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Tourists of the world, unite! The interpretation and facilitation of tourism towards the end of the Soviet Union (1962–1990)

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After decades of relative neglect by the Soviet state, leisure and tourism provision in the USSR underwent a period of rapid growth and institutionalisation between 1962 and 1990. This paper explores the ideological role attributed to leisure activities and tourism, and the wide range of tourism participation options that were offered to citizens via various councils and voucher systems, in what can be argued to be the most developed social tourism system of the twentieth century. On the basis of an extensive review of the literature in the English and Russian languages, it proposes a structure that shows the extent of Soviet state involvement in tourism and the different target groups these tourism initiatives were aimed at. It also explores areas of tension between state-assigned functions of leisure and the actual interpretation of leisure by many Soviet citizens.

Keywords: Soviet Union; USSR; ideology; tourism administration; communism

Résumé

Après plusieurs décennies de négligence relative par le gouvernement soviétique, les loisirs et le tourisme en URSS ont connu une période de croissance rapide et une institutionnalisation entre 1962 et 1990. Le présent document examine le

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rôle idéologique attribué aux activités de loisirs et de tourisme, et l’éventail des possibilités de participation au tourisme offertes aux citoyens par l’intermédiaire de divers conseils municipaux et par des systèmes de bons d’achats, dans ce qui peut être considéré comme le système de tourisme social le plus développé du xxe siècle. Fondée sur une vaste analyse bibliographique en langues anglaise et russe, cette étude suggère une structure qui montre l’étendue de l’implication de l’État soviétique dans le tourisme et les différents groupes cibles visés par ces initiatives touristiques. Cette analyse examine également les points de tension entre les fonctions de loisirs attribuées par l’État, et l’interprétation effective des loisirs par de nombreux citoyens soviétiques.

Mots-clés: Union Soviétique; URSS; idéologie; administration du tourisme; communisme

摘要

1962 至1990 年间,苏维埃社会主义共和国联盟在经历了几十年对休闲和旅游业的相对忽略后, 加大供给, 休闲和旅游业在此期间经历了一段快速发展和制度化时期。本文探究了在这个被称为 20 世纪最发达的社会旅游系统中, 引致休闲活动和旅游的意识形态, 以及通过多种市政服务机构和保证系统提供给市民参与旅游的多样选择。在对大量英文和俄文文献综述的基础上,本文提出了一个结构框架来展示苏联国家干预旅游的程度以及这些旅游先导措施定位的不同目标群体。它也探究了在国家政府制定的休闲功能和很多苏联市民对休闲的实际解读之间的矛盾张力。

关键词: 苏联, 苏维埃社会主义共和国联盟, 意识形态, 旅游行政管理, 共产主义

Introduction

Between 1962 and the fall of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) in 1990, Soviet tourism underwent a period of rapid development: from a marginal leisure pursuit, it transformed into an activity that was widespread and accessible to large sections of the population. The state played a central role in the provision and administration of tourism, and infused the concept with strong ideological values: this paper explores the various ties between the state and tourism in the final three decades of the Soviet Union. This period has been relatively under-researched in the academic tourism literature, which tends to focus on post-communist tourism development. Where Soviet tourism is researched, studies discuss international tourism development, whereas domestic tourism is in many cases neglected in comparison. Exceptions are the work of Shaw (1991) and Noack (2006), who refer to a number of key stakeholders in tourism provision and administration in this period: this paper builds on and extends their work, proposing a detailed overview of the institutions, organisations and tourism forms that were involved.

The paper will provide a brief historical sketch of tourism development between 1961 and 1990, and will explore the ideological meaning attached to leisure activities and tourism during this time. It will then, based on a literature review in the English and Russian language, propose a structure that shows the extent of Soviet state involvement in tourism, and the different target groups these tourism initiatives were aimed at, which will be presented in a visual model. The model demonstrates how tourism in the USSR is unjustly overlooked in tourism studies as one of the most developed and wide-reaching social tourism systems in the twentieth century.
Historical sketch

The 1960s heralded the beginning of widespread and rapid tourism development in the USSR. Prior to this time, the restructuring of the Soviet economy had been the main priority for policy-makers: ‘The essential purpose of the Soviet Union was to establish and maintain a classless society in which there was collective ownership of the means of production’ (Brown & Ford, 1931, p. 362). By the time of Lenin’s death (1924), all capital and all productive assets had become state property. This meant that the Soviet government owned and controlled the economy, directly employing workers, and determining wages, services and production levels. Five- or 10-year economic plans decided economic goals, rather than consumer preferences. Centrally controlled wages, combined with the abolition of private real estate, were seen to lead to an egalitarian society without class boundaries (Lansford, 2007). The agricultural sector was collectivised, depriving the peasantry the right to dispose of its product. By 1938, Soviet statistical sources indicate that the state owned 99.3% of the country’s national income (Pipes, 1995).

