

Soviet Worker Leisure Travel in the 1930s

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In the autumn of 1930, 257 “best of the best” Soviet shock workers received the prize of a lifetime, a month-long cruise around Europe aboard the brand-new Soviet-built ship, the *Abkhazia*, on its maiden voyage from Leningrad to its commercial destination, the Black Sea.¹ This voyage belonged to a broader repertoire of Soviet leisure practice, in which leisure was theorized as a necessary and important corollary to productive labor. Well-spent leisure allowed workers to restore their exhausted organisms. Soviet leisure also trained the mind as well as healed the body. The *Abkhazia* voyage provided workers (and those who read about the journey) with eyewitness knowledge of the contemporary crisis of the capitalist economy and with the possibility to share production experience among fellow travelers as well as with workers abroad. This voyage, and other leisure

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¹ *Korabl' udarnikov: sbornik ocherkov uchastnikov pervoi zagranichnoi ekskursii rabochikh udarnikov na teplokhode "Abkhaziia"*, ed. M. Lias (Moscow: Khudozhestvennaia literatura, 1931).

travel like it, also served as an important reward for hard and loyal work, and it signified the place of leisure, rest, and recreation in the arsenal of Soviet labor incentive policies.

For all the centrality of production and labor in the first socialist state, the relationship of the Soviet regime to its putative core constituency, the “working class,” continues to generate controversy and debate. On the one hand, historians have considered how workers contributed to the building of socialism as active participants in the socialist state-making process. The Soviet regime furnished them with symbolic capital as the official builders of the revolution, capital that could be exchanged through the educational system with the opportunity for training and occupational mobility. In production relations, the party and trade unions promoted abundant opportunities to participate as agents in the production process: through production conferences that gave them a voice in management decisions, through rewards for inventions and labor-saving innovations, through wall newspapers that exhorted and praised good production behavior. In its promotion of “proletarian culture,” the regime signaled that the primary beneficiaries of the revolution would be working men and women, once mere cogs in the capitalist machinery who now enjoyed access to all the cultural benefits once reserved for the ruling classes.² On the other hand, some historians argue that all of these purported

² Among the many studies on such questions, see Sheila Fitzpatrick, *Education and Social Mobility in the Soviet Union, 1921-1934* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), Lewis H. Siegelbaum, *Stakhanovism and the Politics of Productivity in the USSR, 1935-1941* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988); William J. Chase, *Workers, Society, and the Soviet State: Labor and Life in Moscow, 1918-1929* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1987); Stephen Kotkin, *Magnetic Mountain: Stalinism as a Civilization* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995); Lynn Mally, *Revolutionary Acts: Amateur Theater and the Soviet State* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2000); Wendy Z. Goldman, *Women at the Gates: Gender and Industry in Stalin's Russia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

benefits were mere window dressing that obscured Soviet workers' true subaltern position, the object of cynical political and economic discipline. Far from being incorporated into the socialist regime, Soviet workers resisted when they could, collectively at times but often through individual escape, sullen withdrawal, working to rule, or political indifference.³ The failure of incorporation, one might say, led to Soviet workers becoming a "class apart," co-existing with the regime but retaining its own culture and values.⁴

The regime itself promoted both disciplinary and participatory approaches to the formation of its new Soviet working class. If the wage remained the fundamental lever through which to motivate production, the regime also endeavored to create optimal conditions for production and to provide opportunities for workers to spend the wage that rewarded their labor. In the Soviet system, leisure became a positive element of the reward and acculturation program. Proper socialist leisure was not simply time away from work. As "repair shops for workers," leisure opportunities provided time and facilities for workers to recover their productive capabilities. Leisure also provided space for workers to create their own identities as Soviet men and women, through developing their particular interests, exposing them to experiences, people and places quite different from their everyday lives, and by actively encouraging individuals to become

³ See, for example, Donald Filtzer, *Soviet Workers and Stalinist Industrialization: The Formation of Modern Soviet Production Relations, 1928-1941* (Armonk, N.Y.: M. E. Sharpe, 1986); Jeffrey Rossman, *Worker Resistance under Stalin: Class and Revolution on the Shop Floor* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2005).

⁴ See Kenneth Straus, *Factory and Community in Stalin's Russia: The Making of an Industrial Working Class* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1997); David L. Hoffmann, *Peasant Metropolis: Social Identities in Moscow, 1929-1941* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994); Diane P. Koenker, *Republic of Labor: Russian Printers and Soviet Socialism, 1918-1930* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2005).

autonomous and self-actualizing. In their philosophy of leisure, Soviet activists argued that strengthening the individual within the collective would build a better collective, dissolving identities based on group or class, and forging a new Soviet citizen, at once disciplined and free, loyal and independent.

This paper will argue that leisure travel – vacations and tourism that took workers away from their familiar everyday – constituted a material and cultural benefit that offered Soviet workers an attractive way to construct their Soviet selves. Leisure travel offered not only recuperation, but stimulation, adventure, and knowledge. In its emphasis on consuming experiences rather than commodities, socialist leisure travel syncretized all the features of socialism in a way that was officially superior to capitalism. The socialist good life on the road was consumed in groups, large or small, cooperatively and consciously. In socialist leisure travel, as the *Abkhazii*'s shockworkers would testify, pleasure and purpose became mutually reinforcing. And just as travel and tourism dissolved the distinctions between work and play, leisure travel also served as a promise of a society that could transcend economic and social distinction. Under socialism, the ocean cruise, the ascent of a mountain peak, or a rest cure on the sunny coast of Crimea would be available to all.

The worker's right to leisure had constituted one element of the movement for the eight-hour work day throughout the industrializing world.⁵ In Russia, this demand

⁵ See Gary Cross, ed., *Worktime and Industrialization: An International History* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1988); Roy Rosenzweig, *Eight Hours for What We Will: Workers and Leisure in an Industrial City, 1870-1920* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983).

appeared in workers' claims immediately after the February 1917 revolution. Echoing international socialist language, they insisted on their right to the "three eights": eight hours to work, eight hours to sleep, eight hours for study or for leisure.⁶ Nineteenth-century socialists had emphasized the importance of cultured leisure, and socialist organizations in western Europe in the 1920s had encouraged workers to engage in self-improving and useful leisure activities in their after-work hours or on Sundays and holidays. The paid vacation, however, was something else. A vacation movement attracted support from some European trade unions only in the early 1920s; by the end of that decade, 40 percent of Europe's industrial workers had won the right, through legislation or negotiation, to an annual paid vacation. The Soviet Union had led the way: its labor code of 1922 stipulated that all workers with at least five and a half months work tenure were entitled to an annual two-week vacation; workers under 18 and in hazardous industries received an additional two weeks. (Poland and Finland – beneficiaries in their own way of the 1917 revolution – also implemented paid vacations for workers in 1922.) The movement proceeded more slowly elsewhere in Europe, and in the United States, workers' organizations paid little attention to paid vacations before the 1930s.⁷

⁶ *Gazeta kopeika*, 8 April 1917; F. Shipulinskii, *Trud i otdykh (vos'michasovoi rabochei den')* (Moscow, 1917); Diane Koenker, *Moscow Workers and the 1917 Revolution* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981), 107-9; Gary Cross, *A Quest for Time: The Reduction of Work in Britain and France, 1840-1940* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989).

⁷ Charles M. Mills, *Vacations for Industrial Workers* (New York: Ronald Press Company, 1927); Cross, *Quest for Time*, 191; Michael Berkowitz, "A 'New Deal' for Leisure: Making Mass Tourism during the Great Depression," in *Being Elsewhere: Tourism, Consumer Culture, and Identity in Modern Europe and North America*, ed. Shelley Baranowski and Ellen Furlough (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2001), 189; Cindy S. Aron, *Working at Play: A History of Vacations in the United States* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 204.

