

‘Like Sheep’? Disobedience Among Soviet Tourists Travelling Abroad

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RESÜMEE

Die Einführung des von der UdSSR ausgehenden Auslandstourismus im Zuge der Chruščevschen Tauwetterpolitik bescherte den sowjetischen Autoritäten eine Reihe schwieriger Fragen: Wie ließen sich Bürger finden, die die Sowjetunion im Ausland würdig vertreten würden, wie konnten die Touristen während der Reise unter Kontrolle gehalten werden, und wie konnten Auslandsreisen propagandistisch genutzt werden? Vor dem Hintergrund dieser Fragen betrieben die staatlichen sowjetischen Tourismusorganisationen einen beträchtlichen Aufwand, um Auslandsreisen zu einem kontrollierbaren Element der Kulturdiplomatie zu formen. Der vorliegende Artikel befasst sich in diesem Kontext mit Momenten, in denen die Kontrollmechanismen zeitweilig nicht mehr griffen, etwa wenn Touristen aus den erwarteten Verhaltensmustern ausbrachen oder Mängel in der Reiseorganisation den reibungslosen Ablauf der Auslandsfahrten störten. Derartige Vorfälle waren mehr als nur Unregelmäßigkeiten in einer ansonsten geölten Inszenierungsmaschinerie – sie verwiesen auf strukturelle Probleme des Auslandstourismus, eines wichtigen Elementes der Außendarstellung in Zeiten des Kalten Krieges.

Introduction

When in late January of 1969 foreign tourism professionals of the Soviet trade unions met for a conference in a small village near Moscow, it was mostly business as usual.¹ The

1 GARF, f. 9520, op. 2, d. 32.

events of the Prague Spring had had an effect on tourism to Czechoslovakia and were mentioned, of course, but mostly the problems that were discussed by the participants were known for years: misbehaviour and illegal trade activities by tourists, shortcomings in travel programs, poor coordination between the various organisations involved in Soviet foreign tourism and so on. 14 years after the Communist Party had launched regular outgoing foreign tourism as a symbol of a new openness after Stalin's death, it seemed as if travelling abroad had almost become routine. The above-mentioned issues aside, things looked quite satisfying. The numbers of tourists going abroad was constantly growing and the share of workers and kolkhoz members among Soviet foreign travellers had also reached new heights.²

However, the USSR was yet far from claiming to be a 'normal' member of the international tourist community. There was still something oddly old-fashioned about the way Soviet foreign trips were organized. From the very beginning in 1955, the decision to allow foreign travel to a limited number of citizens was flanked by a whole host of precautionary measures in an attempt to insure against ideological harm.³ And it showed: While in the popular 1968 Soviet adventure movie "Diamond arm" (*Brilliantovaja ruka*) the main heroes travel casually and relaxed on a cruise trip along the Black Sea and embark on individual walks through Istanbul, in reality things looked a lot different. Vladimir Ankudinov, who between 1947 and 1968 had served as Chairman of Intourist and was now head of the Administration for Foreign Tourism at the Council of Ministers (*Upravlenie po inostrannomu turizmu pri Sovete Ministrov SSSR*), at the above-mentioned conference gave a different account of a Soviet tourist group he met on a vacation in Bulgaria in 1969:

*I personally observed the behaviour of our tourists, who were [...] on a holiday. I really ask you, comrades, to change the instructions that you [...] give to these groups. All the tourists – from Yugoslavia, Austria, Italy, West Germany, Poland, Czechoslovakia, the GDR behave themselves at the beach [...] like normal people, they take a walk in pairs, as a threesome or foursome; but our tourists: in groups, like herds. I can't stand it any longer, approach a group and ask: [...] Why do you walk around like sheep? We were instructed that way, they answer. That's a shame for our country and for our people. What are we afraid of? [...] Why are we afraid of taking a bath at the beach, of playing ball with other tourists?*⁴

It is rather revealing that of all people Ankudinov, one of the leading figures in Soviet foreign tourism for more than twenty years, was supposedly surprised by the conse-

2 See the next chapter for more detailed information about the statistical indicators of Soviet foreign tourism.

3 Those measures included an enormously complicated and bureaucratic application process and a constant surveillance of tourists during their trip, see for example A. Gorsuch, *All this is your world. Soviet tourism at home and abroad after Stalin*, Oxford/New York 2011, 80-87, 117-120 and S. Shevyrin, *Za granitsu! (Iz istorii zarubezhnogo turizma v SSSR)*, <http://www.permgani.ru/publikatsii/stati/za-granitsu-iz-istorii-zarubezhnogo-turizma-v-sssr.html>.

4 GARF, f. 9520, op. 2, d. 32, l. 134f.

quences of the control excesses that were so characteristic for the travel experience of his compatriots. It was a rare confession of a high ranking official that at the very core there was something wrong with the project of Soviet foreign tourism. Just a few moments earlier during the same speech, the tourist official had boasted that “a group of Soviet tourists in some countries on a ten to twelve-day trip is more effective than a diplomatic mission in twenty years.”⁵

There was a clear contradiction between what Ankudinov claimed to be true and what he observed with his own eyes. How could Soviet tourists have an effect on the population they visited if they had no chance to communicate with anyone outside their own group and did not even look like ‘normal people’? Not to mention that recent developments did not make it easier for them to promote the merits of their native country to foreigners. Economically, the Soviet Union was “ceasing to catch up and overtake”,⁶ liberal concessions in various eras of cultural and social life that had been associated with Khrushchev’s Thaw had been taken back and Prague Spring was crushed by the Red Army just a few months earlier.

While all of these developments certainly diminished the effectiveness of Soviet foreign tourism as a cultural-diplomatic mission, this article will argue that the exploitation of tourists for propagandist means did not just start to stumble in 1969, but was much rather from the very beginning fraught with problems. One reason for this was that controlling entire tourist groups for the duration of their trip for various reasons proved to be a demanding task for the responsible Soviet travel organisations. After all, the tourists quite often resembled anything but passive sheep, ignoring instructions and following their own agenda instead.

Just a few years ago, little was known about Soviet foreign tourism. Anne Gorsuch, who published her first article on ‘Time Travellers’ to Eastern Europe in 2006, basically had to carry the load alone in the first few years.⁷ However, the topic has recently gained in popularity and the scope and depth of the field has widened. A number of researchers have worked with oral testimonies of former tourists, which helps to understand how Soviet citizens experienced travelling abroad under the specific circumstances of their time.⁸ While initially the years under Khrushchev had been the focal point of attention,

5 GARF, f. 9520, op. 2, d. 32, l. 129.

6 P. Hanson, *The Rise and Fall of the Soviet Economy. An Economic History of the USSR from 1945*, London et al. 2003, 126.

