Relaxation by Airplane in the 1950s and 1960s, in: *Journal of Tourism History*, Vol. 2 2010/3, p. 149–163.

61 Sina Fabian makes a similar observation about West German package tours to Spain. She ascribes the change to the changing demands of more seasoned and independently minded tourists in the 1980s – an argument that might be applicable to the South-East European cases as well. Fabian, Sina: Massentourismus und Individualität: Pauschalurlaube westdeutscher Reisender in Spanien während der 1970er- und 1980er-Jahre, in: *Zeithistorische Forschungen/ Studies in Contemporary History* Vol. 13 2016/1, p. 61–85.

62 Urry, John: The Tourist Gaze: Leisure and Travel in Contemporary Societies. London 1990.

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fluences what is seen and what is hidden from the travellers. To legitimize its own existence, the modern guidebook will almost inevitably argue why a visit to the location in question is worthwhile. This makes the guidebooks to Communist Europe particularly interesting sources. Their presentations of the destinations' recent history, contemporary situation, and exciting attractions helped constitute the tourist discourse on Cold War Eastern Europe. The production of guidebooks was key to putting Communist Europe on the post-war tourist map as they nurtured desires and helped tourists negotiate the bureaucracy. Guidebooks are thus useful in assessing the relation of commercial tourism to Cold War politics. Curiously, though, next to no research has examined the special role of tourist guidebooks to Communist Europe.[63]

In Scandinavia, the mainstream guidebook series *Turen går til* (The Trip Goes to) was launched in 1952. Its success was immediate and it quickly became the leading series in Denmark. Swedish and Norwegian editions soon followed and a few guidebooks were even translated for the German market.[64] The total sales of *Turen går til* reached 373,000 in 1962.[65] The publisher recognized the potential of the East European destinations at an early stage. Guidebooks appeared to Yugoslavia in 1957, Berlin in 1960, and Czechoslovakia in 1962. Between 1967 and 1970, Bulgaria, Hungary, Poland, and Romania also received their own guidebooks in the series. Throughout the Cold War, the guidebook to Czechoslovakia remained the most frequently updated with eight editions published between 1962 and the summer of 1989. This is best explained as a consequence of Czechoslovakia's relative popularity as a destination for tourists travelling alone or in smaller groups without guides.[66]

Producing guidebooks for destinations behind the Iron Curtain was not a straightforward job. When Temple Fielding compiled his best-selling *Travel Guide to Europe* (first published in 1948), he found the East European countries attractive but off limits to the American tourist. Subsequent editions lamented

63 In contrast, the media history of the guidebook in the 19th and early 20th century has been thoroughly explored. See for instance Anisimov, Evgenii V. / Bekasova, Alexandra / Kalemeneva, Ekaterina: Books that Link Worlds: Travel Guides, the Development of Transportation Infrastructure, and the Emergence of the Tourism Industry in Imperial Russia, Nineteenth–Early Twentieth Centuries, in: *Journal of Tourism History* Vol. 8 2016/2, p. 184–204; Müller, Susanne: Die Welt des Baedeker: Eine Medienkulturgeschichte des Reiseführers 1830–1945. Frankfurt/Main 2012; Peel, Victoria / Sørensen, Anders: Exploring the Use and Impact of Travel Guidebooks. Bristol 2016.

64 The German editions appeared in the Polyglott Reiseführer series.

65 It is unclear if this figure – printed in a Danish guidebook – included the Swedish and Norwegian sales, but at any rate, it remains impressive. Figure from Poulsen, Milena: Turen går til Tjekkoslovakiet [The Trip Goes to Czechoslovakia]. Copenhagen 1962, p. 65.

66 Still, the Danish embassy in Prague reported in 1975 that the majority of Danish tourists arrived on package tours, though it admitted having no official data to support the claim. DNA Journalsager [Journal files] 36 D 78a.