By the 1930s, however, in part due to the challenge of the Soviet socialist model, the right to leisure in the form of annual paid vacations gained new legitimacy in western Europe. Capitalists found that vacations could reward loyal behavior at little cost since they coincided with annual summer slowdowns. Proponents of scientific management discovered the psychological and physical benefits of holidays-with-pay, and governments in the 1930s seriously took up the question of legislating the annual vacation.⁸ At the same time, industrial planners in Italy and Nazi Germany put into practice regimes of activities that sought to educate and to discipline workers through the medium of active and structured leisure. The Italian *dopolavoro*, or “After-Work” program, nationalized and rationalized leisure and after-work sociability. Among its notable offerings, “After-Work” arranged for “popular trains” with steep discounts for group travel around the country. Mass outings took homogeneous groups of workers on excursions with distinctively patriotic goals.⁹ Shelley Baranowski recounts how the Nazi “Strength through Joy” (*Kraft durch Freude* – KdF) program used leisure activities, particularly tourism, as a way to ameliorate German workers’ quality of life “while compensating for wage freezes, longer working hours, and restrictions on private consumption.” KdF officials distrusted autonomous working-class leisure: their programs tutored workers in how to relax and how to travel as part of the regime’s bargain with this disaffected constituency. In fact, manual workers remained underrepresented in the well-publicized KdF vacations, especially the “classless” cruise

⁸ Cross, *Quest for Time*, 222-28.

⁹ Victoria de Grazia, *The Culture of Consent: Mass Organization of Leisure in Fascist Italy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), esp. chap. 3, and 180-83.

ships that plied international waters in the 1930s.¹⁰ Workers were not the natural constituencies of capitalist and fascist leisure planners: these schemes could be seen as mechanisms to encourage workers to buy into an alien system or to compensate for low wages, lost rights and privileges. But regardless of economic or political system, the industrial world of the 1920s and 1930s had discovered a new significance for the disposition of time away from work.

The approach to leisure in the Soviet Union reflected some of these pan-European trends of rational and nationalist leisure that would complement or substitute for work-based incentives. In the Soviet Union, however, where the proletariat reigned, *work* and the *worker* were much more central to the discourse on leisure. Soviet workers did not merely discursively share in the benefits of the industrial nation, as in Germany, Italy, or Popular Front France: Soviet workers represented the core of the productivist goal of the Soviet system, and their interests, again discursively, came first. The provision of vacations was both useful for the production goals of the nation and a pleasurable reward for the hard work performed by its core constituency, the working class.

Early discussions of production, leisure, consumption, and health in the Soviet Union emphasized the utilitarian element of leisure in the socialist system. The proletarian *needed* new forms of recuperation as an antidote to the intensity of socialist forms of production such as shock work and socialist emulation. The scientific

¹⁰ Shelley Baranowski, *Strength through Joy: Consumerism and Mass Tourism in the Third Reich* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 5, 68-71. See also Kristin Semmens, *Seeing Hitler's Germany: Tourism in the Third Reich* (Houndmills, Eng.: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), chap. 5.

organization of labor required a scientific organization of rest.¹¹ Proletarian leisure had nothing in common with “cinema, skittles, beer, or dancing.”¹² Rather, it belonged to the realms of production and public health. In this context, medicalization emerged as an important characteristic of Soviet leisure. All rational leisure pursuits began with a visit to the doctor, and leisure activists encouraged participants to monitor their own medical conditions to ensure that they were fulfilling their responsibilities to rational recuperation.¹³ Public health officials who gathered to consider “worker leisure” in 1933 insisted that a “regime of leisure” required the careful calculation of the physical and medical needs of the individual, based on age, profession, sex, and physical condition.¹⁴ Socialist leisure trained the proletarian machine-body.

Soviet leisure also developed the proletarian mind. The same public health officials who insisted on the medical foundation of leisure also emphasized that the regime of leisure required the absolute freedom of the individual to choose his or her forms of recreation, without any compulsion whatsoever.¹⁵ Rational leisure prepared workers to become autonomous, self-activating individuals, who would voluntarily

¹¹ G. M. Danishevskii, “Problema massovogo rabocheho otdykha vo vtoroi piatiletke,” *Zdravookhranenie i rabochii otdykh vo vtoroi piatiletke. Trudy I vsesoiuznoi konferentsii po planirovaniu zdavookhraneniia i rabocheho otdykha*. vol. 4 (Moscow-Leningrad: Sovet truda i oborony, 1933), 68; G. Bergman, *Otdykh letom* (Moscow-Leningrad: Molodaia gvardiia, 1927), 7.

¹² Bergman, *Otdykh letom*, 15, 18.

¹³ See, for example, instructions on getting a medical *spravka* in O. A. Arkhangel'skaia, *Rabota iacheiki OPTE po samodeiatel'nomu turizmu. (Instruktivno-metodicheskie ukazaniia dlia iacheek OPTE)* (Moscow: TsS OPTE, 1935), 20; *Puteshestvie po SSSR. Turistskie marshruty*. Sost. O. Arkhangel'skaia i N. Turiutina (Moscow-Leningrad: Fizkul'tura i turizm, 1938), 202-205; *Doma otdykha. Sbornik statei i materialov (1920-1923 gg.)* (hereafter *Doma otdykha 1920-1923*) (Moscow-Petrograd: Gosudarstvennoe izdatel'stvo, 1923), 27-51.

¹⁴ Danishevskii, “Problema massovogo rabocheho otdykha,” 77.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

choose the most physically and intellectually challenging forms of social activity. Tourism, to which I will return, appealed to many leisure activists as the ideal form of proletarian leisure precisely for its ability to combine physical and mental development. “Tourism develops curiosity, and out of this grows a thirst for knowledge,” argued *Komsomol’skaia pravda* in 1926. “Tourism instills dexterity and a habit of hardship... it strengthens the nerves.”¹⁶ “The basis of tourism is self-organization and self-activity,” ruled the Komsomol secretariat in 1927.¹⁷ Independent touring in small self-selected groups was hailed as far superior to group or package tours because the independent group made its own decisions, selected its own itinerary, and planned its tour from beginning to end. The independent tourist developed “initiative, activism, self-control, and other strong-willed qualities.”¹⁸

Proletarian leisure doctrine emphasized, throughout the 1920s and through much of the 1930s, the extent to which real proletarians needed the benefits of rational leisure more than any other social group. This was the socialist difference: in capitalist Europe, the only “rest home” available to workers was the cemetery.¹⁹ Socialist workers both needed and deserved respite from their tiring work routines, from their crowded and unhygienic living and working environments.²⁰ The production needs of the state also placed the leisure needs of workers in the center of attention of rational leisure planners. “Our system of correctly organized rest ought to activate workers and collective farmers,

¹⁶ *Komsomol’skaia pravda*, 16 December 1926.

¹⁷ Rossiiskii gosudarstvennyi arkhiv sotsial’no-politicheskoi istorii, f. M-1, op. 4, d. 29 (Secretariat meeting 21 May 1927).

¹⁸ *Turist-aktivist*, no. 1 (1933): 5.

¹⁹ N. A. Semashko, “Trud i otdykh,” in *Doma otdykha 1920-1923*, 8.

²⁰ “Chto takoe otdykh, zachem on nuzhen rabochemu i kak ego provodit’,” *Doma otdykha 1920-1923*, 166.

strengthen their will to work, and properly combine amusement, games, and absorbing pursuits with broadening their political, production, and cultural horizons.”²¹ The Commissariat of Public Health kept careful track of the social composition of patrons of sanatoria and health spas (*kurorty*) in order to ensure that the most needy –workers – were served first. Unfortunately, in part through workers’ own disinclination to take up these opportunities, they constituted only 36 percent of the patients at health spas rather than the targeted 90 percent.²² “Why should I go to a spa?” questioned a typical worker; “Only the bourgeois go there, and there is nothing there for us brothers to do.”²³ This was a mistake, wrote the Komsomol activist Bergman in 1927. Tourism was not only for the gentry:

It is a nasty habit to think in this way: in the end, we ourselves are masters of our own lives, and it’s time to get away from our habits of slavish self-limitation: “Only gentlemen can do this,” or “What can we do?” Not true! Despite our poverty, workers can live much better, more beautiful, and more interesting lives.²⁴

Economics shaped the leisure options for Soviet workers, imposing constraints of scarcity that would not be overcome until the years of relative prosperity in the 1960s and 1970s. Nonetheless custom also played an important role in planning for leisure and in

²¹ Danishevskii, “Problema massovogo rabochego otdykha vo vtoroi piatiletke,” 69; Dr. S. L. Lifshits, “Mediko-sanitarnoe obsluzhivanie Domov Otdykha,” *Doma otdykha 1920-1923*, 42.

