

Seeing Red: American Tourism to the Eastern Bloc, 1960-1975

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Seeing Red: American Tourism to the Eastern Bloc, 1960-1975


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Abstract

Theoretical literature asserts that tourism should lead to better interactions between nations with different ideas and cultures. However, empirical studies find that this is often not the case, and certain pre-trip factors are more influential in changing tourists' opinions than the experience itself. This study examines one of these potential factors: the role that the news media plays in shaping public opinion about foreign countries prior to travel. Using a case study of American tourists to the Eastern Bloc from 1960-1975, this paper suggests that media portrayal contributed to the negative views Americans held of the Soviet Union and the lack of opinion change after travel. Using the counterexample of Hungary, this paper also suggests that this portrayal was unique to the Soviet Union, and not reflective of the Eastern Bloc as a whole. Finally, it offers a potential new avenue for future research on opinion change in tourists—the consideration of pre-trip domestic factors, such as the news media and the overarching geopolitical context.

Introduction

As mass international tourism grew in the mid-20th century, scholars initially speculated that the phenomenon would help overcome, or at least minimize, hostilities between opposing nations. These scholars based their hypotheses on the assumptions of contact theory. Emerging in the 1960s, contact theory asserted that more interaction would lead to greater understanding, exchange of ideas and dialogue, and cross-cultural connections, which would themselves prove stronger than ideological conflict. However, there is debate regarding the actual observed cultural impacts of tourism between geopolitical opponents. While some scholars propose that tourism is the solution to international conflict, others argue that the main impact of tourism is purely economic.

The empirical debate focuses around whether tourists experience opinion change as a result of their travel. In its most basic form, the theory argues that if tourists improve their attitudes towards the destination country, then, over time, the relations between that country and their home country should also improve. In reality, it is not that simple. Studies have shown that several factors influence opinion change before, during, and after a tourist's trip abroad. Pre-trip factors, including the initial views of the destination country, play a particularly vital role in shaping the tourist experience. However, there is little consensus as to how these pre-trip views form and whether they become strong enough to create barriers to cross-cultural interaction, especially between opposing nations.

This study examines the role that the news media plays in shaping public opinion about foreign countries prior to travel, and how that portrayal translates into the experiences of tourists abroad. Using a Cold War case study of American tourists to the Eastern Bloc, this paper suggests that the mass media's agenda-setting influence contributed to the more negative views

Americans held of the Soviet Union in comparison to the more “liberal” communist nation Hungary. The findings suggest a strong caveat to contact theory: that pre-determined expectations can shape what we see, and the mass media has an outsized influence on those expectations.

Tourism and Diplomacy

The modern tourism industry, as we understand it today, arose in the 1960s. With its inception, scholars began to consider the potential of wide-spread international tourism to break down the political barriers that were dividing continents. One scholar, Frederick Barghoorn, viewed tourism as a form of ‘cultural diplomacy,’¹ stating that the rapid influx of tourists could become a way to improve the relations between ideologically different states could improve as more interaction took place. Later, other thinkers took this suggestion further, positing that tourism has the potential to bring widespread international peace, especially when dealing with closed nations. Louis D’Amore argues that the “key to a changed political relationship...has been an opening to travel and the web of relationships that have developed through cultural exchanges.”² This argument relies on the idea of tourists as cosmopolitans, looking to experience cultures outside of their identity as a citizen of a specific nation-state. Others believe in similar principles, but recognize that tourists *observe* other cultures through the lens of their own culture, rather than being truly cosmopolitan.³ In general, the theoretical literature agrees that tourism should have positive impacts, to various degrees, on the views of those involved.

However, empirical studies on tourism and cultural diplomacy have mixed findings on the applicability of these theories. A study by Nyaupane, Teye, and Paris found that expectation

¹ Frederick C. Barghoorn, "Soviet Cultural Diplomacy since Stalin." *The Russian Review* 17, no. 1 (1958): 41-55.