7 A. Gorsuch, *Time Travellers. Soviet Tourists to Eastern Europe*, in: Anne E. Gorsuch a. Diane Koenker (ed.), *Turizm. The Russian and East European tourist under capitalism and socialism*, Ithaca 2006, 205–226. A notable exception is the dissertation of Ekaterina Andreeva about Russian tourism to France from 2006, see E. Andreeva, *Evolutsija turističeskich praktik russkich vo Frantsii. Načalo XIX – nachalo XXI v.v.*, Saratov 2006.

8 See for example A. Popov, *Po tu storonu ‘zheleznogo zanavesy’: Velikiie otkrytiia sovetских turistov*, published online in June 2011, <http://hist-tour.livejournal.com/2011/06/23/>; D. Raleigh, *On the Other Side of the Wall, Things Are Even Better. Travel and the Opening of the Soviet Union: The Oral Evidence*, in: *Ab Imperio* (2012) 4, 373–399; S. Zhuk, *Closing and Opening Soviet Society (Introduction to the Forum)*, in: *Ab Imperio* (2011) 2, 123–158; A. Golubev, *Bringing Home New Things and E* <http://www.permgani.ru/publikatsii/stati/za-granitsui-iz-istorii-zarubezhnogo-turizma-v-sssr.html> motions: *Soviet Tourists Abroad as Consumers*, New Orleans 2012, https://www.academia.edu/3202133/Bringing_Home_New_Things_and_Emotions_Soviet_Tourists_Abroad_as_Consumers.

the majority of the recent studies additionally or even exclusively cover foreign tourism under Brezhnev.⁹ Only the 1980s and especially the perestroika are still a somewhat neglected area.¹⁰

Working mainly with trip reports, protocols, statistics and annual reports from Soviet tourist organisations stored in Russian archives, but also taking into account recent relevant studies, this article takes a look at how Soviet travellers found ways to break the enforced group discipline while being on foreign trips. Such deviations from prescribed norms deserve a deeper analysis, because they allow us to perceive Soviet tourism not only as a flawlessly orchestrated collective performance, but as an undertaking, where travellers took the opportunity to express their intentions and act individually within given constraints. By looking at the exception from the rule, we learn about yet unfulfilled desires of the already privileged Soviet citizens in a socialist society that discovered an increasing lust for hedonistic pleasures and luxury.¹¹ It was not only about consumerism, however. Tourism, described by Dean MacCannell as a powerful globalised cultural experience,¹² offered Soviet travellers glimpses of a different, tempting lifestyle. In the West, excessive drinking, romantic affairs and casual behaviour on foreign trips might have been merely regarded as tourist clichés; nevertheless, it is certainly worthwhile to ask whether travellers from the USSR construed it as a means of rebelling against a state that wanted them to be better dressed, better educated as well as behave better than everyone around them all the time.

This paper tries to assess divergent behavioural patterns of tourists as well as their meaning for Soviet history in general. While the years under Khrushchev are the main focus, the 'boom years' of foreign tourism under Brezhnev are also taken under consideration. Special attention is in this context devoted to the different travel experiences that were provided by the two main tourist organisations, Intourist and Sputnik. Both travel offices had a very distinct approach towards their business, which makes it necessary to treat them individually. Soviet foreign tourism after all was a multi-faceted phenomenon not only with regard to tourist behaviour, but also from an institutional point of view. Since Soviet foreign tourism despite the recent surge in interest still remains a relatively young research field, even basic questions are not yet satisfactorily resolved. One of them is how many tourists actually went abroad in the years following up the introduction of

9 All of the above-mentioned authors cover tourism under Brezhnev, additionally one should mention A. Kozovoi, *Eye to Eye With the 'Main Enemy': Soviet Youth Travel to the United States*, in: *Ab Imperio* (2011) 2, 221–237. Russian historian Sergej Shevyrin has written a short article on outgoing foreign tourism based on documents from the Perm State Archive, covering the years from 1960 to the mid-1970s, see S. Shevyrin, *Za granitsul!* (3). The 2011 dissertation of Anastasiya Mashkova partially covers both the Khrushchev and Brezhnev era, see A. Mashkova, *BMMT 'Sputnik' v 1958–1968 gg. Stanovlenie i razvitie molodezhnogo inostrannogo turizma v SSSR*, Moscow 2011.

10 They are however at least partially covered in the aforementioned articles of Donald Raleigh, Andrei Kozovoi and Sergei Zhuk. Alexey Golubev had the late 1980s as a focus in his article for a Finnish journal, see A. Golubev, *Neuvostoturistin ja läntisen kulutuskulttuurin kohtaaminen Suomessa*. [Soviet Tourism and Western Consumerism: a Meeting in Finland], in: *Historiallinen aikakauskirja* [The Finnish Historical Journal] (2011) 4, 413–425.

11 See D. Crowley, Susan E. Read (ed.): *Pleasures in Socialism. Leisure and Luxury in the Eastern Bloc*, Illinois 2010.

12 D. MacCannell, *The Tourist. A New Theory of the Leisure Class*, Berkeley 1976.

foreign travel in 1955. Thus before dealing with tourists violating “norms of behaviour”, a chapter shall be devoted to this statistical issue, which probably has not gotten enough attention yet.

‘Explosive growth’? About the statistics of Soviet foreign tourism

Estimating the amount of outgoing Soviet tourists is somewhat helped by the fact that there were only a limited number of organisations who offered touristic foreign trips and that it was not possible for Soviet citizen to spontaneously and individually travel abroad on their own.¹³ The institutional structure of outgoing Soviet foreign tourism was basically threefold: Firstly, trips on a commercial basis (meaning that touristic services were bought from professional travel organisations abroad) were organized since 1955 by Intourist, which at that time was affiliated with the foreign trade ministry. In 1964 Intourist became part of the newly-built Administration for foreign tourism at the Council of Ministers, which had a ministry-like status.¹⁴ Secondly, the Komsomol founded its own youth travel office, Sputnik, in 1958, first and foremost to give its own members a platform for touristic exchange and an opportunity to spread “the truth about life in the Soviet Union” around the world.¹⁵ It operated on a non-commercial basis, which meant that touristic services were strictly delivered based on exchange agreements with foreign partner organisations.¹⁶ Finally, beginning in 1958 the Soviet trade unions also provided touristic trips through their own tourist office, mostly for distinguished workers, who received discounts on their travel vouchers.¹⁷ As in the case of Sputnik, trips were organized on a non-hard-currency basis.¹⁸ Apart from that, the trade unions cooperated with Intourist, promoting the latter’s trip offers on a local factory level, assembling the travel groups and preparing the tourists for the trip.

