

POLITICIZATION: CZECH HOTELS MAY REJECT VISITORS



In 2014, hotel Brioni in Ostrava in the Czech Republic refused to accommodate two Russian tourists unless they sign a declaration that they condemn the occupation of the Crimean Peninsula by the Russian Federation. The owner of the hotel was later given a fine for this conduct which he did not agree with and decided to go to court. As a result, the whole case arrived in front of the Constitutional Court which issued a perhaps surprising judgment at the end of April.

The Senate consisting of three judges ruled that such conduct cannot be punished. The main reason was that business should not be only considered a source of profit but also further satisfaction of the entrepreneur. For example, being “politically active” and “contributing to the common good” (as cited in the decree).

This decision of the court has caused a lot of controversy in the country, as it is the first decision of this kind across the old continent. The main issue many experts and others have with this is that it unnecessarily protects the politicization of businesses. Furthermore, constitutional lawyers consider it a dangerous judgment which could pretty much change the barriers of discrimination in terms of free will and speech, regulated by the Antidiscrimination Act in the country.

The issue is that with the right to accommodate whoever an owner wants based on political belief many more potentially similar scenarios could arise in the future. In this sense, a hotelier could refuse to accommodate Chinese visitors, referring to the country’s invasion of Tibet. One could also deny access to a Turkish commoner based on the annexation of Northern Cyprus by Turkey.

In short, this judgment does give much more freedom. However, freedom is indeed somewhat dangerous, as it seems unclear where these limits of accommodation limitation lie. Another question that arises is, whether it is wise to give hotels the position of political watchdogs and protectors of the so-called ‘greater good’.

Perhaps, from the perspective of hoteliers, more priority should be given to the improvement of hotel services their facilities offer. The mentioned Hotel Brioni in Ostrava has a somewhat average rating on the travelling portal TripAdvisor (3.5 out of 5) from 154 reviews.

The biggest advantage of the hotel is its location, which really cannot be considered a direct contribution from the owner and staff. The services and value have an average mark of 3.5, with cleanliness receiving 4 out of 5. A somewhat ok rating but given the basis of a good location, perhaps more could be done.

This is obviously not a criticism of the hotel services offered by the hotel. But once again, **it seems somewhat unnecessary for a hotel to engage in politics, especially in such a manner that limits potential customers due to their opinion** and something they have no responsibility or power over. Rather than this, more focus and attention could be paid to the improvement of the services, with a potential subsequent rise in popularity for the benefit of the hotel.

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