

## TOURISM IN MOLDAVIAN SSR: A PERSPECTIVE OF THE TOURISTS FROM ROMANIAN SOCIALIST REPUBLIC (1968-1978)

Olesea PALAMARJA (VRABIE)

Stefan cel Mare University of Suceava, 720229, Romania

[olesea\\_palamarja@yahoo.com](mailto:olesea_palamarja@yahoo.com)

### Abstract

*Bilateral relations between Chisinau and Bucharest after the Second World War have been quite difficult. We must say that a first step in this regard was the development of touristic relations between those two during '60s. In 1964 Department for External Tourism has started its activity as part of The Council of Ministers of the Moldavian SSR and handled directly the accomodation and services for international tourists visiting Moldavian SSR or tourist going abroad.*

*The main activity of the Department was to accomodate tourists from Romanian Socialist Republic although in their reports you also can find information about other international tourists. Presenting the number of the Romanian tourists visiting Chisinau as being influenced by the relationship between Bucharest and Moscowa might facilitate the understanding of the tourists' number fluctuations in '60s and '70s.*

**Key words:** *activity report, Department for External Tourism within MSSR's Council of Ministries, RSR, Moldavian SSR, tourism,*

**JEL Classification:** Z30

### I. INTRODUCTION

The beginning of the touristic relationship between the MSSR and the RSR is associated with the year of 1964 because it marks the beginning of the activity of the Department for External Tourism within the Council of Ministries (CM) of USSR, on August 22, 1964 (ANRM, f. 2782, inv. 3, d. 1, p. 2-4) the Department for External Tourism was established under the CM resolutions. On September 26, 1964 under resolution no. 376-26 the Department for External Tourism had its activity officially started within CM of Moldavian SSR (MSSR).<sup>1</sup> The main tasks performed by the Department concerned improvement of the accommodations for the foreign tourist coming to MSSR and work with soviet tourist who went abroad. The joint stock company *Inturist* was one of Department's main partners for working with tourists.

In 1945-1953, before the Department for External Tourism was established there were few visitors from foreign countries. If speaking severely about touristic relations between MSSR and RSR, in the written press of '50s we can find some data concerning the arrival of delegations from RSR (ANRM, f. 2782, inv. 3, d. 1, p. 2-4). Those were specialized delegations or groups, so their staying was in the least for touristic purposes. Practically the

beginning of the touristic relationship between MSSR and other countries started when the Department for External Tourism was established. Therefore, starting with 1965 *Inturist* Jsc. began writing reports on accommodation and services for foreign tourists from soviet or capitalist countries. We should mention that *Inturist* Jsc. was also responsible for preparing the documentation necessary for soviet tourist in order to go abroad.

In order to organize the tours during tourist season *Inturist* Jsc. and Department for External Tourism cooperated with specialized organization and institutions from the countries willing to send their citizen to visit the republic. For example, responsible for this activity in RSR was the National Office for Tourism (NOT) *Carpati*.

It is important to mention that during 1968-1978 the Bulgarian tourists were the main sightseers to visit Chisinau, followed by tourists from RSR. The number of tourists from Polish People's Republic, Hungarian People's Republic and from German Democratic Republic was low as we can see it from statistical data provided by *Inturist* Jsc. for the period of time specified. (AOSPRM, f. 51, inv. 47, d. 11, p. 130-138).

Groups visiting the republic had their activities managed according to the program given by the *Inturist*. Tourist attractions open for visiting were those included in the list drafted by local authorities and approved by MSSR's Council of Ministries. The responsibility of the guides-translators was to entertain the tourists and to submit activity reports at the end of

the season. The reports presented not only statistical data about international tourists, but also tourists' opinions about sightseeing tours and even citations of people who weren't afraid to talk about sensible topics such as Bessarabia problem. The importance of these opinions was determined by the guides when it captured their attention and they were very precautionous when it came to Romanian tourists. Therefore, the characteristics given to Romanian tourists haven't changed substantially during the years. The groups from the left of Prut were thought of being the most difficult as they were the groups who complained the most about provided accommodation. Also, the relationship between *Inturist* Jsc. and *Carpati NOT* wasn't one of the best: in the reports submitted by *Inturist* Jsc. Often, it was mentioned complaints about the activity of the Romanian firm, especially, concerning the organization of the tourist groups visiting Chisinau.

