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Unpacking Tourism in the Cold War: International Tourism and Commercialism in Socialist Romania, 1960s–1980s

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The role of market-oriented tourist policies in the planned economies of socialist Eastern Europe has been long overlooked. This article examines how the socialist regime in Romania moved from sheer ideological rhetoric to commercialism and market-driven strategies when promoting Romania as a tourist destination in the ‘West’ between the 1960s and the 1980s. It argues that there was a continual shifting between using tourism as an ideological tool and a certain pragmatism that was needed to turn socialist Romania into a desirable tourist destination.

In 1978, *Viajar*, a tourist magazine published in Barcelona, invited Spanish tourists to visit socialist Romania and discover ‘the route of Count Dracula’ (aka Vlad the Impaler, a fifteenth-century ruler of the medieval principality of Wallachia) during a two-week trip. One of the Spanish tourists, bolder than the others, even left Count Dracula a note in Bran Castle’s museum book: ‘From Seville we came to see Count Dracula . . . Where is he hiding? Dracula, show yourself, do not be shy!’¹ The Spanish tourists were not the only ones to show interest in the Dracula story and in its origins in Transylvania. Throughout the 1970s, the ‘Dracula tour’ seems to have sparked considerable interest among Western tourists. This included a group of American teenagers in 1974 who enquired about the presence of Dracula as well before ending their trip to Romania with a visit to Nicolae Ceaușescu himself.²

Blending fun activities with more politically-driven events looks like one feature of Romanian tourism during the socialist 1960s–80s. Yet, as pragmatism became the rule of thumb in Romania’s economic policies as of the mid-1960s, the tourist officials tried to include more entertaining activities in the tours as opposed to those that highlighted the accomplishments of the socialist regime. This article examines how the socialist regime in Romania moved from sheer ideological rhetoric to commercialism and market-driven strategies in its effort to promote the country as a tourist destination in the ‘West’ between the 1960s and the 1980s. It argues that there was a continual shifting between using tourism to convey the achievements of the socialist regime and a certain pragmatism that was needed to turn Romania into a desirable tourist destination. In this regard, I show that this shift occurred both because of the top-down state policies and because of various state and non-state agents that shaped the tourism industry and promotion in Romania during socialism, especially throughout the 1960s and the 1970s. As non-Romanian authors picked up certain topics related to Romanian tourism, such as Dracula, the political regime in Romania had little control over the messages these materials

¹ ‘Rumania. La Ruta del Conde Dracula’, *Viajar*, 3 (1978), 13–20. By ‘Western tourists’ I mean tourists from Western Europe and the United States who had access to hard currencies, or – in the language of the Romanian socialist regime – ‘tourists from capitalist developed countries’.

² ‘130 Americans sur le trace du Dracula’, *Vacances en Roumanie*, 27, 3 (1974), 20. Nicolae Ceaușescu was General Secretary of the Romanian Communist Party between 1965 and 1989; in 1967 he became president of the State Council and in 1974 president of the republic.

conveyed. Hence, the Western tourists who visited Romania could choose between various narratives about this socialist country, and so build their own picture about it. As it wanted to attract them, the Romanian socialist state could not afford to completely ignore their expectations.³ In this way, Romania's promotion abroad became the task of multiple actors that ranged from the socialist state itself to tourist technocrats as well as tourist agencies and promoters from abroad.

Western tourists' presence across the Iron Curtain was hardly a new phenomenon during the 1970s. At this time, almost all countries in socialist Eastern Europe had already embraced international tourism for its promise to bring along the coveted hard currencies and to improve their image among the ordinary citizens in the capitalist West against the backdrop of the Cold War.⁴ Not only that Romania was no exception to this, but it constantly looked at its competitors, the more liberal Yugoslavia, Hungary with its Balaton lake, and Bulgaria, with which it shared access to the Black Sea coast, in order to diversify its tourist offer.⁵ Moreover, because the income from beach tourism had a limited ceiling growth due to geographical limitations,⁶ Romanian planners struggled to come up with a more attractive package for the Western market than just the seaside.⁷ In this regard the Orthodox monasteries, the folk culture and even the Dracula story became Romania's trump card.⁸

However, for the Romanian socialist regime, the Western tourists' interest in Dracula, religious sites and folk culture triggered an ideological dilemma. How should Romania be promoted abroad: as a destination of mystical lands where vampires once lived, or, who knows, might still live and where peasant lifestyle is still rife, or as a land of modernity and high culture? Where should the accomplishments of the socialist regime fit in promoting Romania as a tourist destination? These were questions to which the socialist officials struggled to find the 'right answer' while also attempting to attract more Western tourists with their coveted hard currencies. This article seeks to shed light on these debates as reflected by the party documents, tourist guidebooks and magazines. At the same time, it looks at how Western tourist magazines portrayed Romania as a tourist destination in order to learn what kind of message an ordinary tourist from the capitalist West would have gotten about this socialist country as of the mid-1960s onwards. Given the Cold War context, marked by the East-West détente in the 1970s and the return to the so-called Second Cold War in the early 1980s, how did a small, relatively 'exotic' and socialist country like Romania use international tourism to get to the hearts and minds of the working people in the capitalist West?

Studies about socialist tourism have focused on either the restorative function of tourism, on tourism as a transnational force, or more broadly on tourism as a political, economic and social project.⁹

³ Recent literature has examined the issue of markets in socialist regimes, especially in Yugoslavia, Hungary and the Soviet Union, showing that even under state socialism selling and buying was a market-driven process. See Patrick H. Patterson, 'Making Markets Marxist? The East European Grocery Store from Rationing to Rationality and Rationalizations', in Warren Belasco and Roger Horowitz, eds., *Food Chain: From Farmyard to Shopping Cart* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008); Beth Greene, 'Selling Market Socialism: Hungary in the 1960s', *Slavic Review*, 73, 1 (2014), 108–32; Valentina Fava, 'Between Business Interests and Ideological Marketing: The USSR and the Cold War in Corporate Strategy, 1957–1972', *Journal of Cold War Studies*, 20, 4 (2018), 26–64.

⁴ In 1966, *The New York Times* touted that Eastern Europe is seeking Western tourists and their dollars. See: 'Red Nations Seeking Western Tourists – and Dollars', *The New York Times*, 21 Jan. 1966, 94.

⁵ On competition in socialist societies see Katalin Miklössy and Melanie Ilic, eds., *Competition in Socialist Society* (New York: Routledge, 2014).

⁶ The Romanian coastline only measures 245 km (152 miles) compared to Bulgaria, which has 370 km (223 miles), and the former Yugoslavia with 800 km (497 miles).

⁷ Minutes of the Council of Ministers/Economic Council Meeting, 23 May 1965, Romanian National Archives (henceforth ANIC), Council of Ministers Collection, file no. 227/1965, folio 52. The National Office for Tourism–Carpathians planned to reduce the gap between the seaside and the rest of the country in terms of tourist infrastructure so they could launch on the international market other regions as well besides the Black Sea coast.

⁸ As Duncan Light has shown in his *The Dracula Dilemma: Tourism, Identity and the State in Romania* (Surrey: Ashgate, 2012), Transylvania (and through extension Romania) came to be synonymous with the Dracula story in the 'West'.

⁹ Diane Koenker, 'Whose Right to Rest? Contesting the Family Vacation in the Postwar Soviet Union', *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 51, 2 (2009), 401–25; Diane Koenker and Anne Gorsush, eds., *Turizm: Leisure, Travel, and Nation Building in Russia, Eastern Europe and the USSR* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2006); Diane Koenker, *Club Red:*

As Anne Gorsuch has rightfully observed, tourism did become a transnational force in the Cold War dynamics of the 1960s and the 1970s.¹⁰ Yet the discussion about the role of tourism in the Cold War remained mostly confined to the role of superpowers, such as the Soviet Union and the United States, and overlooked the ambitions and expectations of small states like Romania.¹¹ Similarly, with some exceptions, the topic of international tourism during socialism has remained largely unexplored in the Romanian case.¹² But the case of international tourism in Romania is of particular interest. Although Romania opened up economically and politically towards the West (both Western Europe and the United States) in the late 1960s, domestically it maintained tight control over its citizens. After having pursued a policy of political liberalisation in the late 1960s and mid-1970s, the regime limited individual freedom, such as the freedom to travel abroad and have access to consumer goods, during the 1980s.¹³ As an economic sector that exposes domestic realities to foreign visitors, international tourism seemed like a thorny choice for the socialist regime in Romania. But, following the model of other emerging tourist countries, such as Spain and Yugoslavia, Romania was also determined to take advantage of the opportunities that international tourism brought about for the developing European countries in the 1960s. Thus, Romanian officials embraced international tourism because of its economic promise to resolve the balance of payments problem, the prospect of selling socialism as a viable political regime and, last but not least, in order to present Romania as part of Europe's cultural heritage.

As most literature on socialist Romania has focused on nationalism and the regime's various control mechanisms, and only recently a body of scholarship has begun to study Romanian socialism from a cultural and social perspective, this study builds on this literature and paints a more nuanced perspective.¹⁴ It shows how, starting in the late 1960s, the socialist regime paid specific attention to the

Vacation Travel and the Soviet Dream (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2013); Anne Gorsuch, *All This Is Your World: Soviet Tourism at Home and Abroad After Stalin* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011); Scott Moranda, *The People's Own Landscape: Nature, Tourism and Dictatorship in East Germany* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2014); Igor Tchoukarine, 'Open Door Policy and Global Tourism in the 1950s and 1960s', *East European Politics and Societies and Cultures*, 29, 1 (2015), 168–88; Zdenek Nebrensky, 'From International Activity to Foreign Tourism: East–West Interaction, Czechoslovak Youth Travel, and Political Imagination after Stalin', *East European Politics and Societies and Cultures*, 29, 1 (2015), 147–67; Mark Keck-Szajbel, 'A Cultural Shift in the 1970s: "Texas" Jeans, Taboos, and Transnational Tourism', *East European Politics and Societies and Cultures*, 29, 1 (2015), 212–25; Pavel Mücke, 'Hidden, Yet Visible Workers of Czechoslovak International Tourism: Macro and Micro-Historical Views of Cedok's Branches Abroad and Tour Guides during the Period of Late Socialism (1968–1989)', *Journal of Tourism History*, 1, 13 (2021), 75–94.