Travelling abroad as a tourist for a Soviet citizen required to apply for a travel voucher of one of the abovementioned organisations, usually through a trade union official at his workplace (for trips with Intourist or the trade union) or at the local Komsomol office (for trips with Sputnik).¹⁹ Since annual statistics of the Soviet travel offices are stored in

13 This remained in principle also true after 1967, when Soviet tourists for trips to socialist countries only needed their internal Soviet passports (as opposed to the international passport that was required before) and a tourist voucher, see A. Gorsuch, *All This*, 86-87 (3). The complicated procedure that was required to receive a tourist voucher was not changed.

14 In 1969 it was again restructured into the ‘Main Administration for foreign tourism at the Council of Ministers’ (*Glavnoe upravlenie po inostrannomu turizmu pri Sovete Ministrov SSSR/Glavinturist*). A good overview about the institutional structure of Soviet foreign tourism after Stalin can be found in Andreeva, *Evolutsija*, 103-105 (7).

15 A. Mashkova, *BMMT*, 42-52 (9).

16 GARF, f. 9520, op. 1, d. 1810, l. 5-9.

17 The trade union’s travel office changed its name and structure three times in the examined period: Tourist Excursion Bureau/Turistsko-ekskursionnoe upravlenie/TEU (1953–1962); Central Council for Tourism/Tsentrāl’nyi sovet po turizmu/TsST (1962–1969) and finally from 1969 on Central Council for Tourism and Excursions/Tsentrāl’nyi sovet po turizmu i ekskursijam, TsSTE).

18 Ibid.

19 For details about the application process see S. Shevyrin, *Za granitsu!* (3) and A. Gorsuch, *All This*, 111 (3).

Russian archives, it is possible to approximately determine the quantity of foreign tourism by adding up the amount of tourists that were sent abroad by each one of them. Anne Gorsuch for example extrapolated available numbers for outgoing tourism under Khrushchev via Intourist and Sputnik and quite convincingly came to the conclusion that all in all roundabout half a million Soviet tourists went abroad in the time span from 1955 to 1964, with the annual amount of tourists growing steadily from a mere 2000 in the first year.²⁰

Before that, most publications up until recent years cited much higher numbers for outgoing tourism in that time period, relying mostly on rather dubious data from Soviet sources. Concerning Khrushchev's era, Anne Gorsuch made an attempt to find out where those numbers actually originate from. In a footnote of her book "All This Is Your World", Gorsuch quotes an interview of the Soviet newspaper "Izvestiia" with Vladimir Ankudinov from 1966, where the then head of Intourist claimed that in 1956 560,000 and in 1965 1150,000 Soviet tourists had travelled abroad.²¹ These and comparable figures on outgoing foreign tourism later reappeared in a well-known book on the history of Russian and Soviet tourism by Gennadiy Dolzhenko from 1988 without further explanation.²² It has been suggested by Gorsuch that they represent the total number of Soviet citizens going abroad not only as tourists in a given year.²³ This is confirmed by statistics, which Intourist published in November 1959 in its bulletin "Novosti Intourist" under the headline "Soviet citizens visiting foreign countries". According to the data given here, in 1958 a total of 740,805 citizens went abroad, among them 168,319 for touristic or health purposes, while the lion's share of travel was connected with business matters (558,741).²⁴

So apparently official Soviet tourism statistics have to be handled with care, and this holds true also of later years. Diane Koenker refers in her recent publication "Club Red. Vacation, Travel and the Soviet Dream" to an 'explosive growth' in Soviet foreign travel under Brezhnev.²⁵ Citing various sources, among them G. P. Dolzhenko, she comes to the conclusion that 1,8 million Soviet tourists went abroad in 1970, among them 816,000 to capitalist countries. Even Anne Gorsuch cites among others the very same Dolzhenko, whose statistics she had doubted for earlier years, as a source for her estimate that in 1974, "approximately two million people travelled abroad".²⁶ Donald Raleigh in a recent article wrote that "between 1960 and 1976, eleven million Soviet tourists [...] travelled to Eastern Europe", even though it is not quite clear on what source this number is based on.²⁷

20 See A. Gorsuch, *All This*, 18-19 (3).

21 Ibid.

22 G. Dolzhenko, *Istoriya turizma v dorevoljucionnoy Rossii i SSSR*, Rostov na Donu 1988, 154.

23 See A. Gorsuch, *All This*, 18 (3).

24 *Novosti Inturista*, November 1959, p. 3.

25 D. Koenker, *Club Red. Vacation, Travel and the Soviet Dream*, Ithaca/London 2013, 242.

26 A. Gorsuch, *All this*, 186 (3).

27 D. Raleigh, *Other Side*, 380 (8).

In fact, the dimensions of outgoing foreign tourism in the years from 1965 to 1975 were probably much smaller according to archival sources. We can even quote former Intourist-president V. A. Ankundinov himself to support this claim. At the 1969 conference of tourism professionals mentioned in the introduction, he told his professional colleagues that “as tourists about 200,000 Soviet citizens travel abroad”.²⁸ This is a number that indeed can be reproduced. If we add up the amount of tourists who according to internal statistics went abroad in 1968 with Intourist (117,179),²⁹ the trade unions (8373)³⁰ and Sputnik (50,800),³¹ we arrive at a number of a little more than 176,000. Using the same method, for 1970 we arrive at a number of 239,000 (166,025/8241/65,000)³² tourists. In 1970, the trade unions also calculated the sum of all tourists that went abroad since 1955 with Intourist and their own travel office – roughly 1,1 million.³³

For later years, it becomes increasingly difficult to find aggregated statistics for foreign tourism, but it's still possible to outline the rough dimensions – Sputnik sent over 102,000 tourists abroad in 1975,³⁴ Intourist over 330,000 in the first ten month of 1976, which makes it unlikely that the overall number of outgoing foreign tourists in that year exceeded 600,000.³⁵

