Strengthening Friendship and Fraternal Solidarity:

Soviet Youth Tourism to Eastern Europe under Khrushchev and Brezhnev

The three decades following Stalin's death in 1953 witnessed a dramatic expansion in Soviet tourism to the other countries of the European socialist bloc. Youth tourism in particular was an important feature of efforts to build friendlier and more durable links with the satellite states at the grassroots level. However, the prospects for long-term success in this endeavour were continually hampered by Soviet concerns about the dangers of interaction, and the passing years came to see the economic benefits of tourist travel, rather than the initial goal of building solidarity, move closer to the centre of attention.

Keywords: Khrushchev, Brezhnev, Soviet, Eastern Europe, Komsomol, Tourism

Soviet re-engagement with the outside world has long been one of the key facets of historiography on the post-Stalin years. Most often this 'opening up' has been explored in the context of growing interaction with the West, and with the countries of the developing world.[1] Key moments and sites of interaction between Soviet citizens and foreigners, such as the 1957 World Youth Festival in Moscow, or the growing numbers of international students in Soviet higher education institutions, have thus far mainly generated a narrative which centres upon

[1] See, for example, Y. Richmond, *Cultural Exchange and the Cold War: Raising the Iron Curtain*, University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2003; A. Iandolo, 'The Rise and Fall of the Soviet Model of Development in West Africa, 1957-64', *Cold War History*, Vol. 12, No. 4, 2012, pp. 683-704; E. Gilburd, 'The Revival of Soviet Internationalism in the 1950s' in D. Kozlov and E. Gilburd eds. *The Thaw: Soviet Society and Culture during the 1950s and 1960s*, University of Toronto Press, 2013, pp. 362-401.

new and 'exotic' contacts with either the capitalist world or the 'global south'.[2] The concurrent increase of encounters between Soviet citizens and those from other countries of the European socialist bloc, however, has been less widely remarked upon to date.[3] Actually, though, post-Stalin 'opening up' was always most substantial in regard to the countries of communist Eastern Europe, in terms of the volume, diversity and 'openness' of the exchanges that ensued.[4]

While not wholly without precedent – a small trickle of students from Eastern Europe had first appeared in Soviet higher education during the late 1940s – new grassroots encounters with the other countries of the European socialist bloc clearly did come under the wider umbrella of Khrushchev-era 'opening up' to the outside world. Soviet political dominance over the region had already been secured during the second half of the 1940s but

[2] See, for example, T. Rupprecht, *Soviet Internationalism after Stalin: Ideology and Exchange between the USSR and Latin America during the Cold War*, Cambridge University Press, 2017; J. Hessler, 'Death of an African Student in Moscow: Race, Politics and the Cold War', *Cahiers du Monde ruse*, Vol. 47, No. 1-2, 2006, pp. 33-63; C. Katsakioris, 'Burden or Allies? Third World Students and International Duty through Soviet Eyes', *Kritika*, Vol. 18, No. 3, 2017, pp. 539-567; W. Taubman, *The View from the Lenin Hills: an American Student's Report on Soviet Youth in Ferment*, London: Hamish Hamilton, 1968; O. Gerasimova, *"Ottepel'", "zamorozki" i studenty Moskovskogo universiteta*, Moskva: AIRO, 2015.

[3] As discussed below, three notable exceptions to this trend are R. Applebaum, 'The Friendship Project: Socialist Internationalism in the Soviet Union and Czechoslovakia in the 1950s and 1960s', *Slavic Review*, Vol. 74, No. 3, 2015, pp. 484-507; Z. Wojnowski, 'An unlikely bulwark of Sovietness: cross-border travel and Soviet patriotism in Western Ukraine, 1956-1985', *Nationalities Papers*, Vol. 43, No. 1, 2015, pp. 82-101; and A. Gorsuch, 'Time Travelers: Soviet Tourists to Eastern Europe' in A. Gorsuch and D. Koenker eds. *Turizm: The Russian and East European Tourist under Capitalism and Socialism*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2006, pp. 203-226. On wider exchange within the socialist camp, see also P. Babiracki and A. Jersild eds. *Socialist Internationalism in the Cold War: Exploring the Second World*, London: Palgrave, 2016.

[4] For example, for every American or British student in a Soviet university dorm in the early 1960s, there were more than ten Bulgarians, East Germans and Czechoslovaks. See T.Yu. Krasovitskaya ed. *"Vozvratit' domoi druz'yami SSSR…": obuchenie inostrantsev v sovetskom soyuze 1956-1965'*, Moskva: Demokratiya, 2013, p. 159.

grassroots interaction between citizens of the bloc remained particularly rare until after Stalin died in 1953.[5] Barring occupation forces, elite-level contacts, and a small handful of official exchanges, the insularity and xenophobia that suffused Soviet officialdom's attitude toward almost all things foreign in the late 1940s and early 1950s very much included interactions with those in the newly-acquired 'buffer zone'. It is worth recalling in this context that several countries of that zone had within only the last decade fought alongside the Nazis or else were quite open in their historic antipathy toward Russia and the USSR prior to the official declarations of friendship which would lock them in the Soviet embrace after war's end. In regard to interactions between the USSR and Eastern Europe, though, the three and a half decades after 1953 saw a clear and lasting reversal of this late Stalinist insularity, if not an end to the underpinning Soviet hegemony. By the time the Berlin Wall fell in 1989 many millions had travelled between the USSR and the states of communist Eastern Europe for tourism, study, work and more besides. Vicarious interaction – which was both widening and deepening the whole time as mass media developed throughout the region – such as consumption of allies' cultural products like movies and music, was naturally much more widespread still, if lacking in the immediacy of person-to-person contact that tourism offered.