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this fact: 'It's a wonderful country, this Czechoslovakia, with some of Europe's most gracious citizens – if you can get in. I couldn't.'[67] 'Maybe you'll get a visa for Soviet Hungary, maybe you'll go, and maybe you'll enjoy it. For my part, I couldn't.'[68] Later on, when the Eastern governments had become more inviting, guidebooks authors still needed to collaborate with the authorities to obtain the necessary travel permits and collect the most recent information about visa rules, currency regulations, and compulsory hotel reservations. The Eastern governments had a natural interest in how their countries were portrayed and they possessed some leverage over the authors and their publishers. The books would hardly serve their purpose if they could not travel through the Iron Curtain.[69] At the same time, western visitors remained an important source of hard currency that the official travel bureaus sought to cultivate. The balancing act means that guidebooks to Eastern Europe published in the West, at least in the 1950s and 1960s, belong to a light-grey zone of occasional (self-)censorship.

The guidebook business was tangled up in politics on either side of the ideological divide. In the wake of the Watergate scandal, stories surfaced about CIA's financial support of the most renowned publisher of English-language guidebooks, Fodor's Travel Guides, in return for agent alibis as travelling guidebook authors. The Hungarian émigré Eugene Fodor insisted that 'we never let politics be smuggled into the books' and with relatives behind the Iron Curtain, he had good reasons to avoid unnecessary provocations.[70] The author of *Turen går til Tjekkoslovakiet* was in a similar situation. Milena Poulsen was born in Bohemia in 1916 and obtained Danish citizenship in 1939 after marrying a Dane. Her family remained in the country. After the father's death in 1947, Poulsen was involved in a 15-year tug-of-war with the Czechoslovak authorities over the inheritance. When she finally received her share, the Czechoslovak authorities refused to exchange it for foreign currency and Poulsen was forced to spend the entire sum in the country.[71] It is unclear how Poulsen spent her inheritance. However, it is very plausible that at least parts of it financed travels across the country and helped Poulsen prepare her guidebooks manuscript.[72]

67 Fielding, Temple: *Fielding's Travel Guide to Europe.* New York 1951 [1948], p. 180.
68 Ibid., p. 395.
69 This risk prompted the publishers of a 1956 guidebook to Moscow to include a removable inlet with information that was likely to displease the Soviet authorities. See: Moscow: First Comprehensive Historical and Tourist Guide Book to the Holy City of Russians; with Detailed Enumeration of Historical and Religions Treasures in 14 Suggested Excursions. Frankfurt/Main 1956.
70 M. Hersh, Seymour: Hunt Tells of Early Work for a C.I.A. Domestic Unit, in: *New York Times* (31 December 1974); Crewdson, John M.: C.I.A. Established Many Links To Journalists in U.S. and Abroad, in: *New York Times* (27 December 1977).
71 Numerous correspondences between 1950 and 1963, DNA GS 73 Tjek 13/56.
72 A first instalment of 8.000 Czechoslovak crowns was transferred to her closed account in

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Moreover, Poulsen's prolonged dispute with the Czechoslovak state might have won her manuscript extra attention by its representatives in Denmark. The colophon informs the reader that 'the manuscript has been inspected [gennemset] by the Czechoslovak State Travel Agency' in Copenhagen.[73] The Danish wording is ambiguous. The innocuous interpretation suggests that the text was fact checked. The suspicious reader might nevertheless infer that more than factual errors were weeded out by the Czechoslovak state's representatives in Copenhagen to ascertain that the guidebook did not stray from the party line in its description of the country's attractions and recent history.

East European officials were also involved in the production of the Swedish edition of the *Turen går till*-guidebook to Hungary from 1968. Its colophon bluntly proclaimed, 'the book is examined and approved by the Hungarian State's Air and Tourist Agency'.[74] Such statements bestow the book's information with authority. However, it also informs the critical reader that the book is not the work of an independent author and that compromises might have been made. The three subsequent editions of Poulsen's book retained the statement about Čedok in the colophon after which it vanished in the fifth edition published in 1977. Finally, the seventh edition from 1984 contained a traditionally formulated expression of gratitude to Čedok.[75] Browsing through scores of additional guidebooks to Eastern Europe in English, Dutch, and German, I did not find any similar indications of potential (self-)censorship. None of those published by western publishing houses carry any obvious admissions of editorial concessions, though especially the older manuscripts sometimes contained glaring silences about politics and history.[76] Evidently, guidebooks produced by the Eastern travel bureaus for western readers and guidebooks produced by friendship organizations presented matters in a very different light.

