The Russian Empire, like many other Europe countries, became irreversibly entangled in the age of mass politics after the total mobilisation of the First World War. Millions of male citizens, the vast majority peasants, had been drafted into the armies and subsequently politicised.¹ Much of the revolutionary history of 1917 can be read as the failed attempt by Russia’s elites, from liberal to socialist, to cope with the underlying social changes and the political radicalisation of these mobilised masses. The representatives of the provisional government, from liberal to moderate socialists, all too obviously felt uneasy about mass politics, embodied for the time being by the mushrooming Soviets. Even the Mensheviks, outspoken advocates of a social democratic mass party, were overwhelmed. Only the Bolsheviks, driven by a sense of a historical mission, possessed a clear-cut, if not very democratic concept of dealing with the masses. The party claimed the mantle of political leadership as the avant-garde of the working class. Socialist politicians of all camps constantly referred to the masses and claimed to speak on their behalf, but in the critical days of the summer and autumn of 1917 only the Bolsheviks seemed ready to face and direct the mobilised masses in order to overthrow the existing regime.²

Bolshevik leadership, as it soon turned out, was fraught with manipulation and coercion. Three years of civil war, during which the Bolsheviks successfully defended their rule, exhausted the country. Yet after the war was won, the fundamental transformation of Russia which the Bolsheviks aspired to carry out had to be postponed until some degree of economic recovery had taken place. The New Economic Policy (NEP) adopted in 1921 signalled the Bolsheviks’ temporary withdrawal to the «commanding heights» of politics and economy. The role of the masses had to be redefined in theory and practice while the nearly permanent mobilisation subsided for a number of years.

² «The slogan ‘All power to the Soviets’ could only become the Bolsheviks’ slogan». S. Plaggenborg, Experiment Moderne. Der Sowjetische Weg, Frankfurt am Main 2006, 50.
It was clear, however, the velikii perelom, the great transformation, had only been temporarily suspended. Debates on the necessity of a swift industrialisation and the building of socialism continued after Lenin's death in 1924 and characterised the ensuing battles for succession. One should not overlook the vagueness of these concepts before they were put into practice in the notorious Stalinist style. Indeed, discussions among communists in the second half of the 1920s displayed a polyphony of voices and differing interpretations, with competing perceptions of the masses and their role in the imminent transformation of state, society and economy. If wide participation of the masses was de rigueur, the degree of self-organisation accorded to them varied significantly.

Initially, Trotsky, and with him other leaders in the armed forces, seemed to regard large voluntary organisations primarily as an instrument for the necessary demobilisation of the Red Army after the civil war and the creation of a military and labour reserve. Increasingly, however, the creation of large voluntary associations was also seen as an important instrument for mobilising beyond the groups the Bolsheviks had relied on so far, i.e. workers and soldiers. During the 1920s, Soviet voluntary organisations were called to fight against religious cults («All-Union League of the Godless»), promote alphabetisation («Down with Illiteracy»), support Soviet defence and aviation («Society for the Support of Defence and the Aviation and Chemical Industry» – Osoaviakhim, «Nationwide Compulsory Preparation» – Vsevobuch) and promote personal hygiene or physical culture (voluntary sport associations). It seemed that such volunteer organisations were potentially capable of organising «everyone and everything within its framework and to set and keep them in motion». Indeed, in some organisations like Osoaviakhim, millions of members enrolled.

The list of organisations illustrates firstly that, as a rule, voluntary associations were created to pursue a clearly spelled out goal. Secondly, the thrust of most associations penetrated the private sphere of Soviet citizens' lives and, in anticipation of the grand transformation, aimed to influence some of their mundane practices. Against this backdrop, supposedly non-political realms like tourism and travel could also be recast as battlegrounds for the coming class wars or as veritable construction sites for the building of socialism. The effort of some party and Komsomol members, dedicated tourists themselves, to reinvent tourism as a particular «proletarian» pursuit of leisure and, more importantly, as an effective means of mass mobilisation, fits into this greater picture. In contrast to other Soviet mass organisations, the «Voluntary Association for Proletarian Tourism» propagated means (tourism) to...
propel change, not political ends. This required, as I will discuss in the following sections, a complete remoulding of the concept of tourism. As a result, the pursuit of modern leisure emerged as an embodiment of almost all the values that were dear to Stalin’s cultural revolution.5

Sometimes radical to the point of ridiculousness, the Soviet proletarian re-invention of tourism has fascinated historians of Stalinist cultures. Diane Koenker has exploited the contradictions and inconsistencies of the «proletarian» concept of tourism and inquired into its consequences for the practice of Soviet tourism under Stalin.6 In her detailed study on Soviet alpinism, Eva Maurer has comprehensively outlined the political setting in which the project was launched. Her research, however, focuses on the unredeemed promise of a social opening in which proletarian tourism extended to the elitist realm of mountaineering.7 Soviet and post-Soviet historiography, on the contrary, has acknowledged the final failure of the project, but has also been very reluctant in terms of interpretation.8 My own discussion aims to contextualise the project of proletarian mass tourism in the contemporary debates on mass politics.

1. «Normalisation» and Its Critics: Soviet Tourism in the 1920s

Vacation and recreation appeared on the agenda of the new regime surprisingly early. Soviet activities initially focused on two areas: recreation and educational excursions. Tourism in the narrow sense of the word, i.e. active movement from one place to the other, was largely neglected. Given the relatively modest development of domestic travel and tourism before 1917, the Bolsheviks indeed showed some degree of foresight when they opted to explore the propagandistic values of opening the country’s health facilities to the «toiling masses» at the height of the civil war. Beginning in 1919, the government issued a series of decrees with the aim of nationalising existing sanatoria and converting former private villas, particularly in the Crimea, into «recreation homes» for workers and peasants from Russia or abroad.9

9 For these decrees, see I. I. Kozolov, V.I. Lenin I...
Due to the austere circumstances of war communism, the opening up of the resorts remained a largely symbolic act. The number of beds on offer in 1921 did not exceed five thousand. Despite the rhetorical reference to the masses, only a few workers who were hand picked by the trade unions could enjoy vacations on the country’s southern shores. The ensuing economic recovery during the NEP period would facilitate the extension of this recreational infrastructure. Still, the New Economic Policy also meant a retreat of state and party from earlier «revolutionary» projects in the realm of recreation and educational travel. This resulted in lower subsidies for workers’ holidays and, as a consequence, the number of state-sponsored vacationers dropped from 65,000 in 1921 to 28,000 one year later. By contrast, the number of beds available rose slowly but continuously, and by 1928 some 80,000 beds were on offer at the Soviet Union’s health and recreational resorts. Many of the nationalised sanatoria and recreational facilities in the country’s health and seaside resorts passed into the hands of local authorities who then leased them out to private entrepreneurs. This revival of a market-driven tourist industry, particularly on the Black Sea, was epitomised by the large number of guide books published in the second half of the 1920s. Many of these contained advertisements for privately run businesses that offered all kinds of amenities for travellers.