Foremost among the proliferating sites of direct interaction between Soviet and East European citizens was intra-bloc tourism. First made possible by a CPSU resolution enabling tourist travel to Eastern Europe in 1955 (fully ten years after the bulk of the region had come under the sway of Moscow), visitors soon began to flow across the border, and the numbers grew consistently thereafter.[6] It was only ever a minority of Soviet citizens who got to travel to Eastern Europe, but the actual number of people who went was nonetheless substantial, rising from

[5] On this theme, see, for example, P. Babiracki, 'The Taste of Red Watermelon: Polish Peasants Visit Soviet Collective Farms', in P. Babiracki and K. Zimmer eds. *Cold War Crossings: International Travel and Exchange across the Soviet Bloc, 1940s-1960s*, Texas A&M University Press, 2014. See also T. Volokitina et al, *Moskva i vostochnaya Evropa: stanovlenie politicheskikh rezhimov sovetskogo tipa (1949-1953)*, Moskva: Rosspen, 2008.

[6] This initial decree envisioned only travel to Eastern Europe, though trips to the capitalist West soon followed. On the theme of adult tourism from the USSR to Eastern Europe see in particular A. Gorsuch, 'Time Travellers'.

around 560,000 in total in 1956 to almost 4,500,000 per year by 1985.[7] Of these, typically around nine out of every ten went to fraternal states of the socialist bloc, such as Bulgaria, Poland, the GDR and Czechoslovakia. Naturally, this emergence and subsequent remarkable growth in tourism to and from Eastern Europe did not arise primarily in response to a clamour 'from below', but in accord with directions from the very top.

Much recent scholarship on both domestic and international Soviet tourist travel has positioned the topic within the framework of the consumerist turn that took place across the socialist camp during the post-Stalin years.[8] Like blue jeans, television sets and washing machines, tourist travel steadily became part of the material 'good life' that regimes proffered to citizens. Running alongside this 'consumerist' paradigm, Anne Gorsuch has also emphasised what we might call a 'quasi-imperialist' dynamic, of using tourist travel to reinforce among Soviet citizens official narratives on their country's power and prestige by showing them their 'empire', in a bid to 'make Eastern Europe part of a new Soviet imaginary at home, reinforcing authoritative discourses about Soviet superiority and control'.[9] Zbigniew Wojnowski has also pointed to another facet of cross-border travel from Western Ukraine in particular to neighbouring communist Eastern Europe, as a way in which to build a compelling narrative on the 'Soviet' identity of this recently incorporated region of the USSR.[10] More broadly, we can also point to international tourist travel as both an incentive and reward for citizens' conformity (questions of an individual's ideological propriety were central to decisions about whether they could travel abroad) and a means

[7] I. Orlov and A. Popov, *Russo turisto: sovetskii vyezdnoi turizm, 1955-1991*, Moskva: Izdatel'skii dom VShE, 2016, p. 109. As Orlov and Popov note, Soviet definitions of what constituted 'tourists' and 'tourism' could be rather fluid and vague at times, meaning such figures have to be regarded somewhat cautiously.

[8] See, for example, D. Koenker, *Club Red: Vacation Travel and the Soviet Dream*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2013; C. Noack, 'Brezhnev's "Little Freedoms": Tourism, Individuality and Mobility in the Late Soviet Period', in D. Fainberg and A. Kalinovsky eds, *Reconsidering Stagnation in the Brezhnev Era: Ideology and Exchange*, London: Lexington, 2016, pp. 59-76.

[9] Gorsuch, for example, draws the parallel between Soviet tourism to Eastern Europe and British travel to India during the days of the Raj. A. Gorsuch, *All This is Your World: Soviet Tourism at Home and Abroad after Stalin*, Oxford University Press, 2011, p. 87.

[10] Z. Wojnowski, 'An unlikely bulwark of Sovietness'.

of drawing more people into more active engagement with the work of the party-state (such as undertaking propaganda activity on one's return home about places visited). Each of the above approaches clearly makes a valuable contribution to the broad theme at hand, and taken together they make plain that there were multiple drivers behind the push for greater interaction.

Whilst one tends not to find in the primary source base a clear and conscious division between the domestic and international purpose of tourism, it is nonetheless important to explore the latter more fully. It is, for example, critical that we note the formative stages of Soviet outbound tourism took place during a spell around the mid-1950s that was characterised by the prevalence of a new regime discourse on international friendship.[11] This discourse first emerged in relation to the allied regimes of the bloc. Explosive events in the GDR, Poland and Hungary during the three years following Stalin's death – each of which saw manifestations of considerable public hostility toward the Soviet Union – can only have made clear to authorities in Moscow that the existing situation across the region hardly pointed to a future of stability and prosperity. Already by the time of the uprising in Hungary one can point to multiple efforts to establish less nakedly imperialistic ties with the other countries of the socialist camp. Rapprochement with Tito's Yugoslavia, the formation of the Warsaw Pact in 1955 (with its apparent promise of genuine multilateralism), encouragement for allies to show greater autonomy in their dealings with the developing world, and the rejuvenation of the CMEA (Council for Mutual Economic Assistance, or Comecon), were all indicative of the fact that the Stalinist model of overtly exploitative and domineering relationships between the USSR and its allies had been reined in somewhat.[12]

[11] See in particular P. Koivunen, 'Friends, "Potential Friends" and Enemies: Reimagining Soviet Relations to the First, Second and Third Worlds at the Moscow 1957 Youth Festival', in P. Babiracki and A Jersild eds. *Socialist Internationalism*, pp. 219-220.

[12] See, for example, L. Crump, *The Warsaw Pact Reconsidered: International Relations in Eastern Europe, 1955-1969*, London: Routledge, 2015; S. Kansikas, *Trade Blocs and the Cold War: the CMEA and the EC Challenge, 1969-76*, Unpublished PhD dissertation, University of Helsinki, 2012; N. Telepneva and P. Muehlenbeck eds. *Warsaw Pact Intervention in the Third World: Aid and Influence in the Cold War*, London: IB Tauris (forthcoming).