¹⁰ Anne Gorsuch, *All This Is Your World: Soviet Tourism at Home and Abroad After Stalin* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).

¹¹ Some exceptions to this are two edited collections: Eric G. E. Zuelow, ed., *Touring Beyond the Nation: A Transnational Approach to European Tourism History* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2011) and Sune Bechmann Pedersen and Christian Noack, eds., *Tourism and Travel During the Cold War: Negotiating Tourist Experiences Across the Iron Curtain* (New York: Routledge, 2019).

¹² Sune Bechmann Pedersen, 'Eastbound Tourism in the Cold War: the History of the Swedish Communist Travel Agency Folkturist', *Journal of Tourism History*, 10 (2018), 130–45; Ducan Light, *The Dracula Dilemma: Tourism, Identity and the State in Romania* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2012) includes a chapter on tourism and Dracula during socialism; Dragos Petrescu, 'Closely Watched Tourism: The Securitate as Warden of Transnational Encounters, 1967–1969', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 50, 2 (2015), 337–53.

¹³ This happened against the backdrop of the 1979 oil shock which strongly affected the Romanian economy, so the government began to cut off consumption in order to save hard currencies. Both Romanian citizens' trips abroad and consumption goods required considerable amounts of hard currencies that the government planned to use to equalise the balance of payments. It was exactly the opposite with Western tourists, who brought along hard currencies, such as US dollars and German marks.

¹⁴ Katherine Verdery, *National Ideology Under Socialism: Identity and Cultural Politics in Ceaușescu's Romania* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991); Gail Kligman, *The Politics of Duplicity: Controlling Reproduction in Ceaușescu's Romania* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998); Vladimir Tismaneanu, *Stalinism For All Seasons: A Political History of Romanian Communism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003); *Journal of Romanian Studies*, 1, 1 (2019) with articles on totalitarianism and resistance and retroactive justice; Dennis Deletant, *Romania under Communist Rule* (New York: Routledge, 2018). In addition to these, some recent literature deals with work under

world market when developing international tourism and promoting the country as a tourist destination in the capitalist ‘West’.¹⁵ A growing number of studies have shown how socialist countries had to adjust to the global/capitalist market as well, but the Romanian case has been less studied from this perspective.¹⁶ As anthropologist Steven G. Randall puts it, socialist Romania, like other modern states, used a mixture of policies involving ‘both capitalist and socialist, democratic and authoritarian features in the attempt to avoid the hazards and to gain the advantages of a global system dominated by capitalist accumulation’.¹⁷

The article uses an array of primary sources ranging from reports by the Romanian Communist Party’s Political Bureau (Politburo) and by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, to studies by the Institute for Research and Development in Tourism which have recently been made available to researchers, to guidebooks, magazines, and tourist flyers promoting Romanian tourism abroad, together with Western magazines.

The Politics of International Tourism in the 1960s–80s

In the early 1960s, Romania acquired a taste for international tourism. It was the example of the neighbouring socialist countries and the advent of mass tourism in Europe which sparked interest among state officials. Moreover, after using a variety of means (including violence), in the early 1960s, the Romanian socialist regime had secured its internal position.¹⁸ Thenceforth, its goal became that of consolidating the economy and improving the country’s external image. From this point of view, tourism was a safe avenue. Initially, international tourism was mostly a question of establishing friendly relationships among socialist countries, but soon socialist officials came to regard international tourism as a source of much needed hard currency that could help to equalise the balance of payments. In addition, international tourism was a means of selling Romanian socialism as a friendly and successful type of political regime against the backdrop of the Cold War. This led to the design of promotional campaigns aiming to welcome more tourists from Western Europe rather than from socialist Eastern Europe, since these Western tourists paid in coveted hard currency.¹⁹ Although the number of tourists from capitalist countries never came close to that of tourists from the socialist bloc, the revenue that they brought to the Romanian economy was slightly more.²⁰

Such developments were part of larger trends in other socialist countries. In 1955, *The New York Times* sceptically announced that ‘Tourism is piercing the Iron Curtain’.²¹ While proclaiming that ‘Trans-Iron Curtain vacations as an accompaniment of the current phase of East-West coexistence have begun in earnest’, it acknowledged that Americans could not fully benefit from this opening

socialism: see, among others, Alina Sandra Cucu, *Planning Labour: Time and the Foundations of Industrial Socialism in Romania* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2019); Jill Massimo, *Ambiguous Transitions: Gender, the State and Everyday Life in Socialist and Postsocialist Romania* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2019); Diana Georgescu, ‘Small Comrades as Historians and Ethnographers: Performativity, Agency, and the Socialist Pedagogy of Citizenship in Ceausescu’s Romania’, *Slavic Review*, 78, 1 (2019), 74–102.

¹⁵ Most studies argue that socialism has an innate inability to adjust to markets. See Jesus Huerta de Solo, *Socialism, Economic Calculation and Entrepreneurship* (Cheltenham: Edward Edgar, 2010). Similarly, some Western literature during the Cold War acknowledged the importance of advertising in socialist regimes. See P. Hanson, *Advertising and Socialism: A Study of the Nature and Extent of Consumer Advertising in the Soviet Union, Poland, Hungary and Yugoslavia* (London: Macmillan, 1974).

¹⁶ Besnik Pula, *Globalization Under and After Socialism: The Evolution of Transnational Capital in Central and Eastern Europe* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2018), James Mark, Artemy M. Kalinowsky and Steffi Marung, *Alternative Globalizations, Eastern Europe and the Postcolonial World* (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2020).

¹⁷ Steven G. Randall, ‘Socialist Romania and the Futility of Cold War Analysis’, *Studia UBB Sociologia*, 63, LXIII, 2 (2018), 71.

¹⁸ For instance, political prisoners who had opposed the establishment of the communist regime were released between 1962–4. This signalled the end of mass arrests and political trials in socialist Romania.

¹⁹ Report, 16 Apr. 1981, ANIC, CC of PCR Collection, Economic Section, file no. 244/1981, folio 25.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, folio 27.

²¹ Norman Moss, ‘Tourism is Piercing the Iron Curtain’, *The New York Times*, 11 Sep. 1955, X29.

because the State Department only granted passport validations for travelling to the USSR and Eastern Europe in certain cases. However, in 1955, some British, French and West German tourists did visit Bulgaria, Hungary, Romania, Czechoslovakia and the USSR. Norman Moss, the author of *The New York Times* article, took a trip to Hungary and, despite his declared anti-communism, admitted that he was able to move freely and to wander through the streets of Budapest with a camera slung on his shoulder. Although the law required films to be developed inside the country, it was rarely enforced. In the post-Stalinist mid-1950s, socialist Eastern Europe was becoming friendlier towards the capitalist bloc, although the Cold War rhetoric was still in place on both sides.²² Nikita Khrushchev's shift from sheer military to economic and political 'competition' with the United States and his visit to the United States in 1959 seemingly announced the beginning of a new phase of East-West relations in the Cold War.²³ Moreover, the 'small states' in Eastern Europe started to have their own agenda vis-à-vis the capitalist West. Already in 1958, Romania had signed an economic and cultural agreement with France.²⁴

International tourism too came to play a role in the East-West rapprochement. First, the socialist bloc made some institutional progress with regard to clear travel regulations and creating an infrastructure for tourism. In the late 1950s, delegates from socialist countries began to meet every two years and discuss ways to develop international tourism.²⁵ The meeting that took place in 1961 in Moscow was a turning point in the history of tourism in the socialist bloc as the issue of tourism with capitalist countries was seriously discussed. This was already the fourth meeting of socialist tourist organisations and it included participants not only from the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, but also from Mongolia, North Korea and North Vietnam.²⁶ The second point on the agenda at the tourist delegates' meeting concerned the 'importance of developing international tourism between socialist and capitalist countries as a means of popularizing the accomplishments of socialist regimes and of counterattacking the unfriendly imperialist propaganda towards socialist countries'.²⁷ The agenda also mentioned that relationships between socialist and capitalist countries in the field of tourism should be based on socialist states being cheaper and more attractive tourist destinations. The meeting also emphasised that socialist countries should find ways to promote themselves in the tourist markets of capitalist countries.²⁸ The meeting in Moscow thereby signalled the shift from a 'domestic' tourism within the socialist bloc that aimed at strengthening socialist brotherhood to an international tourism with the West that was driven by profit and operated as 'soft power' in the Cold War context.

At the 1961 tourist organisation meeting, Romania was not the strongest voice with regard to tourist relationships with capitalist countries. According to the agenda, for 1962 Romania had tourism

²² After the East-West meeting in Geneva in 1955, economic cooperation between East and West correspondingly increased. In 1955, steel experts from capitalist countries visited the Soviet Union, Prague and Budapest while also, beginning in 1954, regular seminars on East-West economic cooperation were held in Geneva. See United Nations Archive in Geneva, GX18/12/1, folder 24 (15336). The peak of the rapprochement took place in 1959 when Nikita Khrushchev, Secretary-General of the PCUS, visited New York, while Richard Nixon, US Vice-President, went to the Soviet Union to attend the opening of the American National Exhibition at Sokolniki Park in Moscow.

²³ On Nikita Khrushchev's visit to the United States see Viorela Dana Papuc, 'A Thawing in the Cold War? Examining Nikita Khrushchev's Visit to the USA, 15–27 September 1959', *Flinders Journal of History and Politics*, 25 (2008), 55–78.

²⁴ Personal file of Henry J., 1959, Archives of the National Council of the Securitate Archives (henceforth ACNSAS), Personal File Collection (Informativ), file no. I 329725, vol. 1, folio 4.

²⁵ ANIC, Council of Ministers Collection, file number 29/1961, folio 6. The tourist delegates' meetings started in 1955, independently of Comecon. See Martin A. Garay, *Le tourisme dans les démocraties populaires européennes* (Paris: La Documentation Française, no.3609–3610, 1969), 35; and Sune Bechmann Pedersen, 'Eastbound Tourism in the Cold War: The History of the Swedish Communist Travel Agency Folkтурист', *Journal of Tourism History*, 10, 2 (2018), 130–45.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, folio 6. All countries except Mongolia and North Vietnam were part of Comecon. Mongolia joined Comecon in 1962 and North Vietnam in 1978. See Glen E. Curtis, ed., *Czechoslovakia – A Country Study* (Washington, DC: Federal Research Division of the Library of Congress, 1992).