The cutbacks in state-sponsored recreation for workers and peasants and the overt commercialisation of tourism could not but fuel communist discontent with what was perceived as a betrayal of the «Leninist legacy»: contemporary Soviet caricatures, for example, showed affluent NEP men (and women) edging out the toilers from the beaches and café terraces in the country’s kurorty.

The changes from the New Economic Policy also affected other ideologically charged domains of early Soviet tourism, like excursions. Excursions had gained enormous popularity in pre-revolutionary Russia, especially in the struggle of the zemstvos (organs of local representation and self government) for the introduction of a comprehensive school system. Under the conditions of widespread illiteracy, excursions seemed particularly effective as a visual and hands-on means of education. Beyond that, local educational facilities (kraevedenie) were regarded as a substantial element in civic education. From early on, the Soviet regime had strongly supported initiatives in the field of public education. In Petrograd, for example, leading academics successfully lobbied for the opening of so-called «excursion bases» in and around the former capital and other major cities between 1918 and 1922.

11 Maurer, Pik Stalin, 78.
12 Dolzhenko, Istoria turizma, 46–60.
These bases provided instruction and accommodation for pupils (and workers continuing their education in the new «red» educational facilities) on one – day or weekend outings. Crucially, under the conditions of war communism, they also offered the necessary equipment and food supplies for these excursion groups. Gradually, the People’s Commissariat for Enlightenment of the RSFSR (Narkompros) extended the network of excursion bases and offered professional training to volunteers acting as guides. After the civil war, a small number of long-distance excursions were offered, such as from Moscow and Leningrad to the Crimean peninsula, where even a rudimentary infrastructure of excursion bureaus and bases also emerged.

These initiatives were backed by a number of influential «old Bolsheviks», among them Lenin’s spouse Nadezhda Krupskiaia, the first people’s commissar for enlightenment Anatolii Luncharskii and the deputy commissar of justice of the RSFSR Nikolai Krylenko. Nonetheless, the lifespan of these initiatives was limited. With the «normalisation» during the NEP period, efforts to mobilise the population for «purposeful» leisure pursuits were moderated. Moreover, the availability of commercial mass culture diminished the attractiveness of the very basic self-education facilities. In 1922–23, pre-revolutionary tourist organisations like the «Russian Society of Tourists» (Rossiskoe obshchestvo turistov, ROT; founded in 1895) reorganised and began arranging trips for members as it had done before the war and revolution. By the mid-1920s, the association counted around 500 active members. The majority came from an academic background, which rendered the society an easy target for the proponents of a «proletarianisation» of tourism in the late 1920s.

Meanwhile, officials in the RSFSR’s Narkompros decided to better adapt the concept of excursions to the new realities of the NEP period. The Moscow-based Institute for Methods of Informal Education (Institut metodov vneshkolnoi raboty) was created to inform and coordinate the work of the excursion bodies. Excursion bureaus, primarily in the south of the country, extended their services to paying customers; some of the unprofitable bases were closed down. In 1926, the Institute was merged with other excursion bureaus into a new United Excursion Bureau of the Narkompros (ob’edinennoe ekskursionnoe biuro Narkomprosa). This bureau was a direct forerunner of «Sovetskii turist», a joint-stock company founded by the People’s Commissariat of Enlightenment in March 1928 to promote the further development of domestic tourism in the USSR. «Sovtury», as it became quickly known, was meant to cater to the material as well as the «cultural and political needs» of tourists and excursion participants. In contrast to the emerging movement of «proletarian tourism», Sovtury and its forerunners emphasised both,
the educational and recreational elements of tourism.\textsuperscript{18} Sovturt took over the infrastructure built up by the People’s Commissariat of Enlightenment and began to offer package tours to Crimea and the Caucasus in the 1929 summer season. Share owners were given preferential treatment, but all citizens could buy vouchers (pute-vki). Well-to-do customers paid higher prices and gains were used to subsidise cheaper vouchers for people earning wages averaging under eighty roubles.\textsuperscript{19}

Sovturt worked quite efficiently. The form of a joint-stock company allowed for more effective fund raising; and the facilities and trained cadres inherited from the forerunner organisation provided the company with a solid foundation. Yet adaptation to the market conditions of NEP came too late, as the political situation began to change dramatically during the founding period of «Sovetskii turist». Its non-ideological approach turned into a disadvantage very quickly.

2. The Invention of «Proletarian» Tourism

The founding fathers of Soviet educational tourism had observed Sovturt’s flirt with capitalism and market mechanisms with growing disappointment and gladly joined younger communist hardliners in vitriolic denunciations of bourgeois «guide-book tourism» (turizm-gidizm).\textsuperscript{20} In terms of content, criticism focused on Sovturt’s commercialism because it supposedly implied a neglect of two basic principles of Soviet tourism. Firstly, the high price of vouchers was said to exclude proletarian workers from participation. Secondly, the alleged emphasis on recreation supposedly deprived Soviet tourism of meaning, thereby blurring the boundaries between «bad» capitalist and «good» socialist tourism, a boundary that was redrawn again and again in contemporary Soviet media.\textsuperscript{21}

Against this backdrop, any competing doctrine of Soviet tourism would have to offer a political purpose in terms of content and have to be more socially inclusive (or selective in favour of the formally excluded) in its forms of organisation. Based on the idea of the voluntary and conscious participation of workers in tourist activities geared toward personal education and collective experiences, «proletarian tourism» claimed to instil communist values and prepare participants for an active involvement in the building of socialism.\textsuperscript{22}

The outlines of this new doctrine were shaped in a series of articles that appeared from December 1926, firstly in newspapers run by the party’s youth organisation, later in journals and monographs.\textsuperscript{23} Among the authors were young Komso-

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{18} Dolzhenko, Istoritsa turizma, 78–79; Usyskin, Ocherki istorii, 100–101, 104–105.
\item \textsuperscript{19} On Sovturt see Orlov/Uruchikova, Massovyi turizm, 41, 55, 71.
\item \textsuperscript{20} Maurer, Pik Stalin, 78; Orlov/Uruchikova, Massovyi turizm, 37 and footnote 2.
\item \textsuperscript{21} See the detailed discussion in Koenker, «The Proletarian Tourist», 125–129.
\item \textsuperscript{22} Ibid., 120.
\item \textsuperscript{23} Much of the earlier discussion was summed up by V. P. Antonov-Saratovskii, Besedy o turizme. Azbuika Sovetskogo (proletarskogo) turizma, Leningrad–Moscow 1930.
\end{itemize}
mol officials like Lev M. Gurevich, but also well-known functionaries of the regime like Nikolai Krylenko, public prosecutor in the RSFSR, or fellow jurist Vladimir Antonov-Saratovskii. The latter would become the chief ideologist of the new movement.24

In a sharp move away from organised package tours as practised by excursion bureaus particularly in Crimea, the advocates of «proletarian» tourism favoured a grass-roots variant labelled samodeiatel’nyi. The Russian term stressed the self-organised, autonomous and amateurish character of this kind of travel. Small groups of enthusiasts would join fellow workers in order to plan and carry out hikes that were off the beaten tracks and largely independent of existing tourist infrastructure. Obviously, its advocates were inspired by the practice of mountaineering in pre-revolutionary Russia and the West. In practical terms, the conceptualisation of samodeiatel’nye groups of tourists was strongly reminiscent of alpinist rope parties and indeed many of the promoters of «proletarian tourism» had practiced mountaineering themselves.25