Appropriately for an era in which young people frequently came to symbolise social and political renewal inside the USSR, youth were to occupy a central place in attempts to reorient relations in the bloc. This was in large part because Soviet authorities remained wary that older generations across Eastern Europe often continued to harbour the kinds of nationalist mindsets and hostilities that would impede warmer grassroots ties.[13] Attitudes among the younger generation (and those generations to follow them) would be crucial to the long-term prospects for the region. By virtue of their size and resources, and their typically tight subordination to ruling parties, communist youth movements were the ideal medium through which to try to drive such major social-political change. While the 1957 Youth Festival very much saw Komsomol authorities focus their energies on winning new friends from the First and Third Worlds, the drive to strengthen links with other parts of the socialist bloc was already well underway by that point.[14] Soon after Stalin's death, articles and editorials in the Komsomol press had already begun to call for stronger ties to be formed between the fraternal youth organisations of the bloc.[15] By the end of 1953 *Komsomol'skaya pravda* had also come to feature a regular sidebar which updated Soviet readers on what was being written by the youth press in the likes of Poland, Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia and China.

In August 1956 the Komsomol Central Committee declared its intentions with the resolution 'On strengthening links with youth organisations in the People's Democracies', making plain to all that bolstering connections throughout the region had become a priority. Everything from pen-pal links, friendship societies and academic exchanges through to football, basketball and chess matches, choral singing contests and wrestling tournaments duly sprang up between communist youth organisations from the USSR, Poland, Romania, Bulgaria and the other regimes of communist Eastern Europe. Regular and occasional connections were made between republican and regional Komsomol bodies in the USSR and their communist youth counterparts in Eastern Europe, as well as

[13] See, for example, RGASPI (Moscow), f. m-1, op. 30, d. 419, ll. 27-28, in which Komsomol officials argue that older generations of Poles were to blame for anti-Soviet Polish nationalism, with young Poles victim to their elders' prejudices.

[14] On Soviet aims at the youth festival, see P. Koivunen, 'Friends, "Potential Friends" and Enemies', pp. 235-238.

[15] See, for example, E. Khoneker, 'krepit' druzhbu s sovetskoi molodezh'yu', *Komsomol'skaya pravda*, 17 March 1953, p. 3, in which a young Erich Honecker (as head of the Free German Youth) commiserated on the death of the 'great Stalin' and called for stronger links between the FDJ and Komsomol.

between town- and district-level bodies, and eventually down to the level of youth movements' cells in individual factories, farms and schools. Tourism, though, soon became the principal avenue for direct interaction.

In the same way that domestic tourism and other engineered sites of interaction between young people from different regions of the USSR was used by the Komsomol as a means of helping to bind together the youth of their own country, cross-border travel to Eastern Europe was part of the bid to bolster long-term cohesion in the wider bloc.[16] While youth tourist travel obviously shared many commonalities with adult tourism – the latter was certainly not without propagandistic goals and similarly emphasised the value of 'citizen diplomacy' – Soviet youth tourism in particular emerged with a clear goal of exerting ideological influence among young people of other countries according to Orlov and Popov.[17] The likes of John Connelly, Tom Junes and Jan Palmowski have all shown just how high a priority exerting ideological influence over the young generation(s) was for regimes across Eastern Europe.[18] From Moscow, young generations in the likes of Poland, Hungary and Romania were seen as both easier and more important to win over to the Soviet cause than were their elders throughout the region. An examination of youth tourism from the USSR to the countries of Eastern Europe, therefore, highlights a theme that Rachel Applebaum recently raised in her work on Soviet-Czechoslovak interactions during the post-Stalin period: that of regime efforts to build stronger and friendlier ties between Soviet and East European citizens at the grassroots level, a process Applebaum called 'the friendship project'.[19] Accordingly, one of the key points

[16] On domestic tourism as a way of bonding Soviet peoples together, see, for example, LYA (Vilnius), f. 4421, op. 26, d. 95, l. 5. Large-scale domestic tourist operations like *Moya Rodina – SSSR* were reasonably explicit in their aim of strengthening friendship among different Soviet peoples. See, for example, *Metodicheskie rekomendatsii po organizatsii molodezhnogo turizma*, Leningrad: 1983, p. 9. On the importance of tourism in regard to links within the bloc, see, for example, RGASPI, f. m-1, op. 30, d. 276, l. 3.

[17] I. Orlov and A. Popov, *Russo turisto,* p. 80. On 'citizen diplomacy' in Soviet internationalism, see in particular E. Gilburd, 'The Revival of Soviet Internationalism'.

[18] See, for example, T. Junes, *Student Politics in Communist Poland: Generations of Consent and Dissent*, London: Lexington, 2015; J. Connelly, 'Students, Workers and Social Change: the Limits of Czech Stalinism', *Slavic Review*, Vol. 56, No. 2, 1997, pp. 307-335; J. Palmowski, *Inventing a Socialist Nation: Heimat and the Politics of Everyday Life in the GDR, 1945-90*, Cambridge University Press, 2013.

[19] R. Applebaum, 'The Friendship Project'.

to be made here is that the development of Soviet youth tourism to Eastern Europe (as well as incoming tourism to the USSR from the likes of Poland, the GDR and Czechoslovakia) was very much part of a wider effort to use expanding grassroots interaction as a means of building cohesion and long-term stability across the European socialist camp following the move away from the previous, Stalinist, model of relations. Nonetheless, while the Soviet political authorities had considerable faith in the potential of youth tourism as a means of bolstering ties throughout the region – and the USSR was by no means alone in believing in the potential power of tourism in that respect – they also retained deep reservations about the consequences of interaction with even fellow socialist states, and never fully reconciled the two.