An analysis of the dossiers on Department's for External Tourism activity allowed us to operate with data about international tourists visiting the republic gathered during the years. It's interesting to analyze the touristic relations between RSR and MSSR especially in the context of all the events from that period of time when it's highly necessary for us to relate to the Romania and Soviet relations. The relationship between Bucharest and Moscow was extremely tense during 1968 until 1978. Such problems as cooperation within the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (COMECON), Czechoslovak invasion, and also reintroduction on Romanian-Soviet agenda of some of the subjects that Moscow didn't like led to Romania's estrangement from Soviet countries. The mentioning of the territorial dispute during Romanian and Soviet delegations' meetings was something that annoyed the soviet authorities. In this context it is easier to explain the attitude towards Romanian tourists visiting Chisinau.

## II. STATISTICAL INFORMATIONS ON THE NUMBER OF ROMANIAN TOURISTS WHO VISITED MSSR

In spite of being a promising developmental plan for a friendly relationship between border areas of the RSR and MSSR, in 1968 the relation between Bucharest and Moscow has come to a critical juncture and therefore it affected the relation with Moldavian SSR. The crisis that affected the Romanian-Soviet relation in 1968 was determined by the invasion of Soviet Union and other members of the Warsaw Pact in Czechoslovakia and later by the visit to Bucharest of the American president Richard Nixon. In a few months after the conclusion of the Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation, and Mutual Assistance between Romania and Soviet Union sensible topics

related to the Romanian-Soviet/Russian history came in focus again but it hasn't affected their touristic relations. Eventually in 1968, 2.856 Romanian tourists visited the country and 4.115 tourists visited in 1969 (ANRM, f. 2782, inv 1, d 40, p. 21-22). Local authorities highlighted the fact that 1969 was the year with the highest number of Romanian tourists visiting MSSR since 1959 when the *Inturist* Jsc. was established. In 1970's there's a visible increase of the number of international tourists visiting the republic, except years 1970, (ANRM, f. 2782, inv. 3, d. 19, p. 1-21) 1977 and 1978. Historians such as Gheorghe Negru consider that the year of 1970 was a culmination of the Soviet's propagandistic war from 1970 to 1975 (Negru, 2012) started by Soviet authorities against „nationalism” in MSSR and „peculiar politics” of the RSR. Nevertheless, in 1974 the number of Romanian tourists exceeded the number of Bulgarian tourists. This data is confirmed by Department's for External Tourism notice *Concerning the accommodation of RSR tourists in Moldavian SSR in 1968-1978* from December 11, 1978 submitted to Central Committee of MCP, MSSR's Council of Ministries, and General Directorate for External Tourism within MSSR's Council of Ministries (AOSPRM, f. 51, inv. 47, d. 11, p. 130-138).

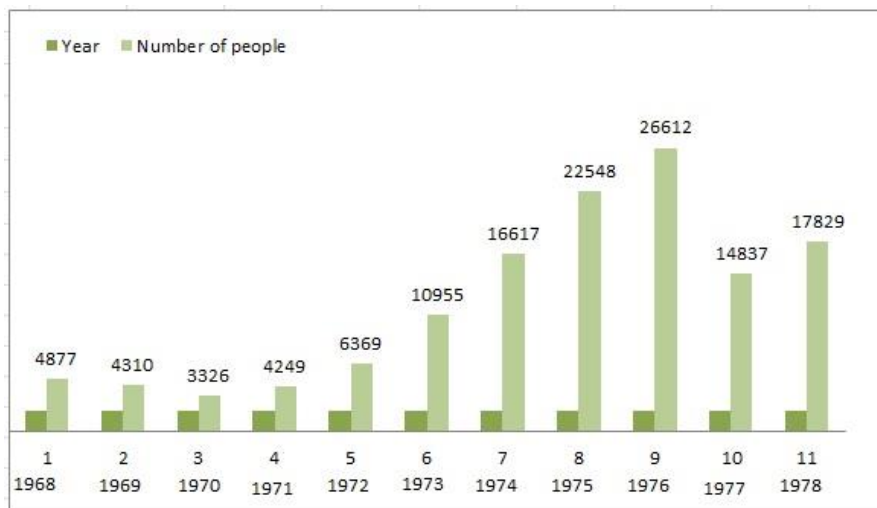
According to the informative note on accommodation of the Romanian tourists visiting Moldavian SSR for the period 1968-1978 overall the numbers are as shown below (Figure 1).

The table (Table 1) below shows how the number of international tourists from other socialist countries who visited MSSR in 1968-1978 compares to the number of tourists from RSR for the same period of time.