The obvious advantage of this active form of travel was that it required comparatively modest investments. Equipment or food supplies needed to be provided, but little infrastructure was necessary. Being cheap, it would be accessible to masses of workers who would further promote this form of leisure activity among their fellow workers. Its authors therefore claimed it could be easily introduced across the Soviet Union, wherever class-conscious workers might be convinced of the benefits of tourism. A voluntary association of these self-organised tourist groups would be the logical form of organisation, and it could provide for mass mobilisation across the country.26

In a typical Soviet manner, the issue of Soviet tourism was thus redefined as a problem of consciousness to be mastered by purposeful agitation and propaganda. Turning their backs on the factual problems of tourism development – from the low level of investment and the lack of means and free time on the side of workers to the shortage of cadres, – the promoters of proletarian tourism promised to spark a union-wide mass movement in a short time span.

The autonomy and individualism of such grass-roots tourist groups, however, could not but raise questions about political control and ideological guidance, particularly as the self-organised tourists would travel off the beaten tracks. In all likelihood, therefore such tourism would transcend the boundaries of firmly established Soviet rule, largely limited to urban areas at the time. Not surprisingly, much of the

24 The first programmatic article, «Organizuem massovyi turizm», was published in the central newspaper Komsomol’skaya pravda, on 16 December 1926.
26 Bulletin of Central Council and Moscow Oblast Section of the Society for Proletarian Tourism 2–3 (February–March 1930). 24: Turist-aktivist 1 (January 1932), 7; Turist-aktivist 8 (August 1931), 15–16, 41; Turist-aktivist 2 (February 1932), 20, all quoted in Koenker, «Who was the Proletarian Tourist?», 2, 7.
discourse on «proletarian» tourism was concerned with questions of leadership and social discipline.

What exactly should inform the practice of proletarian tourism? Vladimir Antonov-Saratovskii tried to put this in a nutshell in his book from 1930, *ABC of Proletarian Tourism.* In the first place, «proletarian tourists» were represented as the avant-garde of class-conscious workers. They would excel in the workplace, exceed work norms and provide practical and moral guidance to their fellow workers. Embarking on tourist trips, they were expected to visit other factories in order to profit from an exchange of views, or, more realistically, apply their skills to «help» less backward villagers: «... in accordance with their professional and physical potential, they [proletarian tourists] should help local residents in cultural or technical respects, or with their work; for example they might repair agricultural machines, communicate popular agricultural findings, provide care to people and livestock, install radios, take part in the struggle against agricultural wreckers [*vreditel’i*] and parasites or help in field work.» In contrast to tourism in a capitalist environment, the proletarian variant would thus not be an escape from everyday life, but remain firmly linked to the production process.

Secondly, the proletarian tourist educated himself and others. On the one hand, he (very rarely: she) would learn to conquer all kinds of challenges as a member of a hiking party, and to suppress, if necessary, his (or her) own petty bourgeois inclinations to idleness, religiosity or other remnants of the pre-revolutionary lifestyle. As the trips would take the tourists to remote areas, often on the non-Russian periphery of the Soviet Union, they would inevitably emerge as disseminators of a more refined, «cultured» Soviet lifestyle. Although the proletarian tourists were exhorted not to lapse into national stereotypes or prejudices, there was nothing wrong in passing on their superior knowledge to the rural population: «Bringing socialist culture and political enlightenment to the most ignorant and wildest corners of our Union, the tourist should pay particular attention to the less cultured people. In sharing their experiences with them, the tourists should above all explain the national policy of party and Soviet power and, through their behaviour, enhance the solidarity between the toilers of all people.» Sections of proletarian tourism were encouraged to take particular villages or collective farms under their wing (shefstvo).

Thirdly, the tourist, like the sportsman or woman, toughened his (or her) body in physical exercise, which was seen as an important aspect of paramilitary preparation. Against the backdrop of the USSR’s political isolation and the regime’s growing obsession with capitalist encirclement, this was a useful argument in the contest

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28 Ibid., 37.
29 Ibid., 61–66.
30 Ibid., 37.
for resources. Moreover, the advocates of proletarian tourism stressed that the tourist, in contrast to the sportsman, learned to use a map and compass and to survive out in the open.

The collective character of the physical exercise also added a moral dimension: the success of a tourist hike depended on individual sacrifices in the name of the common good. An individual tourist would learn to take on responsibilities in some cases, and to assume the task of leadership in others. In practice, the collective character of «proletarian tourism» was demonstrated through collective mass outings and excursions. «Mass marches (massovki) and training camps are the best form of independent (samostoiatel’nyi) tourism», read an article in Na sushe i na more in 1933. Mass outings were organised on public holidays like May Day or the anniversaries of the October revolution. Several hundred workers would gather on these occasions to visit sites linked to the revolution or the civil war. Occasionally, large proletarian rope parties would also try to climb higher mountains in the Urals or in the Caucasus.

Fourthly, the fact that the proletarian tourists did not follow trodden paths but opened up new routes, often in unknown territories, provided them with a role in the Soviet project of the scientific conquest of nature. Tourists were encouraged to explore the Soviet space as cartographers and to examine nature and natural resources as biologists or geologists. This necessitated, on the one hand, meticulous preparations for the hikes, like training in scientific methods of observation, which in turn extended the pursuit of tourism into the time before and after the actual trip. On the other hand, tourists had to learn how to record, document and report their findings. Indeed, literary techniques like keeping individual and collective diaries were widely used in Stalin’s times as instruments to encourage and at the same time control individual development.

Significantly, «recreation» did not rank highly among the virtues extolled by proletarian tourism. Still, as Diane Koenker has convincingly argued, the concept was fraught with contradictions. Among these, she identifies the relationship between the individual and the collective, as proletarian tourism was conceived to serve both the social body (production and patriotism) as well as the individual self (development of the personality). It stood between mobilisation and «self-locomo-

31 Maurer, Pik Stalin, 90–92; Antonov-Saratovskii, Besedy o turizme, 40–46, 129–130.
32 Quoted from Maurer, «Alpinizm as Mass Sport», 145. See also Maurer’s chapter «Inszenierung der Massen» in Pik Stalin, 143–183; Orlov / Iurchikova, Massovyi turizm, 43, 73, 76; M. Rolf, Das sowjetische Massenfest, Hamburg 2006, for example 88–89.
33 Antonov-Saratovskii, Besedy o turizme, 29–33.
tion», on the one hand, and control and discipline, on the other: «A proletarian tourist, then, was the active tourist, regardless of occupation, sex or social position. And the best form of tourism was independent, samodeiatel’nyi tourism.»

