

Poorly Planned Holidays (1953)

Abstract

Tourism started up again in the 1950s in the GDR as well. This report on supply difficulties and the uneven utilization of Baltic Sea resorts during the high season of 1953 makes clear that the tourism industry, like all other areas of GDR life, suffered from the deficiencies and the shortcomings of the planned economy as well.

Source

The efforts of all co-workers in the organs of state power in the seaside and vacation resorts of our republic are aimed at offering the workers, the intelligentsia, and all other participants in the building of our state an impeccable, exemplary opportunity for recreation. The colleagues in the local organs at the seaside resorts demonstrate how serious they are by the fact that they were able, despite great initial difficulties, to largely remedy through their own initiative many of the deficiencies that cropped up.

Some of the flaws could have been avoided if the central organs of our state apparatus had paid more attention to the recreational system. [...] Many mistakes would not have arisen if the long-demanded guidance and coordination through a central state organ had occurred. [...]

One deficiency is the inadequate utilization of the accommodations. This underutilization leads, especially in the pre-season, to an unnecessary limitation on the visitor stream. Unfortunately this also happened again this year. In Heringsdorf, for example, out of 3,900 available beds, only 482 were filled on the 15th of May, 501 on 25th of May, and 1,150 on the 31st of May. [...] But as soon as the summer began, the number of travelers on official business and the number of instructors who came to the seaside resorts rose sharply. It is high time that the people in charge apply stricter criteria for official business trips. To this day, the residents of seaside resorts do not understand how vacationing colleagues can arrive at the resorts in their official cars and park them there. Are these vehicles not needed by their offices in the summer as well?

Most of the impediments occurred in provisioning. A smooth provisioning could be ensured only with great exertions and great personal effort on the part of many co-workers. As the season began, it became evident that crucial mistakes had been made. At a meeting in Stralsund in February of this year, it was noted that the number of people who vacation in the district of Rostock during the summer months had not been included in the provisioning plan. In response to appropriate indications, the newly established Commission for Trade and Provisioning got involved, along with other agencies, and the DHZ [*Deutsche Handelszentrale*], HO [*Handelsorganisation*], and *Konsum* were given plans for stocking up.

[...]

Constant communication among all relevant agencies is the foundation for good work. We can't have what happened in Kühlungsborn, where, at the beginning of the season, the mayor tried in vain for weeks to get colleague Ritter from the district leadership of the FDGB [*Freier Deutscher Gewerkschaftsbund* or Free German Trade Union] Vacation Service to participate in a meeting of the *Versorgungsaktiv* [Provisioning Aktiv]. Nor should it happen again in the future that the selection of liquors and cigarettes is small, that cheese is delivered only every eight days, and that beer arrives only falteringly because of overly cautious ordering on the part of the recreation homes. This way you anger the vacationers! We do not understand why better preparations were not made. Based on the

distribution of FDGB vacation spots within the districts, it should have been easily possible, for example, to achieve a timely reallocation of the necessary amounts of food, since vacationers drop out of their home districts temporarily as far as provisioning is concerned.

In addition to positive examples of a sales culture worthy of our order, there were significant deficiencies when it came to the decoration of some stores and the service. For example, at the beginning of the season, in response to complaints from guests, the mayor of the community of Heringsdorf, colleague Rauch, needed to call together the service personnel of the HO and the *Konsum* and remind them of their duties and special tasks. The trade organs, too, should learn to get ready for the season. Sporting and bathing articles were not adequately available everywhere. In Zingst and Kühlungsborn nearly all seasonal items were missing.

These observations on running this year's season are limited to the experiences of only a few seaside towns. It should be emphasized, however, that similar things happened in many places. [...]

Source: *Demokratischer Aufbau*, August 1953, Nr. 8. SBZ-Archiv 4/1953, p. 256; reprinted in: Christoph Kleßmann and Georg Wagner, *Das gespaltene Land. Leben in Deutschland 1945–1990. Texte und Dokumente zur Sozialgeschichte*. Munich: C.H. Beck, 1993, pp. 513–15.

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