For several decades, leisure time, including recreation and tourism activities, had been a largely neglected policy area. Indeed, as Noack (2006, p. 282) noted:

Until 1960, the quantitative and qualitative level of Soviet recreational infrastructure remained underdeveloped and underfinanced. [...] From 1961 onwards, however, the party and the trade unions displayed considerable interest in the development of recreational structures. This unprecedented concern was part of a new policy that tried to secure the Soviet citizens’ loyalty to the regime by expanding consumption and by distributing far-reaching social benefits.

Riordan (1982, p. 66) mentions the ‘fairly steady increase in public and personal prosperity, a marked growth in the range and quantity of consumer goods available, a reduction in working time and a continuing shift in the population balance in favour of the towns’ as reasons for the increased importance of tourism and leisure.

The reduction in working time was a key factor influencing the growing demand for leisure activities, and an important pillar of the communist state. In 1956, the standard (six-day) week in Soviet industry was of 46 hours; by 1961, it had declined to 41 hours, most workers having five seven-hour days and one six-hour day each week. In 1980, the average working week in industry was 40.7 hours and, in state employment in general, 39.4 hours in a five-day week (Riordan, 1982). This made the working week in the Soviet Union one of the shortest in the world – the reduction of the working time was often linked to the high labour productivity of the communist worker (Preobrazhensky & Krivosheyev, 1982).

The right to rest, leisure activities and tourism for workers was supported by the Constitution of the USSR:

ARTICLE 119. Citizens of the U.S.S.R. have the right to rest and leisure. The right to rest and leisure is ensured by (a) the reduction of the working day to seven hours for the overwhelming majority of the workers, (b) the institution of annual vacations with full pay for workers and employees and (c) the provision of a wide network of sanatoria, rest homes and clubs for the accommodation of the working people. (Soviet Constitution, 1936)

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights formally acknowledged the right to rest in 1948: ‘Everyone has the right to rest and leisure, including reasonable limitation of working hours and periodic holidays with pay’ (United Nations (UN) General
Neither the International Labour Organisation (ILO, 1936) Convention nor the UN Declaration formally refers to the provision of leisure and tourism infrastructure as part of legislation: the Soviet Union can thus be seen to have adopted this principle early, and to have extended it considerably compared to the West. It needs to be added that the accommodation options that were provided were often basic (shelters and refuges rather than hotels) and aimed at group travel (Noack, 2006).

Tourism in the Soviet Union was organised and administered by a variety of official bodies. ‘No one organisation in the Soviet Union administered or coordinated the development of tourist facilities’ (Shaw, 1991, p. 124). Hall (1991, p. 49) highlights that ‘domestic tourism […] was often a major social or welfare role of trade unions, although other organisations and individual arrangements played an important part’. A central body was the Central Council for Tourism and Excursions, which was given a leading role in tourism development in 1962. This organisation was responsible for providing tourist accommodation, setting up a network of tourist and excursion bureaux, organising an approving tourist routes and tours, publishing tourism literature of all kinds, overseeing tourism training and researching tourism (Shaw, 1991). ‘State-sponsored social tourism became an integral part of the benefit system’ (Noack, 2006, p. 282). The Central Council was, however, the top of a complex network of organisations: it oversaw a range of sub-councils, which will be explored later in this paper. Between 1965 and 1975 these councils received enormous state loans and subsidies from the social insurance fund to enlarge the country’s vacation facilities (Noack, 2006).

Access to tourism in the USSR came primarily through the grant of a travel voucher, the putevka, a nonmarket mechanism for the allocation of the scarce resource of a place on a tour or in a tourist destination.[…]The economic organisation of Soviet tourism revolved around the voucher, rather than disposable income, personal savings, or consumer demand.

‘It took a doctor’s order (spravka) before one could try to obtain a voucher for a three of four week’s cure in sanatoria through the trade unions’ (Noack, 2006, p. 285). Trade Unions would work with the Ministries of Health and Social Welfare in getting vouchers for their members to take medical treatment and recuperate (Burns, 1998, p. 557). The cost of such tourism was heavily subsidised by the various trade unions and enterprises (Burns, 1998, p. 557). ‘Vouchers were heavily subsidised and sold for 30% of the nominal price’ (Noack, 2006, p. 285).