The fear that samodeiatel’nost’ implied a potential loss of control was particularly evident in the persistent campaigning against all forms of «tramping» (brodjazhnichestvo) or «record breaking» (rekordmenstvo), both denounced as forms of travel merely for the sake of travelling. «We are in favour of a cultured, rational use of workers’ holidays; we are in favour of a clear objective of travel [...] We are against the separation from the sphere of production, against roaming across the USSR or around the world, against tramping.» read an article in Na sushe i na more in 1929.

Komsomol’skaia Pravda had denounced the record mania a year earlier: «It is ridiculous to associate travel with attempts to set records [...] Speeding along a route squanders the opportunity to carry out the fundamental task of the tourist – the observation of a locality, nature and the life of the local population.» This was also a helpful argument for insisting on the organisational separation of physical culture and tourism.

3. The Attempted «Proletarian» Takeover in Soviet Tourism

The call for a «proletarianisation» of tourism thus went far beyond the social opening that had characterised early Bolshevik policies in the fields of recreation and educational excursions. The constellations of actors and the outlines of the new concept reveal a much more ambitious project, anticipating the imminent revision of the New Economic Policy in favour of fundamental changes in economy and society. The contemporary volunteer associations provided a blueprint which was creatively appropriated: in this case, proletarian tourism (more than physical culture a means of individual rather than societal transformation) became the declared goal of a broad volunteer movement. By organising workers as tourists into a voluntary mass organisation under their leadership, the founding fathers of proletarian tourism, all of them established Soviet officials, aspired to an active role, firstly in Soviet tourism’s imminent transformation and, moreover, as spearheads of a broad social movement in the coming «great leap forward».

Although proletarian tourism was based on the idea of self-organisation, its advocates still needed powerful allies to launch and propagate their project against Sovtur

35 Koenker, «The Proletarian Tourist», 120, 127, 130–134; Quote from Koenker, «Who was the Proletarian Tourist?», 18.

36 Quote from Maurer, Pik Stalin, 87. See also Antonov-Saratovskii, Besedy o turizme, 66–68. On the surface a rant against established petty bourgeois tourism, agitation of this kind also addressed an important problem of the First Five-Year Plan: the enormous streams of uncontrolled migration from the countryside into the supposedly safer cities and the high fluctuation of cadres at Soviet constructions and productions sites.

37 Quote from Koenker, «The Proletarian Tourist», 126.
and the state agencies that backed it. Pragmatic deliberations played an important role in the choice of the party’s youth organisation as a platform for the attack on the established Soviet tourist organisations. Since the younger generation was seen as the ideal carrier of the new ideals in society, the Komsomol was already engaged in several volunteer associations. Moreover, proletarian tourism explicitly addressed some of the «ills» of Soviet youth discussed in the contemporary press, including antisocial behaviour like drunkenness, hooliganism or allegedly unrestrained sexuality. Apparently, as the authors promised, «dangerous» bodily instincts like sexuality or alcoholism would be suppressed through increased physical exercise.38

Proletarian mass tourism thus seemed to provide ideal instruments for the mobilisation of youth, amalgamating intellectual and moral edification with the suppression of negative inclinations. Against this backdrop, other high-ranking communists like the Peoples’ Commissar for Health, Nikolai Semashko, and the Chairman of the International Association of Red Sports and Gymnastics Associations (Sportintern), Nikolai Podvoiskii, could also be persuaded to advocate on behalf of the idea of «proletarian tourism».39

On that account, the Komsomol leadership readily provided the «proletarians» with press outlets and accommodated another «proletarian» bureau for tourism from January 1927.40 The Komsomol’s Central Committee itself issued several directives mirroring the principles of proletarian tourism during the following months. Self-organisation and autonomy (samodeiatel’nost’) as well as physically active forms of travel were identified as the basic pillars of future Soviet tourism, and the directives stressed its educational, social and military value. At the same time, the creation of a union-wide association of volunteers was discarded as «premature».41

In the face of massive resistance put up by the Narkompros excursion bureaus, which insisted on their statutory monopoly in organising tourism, the Komsomol leadership obviously refrained from an open confrontation. This certainly frustrated the promoters of proletarian tourism, but they had to acknowledge that in practical terms the building of a mass organisation proceeded only sluggishly. Yet with tourism a means rather than an end in itself, any notion of success that proletarian tourism could claim depended on mass membership. Recruitment, however, was not facilitated by the fact that Sovtur had already begun to set up tourist cells and sections at the shop floor level. «Proletarian» counterparts therefore had to be affiliated with regional or local Komsomol branches. Unfortunately, it quickly became clear that many of these administratively founded branches existed only on paper, as

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39 Maurer, *Pik Stalin*, 80.
40 Orlov / Iurchikova, *Massovyi turizm*, 43–45, 47.
41 Ibid., 44, 46, 48–49.
officials had been pressured to join as many voluntary associations as possible. \footnote{42} This could not escape the attention of Komsomol leadership in the long run, and relations with the new bureau noticeably cooled down over the course of 1927.

Without mass membership, voluntary associations would also lack funding. Looking for alternative sources, the «proletarians» increasingly focused on the revived pre-revolutionary Russian Society of Tourists (ROT). With its some five hundred devoted members, ROT had been able to tie in with its earlier activities, including the maintenance of a number of tourist bases. The allegedly bourgeois social makeup of society, «five hundred clerks and one worker», \footnote{43} made it easy prey for proletarian agitation. Via the press, Komsomol members were exhorted to join the association in the beginning of 1928, and within a couple of months the massive entry of some 12,000 young communists rendered the original 500 members a small minority that could easily be outvoted. This happened at a special meeting that was called on 31 May 1928. The majority elected a new leadership under Krylenko and a different statute was passed and acknowledged by the People’s Commissariat of the Interior in November 1928. In articles and internal papers, the association was re-baptised as the «Society for Proletarian Tourism» (Obshchestvo proletarskogo turizma, OPT), although the new name was not officially recognised before November 1929.\footnote{44}

From mid-1928, the hijacked Russian Society of Tourists formed the springboard for the final attempts to form a mass association and to take full control over the development of Soviet tourism. The creation of new media outlets was instrumental in this attempt. The journal Na sushe i na more, edited by the Komsomol’s Molodaia gvardia, was attached to the bureau in early 1929. Na sushe i na more addressed the general public while the Bulletin of the Central Soviet of the Society for Proletarian Tourism provided theoretical and practical guidance for its members. Both incessantly repeated the basic rules of proletarian tourism, and both intensified critiques aimed at Sovtur’s allegedly commercial practices, its social exclusiveness and its neglect of the statutory interests of the samodeiatel’nye turisty.\footnote{45}

Sovtur in turn furnished evidence to deny these claims and pointed out the soft spots of its competitor: the poor development in terms of membership, the structural organisation of a voluntary association which defied efforts to control it, and the low effectiveness of ROT / OPT’s practical work.\footnote{46}


\footnote{43} According to Dolzhenko, Istoriiia turizma, 75, this phrase was coined posthumously by Antonov-Saratovskii in 1930.

\footnote{44} Dolzhenko, Istoriiia turizma, 73–75; Orlov / Iurchikova, Massovyi turizm, 50–51, 55.