Of course, considering only data from tourist organisations is a relatively strict way of estimating outgoing tourism statistics. The method of the United Nations Statistical Yearbook, which relies on data from destination countries about incoming tourists, is much more liberal in comparison: In the language of the Statistical Yearbook, “tourist” generally refers to “persons travelling for pleasure, domestic reasons, health, meetings, business, study (including students and young persons studying abroad) and so on, and stopping for a period of twenty-four hours or more in a country or area other than that in which they usually reside.”³⁶ Accordingly, the UN arrives at rather high numbers (about one million outgoing Soviet tourists in 1970 and 2,1 million in 1975), which are still more modest than those published by Dolzhenko, but at least in the mid-1970s they do come pretty close.³⁷

Where does this leave us? If we talk about tourism in a sense of organized group travel via one of the above-mentioned organisations, it seems appropriate to work with much more modest estimates than has been done so far. If we take into account a broader range of international travel activities, including business trips, student exchanges, political delegations and so on, we naturally arrive at a much higher number, but at the same

28 GARF, f. 9520, op. 2, d. 32, p. 129.

29 GARF, f. 9520, op. 1, d. 1417, l. 24.

30 Ibid.

31 RGASPI, f. M-5, op. 2, d. 71, l. 87.

32 GARF, f. 9520, op. 1, d. 1417, l. 24; RGASPI, f. M-5, op. 2, d. 160, l. 61.

33 GARF, f. 9520, op. 1, d. 1417, l. 24.

34 RGASPI, f. M-5, op. 2, d. 923, l. 1.

35 GARF, f. 9520, op. 1, d. 2311, l. 21.

36 R. Siverson et al., *Soviet Tourism and Détente*, in: *Studies in Comparative Communism* 13 (1980), 356–368, here 360.

37 Ibid., 364.

time run into the risk of blurring the term 'tourism'. In any case, when using statistics in the context of tourism, it would be advisable to clearly outline what kind of definition is used.

Returning to statistics based on aggregated annual statistics from the Soviet travel organisations, outgoing foreign tourism in fact experienced a steady growth, rising from 2000 tourists annually in 1955 to 50,000 in 1964, nearly 200,000 in 1968 and probably landing in the range of 500,000 to 600,000 in 1976. Given the population size of the Soviet Union, which expanded from 200 to about 250 million in the same time period, those were far from impressive figures.³⁸ Also, the growth in tourist numbers was mainly caused by an expansion of trips to socialist countries, while tourism to capitalist countries especially since the mid-1960s developed more slowly. Intourist for instance sent 7921 of 45,168 tourists to capitalist countries in 1960, which corresponded to almost 17%.³⁹ In 1966, this share was down to 14,5% (12,552 out of 86,375),⁴⁰ and in the first ten month of 1976, less than 12% of the tourists (38,915 out of 330,189) went to capitalist countries.⁴¹ The development at Sputnik was comparable, the share of trips to capitalist countries here dropped from 14,6% in 1960 to 9,2% in 1966 and 8,2% in 1975.⁴²

A look at the social composition of tourist groups shows that the share of workers and *kolkhozniki* grew in all organizations: in the case of Intourist from under 5% in 1960 to over 25% in 1970,⁴³ in the case of Sputnik from 10% in 1960 to almost 44% in 1975⁴⁴ and at the trade unions from over 48% in 1964 to almost 60% in 1970.⁴⁵ However, trips to capitalist countries by and large remained a prerogative of the upper strata of Soviet society, with the share of white-collar workers at Intourist being at 84% in 1976⁴⁶ and 66% at Sputnik in 1975.⁴⁷

To sum it up, outgoing foreign tourism in the Soviet Union expanded quite rapidly during the 1960s and in the first half of the 1970s, starting however from a very low level. Tourism to capitalist countries throughout the years remained a comparably rare occurrence and was available first and foremost to a small and rather privileged share of travellers from the upper strata of Soviet society. On the other hand, the share of workers and *kolkhoz* member was raised especially among travellers to socialist countries in all Soviet tourist organisations.

Of course, the data mentioned in this section gives merely a rough overview. A more thorough statistical examination of outgoing tourism could also take into account as-

38 M. Hildermeier, *Geschichte der Sowjetunion*, Munich 1998, 1172.

39 GARF, f. 9520, op. 1, d. 430, p. 131.

40 GARF, f. 9520, op. 2, d. 29, l. 1.

41 GARF, f. 9520, op. 1, d. 2311, l. 21.

42 RGASPI, f. M-5, op. 2, d. 774, 'Vypolnenie programmy BMMT 'Sputnik' TsK VLKSM za 1958–1974 gody', without a page number; RGASPI, f. M-5, op. 2, d. 923, l. 1.

43 GARF 9520 1 431, l. 96; GARF, f. 9520, op. 1, d. 1417, l. 24.

44 RGASPI, f. M-5, op. 2, d. 923, l. 1; RGASPI, M-5, op. 1, d. 89, l. 43.

45 GARF, f. 9520, op. 2, d. 29; GARF, f. 9520, op. 1, d. 1417, l. 24.

46 GARF, f. 9520, op. 1, d. 2311, l. 21.

47 RGASPI, f. M-5, op. 2, d. 923, l. 1.

pects like party membership, gender and age of tourists; this would however go beyond the scope of this article.⁴⁸ Furthermore, for a number of years sufficient data is hard to come by, in particular for the time period from 1977 to 1982, since tourism statistics were increasingly assembled exclusively by the trade unions on regional levels.

Intourist and Sputnik – different organisations, different problems

As has been hinted at in the previous section, the enormously expensive trips via Intourist, which in some cases equalled two or more average monthly salaries of a Soviet citizen, were accessible mostly for well connected members of the party and the upper echelons of Soviet society.⁴⁹ Sputnik from the very beginning set out for a younger and less affluent target group, deliberately positioning itself as a more modest, affordable alternative to Intourist.⁵⁰ In its first annual report from 1958, the newly founded travel office criticized Intourist for not considering the specific needs of young travellers and in general being too expensive.⁵¹ In fact, Sputnik managed to offer trips for comparably low prizes. While 14-day trips to Eastern European countries with Intourist in 1962 cost about 200 rubles,⁵² comparable trips with Sputnik were available for less than the half in 1964.⁵³

Lower prices did however also mean a lower level of comfort. While Intourist customers often left the Soviet Union on cruise ships and via aircraft, Sputnik trips were being carried out on much more modest conditions. One of the very first exchange agreements between Sputnik and the Hungarian travel office “Express” from October 1958 stated that Soviet tourists were to be transported in second-class train wagons without sleeping compartments.⁵⁴ Accommodation was provided among others in dormitories, holiday facilities or camps, with four to eight persons sharing a room or a tent.⁵⁵ Up until the mid-1960s it was not uncommon that the young travellers had to carry their own luggage through the visited cities, even if exchange agreements told otherwise.⁵⁶ To make matters worse, Sputnik tourists often had to get by without washing facilities as well, which obviously made it difficult to sustain the desired authoritative look, especially during hot summer days.⁵⁷

48 Anne Gorsuch for instance concluded for the period of Khrushchev that in general more female tourists went to Eastern Europe, while male tourists were predominant on trips to Western Europe and North America, see A. Gorsuch, *All This* (3), 96-97.