²² Gosudarstvennyi arkhiv Rossiiskoi Federatsii (GARF), f. A-483 (RSFSR People’s Commissariat of Health, main resort group, 1923-24), op. 1, d. 52 (correspondence with VTsSPS presidium and other organizations, 1923)

²³ Bergman, *Otdykh letom*, 63.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 52-53.

workers' own preferences. Sedentary forms of vacation rest, whether in the medical kurort or in a trade union rest home, symbolized the well-deserved respite earned by eleven months of hard work and constituted the most sought-after options. When most workers thought about vacation, they dreamed about the south, sun, and rest.

As Louise McReynolds recounts, Russia's spa culture emerged in the service of empire. Mineral springs in the Caucasus began to receive recuperating military officers in the early nineteenth century, followed by royal family members who established estates in the area, who in turn attracted a growing population of middle-class consumers of vacations and leisure. Crimea began to receive imperial visitors in the second half of the nineteenth century, and soon a bustling resort culture had developed not only in royal Yalta but all along the Black Sea coast.²⁵ With the end of the civil war, the spas and sanatoria built by private developers in the tsarist period came under the control of the Commissariat of Public Health, which aimed to make the medical resources of the health resort system available to all who needed them. Officially, industrial workers received the highest priority in assignments to health resorts, but high party and state officials regularly sought rest and treatment on southern shores, adding their communist imprimatur to the model begun by the imperial family and its troops. In July 1923, the Kremlin ordered the "Karl Marx" resort to be made habitable in Suuk-Su (Crimea) within two weeks, just in time for the arrival of weary Central Executive Committee members. (The crash effort was successful: Rozaliia Zemliachka wrote in the resort's comment

²⁵ Louise McReynolds, *Russia at Play: Leisure Activities at the End of the Tsarist Era* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2003), 171-77.

book that she had enjoyed the food and the living conditions.)²⁶ In December 1924, Leon Trotskii was sent by his physicians for a two-month “climate therapy” cure in Sukhumi on the Caucasian Black Sea coast, which famously kept him away from Moscow at the moment of Lenin’s death and the intense struggle over Lenin’s succession.²⁷

Whether for communist functionary or ordinary laborer, the health resort (*kurort*) was the place for serious therapy and medically supervised leisure. Resorts were ideally situated far away from the bustle of urban life, and extended stays there permitted patients to recover from any number of serious physical or emotional illnesses.

“Sanatoria are not places to make merry, but repair shops for laborers.”²⁸ Admission and treatment could be obtained only with a doctor’s certificate, and costs were paid through state social insurance or by trade unions. A kurort settlement might consist of a number of different institutions: medical sanatoria offering therapeutic room and board and often closed except to patients; *pansionaty* offering lodging for the less seriously ill who came as day patients to sanatoria and polyclinics; and dining rooms to serve the ambulatory ill. Different diseases required different kinds of treatment: at climatic resorts, the change of scenery provided the cure, whether located in forest regions, steppe, mountains, seaside, or on rivers. The key therapeutic elements consisted of a change of place, moving to a destination with good air and plenty of sunshine, and full rest with a nourishing diet.²⁹ Balneological therapy was recommended for the more seriously ill, who could receive

²⁶ GARF, f. R-3263 (Reports on kurort no. 2 of the Central Executive Committee, 1923-24), op. 1, d. 5, ll. 1-1ob.; d. 9, l. 2.

²⁷ Leon Trotsky, *My Life* (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1970), 508-9.

²⁸ *Kurorty Abkhazii. Putevoditel' s prilozheniem kratkogo ocherka osennezimnikh kurortov SSSR (Sukhum-Gagry)* (Moscow: Glavnoe kurortnoe upravlenie, 1925), 80.

²⁹ *Kurorty SSSR. Spravochnik* (Moscow: Glavnoe kurortnoe upravlenie, 1923), 15-20.

mud baths and mineral water treatments in mountain spas such as those in the Caucasus, and seaside therapies in Crimea and along the Black Sea coast. By the 1930s, the Soviet Union had developed an extensive network of resorts with their associated hospitals, sanatoria, and rest homes, and the most highly placed institutions, unions, and enterprises commandeered the most prestigious medical locations. Kislovodsk, in the Caucasus Mineral Waters district, included 53 separate health units (including rest homes); Sochi on the Black Sea coast boasted 27. The Commissariat of Public Health published a regular guidebook listing all of the resort possibilities in the USSR along with the kinds of diseases and conditions each resort was able to treat, price lists, and practical advice about transportation to and from the resort destination.³⁰

A visit to a kurort followed from a doctor's prescription, but access required a voucher (*putevka*) from one's trade union, which paid the actual cost of treatment and transportation. Yet even in the 1930s, a few sanatoria and pansionaty took paying (*chastnye*) guests, and the elite managed to obtain places in kurorty for their summer holidays. As a university student, Mary Leder applied for and received a voucher to a university-owned spa on the grounds of chronic health problems; in summer 1937, at the height of the terror, her NKVD connections arranged a six-week sojourn in Gurzuf, Crimea, where the "majority of guests" were officers, officers' wives without their husbands, and sons and daughters of high officials.³¹ The allocation of scarce sanatorium places was very much a party matter and receiving a place required

³⁰ Ibid.; *Kurorty SSSR Spravochnik* (Moscow-Leningrad: Gosudarstvennoe izdatel'stvo, 1936); *Kurorty SSSR* was published in 1951 in Moscow in a tirage of 20,000. In this edition, the words said "medicine" but the photographs say "vacation."

³¹ Mary M. Leder, *My Life in Stalinist Russia: An American Woman Looks Back* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001), 120, 132.

considerable effort. The chairman of a Leningrad print shop, Dmitrii Dudarev, appealed to his union's party fraction in 1925 for a pass to a health resort, citing his long service to the trade union (from 1905) and the severity of his medical condition: "The doctor and the medical commission say I have severe neurasthenia and I can only recover my health in a *kurort*." He requested a pass to the Caucasus spa at Kislovodsk, but the party committee referred him instead to the nearby kurort at Sestroretsk, on the Gulf of Finland.³²

The resort life, however, was a taste that had to be acquired. Another printer who had been rewarded with a pass to a kurort in the Caucasus traveled only reluctantly: he had never left his native city, all he knew of the Caucasus were scraps from guidebooks he had set in type.³³ For the anonymous author of "Kurort Reminiscences," the experience of a kurort stay in late 1927 was a mixed one: he was pleased that workers now had access to the medical facilities in Kislovodsk that in the old days had treated only factory owners and merchants: nearly 90 percent of the patients, he judged, were workers, and they appreciated the fresh mountain air. The food, however, was not particularly filling, especially for those on the milk diet prescribed for tuberculosis patients. "The time passed very slowly," he wrote. The reading room offered a few newspapers, but remained unheated until December; he could not afford the borrower's fee at the local public library, and the weekly amateur evenings failed to amuse him.³⁴

³² Tsentral'nyi gosudarstvennyi arkhiv istoriko-politicheskoi dokumentov Sankt Peterburga, f. 435, op. 1, d. 59 (party meetings in union of polygraphic workers, 1925), ll. 69-72.