Soviet tourism became mass tourism during the Brezhnev period (1964–1982). Official figures and contemporary Western reports agree that the number of Soviet domestic tourists more than doubled between 1965 and 1980, and that annual growth rates reached 10 per cent in the late 1960s. (Noack, 2006, p. 281)

Tourism was 14th among all recreational pursuits in number of participants in 1955, 11th in 1960, 4th in 1965 and 2nd, after athletics, in 1970. Immediately after the war, there were only 15 recognized tourist routes in the USSR; by 1970, there were more than 1000. In 1970, some 50 million people took part in camping or excursions around the country; in 1972, the number had increased to 74 million (nearly one-third of the population). (Riordan, 1982, p. 68)

Figures cited by Noack (2006) indicate that in 1970, 17 million citizens spent their holidays in Soviet recreational facilities; by 1975 this had risen to 30 million; and by 1983
to 45 million. Day trips were also popular: in 1980, 17 million people participated in those (Noack, 2006). Shaw (1991) highlights that by 1988 this number had increased to 69 million workers and their families – which means that 1/3 of the population travelled that year. Additionally, 30 million children had stayed in Pioneer and school camps, and other children’s facilities. However, there were large geographical differences in tourism participation and development, ‘Large parts of the north and east – with sub-arctic characteristics – and the arid lands of Central Asia had low densities of population and have been influenced only to a very modest degree by tourism’ (Shaw, 1991, p. 126). Low levels of car ownership also restricted mobility (Shaw, 1991).

Although the tourism sector developed at a rapid pace, demand continuously outstripped supply. ‘State ownership of the tourism industry brought its own problems. The chronic deficits of the socialist economy are by now well known: tourism agencies never received the resources that they believed necessary to accomplish their goals’ (Gorsuch & Koenker, 2006, p. 4). The infrastructure that was built could not keep up with growing demand. In 1982, for example, there were only approximately 13,000 sanatoria, rest and holiday homes, and tourist institutions which could accommodate around 2,000,000 visitors’ (Preobrazhensky & Krivosheyev, 1982, p. 7). This meant there was a chronic shortage of vouchers, which drove many people to travel independently. This phenomenon of uncontrolled, also referred to as ‘wild’, tourism grew rapidly: in the summer these ‘wild’ tourists started to outnumber those on state-organised trips, a development that was not liked by the government (Noack, 2006). It is noteworthy that this phenomenon received scant attention in the Russian-language sources consulted for this paper.

Until 1985, tourism was very much part of a centrally planned economy with investments made and plans drawn up from Moscow.

From 1985 onwards however, Gorbachev – then President – started to decentralise the economy, which left more room for investment decisions by individual enterprises and organisations. The semi-governmental and private sectors started playing a more important role in tourism, travel abroad became easier and private visits were made possible, and more exchanges developed between East and West (Shaw, 1991). ‘Non-commercial tourism societies competed alongside businesses chartered for profit, reflecting a renunciation of market principles that would provide a cultural antecedent for socialist values in the twentieth Century’ (Gorsuch & Koenker, 2006, p. 3). The Central Council for Tourism and Excursions was responsible for some 52 million tourists in 1990 (Burns, 1998, p. 557).

The ideological value of leisure time and tourism

Noack (2006, p. 288) refers to the ‘extreme ideological loading of Soviet tourism’: tourism was an activity hailed for its physical and educational purposefulness, and
was thought to enhance collectivism, willpower, persistence and endurance. The Russian word ‘turizm’ possesses both a broad and a narrow definition: in a broad definition, it just means a ‘purposeful journey’; in a narrow definition, a tourist was ‘anyone who followed a leisure-travel program of visual, cultural and material consumption’ (Gorsuch & Koenker, 2006, p. 2). Tourism was thus seen to be a part of the education and moral elevation of the masses.