² Louis D’Amore, “Tourism—a vital force for peace.” *Tourism Management* (June 1988): 153.

³ Hugh Cannon and Attila Yaprak, “Will the Real-World Citizen Please Stand Up! The Many Faces of Cosmopolitan Consumer Behavior,” *Journal of International Marketing* 10, no. 4 (2002): 32.

plays a significant role in attitude change towards a specific country, depending on whether or not the tourists' expectations were met.⁴ In their research on the reported experiences of tourists to Europe, Australia, and Fiji, they find that negative opinion change towards Australia resulted from relatively high expectations that were unmet. Additionally, in a study that compared the nationality of tourists to the destination country's opinion of them, Thyne, Lawson, and Todd examined American, German, Japanese, and Australian tourists to New Zealand and found that social distance—in this case, how similarly the citizens viewed themselves from a cultural perspective to the tourists—played a significant role in which nationalities were favored over others.⁵

Other research on Turkey comes to a different conclusion, finding that tourists left with a more positive opinion of the country and its people, despite initial negative opinions.⁶ The primary exception was Greek tourists, who left with an even more negative perception of the Turkish people than they previously held, likely due to the historically prominent rivalry between the two countries.⁷ Therefore, in practice, tourism appears to be a combination of the previously discussed theories—tourists wish to experience other cultures to feel as if they are broadening their world view, but may still maintain their preconceived opinions of the destination. These opinions have lasting impact both during and after the tourist experience.

⁴ Gyan P. Nyaupane, Victor Teye, and Cody Paris, "Innocents Abroad: Attitude Change toward Hosts," *Annals of Tourism Research* 35, no. 3 (2008): 650-667.

⁵ Maree Thyne, Rob Lawson, and Sarah Todd, "The Use of Conjoint Analysis to Assess the Impact of the Cross-Cultural Exchange between Hosts and Guests," *Tourism Management* 27, no. 2 (2006): 201-213.

⁶ Mainly, Europeans who visited Turkey were more likely to support its integration into the European Union. Maria D. Alvarez, Kivanç Inelmen, and Şükrü Yarcın, "Do Perceptions Change? A Comparative Study," *Anatolia: An International Journal of Tourism and Hospitality Research* 20, no. 2 (2009): 401-418.

⁷ Petros Anastasopoulos, "Tourism and Attitude Change: Greek Tourists Visiting Turkey," *Annals of Tourism Research* 19 (1992): 629-642.

The Perfect Example? American Tourists to the Eastern Bloc

As these theories were being formulated during the Cold War, American tourism to the Soviet Union, or the Eastern Bloc more broadly, was seen as the ideal case to study tourism as a tool of peace. The initial conditions were ideal: due to high levels of ideologically-driven regional tension there was little to no tourism exchange or cultural interaction between the two geopolitical blocs prior to 1955. Instead, the Soviet regime “nourished ignorance about foreign countries in order to advance its own xenophobic interpretation of world events in which the bourgeois west was cast as the enemy.”⁸ The other communist nations in Eastern Europe were also more concerned with solidifying the new regimes and building up internal industry than bringing in foreigners who might pose a threat to that goal.⁹ As a result, many of these nations remained closed to the West throughout the 1940s and 1950s, which compounded Western denunciations that these isolationist nations lacked basic civil liberties.¹⁰

Communist countries in the Eastern Bloc began to open up to more Western tourists beginning in 1955, primarily as a method of economic development.¹¹ The tourism that these countries had seen up to this point was often ‘fraternal’ tourism from neighboring communist countries, which was not enough to generate the profit that could be gained from wealthier citizens in the West. For this reason, the American dollar was particularly sought after due to its value as a strong hard currency, even less likely to experience fluctuations in value than Western European currencies. As Radio Free Europe reported in the 1970s, “economic thirst for hard currency...caused several regimes (notably Hungary) to try and attract visitors from the West

⁸ Anne E. Gorsuch, “‘There’s No Place Like Home’: Soviet Tourism in Late Stalinism.” *Slavic Review* 64, no. 4 (Winter 2003): 760-761.