The easiest way to avoid conflict was to circumvent controversial subjects altogether. This strategy was typical of the first post-war guidebooks. For instance, two mainstream Swedish guidebooks published in the late 1950s about

1957, enough to afford more than 150 nights in a luxury-class hotel room by the 1962 prices listed in her guidebook. Poulsen, Tjekkoslovakiet, 1962, p. 9.

73 Ibid., p. 2.

74 Burian, Christian: *Turen går till Ungern* [The Trip Goes to Hungary]. Gebers resehandböcker. Stockholm 1968, p. 2. The German original – or rather, its third edition (1969), the earliest I succeeded in tracking down – thanked the Hungarian state travel agency in Budapest (IBUSZ) and the IBUSZ branch in Frankfurt, in addition to a Dr Peter Sellei at IBUSZ in Vienna for his inspection ['Durchsicht'] of the manuscript. Idem: *Ungarn.* Polyglott-Reiseführer, 3rd edition. Cologne 1969 [1966].

75 By the late 1980s, Čedok exerted no pressure on authors. Interview with Lone Krog, co-author of *Turen går til Tjekkoslovakiet* from 1989. Thy, Denmark, 2 April 2016.

76 The guidebooks studied were published between 1957 and 1989 in the series by Allert de Lange's, Anders Reisen, ANWB, Blue Guide, Fodor's, Frommer's, Nagel's, Polyglott, and Your Guide to, together with dozens of stand-alone guidebooks.

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Spain and Greece did not include a word about the destinations' traumatic twentieth century histories of civil war, political persecution, and authoritarian rule.[77] The same goes for a West German 1954 guidebook to Yugoslavia.[78] Although post-war history and politics was rarely completely omitted from the earliest western guidebooks to Eastern Europe, the authors generally tried to steer clear of conflicts. For instance, Nagel's first guide to Czechoslovakia which appeared in 1959 in English, French, and German editions explained that after 1945 '[t]he wounds caused by the Second World War and the occupation were soon healed and Czechoslovakia rebuilt her industry by which she had made her mark at the end of the 19th century and once again is numbered among the highly industrialised countries.'[79] This consensual take on the country's post-war history is hardly surprising as the book was in fact prepared by Čedok and a Czechoslovak team of authors. Still, the approach chosen by guidebook publishers varied between publications. Nagel's guide to Hungary (1958) was compiled by a French-German journalist and frankly admitted the 'numerous political crimes and grave errors' committed since 1949.[80] Meanwhile, *Your guide to Hungary* (1967) and *Your guide to Poland* (1966) generally toed the party line without admitting so.[81] In contrast, *Your guide to Bulgaria* (1964) candidly sought to avoid controversy with these introductory remarks: 'To begin with, you can forget politics. I speak to you as a longstanding liberal – only a fellow-traveller with you, not in the other sense.'[82]

One of the most politically contentious parts of the guidebooks to Eastern Europe was the history of the accession to power of the Communist parties. The parties were always adamant to recast the immediate post-war events to legitimize their seizure of power. In contrast, western guidebooks in the 1950s and 1960s often presented the success of the Communists as a deus ex machina. From the mid-1960s and onwards, some guidebooks became more outspoken about the recent past and the true state of affairs under Communist rule, while at the same time stressing that this ought not deter the Western tourist from going.

The arguments to visit Communist Europe presented by the guidebooks rarely included post-war history and politics. Only in guidebooks to Berlin was the Cold War-context presented as an attraction that merited a holiday there. For

77 Uddenberg, Bengt: Spanien: Med route genom Portugal [Spain: By Way of Portugal]. M:s resenyckel. Stockholm 1958; Valmin, Natan: Att resa i Grekland [To Travel in Greece]. Stockholm 1957.

78 Jugoslawien. Kurt Schroeders Reiseführer. Bonn 1954.

79 [Chyský, Jiří et al.]: Czechoslovakia. The Nagel Travel Guide Series. Geneva 1959, p. 14.