In the main, then, this is not an essay about Soviet youth tourists' impressions and experiences of travel. The focus here is rather more institutional, centring upon the goals, methods and perceptions of the Komsomol in regard to its tourism operations to Eastern Europe following the founding of its Bureau for International Youth Tourism (BMMT) in 1958. This new sphere of activity was reflective of two crucial changes in the role(s) that the communist youth movement came to play within the USSR across the three decades following Stalin's death. From a small but zealous 'youth vanguard' during the formative stages of Soviet power, the 1930s and 1940s already saw the beginnings of the Komsomol's subsequent morphing into a behemoth organ of mass socialisation: a process which continued apace well into the 1980s.[20] Providing members with suitable recreational opportunities became a fundamental part of Komsomol efforts to shape Soviet youth. Passing years saw this sphere including more and more Western-type activities, such as rock concerts and disco nights, as the desires of young people were both accommodated and co-opted to varying degrees.[21] The obvious parallel to draw here is with developments in the mass media during the period in question. As Christine Evans has noted in regard to television

[20] See in particular S. Bernstein, *Raised under Stalin: Young Communists and the Defense of Socialism*, Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 2017.

[21] See, for example, G. Tsipursky, *Socialist Fun: Youth, Consumption and State Sponsored Popular Culture in the Soviet Union, 1945-1970*, University of Pittsburgh Press, 2016; S. Zhuk, *Rock and Roll in the Rocket City: the West, Identity and Ideology in Soviet Dniepropetrovsk, 1960-1985*, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2010. Roth-Ey and Evans have pointed to a similar trend in regard to the output of Soviet mass media

output during the post-Stalin period, initial notions of using the medium for enlightenment and mobilisation purposes steadily gave way to providing mass entertainment.[22]

Additionally, the post-Stalin years saw the Komsomol increasingly expected to contribute actively to the regime's wider geostrategic prerogatives (such as winning new friends abroad, as witnessed at the 1957 Moscow Youth Festival).[23] Increasing interaction with the outside world, though, brought an array of new challenges for the Komsomol to deal with – not least of which was the expanding popularity of foreign culture among Soviet youth. As I show, this was an enduring and fundamental concern for Soviet authorities – one which in numerous ways hampered attempts to build grassroots links and cohesion within the bloc – but it was also one that by no means trumped all else. Even as negative (from the authorities' perspective) aspects of youth tourism to Eastern Europe revealed themselves, and the prospects for building lasting grassroots friendliness seemed to diminish, the number of young people travelling across the Western border only grew. This was, I suggest, in large part because of another new priority for the post-Stalin Komsomol - that of economic dynamism.

Coming closer together

BMMT reports and circulars noted from the very outset that 'the Soviet youth tourist is not just a traveller, but also a propagandist for Soviet activity'.[24] When the Komsomol Central Committee enumerated several key purposes behind its burgeoning international tourism operations in 1960, the first of them was 'strengthening fraternal international links with the young men and women of (other) socialist countries'.[25] As head of the Komsomol, Sergei Pavlov, too, made clear in 1963 that tourist exchanges were vital in helping to 'disseminate

[22] C. Evans, *Between Truth and Time: a History of Soviet Central Television*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016.

[23] See, for example, R. Hornsby, 'The Post-Stalin Komsomol and the Soviet Fight for Third World Youth', *Cold War History*, Vol. 16, No. 1, 2016, pp. 83-100; P. Koivunen, 'The 1957 Moscow Youth Festival: Propagating a New, Peaceful Image of the Soviet Union' in M. Ilic and J. Smith eds. *Soviet State and Society under Nikita Khrushchev*, London: Routledge, 2009, pp. 46-65.

[24] RGASPI, f. m-5, op. 1, d. 3, l. 23. Quote taken from a 1958 review of BMMT's first year of activity.

[25] I. Orlov and A. Popov, *Russo turisto*, p. 88.

truthful information about the USSR and our young people' and 'to help strengthen friendship and mutual relations among young people'.[26] As table 1 shows, from an initial 1,256 Soviet youths who travelled as tourists to fraternal socialist states in 1958, the number climbed to over 5,600 the following year, and then topped 8,000 in 1960.[27] This growth trend becomes even clearer when we fast-forward a decade. For the four-year period between 1966 and 1970, 180,000 young people went abroad under Komsomol auspices. For the period between 1970 and 1974, a total of 321,000 went abroad as BMMT tourists: over 300,000 of whom visited Eastern Europe.[28] Among these were over 50,000 who went to Bulgaria, almost 50,000 who travelled to Poland, over 30,000 who went to each of Czechoslovakia, Hungary and the GDR, and over 20,000 who visited Yugoslavia.[29] According to its own figures, BMMT had taken around 3.5 million Soviet youths abroad by the early 1980s, with approximately nine out of every ten of them going to fraternal states across Eastern Europe.[30]

	1958 (from July)	1959	1960	Total
Bulgaria	205	500	869	1574
Hungary	49	808	979	1836
GDR	326	1081	1337	2744
Poland	338	449	946	1733
Romania	176	246	217	639
Czechoslovakia	161	2507	3780	6448
	1256	5641	8128	14,974

BMMT data on Soviet youth tourists to Eastern Europe, 1958-60.[31]

[26] TsDAGO, f. 7, op. 15, d. 503, l. 3.

[27] RGASPI, f. m-5, op. 1, d. 1, l. 27-29.

[28] At the XVII congress BMMT announced a plan target of 513,000 Soviet youth going abroad with BMMT for the period 1971-75. Such targets were consistently met and exceeded.

[29] RGASPI, f. m-6, op. 17, d. 571, l. 15.

[30] V.A. Kvantal'nov and V.K. Fedorchenko, *Orbity 'Sputnika': iz istorii molodezhnogo turizma*, Kiev: Izdatel'stvo TsK LKSMU, 1987, p. 40.

[31] RGASPI, f. m-5, op. 1, d. 1, l. 24.