\footnote{45} Dolzhenko, Istoriiia turizma, 77; Orlov / Iurchikova, Massovyi turizm, 52–55, 69.

\footnote{46} Maurer, Pik Stalin, 83.
As a matter of fact, even after the takeover, OPT continued to fail to live up to the promise of a mass organisation of proletarian tourists. Workers’ engagement, let alone self-organisation, lagged behind excessive expectations. Many of the local groups existed only on paper. Progress in the creation of new tourist bases, the manufacturing and distribution of equipment or the professional training of guides and instructors, envisioned in the statute, were all very modest. At least a few of the active sections, particularly in Moscow, gained some degree of public visibility, mostly through their participation in spectacular mass outings. Six hundred tourists participated in one organised by the Moscow section, some in the disguise of ‘bourgeois’ travellers or ‘globe trotters’, mocking the commercial character of tourism in the West and denouncing meaningless «trampings».

Regardless of these propagandistic achievements, the «proletarians» had to face the fact that, for the time being, neither the Komsomol nor the Narkompros was willing to sacrifice Sovtur, still the greater and the more efficient organisation. A truce was mediated instead, granting Sovtur monopoly over the organisation of package tours, and the Society for Proletarian Tourism obtained the responsibility for grass-roots tourism. But this could hardly solve the conflict. Firstly, the agreement stipulated the right of self-organised tourists to be accommodated in Sovtur’s bases under preferential conditions, which opened the doors for persistent complaints by the «proletarians». Secondly, and probably more importantly, both organisations continued to compete, as in the recruitment of workers or when lobbying Soviet railways for cheap fares.

If the proletarians had to postpone their final assault, time nevertheless seemed to be on their side. While the country drifted into the chaotic period of forced industrialisation and collectivisation, the proletarians looked for further allies and began courting the trade unions. The latter had abstained so far from direct involvement either with voluntary organisations or with tourism, although they were seriously involved in the organisation and propaganda of physical culture and ran a number of health facilities at the country’s resorts. For OPT, the trade unions looked like ideal partners for outflanking Sovtur. In organisational terms, the trade unions were present at the shop floor level in every Soviet factory or institution, and they had discretionary power over the allocation of so-called «cultural funds». Here was an alternative source of funding for the ambitious project of mass tourism, unspoiled by any commercial stain. If the «proletarians» could have exploited the trade unions’ organisational penetration of the Soviet economy and tapped into the cultural funds, they would doubtlessly have been able to finally overpower their rivals. The trade

47 See the sometimes contradictory evidence produced by Orlov / Iurchikova, Massovyi turizm, 57–60, 63, 68, 71. 
49 Orlov / Iurchikova, Massovyi turizm, 53–54.
unions, however, remained cautious. They did not intervene in favour of the new society, nor did they on behalf of the latter’s declared bête noir, Sovtur.  

Therefore, during 1930, the Society for Proletarian Tourism had to revert to its earlier tactics, and it continued to push for the liquidation of the allegedly anachronistic joint-stock company through its press outlets. At the same time, OPT repeatedly offered its services as a «transmission belt» in the ongoing cultural revolution. And, indeed, with the Soviet Union finally embarking on the «great leap forward», the proletarians’ continual self-styling paid off. On 8 March 1930, the Soviet government decreed the fusion of «Sovetskii turist» with the «Society of Proletarian Tourism in the RSFSR». Tellingly, the new organisation bore the name of «All-Union Voluntary Society for Proletarian Tourism and Excursions» (Vsesoiuznoe dobrovol’noe obshchestvo turizma i ekskursii, OPTE). With Krylenko and his deputy Gurevich, two sharp critics of Sovtur and leading propagandists of proletarian tourism took over the leadership. The future seemed to be with self-organised, mass mobilising proletarian tourism.


While the leaders of the proletarian movement had succeeded in stripping the Sovtur managers of power, the victory threatened to become pyrrhic. The declared aims of the new society’s leadership had always been mass mobilisation and politicisation through the medium of samodeiatel’nyi turizm; now they had to cope with the responsibility for the unwanted package tourism inherited from Sovtur. There was little time to celebrate the hostile takeover, as the society got off to a surprising false start: insecure about their future as paid employees in a volunteer organisation, the former Sovtur staff of the tourist bases and excursion bureaus displayed little zeal in the critical months of preparation for the travel season 1930. OPTE’s new leadership had to resort to emergency measures for the distribution of vouchers and some package tours had to be cancelled that year.

Nonetheless, the Society of Proletarian Tourism and Excursions claimed to have served no less than two million Soviet citizens annually. A closer look reveals that

50 Ibid., 60–61. Trade Unions even discouraged workers from paying dues to more than one voluntary association. See Slepyan, «Limits of Mobilisation» 858.

51 The regime’s changing outlook on volunteer organisations is clearly visible from the revision of rules and regulations: Whereas in 1928 the non-commercial principle defined the status of an association, the polozhenie o dobrovol’nykh obshchestvakh and soiuzakh two years later regarded their «active participation in the building of socialism» and their «support of the country’s defence» as its main features. See Orlov / Iurchikova, Massovyi turizm, 77.

52 Dvornichenko, Razvitie turizma, 24–27; Orlov / Iurchikova, Massovyi turizm, 76–77.

53 The problem of permanent employment within the framework of a volunteer organisation was not completely solved until a year later. Orlov / Iurchikova, Massovyi turizm, 88, 90. In 1933 a new government decree eliminated paid positions in voluntary organisations again. Koenker, «Who was the Proletarian Tourist?», 12.

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only 228,000 of them had embarked on package tours in 1934 and only around 43,000 participated in trips covering larger distances. The high figures were achieved by counting participants in one-day excursions, which was no less than 2.15 million the same year. All the same, the number of participants in long distant package tours increased to 69,000 in 1934, but dropped again to 61,200 a year later.\textsuperscript{54}

To justify its claims to represent a large volunteer society and thus make itself indispensable for the regime, the leadership of OPTE reported exponential increases in numbers between 1930 and 1932, its membership allegedly reaching some 936,000 that year.\textsuperscript{55} With a growing membership, the society reported a slow but steady rise in the share of workers, allegedly reaching 49 per cent in 1932. Women (in contrast to children) were not specifically targeted and accounted for less than one per cent of the membership. This is a marked and not fully comprehensible contrast to the practice of many other voluntary associations of the time.\textsuperscript{56}

Indeed, the society continued to struggle with the same organisational problems as before. Although the fusion with Sovtut had put an end to the competition between tourist bodies in the factories, they often showed little or no activity at all. More often than not, local cells officially counted dozens of members, yet only few individuals paid their membership fees. The leadership of the society was also worried by the fact that active members may have acquiesced to this situation too readily: devoted travellers in such cases used the cell exclusively as a resource for their own tourist endeavours. Although the leadership did not tire in denouncing «deviations», on-site, things developed haphazardly.

