

Holiday Houses Hill

Seaside Architecture and Urbanism
in Bulgaria and Croatia

Edited by Elke Beyer, Anke Hagemann and Michael Zinganel

Each summer season, the sun-drenched coasts of Bulgaria and Croatia turn into densely inhabited, intensively exploited tourism industry hot spots. This book traces the various architectural and urban planning strategies that have been pursued there since the mid 1950s—first in order to create, and then to further develop, modern holiday destinations. It portrays (late) modern resorts of remarkable architectural quality and typological diversity that have lasted for decades: as anchors of the socialist states' 'social tourism', as playground for domestic publics in search of recreation and as a viable product on the international holidays market. Finally, it shows how individual resorts and outstanding buildings have been restructured both economically and physically since the fall of state socialism, and explores the present-day conflicts triggered by coastal development in the name of tourism.

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Sun, Sea, Sand... and Architecture.

How Bulgaria's Black Sea coast was turned into a tourist product

Elke Beyer and Anke Hagemann

In the mid 1950s, the socialist People's Republic of Bulgaria decided to develop its natural resources of sun, sea and sand on the Black Sea coast as an all-round, neatly packaged tourist product, and to market it to domestic and international holidaymakers. Over the next two decades, the construction of entire new bathing resorts provided architects and urban planners with unprecedented opportunities to experiment. The Black Sea coast became a testing ground for the renewal of resolutely modern design, beyond the neo-classicist dictates of the Stalinist era, and the resorts that sprang up there showcased the very latest in contemporary Bulgarian architecture.¹ A US-American travel guide published in 1968 enthusiastically declared, 'What the Bulgarians have done and are doing with their 250-mile stretch of Black Sea coast is one of the phenomena of the international tourist industry. [...] The Bulgarians have created pleasure resorts that, despite the hundreds of thousands jamming them in season, are miraculously devoid of a honky-tonk quality. They have paid considerable attention to the need for shady spaces, for parks and gardens, for a variety of

places to eat, drink, and amuse oneself, for sightseeing tours—inexpensive and well-organized—to both immediate and distant points, for rapid transport (direct flights to the coast from abroad, for example) and at least to as great an extent as possible, for pleasant, efficient service.'² Development of the coast for millions of holidaymakers laid the foundations for an economic sector that was vital to Bulgaria under state socialism, and has remained so under capitalism.³ Despite a slump in the 1990s, the Black Sea coast resorts are now once again popular and affordable 'summer getaway'

¹ Interview with Todor Bulev, Professor of Urban Planning and former Vice-President of the Bulgarian Chamber of Architects, and Liliya Lutsanova, lecturer in Urban Planning at Varna Free University, 24 August 2010, Varna. See also Todor Bulev, 'Architektur in Bulgarien von 1944 bis heute. Etappen einer Entwicklung', in Adolph Stiller (ed.), *Bulgarien. Architektonische Fragmente*, Salzburg: Pustet, 2007, pp. 90–141.

² Robert S. Kane, *Eastern Europe A to Z. Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, East Germany, Hungary, Poland, Romania, Yugoslavia—and the Soviet Union*, New York: Doubleday, 1968, pp. 55/56.

³ According to a spokesman for the Bulgarian Ministry of the Economy, Energy and Tourism, tourism in 2009 accounted for 10.5 percent of Bulgaria's

destinations. Yet their ambience has changed dramatically, owing to the sweeping privatization of real estate and the tourism sector in the 1990s, and the wildly eclectic and largely deregulated construction boom that set in after the year 2000.

The 'tourist product' is professional jargon for the combination of a particular location's natural resources (landscape, climate) with the comprehensive range of services (accommodation, entertainment, etc.) on offer there for purchase as a holiday package. Here, the tourist product is read primarily in terms of the 'tourist space',⁴ that is, with regard to how a holiday destination is shaped by a number of diverse actors and factors—not least by the urban planning and architectural schemes that first make a region accessible. Certainly, urbanism and architecture were a top priority when Bulgaria began its rapid, centrally planned development and international promotion of the Black Sea coast as a tourist destination for the masses. In the six intervening decades, the tourist product has never ceased to evolve. This book highlights the defining role that architecture and urban planning have played in designing the tourist product. We examine five decisive moments in the history of the major holiday resorts, from the foundation of the People's Republic of Bulgaria in 1948 to the present day: Druzhba and the first resort master plan of 1956; Golden Sands and the expansion of the major resorts up to the time of the International Union of Architects' Congress in 1972; Albena and various privatization models in 1997; Sunny Beach at the height of the construction boom in 2004; and the emergence of numerous investment ruins and a few exclusive golf resorts since the onset of the global financial crisis in 2008. Each resort is considered in terms of the period that most crucially defined its architecture and urban structure. Our examples demonstrate how radically images and architectural interpretations of the tourist product have shifted from era to era. They are complemented by a series of case studies detailing the structural transformation of individual hotels or holiday houses. [→ 119] The research rests primarily

direct BIP. The tourism sector employs 170,000 individuals; or 474,000, if one takes into account seasonal staff and those employed in dependent sectors. In 2009, tourism generated revenue of 2.6 billion EUR—75 percent of it on the Black Sea coast. Interview with Hristomir Hristov, State Expert, Tourism Policy Directorate, Ministry of the Economy, Energy and Tourism, Sofia, 1 September 2010.

⁴ Bernd Eisenstein, *Grundlagen des Destinationsmanagements*, Munich: Oldenbourg 2010.

on our field trips and interviews with various stakeholders in the Bulgarian tourism and construction industries, but draws also on studies of architectural and cultural history, tourism geography and ethnography, on source material published since the 1950s in Bulgarian and international architectural journals, and on press reports of current construction projects and the often vehement public opposition they

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architecture

BULGARIA BUILDS

Modern Bulgarian hotel architecture, as featured in the British journal *Architectural Review* in 1966. Hotel Glarus in Golden Sands, architects: Georgi Ganey, Diana Popova, 1960.

building, and great versatility influencing a factor is Bu winters are then German whereas summer Spain. That capital lies a and is further advantages Riviera. Ne of contemporary which won i in the building notable are t Sands, Drou are genuine amphitheatresque sea and over town of Varna near the s Nessebur for 2,000 years. In these three tects, availability 'summer by employing of building tions; but le more univertectural for resort town by tall hotel interesting a

have sparked. What follows is a brief introduction to the conditions under which tourism has developed in Bulgaria—from the state planning institutions of the Republic's founding years, to privatization and the recent controversial legislation on further development of the coast.

Bathing resort tourism for the international and domestic markets began to establish itself at several points on Bulgaria's Black Sea coast in the early twentieth century, most notably in Varna. Yet the infrastructure remained modest until shortly after World War II, when the first hotels devoted to the 'sun, sea and sand' style of holiday opened in and around Varna. In 1948, a centralized national tourist agency modelled on the Soviet 'Inturist'⁵ was launched in Bulgaria under the name 'Balkantourist'. This organization operated under directives of the Bulgarian Committee of Tourism, the arm of the Council of Ministers responsible for planning, managing and steering the country's develop-

ment as a tourist destination in the framework of the Five-Year Plans.⁶ Balkantourist commissioned, owned and managed almost all of the hotels catering to international guests. It also maintained offices abroad, and invested large sums in international marketing campaigns. Streams of foreign guests were thus 'steered into the country, according to plan'.⁷ The design of architecture, urban planning and regional development for tourism purposes was likewise organized centrally in the People's Republic of Bulgaria: as of the mid 1950s, sole responsibility for the design and structural development of each new resort in its entirety was assigned to a team of architects, planners and engineers under the direction of a chief architect at Glavproekt, in Sofia, the central state institute for architecture and urban planning. An institute of regional planning was inaugurated in 1960, and elaborated a master plan for overall development of the coast.⁸ Mass tourism was deliberately concentrated in a few high-density resorts in order to avoid coastal sprawl and protect the natural resources so vital to tourism development.

From the mid 1950s to the late 1960s, a total of four new major resorts was planned and built

5 The Soviet tour operator Inturist was founded in 1929 to channel foreign visitors to the main sites of 'building socialism' with propaganda value in the USSR. Under Khrushchev's aegis, both foreign and domestic tourism in the Soviet Union expanded and acquired a more consumption-oriented profile from the mid-1950s onwards. Package deals and tourist infrastructures for foreign visitors were designed to stimulate hard currency spending, yet visitor movement in the USSR remained much more restricted than in Bulgaria. In a recent paper, Johanna Conterio points out that in the 1960s, Bulgarian tourist facilities were seen as a model for the future development of Soviet Black Sea resorts. Johanna Conterio, 'Kavkazskii aul: Caucasian Restaurants and International Tourism in Sochi, 1960s', Paper presented at the Central Eurasian Studies Society Regional Conference, Tbilisi, Georgia, 20/21 July 2012. Most recent historical studies of travel and tourism in the USSR include: Christian Noack, 'Building Tourism in One Country? The Sovietization of Vacationing, 1917–41' in Eric G.E. Zuelow (ed.), *Touring Beyond the Nation: A Transnational Approach to European Tourism History*, Farnham: Ashgate, 2011, pp. 171–95; Anne E. Gorsuch, *All this is your world: Soviet tourism at home and abroad after Stalin*, Oxford et al.: Oxford UP, 2011; Shawn Salmon, 'Marketing Socialism: Inturist in the Late 1950s and Early 1960s', in Anne Gorsuch and Diane Koenker (eds), *Turizm: The Russian and East European Tourist Under Capitalism and Socialism*, Ithaca: Cornell UP, 2006, pp. 186–204. The authors kindly thank Johanna Conterio for generously sharing her insights and literature on this subject.

6 Since 1966, Komitet po turizma pri Ministerski Savet, since 1977, Darzhaven komitet po turizma, see Magarditsch A. Hatschikjan, 'Tourismus', in Klaus-Detlev Grothusen (ed.), *Südosteuropa-Handbuch*, vol. VI: *Bulgarien*, Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1990, pp. 388–93; Claude Sauer, 'Touristenidylle nach Plan: Bulgarien', *Deutsche Bauzeitung*, 1973, no. 9, pp. 982–85.

7 Gerhard Hess, 'Das internationale Kurort- und Erholungsgebiet an der bulgarischen Schwarzmeerküste', *Zeitschrift für den Erdkundeunterricht*, 1973, no. 1, pp. 18–26.

8 Wolf Oeschlies, 'Regionalplanung und Umweltschutz', in Grothusen 1990, pp. 419–32.

9 Dotschka Kasatschka and Vassil Marinov, 'Tourismus in Bulgarien, Strukturen und Entwicklungen während der Übergangsperiode', Christoph Becker et al. (eds), *Geographie der Freizeit und des Tourismus*, Munich: Oldenbourg, 2003, pp. 604–16, here p. 605.

10 Kristen Ghodsee, *The Red Riviera: Gender, Tourism, and Postsocialism on the Black Sea*, Durham: Duke UP, 2005, pp. 79–84.

11 By the late 1980s, 'facilities for social tourism' accounted for 162,000 beds used by 1.7 million domestic tourists (19 percent of the total population); a figure dwarfed somewhat by the 318,000 'second homes' privately owned at that time. Kasatschka / Marinov 2003, p. 606. Hatschikjan notes the following breakdown of capacity in 1986/87, which is derived from Bulgarian statistical yearbooks: number of beds (as a percentage of the overall capacity): hotels 19.2, camping sites 14.4, private accommodation 27.6, holiday houses 21. Hatschikjan 1990, p. 393.

on Bulgaria's Black Sea coast: Druzhba, Golden Sands, Sunny Beach, and Albena. They were complemented gradually by smaller holiday villages on the coast, winter sports resorts in the mountains and holiday centres at attractive inland locations. By the mid 1980s, Bulgaria had increased its hospitality capacity to circa 500,000 beds.⁹ This figure encompassed not only Balkantourist hotels for international guests but also the numerous holiday houses, camping sites, simple chalet parks and youth camps run by other state and social organizations, mainly for Bulgarian holidaymakers.

Developing leisure and holiday opportunities for Bulgaria's workers and bureaucrats had been a priority of the socialist regime since its earliest years. Until 1989, at least fifty percent of holiday accommodation was reserved for Bulgarians, in order that they might relax and regenerate their productive capacity. The Constitution of 1948 guaranteed all Bulgarian employees fourteen days' paid annual holiday, while numerous national holidays made occasional short breaks feasible. The 'social tourism' organized in conjunction with people's place of employment or a mass organization played a significant role until the demise of state socialism.¹⁰ Overall, the state-run holiday houses and

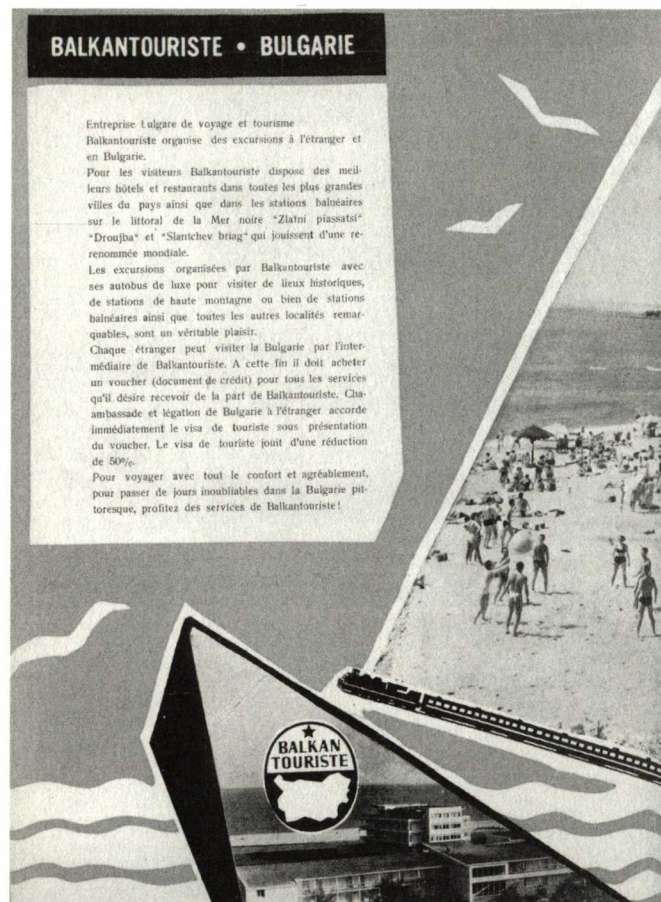
hotels each offered roughly the same number of beds. In the late 1980s, around one fifth of the population spent their annual holiday in the former.¹¹ Places in the holiday houses or chalet parks assigned to state companies and trade unions were allocated as part of a holiday package—the precursor or socialist-style version of today's package deal, in a sense. Our first section outlines the spatial concepts pursued in the earliest days of centralized tourism planning under state socialism, which were realized first in the Druzhba resort, near Varna: a balanced mix of international hotels and domestic (social) tourism, embedded, most notably, in a pioneering example of lavish landscape planning.

A great deal of holiday accommodation, in particular hotels in the higher categories, was designed to appeal to an international clientele. The Bulgarian government had recognized in the 1950s and 60s that



Experiments in panel construction: Hotel Balaton in Sunny Beach, architects: Nikolay Nenov et al., 1965.

Early 1960s postcard of Hotel Tintyava in Sunny Beach, architect: Liliya Stoyanova, 1960.



An ad in the Bulgarian journal *Arhitektura* in 1961, inviting foreign tourists to book a holiday with the state tourism agency, Balkantourist.



Sunny Beach hotels featured on a poster promoting the work of the central state institute for architecture and urban planning, Glavproekt, 1965.

12 Ghodsee 2005, pp. 84–88.

13 Karin Taylor, *From Trips to Modernity to Holidays in Nostalgia—Tourism History in Eastern and Southeastern Europe*, Tensions of Europe/Inventing Europe Working Paper Nr. WP_2011_01, March 2011, p. 20; Karin Taylor, *Let's Twist Again: Youth and Leisure in Socialist Bulgaria*, Vienna and Berlin: LIT, 2006, p. 111.

14 While, in 1960, circa 250,000 foreigners travelled in Bulgaria, their number increased circa tenfold by the year 1970, to 2.5 million, and doubled once again by 1980, to over 5 million. Hatschikjan 1990, p. 391.

15 Kasatschka/Marinov 2003.

16 Marin Bachvarov, 'Die schwierige Übergangsphase des bulgarischen Tourismus', *Südosteuropa-Studien*, 2000, vol. 66, pp. 89–102, here p. 93.

beach tourism was a valuable asset—and conveniently ignored the fact that exploiting this 'product' for profit was not entirely compatible with socialist economics. Strengthening cultural and economic ties with other socialist countries in Europe was one major incentive; another was the prospect of extracting much-needed hard currency from the pockets of tourists from capitalist countries.¹² The tourist product could be purchased and consumed as a completely organized package, but was available also to independent travellers in more flexible formats. A great deal of private accom-

modation was licenced too, to supplement provision by the state.¹³ In the intervening decades, millions of guests have flocked to the country to enjoy the tourist product—and they have rapidly 'urbanized' the coast, in effect, for a few months each summer season.¹⁴ In the 1960s and 70s, the holiday resorts and the range of services and attractions on offer were expanded and organized with ever greater professionalism. Which architectural formats underpinned this development and how they turned the holiday resorts into an internationally acclaimed showcase of Bulgarian architecture is discussed in the second section, with a particular focus on the Golden Sands resort and the Congress of the International Union of Architects held in Varna in 1972.

This gradual differentiation and upgrade of the tourist product steadily boosted visitor numbers until the mid 1980s. After 1989, they dropped significantly, for the tourism sector was confronted with the abrupt end of Bulgaria's established rapport with other Comecon countries and the uncertainties prompted by political and economic upheaval.¹⁵ In the twenty-four years since then, organizational structures and property relations have changed in many regards, and so have vested interests in marketing the tourist product. In the course of privatization, state-owned tourism facilities were broken down into 130 smaller companies.¹⁶ Hotels in the larger resorts were generally sold off individually. Following several years of stagnation and halting privatization, an investment and construction boom set in at the turn of the millennium, and radically altered the face of holiday resorts and tourism architecture. TUI, Neckermann, ITS, and other global players in the tourism industry, gained enormous influence over the design and pricing of the tourist product. Bulgaria's Black Sea coast was touted as a cheap destination, both to package-deal tourists and prospective

How everything is problematic

17 Interview with Marin Neshkov, chairman of the Varna Chamber of Tourism, Varna, 24 August 2010.

18 Interview with Yanina Taneva, Manager, Art for Social Change Programme, Red House, Sofia, and Petko Tsvetkov, Coordinator of the Green Belt and Natura 2000 campaigns, Bulgaria Biodiversity Foundation, Sofia, 1 September 2010. Both were organizers of the Save Irakli! campaign, see p.149.