Halfway through the 1960s, new (or 'hybrid') forms of tourism had also begun to appear, such as the growing number of friendship trains and student construction brigades that were dispatched between fraternal countries to help strengthen links through holding celebrations, meetings and performances, as well as by building roads and dormitories in addition to enjoying a little tourism. According to Komsomol officials, these new forms, too, were vital to Soviet counter-propaganda efforts in the region and a valuable means of both strengthening friendship and propagandising mature socialism.[32] Passing years also saw the initial reliance on face-to-face contacts bolstered and the audience for the Soviet message widened not only by the growing numbers who travelled, but also by increasing utilisation of mass media, such as tourists giving televised interviews and sometimes performances in addition to being granted airtime for radio broadcasts and in writing in the local press.

This drive to strengthen ties with the people of the region was very much within the sphere of what Frederick Barghoorn termed the 'Soviet Cultural Offensive' of the period, bidding to charm and impress the outside world in order to further foreign policy goals.[33] Naturally, there had been at least some instances of contact between young people of the socialist bloc prior to the death of Stalin, but connections and interactions were overwhelmingly handled by (or else filtered through) trained Komsomol professionals.[34] Links between the Komsomol and its East European partners quickly flourished at all levels following the decree of August 1956. In one telling example, a delegation of over 350 Ukrainian Komsomol members set sail from Odessa for Bulgaria the following month (stopping off in Romania on the way) carrying cultural troupes, young farmers, journalism workers, and a football team among many others on board, holding all manner of meetings, sporting contests and

[32] LYA, f. f. 4421, op. 33, d. 98, l. 3. Approximately 40,000 Komsomol members participated in construction exchanges during 1966-1974, with the pattern one of clear growth across the period. On friendship trains, see RGASPI, f. m-6, op. 17, d. 571, l. 7.

[33] See F. Barghoorn, *The Soviet Cultural Offensive: the Role of Cultural Diplomacy in Soviet Foreign Policy*, London: Greenwood Press, 1976.

[34] The Anti-fascist Committee of Soviet Youth and its successor, the Committee for Youth Organisations (KMO), for example, filtered contacts by overseeing processes like the distribution of incoming and outgoing pen-pal contacts.

celebratory events with their Bulgarian counterparts on arrival.[35] The subsequent reports were fulsome in their boasts of how well the trip had gone and how warm the reception had been. Soon enough, no major Komsomol occasion was complete without attendant delegations from the People's Democracies, and the same was increasingly true in the other direction.[36] Friendship evenings, cultural exchanges and sporting encounters between youth in border regions, such as between Polish communist youth from Bialystok and Belorussian Komsomol members from Grodno, were increasingly also being held and trumpeted in the youth media.[37]

Presumably buoyed by the apparent success of initial moves, like the delegation sent from Odessa to Bulgaria, the Komsomol's drive for greater interaction only gained momentum. In January 1957 first secretary Aleksandr Shelepin informed the Communist Party Central Committee that links with other youth unions of the bloc were steadily growing stronger but were nonetheless being built from a very low base and still remained only 'episodic'. Shelepin also instituted a structural reform within the Komsomol Central Committee (splitting dealings with foreign youth organisations into two bodies: one specialising in Eastern European youth movements, and the other with youth outside the socialist world) which facilitated greater capacity for and specialism in East European youth affairs.[38] More and more youth workers from the People's Democracies were also being encouraged to head to the USSR for study in Komsomol training schools. A 1958 report, for example, stated that 599 students from

[35] As the Ukrainian Komsomol report noted, this delegation was in large part sent as a response to a trip of 400 Bulgarian communist youth who came to Odessa in May of that year. TsDAGO, f. 7, op. 17, d. 576, ll. 3-10.

[36] See, for example, GARF (Moscow), f. 9414, op. 13, d. 132, l. 47 and RGANI (Moscow) f. 5, op. 31, d. 108, ll. 69-71 on plans for the 40th anniversary of the Komsomol, in October 1958. Komsomol delegations were usually also present at events marking anniversaries of East European regimes' founding, and their liberation from Nazi occupation. See, for example, TsAOPIM (Moscow), f. 635, op. 1, d. 2425, l. 5.

[37] See, for example, NARB (Minsk), f. 63, op. 19, d. 13, ll. 99-101. On this theme, see also Z. Wojnowski, 'An Unlikely Bulwark of Sovietness'.

[38] RGANI, f. 5, op. 31, d. 94, ll. 1-2. The two bodies in question were the Komsomol Central Committee's International Department and the Committee for Youth Organisations (KMO) respectively.

other parts of the socialist bloc (including also Vietnam and Albania) had studied youth work under Komsomol tutelage that year.[39]

A key moment in the process of expanding interactions came when, in the wake of the Moscow 1957 World Youth Festival, the Bureau for International Youth Tourism was established and began operating in summer 1958 under the auspices of the Komsomol's Committee for Youth Organisations (KMO).[40] Tourism and wider connections between communist youth movements soon blurred into one another, especially as control over such interactions became a little more decentralised with the passing years. Encounters between the Latvian republican Komsomol and the Free German Youth (FDJ) in Rostock were a useful reflection of this trend. Links were established in 1963, when the two began to hold a regular 'week of peace' at which visiting delegations gave concerts and held dances, football matches, athletics contests and go-kart races, before commencing a programme of regular tourist exchanges between young people from Riga and Rostock.[41] Plenty of republican-, city- and district-level partnerships like this one lasted for many years and saw their own distinct histories and traditions develop. A 1983 pamphlet on the history of Uzbek youth internationalism, for example, spoke in glowing terms of that republic's connections with communist youth in Bulgaria and of regular exchanges with the Yugoslav republic of Macedonia, which included tourism, film festivals, pen-pal links, photography exhibitions and more.[42] In time the branches of youth organisations from capital cities of the bloc also came to develop their own little club, holding rallies, sports tournaments and tourist visits between Moscow, Sofia, Prague, Budapest, Warsaw and Berlin. It is also worth noting in this connection that even many of the Soviet Union's formally 'closed' cities had their own

[39] RGASPI, f. m-24, op. 1, d. 157, l. 8. Studies also included theatre and museum trips, friendship evenings, film showings and all manner of other events intended to bolster respect and friendship.