49 See as well A. Gorsuch, *All This* (3), p 80-85.

50 For the early history of Sputnik, see A. Mashkova (9), BMMT, 42-52.

51 See Sputnik's report 'About the work in 1958', RGASPI, f. M-5, op. 1, d. 1, l. 1-31.

52 S. Shevyrin, *Za granitsu!* (3).

53 RGASPI, f. M-5, op. 1, l. 40.

54 Mashkova, BMMT (9), 50-51.

55 *Ibid.*, p. 51.

56 See for example the report of a tourist group from Bashkiria to Poland from May 1961, RGASPI, f. M-5, op. 1, d. 57, l. 72 as well as a report from Sputnik from October 1964, RGASPI, f. M-5, op. 1, d. 207, l. 89-95.

57 RGASPI, f. M-5, op. 1, d. 112, l. 279-282 (Trip report from Poland, 1965).

How modestly some of the first Sputnik tourists travelled is illustrated by one report of a so called group elder (*starshy gruppy*), usually a distinguished Party or Komsomol member, who was appointed before the trip by the tourist group as a spokesman and assisted the trip leader in organisational issues and in supervising the group.⁵⁸ In 1958, Sputnik received the following report from a group elder from Bashkiria, who had just returned from a trip to Poland:

*The tourists were forced to drive on an open, dirty truck on which 33 persons were spread. In this manner, the group spent about five of their 14 days on the road, which is why the tourists got very tired. Comrade Klyučarov also mentioned some deficits with the accommodation: eight to ten persons were accommodated in rooms with the size of 16-[square] meters in bunk beds, which made it hard to recover; no washing of sheets was organized, there was no hot water, only once did we go to a sauna; the food was monotonous, there was especially a lack of vegetables [...].*⁵⁹

One Sputnik trip leader claimed after a visit to Austria in 1960 that he had to fight for every piece of bread 'in order not to starve'.⁶⁰

In comparison, the complaints of Intourist trip leaders sounded rather mundane. Here, hotel rooms were described as being too small or dirty.⁶¹ Missing towels, mirrors or seats were faulted along with toilets being available only at the corridor. One Intourist trip leader from Moscow, who accompanied one of the very first tourist groups from the USSR to Great Britain by sea in 1956 heavily criticized the condition of the Soviet motor ship 'Molotov', which had just been overhauled. Toilets were congested, lamps came crashing down from the ceiling and the service personnel was understaffed.⁶²

Thus while on Sputnik trips quite often times even basic needs were not fulfilled, Intourist trip leaders were in comparison concerned with luxury problems, and sometimes they had absolutely nothing to quibble about: A trip leader, who returned from a trip to the island Rügen in East Germany in August 1960, hardly managed to contain his excitement about the travel conditions: "Comfortable rooms, perfect cleanliness, faultless service, good food added up to fantastic conditions for our stay."⁶³

If we consider Soviet foreign tourism as a sort of theatrical guest performance, as Anne Gorsuch has done, then Intourist certainly sent the materially best equipped crews.⁶⁴ Having arrived at their destinations, those 'first class tourists' were being accommodated in hotel rooms and transported in exclusively chartered buses, which certainly made it easier to keep the 'actors' isolated from the host societies. Sometimes this isolation even

58 For further information how a Soviet foreign tourist group was organized, see S. Shevyrin, *Za granitsul!* (3).

59 RGASPI, f. M-5, op. 1, d. 2, l. 210.

60 RGASPI, f. M-5, op. 1, d. 55, l. 13.

61 See B. Tondera, *Der sowjetische Tourismus in den Westen unter Nikita Chruščev*, in: *ZfG* (2013) 1, 43-64, here 51-52.

62 Ibid.

63 Report about a trip of Belorussian tourists to the GDR, GARF, f. 9520, op. 1, d. 426, l. 182.

64 GARF, f. 9612, op. 1, d. 373, l. 49.

went so far that even Intourist officials found a reason to complain: “The biggest part of the program in Scotland consisted of gazing at landscapes through our bus window”, a clearly disappointed trip leader reported after returning from a trip through Great Britain in the summer of 1956.⁶⁵

For Sputnik, it proved to be much more difficult to stage a ‘flawless performance’, since the Spartan travel circumstances sometimes made it more or less impossible to keep control of the tourist group. Often being accommodated on large international camps, time and again the young Soviet tourists found it possible to break out of what one trip leader fittingly called ‘turdistsiplina.’⁶⁶ There occurred affairs with foreigners, excessive drinking and sometimes even fights between male tourists.⁶⁷ Occasionally, individual Sputnik tourists embarked on unauthorized trips away from the group as well or ‘embarrassed’ their fellow travellers in other ways. In a collective report from a group of 36 tourists from the Republic of Kazakhstan, a typical case was described as follows:

*Two of our students systematically ignored the daily schedule and returned to the dormitory at one o'clock after midnight or later, spending their time individually with Polish comrades. It was observed more than once that the girls hugged, kissed and individually spent their evenings with Poles and had a drink, went to the cabaret and so on. During all of the stay in Poland they kept distance to the group, entertaining the Polish comrades – our guides. This had a huge effect – it had an influence on the realisation of all planned events for our group, since our guide and our interpreter let themselves be distracted from the mentioned two young women and often forgot about us.*⁶⁸

In a similar case a Sputnik trip leader explained to a Pole, why such a behaviour by a Soviet tourist was considered unacceptable even though a more intense exchange between the people of the Socialist State Union was one of the very reasons the Komsomol had introduced their travel office in the first place:

*The interpreters Fialkovskii Ričard and Janoš found out [about a meeting of the tourist group where the misbehaviour of two tourists was discussed] and approached me with the question: “Isn't it allowed to make friends with Soviet girls?” They were being told that it's okay to make friends with Soviet girls, but this friendship has to be founded in mutually considerate relations and that it's not allowed for tourists to disturb the daily schedule.*⁶⁹

Nothing was more important for Soviet tourist officials then to keep things under control, no matter if the travellers found themselves among ‘brotherly friends’ or ‘class enemies’. But the Komsomol's travel office due to its limited material possibilities had to make compromises.

