

TRAVEL AND TOURISM FROM GDR TO PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC
OF BULGARIA IN THE PERIOD 1950–1990
(Outlines of the Socialist Everyday Life through the Messages of Postcards)

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Abstract

Comparative studies on social realities within the socialist system itself are rare and not enough developed. This is due to the commonly accepted opinion that the potential of the research field is limited by the economic and political firmness of the totalitarian regimes and the lack of big differences between them. The purposeful institutional unification of the cultural patterns becomes a background against which the specificities of the national traditions show up clearly. The aim of the present work is to show how the battle for „small freedoms“ develops and to prove their general presence – from the trade-union membership for benefits to the possibilities for opposition. The case in point is not only the physical movement from A to B but also the transfer of certain everyday-life stereotype (eating habits, consumption of alcohol, habitudes etc.) in a new, unfamiliar but socially identical environment. This particular case presents GDR and People's Republic of Bulgaria – two socialist countries, as similar as different. The analysis of texts of postcards and of biographical interviews outlines the main characteristics of the organized collective and individual tourism from GDR to Bulgaria, particularly to the Black Sea. Although specific the materials show the interweaving and mutual influence of policy, ideology and reality as well as the strategies of the people for evading the restrictions of the regime. The comments of the contemporaries reveal the battle against the institutional reticence.