³³ *Pechatnik*, no. 2, (1927): 25-26.

³⁴ GARF, f. R-5528 (Central Administration for Social Insurance under Narkomtrud), op. 6, d. 164 (miscellaneous correspondence on kurort treatment), ll. 109-10.

Such accounts suggest the widespread sense of entitlement that was first acquired by the elite; but the workers' habit of leisure was not yet firm in the 1920s.

The five-year plans of the 1930s called for a grand expansion and reconstruction of the network of health resorts.³⁵ But these remained designated for the treatment of medical conditions. For most industrial workers, the rest home (*dom otdykha*) represented the pinnacle of a vacation destination: they were more numerous than sanatoria and spas, but still the network of rest homes could not accommodate all who wished to spend their vacations there. Vacations in such places were claimed as a right of every worker, but in practice, a pass to a rest home could be used as a selective reward designed to motivate work and reward loyalty.

The Soviet system of rest homes provided facilities for less extended retreats, but as with sanatoria, they were also highly regimented and purposeful. Rest homes arose in the waning years of the civil war, organized in Petrograd by the Department of Labor and in Moscow by the local health department. Individual trade unions and enterprises also opened their own rest homes, often renting or purchasing suburban dachas or nationalized gentry estates within a day's journey from their cities or workplaces. Rest homes lacked specific medical facilities, but stays were justified on the grounds of their generally therapeutic value: "Those sojourning in Rest Homes find there a corner of healthy life, a commune of toilers resting after a year of work and living in a friendly family and close-knit communal life." The healthy leisure regimen included baths, nutritious meals, medically supervised exercise and physical therapy. The recommended duration for a rest home stay was three weeks, although most patrons came for only two. Resters were

³⁵ *Kurorty SSSR. Spravochnik* (1936), 16-17.

measured and weighed upon arrival and departure, and they based the success of their vacations on the amount of weight they had gained, their feeling of improved well-being, and their enhanced capacity for work once they returned to normal life.³⁶ In addition to healthful diet and physical exercise, rest homes also offered cultural enlightenment, to be administered in simple forms and small doses to allow for the minimal capability of most workers to absorb “theoretical knowledge.”³⁷ As of 1928, almost 300 rest homes with 46,000 spaces had been established across the country, 38 homes with 10,600 spaces in Moscow province alone.³⁸ By 1932, the network of rest homes had expanded to accommodate over 1 million individuals, but their facilities were inadequate to meet the demand, and they were especially inaccessible for families, young people, and pregnant and nursing mothers.³⁹ Individual enterprises and trade unions invested their own funds in the construction of these vacation destinations. The Moscow printers’ union opened a rest home in Khimki, on the outskirts of the city, in the 1920s, and offered 380 spaces a year to lucky or deserving union members.⁴⁰ The newly built Elektroavod in Moscow opened a rest home with a capacity of 500 people a month in the Moscow region in 1931, later adding two more homes. In addition, the plant not only received an allotment of

³⁶ *Doma otdykha 1920-1923*, 11-45.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 65.

³⁸ L. G. Gol’dfail’ and I. D. Iakhnin, *Kurorty, sanatorii i doma otdykha SSSR, 1928* (Moscow: Gosudarstvennoe izdatel’stvo, 1928), 405-48.

³⁹ N. M. Petrov, “Rol’ sotsstrakha v organizatsii razvitiia rabochego otdykha,” *Zdravookhranenie i rabochii otdykh vo vtoroi piatiletke*. 81-85.

⁴⁰ *Pechatnik*, no. 19 (1929), 11.

spaces at the union's rest home in the south, but used its own funds to purchase additional places on a "commercial" basis.⁴¹

Lectures, music, games, and plays filled up the days of the ambitious resters, while others found less structured ways to pass the time. Drinking and card playing were prohibited, but seem to have been very common. The amateur writings at one home hinted at a romantic variant that was undoubtedly more popular than the written record indicates: "He was a rester, and she was a rester. But they weren't resting..."⁴² Above all, however, in these years of scarcity and rationing, a ticket to a rest home meant access to ample food. Three "tasty and filling" meals a day were the norm at the printers' union home in 1924; the noon dinner was the "gayest part of the day."⁴³ The official regimen prescribed four meals a day: breakfast at 9 a.m. (after morning calisthenics), a three-course dinner at 1:30 p.m. followed by two hours of absolute and enforced rest – the "dead" hours; tea at 4:30 in the afternoon, and supper at 8 pm. Meat was served at both dinner and supper, and rest home authorities insisted on a minimum allotment of calories, protein, and fats. In the 1920s, rest homes were held up as a model to the public catering authorities for how to provide good quality meals at reasonable costs.⁴⁴ At Elektroavod in 1934, workers "fought" for passes to the rest home with the best reputation for food.⁴⁵

⁴¹ Sergei Zhuravlev and Mikhail Mukhin, *"Krepost' sotsializma": Povsednevnost' i motivatsiia truda na sovetskom predpriiatii, 1928-1938 gg.* (Moscow: Rosspen, 2004), 193-94.

⁴² *Doma otdykha 1920-1923*, 65, 98.

⁴³ *Pechatnik*, no. 17 (1927): 18; *Moskovskii pechatnik*, no. 22 (1926): 4. *Moskovskii pechatnik*, no. 29-30 (1924): 17.

⁴⁴ *Doma otdykha. Sbornik statei i materialov 1924-1925 g.g. (k ustanovke rezhima v domakh otdykha)*, ed. L. E. Fedynskaia (Moscow: Moszdravotdel, 1925), 57-59; *Moskovskii pechatnik*, no. 29-30 (1924): 7.

⁴⁵ Zhuravlev and Mukhin, *"Krepost' sotsializma,"* 195.

As with the kurort and sanatorium, access to rest homes was rationed by means of the putevka. Likewise, a prospective vacationer could not choose to spend his or her own salary or savings on such a vacation: a pass to a rest home was a boon to be desired, a rare and special opportunity. At the Elektrozavod plant in Moscow, as Sergei Zhuravlev and Mikhail Mukhin document, workers earned such passes as a reward for exemplary work effort or for party work, part of the socialist incentive system. Shock workers received official priority, by decree of the Central Trade Union Council.⁴⁶ Not surprisingly, the deficit in vacation passes gave rise to complaints about favoritism: in Leningrad, the printers' union boss sent a woman to the rest home that the local shop had not selected or authorized; workers complained that he sent her with "the money we earned with the sweat of our brow."⁴⁷ The best that a worker could hope for was a place in a rest home or sanatorium every other year, criticized another, while administrators and their families seemed to receive a place every summer.⁴⁸ Excess demand also meant that workers could not hope to spend their vacations with their families, although they expressed a strong preference for family vacations. In 1934, the Elektrozavod factory committee responded to such pressures by deciding to build a "family wing" at one of the plant's rest homes. Some workers simply refused to accept a pass to a rest home, because

⁴⁶ Ibid., 193-94. Petrov, "Rol' sotsstrakha," 82.

⁴⁷ Tsentral'nyi gosudarstvennyi arkhiv Sankt Peterburga, f. 4804 (trade union of polygraphic workers), op. 10, d. 4 (Stenograficheskii otchet VII Gubs"ezda soiuz), l. 450.

⁴⁸ Tsentral'nyi gosudarstvennyi arkhiv Moskovskoi oblasti (TsGAMO), f. 699 (trade union of polygraphic workers), op. 1, d. 1141, l. 19.