65 GARF, f. 9612, op. 1, d. 373, l. 19.

66 GARF, f. 9612, op. 1, d. 478, l. 25.

67 See the chapter ‘Unerlaubte Begegnungen’ in: B. Tondera, *Tourismus*, 56–58 (59).

68 ‘Report about the development of international youth tourism’, RGASPI, f. M-5, op. 1, d. 27, l. 1–15, here l. 8.

69 Ibid., 9.

As mentioned above, Intourist could stage their trips under more controlled circumstances, but that still did not guarantee that every tourist would act according to the script. Trip leaders often had a hard time managing the great self-confidence of the handpicked tourists. Among them, there were often well-educated, multilingual and influential individuals, who were not always willing to simply accept the authority of superiors. Intourist trip leader Braginskii returned from a trip to England in the summer of 1956, complaining that it had been almost impossible for him to 'maintain discipline' among his tourist.⁷⁰ According to Braginskii, the group, which consisted of TV and radio professionals, did not form a collective, since some individuals isolated themselves from the others.⁷¹ He accused one of his tourists, engineer Aleksey Antipov, of "trying to take advantage of his language skills" and being "enthusiastic about everything English, not realizing, how this belittles the Soviet reality".⁷² Some tourists openly challenged the authority of the trip leader, such as the tourists Palii and Čerkmarev, who went on a trip to England with Intourist in October 1960. Trip leader Novikova accused both fellow travellers of engaging in illegal trade activities and of answering to her remarks with the words: "I don't give a damn about the leaders."⁷³ An Intourist trip leader, who returned from Hungary in June 1961 complained that some of his tourists had refrained from following his orders and refused to take part in the program at various instances. She felt the need to demand in her report that "every tourist should be well aware that the leader of the group is a person, whose orders are to be considered by the tourist abroad – as law."⁷⁴ Sometimes even entire tourist groups turned against the representative of Intourist when they tried to push through their own interests during the stay abroad or when they complained about the way they had been treated after the trip, even though usually such attempts were futile.⁷⁵

The short period of Khrushchev's Thaw from the mid-1950s to the early 1960s had created a sense of new beginnings and the opening for foreign influences led to a culture shock in Soviet society.⁷⁶ The euphoria was noticeable among Soviets travelling abroad as well. Some of them probably did not even realise why their behaviour was being deemed inappropriate. Such was the case with the author Lev Kassil, who had travelled to the United States in the summer of 1959 as part of a writers' delegation.⁷⁷ After his return,

70 GARF, f. 9612, op. 1, d. 373, l. 12.

71 Ibid.

72 Ibid.

73 GARF, f. 9520, op. 1, d. 426, l. 216.

74 GARF, f. 9520, op. 1, d. 426, l. 47 (Trip report from Hungary, 1961).

75 A tourist group collectively refrained from taking part in 'yet another visit to an electrical plant' in England in 1961, see Gorsuch, *All this*, 147; there are furthermore a few documented cases when tourist groups collectively or through the group elder filed complaints about travel conditions or their trip leader to the local tourist office in charge, see for example GARF f. 9520, op. 1, d. 430, l. 22 (Trip report from a group oldest, 1961); GARF, f. 9520, op. 1, d. 430, l. 91 (Collective declaration by a group of tourists, 1961).

76 V. Zubok, *Zhivago's children. The last Russian intelligentsia*, Cambridge et al. 2009, see especially the chapter 'Culture Shock', 94–111.

77 The document containing information about Kassil's trip doesn't mention through which organisation it was realized, see RGANI, f. 5, op. 33, d. 105, l. 52f.

he was invited to the live TV broadcast “Encounter in America” to talk about his impressions from the trip. Kassil there did not shy away from bold statements, talking about the “great people” of America that was open-minded and independent.⁷⁸ The author went on: “This democratic behaviour impressed us. You could not tell superior from subordinate, millionaire from beggar.”⁷⁹ Kassil also expressed his enthusiasm about the comfortable coach and raved about the omnipresent hum of the “blessed air conditioning”, bearing witness to comfort. Even more enthusiastically were Kassil’s remarks about New York:

*The city is beautiful, I don't know how others feel about this – many comrades might not agree with me – but the skyscrapers have made a huge impression on me. It's simply impossible to remain unmoved, to avoid a feeling of pride about the power of the human mind and the human technical genius when standing in front of a building, touching the glass skeleton and seeing how the glass under the palm of your hands escapes into the clouds.*⁸⁰

Indeed many comrades did not agree with Kassil. His misbehaviour was sharply criticized by the Assistant Chairman of the Department for Agitation and Propaganda of the Central Committee, A. Romanov. He condemned the ‘unconcealed bourgeois character’ of Kassil’s remarks and recommended that the writer should be banned from further exhibitions on public media for the time being.⁸¹ An explanation for the surprisingly candid statement by Kassil might be that the author had felt his one-sided report was justified since only a few weeks before him Khrushchev famously had visited the United States himself and also expressed his appreciation of the technological achievements there. In the book that was published shortly after Khrushchev’s trip in the Soviet Union, the First Secretary was depicted as a level-headed, yet aggressive statesman, who upon arrival at Andrews Air Force Base in Washington stated:

*You are today turning out some goods in greater quantity than we, but that is due to historical circumstances. [...] We are catching up with you in economic progress, and the time is not far distant when we will move into the lead.*⁸²

There was a finesse in Khrushchev’s rhetoric, which Kassil (and with him a lot of Soviet tourists of his time) obviously had not yet fully incorporated – the West was not to be compared with the Soviet Union of the present, but with the one of the future.