⁹ Russell L. Ivy and Charles B. Copp, “Tourism Patterns and Problems in East Central Europe.” *Tourism Geographies* 1, no. 4 (1999): 425-442.

¹⁰ József Böröcz, *Leisure Migration: A Sociological Study on Tourism*. Oxford: Pergamon Press, 1996. 131.

¹¹ Freya Higgins-Desbiolles, “More than an ‘Industry’: The forgotten power of tourism as a social force.” *Tourism Management* 27, vol. 6 (Dec 2006): 1192.

even at the risk of ‘ideological contamination’.”¹² Despite initial apprehension, American tourists began to flock to the Eastern Bloc in order to see how the “Other” lived.

Soon after, empirical research on the attitude change of American tourists—towards the Soviet Union in particular—began to emerge. In the late 1960s, Peter Grothe conducted a study on opinion change of people who visited the Soviet Union through pre- and post-trip surveys. The results showed that the tourists were constantly aware of being Americans and the salience of the political differences between themselves and their destination.¹³ After the trip, Americans maintained the negative image of the Soviet government and system, but were generally fond of the Russian people.¹⁴ The fondness toward the people was not substantial enough to claim any real change in views, and overall these views were consistent with their pre-trip opinions. Then, in the late-1980s, a similar result was found by researchers studying students who had spent time abroad in the Soviet Union. Though they hypothesized that contact with the USSR would have a positive impact on the views held by American students, the results showed that it was not the case.¹⁵ There was little to no difference in the views of students who had traveled versus those who did not, even though most reported that they were satisfied with their tourist experience.

American tourists to the Soviet Union would have been the perfect example of the power of international tourism as a means to throw off biases and promote international peace, had it not been for the results of studies such as these. Instead, these studies, as well as those mentioned previously, display a significant disconnect between the expected theoretical outcomes of tourism and the realities of travel between opposing nations. These and similar studies ultimately

¹² Radio Free Europe Research, “Tourism in Eastern Europe, 1966-1971: A Statistical Summary” August 1972.

¹³ Peter Grothe, “Attitude Change of American Tourists in the Soviet Union.” George Washington University (1969): 10.

¹⁴ Ibid, 51-80.

¹⁵ Abraham Pizam, Jafar Jafari, and Ady Milman, “Influence of tourism on attitudes: US students visiting USSR.” *Tourism Management* 12, no. 1 (1991): 47-54.

come to the same conclusion: it is pre-trip views and expectations that influence the outcomes of the tourist experience more than the in-country experiences themselves. Therefore, in order to understand why this disconnect occurs, it is necessary to determine what influenced the initial formulation of these negative opinions, and how they became ingrained enough in a traveler's mind to resist change while abroad.

Methods

This study re-examines this initial case of disconnect by focusing on two countries—the Soviet Union and Hungary—and comparing the described experiences of American tourists to each from 1960-1975. Hungary is an important comparison case to the Soviet Union because of its position as one of most economically and politically liberal nations in the Eastern Bloc. Additionally, Hungary saw incredible growth in terms of its tourism industry during the Cold War, eventually becoming “the most tourist-saturated state socialist country of the world by the late 1980s.”¹⁶ These two countries thus represent the greatest difference amongst a group of states that were typically viewed as a homogeneous bloc under Moscow's leadership. The time frame of 1960-1975 also captures most of the evolution of tourism in this region. Ending the study in 1975 insulates the data from any distorting effect that may have resulted from the 1980 Olympics in Moscow.

In order to examine some of the factors that shaped tourists' perceptions, this study looks at tourism-related articles and advertisements from three newspaper publications: *The New York Times*, *The Boston Globe*, and *The Atlanta Journal and the Atlanta Constitution*,¹⁷ which

¹⁶ Jozséf Böröcz, *Leisure Migration: A Sociological Study on Tourism*. Oxford: Pergamon Press, 1996. 3.