²⁷ *Ibid.*, folio 6.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, folio 10.

agreements with Intourist (USSR), ORBIS (Poland), CEDOK (Czechoslovakia), IBUSZ and EXPRES (Hungary), the country's main tourist partners. Romania's representatives presented a report that addressed the issue of 'restorative tourism' and the prospects for its development within the socialist bloc.²⁹ This stance resembled the classic approach to tourism in the socialist bloc. However, following the 1961 meeting in Moscow, the Romanian government became more open to the possibility of welcoming Western tourists.³⁰ Indeed, immediately after the meeting its Council of Ministers asked for a report on the prospects for developing international tourism with Western countries. More than anything else, this report reflected the Romanian government's lack of experience in the sector.³¹ After having acknowledged an increase in the number of Western tourists holidaying in socialist Romania from 7,800 in 1957 to 40,000 in 1961, the report examined how other socialist countries welcomed Western tourists.³² Most of the examples were drawn from Bulgaria, Romania's southern neighbour. While in Bulgaria, tourists were offered guided tours to help them familiarise themselves with the history of the country and of the resorts; in Romania, tourists visited selected collective farms, the visits usually ending with a dinner party with 'comrades'.³³

Despite this dull itinerary, change was afoot. As of 1962, the National Tourism Office–Carpathians (NTO–Carpathians, the state tourist agency in charge of most tourist activities) and the government still did not have a clear plan for developing tourism with Western countries, but the quality of the advertising materials that promoted Romania as a tourist destination began to improve. Just a year later, another report, put together by the Propaganda and Foreign Relations Section within the Central Committee of the Romanian Workers Party (RWP),³⁴ emphasised this progress:

If during the previous years the tourist propaganda and the advertising of our country abroad focused only on general information, in 1962 these advertising materials became more detailed. Both printed materials and commercials advertised specific tourist destinations, including information about the travel conditions, prices, and where one can book a vacation to the RPR [Romanian Popular Republic]. Some of the materials were printed in collaboration with the partner travel agencies from abroad, while others were made at the request of foreign firms to be disseminated in their respective markets.³⁵

The same report noted that in 1962 alone, 124 items of advertising material were published with a circulation of 5.1 million copies. Additionally, 5.2 million postcards were made available to promote Romania abroad, and a television network from West Germany commissioned two promotional movies about Romania.³⁶ This campaign marked the launch of socialist Romania's concerted efforts to make the country a destination for tourists from capitalist countries.

This, however, did not mean that Romania's socialist path of development was to be completely silenced. In fact, the party elites wanted to have Romania promoted in the 'West' mostly as a socialist country with a rich folk culture. The above-mentioned 1963 report complained that 'traditional folk

²⁹ *Ibid.*, folio 39.

³⁰ Note about increasing revenue in hard currencies, 1969, ANIC, CC of PCR Collection, Chancellery Section, file no. 92/1969, folio 20. Among other things, this note mentions a plan to attract as foreign tourists more Romanians who had emigrated abroad and to offer them the possibility of buying property in Romania.

³¹ Until 1962, Romania had attempted to attract socialist tourists. This is shown by its elimination of visas for visitors from all the socialist countries (the Soviet Union, Czechoslovakia, Bulgaria, Hungary, East Germany, the Chinese People's Republic, the Korean People's Republic, the People's Republic of Mongolia and the Democratic Republic of Vietnam). See *World Travel* (April 1964), 13.

³² Report, 1961, ANIC, Council of Ministers Collection, file no. 29/1961, folio 46.

³³ *Ibid.*, folio 47.

³⁴ Romanian Workers Party/RWP (1948–65) had its name changed to the Romanian Communist Party (RCP) between 1965 and 1989.

³⁵ Note about the propaganda work of NTO–Carpathians, 15 Apr. 1963, ANIC, CC of PCR Collection, Propaganda Section, file no. 21/1963, folio 3.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, folio 4.

culture and events related to it and newly erected buildings are not promoted well enough', while the training of travel guides included 'few classes about the party's internal and foreign policy and the accomplishments of popular democracy'.³⁷ Moreover, only seven of the twenty-three guides working with NTO-Carpathians were party members. The report blamed poor political training for some of the tourist guides' inability to answer the simple question 'why is there just one party in our country?'. The RWP critiques were directed at the NTO-Carpathians, which they accused of not following the party's political guidance. It was only as of 1965 when international tourism started to be economically profitable and Romania opened up economically towards the capitalist West, when it became easier for the NTO-Carpathians' technocrats to counter the political demands.

A 1965 report put together by the representatives of NTO-Carpathians, the State Committee for Planning, the Ministry of Interior Trade, the Ministry of Finances and delegates of the counties where tourism was a key economic activity proposed a number of measures to improve the tourist activity in Romania.³⁸ Their conclusion was that international tourism has a high economic efficiency, comparable with that of industries that produced goods to be exported to capitalist countries.³⁹ To support their arguments they offered concrete numbers: in 1965, one million foreign tourists visited Romania as compared to only 200,000 in 1960, while the revenue from international tourism had increased from 34.4 million lei *valuta* in 1960 to 117 million lei *valuta* in 1965.⁴⁰ The most economically beneficial growth was that of the hard currency income coming from Western tourists. While in 1960, Western tourists contributed 5.3 million lei *valuta* to the Romanian budget, in the next five years this amount increased sixteen-fold, reaching 88 million lei *valuta* in 1965.⁴¹ The report proposed an investment in tourism of three billion lei of which 2.3 billion lei were allocated for international tourism with the mentioning that Romanian tourists could use those respective hotels outside the tourist season and when they were not fully occupied by foreign tourists. The Politburo approved of this measure despite the fact that Romanian citizens' right to rest was put into jeopardy. In this way, international tourism in Romania, although state controlled, came to follow the rules of a profit-driven market economy, and granted only limited funding to 'restorative tourism' for workers that used to be its focus during the 1950s and early 1960s.

The ones in charge for making tourism a profitable endeavour were the tourist technocrats. The fact that many of the NTO-Carpathians' employees had so-called bourgeois origins and were educated during the interwar period helped them to better adjust to the economic re-opening towards the capitalist West in the 1960s and to welcoming Western tourists.⁴² As international tourism with the West involved frequent contacts with firms and individuals in Western Europe and the United States, these technocrats learned to act in a more business-like way. For instance, in January 1968, Nicolae Bozdog, the head of the NTO-Carpathians, travelled to New York to meet with John B. Gates, chairman of the board of Intercontinental Hotels, to negotiate the opening of an Intercontinental Hotel in Bucharest. Bozdog and his deputies Gheorghe Leonte and Traian Lupu (who undertook the job as an NTO-Carpathians representative in New York) flew first class from Bucharest to New York, lived in an

³⁷ *Ibid.*, folio 5.

³⁸ Proposal for the development of tourism in Romania, 1965, ANIC, CC of PCR Collection, Chancellery Section, file no. 113/1965, folio 2.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, folio 3.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, folio 5. In 1965, the revenue obtained from international tourism (tourist packages and extra services) was expected to reach \$14.5 million and from domestic tourism \$10 million (calculated at the rate of 18 lei to a dollar). This was an increase from the \$9.3 million and 4.8 million rubbles obtained in 1964. See Minutes of the Council of Ministers/Economic Council Meeting, 23 May 1965, ANIC, Council of Ministers Collection, Economic Council, file no. 227/1965, folio 49.

⁴¹ Proposal for the development of tourism in Romania, 1965, ANIC, CC of PCR Collection, Chancellery Section, file no. 113/1965, folio 3. For 1965, 70 per cent of the total income from international tourism was planned to come from Western tourists, more precisely from West German, Scandinavian, British, Austrian or Swiss tourists, who were the most numerous. The NTO-Carpathians' report was first discussed within the Council of Ministers, and after that a shorter version was sent to the Politburo of the RCP.

⁴² *Ibid.*, folio 7.

expensive hotel, dined in fine restaurants, and planned to see a non-political American musical while in New York.⁴³ Undoubtedly, this trip allowed the Romanian guests to gain first-hand experience with the capitalist way of life and 'bourgeois sensibilities'. These visits did not make the socialist officials less loyal to the Romanian socialist state, but certainly influenced their mentality and perspective on East-West economic interactions. Furthermore, Bozdog's visit to the United States and the subsequent good press worked to improve the image of Romania in the United States, which the US media ceased to label as a 'red country'.⁴⁴

NTO-Carpathians grounded the reports that it sent to the Council of Ministers or to the Politburo of the Romanian Communist Party (RCP) on the studies elaborated by the National Institute for Research and Development in Tourism. The Institute, established in the mid-1950s as part of the Ministry of Interior Trade, actively followed developments in other European tourist countries, shared data with similar organisations in both socialist and capitalist countries, and regularly assessed foreign tourists' preferences and discontents regarding services in Romanian resorts.⁴⁵ Although many times not politically affiliated to the RCP, these tourist technocrats were essential to the socialist state's project to develop international tourism and to strengthen economic relations with the capitalist West, as they spoke foreign languages, knew the jargon of business and understood how international tourism works.

The organisation of tourism in Romania also suggested that the party elites granted more autonomy to the tourist sector as of the late 1960s, lured by the possibility to make tourism economically profitable. In 1967, the NTO-Carpathians asked the Political Bureau of the Romanian Communist Party for permission to be the sole institution responsible for the development of tourism in Romania as they explained this would raise the economic efficiency of international tourism (a 420 million lei *valuta* revenue from international tourism was projected for 1970), would ensure better training of the tourist personnel and would help to resolve any day-to-day inconsistencies that might occur between the accommodation and food services. The Politburo agreed to grant autonomy to NTO-Carpathians, which gained the rank of a ministry and became directly responsible to the Council of Ministers.⁴⁶ This measure reflected the increased role of tourism within Romania's socialist industry.