Outgoing foreign tourism in the Soviet Union is a fascinating case of an authoritative state conceding a liberty to its citizens and at the same time trying to curtail it at all stages in order to control any possible propagandist damage. Looking at examples from Intour-

78 Ibid.

79 Ibid., I. 54.

80 Ibid., I. 56.

81 Ibid., I. 50 and I. 58.

82 M. Charlamov/O. Vadeev (ed.), *Litsom k litsu s amerikoy. Rasskaz o poezdke N. S. Chrusheva v SShA*, Moscow 1959, 105–106.

ist and Sputnik trips however indicates that the process of turning foreign tourism into a risk free cultural-diplomatic enterprise did not go along without bumps and bruises and effectively never quite materialized. Still, cases of tourists getting into conflict with trip leaders and violating 'norms of behaviour' should not be interpreted as intentional dissident behaviour, but rather as a consequence of the elitist composition of travel groups, contradictory signals given by the political leadership and – especially in the case of Sputnik – as a result of a limited ability to control the travel circumstances.

Soviet trip leaders at their time yet again found other explanations: they almost always blamed shortcomings in the selection process of the local Soviet tourist organisations, which were made responsible for choosing 'unreliable' persons.⁸³ That way, the project of foreign tourism itself did not have to be questioned – there was no structural problem with sending Soviet citizens abroad, one simply had to improve the mechanics to make sure that only 'reliable' persons would make it into the tourist groups.

Foreign tourism under Brezhnev

As the Thaw in the cultural and ideological spheres was rolled back by Soviet leadership right after Khrushchev's ouster and critical voices like Andrei Sinyavsky and Yuli Daniel were being shut down in public trials, the pecking order in tourist groups appears to have become more stable – at least at the surface. If we remember Ankudinov's remarks from the 1969 conference mentioned in the introduction, the top-level tourist official could not conceal certain awkwardness about the supposed obedience of his compatriots. There was something unnatural about those Soviet tourists, not only in that they looked misplaced among their casual fellow-travellers from other countries. Ankudinov might have also suspected that the proverbial sheepishness of the tourists was suspicious. And indeed, complaints about tourists praising Western lifestyle or openly challenging the authority of the trip leaders appeared much more seldom in travel reports after 1964. In an annual report from 1968 about trips to Bulgaria, by far the leading destination for Soviet tourists, Intourist proudly proclaimed that the "amount of serious violations of behavioural norms decreases year by year."⁸⁴

Nevertheless, another problem soared to the top of the agenda of tourist officials – smuggling of money and illegal trade activities. A worker of Intourist at the border checkpoint to Romania in Ungheni reported a growth of detected cases of illegal export of currency from 104 in 1967 to 187 in 1968.⁸⁵ According to this worker, the growth of smuggling exceeded the growth of tourist traffic at his checkpoint.⁸⁶ Even though especially for

83 A typical case was a trip leader from Leningrad, who upon returning from East Berlin in May 1965 complained that the trade union representatives, who chose the tourists at the factory level, would not sufficiently take into account a 'general level of maturity and culture' see GARF, f. 9520, op. 1, d. 873, l. 99.

84 GARF, f. 9520, op. 2, d. 28, l. 29.

85 GARF, f. 9520, op. 2, d. 32, l. 80.

86 Ibid.

tourism to Eastern Europe consumption had already earlier played an important role during foreign trips up until 1964,⁸⁷ this aspect now reached new dimensions. “Since the mid-1960s”, Alexey Golubev writes, “a typical Soviet tourist underwent through drastic changes, as ideological implications related to the representation of the Soviet socialist system were giving way to the understanding of foreign tours as an opportunity to purchase consumer goods unavailable or too expensive at home.”⁸⁸ The fact that a number of Eastern bloc countries lifted their travel restrictions since the mid-1950s led to an unprecedented explosion of travel in this area and triggered a huge upsurge in illegal trade activity all over Central Eastern Europe.⁸⁹ As a matter of fact, Soviet tourists played only a minor role in this development, since the USSR remained much more cautious towards opening up their borders compared to their neighbours.⁹⁰ But those who got the chance to visit the blossoming black markets of Poland, Czechoslovakia or the GDR certainly did not hesitate to make the most of such an opportunity. Therefore, complaints of Intourist trip leaders now often sounded like this one from November 1968 about a trip to Poland and Czechoslovakia:

*Two persons from Baku [...] were stopped during border control, since they carried 50 cans of black caviar with them (25 of them were being taken away) and they tried to exchange or sell wrist watches, cameras, transistor radios abroad, which they did not manage to do thanks to the active interference from both the trip leader and the group elder.*⁹¹

The trip leadership however was not always as attentive. In November 1974, a trade union official accompanied a large tourist group from Azerbaijan on a cruise trip along the Baltic Sea and afterwards reported to his superiors that the responsible trip leader completely ignored the fact that tourists were selling jewellery and transistor radios along the way.⁹² In some cases, even tourist officials themselves were involved in illegal activities. In 1981, a major scandal shattered Sputnik, when it was revealed that a number of officials from the central office had circumvented official tourist selection procedures and “used their professional position for selfish intentions”.⁹³ It appeared that Sputnik employees had cooperated with tourists in illegal foreign exchange dealing by manipulating balance sheets and bookkeeping.⁹⁴ They were being fired and legally pursued for their

87 See the sub-chapter ‘Shopping Adventures’ in A. Gorsuch, *All This* (3), 93-97.

88 A. Golubev, *Neuvostoturizmin* (10), without page number, since the quote has been taken from the online version of this article.

89 See J. Kochanowski, ‘Wir sind zu arm, um den Urlaub im eigenen Land zu verbringen’: Massentourismus und illegaler Handel in den 1950er und 1960er Jahren in Polen, in: W. Borodziej, J. Kochanowski, J. von Puttkamer (ed.), *‘Schleichwege’: Inoffizielle Begegnungen sozialistischer Staatsbürger zwischen 1956 und 1989*, Cologne et al. 2010, 135-152.

90 See J. Kučera, *Der sozialistische Staat und die Kontakte seiner Bürger mit den ‘Bruderländern’*, in: W. Borodziej, J. Kochanowski, J. von Puttkamer (ed.), *‘Schleichwege’* (94), 365-378.