We can conclude therefore that until 1976, especially in 1973-1976, there is a constant and substantial increase of the number of Romanian tourists who visited MSSR. Moreover, in 1972-1976 the number of tourists increased from 6369 people to 26.612 people otherwise the number increased by 4.18 times (ANRM, f. 2782, inv. 3, d. 41, p. 147-172).

Tourist from PRB occupied the top position on the chart until 1973; from 1974 the top position was occupied by tourists from RSR (ANRM, f. 2782, inv. 3, d. 41, p. 147-172). Numbers continued to increase until the end of 1978. In 1977 there was a significant decrease of tourists from RSR: the numbers represented only 56% of the number of tourists who visited MSSR in 1976. Nevertheless, they still represented the largest group of international tourists. As reported by the tourists this decrease was due a new international travel law enforced in 1976-1977 that forbid traveling more than once in two years and also because of the earthquake's consequences.

The first half of the year 1978 brings an increase in number of the Romanian tourists: their number for 11 months of 1977 reaches to 12.648 is



**Figure 1.** Number of Romanian tourists who visited MSSR in 1968-1978

17.829 people what is by 5.181 people or 40.9 % more.

**Table 1.** Number of tourists from socialist countries who visited MSSR in 1968-1978

Country	1968	1969	1970	1971	1972	1973	1974	1975	1976	1977	1978
<b>RSR</b>	4877	4310	3326	4249	6369	10955	16617	22612	22612	14837	17829
<b>PRB</b>	7503	10672	6472	16548	16000	17000	15452	14793	9273	11336	11984
<b>GDR</b>	14	273	599	253	458	960	1183	1526	855	891	560
<b>PRU</b>	3	40	37	177	179	77	487	432	306	414	410
<b>PRP</b>	245	115	118	621	350	347	419	668	465	1125	1024
<b>CSR</b>	90	17	223	1010	1375	1212	792	1946	1863	2925	2513
<b>SFRY</b>	337	85	83	120	61	99	401	187	16	118	56
<b>Capitalist countries</b>	1366	1009	995	1276	1586	2379	1992	2064	4026	2536	3694

### III. COMPOSITION OF TOURIST GROUPS AND ITINERARIES OF VISITS

An important aspect to consider was the diversification of cities and counties where tourists were coming from (ANRM, f. 2782, inv. 3, d. 31, p. 20-23). Until 1974 the majority of the tourists were from Bucharest but during the second part of '70s tourists were coming from almost Romanian counties.

Age range and professions of the tourist group members remained the same during the specified period. Most of them were representatives of intelligentsia: doctors, engineers, professors and commercial workers. Although during the second part of the period we can see more tourists who work in service sector and mid-level technical staff from small enterprises. Usually, the group had many retirees and housewives. On rare occasions there were workers, students, and pupils in a tourist group and almost never peasants (ANRM, f. 2782, inv. 3, d. 30, p. 55-

60). As about age range, mostly the groups were of middle aged or old people and the young people would come scarcely ever.

Starting with 1974 we can distinguish a substantial increase of the number of Hungarian tourists.

*NOT Carpati* would usually organize mixed groups of different age, professions and nationality. So, this was unacceptable for the responsible from Chisinau: this was difficult to interest all the members at the same time. Therefore, they suggested organizing specialized groups (ANRM, f. 2782, inv. 3, d. 30, p. 55-60). As a solution it would satisfy both parts: on the one hand tourists would be able to visit the sights they'd like and on the other hand they'd participate at the tours where guides' propaganda work would flourish. Surely specialized groups meant an easy work for guides and translators from Chisinau. Thus, there were few such groups during the period mentioned, 1-2 (ANRM, f. 2782, inv. 3, d. 34, p. 1-15)

groups per year mostly and seldom were they made of members with same specializations.

For this period of time *NOT Carpati* never changed the duration of the visit nor the itineraries.