As part of its new responsibilities, in 1967 the NTO-Carpathians embarked on building a new chain of resorts (Neptun-Olimp, Venus and Saturn) on the southern part of the Romanian Black Sea coast.⁴⁷ This new string of holiday resorts would complement the already existing Mamaia, Eforie Nord and Eforie Sud resorts located close to Constanta, the main city in the region. Although significant hotel building took place in Mamaia and Eforie in the late 1950s and early 1960s, the capacity of these hotels did not meet the demand and the Western tourists' rising expectations.⁴⁸ During an Economic Council's

⁴³ Romania, 1968, University of Miami Libraries, Pan American World Airways Records, *Clipper Magazine*, vol. 8, collection 341, series I, box 206, folder 10.

⁴⁴ In 1969, President Richard Nixon also visited Romania and met with Nicolae Ceausescu, General Secretary of the Romanian Communist Party.

⁴⁵ ANIC, Institute for Research and Development in Tourism Collection (Institutul Național de Cercetare-Dezvoltare in Turism), i.e. file no.5/1969 (Survey of Romanian Seaside), 4/1972 (Economic rentability of cars for tourist purposes and proposals for increasing the hard currency revenue), or 12/1974 (Study of tourist policies of competing tourist European countries), etc.

⁴⁶ Report, 1966, ANIC, CC of PCR Collection, Economic Section, file no. 31/1966, f. 5 and Protocol no. 48 of the Politburo, ANIC, 22 Nov. 1966, CC of PCR, Chancellery Section, 150/1966, folio 14.

⁴⁷ Minutes of the Council of Ministers/Economic Council Meeting, 23 May 1965, ANIC, Council of Ministers, file no. 227/1965, folio 32.

⁴⁸ In 1938, Hotel Rex in Mamaia was opened in the presence of Carol II, the King of Romania at that time, while in Eforie, Hotel Bellona was erected in the 1930s. In 1957, Hotel Bucharest was built in Mamaia, in a Stalinist architectural style. Besides these hotels, a number of rest houses and villas existed in Mamaia and Eforie from the interwar period; most of them were nationalised houses that only provided an inadequate lodging, especially for foreign tourists. In the early 1960s, five more hotels were opened in Mamaia: Aurora, Meridian, Doina, Flora and Victoria, which one black and white postcard proudly advertised in 1962. In Eforie, Hotel Bellona remained the most modern facility until 1970, when Hotel Europa, an eleven-storey skyscraper, was built.

meeting on 23 May 1965,⁴⁹ representatives of the NTO–Carpathians emphasised that the enlargement of tourist infrastructure was paramount to the further development of international tourism in Romania for ‘recent studies of the external market shows that the high revenue expected from international tourism is contingent on the expansion of the current tourist infrastructure’.⁵⁰ At the same time, as Johanna Conterio has observed, tourist developments on the Black Sea coast were supposed to showcase the superiority of the socialist approach to urban planning.⁵¹ From this perspective, the existing hotels and vacation spaces on the Romanian Black Sea coast limited the socialist planners’ ability to meet both their ideological agenda and the increasing demand.⁵² The project to build new holiday resorts on the southern part of the Romanian Black Sea coast could suggest the socialist planners’ wish to break with the design of the tourist city of the interwar period (which included villas and small hotels) and to build larger hotels that matched both the Romanian socialist regime’s vision of modernity and the European/world trends of the 1960s–70s.⁵³

And indeed, the Romanian government built Neptun-Olimp, Venus and Saturn complexes to cater to foreign tourists, especially those from Western Europe. The plan that NTO–Carpathians sent for approval to the Politburo highlighted the presence of an attractive natural landscape, ‘close to a forest’, which, they said, ‘increases the chances of successfully promoting the resort in the foreign market’.⁵⁴ Most of the accommodation infrastructure consisted of two-star hotels as Romania was mostly catering to working and middle-class tourists from capitalist countries, but also because these were the tendencies in the more developed tourist countries (e.g. Spain and Yugoslavia).⁵⁵ The cost to build the whole resort was around \$340 million, and the plan insisted that investment would be recouped in fifteen years. Although the building of this new complex conformed to the rules of the planned economy, the tourist officials paid specific attention to costs and revenues in order to convince the party elites that the resort was worth building. The Neptun-Olimp, Venus and Saturn resorts were just the tip of the iceberg in the growth of tourist infrastructure in Romania. Between 1970 and 1985, the number of hotels soared by 42.3 per cent.⁵⁶

In the 1970s, along with the modern tourist infrastructure that burgeoned on the Black Sea coast and elsewhere in Romania, a new vision of tourism emerged. This clearly emphasised the commercial value of tourism in Romania. In 1976, Oskar Snak, a high official in the Ministry of Tourism and a scholar of tourism, explained: ‘From an economic and social point of view, the development of

⁴⁹ Economic Council (Consiliul Economic) was part of the Council of Ministers; its role was to follow how the decisions of the Central Committee of the Romanian Communist Party and of the Council of Ministers were put into practice in the economic realm. EC also coordinated the local economic commissions and proposed studies about the improvement of economic planning and economic management. See Law 20/1967 regarding the Organization and Functioning of Council of Ministers at <https://lege5.ro/Gratuit/g43tamjr/organizarea-si-functionarea-consiliului-de-ministri-lege-20-1967?dp=ha2tcnbgxyya> (last visited 20 April 2021).

⁵⁰ Minutes of the Council of Ministers/Economic Council Meeting, 23 May 1965, ANIC, Council of Ministers Collection, file no. 227/1965, folio 44.

⁵¹ Johanna Conterio, ‘“Our Black Sea Coast”: The Sovietization of the Black Sea Littoral under Khrushchev and the Problem of Overdevelopment’, *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History*, 19, 2 (2018), 330. This emphasised the state ownership of the land and natural resources along with the experts’ ability to plan space in order to meet the needs of the people as opposed to the interests of private business.

⁵² The new hotels were built next to the ones erected during the interwar period and a house of culture was opened. Significantly enough, Eforie North and South had a stable population, unlike Mamaia or the newly built resorts, which were virtually deserted outside the tourist season. See Oana Adelina Ștefan, ‘Individual Tourists and “Tourism by Choice”: Tourist Policies in Romania of the 1960s–1970s’, in Alina Șerban, Sorin Istudor and Kaliopi Dimou, eds., *Enchanting Views: Romanian Black Sea Tourism Planning and Architecture in the 1960s–70s* (Bucharest: Asociația Pepluspatru, 2015), 128–45.

⁵³ On architectural planning in socialist Romania see Liliana Iuga, ‘“Don’t Tell Me It Cannot Be Done; We Must Reach an Acceptable Solution!” Politics, Professionals and Architectural Debate in Socialist Romania’, *sITA, Studies in History & Theory of Architecture*, 6 (2018), 78–91.

⁵⁴ Minutes of the Council of Ministers/Economic Council Meeting, 23 May 1965, ANIC, Council of Ministers Collection, file no. 227/1965, folio 228.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, folio 230.

⁵⁶ Maria Luminita Cojocca and Monica Mariana Coros, ‘The Romanian Hotel Industry: An Analysis Based on Real Facts’, *Journal of Tourism: Studies and Research in Tourism*, 16 (2014).

tourism refers to the population's growing demands for a better access to tourist services and consumer goods, which in the end stimulates both production and consumption'.⁵⁷ Furthermore, Snak emphasised that the growing number of 'foreign visitors is beneficial for the development of certain tourist areas and of the Romanian economy in general'.⁵⁸ More than that, he noted, 'international tourism can positively influence a country's balance of payments, capitalize on a country's natural resources' and act as 'an invisible form of exporting services and products, which is very economically advantageous'.⁵⁹ This view on international tourism was nothing different than the tourist philosophy in countries with more tourist experience, such as Spain or Yugoslavia, but it was still not enough to make Romania truly successful with tourism.⁶⁰ The key was better promotion abroad and a cohesive tourist brand that would attract tourists.

How to Promote Romania Abroad and to Make Tourism Profitable

In a 1972 interview published in *Recepción*, a Spanish tourist magazine, Traian Lupu, General Secretary in the Ministry of Tourism, declared that 'Romania is essentially a tourist country because of its year-round tourist possibilities, its rich folklore and traditions, thermal spas, and the so-called Romanian miracle'.⁶¹ Lupu, who previously served as the head of the NTO–Carpathians office in New York, aimed at attracting tourist agencies and tourists in Spain by emphasising what he thought the Spanish public sought from a tourist destination. But his statement illustrated succinctly Romania's tourist strategy. Throughout the 1970s, the tourist officials planned to advertise Romania as a multi-faceted tourist destination that could cater to a larger spectrum of tourists, not only from traditional Western markets, such as West Germany, Italy, France and Scandinavian countries, but also from the emerging tourist countries like Spain or Greece.⁶²

Nevertheless, in the Romanian case, the path to developing a tourist strategy was thorny as there was a continuous tension between the party officials' wish to gain swift revenues from tourism and the technocrats' goal to foster a long-term development plan. This was but one reason why ultimately the tourism development in Romania did not entirely pay off. For one thing, after a promising start, the overall economic results of international tourism in Romania remained below the socialist officials' expectations. The government was puzzled by this as it had taken various additional measures to increase tourist circulation. In 1967, Romania had abolished visa regulations for tourists from capitalist countries and allowed visas to be obtained at the border.⁶³

Although the figure of foreign tourists substantially increased from 200,000 in 1960 to 6.8 million in 1982, the number of Western tourists only reached 899,690 in 1979, which was a peak year.⁶⁴ Likewise, the total income from tourism in Romania remained lower than that in other socialist countries, such as Yugoslavia, Czechoslovakia and even Bulgaria.⁶⁵ This would only increase in the

⁵⁷ Oskar Snak, *Economia și organizarea turismului* (Bucharest: Sport Tourism Publishing, 1976), 28.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 29.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

⁶⁰ Oana Adelina Ștefan, 'Vacationing in the Cold War: Foreign Tourists to Socialist Romania and Franco's Spain, 1960s--1970s', PhD thesis, University of Pittsburgh, 2016.

⁶¹ Louis de Borja, 'Rumania, una perla a orillas del Mar Negro', *Recepción Informacion Hotelera y Turistica*, 55 (1972), 24–30.

⁶² In 1973, Vasile Gliga, the deputy minister of Foreign Affairs, wrote to Ilie Voicu, the deputy minister of Tourism, that 'Spain could become an important client for our tourism'. See Ministry of Foreign Affairs Archives, Fond 1973, file no. 3587/1973, folio 6.