Still, actual membership, either from individual or corporate bodies, was vitally important to proletarian tourism, not merely for the sake of propaganda: membership fees remained the basic source of income, besides the profit from selling package tours and tourist equipment from the three factories run by the society. After the 1930 fusion, the society supposedly carried over a balance of no more than 2000 roubles on its accounts. Against this backdrop, it is quite impressive that it operated a budget of eighty million roubles two years later. OPTE was not merely able to expand the tourist infrastructure, but it also embarked on symbolic projects like the construction of a large tourist complex in Moscow. Planning for the latter included a six-story hotel, cinemas and shops. It was still under construction when the German attack put work to a halt in 1941.\textsuperscript{57}

\textsuperscript{54} Soviet statistics are problematic in general; in the case of OPTE quantitative and qualitative interpretation is complicated by the loss of archival material for the years 1932–1934.
\textsuperscript{55} All statistical data from Orlov / Iurchikova, Massovyi turizm, 84–86, 90, 94. Given that Ossovikhailim had already 2 million members in 1927, OPTE’s 1932 figure was not particularly impressive.
\textsuperscript{56} Slepyan, «Limits of Mobilisation», 854.
\textsuperscript{57} The Society enjoyed exemption from taxes. For fees and budgets, see Orlov / Iurchikova, Massovyi turizm, 79–81, 94. For the Moscow building complex, see Usyskin, Ocherki, 117.
More importantly, the advocates of proletarian tourism had to face the fact that the share of workers eager to embark on wearisome self-organised expeditions during their rare leisure time remained insignificant. Indeed, the number of registered samodeiatel’nye turisty, around 200,000 annually, stayed relatively stable during the late 1920s and early 1930s, which could have been seen as an achievement in its own right given the turmoil in the country. Yet even under more favourable political conditions and in the absence of institutional competition, OPTE proved incapable of rebuilding Soviet tourism along the lines of samdeiatel’nyi turizm. Obviously, self-organisation as the basis for mass mobilisation did not work. And where it had worked, it functioned largely autonomously. The degree of identification with and the commitment to the aims of the Society for Proletarian Tourism remained at the discretion of the individual tourist cells. Emphasis on the self-organised and grassroots character of tourism, it turned out, meant that there were limited means of enforcing voluntary activity in the field of tourism, either through incentives or through sanctions.

Against this backdrop, control and coercion played an important role in theory and practice. Indeed, even though officials were formally elected, OPTE remained a strictly hierarchical affair. As Aleksei Popov has fleshed out in his study of the administrative practices of the Crimean branch, the Society for Proletarian Tourism and Excursions indeed acted mostly as a transmission belt of party politics. If some of the leaders and ideologists of the association were enthusiastic practitioners of tourism themselves, their handling of affairs within the society displayed the whole range of Stalinist methods of «management», from top-heavy planning, an emphasis on centralisation, moral appeals and coercive means of mobilisation to attempts to control implementation. Beyond this, OPTE’s leadership occasionally resorted to «revisions» of membership cards in order to cleanse the association of unwanted «counterrevolutionary elements».

It does not come as a surprise therefore, that already in 1932, when the Society for Proletarian Tourism and Excursions organised its first union-wide congress, the leadership faced criticism not only from within the society’s own ranks, but also from its early allies. The secretary of the Komsomol’s Central Committee, Andreev, for example, noted that the organisation lagged behind its own aims in terms of membership and the penetration of Soviet society. The society’s merits, on the other hand, were seen in its loyal subordination to «the political and cultural tasks of the party».

Under the conditions of 1932 this meant active participation in the new forms of class war under the banner of industrialisation and collectivisation. Indeed, during
the 1930s proletarian tourism excelled in the same fields as before the merger: the concept safely maintained its supremacy in the public discourse on what «real» Soviet tourism meant, and the society retained its ability to mobilise membership where it was concentrated and active, i.e. in the large industrial cities like Moscow and Leningrad. Urban tourists for example took part in the collectivisation campaigns, and their «sponsorship» (shefstvo) of collective farms was not restricted to the repair of machinery or giving a hand in sowing and harvesting. Tourists from Moscow, for example, organised a meeting in one kolkhoz during which they called for the election of new administration and insisted on the outing of seven «kulak» households. This was proudly recorded by OPTE’s press organs.61

Faced with the dynamics unleashed during the «great leap forward», the regime tried to regain control and to steer society back into quieter waters. The Second Five Year Plan was designed to stabilise production after the unsustainable growth of the first plan. Higher wages were promised for better work and, increasingly obvious in the mid-1930s, a specific Soviet form of «cultured» consumption was stimulated. Then, in 1933, OPTE suddenly had to face criticism «from above» that it had pushed the political, military and educational aspects of tourism at the expense of its recreational task.62 This criticism went far beyond the usual complaints regarding the failures of individual managers or sections to provide tourists with the necessary services, for it fundamentally catered to basic credo of proletarian tourism as opposed to bourgeois ideas of «recreation».

During the following period the society rather reluctantly adopted new catchwords like «tourism is the best form of recreation». Chairman Krylenko admitted the following as late as 1936: «[…] now that the enthusiasm for the building of socialism has seized hundreds of millions, now that there are no citizens left who would be indifferent towards the building of socialism […] there is now no need to begin to advance tourism with political propaganda. We are now aiming at the organisation of healthy vacations for political workers.»63

This insight, assuming it was one, came too late. After the «victory» of socialism in the class wars of the late 1920s and early 1930s, the value of the Society for Proletarian Tourism and Excursions for the regime decreased dramatically. More than many other volunteer associations, which were at least pursuing identifiable goals, proletarian tourism had positioned itself as a catalyst in the cultural revolution. Now that the latter’s aims had been officially achieved, as noted for example in the 1936 constitution, the Society for Proletarian Tourism and Excursions was no longer needed as a «transmission belt» for the party-state. Stalin had declared that life had

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61 For a comprehensive overview of the topics discussed in the OPTE press, see Koenker, «The Proletarian Tourist», passim. For tourists’ participation in collectivisation see Dolzhenko, Istoriia turizma, 83–84.

62 Dolzhenko, Istoriia turizma, 85–86.

63 First published in Na sushe i na more in 1936, quote from Dolzhenko, Istoriia turizma, 94.
become more joyous in the Soviet Union, and now performance mattered in the spheres of consumption and social welfare rather than political principles.\textsuperscript{64} Quite unexpectedly, for its leaders, the society was disbanded by a decree that the Soviet government issued on 17 April 1936. The infrastructure and capital built up by the OPTE was transferred to the trade unions. The All-Union Central Council of Trade Unions created a separate substructure, the «Direction for Tourism and Excursions» (Turistsko-ekskursionnoe upravlenie VTsSPS) to organise all services linked to the offering of package tours, whereas the responsibility of samodiatel’nyi turizm was conferred upon the recently created «All-Union Committee for Physical Culture and Sport»\textsuperscript{65}

5. The Legacy of Proletarian Tourism in Discourse and Practice

In many respects the reorganisation of Soviet tourism under the aegis of the VTsSPS made sense: the «proletarians» themselves had courted the trade unions as financially powerful partners, and the availability of funds resulted in the accelerated growth of tourism facilities in the years to follow. Between 1936 and 1938, the number of tourist accommodations doubled and the number of package tours tripled. In the pre-war years, almost 2.7 million Soviet citizens annually took advantage of the services of «organised tourism» promoted by the new Direction for Tourism and Excursion.\textsuperscript{66} If Stalin was more worried about performance than about ideology, the 1936 decision proved of value: the trade unions showed considerably more zeal in fulfilling one of the promises of Stalin’s constitution, the «right to rest».