¹⁷ *The Atlanta Journal* and *The Atlanta Constitution* merged following the time period of this study. Prior to this merger, papers were often published under the combined title, *The Atlanta Journal and the Atlanta Constitution*. The databased employed here provided the following collections: *The Atlanta Journal and the Atlanta Constitution* (1950-1968) and *The Atlanta Constitution* (1946-1984).

represent three audience scopes ranging from large to relatively small metropolitan areas. I selected articles from these publications using keyword searches in the *ProQuest Historic Newspapers* database. The keywords captured both the geographic scope— “Hungary,” “Russia,” “Eastern Bloc,” and “Soviet Union”—and topic specific keywords: “tourism,” “travel,” and “tourists.” Keyword searches for the two main state travel agencies in Hungary and the Soviet Union, “IBUSZ” and “Intourist,” respectively, added more narrowly-focused articles to the sample.

These searches yielded 110 newspaper articles. The distribution by newspaper is as follows:

Total Newspaper Sources	110
<i>New York Times</i>	58
<i>Boston Globe</i>	23
<i>AJC</i>	29

The articles were then analyzed through a descriptive content analysis, which included inductive coding¹⁸ of the articles to identify patterns. These entries were subjected to a country-based comparative qualitative textual analysis, with emphasis on determining how each country was portrayed in the media and whether the depictions displayed change over time.

Media Portrayal of Travel to the Soviet Union and Hungary

Overall, the articles consistently portrayed the Soviet Union as being more difficult for travelers than Hungary due to being more restrictive, less accommodating to foreigners, and less organized. In addition, these negative depictions of the Soviet Union were consistent throughout the time period and showed no signs of significant improvement as interaction with the West

¹⁸ Tehmina Basit, “Manual or Electronic? The Role of Coding in Qualitative Data Analysis,” *Educational Research* 45, no.2 (2003): 143-154.; Barney Glasner, “The Constant Comparative Method of Qualitative Analysis,” *Social Problems* 12, no. 4 (Spring 1965): 439-443.

increased. However, it was during periods of increased brinkmanship, such as the Cuban Missile Crisis or the invasion of Czechoslovakia, when the Soviet people were depicted as being the most hostile or apprehensive towards American tourists. On the other hand, the depictions of Hungary became more favorable over the period studied, in part due to the success of New Economic Mechanism (NEM) implemented in 1968. The NEM made Hungary the most market-oriented centrally planned economy in the Eastern Bloc, something which made American visitors report feeling more 'at home.'¹⁹ In addition to these general trends, other important conclusions can be drawn from the articles.

First, unlike the cases in other studies,²⁰ unmet expectations do not appear to be a likely factor in the lack of opinion change of American tourists. This is because, based on the descriptions in the articles, the bar was set *extremely* low for the countries of the Eastern Bloc. These low standards extended beyond just the general 'glumness' Americans expected from communist societies. Potential tourists were told to expect ever-present military police, difficulty interacting with natives, difficulty navigating without a tour guide, and waiting longer for a visa than initially promised. Though articles portrayed these issues as more severe in the Soviet Union, the consensus was that these difficulties existed in all of the Eastern Bloc states. Even in articles discussing how wonderful trips to these countries could be, tourists were reminded not to expect the same comforts that they were accustomed to, as "Eastern Europe is not Paris."²¹ With the prevalence of these warnings and reminders, it is unlikely that a well-informed tourist went abroad with high expectations.

¹⁹ Stephen Somerville, "Hungary Seeks 10 Million Tourists." *Boston Globe* (1960-1985), May 31, 1970.

²⁰ Gyan P. Nyaupane, Victor Teye, and Cody Paris, "Innocents Abroad: Attitude Change toward Hosts," *Annals of Tourism Research* 35, no. 3 (2008): 650-667.