Itineraries for train travelling:

1. Ungheni – Chisinau – Kiev – Moscow (1.5 days in Chisinau)
2. Ungheni – Chisinau – Kiev – Ungheni (2.5 days in Chisinau)
3. Ungheni – Chisinau – Odessa – Ungheni (2 days in Chisinau)
4. Ungheni – Chisinau – Rostov on Don – Volgograd – Moscow – Ungheni (from 1978, 1 day in Chisinau)
5. Ungheni – Chisinau – Kiev – Baku – Erevan – Tbilisi – Moscow – Ungheni (from 1978, 1 day in Chisinau)

Itineraries for bus travelling:

1. Leuseni – Chisinau – Odessa – Chisinau – Leuseni (3 days in Chisinau)
2. Leuseni – Chisinau – Tiraspol – Chisinau – Leuseni (2 days in Chisinau and 2 days in Tiraspol)
3. Leuseni – Chisinau – Balti – Chernovtsy – Porubne ( 2 days in Chisinau, 1 day in Balti) ( ANRM, f. 2782, inv. 3, d. 41, p. 147-172).

Car travel became popular from 1974. In 1975 only 46% of tourists traveled by bus but 50-51% in 1977-1978.

It was important that during their visit in MSSR Romanian tourists received the maximum information about soviet reality, soviet life style, CPSU's and Soviet Government's domestic and foreign policy, successful implementation of the provisions established during the XXV Congress of CPSU and XIV Congress of MCP, history of Moldova's revolutionary struggle, about national flourishing during Soviet Union and Moldavian's people success as part of the soviet republics family, about Leninist solutions for nationality problem in USSR following MSSR's example (ANRM, f. 2782, inv. 3, d. 41, p. 147-172).

#### IV. CONCLUSIONS

In '60s and '70s of the 20<sup>th</sup> century relations between RSR and MSSR developed and extended as we can see from the data presented above. However, when we talk about tourism, we have to mention the quality of those relations was different in that period of time. It was difficult to receive individual visas and only at the end of the '70s car travelling became popular. Usually, a visit taken of a few days and there was a limited list of places tourists could visit. The annex to Decision no. 35-5 from January 28, 1965 adopted by Council of Ministries of MSSR concerning *the approval of touristic attractions allowed for*

*visiting by international tourists and delegations and improvement of the services and accommodation for them* (ANRM, F. 2782, inv. 3, d. 1, f. 27-37) stated clearly the touristic sights. After establishing the touristic attractions allowed for visiting the lists will be sent to the local authorities from districts and cities involved in order to prepare the locations.

This period was characterized by an increase of Romanian tourists and by mutual complaints related to services and accommodation of the tourists. Guides-translators from Department for External tourism had to be extremely careful interacting with tourists who had „wrong ideas” about Soviet realities, and MSSR in particular. They had to be well informed and able to argue every remark coming from the tourists. The receiving party usually was unsatisfied by the groups sent by *NOT Carpati*: they weren't specialized therefore guides had to work hard.

Tourism was seen as an opportunity for ideological propaganda aimed at foreign citizens visiting MSSR. At the same time, this was an opportunity for the tourist to bring in the country merchandise for selling. Therefore, they weren't interested in the program proposed by the *Inturist*. Having a fixed schedule was unacceptable for the most tourists who came to visit their relatives or friends in Chisinau. People who tried to reach cities not included in the program had to pay a fine.

Soviet authorities at that time were concerned with coming up with solutions for „chauvinist propaganda” coming from Romania and aimed at MSSR's citizens, especially intelligentsia. In order to fight this propaganda authorities established administrative penalties. Tourists were also thoroughly controlled and in extreme cases they were deported (Buga, 2013).

Although during '70s the number of Romanian tourists increased and soviet authorities were open for improving touristic relation between the two countries by finding common elements, unifying in their nature, and cooperation in border areas by opening new border crossings they showed an anxious attitude towards Romanian tourists, often clearly visible, that had behind it a territorial dispute – Bessarabia problem.

#### V. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

This paper has been financially supported within the project entitled "DECIDE-Development through entrepreneurial education and innovative doctoral and postdoctoral research", project code POCU/380/6/13/125031, project co-financed from the European Social Fund through the 2014–2020 Operational Program Human Capital.

**VI. REFERENCES**

1. Negru, G., „Cursul deosebit” al României și supărarea Moscovei. Disputa sovieto-română și campaniile propagandistice antiromânești din RSSM (1965-1975). Studiu și documente. (2012), Chișinău.
2. Buga, V., Pe muchie de cuțit. Relațiile româno-sovietice 1965-1989. (2013), București: Institutul Național pentru Studiul Totalitarismului.
3. National Archive of the Republic of Moldova (ANRM), (Fond 2782, inventar 3, dosarele. 1; 19; 30 ;31; 34; 41).
4. Archive of Social-Political Organizations of the Republic of Moldova (AOSPRM), fond 51, inventar. 47, dosar 11.