[40] On the founding of BMMT, see in particular I. Orlov and A. Mashkova, 'Innostrannyi molodezhnyi turizm v SSSR v 1958-64 godakh', *Rossiisskaya istoriya*, No. 6, 2011, pp. 155-165.

[41] LVA, f. 201, op. 3, d. 16, ll. 145-147.

[42] Kh. Turaev, *Razvitie internatsional'nikh svyazei molodezhi Uzbekistana: v pomoshch lektoru*, Tashkent: Znanie, 1983.

blossoming links with Eastern Europe. Urals State University in Sverdlovsk, for example, boasted a club for links with the People's Democracies as early as 1959.[43]

Travel to the West was, in the main, more desirable and thus a greater marker of status, but it was also a far less realistic aspiration for the average young person. BMMT did take young people to capitalist countries and, in later years, to the developing world, though in far smaller numbers than to Eastern Europe. By the end of the 1970s, for example, over 1,000 each year were going to the likes of the United Kingdom, Denmark and Italy, while over 4,000 went to France and around 7,000 went to West Germany each year. Curiously, of the European 'neutrals', such as Austria and Switzerland, only Finland truly stood out as a receiving markedly higher numbers of Soviet youth tourists than did the more ideologically belligerent capitalist countries of the continent.[44] This was, one suspects, at least partly because Finland was somewhat unique of the capitalist world in refusing to accept asylum requests from Soviet citizens, meaning that the chances for defections there were very limited.[45] The wider trend, though, in which typically less politically hostile European capitalist countries received little more (or even fewer) Soviet tourists than the likes of the United Kingdom and West Germany, was telling of the fact that a country's diplomatic stance toward the Soviet regime was by no means the only factor which impacted on tourist connections between the two (one factor worth mentioning here is that bilateral agreements between tourist organisations often meant that the number of visitors to the USSR from the likes of West Germany was tied to the number of Soviet citizens who went in the other direction). Finland aside, divisions within the capitalist camp were not nearly so significant as the division between the capitalist and socialist camp. As Komsomol sources made plain at the outset, travel to the West was primarily an avenue for ideological competition, but travel to Eastern Europe was intended to 'strengthen friendship and contacts…and to exchange experiences'.[46]

[43] TsDOOSO (Ekaterinburg), f. 61, op. 16, d. 59, l. 6.

[44] During the years 1978 to 1980, for example, the number of BMMT visitors to Finland (a little over 54,000 in total across the three years) was comfortably more than double that of any other capitalist country on the continent. RGASPI, f. m-6, op. 19, d. 286, l. 59.

[45] See S. Mikkonen, 'Changing Dynamics: from International Exchanges to Transnational Musical Networks' in D. Fainberg and A. Kalinovsky eds. *Reconsidering Stagnation in the Brezhnev Era: Ideology and Exchange*, London: Lexington, 2016, pp. 163-183.

[46] RGASPI, f. m-5, op. 1, d. 410, l. 86.

In terms of charm, things were not left to chance or to the initiative of the individual tourist, with visitors travelling armed to the teeth with Komsomol-provided portraits of the likes of Lenin and Yuri Gagarin, models of Sputnik and Komsomol pins to hand out at every opportunity. Speeches and gestures intended to communicate friendship were to a considerable extent uniform. Clearly, then, there was a substantial element of staging at play, but not all Soviet visitors needed direction from above when it came to demonstrating a keen sense of friendship to locals in the region. A 1959 report at the end of a trip to Yugoslavia, for example, noted with evident pride how Soviet youth tourists visiting Rovinj (Croatia) had aroused great sympathy and respect among locals and showed their 'high moral qualities' by spontaneously volunteering to give blood in response to a local blood drive in the wake of a recent earthquake in Skopje.[47] As Applebaum shows, plenty of young people in both the USSR and the satellite states proved eager to embrace the opportunities for intra-bloc friendship as they began to open up in the 1950s and 1960s.[48]

BMMT analyses of tourism data soon offered an alluring picture of success. Citing figures that showed a rise from 160 Soviet youth tourists who headed to Czechoslovakia in 1958 to an impressive 3,864 in 1961 (with annual Czechoslovak visitors to the USSR increasing from 148 to 3,579 during the same period), BMMT proudly declared that such exchanges were already making a major contribution to strengthening links between the two countries.[49] As ever, climbing output figures were equated to success. Even in spite of the fact that such tourism data actually reflected above all else how many people officials on either side of the border were prepared to allow to travel – and there were always far more people who wanted to go abroad than were permitted to – the apparent link between tourist numbers and burgeoning friendship clearly had some important backing at the highest level. When Komsomol bosses noted a serious deterioration in the relationship with Romanian communist youth in 1964, for example, one of the first attempts at solving the problem was to try and increase the dwindling flow of

[47] TsDAGO, f. 7, op. 17, d. 590, l. 2.

[48] R. Applebaum, 'The Friendship Project'.

[49] RGASPI, f. m-1, op. 30, d. 240, l. 4.

youth tourism between the two countries.[50] Even the animosity occasioned by the Prague Spring (see below) did not for long impede the steady flow of Soviet youth to Czechoslovakia. From around 9,000 BMMT visitors in 1967, the total dropped to 4,000 in 1968 and then to 2,000 the following year, but by 1970 it exceeded all previous figures, reaching over 12,000, and then continued to grow steadily thereafter. Indeed, as Applebaum notes, Soviet policy makers viewed tourism as a part of the wider normalisation process for Czechoslovakia, with the aim of 'positive' Soviet influence being brought to bear on the wayward Czechs and Slovaks.[51] Within a decade, Czechoslovakia was again among the most visited countries for BMMT tourists. As figure 2 shows, two decades after BMMT's founding, it was consistently sending a substantial flow of young people on holiday across Eastern Europe every year. As discussed below, the growing number of young people who travelled to Eastern Europe reflected, and perhaps also drove forwards, a more commercial approach to youth tourism as the years passed.