²¹ Richard Longworth, "East Europe: It's a Good Idea to Get All Visas Before Leaving U.S." *The Atlanta Constitution* (1946-1984), February 18, 1973.

Rather, the articles focused more on what tourists were *unable to do* rather than what they *could do* while abroad—particularly in the Soviet Union. For example, Americans were warned to be cautious when taking photographs, as “what looks like a bridge or a seaport to you may be a military objective to your hosts, and hence unphotographable.”²² As a result, the State Department advised tourists not to “attempt to take photos of slums, the poor, military installations or border areas,” and “when in doubt, ask” someone in a position of authority.²³ This was not simply a word of caution, as the papers also provided many examples of Americans who had been arrested and held in the Soviet Union for taking photographs of things that they were not supposed to, whether they did so knowingly or not.²⁴

Underlying these warnings were descriptions of the Soviet Union indoctrinating its citizens to believe that “many tourists and other visitors from the United States are collecting intelligence information.”²⁵ Therefore, even if tourists were not being monitored by the government (though a number of articles claimed they were), the Soviet citizens were still keeping an eye out for potential “spy tourists,”²⁶ raising the likelihood that one would get in trouble while abroad. Even Frederick Barghoorn, the scholar who advocated tourism to the Soviet Union to improve relations between the East and West, found the experience more difficult than he anticipated. Though he “had gone out of his way to be careful and warn the Soviet government and follow rules, [he] still was arrested and expelled as a spy.”²⁷ These stories were likely to raise apprehension for any American tourist considering a visit to the Soviet Union.

²² Ibid.

²³ “Advice from the State Department.” *New York Times (1923-Current File)*, April 16, 1967.

²⁴ “2 Tourists Are Held In Russia, U.S. Told.” *The Atlanta Constitution (1946-1984)*, October 7, 1960.

²⁵ “Advice from the State Department.”

²⁶ Theodore Shabad, “Rosy Red Carpet: More Tourists than Ever Expected to Visit the Soviet This Year.” *New York Times (1923-Current File)*, February 25, 1962.

²⁷ Edward Crankshaw, “Big Brother Is Still Watching.” *New York Times (1923-Current File)*, December 29, 1963.

However, despite similarities in restrictions and other features of the state-run tourism industry, very few of these difficulties appeared to occur in Hungary. There were no reports of tourists being jailed or expelled, nor were there any cases of suspected “spy tourists” in any of the articles. Even when articles were discussing difficulties travelers encountered in Hungary, they were portrayed as part of the adventure of traveling behind the Iron Curtain, rather than a significant hindrance to the experience.

The disparity is particularly noticeable with regard to language barriers. Though one article described the American tourist as being “helpless”²⁸ when it came to the intricate languages of Eastern Europe, there were few claims of language barriers proving to be an issue in Hungary. This remained the case even after tourists were permitted to drive their own cars unaccompanied through Hungary, which began later in the period in question. Articles did not note any inconveniences encountered by tourists regarding the ability to follow road signs or difficulties navigating rural areas outside the popular tourist destinations, even though the residents in those areas are more likely to be monolingual.²⁹ Articles emphasized that many Hungarians, and especially the residents of Budapest, spoke other European languages—most commonly German or English. Even when that was not the case, tourists recounted trying to communicate as “a good-natured relay race,”³⁰ rather than an inconvenience, and the Hungarian people were described as friendly toward foreigners.³¹

These recounts stand in stark contrast to the harsh reactions tourists received in the Soviet Union. For example, one tourist suggested that the Soviet Union incorporate other European

²⁸ Atkinson, Brooke. “Critic at Large: Benign Skepticism is Called the Perfect Temperament for Tourist in Soviet.” *New York Times (1923-Current File)*, June 21, 1963.

²⁹ Blum, Ethel. “Hungary by Auto Is Treat.” *The Atlanta Constitution (1946-1984)*, November 30, 1975.