80 Schreiber, Thomas / Hudson, Lynton: Hungary. The Nagel Travel Guide Series, 2nd edition. Geneva 1964 [1958], p. 10.

81 Appleton, Ted: Poland. Your guide to. London 1966; Ryalls, Alan: Hungary. Your guide to. London 1967.

82 Rose, Harold: Bulgaria. Your guide to. London 1964, p. 15.

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instance, a book from 1973 encouraged visitors to see both sides of the Berlin Wall including the locations famous for their role in the Cold War.[83] Still, very few publications encouraged 'dark tourism' to the sites of Cold War conflict. This kind of tourism only truly took off after the conflict subsided in 1989.[84] Instead, the attractions highlighted in guidebooks to Eastern Europe showed a large degree of historical continuity in the tourism industry. The sights advertised in the guides were largely identical to those of the era of bourgeois 19th century tourism such as castles, chateaux, churches, old towns, and scenic landscapes. For instance, Czechoslovakia was described in the 1960s and 1970s as an unspoilt alternative to the more popular destinations at the time, Spain, Italy, and Greece. Through this dichotomy, the books relied on the familiar trope of authenticity. However, they also guaranteed the reader that it was normal and safe to visit a country behind the Iron Curtain and often supported this claim with a reference to the considerable number of tourists that had already visited the destination. A Swedish guidebook to Czechoslovakia from 1968 informed its readers that the number of visitors to Czechoslovakia was booming. In 1966, 16,000 Swedes had travelled to the country, and in the following year the figure had risen to 23,000, while visits from other western countries had also increased dramatically in 1967.[85] Milena Poulsen assured her readers that the Czechoslovak custom officers were very kind and used to tourists, and a Swedish 1972 guidebook to the country promised that Nordic tourists were particularly well received.[86] In a Swedish guidebook to East Germany completed in May 1989, the reader learns that the East European countries offer the traveller 'genuine' experiences while at the same time it assures the reader that 50,000 Swedes already travel to East Germany every year.[87]

As soon as tourists were officially allowed in Czechoslovakia, Čedok began to appeal to potential customers across the political spectrum. In the late 1950s and early 1960s, the Czechoslovak state travel bureau ran advertisements in the

83 Hammerby, Gert: Turen går till Berlin [The Trip Goes to Berlin]. Gebers resehandböcker. Stockholm 1973, p. 3–5. On Berlin as a site of Cold War tourism, see Standley, Michelle A.: From Bulwark of Freedom to Cosmopolitan Cocktails: The Cold War, Mass Tourism and the Marketing of West Berlin as a Tourist Destination, in: Hochscherf, Tobias et al. (ed.): *Divided, but Not Disconnected: German Experiences of the Cold War.* New York 2010, p. 105–118. Another rare example from the Swedish material alluding to the Cold War is a Reso leaflet from 1952 selling Yugoslavia as 'the country next to the Iron Curtain', LUB.

84 On dark tourism and the Cold War, see Lowe, David / Joel, Tony: Remembering the Cold War: Global Contests and National Stories. London 2013.

85 Widegren, Ulf: Prag, Brno, Bratislava: En reseguide [Prague, Brno, Bratislava: A Travel Guide]. Sesam. Stockholm 1968, p. 4.

86 Kristensen, Helge: Tjeckoslovakien [Czechoslovakia]. Semester. Stockholm 1972, p. 9; Poulsen, Tjekkoslovakiet, 1962, p. 9.

87 Schenkmanis, Ulf: Se Östtyskland!: En reseguide [See East Germany!: A Travel Guide]. Resenärerna. Stockholm 1989, p. 7–9.