⁶³ 'Council of Ministers' Decree no. 800/1967', in *Colecția de Legi, Decrete, Hotărâri și Alte Acte Normative* (Collection of Laws, Decrees and Other Legislative Acts) (Bucharest: Editura de Stat, 1950–69).

⁶⁴ Derek R. Hall, ed., *Tourism and Economic Development in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union* (London: Belhaven Press, 1991), 368; ANIC, PCM–Coordination Office (PCM–Secția Coordonare), file no. 508/1985, folio 29.

⁶⁵ ANIC, CC of PCR Collection, Chancellery Section, file no. 150/1966, f. 20. For instance, in 1965 Romania realised \$24 million from tourism (both capitalist and socialist countries), while Yugoslavia realised \$92 million, Bulgaria, \$31 million and Czechoslovakia, \$30 million. See ANIC, CC of PCR Collection, Chancellery Section, file no. 150/1966, folios 2, 3.

second half of the 1970s. Whereas in 1975 it was \$198 million, in 1980 it increased sharply to \$357 million.⁶⁶ But the income from international tourism in Romania would plummet to only \$127 million in 1984.⁶⁷ The relatively low income and number of Western tourists compared to the other tourist countries worried the Romanian government, which continuously attempted to find solutions to resolve it.⁶⁸ One course of action was to improve the advertising strategy on the Western market.⁶⁹

Already in 1967, Corneliu Mănescu, a member of the Executive Bureau of the Central Committee of the Romanian Communist Party and later president of the United Nations General Assembly, explained the limited success of international tourism in socialist Romania at the time as follows: 'We cannot compare ourselves with the Dalmatian Coast, we have abolished visas, but this did not bring too many tourists. We have to make propaganda, to build tourist circuits, to understand that tourism does not mean only the hotel [accommodation] or places such as Eforie and Mangalia, but we can also develop tourism in other places too'.⁷⁰

In the 1960s, NTO–Carpathians along with the Meridiane Publishing House, a press that specialised in literature, art history and travel, began to publish tourist guidebooks to promote Romania as a tourist destination.⁷¹ Yet these materials only partially met Corneliu Mănescu's suggestion. A tourist guidebook published in 1967 in French (the first such guide to be published in a foreign language during the socialist era) under the supervision of Șerban Cioculescu, a well-established literary critic and historian, looked more like a stiff academic book than an attractive piece written for Western tourists.⁷² The potential visitor to Romania could choose between the twenty-one possible circuits that the guidebook suggested as worth pursuing. In addition, the guidebook included a long list of museums and other high culture venues of potential interest to the foreign visitor, while the last chapter contained practical information about restaurants, hotels, the exchange rate and telephone rates.⁷³ The guidebook's introduction did not shy away from describing Romania as a socialist country, but it also

⁶⁶ ANIC, Institute for Research and Development in Tourism Collection, file no. 32/1981 (Directions for increasing Romania's attractiveness as a tourist destination on the European market), folio 44. The income from international tourism would then plummet from \$357 million in 1980 to \$149.1 million in 1982 and to \$127 million in 1984. See ANIC, Institute for Research and Development in Tourism Collection, file no. 16/1985 (Directions for increasing the revenue from international tourism in Romania), folio 74.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ In Romania, average tourist revenue, per night, was \$30.4 in 1978, \$32.6 in 1979 and \$41.5 in 1980, while, by comparison, Hungary obtained \$37.6 in 1978 and \$40.1 in 1979. Greece, also an emergent tourist country, managed to cash in \$54.5 per night/per tourist in 1978 and \$57.6 in 1979. See ANIC, Institute for Research and Development in Tourism Collection, file no. 32/1981 (Directions for increasing Romania's attractiveness as a tourist destination on the European market), folio 43.

⁶⁹ Romania began to actively participate in international tourist exhibitions in the early-mid 1960s. For instance, in 1964 Romania, through the Institute for Cultural Relations Abroad and the NTO–Carpathians, participated in the Tourist Exhibition in Vienna, Austria, where in a nine square metre space it displayed twenty-five to thirty photos both in colour and black-and-white along with folk objects and several films about the seaside and the Prahova Valley ('Mamaia', 'Vacation in the Sun'; 'Poiana Brașov'; 'Among the Pelicans'). See ANIC, Institute for Cultural Relations Abroad Collection, file no. 31/1961–1963, folio 9.

⁷⁰ Protocol of the Politburo Meeting, 1967, ANIC, CC of PCR Collection, Chancellery Section, file no. 47/1967, folio 24.

⁷¹ On the role of guidebooks in promoting modern tourism see Rudy Koshar, *German Travel Cultures* (Oxford: Berg, 2000). The first general tourist guidebook of Romania during the socialist period was published in 1960, while others followed in 1967, 1968 (which I analyse in this article), 1974 and 1983. Though the first guidebooks were published by Meridiane Publishing House, in the 1970s a specialised publishing house for tourism was established.

⁷² Șerban Cioculescu, ed., *La Roumanie – Guide Touristique* (Bucharest: Editions Meridiane, 1967). The first guidebook was published in 1958 in French under the coordination of party-affiliate historian Constantin Daicoviciu. See Constantin Daicoviciu, *Roumanie* (Bucarest: Editions en Langues Etrangères, 1958).

⁷³ One can assume that the guidebook underwent censorship as censorship was only officially abolished in 1977 when the 'book controls' department within the General Direction for Press and Printing (Direcția Generală a Presei și Tipăriturilor) was abolished. On censorship in socialist Romania, see Liliana Corobca, *Controlul Cărții: Cenzura literaturii în regimul comunist din România* (Bucharest: Cartea Românească, 2014).

conveyed its rich historical past.⁷⁴ This kind of description might have appalled those Western tourists with a Cold War mind-set, although the book aimed to cater to a more intellectually curious audience.

Cioculescu's guidebook opened with a description of the capital, Bucharest, followed by the Prahova Valley, a region only 100 km from Bucharest, and important because of its chain of mountain resorts (Sinaia–Predeal). The rest of the guidebook explored central Transylvania (the Brasov–Sibiu and Brasov–Sighisoara–Sibiu areas), Oltenia (Craiova–Petroșani–Simeria), Banat-western Transylvania (Timișoara–Arad–Oradea–Cluj), the seaside (București–Constanța and the coast) the Danube Delta and finally Moldavia (Bucharest, Buzău, Bacau and Northern Moldavia).⁷⁵ By listing these particular tourist circuits, the guidebook avoided the construction of tourist circuits restricted to only one historical region.⁷⁶ This was especially the case in the western part of the country in regions such as Transylvania and Banat, where important ethnic minorities lived. Thus, the guidebook followed the party's instructions to present Romania as a cohesive unitary space. Although the guidebook included all the regions of the country, it put greater emphasis on Transylvania, since this region was more likely to be familiar to Western tourists because of the Dracula story, or the presence of a large German community, which preserved ties with both West Germany and East Germany.⁷⁷ Nine of the twenty-one suggested tours involved locations in this region. By its structure and preferences, the book created a certain hierarchy of tourist regions that put emphasis on cultural sites.

With regard to the specific tourist places that potential foreign tourists could visit, the 1967 guidebook included both cultural sites and the regime's new industrial plants. For instance, in the case of the Prahova Valley, the guidebook recommended the Peleş Museum in Sinaia, which was described as blending 'German and Italian Renaissance styles', the Sinaia monastery⁷⁸ and the Brazi refinery and the oil equipment plant in Ploiesti.⁷⁹ The inclusion of a refinery and factory, hardly the normal sites for vacationers, suggests that Cioculescu's guidebook sought to balance often conflicting political demands. The description of the Peleş Museum in Sinaia, which was a former royal castle built at the end of the nineteenth century, emphasised its European cultural legacy. The guidebook stressed that the former royal palace contained elements of German neo-Renaissance style, which was a fashionable nineteenth-century architectural style in Italy and former Habsburg lands, but overlooked the existence of a Turkish room, a reference to Romania's oriental legacy. Given the focus of socialist Romania's historians on the medieval Wallachian and Moldavian crusades against the Ottoman Empire and contemporary socialist Romania's leaning toward the West, the author of the guidebook did not hide his preference for Western Europe, while ties with the Ottoman and Russian Empires were silenced.⁸⁰ Of course, stressing links to European culture also served to entice tourists whose hard currency funds the state sought to attract. The emphasis on European cultural heritage worked as a form of soft power against the backdrop of the Cold War.

As the Romanian government attempted to attract more Western tourists, the guidebook tried to present Romania as a familiar and politically friendly zone despite the physical distance and the Iron Curtain. This stance may be surprising at first sight but, in fact, it was part of a larger push to establish

⁷⁴ Cioculescu, ed., *La Roumanie*, 7. 'A country with a solid historical foundation, Romania is a socialist country that advances quickly on the road of progress, without jeopardizing its historical traits'.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 5.

⁷⁶ Historian Lucian Boia expresses a similar view in his memoirs. He recalls how the party apparatchiks strictly forbid the writing of histories confined to just one historical region. See Lucian Boia, *Cum am trecut prin comunism. Primul sfert de veac. Memorii* (Bucharest: Humanitas, 2018).

⁷⁷ On the Transylvanian Germans' relations with East Germans through tourism see James Koranyi, 'Voyages of Socialist Discovery: German–German Exchanges between the GDR and Romania', *Slavonic and East European Review*, 92, 3 (2014), 479–506.

⁷⁸ Cioculescu, ed., *La Roumanie*, 67.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 63.

⁸⁰ Most of the historical literature published during the 1960s–80s insisted on the role of the Romanian principalities in stopping the Ottoman conquest of Christian Europe. On rewriting history in the Soviet bloc countries see Roger D. Markwick, *Rewriting History in Soviet Russia: The Politics of Revisionist Historiography, 1954–1974* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2001).

preferential cultural and economic relations with Western Europe and the United States. In the mid-1960s, socialist Romania's main trading partner became West Germany⁸¹ and in the 1970s it entered into negotiations with the European Economic Community on a preferential trade agreement.⁸² Romania's economic shift towards the EEC and Western Europe was well covered by the Western media in the 1970s, which also helped to increase the number of Western tourists to the socialist country. Yet, the focus of Cioculescu's guidebook on high culture alone and its strong ideological content probably hindered rather than attracted Western tourists. At a time when young people in Western and Eastern Europe were lured by American popular culture, this message was outdated and more specific to the Soviet Union's cultural policies than to those of the Westerners it tried to attract.⁸³ Although circumstantial, the volume's 'outdated' message seems to have reflected Cioculescu's efforts to satisfy two competing political perspectives.