³⁰ Richard Sansow, “Budapest on a Shoestring and All the Gypsy Music You Can Possibly Stand.” *New York Times (1923-Current File)*, November 21, 1971.

³¹ Ilona Gazdag, “The Special Charm that is Typical of Hungary.” *New York Times (1923-Current File)*, March 12, 1967.

languages into museum placards so tourists could read about artifacts without assistance, only for his Intourist guide to snap back, “This is the Soviet Union...Russian is enough.”³² In another case, potential tourists were informed that traveling alone would be extremely difficult without the ability to speak Russian, and warned such tourists against attempting to navigate public transportation.³³ One proposed explanation for the different reactions between the Soviet Union and Hungary was “now [that the Soviets] have their space triumphs under their belts...their attitude seems to be that if you want to visit their country, you’d darned well better speak their language.”³⁴ Additionally, tourists claimed that even when average Russian citizens knew English, their skill level was very poor and underdeveloped.³⁵ As a result, language barriers were often described as the most difficult part of the journey, and tourists were portrayed as being completely lost without their Intourist guides or in-depth Russian language skills. Similar patterns were also presented in other aspects of the tourist experience, culminating in the overarching observation that the Soviet Union was consistently portrayed in a negative light.

Agenda Setting and Public Opinion

Though newspapers were not the only way that Americans received their news at this time, they were still heavily influential in informing the American public of the world around them. Objectively, there were few differences between the tourism programs offered in each country, and the seemingly-vast difference was largely constructed by the newspapers themselves. It appears to be a deliberate tactic as well, as many of the articles were written by a relatively small group of journalists, rather than being candid accounts from tourists themselves.

³² Richard Joseph, “Language Still Biggest Barrier: Russians Less Friendly Despite ‘Thaw’.” *Boston Globe* (1960-1985), November 22, 1964.

³³ Sylvan Meyer, “Tourism in Russia.” *The Atlanta Constitution* (1946-1984), October 10, 1969.

³⁴ Richard Joseph, “Language Still Biggest Barrier...”

³⁵ Peter Grothe, “Attitude Change of American Tourists in the Soviet Union.”

Thus, the overwhelmingly negative portrayal of the Soviet Union in comparison to Hungary is an example of how the American news media was able to shape public opinion through agenda-setting. The selection of which international news stories are covered is one method of agenda-setting, as it influences what the public views as significant.³⁶

Other methods of influence were also apparent in the articles sampled. Opinions related to particular events can be shaped by the media, since receiving news is different from experiencing it oneself. Editorial choice is the primary way that the news media contributes to individual conceptualization of foreign countries and the events within them. Since, as many of the articles point out, the majority of Americans did not speak Russian or another Eastern European language, they had to rely on the information presented to them. This content was heavily curated despite the relative freedom of Western press. Additionally, as “the mass media in the United States look to government officials as the source of most of the daily news they report,”³⁷ it is unsurprising that these portrayals mirrored U.S. foreign policy positions, and thus had an anti-Soviet bias.

Furthermore, when a country is frequently portrayed negatively, the audience is more likely to think negatively about that nation, but positive coverage has no effect.³⁸ This imbalance offers one possible explanation for the difference in the depiction of Hungary as “the most Western of the East Europeans in appearance and temperament”³⁹ and the Soviet Union as “warning Russian citizens against American tourists.”⁴⁰ It was also an intentional effect, as the

³⁶ Wayne Wanta, Guy Golan, and Cheolhan Lee, “Agenda Setting and International News: Media Influence on Public Perceptions of Foreign Nations,” *Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly* Vol. 81, No. 2 (2004): 365.

³⁷ W. Lance Bennett, “Toward a Theory of Press-State Relations in the United States,” *Journal of Communication* 40, No. 2 (1990): 103.

³⁸ Wanta et al.

