

Christopher Görlich

Holidays, state and individualism. The vacation in the GDR.

(Proposal)

The SED state tried to nationalize the organization of holidays – initially by its so called trade union – in order to create recreation for the citizens as well as political control, discipline and education, since holidays apparently played an essential part in legitimating the SED regime. The proposed paper examines the role of the GDR in holidays. The “Feriendienst des Freien Deutschen Gewerkschaftsbundes Deutschlands (FDGB-Feriendienst)” takes centre stage.

But the paper first of all would like to draw attention to the ambivalent relationship between state effort and the intention of the vacationists. Both – the citizens and the state – interpreted tourism as consumption. But the leaders of state and trade union pointed out, that holidays was an integral part of socialist life, as the citizens wished to escape from the state and the „socialist life” at least during holidays.

The state and the trade union had to take back their efforts in the long run. They withdrew from holidays, became just tour operators and had to accept huge costs for the project to enable holidays for almost all citizens, while the citizens imitated western ways of life in vacation.

In the end it seems somewhat tragically: The more the state paid, the less was its influence on holidays.

Curriculum vitae

Christopher Görlich

- 1977: born in Muenster (Germany)
- 1998-2004: studies in history, economics and journalism at Freie Universität Berlin
- 2004: thesis: „Hermann Esser and the Nazi tourism policy“ (Prof. Dr. Wippermann, Prof. Dr. Martin Sabrow)
- 2000-2003: student assistant at Zentrum für Zeithistorische Forschung (ZZF, center for contemporary history)
- since April 2004: scientific assistant at ZZF
- doctoral thesis: Urlaub vom Staat. Zur Geschichte des Tourismus in der DDR (tourism history of the GDR)

Publications:

Zur Reisezeitschrift "Unterwegs" 1957-1962, in: Heiner Timmermann (Hg.), Die DDR in Europa - zwischen Isolation und Öffnung, Münster 2005 (Dokumente und Schriften der Europäische Akademie Otzenhausen, Bd. 140), 506-527.

Die 68er in Berlin. Schauplätze und Ereignisse, Berlin 2002 (Reiseziele einer Region, Nr. 4).