What kind of access was kept in the loop? The...

holiday home owners, primarily on the British, Scandinavian and German markets, later also in Russia. Bulgarian investors and construction companies had carte blanche, for the public and planning authorities wielded precious little influence at the time.¹⁷ The introduction (and consistent enforcement) of new building legislation and permit procedures—a result in part of Bulgaria's accession to the EU in 2007—and, for quite different reasons, especially the global financial crisis of 2008, slowed down this trend significantly.¹⁸ In the third and fourth sections, we trace the two very different privatization strategies pursued in Albena and Sunny Beach and the subsequent structural development of these two major Black Sea resorts. In Albena, the tourist product designed in the 1970s—and, not least, its trademark architecture—are still appreciated by its central management and have accordingly been upgraded with respect and care. Sunny Beach, by contrast, epitomizes the unscrupulous squander of the Black Sea coast's tourism resources for the gratification of short-term commercial interests. Our fifth section addresses how the real estate bubble was additionally inflated on the entire Bulgarian coast by the speculative construction of holiday apartments and it looks also at the alternative products with which developers have sought to maintain their market foothold since the onset of the financial crisis in 2008. In conclusion, we discuss several current construction projects and the intense controversy surrounding their (non-)regulation by planning authorities—for public protest in Bulgaria has grown more effective in recent years. Public hearings, media campaigns and lawsuits now keep dubious developments in the public eye, and help orchestrate efforts to salvage the last unspoiled stretches of the Black Sea coast.

Druzhba 1956:

Hotels and trade union holiday houses in verdant parkland

The very first Black Sea coast resort developed for mass tourism by the People's Republic of Bulgaria was Druzhba (Friendship), near Varna. The original master plan from 1956 specified that a mix of holiday houses for Bulgarian institutions, as well as hotels for an international clientele, should be embedded in the forested mountain slopes. Extensive landscaping was also foreseen, and various outdoor features such as panoramic circuits, lookout platforms, fountains and an open-air amphitheatre define the resort's appearance to this day. Gradual

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Panorama terrace of the Albatros Café in Druzhba, architects: Damyan Damyanov, Petar Raykov, interior design: Emil Dimchev, 1956.

Situation plan of the
Druzhba resort in 1960

Chief architect:
Kosta Nikolov

Hotels built in 1948

- 1 Rosa
- 2 Odesos

Hotels built in 1956

- 3 Chayka
- 4 Bor
- 5 Prostor
- 6 Lebed
- 7 Praga

Hotels built in 1959/60

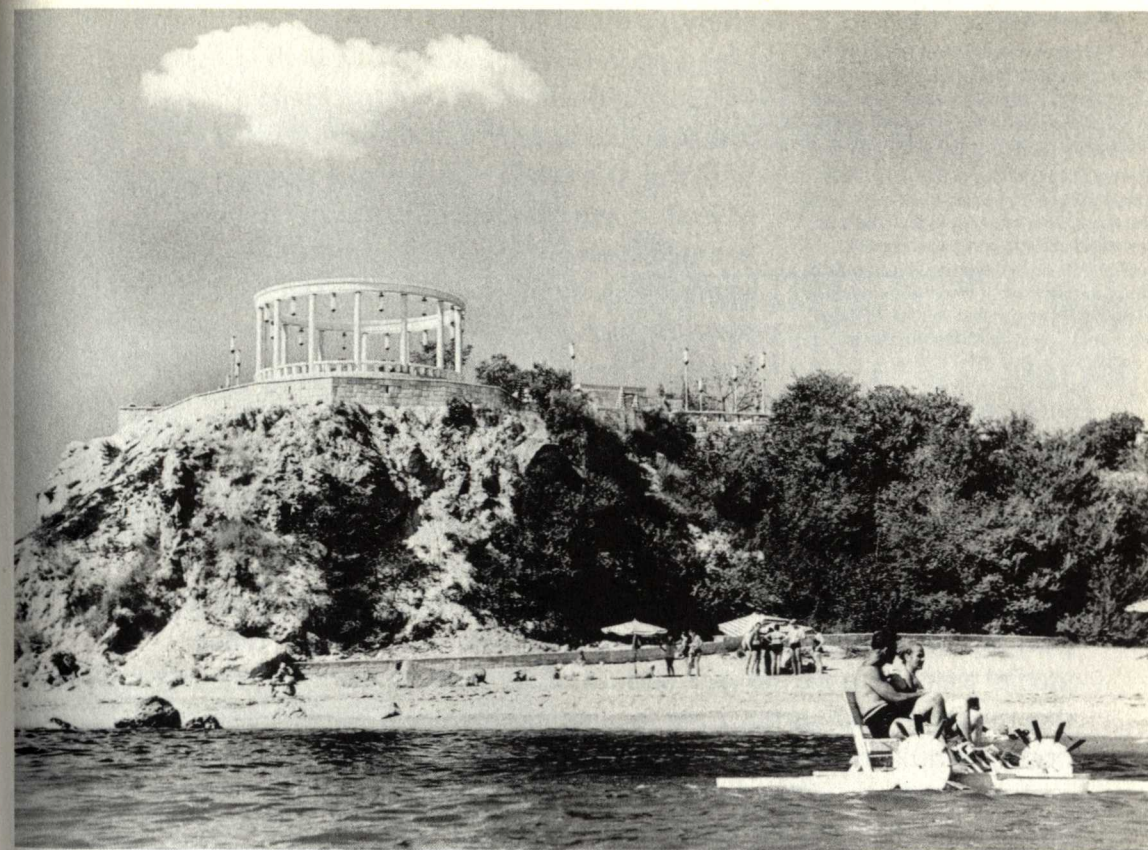
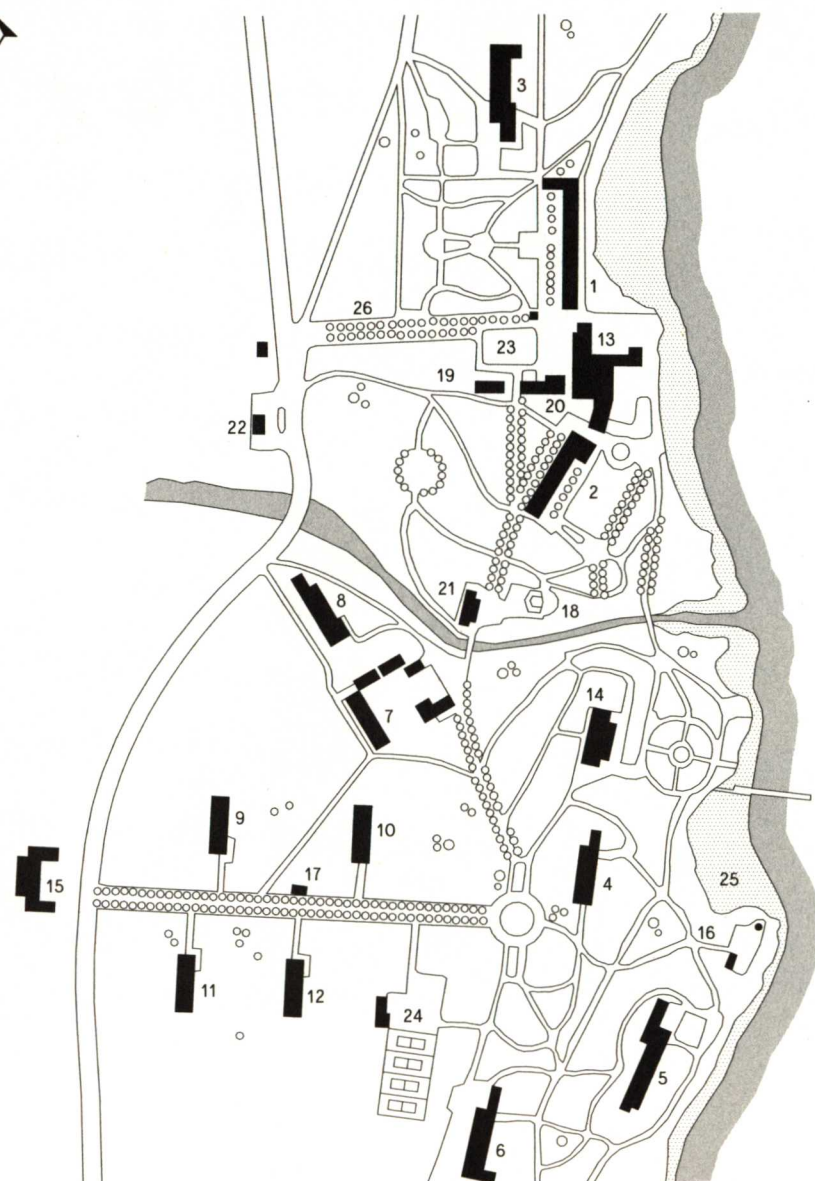
- 8 Lotos
- 9 Nezabravka
- 10 Nartsis
- 11 Emona
- 12 Rusalka

Restaurants

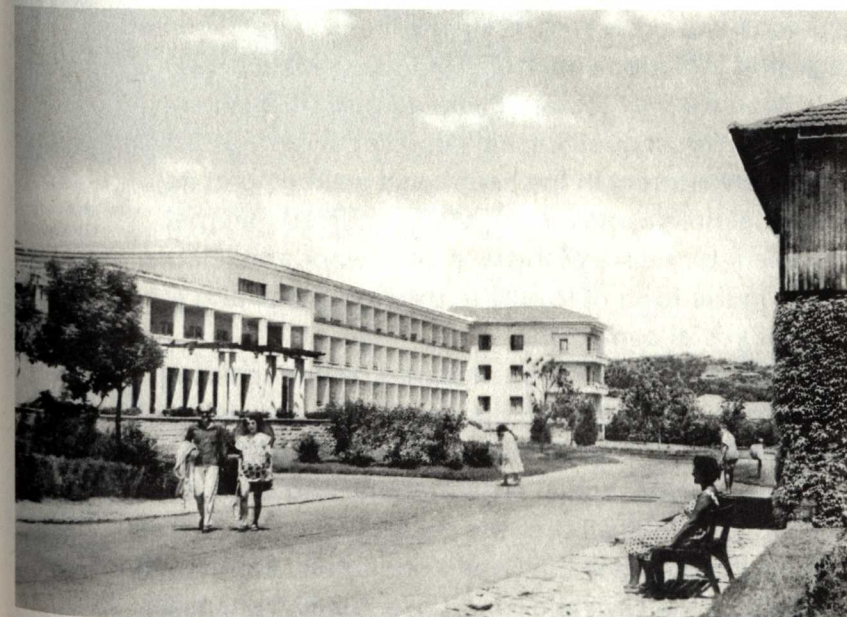
- 13 Chernomorets
- 14 Varna
- 15 Emona
- 16 Albatros Café

Facilities

- 17 Shop
- 18 Open-air theatre
- 19 Post office
- 20 Drugstore
- 21 Administration
- 22 Petrol station
- 23 Parking
- 24 Tennis courts
- 25 Beaches
- 26 Main access road



The rotunda of the Albatros Café, perched above Druzhba's densely forested landscape.



The first generation of hotels in Druzhba epitomizes the transition from 'national traditions' to modern architecture. Hotel Chayka, architects: Evgeni Stoyanov, Aleksandar Belokapov, 1956.

19 Ghodsee 2005, pp. 79–84.

20 The move was inspired in part by the Soviet model and took place simultaneously in the other Comecon countries. Taylor 2011, p. 10.

21 Taylor 2006, p. 109, cites a woman's memory of her holiday in the early 1960s: 'At ten-thirty p.m. we had to be back in the villa, if you were late they locked the door, they didn't allow it, and if you weren't careful, a letter to the trade union [would follow] and in front of the whole enterprise they would read out that you had violated [the rules] ... that you were not moral.'

changes made to architecture and landscape planning in Druzhba attest to a shift in notions of how holidaymakers should ideally use a location and spend their leisure time: while, until the mid 1950s, the resort's diverse range of indoor and outdoor communal facilities promoted an edifying and community-minded experience, the early 1960s ushered in a trend towards more cost-effective accommodation types, whereby the private room became the

primary counterpoint to sun, sea and sand.

Developing leisure and holiday facilities for everyone from factory workers to top-notch bureaucrats was a top priority for the socialist regime, from its earliest days.¹⁹ In order to make broadly available that which had, traditionally, been a privilege of the well-heeled few, the government in 1948 not only introduced the universal right to an annual paid holiday but also, as historian Karin Taylor emphasizes, made 'social tourism' a permanent feature of its social policy.²⁰ In practice, this meant the Bulgarian state facilitated holidays for the masses, firstly, by building holiday accommodation and transport infrastructure and, secondly, by either providing them at affordable prices or granting direct subsidies and package deals to specific social groups.

Places in the holiday houses or chalet parks assigned to state companies, trade unions and other mass organizations were allocated as part of a package that included vouchers for three meals a day—the socialist-style precursor of today's package deal, in a sense. The company or organization in question also covered two-thirds of the cost of a holiday, as an investment in the health and wellbeing of its workforce. The individual holidaymaker therefore incurred minimal expense—yet the close interweave of the worlds of work and leisure exacted its own price, in the form of loyalty to the workplace and a considerable degree of social control.²¹

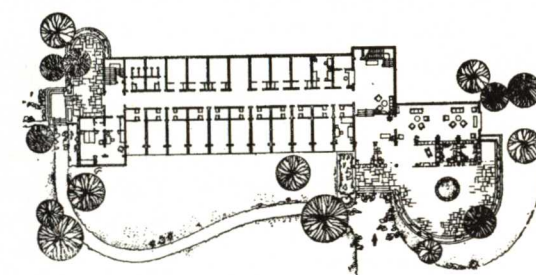
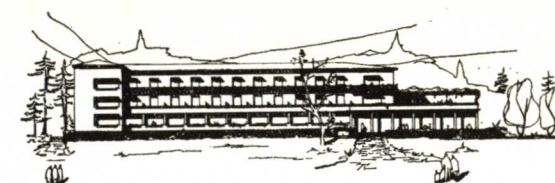
Suitable holiday accommodation was acquired by nationalizing private properties, as in the case of the Evksinograd Palace, situated between Varna and Druzhba; or it was especially built on behalf of specific industrial plants, unions, social organizations and government ministries, at appealing locations all over the country—on the densely wooded slopes of an idyllic bay near the Sveti Konstantin i Elena monastery, for instance, where the Druzhba resort eventually transpired. There was nothing but a single guesthouse and a privately run sandy beach there when the state tourism agency Balkantourist launched its



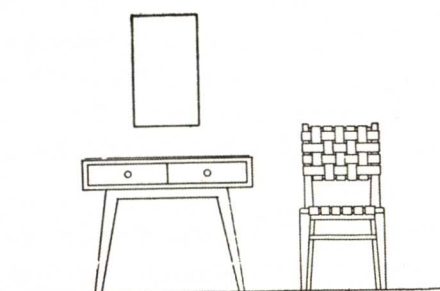
Terraces, pergolas and coquina-paved steps and pathways anchor the hotel buildings in Druzhba's landscaped parkland. Hotel Prostor, architects: Danail Kanev, Petar Grigorov, 1956.



Spacious communal rooms with modern furnishings and elaborate terrazzo flooring in the International House of Journalists near Varna, architects: Nikola Nikolov et al., 1956.



Facade and floor plan of Hotel Bor, architects: Dacho Petrov, Dimitar Popov, 1956.

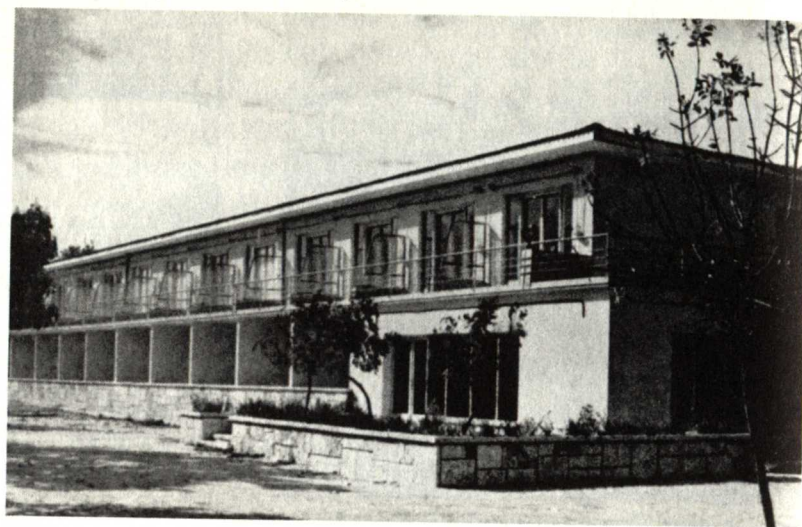


Furniture for hotel guestrooms in Druzhba, design: Emil Dimchev, 1956.

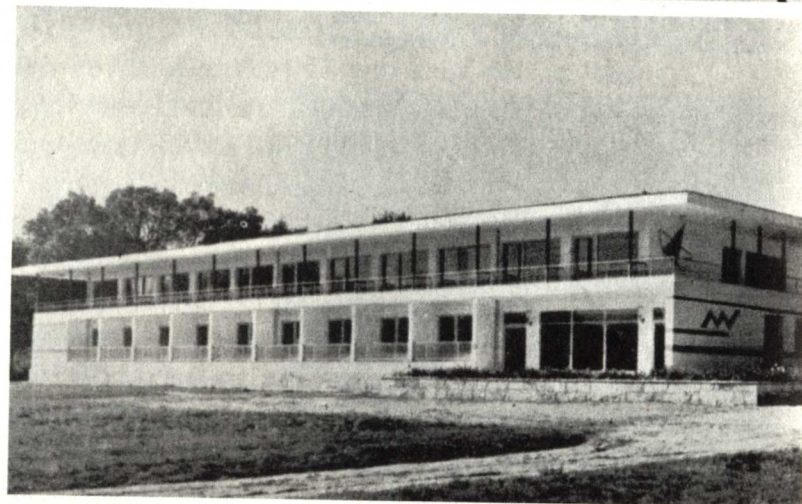
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Hotels and holiday houses built in 1959/60 in Druzhba display clear modern lines and efforts to attain greater cost efficiency.