In Soviet and recent Russian historiography, the same decision has been judged «as inflicting serious damage» on the concept of proletarian tourism and the practice of samodiatel’nyi turizm.\textsuperscript{67} Proletarian tourism had indeed failed to deliver the promised mass mobilisation, yet in the wake of the Stakhanov movement the celebration of the individual rather than the collective body informed the self-staging of the regime. The very idea of volunteer associations became increasingly obsolete under the political conditions of the mid-1930s. Hence the concept of proletarian tourism was «demoted» in several respects: the administrative subordination of samodeiatel’nyi turizm under the Committee for Physical Culture meant a slap in the face to the people who had earlier claimed that tourism and sports were worlds apart. As a matter of fact, the fizkulturniki, who had little to do with tourism before, were not hurrying to accommodate self-organised tourism. Moreover, the new

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{65} Dolzhenko, Istoriia turizma, 105; Usyskin, Ocherki, 121–122; Orlov/Iurchikova, Massovyi turizm, 101.
\item \textsuperscript{66} V. V. Dvornichenko, Razvitie turizma v SSSR 1917–1983 gg., Moscow 1985, 47. 49; Orlov/Iurchikova, Massovyi turizm, 104.
\item \textsuperscript{67} Orlov/Iurchikova, Massovyi turizm, 105.
\end{itemize}
structures seemed be getting on well enough without the expertise of the former advocates of proletarian tourism in the OPTE and only a small number of them found continuous employment with the new institutions. In that sense, we may speak of just another hostile takeover.

Worse still, many of the old Bolsheviks among the «proletarians» vanished during the years of the great terror. One of the earliest prominent members was M. Gershuni, the OPTE member responsible for package tours in the Crimea, who was accused of «Trotskyism» in 1936.68 Chairman Krylenko was shot in 1938,69 and the long-standing instructor for mountain hikes and employee of the Foreign Ministry, Vasilii Semenovskii, shared his fate the same year.70 Other representatives like the long-time deputy chair, Lev Gurevich, disappeared in the gulag for thirteen years.71 It ought to be mentioned, however, that their activity in the field of tourism was often of minor importance for the prosecution. All of the functionaries mentioned above had held other responsible political posts, while others, like the guiding ideologist Antonov-Saratovskii, encountered no prosecution.72

In a bitter twist of fate, the promethean concept of the proletarian tourist as an incarnation of the Stalinist «new man» lived on while some of its authors were murdered or perished in the camps. In actual fact, Soviet publications on tourism continued to celebrate the values of «proletarian tourism»: its mass character and self-organisation as well as its multiple purposes fulfilled by tourists, from the collection of ethno- and geographic knowledge to the search for useful mineral resources and the unveiling of foreign agents. These virtues would survive Stalin’s death, if in a somewhat watered down form.

Self-organised tourists continued to be targets of methodological advice73 and efforts to re-establish bureaucratic control.74 As late as the 1960s and 1970s, the trade unions collected reports about tourists «helping» in the countryside. In 1970, such aid could still be offered in a typically «proletarian» fashion. Students from a teachers’ training institute in Minsk, for example, «built three houses, a school and a cowshed for a collective farm in the Altai mountains». Organizing cultural events or conducting scientific fieldwork was likewise extolled. But it was also recorded that tourists in Ukraine displayed more contemporary ecological concerns and analysed sewage waters from agro-industrial production; other tourists planted trees in Estonia. The fact that three Soviet motor tourists repaired a broken down Citroen

68 Orlov / Iurchikova, Massovyi turizm, 85.
69 A 1988 biographical sketch on Krylenko still passes in silence over the repression. Dolzhenko, Istoriia turizma, 94–104. On his prosecution see Maurer, Pik Stalin, 196–197.
70 A short biography is provided by Maurer, Pik Stalin, 443. For the effects of the terror on Alpinism, see ibid., 192–197.
71 Orlov, Iurchikova, Massovyi turizm, 102; Maurer, Pik Stalin, 355.
72 OPTE itself had not been immune to the Stalinist culture of denunciation and repression. See Orlov /Iurchikova, Massovyi turizm, 84–85, 93, 95.
73 Kratkii spravochnik turista, Moscow 1985.
74 See the recommendations in Kratkii spravochnik, 3–25.
owned by a Danish couple on a camping site near Smolensk was noted with particular pride.\textsuperscript{75}

As late as 1989, primers used for the formation of cadres still claimed to fulfil important educational ends: «[...] instructing people in ideological and political respects, morally, in respect to their work and physical fitness [...] The accomplishment of useful public work on their tours raises the social importance of self-organised tourism, renders it more interesting, purposeful and positively influences personality.»\textsuperscript{76}

The same primer also depicted the male tourist as an exemplary citizen because of his ability to organise his everyday life more efficiently than the average Soviet citizen. The authors emphasised that 67 per cent of male tourists accomplished household work «no less than their wives», thus showing little resemblance to rank-and-file Soviet husbands and their domestic tyranny.\textsuperscript{77}

In practical terms, OPTE’s fall from grace probably mattered less to the practitioners of samodiatel’nnyi turizm than to its ideologists. Due to its particular nature, the extent of samodeiatel’nnyi turizm had always been difficult to quantify, even for its advocates. As analysed above, neither OPT nor OPTE seemed to have been capable of raising the number of grass-roots hikers significantly. Accommodation in the bases continued to be difficult, and even the distribution of discounted railway tickets or of turistskie knizhki never proceeded efficiently.\textsuperscript{78} After 1936, the Councils for Physical Culture and Sport also did not hurry to accommodate tourists, a section opened only in 1940,\textsuperscript{79} nor did it bother to measure the popularity of its latest acquisition. Still, there is little indication that this form of tourism declined before the Great Patriotic War.