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leading Danish conservative dailies, Berlingske Tidende and Jyllands-Posten. The second edition of *Turen går til Tjekkoslovakiet* from 1966 appeared in a special version for members of the Motor Touring Club de Danemark (FDM) – a large interest organisation representing Danish car owners. On the pages of a separate insert, the drivers were advised to travel through East Germany and Czechoslovakia 'for a change', on their way, 'not only to the Balkans, but also to Austria, Northern Italy or Northern Yugoslavia.' The selling points were Czechoslovakia's 'rich attractions, picturesque cities and castles, and its often grandiose landscape'.[88] By the mid-1960s, family holidays by car to Southern Europe had become so commonplace that the guidebook could appeal to the seasoned traveller's lust for new experiences off the beaten track. The guidebook carefully avoided spelling out exactly why East Germany and Czechoslovakia were off the beaten track. Such linguistic gymnastics were common in the 1960s and 1970s in Scandinavian tourist guidebooks and advertisement. In Sweden, for instance, a Reso tour to 'Five East Bloc Countries' from 1972 was presented as 'a new and interesting tour with an itinerary of special interest for those who travelled through Western Europe with our busses and who want to see the part of Europe, which was previously – for various reasons – more difficult to reach'.[89] It remains for the reader to remember the various reasons for Eastern Europe's previous isolation. Reso was clearly against taking any stance on the issue and opted for imprecision over clarity. However, the two examples also serve as further illustration of the attempt to balance the authentic and unspoiled with reassuring remarks about the 'normal' status of western tourists in the countries: The countries are no longer difficult to reach and the special Touring Club preface stresses the importance of booking early as the cabin resorts are popular and sell out quickly.

Eastern Europe on the mental maps

Despite the efforts by Intourist, Čedok, and their East European colleagues, the countries behind the Iron Curtain never became a magnet for Scandinavian tourism. No East European country featured on the top ten of countries most visited by Danes in the 1960 Gallup poll. And more importantly, no country made it onto the top ten of countries that the respondents wished to visit in the future.

88 Poulsen, Milena: Tjekkoslovakiet [Czechoslovakia]. Turen går til, 2nd edition. Copenhagen 1966, unpaginated insert. The special issue was probably sponsored by the Czechoslovak government commission on tourism. A year earlier, it had announced intentions to claim a larger share of the north-south tourist transit traffic. SNA UD I7.Ec. Memorandum, 25 October 1965.

89 Reso Göteborg, Års- och Revisionsberättelse (1972), p. 2. LUB.

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The all-embracing attitude towards the European continent as a tourist destination from the Second World War and its immediate aftermath had given in to the appeal of Mediterranean sun and sea tourism. Nevertheless, the annual Danish sales of *Turen går til Tjekkoslovakiet* averaged 1,500–2,000 copies rising to 2,800 in 1989.[90] The actual number of Danish visitors to Czechoslovakia is difficult to ascertain but official Czechoslovak statistics set the figure to 7,248 in 1964 and 28,169 in 1981, the last year included in a 1984 handbook on tourism.[91] The figures do not simply mirror the conjunctures of international politics. For instance, the drop in Danish visitors in 1969, the year following the crushing of the Prague Spring, was just 14 per cent and the Czechoslovak authorities soon sought to return the international tourist traffic to their pre-invasion levels in order to secure hard currency.[92]

The 1970s were a decade of optimism and expansion for western tourism in Eastern Europe. An editor's foreword to Fodor's 1972 guide to Hungary enthusiastically stated 'our confidence in a bright future for tourism to Hungary seems to have been justified, as the first two editions of this book were sold out with completely unexpected rapidity.'[93] The editor's foreword to Fodor's 1975 guide to Czechoslovakia was similarly elated. 'In the past several years, there has been a simply astounding development in the physical attributes of Czechoslovakian tourism, and, in spite of the adverse news emanating from the country, the tourists have flocked in.'[94] The 1972 foreword to the Hungary guidebook correctly reminded its readers that 'once a popular continental destination, Hungary seemed to lose ground after World War II.'[95] Instead of describing the destination as 'unexplored', the author chose to place Hungary in a broader historical context of European tourism.

At the same time, this was coupled with the contemporary political situation. The Western visitor 'will be treated with particular consideration, for bringing a much envied world within the grasp of his hosts.'[96] In other words, the text balanced the contemporary Cold War context against the longer tradition of foreign tourism in Hungary and avoided the overt exoticization of later English language guidebooks. A Swedish guidebook to Hungary from 1986 stressed that

90 Sales figures were listed in the books until 1984. Subsequent figures from the private archive of the authors Lone Krog and Erling Nedergård.
91 Franke, Antonín: Rukověť cestovního ruchu [Handbook of Tourism], 2nd edition. Prague 1984, p. 390.
92 Report by the Danish embassy in Prague. 22 October 1969, DNA GS 36 Tjek 1.
93 Hungary 1972. [London] 1972, p. 5.
94 Czechoslovakia 1975. [London] 1975, p. 5.
95 Hungary 1972, p. 1.
96 Ibid.