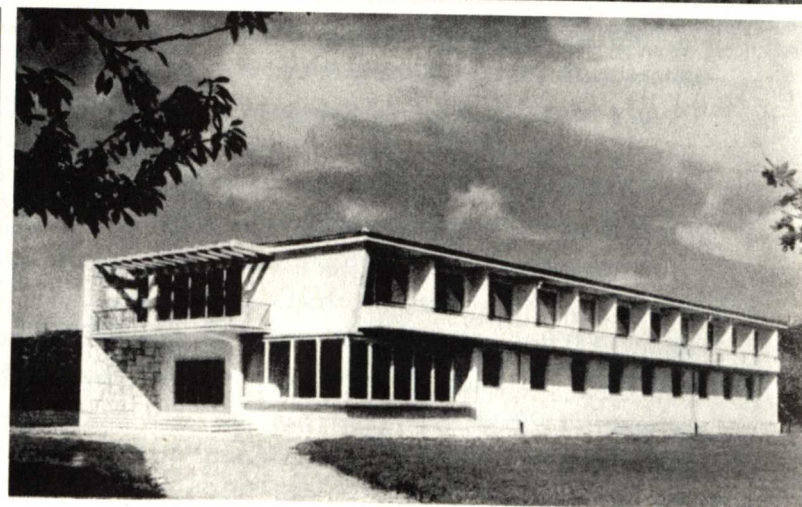
Hotel Russalka, architect: Ivan Draganov.



Hotel Emona, architect: Georgi Stoilov.



Holiday House of the National Army, architects: Boris Kozuharov, Nikolay Nenov.



Hotel Nartsis, architect: Nevena Kechedzhieva.

operations. It opened the Rosa and Odesos Hotels, the Chernomorets Restaurant, a post-office and a drugstore between 1948 and 1950; then, over the next ten years, Bulgarian trade unions, government ministries and state companies built around a dozen holiday houses for their staff and/or members, on the northern sweep of the bay.

The major government ministries (of defence, heavy industries and the like) and the most powerful trade unions (coal and steel) snapped up prime locations on the bay, and built well-appointed first or second row holiday houses.²² [→ 119] To stay in such places was a privilege reserved for senior or especially worthy cadres, and the fact they were only a stone's throw from the Evksinograd Palace, the politburo's holiday retreat, presumably increased the kudos considerably. Druzhba's northern bay in any case hosted several influential branches of the bureaucracy over the next few decades, in increasingly luxurious accommodation. More modest holiday houses for minor state organizations were built somewhat further away from the beach, along with a growing string of villas, chalet parks and camping sites.

This burgeoning social tourism was paralleled throughout the early 1950s by a growing stream of tourists from Czechoslovakia, Poland, Hungary, the USSR, and East and West Germany. The need for more accommodation therefore soon became acute. The Bulgarian government's response, in December 1955, was to approve state funding for the development of coastal resorts intended for both foreign and domestic tourists, with Druzhba taking the lead. Under the direction of Kosta Nikolov, a team of architects from the central state institute for architecture and urban planning, Glavproekt, designed and developed the Chayka, Bor, Lebed and Prostor Hotels (with a combined capacity of 600 beds), the Varna Restaurant (with 600 covers), the Albatros Café (with 400 covers), as well as their luxuriantly landscaped settings.²³

This holiday complex blended in with the holiday houses, restaurants and private villas dotted along the panoramic coast road between

Varna and Golden Sands.²⁴ The planning concept for the complex—an ensemble of new hotels—was the winning entry in an internal competition organized by Glavproekt. Instead of concentrating development around the monastery, each hotel was to be assured its own panoramic outlook and a secluded setting in extensively landscaped parkland. Key landscape features were the equally panoramic promenade along the coast, several tree-lined

22 Angel Sharliev, 'Pochiven dom na minyorite v Kurorta Varna', *Arhitektura*, 1958, no. 6, pp. 18–20.

23 It was initially named Kurort Varna (Varna Spa) then renamed Druzhba (Friendship) in 1960. Kosta Nikolov, 'Chernomorskiyat letovishten kompleks 'Balkanturist' v Kurorta Varna', *Arhitektura*, 1957, no. 4, pp. 110–118; Konstantin Dzhangozov, 'Kurortniyat kompleks 'Druzhba' kray Varna', *Arhitektura*, 1960, no. 7, pp. 3–6.

24 E. N. Atanassov, *Die bulgarische Schwarzmeerküste*, Sofia: Rasglassa, 1958, pp. 17–20.

boulevards and various formal gardens enhanced by playful architectural elements made of coquina: arcades, fountains, bridges and the like. One particular highlight was the Albatros Café, whose terrace was perched high above the sea, on a jutting cliff, and crowned by a rotunda, visible from afar.²⁵ An open-air theatre, two tennis courts, changing rooms at the beach, garages along the main road, and staff quarters and offices completed the picture. Druzhba was established thus as a verdant recreational zone, in which the beach was only one among several places where visitors might take a stroll or while away some pleasant hours in the open air. In both architectural and economic terms, the resort was a resounding success. Visitor numbers continued to grow, so additional hotels, restaurants and holiday houses were built as early as 1960.

The hotel architectures created in 1956 in Druzhba epitomize a moment of transition: from the Stalinist era's pomposity and esteem of 'national traditions' to an endeavour, initiated under Nikita Khrushchev, to realize more functional, cost-effective and modern architecture throughout the socialist bloc. This transition left its mark, not only on the style of hotels in Druzhba but also on their internal organization, as comparison with the neighbouring hotels built only a few years later still attests. Each of the four hotels built in 1956 consists of a 2 or 3-storey rectangular main wing that accommodates guestrooms (with or without a bathroom), a foyer and offices. Adjacent, more individually laid-out wings accommodate communal recreation rooms for games or reading, as well as a bar and a restaurant, and are linked to and embedded in the surrounding topography by terraces and arcades. Coquina paving slabs were used throughout to assure a seamless haptic and visual transition from the hotel and restaurant terraces to the stairs and garden paths criss-crossing the park. Decorative elements in natural stone are a recurrent façade feature, and reference the horizontal, layered ribbon motifs commonly found on Bulgaria's historical monuments. The elaborate interior design drew on terrazzo flooring and wall mosaics in pastel colours and various shades of green and brown, as well as on plywood furnishings, veneers and textiles especially commis-

sioned from contemporary designers—and it thus contrived the quiet reserve and attention to detail so typical of late 1950s Modernism.²⁶

In 1959, five 2-storey blocks—the Lotos, Nezabravka, Nartsis, Emona and Russalka Hotels—and a second restaurant were created on the southern stretch of the bay, to the right

27 Prefab elements were used even more extensively in a holiday house completed on the north side of the bay, in 1959, on behalf of the National Army. It was the work of the architect Boris Kozuharov and Nikolay Nenov, an engineer in the Architecture Department at the Ministry of Defence, who would later make his mark with innovatively designed prefab construction projects, such as the Albena resort step pyramid hotels. Georgi Arbaliev, 'Novata pochivna stantsiya na voennos-luzhashtite v Kurorta Varna', *Arhitektura*, 1959, no. 2, pp. 7–9.

and left of a tree-lined boulevard that climbs steadily towards the panoramic coast road linking Varna with Golden Sands. Architecturally, these small hotels (each has 40 rooms) are more reserved in style than their predecessors, with fewer decorative elements in natural stone and no cheerful annexes for communal facilities. The simple rectangular ground plans foresaw a multifunctional ground-floor foyer

of modest proportions (with reception desk, general access and sitting-room), and a first-floor lounge and public terrace. Investment in communal spaces was reduced in favour of guestrooms designed for more than sleep alone: balconies, loggia, and the additional soundproofing afforded by a small entrance area with cloakroom and washbasin all enhanced guests' sense of privacy. Endeavours to modernize and rationalize construction methods are evident in the use of concrete and, partly, pre-fab elements in these hotels.²⁷

Architecture critics found the hotels somewhat plain in comparison with Druzhba's first phase. Yet the journal *Arhitektura* claimed in its 1960 review that development was definitely on the right track as far as the inner structure and rooms were concerned: the hotels represented an appropriate response to mass demand and seasonal use. The casual remark—that only a limited number of deluxe rooms required an en suite bathroom, for guests bathed daily in the sea—underscores the modesty of aspirations at the time. Comparison of the different tourism architectures created in Druzhba in the space of only a few years reveals a considerable shift in perceptions, both of progressive architecture and of the personal needs of tourists (be they Bulgarian workers or international visitors). In the first construction phase, even the hotels for international visitors offered distinctively designed, generously-sized indoor and outdoor communal areas: the tourist product still bore the stamp of the edifying, community-minded concept of recreation and leisure upheld by socialist holiday houses and 'Houses of Culture'. The production of communal areas was soon reduced or discontinued however—in order to cut costs, certainly, but also as part of the trend towards holiday options that emphasized the appeal of beach life and a private room.

Druzhba did become more densely built owing to construction, in the 1960s, of several modern tower blocks such as the Frederic Joliot-Curie International Scientists' Holiday House and, in the 1970s and 80s, of elaborate, late-modern deluxe developments: the Grand

25 It was first named Patisserie Balkan-tourist (Sladkarnitsa Balkanturist). The building was carefully restored after 2000. By 2010, it housed a luxury fish restaurant reserved exclusively for guests of the Grand Hotel Varna and the Hotel Dolphin, both of which are located in an 'all-inclusive zone'.

26 Emil Dimchev, 'Obzabezhidane na kurortni hoteli', *Arhitektura*, 1957, no. 4, pp. 119–24.

Hotel Varna for example, as well as holiday houses for eminent government bureaucrats, directly on the northern beach. Nevertheless, it remained a small resort, with no ambition to exceed a maximum capacity of 5,000 beds. After 1989, the resort was again named after the historic monastery Sveti Konstantin i Elena, then broken down into variously sized units and privatized. Several large hotels and apartment complexes have sprung up there since the year 2000. [→ 260] Much of the original master plan architecture remains to this day, either unchanged or extensively remodelled. Most of the former holiday houses, that of the Miners' Union, for example, are run now as hotels. [→ 119] The few remnants of landscaped parkland not yet fenced off and reserved exclusively for the guests of the larger hotel complexes have been invaded by snack and souvenir stands, and seem sadly neglected. Yet Druzhba's natural resource—the idyllic, green and varied coastal landscape developed almost sixty years ago as a restful and restorative tourist product—is still the resort's defining feature.

Golden Sands 1972:

'An exciting new polyglot playground for the world'

With growing numbers of international guests flocking to the Black Sea coast throughout the 1960s, the Bulgarian tourism sector seized the moment and broadened its palette of services in seaside resorts. The spacious parks and promenades laid out in the late 1950s were interspersed with modernist high-rise hotel complexes, restaurants and leisure facilities. This introduced a hitherto unseen variety of architectural styles and design themes, and lent the resorts a more urban, progressive flair. In no time at all, holiday resorts and tourism infrastructure became the prestigious flagship of Bulgarian architecture, and were proudly presented as such to international peers at the 11th Congress of the UIA (Union Internationale des Architectes), held in Varna in 1972. Golden Sands (Zlatni Pyasatsi), Bulgaria's second largest Black Sea resort, exemplifies very well how mass tourism was catered for with ever greater professionalism in the late 1960s and early 1970s, as well as how tourism architecture reflected the increasingly diverse spectrum of offers available to tourists.

In the early 1970s, international tourism had established itself as a major source of hard currency for Bulgaria and thus as a mainstay of the national economy. The number of international guests entering the country each year multiplied more than tenfold between 1960 and 1970, from approximately 200,000 to 2.5 million.²⁸ Not only the resorts

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'Bulgarian resorts on the Black Sea Coast attract many international visitors,' claims a travel guide from 1966.

28 Ljubomir Dinev, 'Tourismus und Infrastruktur am Beispiel der bulgarischen Schwarzmeerküste', *Österreichische Osthefte*, 1984, vol. 26, no. 2, pp. 200–08. The figures also include guests in transit; the number of Turkish citizens in transit in 1970 was 570,000.

29 Hess 1973; Dinev 1984.

30 Kasatschka/Marinov 2003.

31 Taylor 2006, p. 112.

32 Ghodsee 2005 portrays, on the one hand, the strict surveillance of Bulgarian tourism sector employees by the state security services (pp. 91–96), yet also emphasizes how attractive jobs in the tourism sector were, and the cultural capital that was to be gained by learning foreign languages and making contact with foreigners (p. 100ff).

33 Taylor 2006, p. 111. Kane 1968, pp. 56/57.

majority of international tourists in Bulgaria came from its socialist sister states, and around fifteen percent from Western Europe, above all from the Federal Republic of Germany.

International tourists opted, first and foremost, for a high-season summertime spree on the beaches of the Black Sea coast. Major resorts were developed there accordingly, as profit-oriented enclaves within the larger socialist People's Republic. The seaside resorts were increasingly conceived as separate spatial units, geared wholly to the needs of foreign holidaymakers, especially of those from Western Europe. Demand soon outstripped supply, nevertheless, and the private rental of guestrooms and holiday apartments was authorized there-fore in 1963, and subsequently organized by state tourism offices.³¹ In addition to the social tourism facilities, the less-regulated holiday arrangements in private guestrooms or on camping sites played an important role for Bulgarian holidaymakers. As research by historian Karin Taylor and ethnologist Kristen Ghodsee has shown, holidays in the Black Sea resorts gave service sector employees and tourists from the East and the West concrete opportunities to mingle, even though such encounters were monitored to some extent.³² German families divided by the Wall, for example, could spend holidays there together. 'Beyond its impact on the economy, tourism changed the face of the Black Sea coastal towns and resorts, and created a vibrant interface between the socialist and capitalist worlds'.³³

International exchange flourished likewise among professionals from the fields of architecture and urban planning. In 1972, the Bulgarian Architects' Association organized the 11th Congress of the UIA,

themselves were expanded to accommodate such huge visitor numbers, but also transport and supply systems: the major holiday resorts were interlinked by the E-95, a 4 to 6-lane panoramic coastal highway (now the E-87); Varna and Burgas acquired modern airport terminals; and, by the early 1970s, no less than fifteen European airlines were offering charter flights to Varna.²⁹ Bulgaria thus joined the ranks of Europe's leading holiday destinations and was 'the country most specialized in tourism' among the Comecon member states.³⁰ Balkan-tourist's professionalism, international market-ing campaigns and numerous offices abroad were evidently paying off. In 1970, the vast

in Varna's new Palace of Sports and Culture. It thus created an ideal international platform on which to present the new architecture and urban planning benchmarks set by the country's latest holiday resorts. Convened to discuss 'Architecture and Leisure', the Congress addressed inter alia the planning and design of tourism facilities.³⁴ The UIA delegates gained first-hand experience of the new Black Sea holiday resorts and other tourist attractions, for they stayed in the

newly-built hotels in nearby Golden Sands and could take a bus tour, specially laid on for them by Balkantourist.³⁵ International architectural journals had covered Bulgarian holiday resorts already in the 1960s and early 1970s, and had thereby drawn parallels with tourism planning in the same period in Romania, Croatia and the Languedoc-Roussillon region of France.³⁶ In Bulgaria, the UIA Congress offered a perfect opportunity for the first comprehensive survey of Bulgarian tourism planning and spawned, among other things, a lengthy special issue of the journal *Arhitektura*, as well as several quality illustrated books on recent Bulgarian architecture.³⁷ Bulgarian tourism architecture had become an important reference for the design of mass tourism destinations—and not only in the socialist sister states but worldwide, for Bulgarian architects exported their tourism planning expertise also to the Global South.³⁸

At the time of the UIA Congress, the Golden Sands resort, which lies circa 15 km north of Varna, had around 85 hotels, chalet parks and camping sites with a total capacity of 17,000 beds, 36 restaurants, numerous entertainment venues and other public facilities. The French *Guide Bleu* from 1969 describes Golden Sands as the most prestigious and comfortable Bulgarian seaside resort.³⁹ Indeed, the stretch of coast north of Varna had appealed to the country's elites ever since bathing tourism was invented. The first holiday facilities of Golden Sands were built between 1956 and 1958, after a very brief planning period, on a circa 4 km strip

34 For a selection of published conference materials, see: *XI. Congrès Mondial de l'Union Internationale des Architectes, Varna, September 1972*, Sofia: Section nationale bulgare de l'UIA, 1972; International Union of Architects (ed.), *L'architecture et les loisirs: XI. Congrès Mondial de l'Union Internationale des Architectes. Documents du congrès*, Sofia, 1975; Bauakademie der DDR (ed.), *Architektur und Freizeit. Beiträge*, Berlin 1974.

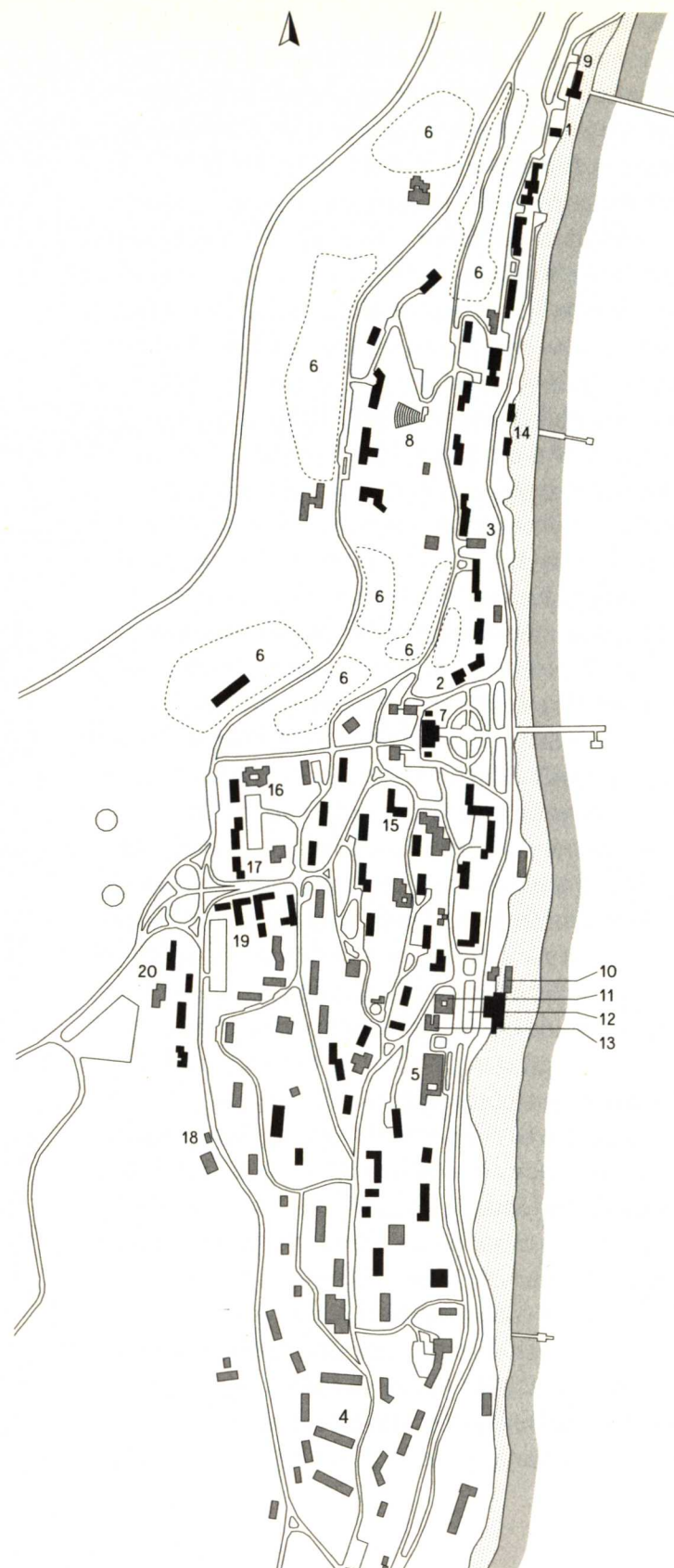
35 Gerald Perrin, 'Architecture and recreation: a report on the recent UIA congress and assembly', *RIBA Journal*, 1972, vol. 79, November, pp. 480/81.