“they did not want to be separated from their families during the time of their assigned vacation.” Mothers did not wish to leave their children.⁴⁹

Camps and colonies offered a low-cost alternative to rest homes for the unattached and physically fit. Camps – rest away from home with any kind of lodging serving as a base – could be organized or they could be set up almost anywhere by independent small groups. A group of seven Komsomols in Tomsk bought a boat and rented a dacha in the summer of 1926, and they spent their holiday there collectively, bathing, engaging in physical culture, and reading literature together at night. By the mid-1930s, vacation camps were said to exist everywhere in the Soviet Union, organized by individuals but also by individual enterprises as well as units of the Society for Proletarian Tourism and Excursions (Obshchestvo proletarskogo turizma i ekskursii [OPTE]). They were not for everyone: “If you don’t want to hike, exchange your suit for comfortable clothes, take your turn at chores and cooking, and if you would be bored without the noisy amusements of Gagry, Sochi, or Yalta, then a camp stay is not recommended for you.”⁵⁰

Although tradition, custom, and personal preference inclined Soviet workers to the sedentary vacation destinations of the kurort or the rest home, an increasingly strident movement favored more active and independent leisure. “Tourism was the best rest (*otdykh*),” proclaimed the Society for Proletarian Tourism, created in 1927, precisely because it broadened one’s mental horizons as well as healed and hardened one’s body. A touring vacation was qualitatively different from one spent in the same place, even

⁴⁹ Zhuravlev and Mukhin, “*Krepost’ sotsializma*,” 195-96; Petrov, “*Rol’ sotsstrakha*,” 85-86.

⁵⁰ Bergman, *Otdykh letom*, 43; Arkhangel’skaia, *Rabota iacheiki OPTE*, 19.

when that place required a journey in order to reach it. Tourism taught independence and self-reliance, it built habits of social cooperation, and it developed techniques for self-knowledge and discovery. The Society for Proletarian Tourism and Excursions promoted three types of organized touring beginning in the late 1920s and extending through the 1930s. Package tours (“planovoi” or “operativnyi” tourism) to traditional attractions such as Crimea and the Caucasus, but also to sites of industrial progress, were offered to the Soviet public beginning in the late 1920s. Such packages brought together groups of 25 or 30 travelers, arranged transportation, food, sightseeing programs, and accommodation, often in very primitive settings. In the absence of a hotel industry and where rest homes and resorts monopolized the available accommodations, the fledgling tourism movement lodged its travelers in “tourist bases” (*turbazy*): these could be schools converted during the summer for tourists’ use or tent camps.⁵¹ “Industrial tours” invited workers in the metal, chemical, and textile industries to travel to other enterprises in their specialties in order to exchange production experience and raise skills.⁵² Tours to the Caucasus were extraordinarily popular: various options took tourists across mountain passes and along the military highways to the sea by a variety of conveyances as well as by foot.

In the years of the first five-year plan, tourism organizers attempted to perfect a new purely socialist form of the group tour: the mass excursion, or *massovka*. Mass excursions involved trainloads of travelers, often workers from a single factory or trade union, who would travel out of town accompanied by the factory’s brass band.

⁵¹ *Turist-aktivist*, no. 8 (1931): 42.

⁵² GARF, f. 9520, op. 1, d. 3a: advertising posters for Sovetskii Turist [a predecessor of OPTE].

Trainloads of proletarians journeyed back and forth from Moscow and Leningrad in the 1920s to celebrate revolutionary holidays and see the sights; another well-publicized mass trip in 1928 took 500 tourists to the Caucasus where they engaged in “cultural work” – agitprop – among the locals.⁵³ The next year, 600 worker youth from the Moscow region repeated the journey by special train. Once they reached the Caucasus, the group divided into two “battalions,” one making the foot journey across the mountains from north to south, the second in the reverse direction. Along the way, both groups engaged the local population in explaining Soviet power and collecting complaints.⁵⁴

By the late 1930s, when tourism had become the responsibility of the Tourist-Excursion Administration (Turistsko-Ekskursionnoe Upravlenie – TEU) of the Central Trade Union Council, group tours became less “massive” but still organized and educational. An advertisement in a 1939 issue of *Na sushe i na more*, the official publication of the tourism organization, invited prospective tourists to choose from a wide range of purposeful and recreational vacation travel. In addition to tours to the major cities of Moscow (Itinerary Number 1), Leningrad, and Kiev, one could take socialist historical tours to Stalin’s birthplace in Georgia, the place of Lenin’s exile in Siberia, and the Crimean and Ukrainian battlefields of the civil war. Tours were also announced for national republics and for sites of Russian and Soviet culture: Tolstoi’s estate in Iasnaia Poliana, Chekhov’s house in Yalta, the Ostrovskii house in Sochi; but

⁵³ *Na sushe i na more* (hereafter *NSNM*), no. 12 (1929): 15; a mass excursion in 1927 took 630 Muscovites, mostly over the age of 30, to Leningrad for three days (*Pechatnik*, no. 27 (1927): 14.)

⁵⁴ *Vsemirnyi turist*, no. 12 (1929): 382.

also places of ancient Russian painting and architecture: Novgorod, Palekh, and Mstera. The TEU, continued the ad, also organized steamship travel along the main rivers of the country, and tourists could travel by automobile and autobus in Crimea, along the Georgian Military highway, to the Black Sea coast, Kazakhstan, and other places. Finally, tourists could sign up for boating or alpinist camps. Trips lasted from five to twenty-two days, and cost from 90 to 720 rubles.⁵⁵

The cost of such tours, at a time when an average industrial worker earned something like 375 rubles a month, meant that package tours remained unaffordable for many individuals and most families, a point to which I will return.⁵⁶ Fortunately, said the tourism activists, independent (*samodeiatel'nyi*) tourism was not only less expensive than the package tour, but superior in every way. The Society for Proletarian Tourism and Excursions, through its network of factory-based cells, encouraged Soviet tourists to put together their own independent tours: to form small compatible groups, plan an itinerary, save their money, and explore the well-known or the far-off corners of the Soviet expanse, preferably on foot, by canoe, on horseback, or by bicycle, but also by bus or railroad train. This was proper “touring” (*turizm*), and its advocates boasted that such tourism was the best form of leisure because it developed and recuperated all parts of a worker’s organism. It restored physical vigor by providing modulated exercise, it expanded the world view by the physical movement from one place to another away from home, and it developed important habits of self-reliance and survival skills.⁵⁷ (Starting

⁵⁵ *NSNM*, no. 5, (1939): inside back cover.

⁵⁶ Average wage for 1940 from Alec Nove, *Economic History of the USSR* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1969), 280.

⁵⁷ *Turist-aktivist*, no. 1 (1933): 4-5; Diane P. Koenker, “The Proletarian Tourist in the 1930s: Between Mass Excursion and Mass Escape,” in *Turizm: The Russian and East*

in 1938, one could validate these skills by earning the *Turist SSSR* badge during the course of an organized trip.⁵⁸) This form of Soviet leisure travel was eminently affordable. For the price of a few bottles of beer, a fellow could take a train out of town for the day, soak up some sun, and experience nature.⁵⁹ Self-organized tourism put nature and exploration within the reach of everyone. Gradually, activists hoped, the government would subsidize transport for low-paid workers and begin to mass produce tents, rucksacks, and other equipment that could be lent to groups of independent travelers.⁶⁰

One of the more active sections of the OPTE, the Bauman district group in Moscow, reported that in 1929 it had sent 118 groups, consisting of 686 individuals, on such independent tours. Almost all of these (89 groups and 504 people) headed south, to the Caucasus or Crimea; only a handful braved less charted territories such as the Urals, Altai, Karelia, or Central Asia. Reporting back to the society, the Bauman tourists offered testimonies that would help to prepare groups to follow. Six apprentices from an aviation trust training school decided they would boat along the Desna river to Ukraine, but when the real costs of the trip became clear – 70 to 80 rubles in addition to their vacation salary – three of the six travelers withdrew. One said he would rather spend his money on a good suit, a second opted for the rest home, mainly because there he could “fatten himself up for a song.” But having secured the necessary permits, food, and equipment, the remaining three men in a boat had a fine time, camping at night, enjoying

European Tourist under Capitalism and Socialism, ed. Anne E. Gorsuch and Diane P. Koenker (Ithaca, forthcoming 2006).