91 GARF, f. 9520, op. 1, d. 1234, l. 31.

92 GARF, f. 9520, op. 1, d. 1978, l. 59-60.

93 RGASPI, f. M-5, op. 3, d. 407. l. 15

94 Ibid.

actions.⁹⁵ As this example shows, consumption and trade on foreign trips in the later Brezhnev years were not just secretly pursued by individual tourists. It was a profitable undertaking, in which larger networks of high-ranked party-officials and white-collar workers were involved.⁹⁶

The prevalent notion among researchers is that the growing importance of consumption in tourism in the long run deeply undermined the faith of Soviet citizens in the superiority of the Communist societal idea: "Contributing to the erosion of patriotism and even Soviet self-legitimacy, foreign travel created an unquenchable thirst for material goods and services, as well as envy and a sense of humiliation over the Soviet Union's poverty and deficits", Donald Raleigh wrote⁹⁷ and Anne Gorsuch added to that notion, stating that "the optimism of the early 1960s appears to have sunk under the weight of Brezhnev-era stagnation and consumer disappointment with long-promised goods and services, a deficit now judged in open and explicit comparison with offerings visible elsewhere."⁹⁸

Andrei Kozovoi, who wrote an article about Sputnik tourism to the USA from 1975 to 1985, has however made another interesting point that not those citizens, who *did* travel abroad posed a problem to the Soviet cause, but rather those, who *did not*.⁹⁹ Those young tourists, who went to America, got a chance to actually contrast the "Imaginary West"¹⁰⁰ with a first-hand impression of their own. According to Kozovoi, not all tourists were overly impressed by what they saw. But since only a small minority ever made it to America, "the majority live[d] with and spread the idea of an imaginary West, a major threat to the official discourse".¹⁰¹ Since Kozovoi in his study mostly relies on questionnaires that the tourists were asked to fill out upon their return to the Soviet Union by Sputnik officials, one might suspect that the young travellers would be hesitant to reveal their actual feelings about their impressions. Nevertheless, Kozovoi's line of argumentation is also supported by Donald Raleigh. While some of his interviewed "Soviet Baby Boomers" recounted being shocked by the well being of Western (and even Eastern) European societies when they travelled there for the first time between 1960 to 1990, a number of them also remained rather unimpressed, especially those, who got the opportunity to travel abroad multiple times. Among Soviet citizens, trips abroad evoked new needs; however, at the same time foreign travel helped to satisfy those very needs. Just as their predecessors, the second wave of outgoing tourists under Brezhnev tried to make

95 Ibid.

96 Sergei Zhuk has illustrated for Dnepropetrovsk in the 1970s and 1980s that import of Western products through foreign tourism was to a certain extent tolerated and sometimes even encouraged by Komsomol officials, see S. Zhuk, *Rock and Roll in the Rocket City. The West, Identity, and Ideology in Soviet Dnepropetrovsk, 1960–1985*. Washington, D.C. / Baltimore 2010, 280–302.

97 D. Raleigh, *Soviet Baby Boomers. An Oral History of Russia's Cold War Generation*, Oxford, New York 2012, 210.

98 A. Gorsuch: *All This* (3), 189–190. Another article, who supports this point of view is A. Popov, *Storoni* (8).

99 A. Kozovoi, *Eye* (9).

100 The term was coined by Alexei Yurchak, see the chapter 'Imaginary West', in: A. Yurchak, *Everything Was Forever, Until It Was No More. The Last Soviet Generation*, Princeton et al. 2006, 148–207.

101 Ibid., 236.

the most of their travel opportunity. However, those tourists used other means: Instead of openly voicing their discontent and questioning rules, they looked to realize their interests without getting into conflict with the officials. By that token, Anne Gorsuch's assessment for the period of Khrushchev that "a trip to the West and the purchase of Western material items more often reaffirmed the traveller's privileged status within a positively viewed system than it generated resistance to this system",¹⁰² probably needs to be adjusted, but not entirely rejected for the Brezhnev era. Since travelling abroad (and especially to the West) remained a rare privilege and tourists were chosen just as careful as in the early years of foreign tourism, the share of 'believers' in Soviet Communism among tourists was probably still rather high. Of course, the euphoria of the Thaw years was gone and especially the late Brezhnev years have been described as a period, where "material frustrations grated on the population",¹⁰³ but that in turn also elevated the value of being granted access to foreign consumer markets, however restricted. Travelling abroad still promised privileged Soviet citizens a great deal of cultural capital to go along with possible material gains.

Conclusion

If we describe the establishment of Soviet foreign tourism as an attempt of the tourist organisations to establish control over all stages of the travel and to turn tourism into a reliable instrument of cultural diplomacy, we can make out at least two factors that possibly disturbed this process: Firstly, compromises in accommodation or transport conditions often times had to be made especially by Sputnik due to the non-hard-currency character of its exchange programs. This led to tourists almost inevitable getting into contact with fellow travellers or local residents, especially when they resided in large international camps. Furthermore, trips in poorly equipped vehicles and the necessity to carry the luggage on one's own led to exhaustion and left tourists in a non-desirable look. Secondly, party-members, officials and members of the professional elites proved to be self-confident tourists, who especially during the years of the Thaw were not afraid to voice their own opinion, protest against the trip leaders and form alliances with fellow travellers.

Both Intourist and Sputnik seem to have gotten a better handle on these issues during the early 1960s and especially after Khrushchev's ouster, at least on the surface. However, instead of openly violating norms of behaviour or voicing their discontent, tourists now increasingly used their trips as an opportunity to consume and trade behind the back of their supervisors. In some cases even tourist officials themselves were involved in illegal trade activities, hinting at the fact that the system of foreign tourism as a whole was increasingly plagued by corruption. Instead of praising technological and economical

102 A. Gorsuch: *All This* (3), 166.

103 N. Chernyshova, *Soviet consumer culture in the Brezhnev era*, London et al. 2013, 205.

achievements of socialism abroad, Soviet tourists more and more used their trips to acquire commodities that an economy of scarcity at home could not offer them.

Can Soviet foreign tourism therefore be regarded as a metaphor for an empire that – even though stable on the surface – lost the support of its citizens and experienced a slow but steady decline? The answer is probably yes and no: on the one hand, the failure of the cultural-diplomatic ambitions connected with international travel became apparent already towards the end of Khrushchev's reign and the compulsory propagandistic exercises performed by Soviet tourists as well as their stiff appearance looked oddly out of place at the latest at the end of the 1960s, when the 'global beach' had other cultural role models than well-behaved apparatchiks.

On the other hand, foreign travel all through the 1960s and 1970s continued to fulfil an important function as valued luxury item for the politically privileged class and furthermore served as a source for highly-demanded Western commodities. Apart from that, even though the economical superiority of capitalist (and even most socialist) countries was noticed by the tourists, this did not necessarily mean that they automatically distanced themselves from the Soviet cause. The way Soviet tourists dealt with their travel experiences abroad was neither uniform nor unambiguous.