Another guidebook published in English, French and German in 1968 and authored by Nicolae Minei, a historian close to the Communist Party, did a better job at tailoring its message to the needs of foreign tourists, although it kept an ideological agenda. The travel guide proposed four possible tours contingent on the amount of time a foreign tourist could spend in Romania. The most comprehensive tour, which was suggested for a ten-day visit, would allow tourists to visit 'Bucharest, the Romanian Black Sea coast, the Prahova Valley, the Danube Delta, the monasteries in Northern Moldavia, go round Romania by car or train, see the ancient Greek and Roman sites, the ancient Dacian and Roman sites and tour the medieval and folk-art sites'.⁸⁴ In comparison with the 1967 guidebook, Minei's travel guide put a strong emphasis on the seaside, as this was one important point of interest for Western tourists, second only to Bucharest. However, when it came to sketching the history of the country, the guidebook kept to the ideological blueprint. Therefore, it emphasised the Romanians' role in defeating the Ottomans in the Middle Ages when they menaced Christian Europe, and its switching sides during the Second World War against Nazi Germany.⁸⁵ In addition, the 1968 guidebook highlighted the Roman and Greek influences on Romanian cultural heritage, but it did not forget the Dacians, the pre-Roman population that inhabited more or less the territory of contemporary Romania. During the 1970s–80s, the Dacians and their culture became central to proto-chronism, a current of thought instrumentally used by intellectuals and party propagandists to prove the ancestry of Romanian (but not necessarily Roman) culture.⁸⁶ Nevertheless, despite these historical biases, the travel guide offered enough practical information to be a useful aid for tourists who wanted to visit socialist Romania.

Both guidebooks drew a symbolic map of Romania that mirrored the official discourse on tourism during socialism. Besides conveying the accomplishments of the socialist regime and Romania's so-called 'heroic past', the focus of the tourist guides was on high culture. This was meant to make the entire country part of larger European developments, in particular the Renaissance and Baroque eras and their architecture.⁸⁷ The two travel guides were anxious to remind European

⁸¹ One explanation for this was the sectorial development that Soviets proposed within Comecon in the early 1960s. This happened while the Romanian communist leaders planned to build a steel plant in Galati, for which they found money and technology from the West. Ronald Linden, *Bear and Foxes: The International Relations of the East European States, 1965–1969* (New York: East European Quarterly, 1979).

⁸² Angela Romano, 'Untying Cold War Knots: The EEC and Eastern Europe in the Long 1970s', *Cold War History*, 14, 2 (2014), 153–73.

⁸³ On culture during the Cold War see Jessica Gienow-Hecht, 'Culture and the Cold War in Europe', in Melvyn Leffler and Odd Arne Westad, eds., *The Cambridge History of the Cold War, Vol. I* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), and Annette Wöwinkel, Marcus M. Payk and Thomas Lindenberger, eds., *Cold War Cultures: Perspectives on Eastern and Western European Societies* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2012).

⁸⁴ Nicolae Minei, *Romania in One, Three, Seven or Ten Days* (Bucharest: Meridiane, 1968), 5.

⁸⁵ Despite Romania's initial alliance with Nazi Germany in the Second World War, which is not even briefly mentioned.

⁸⁶ Katherine Verdery, *National Ideology under Socialism: Identity and Cultural Politics in Ceausescu's Romania* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1995).

⁸⁷ To a certain extent, the focus on high culture was specific to the Soviet bloc countries during the Cold War in its competition with the West, while the West (especially the United States) placed a greater emphasis on popular culture

travellers of the Romanian principalities' role in stopping the Ottomans in the high Middle Ages.⁸⁸ By emphasising this, it placed Romanian lands on the European and Christian side throughout history despite their belonging to the Soviet bloc in the 1960s. At the same time, the two guides emphasised folklore and the Dacian inheritance. On the one hand, folklore showcased Romania's specificity in the eyes of foreign tourists, while on the other hand it played a role in building a nationalist ideology, which the Romanian communist leaders embraced in the mid-1960s. The two guidebooks thereby reflected the tension between the Romanian socialist regime's goal of transforming the country into a major tourist destination and its wish to use tourism in order to convey a more politically convenient view of Romanian history. As a darling of the regime, Nicolae Minei seemed to have more leeway in putting together a travel guide, while Șerban Cioculescu, who had been politically marginalised throughout the 1950s, may have used his authoring of the 1967 tourist guidebook to pay lip service to the party.⁸⁹ That both men sought to balance political correctness and economic necessity suggests that, among the party's leaders, there existed a cautious approach on how to market socialist Romania.

During the 1970s, the NTO–Carpathians ceased publishing large guidebooks and shifted towards releasing concise brochures and flyers, or guidebooks on more specific topics (e.g. spa resorts), which were easier to circulate to a larger audience.⁹⁰ These materials focused on concrete information, such as travel conditions, visas, hotels, eating and entertainment facilities. In addition to French and English editions, the brochures were also published in German, as most of the Western tourists visiting Romania were West Germans.⁹¹ Because brochures and flyers were physically compact, the ideological undertones were few or completely absent. This marked a difference from the guidebook style that had dominated in the 1960s. For instance, the 1971 cover of *Vacances en Roumanie*, a tourist magazine published by the NTO–Carpathians in several languages, lured Western tourists to Romania with young women in bikinis.⁹² First published in 1958, the magazine was initially called *A travers la Roumanie*, while in 1965 it had its name changed to *Vacances en Roumanie*, reflecting the magazine's goal to become an outlet of tourism promotion in Romania. It was made available in hotels and airports, but those interested could subscribe and receive the publication at home for about \$10 per year. Because it wanted to show that its readers matter, the magazine launched a contest that offered prizes to those who provided the correct answers. The winners were offered a free vacation in Romania and their names were announced inside the magazine.

The content of the magazine closely reflected the Romanian state policy regarding international tourism. Whereas in the early to mid-1970s the magazine included articles about the new resorts on the Black Sea coast, Romanian cuisine and fashion, music festivals, etc., in the 1980s, Nicolae Ceausescu and his wife, Elena, graced the cover of *Vacances en Roumanie* as well. Yet, there was a fine line between ideology and commercialism in the pages of this tourist magazine. The

(movies, music, etc.). On East–West cultural competition during the Cold War see Annette Woinckel, Marcus M. Payk and Thomas Linderberger, eds., *Cold War Cultures: Perspectives on Eastern and Western European Societies* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2012), 9–10.

⁸⁸ For a short overview on history writing during the communist period see Cristina Petrescu and Dragos Petrescu, 'Mastering versus Coming to Terms with the Past: A Critical Analysis of Post-Communist Romanian Historiography', in Sorin Antohi, ed., *Narratives Unbound: Historical Studies in Post-Communist Eastern Europe* (Budapest: Central European University, 2007), 311–409.

⁸⁹ Ș. Cioculescu was a professor at the universities of Iasi and Bucharest and a member of the Romanian Academy of Sciences. He began his literary career in the 1920s with works on Ioan Luca Caragiale, a nineteenth-century novelist and journalist. He earned his PhD from the Sorbonne. Marginalised in the 1950s (his brother was a political prisoner), he made a comeback in the 1960s. In 1969 he received a distinction for his merits as an outstanding 'man of science' in the 'Romanian socialist republic', and in 1974 he became a member of the Romanian Academy of Sciences and Director of its Library.

⁹⁰ Although it did continue to publish more specific guidebooks on the seaside, the spa resorts, or cities of touristic interest, such as Sibiu or Brașov.

⁹¹ West German tourists made up 30 per cent of the number of Western tourists visiting Romania during the socialist period.

⁹² *Vacances en Roumanie*, no.1–4, September 1971, front cover.

September 1971 issue (the magazine was published quarterly) advertised a night club in Venus, then one of the newest resorts on the Black Sea coast. The lively article describes the opening of this brand-new night club with female dancers who had ‘attractive legs and moved graciously’ and waiters wearing ‘cowboy outfits and very short skirts’.⁹³ This depiction was far from unique. Also in 1971, a study put together by the Institute for Research and Development in Tourism called for tourist brochures and magazines to include in the presentation of tourist resorts ‘short and engaging stories’, such as that, ‘all female personnel in Venus were selected through a beauty pageant’, and that ‘only beautiful women are admitted into the resort’.⁹⁴ Certainly, when it came to attracting more foreign/Western tourists, Romanian tourist specialists did not shy away from sexualising women despite the regime’s prudishness otherwise regarding sexuality.

This type of message mirrored the domestic liberalisation that took place during this time period. Starting already in the late 1960s, ordinary citizens’ access to consumer goods had improved (rationing was completely abolished in 1968), while Romanians were also able to vacation abroad. This inchoate societal liberalisation was brought to a halt as of 1979, when rationing was reintroduced for fuel against the backdrop of the global oil crisis. In the early 1980s, in its attempt to reduce the trade deficit, which in 1980, reached \$1.5 billion, the Romanian government cut off investments and imports of technology and consumer goods, which strongly affected the tourism sector.⁹⁵ Yet, it was not just the economic crisis that affected tourism but the more ideological stance that the party was trying to impose. For *Vacances en Roumanie* this meant more articles on Romania’s recent history as opposed to practical and more appealing information about Romanian tourism.⁹⁶

Consequentially, in the late 1970s, the number of Western tourists visiting Romania began to drop. Already in 1980 a report by the Securitate, the communist secret police, complained that only 260,300 people had bought vacations in Romania before 1 April 1980.⁹⁷ In fact, some tourists from capitalist countries cancelled their trips to Romania altogether (West Germany – 5850 cancellations, United Kingdom – 5800, United States – 5445, Italy – 5250, France – 3260).⁹⁸ The tourist firms explained that the cancellations were taking place because of the deteriorating international situation due to the war in Afghanistan, the political situation in Europe, especially in the Balkans, or economic crises in the tourists’ countries of origin, which made them abandon their vacation plans.⁹⁹ In addition, the brand-new infrastructure of the late 1960s and early 1970s had become outdated in the 1980s, and complaints were mounting among tourists about declining tourist services and a lack of entertainment facilities on the Romanian Black Sea coast. Undoubtedly, Nicolae Ceaușescu’s decision to pay all foreign debts in 1982, which signalled a turn to self-sufficiency, contributed to the lowering numbers of Western tourists in Romania as well. Yet, the crisis of international tourism in Romania closely reflected the international context. In the early 1980s, economic depression loomed in the so-called developed capitalist countries, and particularly affected the middle-class tourists and the blue-collar workers that Romania was trying to attract.¹⁰⁰

Since the Romanian socialist government still regarded international tourism as a priority because it represented a source of hard currencies that could alleviate Romania’s economic crisis, it designed a new advertising strategy. In 1981, in order to have a better insight into what Western tourists wanted, the Institute for Research and Development in Tourism sent out questionnaires to the main partner

⁹³ Ibid., 6.