⁵⁸ *NSNM*, no. 9 (1938): 2.

⁵⁹ Bergman, *Otdykh letom*, 14.

⁶⁰ Bergman, *Pervaia kniga turista* (Moscow: Molodaia gvardiia, 1927) , 183.

the silence of the river, and taking in natural and industrial sites from Briansk to Chernigov. A group of three women from the Semenovskii textile mill pointed their compass north, to Karelia. Their journey by rail, foot, and boat took them to a paper factory, a marble quarry, and a hydroelectric station; while visiting a collective farm they helped to start a child care nursery. Everywhere they noted the contrasts with noisy Moscow: not only unforgettable lakes and waterfalls, the beautiful white nights, but also unfamiliar customs and social relations.⁶¹ The journal *Na sushe i na more* brought similar such accounts to thousands of readers in the 1930s.⁶²

While tourism activists and their journal promoted such independent touring as the most authentic and therefore desirable mode of leisure travel, both the planned excursion and the independent group tour shared many characteristics of a particularly purposeful socialist way of traveling. The well-publicized voyage of the *Abkhazia*, noted at the beginning of this essay, was a unique travel experience in many ways, but the publicity generated by the journey was also meant to provide a template for the properly self-conscious way proletarian tourist travel should take place. All of the participants were expected to engage in the good tourist practice of self-reflection and writing their journeys. The Soviet tourist kept a journal on the road, recording impressions, observations, and collecting natural specimens. Each group would appoint a diarist who

⁶¹ *Proletarskii turizm: (Iz opyta raboty baumanskogo otdeleniia obshchestva proletarskogo turizma). Materialy k X baumanskoi raikonferentsii VLKSM* (Moscow: Baumanskii dom VLKSM, 1929), 7, 12, 80-81, 70-74.

⁶² On the journal and its impact, see I. I. Sandomirskaia, "Novaia zhizn' na marshe: Stalinskii turizm kak 'praktika puti,'" *Obshchestvennye nauki i sovremennost'*, no. 4 (1996): 163-72, and Evgeny Dobrenko, "Iskusstvo sotsial'noi navigatsii (Ocherki kul'turnoi topografii stalinskoi epokhi)," *Wiener Slawistischer Almanach*, no. 45 (2000): 93-134.

would compile the individual accounts and submit a report about the trip to the group's sponsor.⁶³ Excerpts from the diaries of several of the workers on the *Abkhazia* voyage, along with that of the captain, appeared in a collection published as *Korabl' udarnikov* in 1931. The book's introduction emphasized the purposeful nature of the trip and the productive role played by recording it. "This was not a trip for holiday and amusement, to which capitalist Europe has become accustomed. No, these 257 Soviet shock workers, having observed the residents of Hamburg, Naples, and Constantinople, carefully recorded everything they saw in their notebooks, they traveled to Europe in order to broaden their horizons, to learn about the achievements of bourgeois technology and culture so that they could better serve the cause of socialist construction."⁶⁴

Such reports, published in collections like *Korabl' udarnikov* or that of the Bauman district OPTE, emphasized that touring was hard work. The *Abkhazia* group encountered violent November weather on the Bay of Biscay that caused most passengers to retire to their cabins but ultimately to take pride in the Soviet ship that could withstand such a storm. On Soviet soil, tourists battled innumerable difficulties: losing their way in the mountains, cold and rain, mosquitoes, rain and cold, food shortages, impassable roads, sunburn, and thieves. Touring work required preparation and gathering knowledge, before and during the trip. The *Abkhazia* passengers received regular lectures about conditions in the countries that they visited and those they sailed past. Tourists inside the Soviet Union – where so many of the most popular destinations were inhabited by non-Russians – needed to learn local customs and by doing so, develop a

⁶³ Arkhangel'skaia, *Rabota iacheiki OPTE*, 32-35.

⁶⁴ *Korabl' udarnikov*, 8.

habit of knowing and of learning. A tourism advocate reminded readers that tourists should not repeat the mistake of one group, who asked a Muslim mountain dweller if he could sell the group a bit of pork.⁶⁵ Having traveled and learned how to learn, the tourist returned a changed person. Many nonparty shockworkers aboard the *Abkhazia*, they reported in their diaries, developed such pride in Soviet achievements through their encounter with the capitalist crisis, that they enthusiastically signed up to be party members even before the journey had ended. Having witnessed the suffering of their foreign brothers, they said, “Take us into the party, we don’t want to be observers any more, we want to be participants in the great construction project.”⁶⁶ A group of young women braved skepticism and their own inexperience to create an unforgettable journey through the Caucasus: “We got stronger and healthier, we expanded our circle of knowledge... *Let them laugh at us, let them not believe, but we accomplished our goals.*”⁶⁷ In the proletarian state, these accounts implied, travel served as a reward for labor, but also as an opportunity for further self-development.

In the utopian future, tourism and travel would be available to all: women as well as men, old and young, urban cosmopolitan and village cowherd. In the more realistic present of the proletarianizing state, industrial workers became the immediate target of leisure travel planners, both because industrial workers were especially deserving of the pleasures and knowledge produced by travel but also because of the publicity value of putting workers first. The *Abkhazia* voyage reports called attention to the predominance of workers among its participants. Of the 257 passengers, 244 were shock workers from

⁶⁵ Bergman, *Pervaia kniga turista*, 24.

⁶⁶ *Korabl’ udarnikov*, 117.

⁶⁷ *Proletarskii turizm*, 47 (emphasis in original).

123 enterprises across the Soviet Union.⁶⁸ When the *Ukraina* sailed from Leningrad a year later on its maiden voyage to the Black Sea, journalistic accounts spoke of “shock workers,” without analyzing the composition of the passengers, whether manual laborers or technical workers.⁶⁹ Both ships (and their subsequent sisters, the *Adzharia* and the *Armenia*), were designed for the Crimea-Caucasus line and offered three classes of accommodation: passengers on these ships would normally be segregated. Classes of transportation remained the rule in the Soviet 1930s (and later), whether by rail, steamship, or river boat.⁷⁰ On the *Abkhazia*’s first voyage, however, every shock worker was free to go on all decks and on all levels of the ship. The first-class cabins were assigned to those who had traveled the furthest to reach Leningrad; Leningraders were placed in the second-class cabins, and third class went to the youngest passengers. All the travelers enjoyed and marveled at the luxurious amenities at their disposal: cozy cabins lined in oak, with sink, mirror, table, and divan; snow-white linen graced the dining-room tables.⁷¹ Such a voyage served as a promise and a preview of some future

⁶⁸ *Turist-aktivist*, no. 1 (1931), 34.

⁶⁹ *NSNM*, no. 30 (1931), 3-7; *Turist-aktivist*, no. 10-11 (1931), 30-32. A brief account in the *Times* of London labeled the 350 passengers as “members of shock brigades, Soviet workers and peasants who have distinguished themselves in special efforts towards the carrying out of the Five Years Plan.” 11 August 1931.

⁷⁰ *Povolzh’e: Spravochnik-putevoditel’ 1930 g.* (Moscow: Izd. Upravleniia Volzhskim Gosudarstvennym Rechnym Flotom, 1930), 242-43; Matthias Heeke, *Reisen zu den Sowjets: Der ausländische Tourismus in Russland 1921-1941* (Münster: LITverlag, 2003), 269-96.

⁷¹ *Korabl’ udarnikov*, 71-72. By comparison, passengers traveled on the Atlantic ocean in this period strictly segregated by class of passage. The old steerage class that had brought thousands of immigrants to the new world was now refitted as “Tourist Third Class” to carry middle-class tourists on voyages of European discovery. But as before, first and second class sections of their steamships remained off limits to those traveling on the lower decks. Lorraine Coons and Alexander Varias, *Tourist Third Cabin: Steamship Travel in the Interwar Years* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), chap. 2.

classless society, where distinctions would be based on age or geography, not income, where privilege went to the least favored, not the most.