Travellers in search of pleasure could take excursions; turizm was meant to involve work, the enhancement of one’s intellectual and physical capital, not leisure. Travel to a destination to spend a holiday, whether or not it involved excursions, was labelled ‘rest’ (otdykh) in Russian: rest could be recuperative, but it did not presume that ‘resters’ interact self-consciously with the world to which they had transported themselves. (Gorsuch & Koenker, 2006, p. 3)

The role of leisure time as an opportunity for self-improvement is a fairly central notion in Marxist philosophy. Marx suggested that the measure of wealth in the Communist Society should be the quantity of free time: time which people would be able to spend on their personal development. The wealth of the socialist state is not only in the aggregate wealth (in various forms of manifestation), but in the richness of the time required for employment (working hours) and to meet the spiritual needs of people for the harmonious development of personality (free time or leisure) (Ganapol’skii, Beznosikov, & Bulatov, 1987). To have leisure time, holds in itself a responsibility to use it wisely. This time should be spent developing into the ideal communist worker:

Soviet totalitarian culture had its own mythological heroes – ordinary people, who were disciplined, enthusiastic about their work, and intolerant of shortcomings in everyday life and at work. They hated the enemies of socialism, believed in the wisdom of the authorities and were unstinting in their devotion to the leader. (Andrei Sakharov Museum, 2013)

This view of leisure time contrasts with Western/capitalist views, where leisure time is seen as a time without obligation, that one is free to occupy as one chooses:

Leisure is time beyond that which is required for existence, the things which we must do, biologically, to stay, alive (that is, eat, sleep, eliminate, medicate, and so on) and subsistence, the things we must do to make a living as in work, or prepare to make a living as in school, or pay for what we want done if we do not do it ourselves. Leisure is time in which our feelings of compulsion should be minimal. It is discretionary time, the time to be used according to our own judgment or choice. (Brightbill, 1960, p. 4)

Combined with this ideological role, leisure time and tourism also acquired a political meaning. Gorsuch (2003, p. 761) highlights that from the late Stalinist period,

the regime demanded a heightened ‘Sovietness’ from those still considered loyal. Domestic tourism was one response to this perceived need, intended to produce physically and ideologically healthy Soviet citizens. [Tourism] aimed to create a correct understanding of the socialist ‘homeland’ by investing historical sites and ‘exotic’ spaces with war-torn significance. Last, but by no means least, tourism was a way of reassuring a weary, war-torn population. (Gorsuch, 2003, p. 761)

Proletarian tourists tour the country to educate themselves and others – contrasting with the idleness and wastefulness of bourgeois tourism. Another aim was to bring a sense of unity to the very diverse peoples of the Soviet Union: ‘the Soviet state was to be an
example for the world of “internationalism in action”, with a free, happy life for all the nations and peoples united inside the 37,000-mile-long border of the USSR’ (Andrei Sakharov Museum, 2013). The ideological character was toned down somewhat after Stalin’s death (Noack, 2006), and the opposition between rest and ‘turizm’ became less stark from the 1970s (Gorsuch, 2003), but Soviet state-organised tourism never completely lost its educational, edifying character.

The role of leisure was the subject of lengthy debates under Khrushchev: concern about the passiveness of tourists on holiday, encouraging more planned, rational and where possible collective uses of leisure time, e.g. lectures, movies, libraries, excursions or physical exercise (as opposed to dancing, card playing or drinking) (Noack, 2006). Party Secretary Leonid Brezhnev has singled out ‘tourism’ as particularly useful in developing patriotism among the young (1971) (Riordan, 1982). Noack (2006) however points out the popularity of ‘wild’ tourism: holidays that were taken outside of the official provision, where the tourists could choose to neglect the self-developing value of the holiday and just relax. He also highlights that the difference between wild and planned tourists was often theoretical from this perspective: even planned tourists found ways to evade the trade union’s solicitude and simply did what they wanted to do (Noack, 2006).

Tourism was seen as a policy measure to achieve a number of benefits for the population. The role officially ascribed to tourism is distinctly functional: to improve health, inculcate patriotism, develop greater knowledge. On their way, ‘tourists’ should hold talks and reading sessions on topical political, economic and other themes, organize artistic displays and take part in agricultural work (Riordan, 1982). The functional role of leisure applies not only to the improvement of the individual, but also to the improvement of society:

Another aim of the authorities has been to see that free time generally is used in a rational way, that leisure should be socially functional. The prevailing functionalized conception of leisure stresses not so much the needs of the individual as those of society. Well-spent time on leisure activities is held to be important because of the contribution it makes to production and the smooth functioning of society in general. It should enrich the individual so that he (sic) may enrich society. Only under socialism, it is argued, is this possible. (Riordan, 1982, p. 71)

This focus on the collective role of leisure results in the relative lack of facilities for families:

In general, Soviet tourism is characterised by an accent on health-seeking (often in a passive sense) and also by an emphasis on group holidaymaking in camps and similar facilities which may not easily cater to the family. The explanation for this situation lies to some extent in ideology: the long-standing distrust of individualism or privatism and the regard paid to educational aims, especially among children and young people. (Shaw, 1991, p. 124)