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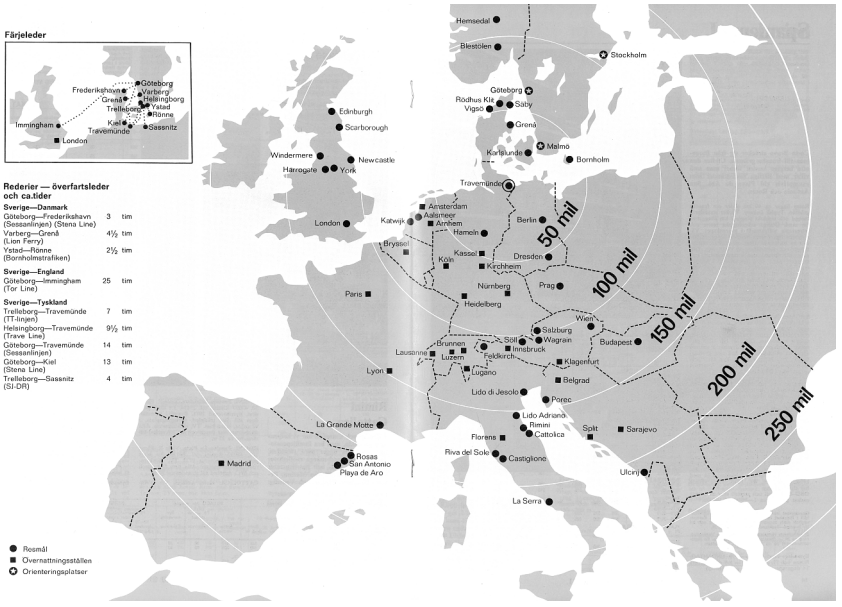

Fig. 3: A 1974 car holiday catalogue by the Swedish Reso travel agency disregarded obstacles on the ground, making Brussels and Prague, Budapest and Paris equidistant from Travemünde. Small print collection, Lund University Library.

the country offered an 'unbroken carpet of *asphalt* roads.'[97] 'Even the smallest roads between the most remote places are covered with asphalt.' Although this admittedly made car tourism more comfortable, the author could not help lament that it also reduced the feeling of the 'original and genuine'.[98] Another testament to the normality of visits to Communist Europe came in 1985 when Swedish Television's motor programme *Trafikmagasinet* included a twenty-minute report about East Germany with a special focus on its road network, service facilities, and friendliness towards Swedish tourists.[99]

In 1987, Frommer's guide to Eastern Europe described the American perception of Eastern Europe as 'a vaguely defined region somewhere east of Paris, north of Greece, and south of Sweden'.[100] A sizeable number of Scandinavians undoubtedly shared this fuzzy view of Eastern Europe as an indistinct landmass, but as this chapter has shown, the countries behind the Iron Curtain also became

97 Schenkmanis, Ulf: Se Ungern!: En reseguide [See Hungary!: A Travel Guide]. Stockholm 1986, p. 42. Emphasis in original.

98 Ibid., p. 42.

99 "Trafikmagasinet besöker DDR 1985. Das "Verkehrsmagazin" im SVT besucht die DDR 1985." Video clip available online: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SpQxb4NHH4c> [15.10.2018].

100 Hadley / Tanner, Frommer's Eastern Europe, 1987, p. 1.

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stables of the Scandinavian tourist industry during the Second half of the Cold War. Advertisement, guidebooks, and travel journalism did not frame a holiday there as something out of the ordinary. Instead, they promoted concrete pictures of the countries as worthwhile holiday destinations. At the same time, the East European countries employed their cultural heritage, scenic landscapes, and gentler climate to carve out a share of the growing international tourist industry. Their attractive powers stemmed not simply from the ever-elusive Communist paradise that they were destined to reach, but in the cheap luxuries, modern beach resorts, and firmly established pre-war destinations that appealed to wider circles of western holidaymakers.

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