³⁹ Binder, David. “Pleasantly Pampered in Hungary.” *New York Times (1923-Current File)*, March 14, 1965.

⁴⁰ Murray J. Brown, “Does Russia Want Tourists or Not?” *The Atlanta Journal and the Atlanta Constitution (1950-1968)*, April 24, 1966.

New York Times had been framing stories about the Soviet Union in an unfavorable light—unless their interest paralleled that of the United States—since 1917.⁴¹ Additionally, the Soviet Union was always framed in the context of its role as the United States’ primary geopolitical opponent, even when such context seemed irrelevant. Even in periods of détente, Americans would still be reminded of the political situation with lines such as, “the U-2 reconnaissance-plane incident in 1960 dampened the United States tourism in Russia somewhat...”⁴² before the article continued to explain how the situation had improved since that point, or moving on entirely from the subject. This was an indirect way that journalists were able to retain the negative portrayal even when the subject of the article was non-political.

Likewise, positive coverage having no effect may explain why the other Eastern Bloc countries, particularly Hungary, could be presented with a positive spin without appearing contradictory to the overall narrative of American foreign policy. Even if journalists were unaware of the results of such portrayal, the articles avoided contradiction by focusing more on Hungary’s culture than its political relations with the United States. Readers were dazzled with descriptions of “the traditional hospitality of the Hungarians”⁴³ in the “most pleasant to visit of all the Soviet Bloc capitals.”⁴⁴ Articles focused more on Hungary’s ‘charm’ than its government, and significant emphasis was placed on the quality of the music and food. When articles did mention the politics of Hungary, it was portrayed as a post-1956 ‘victim’ of Soviet brutality, rather than a communist nation in its own right. It is this feature, combined with others mentioned in this study, that made Hungary the most favorable Eastern Bloc destination by the

⁴¹ Martin Kriesberg, “Soviet News in the New York Times,” *Public Opinion Quarterly* Vol. 10, No. 4 (1946): 540-564.

⁴² Douglas W. Cray, “Communist Lands Wooing Tourists.” *New York Times* (1923-Current File), January 3, 1965.

⁴³ Stephen Somerville, “Hungary Seeks 10 Million Tourists.” *Boston Globe* (1960-1985), May 31, 1970.

⁴⁴ Underwood, Paul. “Hungary Makes Bid for Tourist Trade.” *New York Times* (1923-Current File), April 14, 1963.

1980s—as the most politically and economically “liberal” communist state, tourists could experience life behind the Iron Curtain with the least amount of “risk.”⁴⁵

Though these structural differences became more prevalent towards the end of the study, by artificially exaggerating this dichotomy between tourism to Hungary and the Soviet Union, the newspaper media acted as a gatekeeper, setting up expectations for visitors. Despite having common issues, the experiences in the Soviet Union were interpreted more negatively than in other Eastern Bloc countries. This anticipated difference then acted as a barrier to positive interaction with the foreign country and contributed to both the overall negative ratings of the country and the lack of opinion change by tourists. In some cases, these pre-conceived opinions may have been confirmed while abroad if the tourist encountered inconveniences, as the papers had inadvertently told readers how those inconveniences should be interpreted as well.

Conclusion

In summary, the theoretical literature suggests that tourism should lead to better foreign relations, but the empirical evidence on opinion change fails to support those assertions in many cases. Rather, it is apparent that pre-trip factors and opinions have more influence on the experience than the experience has on opinions. One such example has been presented here: where travel to the Soviet Union did not change the views of the American tourists, nor did it lead to better relations between the United States and the Soviet Union. The evidence suggests that the influence of the news media is a stronger explanatory factor for this lack of change, rather than alternative explanations such as unmet expectations or adverse experiences abroad.