36 E.g. D.T. Sougarev, 'Réalisations récentes en Bulgarie', *L'Architecture d'aujourd'hui*, 1960, no. 91/92, p. 75; D.T. Sougarev, 'Les nouveaux ensembles balnéaires de la Mer Noire: les Sables d'Or et la Côte du Soleil', *Urbanisme*, 1962, no. 74, pp. 59–66; 'A surprising new look in communist Europe: Bulgaria', *Architectural Forum*, 1962, vol. 117, September, p. 111; Yu. Lobanov, 'Planirovka i zastroyka chernomorskikh kurortov Bolgarii', *Arkhitektura SSSR*, 1963, no. 8, pp. 52–60; 'Bulgaria builds', *Architectural Review*, 1966, vol. 140, November, pp. 376/77; Iwan Awramov, 'Ferienorte am Schwarzen Meer: ein Bericht über die Planungen in Bulgarien', *Baumeister*, 1971, July, pp. 811–15; 'Bulgaria', *Architectural Review*, 1972, December, pp. 379–81; Claude Sauer, 'Touristenidylle nach Plan', *Deutsche Bauzeitung*, 1973, no. 9, pp. 978–85.

37 'UIA XI Kongres 1972', *Arhitektura*, 1972, no. 6–8; Yordan Tangarov, Margarita Todorova, Angel Sharliev (eds.), *L'Architecture bulgare d'aujourd'hui*, Sofia: Tehnika, 1972; later: Georgi Stoilov, Angel Sharliev, *Arhitekturata na nashite chernomorski kurorti. Burgasko kray-brezhie*, Sofia: Tehnika, 1975.

38 Grigor Doytchinov, 'Pragmatism, not ideology: Bulgarian architectural exports to the "Third World"', *Journal of Architecture*, 2012, vol. 17, no. 3, pp. 453–73, here p. 462.

39 Jean-Jacques Fauvel (ed.), *Les Guides Bleus: Bulgarie*, Paris: La Hachette, 1969.



Situation plan of Golden Sands
in 1972

Chief architect:
Georgi Ganev

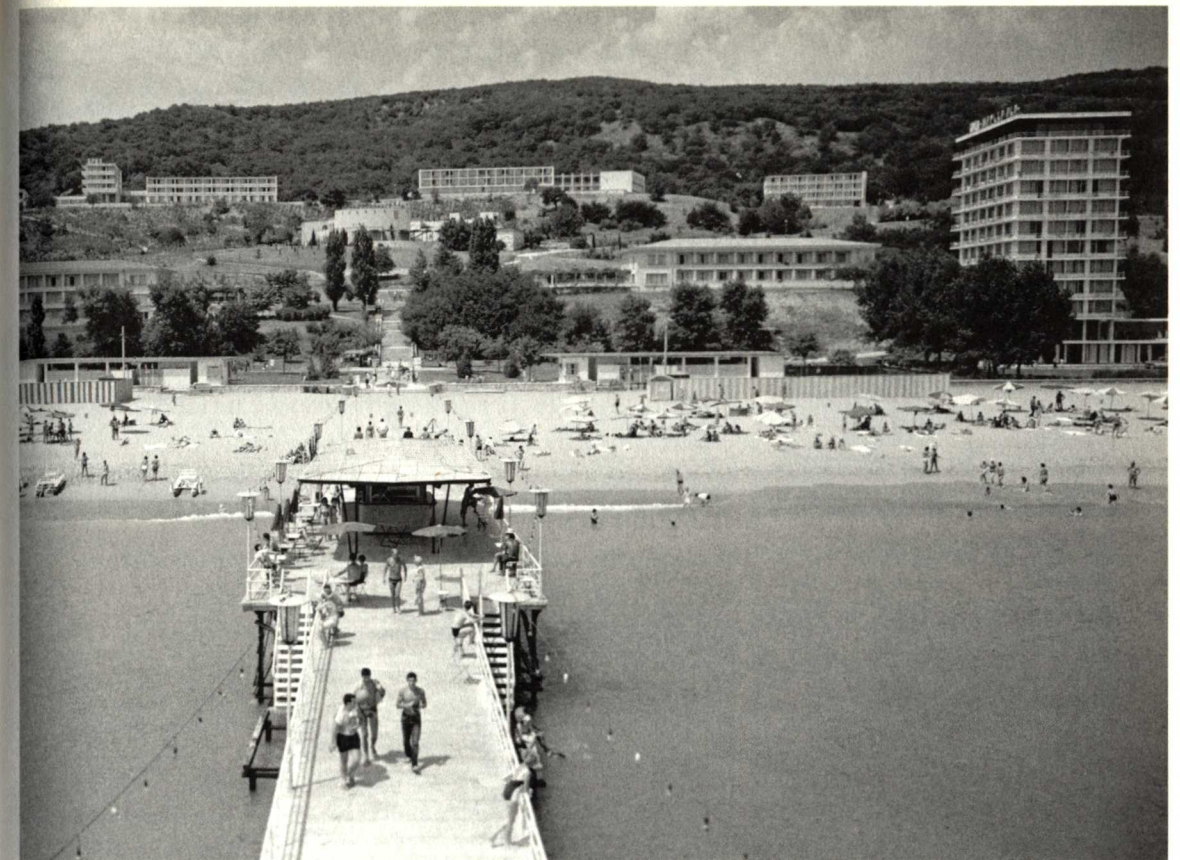
'International Style' landmark
hotels of the 1960s

- 1 Glarus, 1960
- 2 Astoria, 1962
- 3 Metropol, 1965
- 4 Veliko Tarnovo, Pliska and
Gdansk, 1968
- 5 International, 1969

Facilities

- 6 Camping site
- 7 International club 'Kasino'
- 8 Open-air theatre
- 9 Yacht club
- 10 Central changing rooms
- 11 Shops
- 12 Central bus station
- 13 Post office
- 14 Northern changing rooms
- 15 Administration
- 16 Health care centre
- 17 Police station
- 18 Petrol station
- 19 Service facilities and garage
- 20 Staff accommodation

- Structures built before 1963
- Structures built between
1963 and 1972



In the 1960s, the low-rise holiday facilities and parkland of Golden Sands were gradually interspersed with high-rise hotels.
View from the northern pier in 1969.

40 The first construction phase produced 19 hotels and over 500 simple holiday chalets, four large-scale restaurants and further venues such as a casino, a patisserie and an open-air cinema. Georgi Ganev, 'Noviyat chernomorski letovishten kompleks 'Balkanturist' v mestnostta "Zlatnite pyasatsi" kray grad Stalin', *Arhitektura*, 1956, no. 4, pp. 125-34; Atanassov 1958, pp. 20-22; Stefan Manev, 'Edin golyam uspeh na nashata arhitektura', *Arhitektura*, 1958, no. 2, pp. 3-11.

of white sandy beach, beneath densely wooded mountain slopes. Here, too, responsibility was in the hands of a collective—directed in this case by architect Georgi Ganev—under the aegis of Glavproekt, the central state institute for architecture and urban planning. The first phase urban planning scheme was comparable to that for the Druzhba resort: 2 to 4-storey

blocks, occasionally reminiscent of the Stalinist style, were individually embedded in the verdant, forested mountain slopes above the beach. A central axis led from a pier to a symmetrically articulated casino with a pillared portal, via a plaza with a fountain, and a stairway down which cascaded an artificial stream.⁴⁰

Yet the results of this first construction phase by no means exhausted the resort's market potential. As of 1960, the Bulgarian State

41 Golden Sands expanded rapidly and by 1962 encompassed 26 hotels with a total of 5,000 beds and seven large-scale restaurants. Sougarev 1962; Milko Mateev, Angel Sharliev, 'Hotelite ot 1960 godina na kurortniya kompleks Zlatnite pyasatsi', and Borislav Stoyanov, 'Za nyakoi uvlecheniya i nespoluki v stroitelstvoto na Zlatnite pyasatsi', both in: *Arhitektura*, 1961, no. 4/5, pp. 4–19. See also on its further expansion: Petar Raykov, 'Novi hoteli v Zlatnite pyasatsi', *Arhitektura*, 1963, no. 7, pp. 16–19; *Bulgarien. Ein Reiseführer*, Sofia 1963; Bronja Weierstahl, *Bulgarien*, Bonn: Kurt Schroeder, 1965.

42 State-planned French tourism development in the Languedoc-Roussillon region in the 1960s was based on a very similar ratio of beach space per visitor: up to 800 guests per hectare, or 12.5 m² per person. 'Doctrine d'aménagement', *Urbanisme*, 1965, vol. 34, no. 86, pp. 29–31; 'Plan d'urbanisme d'intérêt régional 1964', *Techniques et architecture*, 1969, vol. 31, no. 2, pp. 36/37.

43 Awramov 1971, p. 814.

continually expanded its holiday resorts in response to steadily rising demand.⁴¹ Further planning revisions were based on a simple equation: the available area of beach was divided by the requisite space per guest (12 m²) to determine the potential bed capacity.⁴² Golden Sands was accordingly meant to develop a maximum of 20,000 beds. Glavproekt therefore proposed densification of the original urban planning scheme—in order to limit land use, certainly, but also because the mountainous topography was incompatible with sprawl. Thus, in the 1960s, the relatively low hotel blocks embedded in the first phase among luxuriant vegetation were gradually interspersed with considerably larger hotels, often high-rise towers or slabs. The result was a more diverse

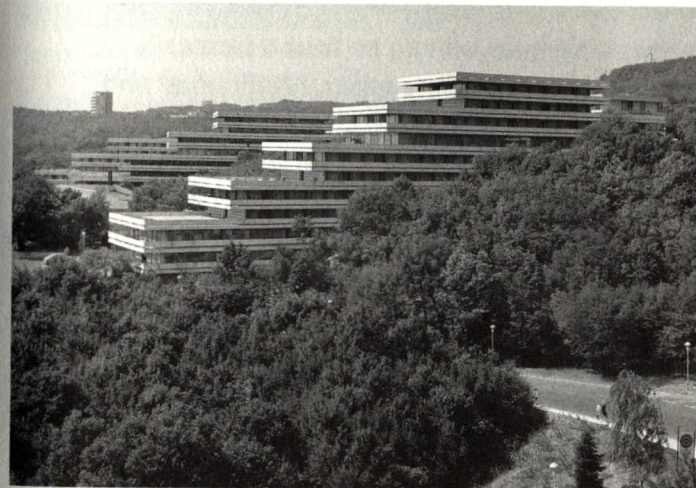
architectural profile and a dynamic shorefront skyline. Golden Sands (like most other large resorts in Bulgaria) was divided into parallel functional zones: the 'beach zone' gave onto the 'contact zone' with its promenades, parks, restaurants and cafés, behind which a broad swathe of hotels, camping sites and chalet parks comprised the 'accommodation zone'. Administrative buildings and staff accommodation were packed into the 'service zone', furthest inland, along with the storage depots and freight terminals located on the major access road.⁴³

A prime example of 1960s architecture among this second generation of hotels is the 18-storey Hotel International (architect Giorgi Stoilov, 1969), which hosted some participants in the UIA Congress of 1972. An unmistakable landmark, visible from afar, the tower rises out of a flat-roofed, extensive, 2-storey base. It is a sleek structure, rhythmically punctuated by the horizontal and vertical white façade bands that appear to be suspended before the balconies on its circumference. A similar formal idiom—a reference to the International Style—is evident likewise in some of the lower hotels built in the preceding years: in the Glarus, Morsko Oko and Astoria, for example, or in the Holiday House of the International Journalists' Association, which lies a few kilometres south of Golden Sands. [→ 120] All of these have a modernist feel to them, underscored by the abstract geometry of their pergolas, sunroofs and other shading elements. Yet this idiom was soon to be dismissed as obsolete: in 1971, Iwan Awramov wrote in the West

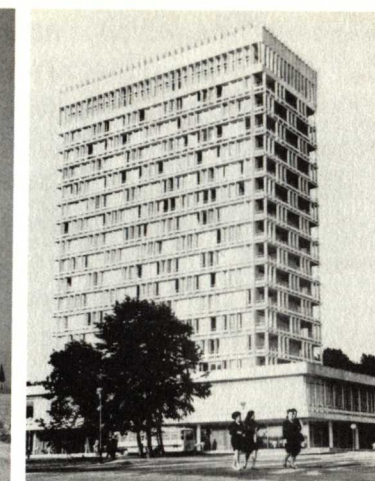
'International Style' references in Golden Sands.



Hotel Glarus, architects: Georgi Ganey, Diana Popova, 1960.



Hotels Veliko Tarnovo, Pliska and Gdansk, architect: Dechko Dzhumakov, 1968.



Hotel International, architect: Giorgi Stoilov, 1969.



Hotel Astoria, architect: Georgi Ganey, 1962, postcard from the early 1960s.



Hotel Metropol, architects: Georgi Ganey, Dechko Dzhumakov, 1965. Patisserie, architect: P. Stainov, before 1972.

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German architectural journal *Baumeister*, of an 'imitation of the International Style, which is already passé in other parts of the world'.⁴⁴

The International Style was only one among the surprising range of styles and typologies to have flourished in Bulgarian tourism architecture during the 1960s, inspired in part by trends emerging elsewhere in Europe, such as Brutalism or Structuralism. Bulgarian architects experimented with pre-cast concrete slabs and decorative formwork on façades, and with novel combinations of natural stone, brick, exposed concrete, timber and metal. They developed a distinctive architectural language for individual buildings and larger hotel complexes, and thus gave each a signature profile. In Golden Sands, the Hotels Veliko Tarnovo, Gdansk and Pliska (architect Dechko Dzhumakov) formed a group of terraced structures set vertically into the mountain slopes and the clear lines of their horizontal white façade bands, a striking contrast to the verdant landscape, were visible for miles around. [→ 144] Extensive, late-1960s hotel complexes of architectural interest can be found primarily in the Sunny Beach resort: the Hotels Sozopol-Nessebar, Kontinental and Cherno More, for example, are elaborate urban structures with courtyards and inner streets, and demonstrate a preference for materials such as exposed brick, timbers and prefabricated concrete. [→ 131, 137]

Architectural innovation also underpinned the step pyramid structures planned for the Albena resort in 1967 (chief architect Nikolay Nenov; construction start 1969). [→ 89] The construction of the Albena resort allowed the Research and Projection Institute for the Standardization and Industrialization of Architecture to test the use of large pre-cast concrete elements, an experience it would later put to use in mass housing projects.⁴⁵ Above all, the various forms of prefab decorative facing on the balconies and access balconies, which recur rhythmically on the façades, attest to the industrial construction methods. It is difficult to gauge to what extent Albena's design and strong visual profile were inspired by the step pyramid apartment complexes created shortly beforehand, at the French Mediterranean resort La Grande Motte (chief architect Jean Balladur, construction start 1966), in the frame-

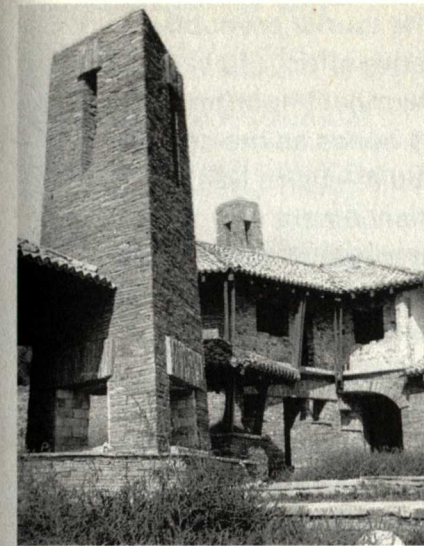
work of a major tourism development scheme for the Languedoc-Roussillon region. [→ 52] The team responsible for the French scheme—architects and regional planners led by Georges Candilis—employed urbanist principles, remarkably similar to the Bulgarian approach, to organize and design a landscape for mass leisure interspersed with town-sized resorts.⁴⁶

44 Ibid.

45 Ibid.

46 Ellen Furlough, 'Making Mass Vacations. Tourism and Consumer Culture in France, 1930s-1970s', *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 1998, vol. 40, no. 2, pp. 247-86, here p. 260; Georges Candilis, *Bâtir la vie: un architecte témoin de son temps*, Paris: Stock, 1977; Georges Candilis, *Planning and design for leisure*, Stuttgart: Krämer, 1972.

Event architectures, themed restaurants and bars.



Fishermen's Village in Golden Sands, architect: Dimtcho Yaramov, early 1970s.



Restaurant Magura in Sunny Beach, architect: Nikola Nikolov, 1969.



Bar Orient in Sunny Beach, architect: Nikola Nikolov, 1969.