**Provision and administration of Soviet tourism**

The extent and complexity of the state apparatus providing and administering tourism in the USSR has been highlighted by some authors (Noack, 2006; Shaw, 1991), but a detailed overview in the English language has been lacking so far. This paper builds on the work of the afore-mentioned authors, and has extended it on the basis of an in-depth
literature search of Russian-language sources. Based on this additional research, the following schematic overview of state-provision is proposed, depicting the organisational structure from 1962 (when the Central Council for Tourism and Excursions was given authority over tourism development). Although the Central Council for Tourism and Excursions can be seen as the explicit coordinating body for tourism, the structure shows that a much wider range of organisations were in fact involved in tourism provision (Figure 1).

The figure below highlights how tourism in the Soviet Union was administered by a wide range of governmental and semi-governmental bodies, serving eight target groups or policy areas. Each of these will now be reviewed in more detail.

Tourism for all

As tourism and rational uses of leisure time became part of the constitution in 1936, the Soviet state developed structures that supported the development of a tourism infrastructure ‘for all’, for every Soviet citizen. From 1962 onwards, the responsibility for developing and managing domestic tourism was allocated to the Central Council of Tourism and Excursions of the All-Union Central Council of Trade Unions. This authority had branch offices or councils in republics, regions, provinces, cities and districts (Usyskin, 2000).

The Central Council of Tourism and Excursions was established in 1936 and had its own camps. This body organised tours around the USSR for all population groups, and was in charge of republican and regional councils of tourism and excursions. Participants were free to choose the trip they wanted to attend – the holidays took place in
the different regions of the USSR and were heavily subsidised. There were various dis-
counts, for example, discounts in the low season, discounts for families, pensioners, etc. 
Even before the Central Council of Tourism and Excursions was given jurisdiction over 
tourism development, some progress was made in widening tourism participation. 
From 1947 to 1962, the number of tourist centres had increased from 96 to 297, and 
more than 200 tourist and recreational camps and 660 fisherman and hunter loges 
were built. All this has allowed trips and excursions for more than 10 million 
people. After the formalisation of its tourism authority in 1962, however, the pace of 
progress increased rapidly. From the 1960s to 1990s, the Council developed more 
than 20,000 tourist routes (Pirozhnik, 1985).

The Central Council of Tourism and Excursions was overseen by the All-Union 
Central Council of Trade Unions. Every organisation involved in tourism was con-
nected to the All-Union Central Council of Trade Unions, because every working 
person paid contributions to trade unions. The Central Authority of the Trade 
Unions, created in 1918, supervised all activities of the trade unions in the USSR 
(Ashwin & Clarke, 2002).

**Amateur tourism**

Amateur tourism can be defined as travel that was self-organised by tourists and relied 
heavily on exercise and physical modes of transportation (Pasechnii & Fadeev, 1980). 
It promoted physical activity, moral strength and endurance in the face of nature. 
Amateur tourism was organised by ‘tourist clubs’ in enterprises. The group size, equip-
ment, food, choice of methods of transport (walking, skiing, mountain, water, bicycle, 
etc.) were determined by the tourists themselves, and self-financed. However, amateur 
tourism was not uncontrolled (like so-called wild tourism): it was bound by the ‘rules 
of the organisation and management of amateur tourist trips and travel in the USSR’.
This document defined the necessary conditions for the trip, including the composition 
of the group, the requirements for group leaders, the format of the route documentation, 
and the rights and duties of the group leaders and participants. Amateur tourist groups 
had to be registered and approved before they could develop a trip, and tourists had to 
have a permit to participate in amateur travel. Amateur tourism attracted millions of 
Soviet people, especially young workers, students, technical workers and intellectuals 
(Fadeev, 1969).

**Sport tourism**

Tourism and sports were strongly linked in the Soviet Union. Before 1962, when the 
Central Council for Tourism and Excursions became the chief coordinating body for 
tourism development, it had shared this responsibility with the Central Council for 
Sport Societies and Organisations, ‘underlining the tendency to regard tourism as a 
form of sport’ (Shaw, 1991, p. 124). From an ideological perspective, sports were seen 
as a prime way to spend one’s leisure time, as it contributed to strong and healthy workers.