	1978	1979	1980	Total
Bulgaria	32, 617	31,316	29,759	93,692
Hungary	17,431	15,189	11,891	44,511
GDR	15,382	18,219	24,948	58,549
Poland	30,530	31,703	24,570	86,803
Romania	5,287	6,578	5,068	16,933
Czechoslovakia	15,786	17,472	15,778	49,039
Yugoslavia	9,730	5,624	3,965	19,319

BMMT data on numbers of Soviet youth tourists travelling to Eastern Europe, 1978-80.[52]

[50] RGASPI, f. m-1, op. 30, d. 276, l. 2. Sadly for the Soviet side, they soon reached the conclusion that the Romanians had no interest in increasing tourism at that time. It was noted, somewhat tartly, that no Romanian communist youth had visited the USSR in 1964, but they had gone to China, North Korea, Yugoslavia, the United Kingdom and France.

[51] RGASPI, f. m-6, op. 17, d. 571, l. 38. See R. Applebaum, 'A Test of Friendship: Soviet-Czechoslovak Tourism and the Prague Spring', A. Gorsuch and D. Koenker eds. *The Socialist Sixties: Crossing Borders in the Second World*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2013, pp. 213-233.

[52] RGASPI, f. m-6, op. 19, d. 286, l. 56.

The qualitative feedback that flowed in to BMMT from leaders of tour groups, and from there to the Komsomol Central Committee, was typically overwhelmingly positive. The vast majority of post-trip reports spoke of encountering great warmth toward Soviet visitors and respect for the USSR's achievements among the people they met on the streets, in factories, on trains and on farms. Early visitors to Bulgaria, for example, recalled being met by cheering throngs armed with flowers for their Soviet guests, while even more prosaic accounts typically recorded mutual respect and eagerness to establish friendly relations.[53] A 1958 trip from Moldavia to Romania, timed to mark the anniversary of Romania's liberation from fascism, proudly boasted of the 'sincere love' that locals showed to the tourists and of the deep gratitude they expressed in thanks for Soviet soldiers' participation in their country's struggle for freedom.[54] By way of corroborating the point about the warmth of their reception, the Moldavian party went on to note that a successful return trip by Romanians to Moldavia then marked the start of an on-going link, with the two subsequently beginning to play each other at football, volleyball, basketball and table tennis, among others, on a regular basis. Some connections, then, obviously had a very concrete purpose in seeking to assuage specific points of friction – in this instance, Romania's irredentist claims to Bessarabia. In the sense that guidelines on issues like selection of candidates and political preparation of travellers, along with the number of travel passes available to each regional or republican branch of BMMT, were set from above, we can see a broadly unified approach to youth tourist travel across the USSR. Even so, there was clearly an effort to utilise cultural synergies in particular where possible, such as the links between Latvia and Rostock, Romania and Moldavia, and between Uzbekistan and the Yugoslav republic of Macedonia.

Alongside all manner of institutional reports and reviews of BMMT's work drawn from Party and Komsomol archives in several former Soviet republics, post-trip reports represent one of the key sources on which the current essay is built. Typically compiled by the individual designated as leader of a tour group, they were for the most part intended to bring any noteworthy occurrences (desirable or undesirable) to the attention of officialdom. Naturally, there were points, such as during the latter part of 1968, when tourism authorities were particularly keen to be apprised of locals' and travellers' behaviour, paying closer attention to problems and frictions that

[53] On the events in Bulgaria, see TsDAGO, f. 7, op. 17, d. 576, ll. 3-10.

[54] RGASPI, f. m-1, op. 30, d. 63, ll. 36-42.

occurred. As such, these reports were by no means a window onto the experiences and attitudes of individual travellers, nor were they bare factual accounts of events, but an overview (framed by the perceptions of the group leader) that allowed officials to pinpoint general areas of strength and weakness in tourist exchanges, such as types of meetings that worked well, destinations that tourists particularly enjoyed, or else places where hostility was encountered, and might presumably feed into on-going conversations between BMMT and counterpart organisations across the region. Many included at least some minor grumbles about issues like the language skills of the interpreters who were provided, standards of transport used and food consumed, but they most often gave an assurance that Soviet tourists had conducted themselves appropriately and locals had been welcoming. This was particularly the case in later years, though as I argue below, that was not necessarily a reflection of grassroots relations having reached the desired level. Instead, it was at least in part because there was increasingly limited inclination to expose and explore the problematic aspects of tourist travel.

While it would require an entirely separate piece of research in order to make concrete claims about how locals across the region perceived their Soviet visitors, and this would surely have varied notably from country to country as well as by time period, one of the important points to note here is that there was also a considerable element of 'stage-managing' at play on the part of hosts.[55] Quite a few reports from BMMT trips to Eastern Europe, for example, noted that delegations had met only with local youth officials, not ordinary communist youth or activists.[56] At the very least, local communist youth organisations tried to ensure that only the most 'reliable' locals were present at such events. Similarly, with Komsomol officials sometimes showing a proclivity to express open discontent at what they encountered by way of ideological activity among other youth organisations of the region (which could in itself provoke regimes to 'tighten up' on certain aspects of youth work), it would hardly have been sensible not to put on a 'show' of ideological propriety and friendship for Soviet guests.[57] Group leaders

[55] It is, however, worth noting here that Applebaum has made the point that, as the Soviet Union showed ever greater interest in Eastern Europe, the people of that region were in turn increasingly casting their eyes westward, to the other side of the Iron Curtain. R. Applebaum, 'The Friendship Project', p. 500.