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Novel hotel architectures and expansion of the major Black Sea resorts both reflected and wrought changes in the tourist product. While in the first development phase, the restorative effect of peace and quiet in a natural setting was regarded as the most important goal of a holiday—and natural and climatic conditions hence as the crucial resource on which the tourist product might be built—there was a noticeable shift in the late 1960s towards the enhancement and diversification of basic beach tourism. A broader range of accommodation became available, along with more varied types of sporting, cultural and leisure pursuits. Golden Sands in particular was lauded in a late 1960s travel guide for its great range of entertainment: 'All about are restaurants, snack bars, coffee shops, bars, casinos, nightclubs, and sports facilities. [...] Nightlife includes dancing in almost all the restaurants, roulette and chemin de fer in the casinos, elegant floor shows in the nightclubs, quiet drinking in the bars, long walks along the seafront promenade, special ballet and folklore evenings, concert and opera performances, beauty contests and sports matches, not to mention dining in a variety of imaginatively designed restaurants serving Bulgarian specialties in traditional Bulgarian folk-art settings'.⁴⁷ Holidaymakers were encouraged to sign up for activity programs and daytrips: the trade press spoke at the time of 'enhancing the holiday's effectiveness' and 'the transition from passive to active tourism'.⁴⁸ As a promotional film about Bulgaria released in 1965 clearly shows, the tourist product hyped at the time consisted first and foremost of carefree consumerism and youthful, cosmopolitan flair: 'East and West meet here, where 250 miles of sunshine shore have been developed as an exciting new polyglot playground for the world. [...] These Golden Sands now belong to a new, discerning world of youngsters in search of fun'.⁴⁹ Besides architectural typologies such as sports and leisure facilities, bars and shops, the resorts developed trivial event architectures and themed restaurants and bars: there was the Fishermen's Village in Golden Sands for example, a rustic setting in rough hewn local stone; the Batchvata wine bar in Sunny Beach, in the shape of a gigantic wine cask; and the usual seaside crop of pirate ship or maritime-style beach bars for tourists' delight and deflection, some of which are still going strong today.

47 Kane 1968, pp. 57/58.

48 Ghodsee's interview partners explain that 'excursions are where the real money is made in Bulgaria'. Ghodsee 2005, pp. 78/79. See also Awramov 1971, Sauer 1973. Strategic development of congress and cultural tourism was seen as a means to increase turnover also in the low season. Development of Bulgarian ski resorts on a similarly large scale was launched too, at this time.

49 Promotional film, Bulgaria 1965, British Pathé Media Archive, www.britishpathe.com/video/bulgaria/query/PM0337 (accessed 8 October 2012).

50 The diversification of holiday options and architectural styles, it must be noted, continued at the initiative and under the management and the watchful eye of the central planning office for tourism, Balkantourist.

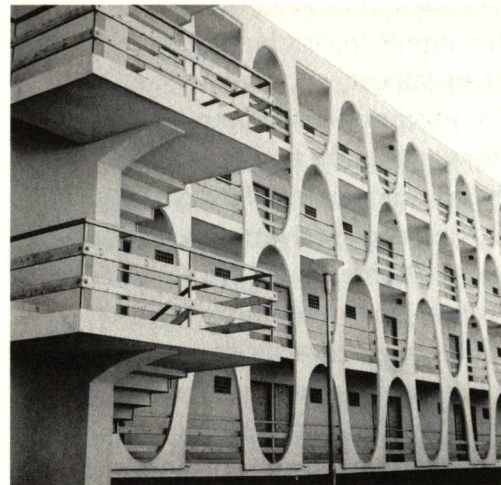
51 As their East German counterparts also noted, not without envy. Ambros G. Gross and Dietrich Wellner, 'Ferien, Schwarzes Meer und Architektur', *Deutsche Architektur*, 1962, vol. 11, no. 6, pp. 295–98; Johannes Bauch, 'Volksrepublik Bulgarien—Erholungsplanung', and Werner Rietdorf, 'Neue Hotelbauten am Sonnenstrand', both in: *Deutsche Architektur*, 1966, vol. 15, no. 3, pp. 158–65.

In the framework of this diversified tourist product, architecture itself acquired 'event value': it became the signature trademark of a resort, a hotel or a restaurant, and its various design themes were adapted to the specific tastes of different target groups and types of holiday.⁵⁰ Modern buildings served also to

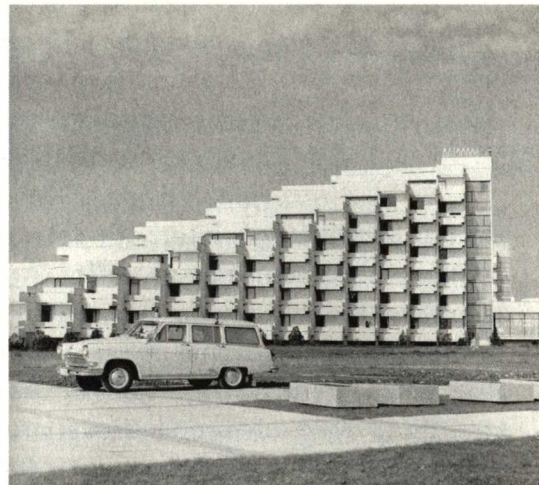
alert an increasingly international public to the progressiveness and comforts the resorts had to offer. Architecture thus came to be as important for tourism as tourism was for Bulgarian architecture. Tourism planning in this phase allowed Bulgarian architects considerable leeway in design matters, above and beyond the practical constraints of everyday architectural practice.⁵¹ The quality of holiday resort architectures of the late 1960s and early 1970s was accordingly remarkable—and it was ultimately and deservedly acclaimed by international experts in the field, at the latest at the UIA Congress in 1972. Visitors' snapshots and postcards, and the masses of tourism brochures and travel guides dispatched abroad, also helped turn holiday resort architectures into a premium showcase for the country as a whole.

The standard of architecture and planning attained in the early 1970s left its stamp on the major resorts—Druzhba, Golden Sands, Sunny Beach and Albena—for decades to come. State planners bore in mind the standard maximum capacity equation when weighing up further expansion. This was one reason they began to promote the development of holiday villages and smaller resorts for domestic tourism in the mid 1970s, increasingly on the coast's southern stretches. Yet the political upheaval of the 1990s robbed centralized planning of its institutional and legal powers. When the massive construction boom set in on the Black Sea coast, around the year 2000, maximum capacity guidelines were swept aside and Golden Sands underwent a second phase of intense densification. Luckily, its topography naturally limits outward growth, so high-season overcrowding and construction megalomania at least proved less drastic than in Sunny Beach. [→ 96] But very few of the modernist buildings of the 1960s have survived unscathed. Some have been replaced entirely; others converted or modernized beyond recognition. Themed hotels and event architectures may still play a role in Golden Sands—yet no one today could even begin to imagine how crucial an impact architectural and urban planning design once had on the quality of holidays there, as well as on Bulgarian architectural practice.

Patterns of prefab façades in Albena, at the time of construction and forty years later.



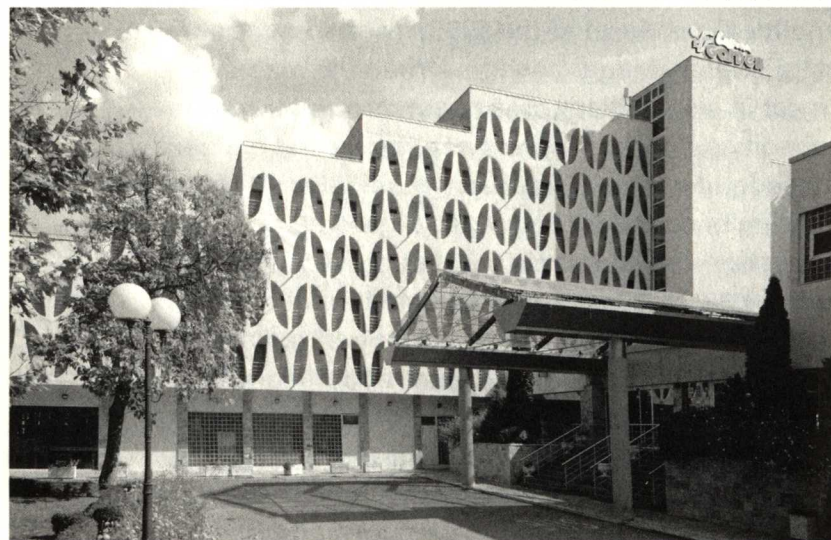
Hotel Dobrotitsa, architects: Nikolay Nenov, Rayna Shopova, 1969/70.



Hotel Dorostor, architects: Nikolay Nenov, Todorka Popova, 1969/70.



Hotel Laguna, architects: Nikolay Nenov, Kostq Kostov, 1969/70. Photo: Nikola Mihov 2012.



Hotel Laguna. Photo: Nikola Mihov 2012.

Albena 1997:

Privatization of a pre-fab icon

Today, Albena, with its trademark step pyramid structures, is regarded as the most successful example of adaptation to what Bulgarians laconically refer to as 'the changes'—both economically and in terms of its overall physical planning.⁵² This is due to the particular form of privatization it underwent: after 1989, the resort remained a single entity under centralized management and in the hands of the same people who had run it previously. Comprehensive and far-sighted planning built on what the management considered to be positive features of the original urban master plan for the resort. Albena thus maintained its strong, established profile, with regard to its architecture, its urban planning features and the quality of its tourist product. Here, we consider the exceptional case of this resort against the broader backdrop of tourism development since the collapse of state socialism and the privatization of holiday resorts in the 1990s.

Albena is the third largest and the youngest of the major coastal resorts. From its completion in the 1970s through to its privatization in 1997, the location barely changed. Most of its original buildings and facilities are still in good shape today. Planning and construction of the resort began at the end of the 1960s, on a sweeping stretch of sandy white beach around 10 km north of Golden Sands. Under the aegis of architect Nikolay Nenov, the entire resort was designed as a single functional entity, in a uniform style. Besides hotel buildings, chalet parks and camping sites, the master plan proposed five restaurants, a bar-cabaret, a casino, a shopping centre, leisure areas, and an all-year-round health centre. By the mid 1970s, the resort had around 14,000 beds and its construction was largely complete.⁵³

Albena is composed of four main zones with diverse accommodation types and functions. A central hotel zone, set in elaborately landscaped grounds, contains striking, step pyramid hotel blocks, with a Y or L-shaped ground plan and staggered terraces. The hotels are clustered with restaurants in a way such as to half-enclose green courtyards, some of which are now used for swimming pools or activity

programs. A zone with six shorefront hotels, all of them relatively high, and more steeply staggered structures, is situated at the southern limit of the central hotel zone. The so-called 'park zone' with its simpler hotel buildings and several chalet parks, is located at a higher level, some

⁵² Neshkov 2010; Hristov 2010; Ghodsee 2005, p. 133.

⁵³ 'Konkursen projekt No. 6: Kurorten kompleks Albena', *Arhitektura*, 1967, no. 4/5, pp. 33–35; Ivan Rahnev, 'Albena — Prekrasna i vdahnovena tvorba na savremennata balgarska arhitektura', *Arhitektura*, 1971, no. 1, pp. 4–18.

Situation plan of Albena in the mid 1970s. The urban layout has barely changed to this day.

Chief architect:
Nikolay Nenov

- 1 Central hotel zone
- 2 Beachfront hotels
- 3 Park zone
- 4 Chalet parks
- 5 Bar-Variété
- 6 Central access road
- 7 Parking
- 8 Sports facilities
- 9 Camping site with bungalows
- 10 Post office
- 11 Administration
- 12 Culture and information centre
- 13 Amusement park
- 14 Shopping centre, restaurants and bars
- 15 Open-air theatre

- Hotel buildings
- Restaurants and service facilities

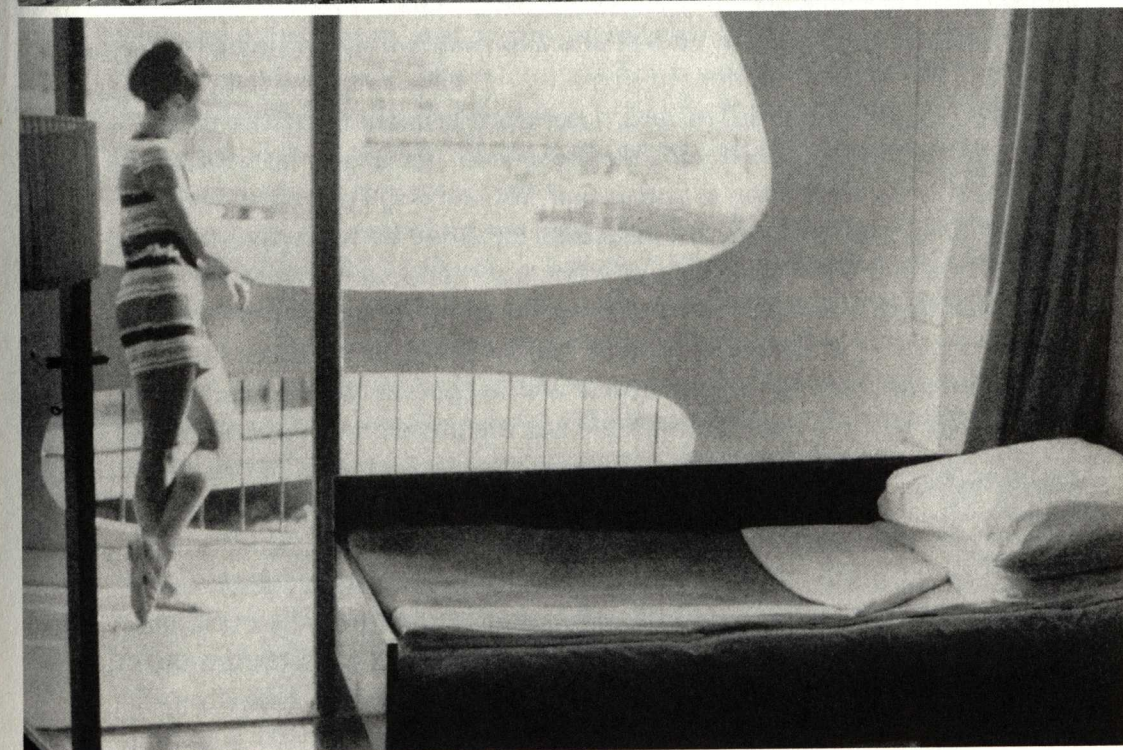


500 m

Albena: a modern resort designed all of a piece, from its urban layout to the guestroom interiors.



Albena's trademark pyramid structures in the early 1970s. View from the north.



Guestroom in the sixth hotel group, 1971.

distance from the beach. Large sports facilities, cultural institutions and administrative buildings are located in a further zone, to either side of the access road. Only very few streets are open to motorized vehicles, and the ample green spaces are for pedestrians only.

In Albena, as in Bulgaria in general, visitor numbers never ceased to rise for two decades—and set a new record each year, in fact, until the late 1980s. The Bulgarian resorts had good infrastructure, high turnover, and personnel well versed in tourism, for whom dealing with Western holidaymakers and tour operators was nothing new. Economic restructuring after 1989 therefore seemed more promising than problematic, for it was widely believed at the time that tourism would drive Bulgaria's economy and should therefore be privatized without delay.⁵⁴ Yet the general crisis hit tourism too. Visitor numbers shrank dramatically in the early 1990s. In particular, East European regulars stayed away, owing either to financial constraints, the war in Yugoslavia or the novel appeal of a holiday in the West. The economic downturn also hampered investment in hotels, which was discouraged even further by a lack of state regulation, while the new civic associations and interest groups needed time to find their feet on this shifting territory.

As a first step towards privatization, large state enterprises were broken down into smaller sections after 1989 then transformed into limited or joint stock companies. In the early 1990s, it was hoped the privatization of tourism operations and hotels would entail simply selling to the highest bidder. To this end, the larger resorts (Sunny Beach and Golden Sands, for example) were broken down into single hotels or complexes, then their value assessed—in largely non-transparent procedures, wide open to corruption. Yet, although certain valuable properties did go to Bulgarian investors for small sums (presumably after palms had been greased), or were 'spontaneously privatized' by former state officials,⁵⁵ the vast majority of hotels remained in state hands for quite a while longer. The Bulgarian Socialist Party ostensibly lacked the political will to push ahead with large-scale privatization while it was still in power (1994–97),⁵⁶ but the government nonetheless

advocated certain alternative forms of privatization: that employees buy-out an enterprise and run it as a limited company, for example, or the Czech model of 'mass privatization', whereby the population was given vouchers that it could then invest, either directly in a state enterprise or in a privatization fund. However, it was only after the change in government in 1997—when

54 Kasatschka/Marinov 2003.

55 'These "spontaneous privatizations" were ubiquitous; an enterprise director or a state bureaucrat would set up a subsidiary of his own enterprise and sell it to himself', Ghodsee 2005, p. 121.

56 See e.g. Emil Giatzidis, *An Introduction to Post-Communist Bulgaria. Political, Economic and Social Transformation*, Manchester and New York: Manchester UP, 2002, pp. 94/95.

57 Ulrich Ermann, Margarita Ilieva, *Bulgarien. Aktuelle Entwicklungen und Probleme*, Leipzig: IfL, 2006, p. 49.

58 Ghodsee 2005, p. 132.

59 Interview with Margita Todorova, Director, Marketing and Sales Department, Albena JSCo, Albena, 27 August 2010; Ghodsee 2005, pp. 132/33.

60 Todorova 2010.

the Conservatives' new agenda was rolled out alongside the IMF and World Banks' structural programmes and constraints—that the privatization juggernaut really got going.⁵⁷

After 1989, the entire Albena resort was initially turned into a state-owned joint stock company. Until the mid 1990s, the management successfully prevented the state from putting Albena up for sale, bit by bit, for it knew this would split the resort into more and less competitive units. Also, individual hotels were dependent on one another owing to their joint infrastructure. Thanks to its unswerving commitment, the management under director Krassimir Stanev was able to re-launch the resort as a private joint stock company and continue operations.⁵⁸ The majority stake was acquired in 1997 by a company set up by the resort's employees—with the aid of a circa 50 million USD investment by the Banque Nationale de Paris—in cooperation with a mass privatization fund in which both Albena employees and many supportive residents of the region had invested their vouchers. According to the management, employees' identification with the resort and its positive local image as a good employer had evidently borne fruit.⁵⁹ This unusual privatization process meant the entire Albena resort—its hotels, restaurants, parks, sports facilities, service providers, suppliers, bus operators, and so on—remained in the same hands, under central management. The Albena JSCo is now a listed group and the largest Bulgarian hotel operator. It has further holdings in Primorsko (a resort on the southern Black Sea coast) and in the Swiss Alps, as well as other investment projects.

The buy-out rested on the longstanding management's and employees' faith in Albena's tourist product. Everyone was convinced that the features created around 1970—the integrated architectural and urban planning design, the combination of different accommodation types in various price categories, the strict separation of motorized and pedestrian traffic, the luxuriant landscaped parks and thoughtfully conceived outdoor spaces, and the centrally coordinated range of gastronomic outlets, sports facilities and entertainment programs—still offered high quality, a quarter of a century on. The management also remained faithful to the original concept when further developing Albena. Even after 2000, when construction on the Black Sea coast was booming as never before, it opted neither for densification nor expansion but chose instead either to modernize existing buildings or to completely replace them by new buildings with a similar number of beds.⁶⁰



The ample public spaces and playgrounds in Albena are still as generously laid out as in the late 1960s, have been newly equipped and are mostly well maintained. Photo: Nikola Mihov 2012.