For the organisation of sports tourism, the Central Council for Tourism and Excurs-
sions collaborated with the All-Union Council of Voluntary Sports Society, which was 
responsible for sports and physical education between 1935 and 1991. The infrastruc-
ture of the All-Union Council of Voluntary Sports Society consisted of facilities in 
enterprises, public-service institutions, collective farms, state farms and educational
institutions. The Tourism Section worked under the direction of the factory or local
committee of the trade union in close contact with Komsomol (the All Union Leninist
Young Communist League). The main objectives of the section included the physical
and spiritual development of workers and young people, the organisation of tourist trips
and multi-day weekend trips, the training of public personnel and the promotion of
amateur tourism (Pasechnii, 1986). According to Popchikovskii (1987), there were
1419 tourist clubs and over 56 thousand sports clubs with 4.1 million members in
1974; 14,500 sports trips were organised that year, and about 600 people were
awarded the title of Master of Sports via tourism.

Wellness tourism

The Soviet Constitution established the right of citizens to health care and established
the material and legal safeguards to ensure the realisation of this right. Health care was
free in the Soviet system (Soviet Constitution, 1936). ‘A feature of Soviet welfare pro-
vision is the granting to employees of vacations at [sanatoria], often at subsidized rates’
(Shaw, 1991, p. 124). According to the Народное хозяйство в СССР (1982) the quan-
tity of sanatoriums increased from 7200 in 1939 to 26,282 in 1980. In the 1980s, 40
million people made use of these long-term treatment and recreation services. The
organisation in charge of this aspect of tourism was the Central Council for the Admin-
istration of Health Resorts, an arm of the All-Union Central Council of Trade Unions. It
operated via various republic and local trade-union councils, and also via the Ministry
of Health (Shaw, 1991). Workers and employees could get vouchers to sanatoriums for
free or discounted at a rate of 70% of the cost of the permit. In some cases, discounts
were also allocated to spouses or family members. Trips to sanatoriums were during
workers’ regular vacations. The length of stay in holiday homes was from 12 to 24
days, and in sanatoriums from 24 to 60 days. If the workers and employees needed
longer treatments, they could be allocated extra vacation for the period necessary to
complete treatment. This vacation was paid for by social insurance funds. Permits
for rest and treatment were issued to workers by medical commissions (Andreeva,
2001).

Youth tourism

Youth tourism covered all teenagers and youth between the ages of 16 and 30. Young
people could buy travel vouchers with discounts in low season, and even during
vacation periods there were discounts for groups. Sometimes such trips were free,
when they were given as an encouragement for excellent study or for active social
work at university. The Central Committee of the All-Union Leninist Young Commu-
nist League, Komsomol, was the youth division of the Communist Party in the Soviet
Union and played a key role in the provision of youth tourism, via its youth tourism
organisation ‘Sputnik’. Sputnik organised trips around the country and abroad for
youths and students. The Bureau had three lines of activity: the international youth
exchange, travel of the Soviet youth around the USSR (since 1963) and organisation
of the holidays in the tourist centres (Sokolova, 2002).

Sputnik had at its disposal transport, guides and tourist centres. In the Soviet period
Sputnik cooperated with hundreds of foreign youth and student organisations of many
countries of the world. It offered more than 100 routes to foreign visitors who came to
the USSR. By the end of the 10th Five-Year Plan (1976–1980), the Bureau of
international youth tourism ‘Sputnik’ operated in 14 republics, 6 territories, 137 provinces and 48 municipalities and regional organisations. It controlled 9048 beds in 27 hotels, youth centres, tourist centres and camps. Between 1974 and 1982, the domestic holidays organised by Sputnik attracted nearly 33 million young travellers (Voronkova, 2004).

International tourism

International travel developed strongly between 1962 and 1990, but remained a small proportion of tourist activity in the USSR. One central organisation, ‘Intourist’, controlled and managed international tourism in the Soviet Union. ‘Intourist’ regulated all foreign tourists travelling to the Soviet Union and Soviet citizens who wished to go abroad. All the hotels, recreation centres, transport, services and the guides working with foreign tourists were subordinate to ‘Intourist’. Most tourists, entrepreneurs, politicians, journalists were only able to enter the Soviet Union with visas and travel itineraries provided by Intourist (Boichenko, 1979).

In order to publicize tourist trips to the Soviet Union ‘Intourist’ published and distributed, both in the USSR and abroad, tourist brochures, booklets, posters and promotional tourism advertisements on the radio and on television, as well as in the Soviet and foreign press. Packages were offered but the organisation often failed to meet the high demands for service quality of foreign visitors; ‘Excessive bureaucracy, inflexibility and standardization of establishments and services, together with a lack of competition between tourist resorts, all militated against improvements in the quality of service’ (Hall, 1991, p. 50).