The *Abkhazia* and *Ukraina* sailings were exceptional one-time cruises whose beneficiaries were not only the several hundred workers who made the trip, but the millions of Soviet men and women who might dream that one day, such eye-opening travel and luxury might be theirs. In the meantime, they could only appreciate through the eyes and words of others the “joys of sea travel, the wonderful bracing air, the continual change of impressions, and the contemplation of the whole panorama of sea and coastline that is possible only aboard a ship.”⁷² Just as the “Strength through Joy” cruises promised all German citizens the possibility of leisure travel but in fact were accessible only to the privileged few, Soviet leisure travel remained a deficit experience in the 1930s. To what extent, then, were Soviet workers able to embrace the possibilities of proletarian tourism? And did workers even want to engage in tourist travel, or did they prefer a new suit or a cheap rest home vacation? To what extent were the stratifications of the normal Odessa-Sukhumi run replicated in other kinds of tourism experiences?

As noted above, health planners hoped during the first five-year plan that 90 percent of the visitors to sanatoria would be “workers,” and they kept careful accounts of the social composition of the patients under their recuperative care.⁷³ Reports in 1931 admitted that the share of workers in many places was 60 percent and less, and even these

⁷² *Spravochnik sovtorgflota dlia passazhirov po vsem moriam s prilozheniem putevoditel'ia po kurortam i portam Chernogo i Azovskogo morei* (1928), 101.

⁷³ GARF, f. A-483, op. 1, d. 52; GARF, f. A-8042 (RSFSR Commissariat of Health (Health Resorts)), op. 1, d. 5 (Conjunctural review of the work of the spas of the all-Russian resort group for 1932).

figures could not be trusted. “It is a common observance,” wrote one report, “that local trade union organizations send white-collar workers and their dependents to sanatoria with the green vouchers that are designated for workers only.” In one case, the six patients sent by a miners’ union local organization consisted of one disabled miner, the wife of the union committee chair, the wife of a foreman, and another white-collar worker plus his wife and child.⁷⁴ Another analysis conceded that the share of worker visitors to seaside resorts – the most desirable vacation destinations – fell below the planned quotas, and that the deficit was greatest in the most desirable month of July, when the share of workers went down and that of technical personnel went up.⁷⁵

The social composition of Soviet tourists – active not sedentary vacationers – also raised concerns in these formative years of proletarian tourism. The OPTE acknowledged in early 1930 that “unfortunately, the desire of industrial workers for tourism remains weak, and the Society for Proletarian Tourism is not yet actually proletarian.” It aimed in 1930 to recruit 200,000 members by October of that year, of whom 60 percent would be workers.⁷⁶ Two years later, OPTE officials admitted that the “proletarian” component in package tours was 20 percent at best, but that 60 percent of independent tourists were “pure proletarians.”⁷⁷ The Leningrad organization reported that its proletarian component had increased from 38.5 percent in 1930 to 60 percent in 1931, with 70 percent of the delegates to a regional conference self-identifying as

⁷⁴ GARF, f. 5528, op. 4, d. 118 (Social composition of patients in the sanatoria of Tsusstrakh – Caucasus mineral waters for 1931), l. 38.

⁷⁵ GARF, f. A-8042, op. 1, d. 118, l. 35-36.

⁷⁶ *Vecherniaia Moskva*, 24 April 1930.

⁷⁷ *Biulleten’ turista*, no. 7-8 (1930): 9; *Pervyi vsesoiuznyi s’ezd OPTE v voprosakh i otvetakh* (Moscow: Fizkul’tura i turizm, 1932), 67; GARF, f. A-2306, op. 69, d. 1826 (draft plan of tourism work of Poliprosvet, 3 September 1928), l. 6.

“workers.”⁷⁸ The network of factory cells would provide access for organizers to the mass of factory workers, to agitate for the benefits of tourism, and to recruit such workers into the expanding program of independent tourism. Proletarian tourism seemed to be converging on the independent tour as most suitable for “proletarian” participation and most proletarian in form.

The Bauman district in Moscow had become one of the centers of proletarian tourism already in the late 1920s. From a small number of 156 tourists in 1927, of whom 65 (41.7 percent) were “workers” (the remainder were white-collar employees and students), the district sent 1,701 travelers on journeys in 1929. Still, only 45.4 percent claimed to be industrial workers.⁷⁹ Many of the individual group reports, however, came from “workers,” a sample chosen perhaps to convey hopes rather than reality. In 1929, a group of tailoring women apprentices from the Moskvoshvei factory prepared all winter for their trip to the Caucasus, studying the route, earning money for the journey, and training with weekend excursions. They spent a month in the region, crossing the main ridges and descending to the Black Sea coast at Sukhumi. Dressed in men’s suits, carrying all their provisions and gear in rucksacks, sleeping in tents, they were taken for “Russian gypsies” in Sochi, but they demonstrated their proletarian zeal by making dinner for a local Komsomol group and singing “Molodaia gvardiia” together. “There were no Azharovtsy, there were no Moskvichi, but only a collective of Komsomols,

⁷⁸ A. Iu. Davydov, “Deiatel’nost’ vsesoiuznogo obshchestva proletarskogo turizma i ekskursii (OPTE) v Leningrade,” *Dobrovol’nye obshchestva v Petrograde-Leningrade v 1917-1937 gg.* ed. A. P. Kupaigorodskaia (Leningrad: Nauka, 1989), 135.

⁷⁹ *Proletarskii turizm*, 6. The OPTE cell at the Mytishchi wagonbuilding plant admitted that not one of its 300 active tourists in 1932 was a worker. *NSNM*, no. 13 (1932): 12.

already fast friends.”⁸⁰ Tourists aboard the *Abkhazia* likewise cemented their proletarian solidarity with song.⁸¹ Performing proletarian internationalism in this way became an important element of Soviet tourism.

Such reports continued throughout the 1930s. *Na sushe i na more* noted in 1935 that the Iaroslavl’ rubber-asbestos combine had three hundred OPTE members, of whom 65 were traveling in independent groups that summer. The most ambitious group of three was headed for the southern coast of Crimea; but more typically for factory workers, other groups planned less expensive journeys. A group of fifteen planned to travel in five boats for 225 kilometers along the Volga; another group planned to tour the centers of Ivanovo and Palekh, combining foot and railway travel. Others looked forward to shorter motor boat and steamer excursions along the Volga. In addition, the OPTE cell had purchased twenty putevki for travel on package tours that summer.⁸² Nothing more was said about these packages or their consumers, but their cost typically exceeded what ordinary workers could pay, even allowing for the discounted rail tickets available to members of the OPTE.

The standard two-week vacation for industrial workers (except those in hazardous trades) as well as financial limits restricted the range for “true” proletarian tourists. Students, both those in factory training schools and educational institutes, disposed of much more summer time, and they seem to have been more numerous participants in proletarian tourism in the 1930s. In the Bauman district, students accounted for 160 of

⁸⁰ *Proletarskii turizm*, 48.

⁸¹ *Korabl’ udarnikov*.

⁸² *NSNM*, no. 11 (1935): 15.

475 tourists in 1928 (33 percent); 552 of 1,701 in 1929 (32 percent).⁸³ A detailed analysis of the tourist accounts published in *Na sushe i na more* would probably confirm the impression that professionals – teachers, engineers, scientists, officials – constituted the majority of individual tourists in the 1930s. Once tourism had become part of the sports network, the sports society “Nauka,” representing scientists from all over the USSR, received considerable attention in the press. It boasted of having sent 1,400 tourists and 1,300 alpinists on trips in 1938.⁸⁴

When *Vecherniaia Moskva* covered a cruise of the ship *Vologda* to the Arctic Circle in August 1937, the popular evening newspaper noted that the trip was a reward for outstanding work. Among the prize winners were engineers, scientists, and Stakhanovites from the textile, shoe, and oil industries.⁸⁵ Leisure travel was still not yet available to everyone, but it was not restricted only to certain occupational sectors. On the whole, however, distinctions among tourists according to social position received little emphasis in the tourism press. Nor were gender ratios an explicit source of concern, although by and large, tourism (and its partner alpinism) acquired a masculine tone. In the late 1920s, to be sure, some activists worried that women might be excluded from tourism because of their perceived frailty. Accounts in *Na sushe i na more* often featured groups of women (especially in the March issues of each year), but the proportional distribution by sex did not receive public attention. The best people, Soviet people, participated in tourism: shockworkers, Stakhanovites, Komsomols, soldiers, party

⁸³ *Proletarskii turizm*, 6.