The management still considers it vital to integrate any such new buildings in the resort's overall composition—an ambition that seems almost Utopian in the light of developments elsewhere on Bulgaria's coast. This means Albena's tourist product continues to be improved, while its original overnight capacity is maintained. Given the negative impact of the construction boom and subsequent overcrowding on the quality of the tourist product in Sunny Beach, for example, this approach seems perspicacious. Strategic planning and coordinated urban design are hampered in most resorts by the hotel owners' competition and conflicting interests. By contrast, Albena's centralized management facilitates the overall regulation, care and maintenance of the resort's urban infrastructure and public spaces. Its recreational zones are elaborately designed and its buildings are mostly well kept. Restaurants, markets, bars and nightclubs are not permitted to mushroom ad hoc—most of the shops, bars and restaurants in the resort are incorporated in the Albena JSCo. Strict limits apply also to nightlife. Albena manages thus to retain its profile as a quiet destination for peaceful, relaxing family holidays, as opposed to binge-party tourism at dumping prices. Its relationship with West European tour operators is based on the latter's exclusive right to market certain hotels to specific target groups, in the framework of their all-inclusive and ultra-all-inclusive packages offering individual sport and activity programs. The original holiday resort concept was upgraded continually under state socialism, and has progressed likewise since 1989. Albena thus remains a perfectly self-contained and comprehensively planned holiday enclave that can cater to a tourist's every wish, from a welcome cocktail to a beach parasol. And the resort's urban silhouette serves as its trademark to this day.

Sunny Beach 2004:
Rampant growth and eclectic blooms
in the real estate bubble

In 2004, over twenty new hotels opened in Sunny Beach (Slanchev Bryag), the largest resort on Bulgaria's Black Sea coast.⁶¹ That same year, the Bulgarian trade journal *Arhitektura* devoted a special issue to architectural developments in the region, just as it had on the occasion of the 11th UIA Congress held in Varna, in 1972. [→ 76] But this time, instead of proudly reaping international acclaim for its achievements in tourism architecture, the Bulgarian Association of Architects felt it must turn the spotlight on the negative effects of deregulated

61 'Gigantski hoteli i rekordni investitsii zalivat morskite kurorti', Sofia: Dnevnik.bg, 4 June 2004, www.dnevnik.bg/biznes/2004/06/03/419171_gigantski_hoteli_i_rekordni_investicii_zalivat/ (accessed 10 October 2012).

62 'Arhitekturata na chernomorskoto kraybrezhie: Nastoyashte i badeshte', *Arhitektura*, 2004, no. 4/5. The special issue on tourism architecture on the Black Sea coast was published in the run-up to the 23rd UIA Congress, which took place in Istanbul, in 2005.

63 Ghodsee 2005, p. 130.

construction activity during the recent investment boom.⁶² Sunny Beach arguably epitomizes its worst-case scenario: a notorious example of overly dense development, summer season overcrowding and cheap party-package deals.

Sunny Beach was launched around the same time as Druzhba and Golden Sands, in the late 1950s, and designed and built on the same principles by Glavproekt, in this case under the direction of Nikola Nikolov. Its location on a

flat, sweeping bay to the north of Nessebar made higher capacities feasible from the start, and also offered more expansion potential than the other state-run resorts. In the 1990s, the resort was broken down into individual components for the purpose of privatization. To sell off Sunny Beach like Albena, as a single entity, was unthinkable, given the huge sums involved. The carve-up was a largely non-transparent procedure. Ghodsee reports that, 'Sunny Beach was restructured without any prior notice, publicity, established rules, auctions, or trade union participation'.⁶³ However, privatization of the individual hotels, which was fundamental to investment, only really got going at the end of the 1990s.

The real estate boom was triggered by a number of factors. Once the Socialist Party had been defeated in the 1997 elections, the new government rushed to privatize state-owned companies, and virtually completed the process in the early 2000s. In addition, a new tourism law had come into force in 1998, which established binding rules on the classification, licensing and monitoring of hotels, in order to improve consumer protection. The tourism economy entered a dynamic phase and there was an increase in tourism sector investment by local and international players, including such major global tour operators as TUI and Neckermann. Many run-down hotels were upgraded to international standards. At the same time, EU funding was pumped into regional infrastructures, for Bulgaria was by then an accession candidate. The result was a steady increase in visitor numbers and a veritable construction boom that gripped the more established resorts, initially, before spreading to sparsely populated or agricultural areas, and frequently even to parts of major nature reserves.

The construction boom hit Sunny Beach particularly hard, for the resort's established reputation and existing infrastructure offered a solid foundation for investment. The resort's number of beds—circa 27,000 in the late 1980s, and hence already at the planned maximum

64 Chamber of Tourism, Burgas, as cited in: 'Gigantski hoteli', Dnevnik.bg 2004.

65 Neshkov 2010; Interview with Elena Ivanova, chairwoman of the Hotel Owners' Association, Sunny Beach, 30 August 2010.

66 Ivanova 2010.

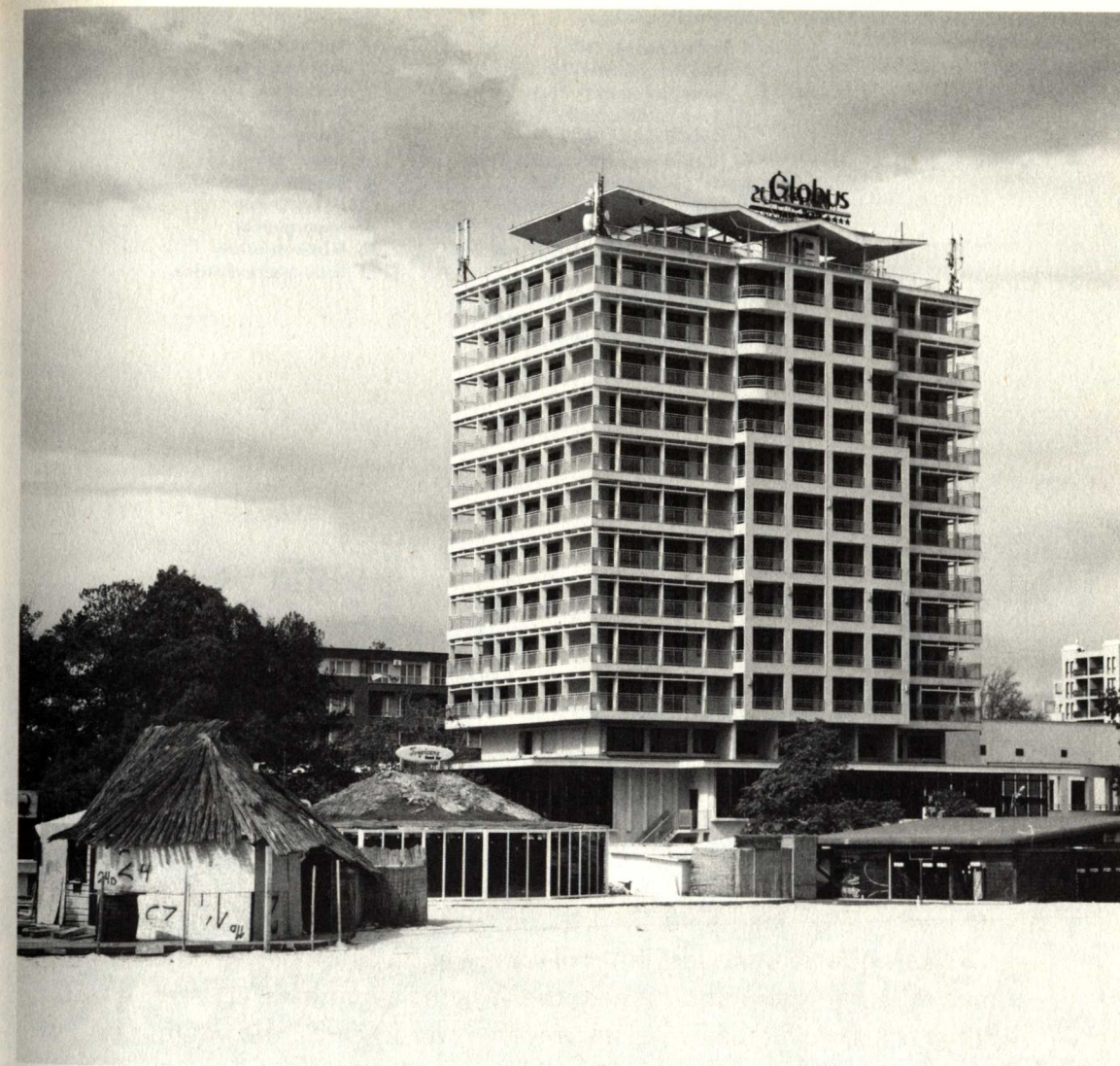
67 In any case, it won the Gradat Media Group's 'Building of the Year Award' in 2004. The Helena Resort was built by Bulimpex plc, whose director, Mladen Mutafchiiski was on the board of the Sunny Beach plc until May 2010. The online news agency Novinite.com has claimed Mutafchiiski is a former arms dealer. 'State Succeeds in Ousting Bulgaria's Sunny Beach Board', Sofia: Novinite.com, 4 May 2010, www.novinite.com/view_news.php?id=115896 (accessed 9 October 2012).

capacity—was reported to be 40,000 in 2004.⁶⁴ By 2010, it was estimated that 150,000 beds were available in Sunny Beach alone, and the same number again in the unbroken string of hotels on the coastal strip around Nessebar, which had engulfed the original villages and towns. The estimated total figure for the resort and its environs was therefore around 300,000—exact numbers are not available, given that newly built apartment complexes and so-called 'apart-hotels' were not necessarily classified as tourist accommodation.⁶⁵ [→ 108] Today, at least 90 hotel owners in Sunny Beach are or-

ganized in the Union of Hotel Owners. They are mostly Bulgarian and run their hotels personally,⁶⁶ which gives rise both to stiff competition and many conflicting interests. Architecture in Sunny Beach tells a similarly jumbled story, with its densely built mix of eclectic luxury hotels, less spectacular new ones, and the faded remnants of tourism under state socialism, the latter either converted beyond recognition, given a face-lift, or still awaiting investment.

In the early phase of the Sunny Beach boom, after the year 2000, large hotels of a size wholly out of proportion with the existing architecture occupied prime beachfront locations. At the northern end of the bay, for example, a whole string of palatial hotel complexes sprang up, whose design and ornamentation draw on the broadest variety of styles: a mix of Baroque balustrades, fanciful towers and postmodern elements, such as mirrored glass and arches, overlays the symmetric lines of the Hotel Victoria Palace while, not a stone's throw away, the pastel-hued, postmodern, Florida-style Hotel Majestic snootily presents its twin wings, symmetrical pool and seafront gardens. The nearby Helena Resort, for its part, cites traditional Bulgarian architectural elements, within a more vernacular, asymmetric complex.⁶⁷

Generally, such new developments were planned and implemented individually, with total disregard for urban planning and the bigger picture. Developers, in their rush to maximize capacity and profit, frequently contravened building regulations on the hotels' position, size and distance from one another. Moreover, clear legal guidelines, comprehensive planning schemes for the coastal region and current master plans for each resort were sadly lacking. Local authorities assertive enough to effectively monitor and enforce planning regulations were likewise conspicuous by their absence. Work on comprehensive



Post-modern facelift of a 1960s landmark hotel tower in Sunny Beach. Hotel Globus, architect: Nikola Nikolov, 1961. Photo: Nikola Mihov 2012.

Sun, Sea, Sand... and Architecture

Bulgaria

Situation plan of Sunny Beach in 2009,
following the massive construction
boom that began there in 2000.

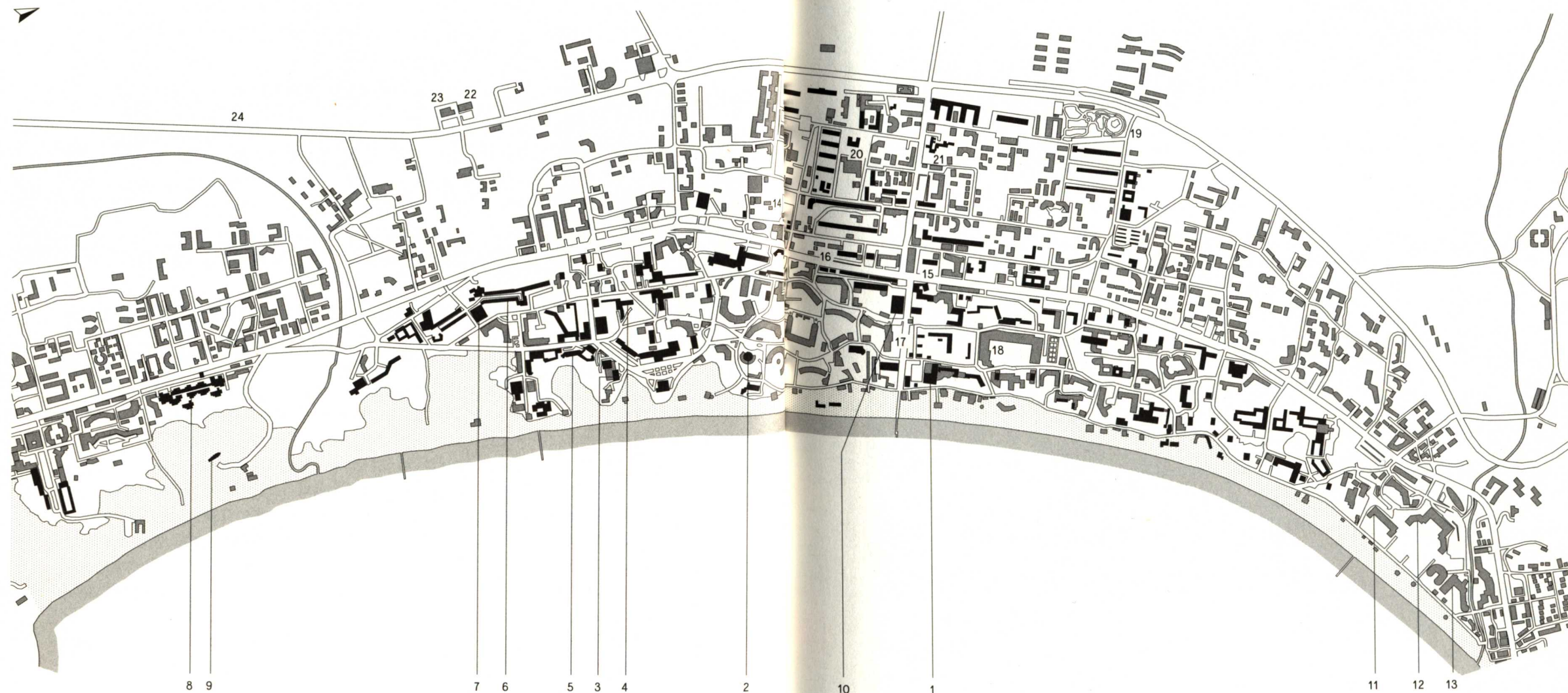
Landmark buildings

- 1 Hotel Globus, 1961
- 2 Bar-Variété, 1964/65
Hotel Colosseum, 2004
- 3 Hotel Europa, 1965
- 4 Hotel Balaton, 1965
- 5 Hotel Sozopol-Nessebar, 1965
- 6 Hotel Kontinental, 1968
- 7 Restaurant Magura, 1969
- 8 Hotel complex Chernomore, 1968-71
- 9 Restaurant Fregatta (Pirate Ship),
before 1969
- 10 Hotel Kuban, early 1970s
- 11 Hotel Victoria Palace, after 2000
- 12 Hotel Majestic, after 2000
- 13 Helena Resort, 2003/04

Selected service facilities

- 14 Bus station
- 15 Administration
- 16 Post office
- 17 Pedestrian shopping street
- 18 Shopping centre
- 19 Aqua Park
- 20 Secondary school
- 21 Kindergarten
- 22 Hypermarket
- 23 Furniture store
- 24 Main road to Burgas

- Structures built before 1975
- Structures built after 1975,
mostly after 2000





From the late 1950s onwards, hotels and entertainment facilities were developed as part of the expansive urban plan for Sunny Beach's flat landscape, chief architect: Nikola Nikolov. View to the southwest in 1964. On the right: Bar-Variété, architects: M. Sokolovski, E. Zidarov, 1964.



New hotels and apartment complexes have sprung up on almost every available plot of land since construction began to boom in Sunny Beach in 2000. View to the west in 2010.

68 Neshkov 2010; Hristov 2010.

69 According to Ivanova 2010, high fees were levied from hotel owners by the Sunny Beach plc, while there was little visible investment in public spaces and infrastructures.

70 Quote from 'State Succeeds in Ousting Bulgaria's Sunny Beach Board', Sofia: Novinite.com, 4 May 2010, www.novinite.com/view_news.php?id=115896 (accessed 9 October 2012). WikiLeaks published US Embassy memos from 2005, according to which Sunny Beach was under the control of the VAI Holding, a company reputedly involved in arms and drug deals. 'WikiLeaks: "Uncensored" 2005 US Diplomatic Cable on Organized Crime in Bulgaria', Sofia: Novinite.com, 18 March 2011, www.novinite.com/view_news.php?id=126405 (accessed 9 October 2012). The hotel trade is frequently suspected of being a primary means of laundering money. Cf. e.g.: 'Bulgaria Interior Min: Gangsters Earn Abroad, Invest Here', Sofia: Novinite.com, 4 April 2012, www.novinite.com/view_news.php?id=138192 (accessed 9 October 2012).

