

Economic-Geographical Aspects of Development of International Tourism in Bulgaria

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Bulgaria is one of the South-eastern European countries, in which the tourist activity in the last years has developed substantially. The economic-geographical study of recreational resources and economic activity and the evaluation of their rational usage in Bulgaria may have practical significance for consideration of organizational-methodical problems of realization of the recreational potential in Azerbaijan. I have for this reason undertaken an investigation of the Bulgarian tourist industry, aiming at a comparative evaluation of the tourist potentialities of Azerbaijan.

Bulgaria possesses favourable recreational resources. The premises for development of seaside recreation are significant. Of the 378 kms. of the Black Sea coast in Bulgaria about 100 kms. have beaches with quartz sands. The northern and central parts of the coast are specially well endowed with beaches of considerable size. The general beach areas constitute 7 million. sq. meters, and with allowance for 16 million sq. meters of dunes this roughly accounts for the ability of the Bulgarian coasts to accept in a season (120-150 days) 5-6 million visitors, and in the peak weeks 0.7-0.9 million people recreating on the coast. The recreational resources of the inland regions in Bulgaria have been utilized to a much lesser degree than the seaside, though in Bulgaria there are good conditions for development of inland tourism as well; 28.2 % of the country's territory are mountains, from which 2,5 % are in a high-mountainous belt higher than 1600 m. above sea level. The duration of the possible recreation season in the mountains constitutes 210-240 days, making a profit of the needed infrastructure investments reasonably secure. In Bulgaria there is an impressive material and technical basis for tourism. But this material and technical basis have a rather uneven geographical distribution, about 60 % is concentrated in the seaside districts, the

concentration in large resort complexes is characteristic such as : 'Golden sands', 'Albena', 'Sunny beaches ' etc. According to the forecasts, in year 2000 the number of hotel rooms on the coast will reach 470 thousand.

The inland health resorts have till now developed more slowly. At present there are three health resorts of international significance: 'Pomporovo' in eastern Rodops, 'Borovetc' in the northern parts of Rilla and the complex 'Aleco' on mountain Vitosha near Sofia. Characteristically, the large part of inland health resorts of Bulgaria are located in a forest belt from 1000 up to 1600 m. above sea level. The resource base of balneological tourism totals more than 30 thousand beds.

The tourist flow into the country is significant. In 1990 4,5 million tourists came from foreign countries, whereas in 1995 Bulgaria were visited by 3,5 million. Despite the reduction in the of number of tourists, the currency receipts from tourism grew. In 1990 these receipts constituted US \$320 million., and in 1995 US \$475 million. The basic problem in planning the development of international tourism is the considerable remoteness of Bulgaria from the main tourist flows of Europe, which pass meridional and concentrate around the Mediterranean sea. The policy of price control is indispensable for maintaining competitiveness, which need to take into account a conjuncture of the tourist market. It is as well necessary to promote a broad advertising propagation of the Bulgarian health resorts abroad. The seasonal prevalence prolongs to remain one of the not solved problems of tourism in Bulgaria. To promote a more broad usage of mineral spas and balneal resources, there is a need for construction of basins with warm water, creation of padding entertaining services etc., in coastal as well as in mountain areas. A better rational usage of recreational resources could be promoted, for instance, by development of winter skiing facilities and in summer of hiking tourism. If the problem of seasonal prevalence in tourism is leveled off, the problems of shortage of qualified labour forces are simultaneously solved also.

The main reason for the fact that Azerbaijan does not use its tourist potential with greater efficiency, consists, apart from factual economic and political conditions, largely on a lack of a basic understanding and analyses of the substance and significance of such a many-sided

phenomenon as international tourism. The purpose of my research is to promote a better understanding in my country of tourism as an activity through the analysis of problems and tendencies of Bulgarian tourism. I will analyse the premises and prospects for the development and effect of international tourism in Bulgaria in spheres of economy, social, cultural and political life through the development of international contacts, all the time including the comparative conditions which at present is prevalent in Azerbaijan. Development of a fundamental theory for the complex research of the recreational environment of Bulgaria is as well needed with the purpose first of all to promote a methodological understanding of their experiences, in order to develop of a better territorial organization of recreational activity in Azerbaijan.

In the PhD project, assembling information on the development of international tourism in Bulgaria, the character of the recreational resources are evaluated and the type of related tourism analysed. The factors promoting and accelerating development of tourism are considered, namely what is supporting a high economical efficiency, effective development of the material and technical base, the progressive development of the transport facilities etc. The recreational regionalization of the national territory is analysed for its positive and negative effects. On the basis of available literature, statistics and other material concerning the development of tourism, the research has included a number of stages:

- analysis of the state of the art of recreational theory;
- quantitative and qualitative estimation of recreation resources;
- analyses of present and perspective requirements of the foreign tourists for different kinds of service;
- analysis of existing recreational networks and its implementation up to a level of Territorial Recreations System (TRS);
- development of the scientific bases for the creation of a spatial recreational system for problem solving of planning and projection within regions for tourism and recreation;
- elaboration of perspectives for the development and accommodation of recreational economy under new conditions (market economy).

The analyses so far has provided results in the following fields:

- the socio-economic, demographic and economic-geographical spatially differentiating factors of formation and development of recreational requirements in Bulgaria are revealed. The state is appreciated and the forecast for recreational activity is presented;
- the estimation of recreational resources of Bulgaria, based on method Delfi - most by a modern method of an expert estimation, and an estimation of the variety of the natural environment in Bulgaria for recreational activity is conducted by usage of a method called 'vortclav's taxonomy'. The types RS of recreation and tourism are selected. For each of the types the appropriate recreational cycle is determined;
- the small-scale zoning of Bulgaria is conducted in the following sequence: a) the natural-recreational attractions of each territory of country are determined; b) potential attractions of actual usage for recreation is compared; c) distribution of attractions of the regions and areas of heightened requirements for recreation are compared. As a result spatial regulation of recreational-resources regions are proposed. The recreational regions with the most valuable resources and favourable provisions, are revealed as objects for European integration.

A result of the conducted research has been the creation of a complex scientific presentation of the recreational environment of Bulgaria with use of theoretical and practical principles of recreational geography and methods of social - geographical investigation of the integrated recreational environments of the country. The theoretical development of recreational geography were connected to areal studies of Bulgaria.

References:

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