⁸⁴ *NSNM*, no. 2 (1939): 2. Eva Maurer reports the prominence of students and white-collar employees in alpinism. “Al’pinizm as Mass Sport and Elite Recreation: Soviet Mountaineering Camps under Stalin,” in *Turizm*, ed. Gorsuch and Koenker.

⁸⁵ *Vecherniaia Moskva*, 15 August 1937; 19 August 1937.

members, geologists, engineers.⁸⁶ As *Na sushe i na more* reminded an inquiring reader, there was no such specialization or occupation of “tourist.” Anyone could be a tourist who preferred active travel to passive rest.⁸⁷

Leisure travel and tourism operated on multiple levels in prewar Soviet society. Vacations and the possibility to spend them in unfamiliar and sublime settings were offered as a right earned by every worker as a result of his or her toil. Even though economic scarcity made the universal enjoyment of seaside or mountain vacations unlikely, leisure travel served in the 1930s as one of the weapons in the arsenal of Soviet incentive measures. Something to be desired, leisure travel was also something to be earned, whether by hard work, loyalty, or advancement up the ladder of skill, training, expertise, and authority. Moreover, under socialism, the ideal reward for hard work and learning was active tourism – the opportunity to play even harder and to learn even more, about oneself, one’s country, and the world.

Soviet leisure travel and tourism exemplified the paradoxes of the system itself, and here is why tourism becomes such a powerful tool for examining and interpreting the meaning of workers’ experiences under socialism. The coverage and promotion of tourism and leisure travel activities hinted at the possibilities that in travel, any Soviet worker could transcend class: anyone could be a tourist who preferred active travel to passive rest. Yet class distinctions persisted in the accessibility and availability of the various leisure travel options. The manager and his wife visited the rest home every year;

⁸⁶ See, for example, the feature on Stakhanovite-tourists in *NSNM*, no. 8 (1936): 15.

⁸⁷ *NSNM*, no. 4 (1937): 2.

workers could only dream about Crimea. Tourism in particular was celebrated as an ideal means of creating the new Soviet person: the healthy, confident, self-reliant hero whose very self-reliance made him or her a much more valuable member of the collective, of the mass. The goal of the Society for Proletarian Tourism and Excursions was to make tourism a “mass movement,” but every member of the mass had to learn for him or herself to “see with your own eyes”, “touch with your hands,” the vast resources and riches of the Soviet land.⁸⁸ Tourism activists scorned the package tour for encouraging passivity; only *individual* tourism developed workers’ critical faculties and survival skills. Soviet tourism exemplified “Lefort’s paradox” recently proposed by Alexei Yurchak: “The Soviet citizen was called upon to submit completely to party leadership, to cultivate a collectivist ethic, and repress individualism, while at the same time becoming an enlightened and independent-minded individual who pursues knowledge and is inquisitive and creative.”⁸⁹ By following the strict discipline of the party’s rules for proper tourism (as codified, for example, in the requirements for earning the *Turist SSSR* badge), the proletarian tourist could achieve authentic self-realization.

The gap between the ideal of tourist travel and active vacations as the reward for labor, and the reality of limited opportunities in the 1930s supports some arguments about the marginalization of Soviet industrial workers. Showpiece “proletarian vacations” such as the *Abkhazia* cruise may simply have reminded the majority of Soviet workers how little they really could earn with their labor. Despite the touted superiority of the rugged hiking or boating vacation, perhaps most Soviet workers in the 1930s would have

⁸⁸ *Komsomol'skaia pravda*, 16 December 1926.

⁸⁹ Alexei Yurchak, *Everything Was Forever, Until It Was No More: The Last Soviet Generation* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006), 11.

preferred to take their well-earned rest in a setting of comfort and ease: lounging in a rest home or a mountain resort, absorbing a little Beethoven performed by the resort orchestra along with sun and the salt air. Tourism activists themselves appeared to be conflicted about the optimal forms for leisure travel and vacations: even the most strenuous hikers through the Caucasus passes preferred to end their tours on the beach in Sochi. Maybe a river cruise down the Volga, with its constantly changing sights and opportunities for historical, economic, and social information gathering, could contribute to making vacationers into self-actualizing persons as effectively as making the same journey by row boat. One could exchange experiences and share songs as easily in the river boat's salon as around the tourist campfire. Pleasure competed with rigor in representations about tourism. Increasingly in the 1930s, comfort was represented as just as worthy reward as a challenging adventure.

The movement for leisure travel and tourism was still a work in progress in the Soviet 1930s: this was a time of training and development, for individual workers and for tourist organizations. The tourism and leisure industry would survive the war with its material base shattered but its structure, methods, and agenda the same. As soon as reconstruction began, the same tourist officials began to discuss ways to rebuild the array of facilities that had been part of the experience of the 1930s: rest home, resort, package tours, tourist bases, and independent tourism. They would worry about the optimal mix of rest homes and active travel. "The majority of people," averred one official, "love tourism and they consider it the best form of rest."⁹⁰ Textile workers and workers from

⁹⁰ GARF, f. 9520, op. 1, d. 69 (stenogram of a conference of the central TEU of VTsSPS on development of mass tourism, 10 June 1948), quote on l. 17ob.

the Molotov automobile plant enthused about their experiences at a Moscow tourist base in 1949 combining rest and outings.⁹¹ Postwar tourism publications differed little in their prescriptions from the initial works published in the 1920s and 1930s: the 1959 *Sputnik turista*, like its 1927 precursor, reminded the tourist that, “*Independent* travel offers the most complete form of Soviet tourism, where the tourist himself selects and organizes an itinerary, himself carries out the journey, and takes care of himself in field camp conditions.”⁹² Rest homes worried most of all about furnishing “good and filling” food that vacationers had come to expect.⁹³

Undoubtedly only a minority of Soviet workers participated in leisure travel and tourism in the 1920s and 1930s. Only workers at the most favored enterprises enjoyed the benefits of trade union rest homes. But like the commodities of caviar and champagne, as Jukka Gronow argues, vacations served as the promise of the good life to come.⁹⁴ They could not yet be enjoyed every day or every year, but they existed, and some deserving Soviet citizens reaped these fruits of the socialist system. Others could read about it in the press. It was a characteristic feature of the Soviet regime in the 1930s that even the *hope* of a reward could function as an incentive, a source of pride, and a marker of well-being. After the war, these arguments for leisure travel and vacations would become the basis for a growing sense that all Soviet workers and citizens were

⁹¹ Tsentral’nyi arkhiv literatury i iskusstva Moskvyy, f. 11, op. 2, d. 33 (comment book from the Lisitskaia tourist base).

⁹² *Sputnik turista* (Moscow: Fizkul’tura i sport, 1959), 13; cf. Barkhash, *Sputnik turista*, 1927.

⁹³ TsGAMO, f. 7223, op. 1, d. 712 (letters and articles on the operation of rest homes, 1951); d. 576 (conference on monitoring the all-union review of rest homes and sanatoria, 29 March 1950).

⁹⁴ Jukka Gronow, *Caviar with Champagne: Common Luxury and the Ideals of the Good Life in Stalin’s Russia* (Oxford: Berg, 2003).

entitled to these benefits. Expectations would rise, but the arguments and structure would remain the same.