71 Ibid. Yet Traikov himself has close ties to aspiring global players. Prior to his appointment as Minister in 2010, he held a top managerial position with the national electricity supplier, EVN Bulgaria, after the company had become a subsidiary of the Austrian EVN AG Group in 2004. In 2011, EVN snapped up the Bulgarian state's last minority shares in Bulgaria's power supply networks. 'EVN stockte bei Bulgarien-Töchtern auf', Vienna: derStandard.at, 21 December 2011, <http://derstandard.at/1324410971226/Auf-fast-100-Prozent-EVN-stockte-bei-Bulgarien-Toechtern-auf> (accessed 8 October 2012).

planning schemes did begin actually, in the early 1990s, under the aegis of the Ministry of Regional Development and with World Bank funding. Yet political interests blocked urgently needed, up-to-date planning legislation for many years. A new law was passed only in 2007—simultaneously with Bulgaria's accession to the EU, when the pressure to create and enforce binding regulations could no longer be ignored. By then, however, developments in Sunny Beach had progressed way too far for effective regulation. And besides, the new legislation came into force only in early 2008, after a six-month delay that conveniently allowed real estate owners sufficient time to clean up the paperwork for their dubiously built hotels.⁶⁸

Inevitably, the lack of any comprehensive, on-going planning for Sunny Beach meant little thought was given to the overhaul or modification of public infrastructures. During the piecemeal privatization of the resort, local infrastructure—the roads, public parks and gardens, sewerage systems, and water and electricity plants—was handed over to the recently founded Sunny Beach plc, which thereupon became liable for its upkeep and development,

and began to levy a service charge from local hotel owners. Although the Bulgarian Ministry of the Economy, Energy and Tourism owns 75 percent of the shares in the Sunny Beach plc, the private minority shareholders have ruled the roost there for many years. The longstanding board of directors has repeatedly faced corruption charges, in part for registering high revenue yet investing little in public infrastructure.⁶⁹ According to press reports, the Nessebar local authority is particularly critical of the board's activities: 'Sunny Beach is Bulgaria's prime example of the merge of organized crime, political lobbying, power and corruption'.⁷⁰ Traicho Traikov, Minister of the Economy in the new government, ostensibly swept a new broom in spring 2010, by appointing a fresh set of local councillors and senior civil servants to the board of the Sunny Beach plc.⁷¹

Owing to this lack of investment, existing infrastructures such as sewerage and wastewater treatment systems, designed initially to serve a maximum of 30,000 holidaymakers, are now severely overstretched in the high season. In July 2010, a complete power cut lasted almost two days, leading some guests to pack up and demand reimbursement.⁷² Every last patch of land in Sunny Beach is now commercialized, so there is a dearth of public spaces, pedestrian routes, and public parks and gardens, while access roads and car parks appear to have sprung up ad hoc. The once-broad promenades through the resort are lined with sales and amusements stands, bars and restaurants, and are consequently overcrowded. In 2010, the Minister of the Interior, Tsvetan Tsvetanov, promised to take action and tear down 750 illegally erected structures, primarily sales stands and food outlets. He also claimed the Sunny Beach plc would soon tackle noise, petty theft, prostitution and other problems in the resort.⁷³ The press was at least able to report, in summer 2011, that fifteen buildings had been demolished on the northern beach, that measures had been taken to restore public order, that a power plant was under construction, and that plans to build a wastewater purification station were being considered.⁷⁴ Yet hotel and restaurant owners' dissatisfaction with the Sunny Beach plc was

unabated: in June 2011, they blocked important access roads in protest against illegitimately levied high fees for the use of public infrastructures, and demanded that community infrastructure, roads in particular, be handed back to the local authority and run in the public interest. In August 2012, the Bulgarian Union of Private Hotel Owners threatened even to take legal action against the Sunny Beach plc (and the Nessebar local authority) and thus finally force them to improve public infrastructure.⁷⁵

Today, the tourist product that Sunny Beach stands for is very much the cheap, all-inclusive deal for binge-drinking, non-stop party people: generally those who are barely out of their teens. Even though most of its hotels have been upgraded and meet the standard requirements of West European tour operators, Bulgaria still offers the best 'summer getaway' package deals. Besides cheap hotels, the cost of eating out or drinking is minimal. In downtown Sunny

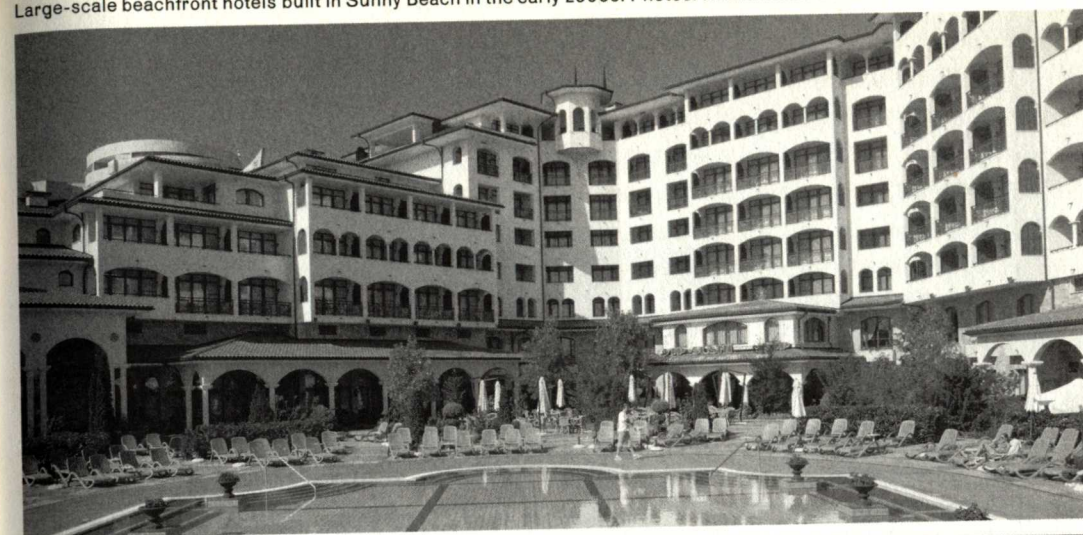
72 Ivan Dikov, 'The European Tijuana, i.e. Bulgaria's Sunny Beach: Tequila, Sex, Marijuana... But No Electricity', Sofia: Novinite.com, 15 August 2010, www.novinite.com/view_news.php?id=119205 (accessed 8 October 2012).

73 'Bulgarian Govt to Demolish Hundreds of Hotels in Sunny Beach', Sofia: Journey.bg, 23 July 2010, <http://en.journey.bg/news/?news=6391> (accessed 8 October 2012).

74 See, e.g.: 'Illegal Buildings Demolished at Top Bulgarian Beach Resort', Sofia: Novinite.com, 9 August 2011, www.novinite.com/view_news.php?id=130960; 'Foreign Diplomats Demand Order at Bulgaria's Top Beach Resort', Sofia: Novinite.com, 10 June 2011, www.novinite.com/newsletter/print.php?id=129138; 'Electric Power Station Launched in Bulgarian Beach Resort', Sofia: Novinite.com, 25 June 2011, www.novinite.com/view_news.php?id=129616; 'Bulgarian Cabinet Mulls Coastal Sewage Bill', Sofia: Novinite.com, 8 August 2011, www.novinite.com/view_news.php?id=130931 (all accessed 8 October 2012).

75 'Bulgarian Hotel Owners to Sue Sunny Beach Company, Nessebar Municipality', Sofia: Novinite.com, 10 August 2012, www.novinite.com/view_news.php?id=142182 (accessed 8 October 2012).

Large-scale beachfront hotels built in Sunny Beach in the early 2000s. Photos: Nikola Mihov 2012.



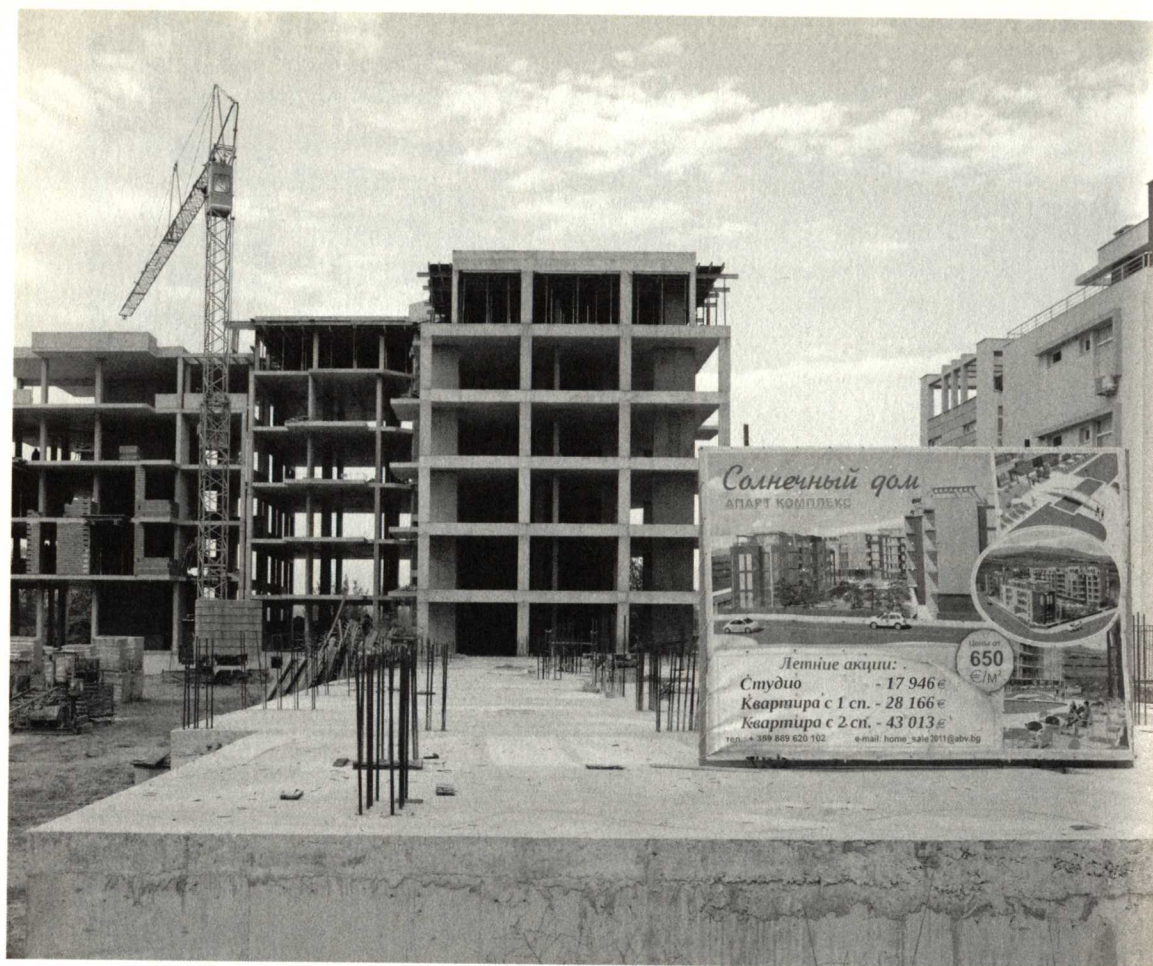
Hotel Helena Resort.



Hotel Majestic.



Hotel Victoria Palace.



Sunny Beach apartments for sale—from 650 EUR/m². Photo: Nikola Mihov 2012.

Beach, alongside mega-sized discotheques and funfair-style attractions, countless bars and cocktail joints lure in the tourists with all-day-long 'Happy Hours' and endless piped music. Carefully planned mass tourism has morphed in Sunny Beach into the chaos of overcrowding: one pool after another, one sun lounge after another, as far as the eye can see, and holidaymakers jostling their way across the beach and the tightly packed pedestrian zones and promenades. In manufacturing and marketing this new tourist product, the focus was not on sustainable development, but on a quick profit. The over-arching needs and collective interests of the resort as a whole were grossly neglected.

The unbridled eclecticism and megalomania of the recent local architecture likewise reflect the primacy of individualism, as architects readily catered to their clients' interests and leading tour operators'

demands. Yet criticism was voiced too, within the profession. Architect Todor Bulev, for example, found it all vaguely reminiscent of Las Vegas casino architecture⁷⁶ while architect Milena Filcheva, in a critical report on Bulgaria's large-scale seaside tourism projects, claimed that 'The Black Sea coast is the new Abu Dhabi of Europe'.⁷⁷ Contributors to the special issue of *Arhitektura* in 2004 gave architects part of the blame for the poor quality of architecture and urban planning. But they also called on the Bulgarian state to intervene in the coastal region and put a halt to the steadily encroaching sprawl spawned by market deregulation, and they personally encouraged policymakers, real estate developers and other tourism sector players to join them in open forums and help raise public awareness of the importance of statutory planning.

But it took the burgeoning financial crisis of 2008/09 to burst the real estate bubble on the Black Sea coast, and to pull the brake on construction in and around Sunny Beach. By then, in any case, hotels and apartments had been built well in excess of demand. Competition on the glutted market grew tougher and prices fell, which naturally had a negative impact on working conditions in the sector. Numerous hotels have since been put up for sale and the main road through Sunny Beach is cluttered with half-finished apartment complexes. Bulgarian tourism associations and hotel owners are therefore now hoping the sector can be shrunk to a healthy size, and are personally crying out for more effective state controls and monitoring—not least in order

to defend their own market foothold and the quality of the overstretched tourist product. In their efforts to shake off Sunny Beach's reputation as a binge-drinking party destination, tourism businesses have also sought to limit bar opening hours and impose curfews.⁷⁸ But certain investors—despite the real estate crisis, a saturated market, collapsing infrastructures, more stringent state regulation and a growing awareness of how vital natural resources are to the quality of the tourist product—evidently still reckon with good returns on construction projects, and so continue to build hotels, apartment complexes and villa parks on greenfield sites in Sunny Beach, as well as directly among the dunes.⁷⁹

76 Todor Bulev, 'National Discussion: Architecture on the Black Sea Coast: Present and Future—some possible answers', *Arhitektura*, 2004, Nr. 4/5, pp. 16–21, here p. 17.

77 Milena Filcheva, 'Concrete versus nature', *A10: New European Architecture*, 2008, no. 24, Nov/Dec, pp. 62/63.

78 'Bulgarian Hotel Owners to Fight Alcohol Tourism by Blacklisting Tour Operators', Sofia: Novinite.com, 16 August 2011, www.novinite.com/view_news.php?id=131165; 'Curfew Mullied for Top Bulgarian Beach Resort over Alcohol Binging', Sofia: Novinite.com, 9 August 2011, www.novinite.com/view_news.php?id=130957 (both accessed 8 October 2012).

79 The chairwoman of the Union of Hotel Owners has publicly supported restrictions on building activity in Sunny Beach, as a means of quality control, Ivanova 2010. Yet as ads in the local branch of her own real estate agency attest, she is simultaneously committed to pushing through villa developments, only a few kilometres inland.

2008 and Beyond:
'Aparthotels', investment ruins and golf resorts

Hotels are not the only things to have mushroomed on Bulgaria's Black Sea coast in recent years. Both in older resorts and on newly developed stretches of the coast, numerous new buildings attest to another variety of commercial logic, namely quick turnover real estate. Until the financial crisis hit in 2008, the property market was ballooning, thanks to a type of holiday accommodation that represented a new departure for Bulgaria, both in terms of its ownership and organizational structure: apartments, clustered in so-called 'aparthotels' or holiday complexes, and available for instant purchase. Bulgarian construction companies or developers were generally behind these schemes, while real estate agents sold them to an international clientele of mostly small-time buyers—if possible, before construction had even begun. According to zoning laws, such building types were residential, and the Ministry of Tourism did not classify them as hotels or guesthouses.⁸⁰ These were handy loopholes: a means not only to bypass the ruling on a location's maximum number of beds, but also to avoid trade controls and commercial tax.

The spectrum currently ranges from luxurious mega-complexes to gated holiday home communities, such as those developed by the Dinevi Group [→ 126] in Sveti Vlas, near Sunny Beach, or no-frills blocks of studio apartments, barely different in size from hotel rooms but equipped with self-catering basics. These unambitious ventures were thrown up by the dozen in the western part of Sunny Beach, for example, and packed in tight, along the road to Burgas.

Marketing is directed specifically at foreign tourists. Real estate agents small and large—'Michael's Property Shop' for instance, which is tucked between shooting galleries and candy carts on the promenade at Sunny Beach—sell a plot of land in a hinterland village for just a few thousand euros, or an apartment in one of the numerous new holiday complexes for a few tens of thousands. Prospective owners can also buy online. [→ 151] Apartments are often available fully furnished, and the developers or estate agents' own subcontractors are naturally on hand to provide—at a price—the full range of services that sublets demand, from marketing to reception, laundry and cleaning. The apartment blocks can therefore be run quasi as hotels. Major tour operators advertise such 'aparthotels' in their brochures as unbeatable opportunities for a bargain self-catering holiday. Yet when demand slumps, it is the individual owners who are left high and dry.

80 Situation in 2010; Hristov 2010.



The 'Golden Line' apartment complex in Golden Sands, developed and built by a Russian construction firm in 2010–12. Photo: Nikola Mihov 2012.



In downtown Sunny Beach, real estate agencies target tourists as potential buyers. Photo: Elke Beyer 2010.



Recently constructed apartment blocks in Sunny Beach. Photo: Nikola Mihov 2012.



One of the numerous construction sites abandoned in the wake of the financial crisis, on the main Sunny Beach-Burgas road. Photo: Anke Hagemann 2010.

Such schemes typified structural development on the Bulgarian coast in the mid 2000s and they led, in many locations, not only to the rise in gigantic residential complexes and excessive densification (as well as to an astonishing number of furniture stores and interior decorators), but also to deserted investment ruins. For, with the onset of the global economic crisis in 2008, the real estate bubble burst on Bulgaria's coast too. Construction volume shrank and prices fell. Moreover, many new buildings had been sold and put into production before planning permission was obtained for them. If this was never granted, construction had to cease—often to the disadvantage of small investors who had already paid for their apartment.

The crisis has made buyers much more cautious and choosy. One of the largest real estate agencies in Bulgaria told us that to close a sale, pre-completion, is very rare nowadays, even in the high-end sector: the days of making a quick profit, selling cheap aparthotels in bad locations to clueless first-time buyers, are well and truly over.⁸¹ While Brits and Germans were the primary target groups prior to the crisis, the market is now oriented increasingly to Russian buyers. Since 2008, property developers can come out on top only with the backing of solvent investors—or they must break into the more stable market for higher-end second homes: those situated on a golf course or marina, for example. Two post-crisis projects illustrate this trend.