While the news media do have an agenda-setting capacity, it would be mistaken to assume that a group of editors and journalists are conspiring to provide a single, homogeneous

⁴⁵ Jozséf Böröcz, *Leisure Migration: A Sociological Study on Tourism*. Oxford: Pergamon Press, 1996. 110.

narrative. Indeed, it is worth noting that the data also showed narratives that were less consistent or even contradictory. The primary example of such contradiction involved whether or not tourists could expect to be spied upon. A number of articles told readers to complain about any problems they had while in their room and, since the room was bugged, the issues would be ‘miraculously’ fixed the next day.⁴⁶ Meanwhile another article stated that “nobody will follow you around or bug your room to learn how tramping over Red Square’s cobblestones made your feet hurt.”⁴⁷ Although there were certainly inconsistencies across the articles, the overarching trend toward negative, politically charged portrayals of the Soviet Union and positive, culturally-focused description of Hungary is undeniable and likely a far greater influence on the public.

However, there are limitations to the analysis presented. Primarily, it is assumed that the Americans who traveled to the Eastern Bloc kept up with the news via newspapers prior to their trip, and thus were subjugated to the different biases discussed within this paper. While this seems highly likely given the recorded educational and occupational backgrounds of the tourists, the media environment of the period, and the prevalence of articles specifically for those looking for advice prior to traveling, the correlation is assumed rather than proved.

Despite these limitations, the findings still strongly suggest that disconnect occurs because theories relating tourism and peace ultimately fail to account for the strength of preconceived opinions and their ability to resist change. Moreover, it proposes that this resistance is ultimately reliant on the salience of those opinions, particularly negative ones, in the political and media environment of the home country. It is the tourist who had the most ingrained hostility towards their destination who did not improve their opinion upon visiting. As this

⁴⁶ Charles Moore, “Budapest a City of Intrigue.” *The Atlanta Journal and the Atlanta Constitution* (1950-1968), May 10, 1964.

⁴⁷ Harold Martin, “Memo to Some Friends Departing for a Brief Visit to Russia.” *The Atlanta Journal and the Atlanta Constitution* (1950-1968), August 23, 1964.

ingrained hostility is more apparent in the case of geopolitical opponents, such as the US and the USSR or Greece and Turkey, these nations are the most likely to diverge from the contact theory assumptions of peace and understanding.

Though the case presented here is a historical, the findings are still relevant for future research on opinion change in tourists. By analyzing the media coverage of the destination, researchers may be able to better predict the outcomes of a tourist's experience and the potential for opinion change. In addition, there are many other avenues of research on media and tourism that are still left to be explored—such as how the 24-hour news cycle, social media, and even “fake news” have altered the impact of media portrayals of conflicting nations.

Appendix 1: Newspaper Articles Analyzed

- "Advice from the State Department." *New York Times (1923-Current File)*, April 16, 1967.
- "2 Tourists Are Held In Russia, U.S. Told." *The Atlanta Constitution (1946-1984)*, October 7, 1960.
- "Alas, It's Rubles Nyet, Dollars Da." *New York Times (1923-Current File)*, January 16, 1967.
- "Communists Eye U.S. Jets In Drive to Lure Tourists." *Boston Globe (1960-1985)*, July 31, 1966.
- "Gabriel Reiner, Cut Travel Bars: Cosmos Chief Helped Open Soviet to US Tourists." *The New York Times (1923-Current File)*, March 12, 1969.
- "Heading for Eastern Europe?" *Boston Globe (1960-1985)*, December 10, 1978.
- "Hungary Eases Visas: Vienna Cites Policy Shift Aiding Visits to Austria." *New York Times (1923-Current File)*, June 12, 1955.
- "Hungary Making It Easier for Westerners to Visit." *New York Times (1923-Current File)*, September 20, 1964.
- "Just Another Tourist." *The Atlanta Constitution (1946-1984)*, July 20, 1969.
- "News and Notes From the Field of Travel." *New York Times (1923-Current File)*, May 18, 1969.
- "News and Notes from the Field of Travel." *New York Times (1923-Current File)*, March 2, 1969.
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