From 1956 to 1985, the USSR was visited by more than 70 million foreigners from 162 countries, although not all may have come as tourists. Table 1 summarises international travel to and from the Soviet Union at several points during this time frame.

Foreign travel had been prohibited to Soviet nationals in the late Stalinist era. The regime fostered ignorance about foreign countries and encouraged domestic tourism instead. Tourists were told that it was only within the borders of the Soviet Union that they would receive a warm welcome (Gorsuch, 2003). Although opportunities for foreign travel became more wide-spread from the Khrushchev rule onwards (1953), the USSR remained a relatively closed country throughout the 1980s, and the Committee of State Security thoroughly checked every tourist. The USSR wanted to attract foreign tourists, but did not let its citizens travel freely (Boichenko, 1979). However, Hall (1991) argues that some international tourist flows may be poorly documented. He highlights that significant numbers of Muslims from the

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Table 1. Inbound vs. outbound travel in the USSR (1956–1985).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Foreign visitors to the USSR</th>
<th>USSR citizens travelling abroad</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1956</td>
<td>486,000</td>
<td>561,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1960</td>
<td>711,000</td>
<td>730,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1965</td>
<td>1.3 million</td>
<td>1.2 million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1970</td>
<td>2 million</td>
<td>1.8 million</td>
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<tr>
<td>1975</td>
<td>3.7 million</td>
<td>2.5 million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1980</td>
<td>3 million</td>
<td>4 million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1985</td>
<td>6 million</td>
<td>4.5 million</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Southern Asiatic republics of the Soviet Union undertook pilgrimages to the Islamic Holy Places in Saudi Arabia and elsewhere. This, however, is contradicted by Pipes (1994), who highlights that due to the communist rejection of religion, Soviet Muslims could not participate in the culture of Islam, and only a handful of them made the pilgrimage to Mecca. Those who did travel abroad, did so with special permission of the People’s Commissariat for Foreign Affairs. Mostly permits were given to small delegations on ‘state business’, often to relatively safe ‘people’s democracies’ (Matthews, 1989).

Military tourism

The army in the USSR was an integral part of the state, as part of the dictatorship of the ruling class. Because of their central role in society, specific attention was paid to the leisure and tourism needs of military personnel. Travel vouchers for military tourism were issued by the Department of Tourism and Excursions of the Ministry of Defense, tourist offices of military districts, groups of forces and the navy. Many facilities were camp sites, as army and navy personnel were expected to love the outdoors and develop their physical strength and health on holiday. The holiday facilities also catered to their spouses and family members. Between 1970 and 1980 these military facilities were visited by more than 1.7 million people. On national holidays, additional excursions and short trips were organised specifically for military personnel (Voronkova, 2004).

Apart from camp sites, military personnel were also invited to visit large mainstream tourist complexes such as ‘Krasnaya Polyana’, ‘Kudepsta’, ‘Terskol’, ‘Sukhumi’ and ‘Zhdanovichi’. The increasing capacity of tourist centres allowed for 1.1 million military tourists in 1980 (almost twice as many as in 1975). After 1978, nine additional tourist centres were added, specifically serving the Armed Forces of the Soviet Union and their families. This new type of holiday quickly became popular, especially among the young officers. Between 1978 and 1981 more than 60,000 officers and their family members used these facilities, including approximately 42,000 children (Kvartal’nov & Fedorchenko, 1989).

Children’s tourism

Great emphasis was placed on children’s camps and holidays. This tourism type had a clear purpose: to promote health and to create good citizens, notably through the Young Pioneers (Communist Party youth group). Travel to these camps would be by bus and although the vast majority of such tourism took place within the USSR, travel overseas was not unknown. A vast network of facilities developed to meet the needs of this particular sector. The cost of such tourism was heavily subsidised (up to 80%) by the various trade unions and enterprises (Burns, 1998, p. 557).

Another organisation that was involved in children’s tourism was the Ministry of Education, which was responsible for school trips through the Central Children’s Excursion and Tourism Station (Shaw, 1991). The main duties of this organisation were the development of recommendations and routes, the coordination of schools and school institutions, the training and professional development of teachers of tourism (seminars, workshops, study tours, conferences and consultations), the management of group tourism and other recreational-educational activities in the regions (holding rallies, competitions, trips and other events). The main facilities that were
used were holiday clubs and campsites. Children’s holidays took place during vacation periods, summer camps, school camps and other tourist activities. All these activities were free of charge (Pasechnii, 1986). Ideologically, children’s tourism was of great importance as Soviet rulers were strongly focused on creating the ‘best generation ever’ during their reign. Leisure and tourism played a role in this, as exemplified by the fact that all the items children may have needed on holiday were sold below their real cost. The state subsidised items such as clothing, toys and food for children under the age of 16. Extracurricular activities such as art classes and music lessons were also made available for free. Children also formed a target group in wellness tourism: Shaw (1991) points out that a quarter of the beds in sanatoria were for children.