Grass-roots tourists themselves were not simply acquiescent. Contributions to Na sushe i na more and even to Pravda in 1936 and 1937 clarified that the new structures did little in the way promoting samodeiatel’nnyi turizm. The creation of a network of tourist clubs was suggested as an alternative. In fact, only one such tourist club for self-organised tourism was created before the war, in 1937 in Rostov on the Don.\textsuperscript{80}

In the long run, the abandonment of samodeiatel’nnyi turizm by the Soviet institutions would not lead to its demise, but rather to its triumphant revival in the post-war period, particularly after Stalin’s death in 1953. While the relaxation of political coercion, the economic normalisation, the increasing levels of urbanisation and education and, finally, the growing amount of free time enjoyed by Soviet citizens

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{75} Gosudarstvennyi arkhiv Rossiiiskoi Federatsii (GARF) f. R 9520, op. 1, d. 1491, ll. 1–21.
\item \textsuperscript{76} A. Kh. Abukov, Turizm na novom etape. Sotsial’nye aspekti razvitiiia turizma v SSSR, Moscow 1983., 128–135, quote 133.
\item \textsuperscript{77} Ibid., 130.
\item \textsuperscript{78} The latter were food ration cards valid across the USSR. Tourists could acquire them after handing in their local ones. Orlov/Iurchikova, Massovyi turizm, 87.
\item \textsuperscript{79} Dolzhenko, Istoriia turizma, 107.
\item \textsuperscript{80} Ibid., 106–108.
\end{itemize}
created the necessary preconditions, the general lack of these things had been continuously ignored by the inventors of proletarian tourism. Again, as in pre-revolutionary Russia and in the 1920s, it was primarily the urban and well-educated milieu of Soviet academia that engaged in grass-roots forms of tourism. As a matter of fact, after the mid-1930s the social exclusivity of samodeiatel’nyi turizm ceased to be targeted in public, while at the same time the continued lip service to the ethics of proletarian tourism provided a new generation of samodeiatel’nye with the perfect smokescreen for their engagement in a distinctive form of tourism. The emergence of tourist clubs in many institutions of higher learning during the 1950s and their broad dissemination during the 1960s was just one indicator of the revival, the renaissance of tourist rallies on a regional, and later national, level, was another.

Both phenomena were evidence that the Soviet tourist was indeed capable of self-organisation. There is reason to assume that the high degree of autonomy characteristic for these forms of tourism was retained even after the trade unions «rediscovered» samodeiatel’nyi turizm in the 1960s and strove to take it back under its wing through the organisation of a «Federation of Tourism» in the 1970s. A dedicated «Direction» was also attached to the Central Council for Tourism and Excursions. In practice, however, the rallies in particular, which were born out of the idea physical competition, defied narrow ideological prescriptions. On the contrary, they became important meeting places for a self-organised tourism only superficially linked to established Soviet institutions. People gathered for the exchange of experiences, hand-drawn maps, literature and equipment. Later, the rallies acquired elements of folk festivals due to the space allocated to competitions for poetry and song performances.

As a matter of fact, if the continuity with what the proletarians had preached was palpable in the autonomous practice, the opposite was true for the ideological content. Diane Koenker has argued that the contradictions of «proletarian tourism» in theory and practice had already created space for Soviet tourists to create themselves, either in groups, families or individually. Now that obtrusive paternalism à la OPT(E) was a thing of the past, this space widened and, particularly during the thaw, samodiatel’nyi turizm became the incarnation of a new, much less ideologically charged and militarised way of life for the post-war generation, later labelled shes-
tidesiatniki («generation of the sixties»). Without rejecting some of the principles developed before the war, especially the collective character of hikes or the quest to travel beyond the trodden paths, the Soviet tourists of the late 1950s and 1960s developed their own subculture, aptly if ironically characterised by Petr Vail’ and Aleksander Genis: «The style of the era was easiness, mobility, openness. Where are you off to and why? Where and why did not matter much. That was the innovation. These nomads never needed a particular destination. Their aim was misty and alluring – romanticism [...]»85 At the same time samodiatel’nyi turizm remained a thoroughly collective undertaking. To quote Vail and Genis again, «[...] the traditional romantic conflict emerged transformed: in fact, it was not the lonely hero who faced a conservative public, but on the contrary a romanticised collective struggled and convinced sporadic retrogrades. Public convention did not allow for not being romantic [...] The non-romantics kept silent, when the others sang. And the collectives roaming the countryside sang: crews of sailors or airliners, expeditions of prospectors, rope teams of mountain climbers, tourist groups [...]».86

The proletarian concept of the collective had been firmly rooted in the Soviet concept of comradeship, which itself referenced the underground traditions of the old Bolsheviks. «Comrades were there for the cause and with their peers, or they were no comrades at all.» Friendship, in contrast, was an ideologically less clear-cut issue. Friendships were more mutually affective, and not necessarily charged with Soviet values or morals.87 Interestingly, they could retain a collective rather than an individual tinge in the post-Stalin context.

In any case, the atmosphere of friendly mutual understanding proved to be more important than achievements in industrial production. To little effect, «traditionalists» in the tourist administration repeatedly denounced the practices of going out just for having a good time, eating and drinking.88 And it was in no way accidental that one of the outstanding features of contemporary popular culture, the bard movement (sometimes dubbed «samodeiatel’naia pesnia» or avtorskaia pesinia, «authors’ song»), developed out of the practice and folklore of the Soviet grass roots tourism. Both the practice of samodiatel’nyi turizm and samodeiatel’naia pesnia lost visibility during the 1970s and 1980s, but lived on to see an astonishing revival in the late 1990s and 2000s in Russia and among Russian expats, of which dozens of highly active internet sites bear witness. Many include historical documents and accounts, which will be instrumental for a deeper analysis of the tourist practice in the post-war Soviet Union.

85 P. Vail’ A. Genis, 60–e. Mir sovetskogo cheloveka, Moskva 2001 (Reprint), 126.
86 Vail / Genis, 60–e, 127. For a similar assessment, see Stites, Russian Popular Culture, 145.
88 Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Rostovskoi oblasti, f. R-4257, d. 536, ll. 60–63.
«A Mighty Weapon in the Class War»: Proletarian Values, Tourism and Mass Mobilisation in Stalin’s Time

The article contextualises the 1920s Soviet project of «proletarian» tourism in contemporary debates on the politics of mass culture. Juxtaposed both with established Western and Soviet practices, the project of «proletarian» tourism tried to bridge the gap between self-organised, «grass-roots» tourism and the hierarchic character of Soviet mass organisations. Anticipating the ideology of Stalin’s cultural revolution, the idea of «proletarian» tourism and the creation of a mass volunteer organisation seemed congenial, yet the analysis of the institutional history displays the many obstacles that the realisation of the project encountered. When the regime declared the achievement of the great social transformation in the mid-1930s, the project of «proletarian» tourism was unceremoniously abandoned. However, some of the ideological notions of «proletarian» tourism displayed a remarkable resilience in Soviet debates, while behind the ideological smokescreen of political correctness a largely self-organised grass-roots tourism saw an astonishing revival in the post-war Soviet Union.

«Eine schlagkräftige Waffe im Klassenkampf»: Proletarische Werte, Tourismus und Massenmobilisierung in der Stalin-Ära


«Une arme puissante dans la lutte des classes»: Valeurs prolétariennes, tourisme et mobilisation de masse à l’époque de Staline

S’appuyant sur des débats contemporains sur la politique culturelle de masse, l’article essaie de contextualiser le projet soviétique de tourisme «prolétarien». Se distinguant des formes établies en Occident et en Union soviétique, le projet de tourisme «prolétarien» visa à combler l’écart entre le tourisme auto-organisé, dit «grass-roots» tourism et la structure hiérarchique des organisations soviétiques de masse. L’idée de tourisme «prolétarien» et la création d’une organisation de volontaires de masse anticipa l’idéologie stalinienne de la révolution culturelle. Cepen-

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