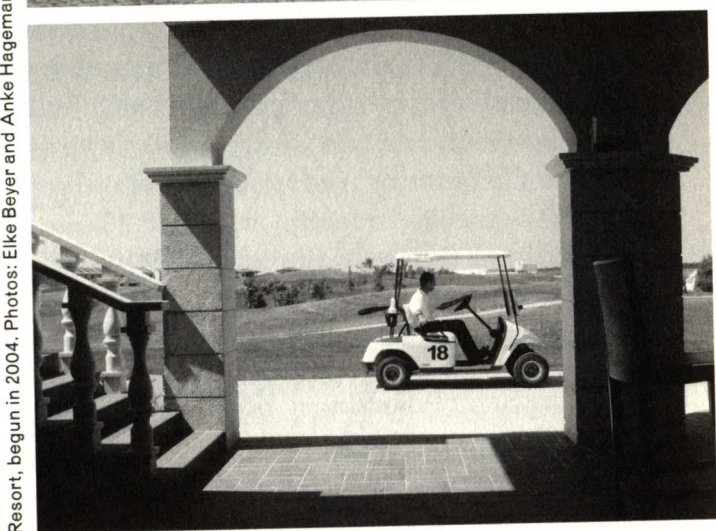
At the centre of Golden Sands, in 2010, the Russian holding, Etalon-Len-SpetsSMU, a major player in residential developments in and around Saint Petersburg, built an apartment complex called 'Golden Line'. The complex comprises three 7-storey wings on a mountain slope and hence enjoys a perfect sea-view. The design of its garden and pool area ensures protection from the resort's pedestrian through-traffic. Most of the privately owned apartments here are designed for the well-heeled middle class: there are numerous studios, the smallest starting at 45 m², and 1 or 2 bedroom apartments, up to 215 m² in size. For a studio in the summer season, real estate agents promise rental income of circa 50 EUR per night.⁸² The complex appeals primarily—and successfully—to a Russian clientele that is not blind to the benefits of owning a

second home in an EU country, especially one with which it has close historical and linguistic links. Moreover, the Russian holding's subsidiary conveniently takes care of residency permits and other tiresome red tape, on buyers' behalf. Other developers try their luck with more exclusive products. One emerging trend on

81 Interviews with Polina Stoykova, Chief Operations Manager, and Evgeni Zlatev, General Manager Varna Office, Bulgarian Properties, Sofia, 25 August, and Varna, 1 September 2010.

82 Interview with Mariya Mikhailovna Zharskaya, Manager of the Investments Department, Etalon-LenSpetsSMU, Golden Sands, 26 August 2010.

A new line in luxury property development poses a growing threat to the sensitive karst landscape of Bulgaria's northern Black Sea coast: apartment blocks and stand-alone villas in exclusive golfcourse settings. Here, the Lighthouse Golf Resort, begun in 2004. Photos: Elke Beyer and Anke Hagemann 2010.



Situation plan of the Lighthouse Golf Resort, as foreseen in 2010.

- 1 Access road
- 2 Gatehouse
- 3 18-hole golf course
- 4 Clubhouse restaurant / conference centre

- 5 Lighthouse Hotel and Spa
- 6 'Lake District': semi-detached houses, villas
- 7 'Green District': multi-storey apartment buildings, semi-detached houses, villas
- 8 'Forest District': villas, townhouses
- 9 'Marina District': luxury villas, semi-detached villas

- 10 'Lighthouse District' (not yet realised): semi-detached houses, villas, the Lighthouse restaurant building
- 11 Private beach road
- 12 'Silvery Coast District' (not yet realised)
- 13 Private beach
- 14 Black Sea Rama Golf Resort
- 15 Balchik Airport



83 Interview with Alyona Encheva, Sales Department, Lighthouse Golf & Spa Resort, Balchik, 27 August 2010.

84 'The Bojurets Golf Complex or how Bulgaria conserves the protected species and unique plant communities in Kavarna Municipality', Sofia: FortheNature.org, <http://en.forthenature.org/cases/34> (accessed 8 October 2012).

Bulgaria's Black Sea coast, besides the luxurious marina, is the golf course with integrated villa and apartment complexes, also widely hyped as an all-year-round location for business and conference tourism. Above steep cliffs east of Balchik, for example, in a sparsely populated karst landscape, several Bulgarian

developers have simultaneously launched no less than three golf courses dotted with villas, apartment houses and hotels: the Black Sea Rama, Thracian Cliffs and Lighthouse Golf & Spa Resort. Each developer follows the same formula. Former agricultural land is transformed into an 18-hole golf course with a clubhouse and wellness facilities, while various properties are built on the green for immediate sale. Offers range from relatively small studios and apartments in 5-storey blocks to semi-detached houses or stand-alone villas. Some locations also offer a private beach—reached, in the case of the Lighthouse Golf Resort, via a specially built private road.⁸³ The surrounding golf course lends such residential developments an air of exclusivity and also conveniently keeps the common passer-by or non-member at bay. Yet most of the residences are planted in the middle of flat, monotonous greens—only a few very expensive villas enjoy a spectacular sea-view and an exceptional setting. From an ecological standpoint, moreover, the water consumption required to maintain golf courses and swimming pools poses a long-term threat to the stability of the karst landscape.⁸⁴ Hence, the golf and wellness holiday now promoted as the most novel premium tourist product uses vast expanses of a sensitive environment to the benefit of a very small number of guests, and it simultaneously renders these areas inaccessible to—and uninteresting for—other users.

So, in addition to commodification of the Black Sea coast as a tourist product for long-term, seasonal use, the past decade has seen the emergence also of extremely short-term commercial ventures on the real estate market. The excessive development of existing resorts and of the coastal region in general has generated huge, one-off profits for property developers and construction companies. Yet spatial and architectural resources created over several decades have been sacrificed to this end, and parts of the landscape have been irreparably disfigured. The short-sighted sell-off of the Black Sea coast also adversely affects the quality of its tourist product: instead of a broad spectrum of accommodation types and leisure opportunities—embedded either in a protected landscape or in urban public space that is planned and maintained by a single body—parts of the Bulgarian coast

have now become a sprawling, fragmented urban landscape. Gated luxury compounds and giant tourist traps alternate with cheap apartment blocks still under construction—on a road network jammed to capacity, moreover, by a tailback of rental cars en route to aqua-parks, fun attractions, malls and hypermarkets.

Sun, Sea, Sand and Building Sites: Selling off Bulgaria's Black Sea coast

Resort development on Bulgaria's Black Sea coast can be seen thus to reflect the dramatic evolution, over the last six decades, of the tourist product and of the ways it was created and consumed. From the very start, making selected locations accessible, and natural resources available as consumer goods on the mass tourism market depended, first and foremost, on urban planning and architecture. How tourists should, could or would spend their holidays was essentially defined by the myriad of spaces and images that they produced, and by the fantasies they thereby inspired.

The primary promise of the early tourist product was peaceful recreation in natural surroundings. The Druzhba resort, with its extensively landscaped parkland and relatively small hotels and holiday houses, exemplifies particularly well the 1950s' strivings for an edifying, community-minded holiday experience. In the 1960s, as Golden Sands has shown, the tourist product was geared increasingly to an international mass market. The Black Sea resorts became larger and more densely built, the differentiation of their architectural styles more highly nuanced—from the classy International Style high-rise to structuralist holiday complexes and trivial fishing village motifs. Holiday options were thereby professionalized and also diversified, for example, by the addition of new leisure and entertainment features. Yet, despite such dramatic growth—visitor numbers rose steadily until well into the 1980s—the state maintained a careful balance between built-up areas and open countryside. This centrally planned regulation of regional development, resort expansion and tourism services aspired to, and also largely accomplished, the long-term sustainable use of the tourist product—which is of course not to deny that certain aspects of state socialist resort planning appear fairly dubious today, from an ecological standpoint. In any case, the centrally planned regulation of developments on the coast was swept away by the collapse of state socialism. Resorts originally designed to function as coherent entities were dismantled. Attractive, hitherto protected sections of the coast were

85 Anton Gosar, 'Tourismus in den postsozialistischen Ländern Südosteuropas. Trends und Herausforderungen', *wirtschafts-geographische studien*, 2006, vol. 32/33, pp. 113–140, here p. 115.

86 Milena Hristova, 'The Bulgaria 2010 Review: Tourism', Sofia: Novinite.com, 6 January 2011, www.novinite.com/view_news.php?id=123900 (accessed 8 October 2012).

87 Neshkov 2010.

no longer safe from hotel and holiday home developers. After a slump in the 1990s, visitor numbers rose again, attaining the late 1980s' level in 2004.⁸⁵ Quick profits from tourism and real estate became the flavour of the month. Repercussions for the tourist product became particularly striking after the year 2000. Once lavishly landscaped resorts more or less ceded

to massive building sites or densely built tourist traps, thrown up at random, with no regard for planning. As in the notorious case of Sunny Beach, these are now renowned for cheap, binge-drinking, party-hopping tourism of a sort travel guides rarely recommend. One exception is Albena, a resort whose centralized management had the foresight to retain and upgrade the tourist product developed there over several decades.

Hotel and holiday home developments on hitherto unspoiled stretches of coast have culminated in unregulated coastal sprawl and a no-holds-barred approach even to major nature reserves. Resources vital to the tourist product have already been destroyed: not only natural resources, such as a beautiful landscape and clean water, but also structural resources, the urban planning and architectural features systematically developed in Bulgaria since the late 1950s. Evidently, the value of addressing mass tourism, recreational opportunities and nature conservation as interdependent aspects of a resort and its region, is completely lost on property speculators. And, until very recently, the state or civic bodies able to sustain and protect such value either did not exist or were still weak. Thus, since the turn of the millennium, concepts geared to short-term gain, and the neglect (or complete absence) of effective long-term planning and infrastructural investment, have gradually depleted, and largely sold-off a tourist product once developed with care and foresight, whose most persuasive selling point, nowadays, is its dumping prices.⁸⁶

This sad truth can no longer be ignored, as many stakeholders in the Bulgarian tourism sector were forced to admit, at the latest when the financial crisis hit in 2008. Tourism associations and the Ministry of the Economy are therefore now pursuing both regional and national strategies to turn the international spotlight away from sun, sea and sand package deals, and to polish Bulgaria's image as a place for high-end packages in the cultural, wellness and alternative tourism sectors. Raising the quality of the tourist product, it is hoped, will also raise the amount each tourist spends.⁸⁷ Tourism is still crucial to Bulgaria's

export budget, of course, so new marketing campaigns have been launched to dispel the country's image as a cheap destination, while property developers are increasingly putting their money into luxury products, such as marinas and golf courses.

However, public opposition is on the rise. The sell-off of the Black Sea coast and the destruction of precious nature reserves have galvanized what is probably the largest and most broad-based social movement for civil rights seen in Bulgaria since 1989. Outrage over one of the first illegal, ecologically unsound property developments to catch the public eye—a major development in the protected area of Irakli—led to lively street protests, media campaigns, and national and European lawsuits. These ultimately proved effective.⁸⁸ In 2011 and 2012, court rulings put a halt to the project that influential investors had been

hoping to realize at Irakli since 2005.⁸⁹ [→ 147] In April 2012, following another court ruling, bulldozers set about demolishing the Golden Pearl (Zlatna Perla) holiday complex. Built in the Strandzha National Park in defiance of earlier construction bans, this large complex was part of the controversial master plan for Tsarevo, which anticipated new developments with a total of 100,000 beds, 70,000 of which—along with several golf courses—were to be located in vulnerable nature reserves, close to the Turkish border.⁹⁰ The protest alliance 'For The Nature' sees such inspiring outcomes as a sign 'that the Bulgarian State can fulfil its functions, if there is an active and vigilant civil society at hand'.⁹¹

Yet, despite legislative constraints and public expressions of ecological concern, despite the property crisis, saturated markets and overstretched infrastructures, the lure of profit continues to trigger investment. At the northern end of Bulgaria's Black Sea coast, near Balchik, the White Lagoon resort for 8,000 guests is under construction.⁹² Star architect Sir Norman Foster planned to build five so-called eco-villages in forested areas of the nature reserve to the north of Byala, which were advertised in 2008, under the name Black Sea

88 See the organization's website: <http://daspasimirakli.org> (accessed 8 October 2012).

89 In September 2011, the Appellate Court in Burgas ruled 'that the investment approval granted at the end of 2008 by the Burgas Regional Environment and Waters Inspectorate to offshore investor Swiss Properties is illegal'. 'Bulgarian Eco NGO Triumphs in Court Battle for Irakli Beach', Sofia: Novinite.com, 14 September 2011, www.novinite.com/view_news.php?id=132103. In July 2012, Bulgaria's Supreme Court upheld this decision to acknowledge Irakli's status of nature reserve and thus declared all construction work begun to be illegal. 'Offshore Investor Conclusively Defeated over Bulgaria's Irakli Beach', Sofia: Novinite.com, 9 July 2012, www.novinite.com/view_news.php?id=141093 (both accessed 8 October 2012).

90 'The illegal complex 'Golden Pearl' in Nature Park Strandzha will be demolished after 6 years of lessons in democracy', Sofia: ForTheNature.org, 18 April 2012, <http://en.forthenature.org/news/2392>; 'Destined for destruction', Sofia: TheSofiaEcho.com, 6 January 2012, http://sofiaecho.com/2012/01/06/1739375_destined-for-destruction (both accessed 10 October 2012).

91 Ibid.; Elitsa Grancharova, 'Controversial Tsarevo master plan gets approval', Sofia: TheSofiaEcho.com, 29 August 2008, http://sofiaecho.com/2008/08/29/662992_controversial-tsarevo-master-plan-gets-approval (accessed 10 October 2012).

92 'TransGlobal Assets Contracts Bulgarian Construction Firm for Black Sea Resort', Sofia: Novinite.com, 26 April 2011, www.novinite.com/view_news.php?id=127654 (accessed 9 October 2012).

Sites of controversial construction projects in Bulgaria's major tourism regions. These projects have provoked on-going protests and court cases, as mapped and monitored by the environmental organization For The Nature.

- 1 Ski resort in the Vitosha Nature Park
 - 2 Iskyr River in Samokov
 - 3 Ski resort in the Rila Mountains (Iskrovete-Maljovitsa)
 - 4 Ski resort in the Rila National Park (Panichishte)
 - 5 Cabin-lift in the Rila Mountains
 - 6 Bansko ski area in Pirin National Park
 - 7 Ski resort 'Super Perelik' in the Rhodope Mountains
 - 8 Wind generators in Eastern Rhodope Mountains
 - 9 'Golden Pearl' apartment complex in the Strandzha Nature Park
 - 10 Construction projects in Irakli Beach
 - 11 Construction projects in Kara Dere Beach
 - 12 Construction projects in Kamchiya's Sands
 - 13 'Thracian Cliffs Golf Resort'
 - 14 Nikopol's plateau at the Danube
- Protected sites of the European Union's Natura 2000 network
 □ Bulgarian Nature Reserves, Nature Parks and National Parks

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Gardens, but have so far not been realized.⁹³ In the Sea Gardens in Varna—the city's largest, oldest and best-known public park and landmark—the investment company Holding Varna intends to build 'Alley One', a mega-project comprised of a marina and numerous sports facilities, hotels, restaurants and commercial properties.⁹⁴ And other controversial, lucrative large-scale tourism projects are in the pipeline. An interactive map on the website of the environmentalist alliance, 'For The Nature', keeps track of them—and keeps protests against them in the public eye.

To date, most such investment projects have operated in a legal twilight zone, yet the legislative has recently moved once again in their favour. An amendment to the Forestry Act, passed in June 2012, considerably eased private investment in sport and tourism infrastructure on state-owned land—investment in ski pistes and ski lifts, primarily—and thus legalized sweeping structural interventions in designated protected areas.⁹⁵ Environmental activists were on the case,

however, and after several days of non-stop protest, the Bulgarian President was obliged to use his veto. Nevertheless, only the most controversial clauses were revoked. In an open letter of January 2012, the Association of Bulgarian Tour Operators and Travel Agents (ABTTA) and the Bulgarian Association for Alternative Tourism (BAAT) pointed out to the President that 'changes in the Forest[ry] Act will not help [improve] the competitiveness of the Bulgarian tourist product as a whole, but rather will [endanger] one of the pillars of its development and a key resource—the green treasures of Bulgaria—its landscape and nature'.⁹⁶



93 Filcheva 2008; Foster + Partners, 'Black Sea Gardens, Byala, Bulgaria', London: fosterandpartners.com, 2008, www.fosterandpartners.com/Projects/1480/Default.aspx; Annie Marinova, 'Black Sea Gardens—the end of the last wild beach on the Bulgarian Black Sea coast', *bulgaria.indymedia.org*, 4 August 2008, <http://bulgaria.indymedia.org/article/21558?language=bg>; Kate Connolly, 'Architecture: Bulgarian eco town "the biggest mistake of Norman Foster's career", say protesters', London: *Guardian.co.uk*, 14 July 2008, www.guardian.co.uk/environment/2008/jul/14/greenbuilding.climatechange; 'UK Firm Freezes Controversial Mega Project on Bulgaria Sea Coast', Sofia: *Novinite.com*, 30 June 2009, www.novinite.com/view_news.php?id=105201 (all accessed 8 October 2012).

94 Protesters rallied in July 2012, and organized various actions, including massive sit-ins at major intersections in Varna. 'Bulgaria's Varna Rallies again to Protect Sea Garden', Sofia: *Novinite.com*, 6 July 2012, www.novinite.com/view_news.php?id=141000 (accessed 8 October 2012).

95 'The amendments in the Law of Forests—crony privatization of one of the last remaining public resources', Sofia: *ForTheNature.org*, 14 June 2012, <http://en.forthenature.org/news/2436> (accessed 8 October 2012).

96 'Opinion of tourism agents in Bulgaria about the proposals for amendments in the current Forest Act (FA)', Sofia: *ForTheNature.org*, 9 January 2012, <http://en.forthenature.org/documents/822> (accessed 8 October 2012).

Holiday House of the Trade Union of Miners, Druzhba

The Holiday House of the Trade Union of Miners in Druzhba is typical of the architecture of collective accommodation built in many places along the Black Sea coast in the late 1950s. State-run 'social tourism' provided the Bulgarian labour force with infrastructures designed to assure appropriate recreation in peaceful and natural surroundings. The Miners' Union, for example, maintained a total of eight holiday houses by 1958 (*Arhitektura* 1958, 6), and thus could offer its members well-planned repose and recreation. Its holiday house in Druzhba was built in 1957/58, on the highway between Varna and Golden Sands, to plans drafted by the state planning institute Zavodproekt (Factory Project). It is situated amid lush vegetation, in extensive grounds on a gentle slope, about 300 m from the beach. Similar holiday houses assigned to the Army, the Construction Workers' Union, or other mass organizations can be found nearby.

The original holiday house consisted of two structures that were interlinked on two levels, by broad, semi-enclosed terraces. The long, 3.5-storey block used to accommodate a total of 222 guests and personnel in dormitory rooms situated along a central corridor and oriented either to the sea or the highway. Bathrooms and toilets were likewise for communal use. The lower, U-shaped structure contained a kitchen, dining room, small reading room and several ancillary units. The two structures were positioned such that loud activities (dining and social events) and quiet ones (rest) would remain separate.

In architectural terms, the rationally designed building is a mix of modern functionalism and both classicist and down-to-earth traditional elements. Project consultant was the renowned architect Ivan Vasilyov, who had designed major neo-classicist buildings in the inter-war period, such as the Bulgarian National Bank (1934–39) and the