Discussion
The visual representation of the different target groups served by various councils and organisations in the USSR highlights the changing attitude towards tourism development in the Soviet Union between 1962 and 1990: from a marginal policy area, leisure and tourism provision developed into a much more important policy goal. Although it has been highlighted how supply failed to meet demand, and how the international mobility of Soviet tourists was severely restricted, the figure illustrates what is perhaps most comprehensive social tourism policy of the twentieth century.

Social tourism refers to initiatives that aim to include groups into tourism that would otherwise be excluded from it. The earliest definition of social tourism by Hunzicker (1951) defined social tourism as ‘the relationships and phenomena in the field of tourism resulting from participation in travel by economically weak or otherwise disadvantaged elements in society’ (p. 1). Minnaert, Maitland, and Miller (2007, 2009, 2011) define social tourism as tourism with an added moral value, of which the primary objective is to benefit the host or the visitor in the tourism exchange. In practice, social tourism usually refers to budget-friendly domestic holidays, either individually or as part of a group, or in some cases day trips to theme parks, museums and attractions, that are funded or made available at highly reduced rates, by charities or agencies in the public sector.

Although several European countries had social tourism mechanisms in the time frame that is discussed in this paper, such as France, Belgium, Italy and Spain (Minnaert et al., 2011), the number of initiatives and target groups in the USSR vastly outstripped them, and the ‘democratisation’ of (at least domestic) tourism participation was supported by a much greater number of institutions and mechanisms. Since the fall of the Soviet Union, the majority of these initiatives have become obsolete, and many sanatoria and facilities have been sold or privatised. However, the influence of social tourism still remains in Russia today. In 2013, for example, the Russian tourist authority, Rostourism, submitted a proposal that companies should pay up to 40% or 50% of their employees’ holiday, if that holiday is taken within Russia (RIA Novosti, 2013). Although the stimulation of domestic tourism clearly contributes towards economic goals, the potential allocation of special tax codes to stimulate participation may still point to the social foundations that underpinned tourism provision in the USSR.

Conclusion
This paper has explored the numerous ties between tourism and the state in the Soviet Union between 1962 and 1990. It has shown that during this period, tourism grew in
importance as a policy area, and tourism provision was extended for eight target groups. Although the Central Council for Tourism and Excursions, as a part of the All Union Central Council of Trade Unions, was the key coordinating body, many other organisations were involved at different spatial levels. The visual representation provided earlier shows the complexity of the network of tourism provision, but it also highlights the central position of tourism and leisure in the Soviet Union. Discussions in the tourism literature about the phenomenon of social tourism rarely make reference to provision in the Soviet Union – an omission that is hard to justify considering the number of initiatives that were available, and the great number of target groups that were served by them. Although tourism in the USSR suffered from structural problems in terms of the level and quality of supply available (Gorsuch & Koenker, 2006), and although it placed severe restrictions on foreign travel, tourism rose from being the 14th most common leisure pursuit in 1955 to the second most common in 1970 (Riordan, 1982). Although state provision of tourism led to under-financing and poor service levels (Gorsuch & Koenker, 2006), it is undeniable that the state contributed significantly to widening access to tourism, albeit only to forms of tourism that were seen as compliant with the communist ideology. ‘Wild tourism’, or tourism that was not controlled by the state, was frowned upon, and is rarely mentioned in the Russian-language sources consulted for this paper.

This paper has made a contribution to existing knowledge in this subject area by supplementing the work of Hall (1991), Shaw (1991), Noack (2006) and Gorsuch and Koenker (2006) with sources in the Russian language. Further research that compares Western interpretations of Soviet tourism with sources in Russian is needed to explore the geographical and social differences between tourists, and how this affected their potential participation. Another under-researched area is that of Soviet citizens travelling abroad as most of the existing literature currently focuses almost exclusively on inbound rather than outbound tourism flows.

Note
1. The use of the term differs from the current interpretation of ‘Tourism for All’ by the European Union – the EU uses the term mainly to refer to accessible tourism (http://www.tourismforall.eu/).

References