⁹⁴ ANIC, Institute for Research and Development in Tourism Collection, file no. 21/1971 (On developing the specificity of some resorts at the Black Sea Coast), folio 3.

⁹⁵ World Bank Group Archives, Romania: Reports and Background Material for PCR/PPAR, Jan. 1985, [https://archive-holdings.worldbank.org/](https://archive holdings.worldbank.org/) (last visited Nov. 2019).

⁹⁶ ‘Quinze ans d’histoire nouvelle’, *Vacances en Roumanie* (June 1980), no. 101–2.

⁹⁷ Bookings for organised tours were made well in advance.

⁹⁸ ACNSAS, Documentary Fund, file no. 8935, vol. 21, folio 1v.

⁹⁹ Ibid., folio 2.

¹⁰⁰ ANIC, Institute for Research and Development in Tourism Collection, file no. 8/1978, (Study about individual tourists who visit R.S.R.– Romanian Socialist Republic), folio 53. For organised trips (with a travel agency) the most numerous tourists were blue collar workers, while for individual trips (done mostly by car) tourists with a college degree predominated, who were fewer in Romania.

tourist agencies from abroad asking what could be improved to keep the tourists coming.¹⁰¹ The answers ranged from better services to more informative materials (for instance, American tourists wanted publicity about Transylvania and geriatric treatments) to better food in restaurants and lower prices. Yet, tourist decision makers only partially followed these down-to-earth suggestions since they had to carefully balance both political requests coming from the Romanian Communist Party and the tourists' demands. The 1983 plan to promote tourism reflected this tension. First and foremost, the plan emphasised that 'tourism propaganda is part of the general propaganda which the party and the state develop in order to help disseminate, domestically and abroad, the right image of Romania's past and the Romanian people's accomplishments in the era of socialism'.¹⁰² Nevertheless, despite this dogmatic message, the Romanian tourist officials aimed to adjust the discourse to the prospective audience as well. This is why, in the case of Western tourists, the focus drifted away from a purely ideological position to a more pragmatic stance. The plan stated:

With the purpose of increasing Romania's share in world exchanges of material and spiritual values, the tourist propaganda will present Romania as a country with year-round tourist possibilities which offers an unpolluted climate and a political and socially safe environment together with an array of possibilities for tourism in all regions of the country.

Not only did the tourist promoters insist on issues that they considered of interest, such as safety and the environment, but they also attempted to remain abreast with the latest trends in tourism. In 1984, a report on international tourism techniques noted that 75 per cent of the world's foreign tourists chose European destinations for their vacations and that Romania could be part of this network.¹⁰³ Furthermore, the study emphasised that tourists' priorities had changed and that modern tourists had become less interested in physical recuperation and more focused on cultural and social enhancement.¹⁰⁴ Unfortunately, the socialist officials were less willing to adjust the prices to the worsening economic conditions in Western Europe, although they closely followed these developments. Already in the late 1970s, Romania became slightly more expensive than Spain, Yugoslavia or Bulgaria, countries that were actually better known to Western tourists than Romania.¹⁰⁵

Besides the relatively high costs of tourist services, the Romanian state did little to modernise its offer so as to provide the 'cultural and social enhancement' tourists were seeking in the 1980s. Romanian tourist officials ambitiously planned 'to launch on the European and extra-European tourist markets a number of new programmes and circuits'.¹⁰⁶ However, as in the 1960s, Romanian tourist officials planned to focus on cultural tours that would exclusively highlight high culture and folklore, while the tourists were seeking relaxation and fun. The planned itineraries centred on personalities that the Romanian socialist government deemed representative: Constantin Brâncuși (a Romanian-born surrealist sculptor who lived most of his life in France), George Enescu (a classical music composer) and Nicolae Titulescu (president of the League of Nations and former Minister of Foreign Affairs in the interwar period). In addition, the newly opened tourist circuits were expected to trace Baroque art and architecture in Romania (which only exists in Transylvania, though the 1984

¹⁰¹ ANIC, Institute for Research and Development in Tourism Collection, file no. 33/1981 (Solutions to increase tourist circulation towards Romania in the context of current global trends), folio 6.

¹⁰² ANIC, CC of PCR Collection, Propaganda and Agitation Section, file no. 60/1983, folio 3.

¹⁰³ Gheorghe Ionel and Caraba Crișan, eds., *Tehnica Operațiunilor de Turism Internațional* (București: Editura Sport Turism, 1984), 12.

¹⁰⁴ Ionel and Crișan, eds., *Tehnica Operațiunilor*, 12.

¹⁰⁵ ANIC, Institute for Research and Development in Tourism Collection, file no. 23/1976 (Commercial Policy Study of the European Tourist Market), folio 3. According to a study by the Institute for Research and Development in Tourism, one week on the Romanian Black Sea seaside was sold on the Austrian market at 3530 shillings while on the Bulgarian Black Sea coast it cost 2950 shillings). High tourist prices in Romania became a topic of discussion also in the Politburo meetings; see Protocol of Politburo Meeting, 1978, ANIC, CC of PCR Chancellery, 61/1978, folio 9.

¹⁰⁶ Note on promoting Romania abroad, 1983, ANIC, CC of PCR Collection, Propaganda and Agitation Section, file no. 60/1983, folio 24.

report failed to mention this) and include a number of folk festivals, such as the Maiden Fair on Mount Gaina (Hen) and the pottery fair at Hurezu Monastery.¹⁰⁷

Much like the 1960s guidebooks, the proposed tourist destinations sought to portray Romania as part of European high culture (Baroque art, Enescu and Brancusi), or cultural aspects related to events connected with the religious and mythological realms (the Maiden Fair is associated with a religious holiday and is based on a nineteenth-century myth, while the pottery fair takes place at a monastery). Such destinations may well appear out of step with the socialist ideology, which rejected mysticism. Nevertheless, when it came to tourism the Romanian socialist regime had a more lenient approach towards religion and included religious destinations among the historical sites that should be promoted to tourists.¹⁰⁸ Yet, despite some clear accomplishments in promoting Romania in Western countries, especially in the 1960s and the 1970s, the ways in which tourist promotion was applied on the ground left much to be desired. One major deficiency was how tourist materials were distributed abroad. Already in 1973, a letter from the Romanian tourist office in Madrid to the Ministry of Tourism in Bucharest complained about the lack of tourist maps, of flyers about the Orthodox monasteries, of information on car rental prices and hotel prices and of a catalogue with the places that sell handicraft objects, as these were the materials the Spanish tourists were requesting most often.¹⁰⁹ This incident suggests that despite the abundance of printed tourist materials, the Ministry of Tourism's bureaucracy and increased politicisation (it was created in 1971 to centralise tourism development in Romania with the NTO–Carpathians becoming only a department within it) in fact limited the capacity to meet Western tourists' desires.

What Did Western Tourists Want to See in Romania?

Most of the guidebooks and tourist fliers were designed and published by the NTO–Carpathians/Ministry of Tourism, but some were produced by foreign publishers as well.¹¹⁰ As a 1981 study by the Institute for Research and Development in Tourism shows, foreign tourists relied on travel guides published in their home countries and fellow travellers' recommendations when choosing their next tourist destination.¹¹¹ Hence, an examination of these promotion materials is helpful in grasping how Romania was depicted in the capitalist West and what drew Western tourists to this socialist country. Strikingly, in the 1960s their narrative did not differ much from those printed by the Romanian socialist state. Guidebooks published abroad mentioned that Romania was a socialist country, and briefly listed the accomplishments of the socialist regime while underpinning its sunny seaside and folk culture. Much like the Romanian ones, these travel guides focused on persuading tourists to choose Romania as their travel destination despite its location beyond the Iron Curtain. An important difference was that Western publications mentioned this aspect more explicitly. A 1968 guidebook published in France opened with the question 'Why Romania?' According to the guidebook, the answer was simple:

This year you'll want to spend your vacation abroad and you'll probably visit the same place as last year. But what about discovering a new destination? A country where you'll feel like home, where you are welcomed like a friend and where you can also find . . . the sun.¹¹²

As in the 1960s, when tourists sought sunny destinations for their vacations, this introduction aimed to catch their attention. But given that Romania was a socialist country and Cold War rhetoric was still

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, folio 25.

¹⁰⁸ The extent to which other socialist countries included more religious tours is unclear.

¹⁰⁹ AMAE, Fond 1973, file no. 3587/1973, folios 8, 20.

¹¹⁰ NTO–Carpathians was responsible for the content and the publishing of tourist flyers and other related materials, while as of 1971 the Ministry of Tourism included one department in charge of publishing tourist materials. See Oana Adelina Ștefan, *Vacationing in the Cold War*, 59.

¹¹¹ ANIC, Institute for Research and Development in Tourism Collection, file no. 32/1981 (Tactics to Attract More Foreign Tourists to Romania Against the Backdrop of Tourist Market's Dynamics), folio 69.

¹¹² Martine Clidiere and Lucien Mays, eds., *Vacances en Roumanie: De la Plage de Mamaia aux Monasteres de Moldavie* (Paris: Marabout Flash), 1968, 11.

strong in Western countries, the guidebook carefully addressed this issue. After all, tourism was supposed to ease the East–West Cold War relations.

But you will say . . . this is beyond the Iron Curtain. This is true! But I assure you that this trip doesn't entail any hazard. You will be able to move freely much like at home, and you will be positively surprised by the freedom you encounter everywhere as long as you follow the law.

The guidebook also addressed issues such as distance and language. It informed its readers that a trip to Romania only took four hours by plane, which should not be a problem for the modern tourist who sought 'adventure and friendship'. In addition, it informed French tourists that linguistic misunderstanding would hardly be an issue because, as the travel guide put it, 'if you don't speak Romanian, they speak French'.¹¹³ The 1968 guidebook focused on cultural and historical similarities between France and Romania despite the physical distance and presumed political and cultural barriers. Compared to the guidebooks published in Romania, the 1968 French travel guide did a better job at tailoring its message to French readers as it showed a more intimate knowledge of French tourists' fears and prejudices. Except the short mentioning of the Iron Curtain, the French guidebook looked like a tourist advertising for a country that, albeit geographically distant, shared the same system of values with the tourists. Moreover, the messages of the French and Romanian guidebooks seemed the same: Romania was part of European culture despite its socialist regime (which was rarely mentioned). As in May 1968 Charles du Gaulle visited Romania and both cultural and economic relations between Romania and France were booming, this guidebook was part of the emerging détente between the capitalist West and the socialist East. Against this backdrop Romania was becoming a friendlier tourist destination for the French tourists. Yet the interpretation of these guidebooks cannot be separated from the meanings the potential readers ascribed to it. As scholars of intellectual history have taught us, historical texts should be read in connection with their context – there is no single interpretation of a given text.¹¹⁴ Most certainly the ways in which the guidebooks about socialist Romania were read and understood by the French public were shaped by the détente context, but also by each tourist's social and intellectual upbringing and personal expectations and interests. As many Western tourists who visited Romania had working-class backgrounds, one can assume that the message of friendship and social fairness put forth by the foreign or Romanian guidebooks appealed to them.

But the typology of tourists who visited socialist Romania in the 1960s–80s was much broader. One particular group was that of American and Western European tourists interested in the legend of Count Dracula. Although it is not the purpose of this article to examine Dracula tourism, this exemplifies well how the Romanian state balanced commercialism and politics in its tourist promotion. It also shows how Romania's tourist promotion was not just in the hands of the Romanian state. As in the 1970s, the film industry in some Western countries rediscovered the myth of Dracula, the interest in which was high among Western tourists.¹¹⁵ Moreover, Dracula literature and popular culture developed particularly in Great Britain, the United States and Spain. In 1972, Raymond McNally and Radu Florescu's book *In Search of Dracula* enjoyed some popularity in the United States, while the New York-based General Tours travel agency and Pan Am airline decided to develop such a tour.¹¹⁶ In April 1973,

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, 12.

¹¹⁴ On understanding texts and their meanings see Dominick Lacapra, 'Rethinking Intellectual History and Reading Texts', *History and Theory*, 19, 3 (1980), 245–76 and Quentin Skinner, 'Meaning and Understanding in the History of Ideas', *History and Theory*, 8, 1 (1969), 3–53, or Stephen Greenblatt, 'Murdering Peasants: Status, Genre, and the Representation of Rebellion', *Representations*, 1 (1983), 1–29.

¹¹⁵ A number of films about Dracula or vampires were filmed during the 1970s, including *Nosferatu* (1979) by Werner Herzog, *Dracula* (1979) by John Badham, *Dracula AD* (1972) by Alan Gibson (with Christopher Lee), and the Spanish/French/Italian/German co-production *Count Dracula* (1970).

¹¹⁶ General Tours had a long history of organising tours in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. The trip would last eighteen days and cost \$980. Kurt Brokaw, *A Night in Transylvania: The Dracula Scrapbook* (New York: Grosset & Dunlap, 1976), 127.

the success of the book led screenwriter Samuel Gallu to approach the Romanian authorities in order to have a film about Dracula shot in Romania. Corneliu Bogdan, Romania's ambassador to Washington, and Mihail Dumitru, director in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, received his proposal with enthusiasm because it would have enhanced Romania's image among the US viewers (the audience was estimated at around 70 million people).¹¹⁷ Nevertheless, this project had to be approved by a number of institutions, among them the Council for Culture and Socialist Education. As an institution created in 1971 particularly to safeguard the socialist ideology, this body politely rejected the proposal because 'the Romanian film facilities were fully booked for the rest of the year'.¹¹⁸ In the eyes of the Council for Culture and Socialist Education, the story of Dracula was incompatible with the image of Romania as a modern socialist country.

Despite the opposition of more ideologically inclined institutions against the Dracula tourism, in 1978 two tourist agencies in Barcelona were offering trips to Romania advertised as following 'the route of Count Dracula'.¹¹⁹ However, in order to appease those Romanian authorities unhappy about promoting Romania as a 'land of vampires', a compromise was reached, particularly in the mid-1970s.¹²⁰ According to a guidebook published in the United States by Kurt Brokaw, with an introduction by Radu Florescu and Raymond McNally, this compromise led to 'a historic tour of genuine sites connected with Vlad's name' but with the Dracula story as the backdrop.¹²¹ This became the pattern for other Dracula tours as well. For instance, trips organised by tourist operators in Barcelona dedicated only a couple of days out of fifteen to specific Dracula locations, such as Snagov monastery near Bucharest and the Transylvanian towns of Brasov, Bran and Sighisoara.¹²² According to Kurt Brokaw, on the one hand the Romanian socialist officials were amused by the 'throng of people' who visited the Romanian Library in New York, which exhibited portraits of Dracula, but on the other hand they were keen to make this a profitable business.¹²³ Although among Romanian state officials there was a high interest in getting hard currencies from the Dracula tourism, not everybody approved of this. On the one hand, tourist and foreign affairs specialists had a pragmatic approach to this matter, while on the other hand institutions like the Council for Culture and Socialist Education rejected a more commercial approach in promoting Romania abroad. The CCSE's view prevailed as of the late 1970s and throughout the 1980s against the backdrop of Nicolae Ceausescu's personality cult, for which this institution was in fact in charge.

Both the guidebook published in France and the ones published in the United States about Dracula (which included information about Romania as a tourist destination) managed to focus the Western public's attention on Romania. From a 'distant' destination in Eastern Europe, this socialist country became a friendlier and a more accessible place to those tourists wanting to casually sunbathe on the Black Sea coast or to trace Dracula in Transylvania.

Conclusions

The Romanian socialist state aimed to act in an entrepreneurial fashion as it attempted to develop and promote Romania as a tourist destination in capitalist countries. Tourist officials closely followed reports on international tourism and attempted to adjust their promotional message so as to attract more Western tourists. This strategy did succeed in bringing more foreign tourists from the late 1960s until the early 1980s, yet not enough to satisfy the demands of the party officials. In their attempts to increase the number of foreign tourists, especially of tourists from capitalist countries, Romanian-published guidebooks presented the country as part of high European culture, at times losing sight of the country's

¹¹⁷ AMAE, Fond 1973, file no. 3745/1973, folio 3.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, folio 31.

¹¹⁹ 'Rumania. La ruta del Conde Dracula', *Viajar* (June 1978), no. 3, 2.

¹²⁰ Kurt Brokaw, *A Night in Transylvania*, 109.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, 3.

¹²² *Ibid.*, 2.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, 4.

specificity. This reflected a process of cultural Westernisation and re-branding in the context of the Cold War and Romania's more nationalist stance vis-à-vis the Soviet Union. Some foreign publishers and tourist agencies, especially in Western Europe, picked up on this tendency and in the late 1960s started to present Romania as a familiar destination. The emphasis on high culture and European heritage in the presentation of Romania worked as a form of 'soft power' in the Cold War context as it aimed to attract more tourists. But the Romanian guidebooks' focus on high culture was more in tune with the Soviet cultural strategies during the Cold War; hence it failed to appreciate young people's preference for the more American inspired popular culture.

Similarly, the Romanian socialist regime was unwilling to fully give up its political rhetoric and adjust to the whims of Western tourists. This became particularly clear in the case of Dracula tourism. As some of the guidebooks that promoted this type of tourism insisted on Romania's mysticism and backwardness, it was hardly the kind of image that the socialist regime wanted to send abroad. However, even in this case a compromise was reached between the Romanian state and the travel firms, and as long as they mentioned the story of the real historical character and money flowed in, the regime agreed to Dracula tours – although it never included them in its own promotional campaigns. This hesitant attitude may have frustrated those tourists who came on purpose to learn more about the Dracula story, especially as guides were not instructed to offer much information about this topic in most officially organised tours. The adjustment to the rules of the market was only partial because tourism functioned, after all, within a planned economy, although some attempts to decentralise tourism management were made as of the late 1960s. Moreover, a tension occurred between party elites and tourist specialists. The party elites wanted to use tourism to swiftly acquire the foreign currency that international tourism promised to deliver, while tourist specialists had a more pragmatic, economically focused approach. In the end, the balance inclined toward political power, which negatively affected the Romanian tourism industry.

At the same time, despite receiving significant official attention, international tourism in socialist Romania never became a key economic sector like the chemical and processing industries. In the 1960s and the 1970s, specialists in tourism pushed for more investments in tourism and for more autonomy in tourism management, but the global economic recession in the late 1970s and early 1980s along with Nicolae Ceaușescu's increased grip on power curtailed their efforts as international tourism delivered less and less revenue. Hence, in the 1980s, investment in tourism was discontinued (as in all other economic sectors), which led to decaying infrastructure and subsequent complaints from the Western travel firms that took tourists to Romania. If during the 1960s and the 1970s Romania seemed like a promising tourist destination for Western tourists, in the 1980s international context and a dull tourist vibe brought international tourism from the West to a halt. In order to fill the huge infrastructure on the Black Sea coast, the Romanian state tried to appeal to tourists from socialist countries and to Romanian tourists themselves.

However, the short episode of thriving tourism in the 1970s reflects the complexities of a planned economy and of the Romanian socialist regime, which showed a certain ability to adapt to the demands of the capitalist market. Yet when this happened it was less because of the political power and more because of the tourist specialists who were more connected with the tourist and economic developments elsewhere than were the party elites. As throughout the 1980s specialists were replaced by more obedient party *aparatchiks*, this is but one explanation for the regime's economic failure despite its ambitions to become an active player within the global tourist market.

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