[56] See, for example, TsDAGO, f. 7, op. 17, d. 607, ll. 1-98.

[57] On Soviet complaints see in particular T. Junes, *Student Politics in Communist Poland*, p. 73. Here Junes notes an episode in which Komsomol visitors' complaints about a student discussion club's 'clerical influence' ultimately prompted the Polish regime to close the club in question. See also P. Babiracki 'Two Stairways to

typically drank this in and then reported home accordingly. As a rule, then, the impressions that Soviet visitors reported on their return home, the warmth of their encounters and the respect afforded them, have to be regarded with this element of 'performance' in mind.

Problems and reservations

Paradoxically, one of the key points to raise in regard to the warm welcome that many post-trip reports insisted was enjoyed by Soviet youth tourists is that such reports could also be particularly forthcoming when the reception was not so positive. There were at least occasional instances of hostility or disdain shown to Soviet tourists throughout the region, and the documents did reflect this. For example, a party of Belarussian youth visitors to Poland in September 1956 – in the midst of considerable unrest there – described a generally positive reception but nonetheless also noted lots of provocative questions being asked (on themes like how the people of the USSR had felt about the riots and strikes that took place recently in Poland, and about attitudes toward Stalin among the Soviet population), as well as occasional displays of open hostility which included workers at a Lublin car plant seeing them off after a somewhat muted meeting with the words 'goodbye for a hundred years, goodbye'.[58] Anne Gorsuch also writes of Soviet visitors having to stand for long periods on trains in the likes of Poland and Romania when reserved seats were given instead to locals, while some guides and tourism officials were open in their preference for visitors from the capitalist West, not least because they spent considerably more money than did Soviet visitors with only very meagre foreign currency allowances (see below).[59]

One report from a 1961 trip to the GDR described how the leader of a group of Soviet tourists in Altenburg was playing table tennis in their hotel with a friend when an unseen passer-by threw a large rock at him through an

Socialism: Soviet Youth Activists in Polish Spaces, 1957-1964' in P. Babiracki and A. Jersild eds. *Socialist Internationalism in the Cold War: Exploring the Second World*.

[58] NARB, f. 63, op. 19, d. 13, ll. 182-188.

[59] A. Gorsuch 'Time Travellers'.

open window, only narrowly missing his head.[60] Other visitors to East Germany that year complained of feeling humiliated after they had been invited by representatives of the FDJ (Free German Youth) for a celebratory meal at a restaurant, which actually turned out to be some kind of strip club with other patrons in varying states of undress, at which only two FDJ representatives eventually turned up late to meet them. As the group leader told his host after an hour of waiting and being stared at 'like we were some kind of exhibition piece': 'we are in an undesirable position, we have our honour, we are citizens of the USSR, and therefore we must leave'.[61] The report from a February 1963 trip to Debrecen saw the group leader complain that Hungarian youth had been 'cold' toward their Soviet visitors, both in pre-arranged encounters and later on in student dorms, and had showed little interest in the affairs of Soviet youth.[62] The occasionally fractious relationship between Soviet and Yugoslav youth movements could also be seen in a complaint following a meeting in Dubrovnik at which some local students had apparently sung 'White Guard songs' to insult their Soviet guests at dinner.[63]

It is worth noting that it was not just East European hosts who could cause offence during these tourist encounters. They were undoubtedly in the minority, but there were always a few Soviet tourists who failed badly in their assigned role as citizen diplomats. One report from a 1961 Ukrainian Komsomol trip to the GDR, for example, offered scathing criticism of 'an incredibly light-headed' girl who – when not flirting with Soviet soldiers stationed there – openly declared of the Germans that 'they are all Nazis'.[64] Another noted the offence caused among locals when a Soviet tourist in Bulgaria complained of the accommodation provided that 'it is better to live on the street'.[65] Reports also came into the Komsomol Central Committee in Moscow about a group put together by the Uzbek Komsomol for a trip to Hungary in which the tour party caused a series of scandals in restaurants and cafes by being undisciplined, breaking things and refusing to pay for drinks. The group leader in particular was singled

[60] TsDAGO, f. 7, op. 17, d. 598, l. 9. The individual in question estimated the rock to be about 700g.

[61] TsDAGO, f. 7, op. 17, d. 598, l. 9.

[62] TsDAGO, f. 7, op. 17, d. 607, l. 13.

[63] RGASPI, f. m-1, op. 30, d. 61a, l. 51.

[64] TsDAGO, f. 7, op. 17, d. 598, l. 11. The group leader's report summed this matter up by stating that 'some people do not have the moral right to travel abroad'.

[65] TsDAGO, f. 7, op. 20, d. 390, l. 13.

out for being rude and abusive toward a female Hungarian interpreter.[66] Another group that went to Poland in 1960 was subsequently criticised for the fact that they apparently stayed up all night and then slept all day, while the management of the hotel claimed that one of them had drunkenly attacked some Czech girls with a knife, while another started a fight in a Sopot restaurant as part of an attempt to avoid paying the bill.[67]

Indiscrete remarks and unbecoming behaviour, though, were not the only factors which served to impede attempts at building friendlier grassroots links between Soviet youth and their counterparts across Eastern Europe. Most importantly, the prevailing regime discourse on friendship and co-operation with communist youth in Eastern Europe should not obscure the fact that even during the more open post-Stalin years Soviet officialdom still showed deep reservations about unfettered interaction with citizens of even the most closely allied states. As with incoming youth visitors to the USSR, the political authorities never came down decisively in favour of the benefits that such interaction offered (most typically extolled by the likes of BMMT and Intourist) or against the risks it presented (as expressed by the KGB in particular).[68] While the rules for those going to the West undoubtedly struck a higher pitch of hysteria than for those going to allied states (travellers to capitalist countries were, for example, warned that they would be secretly observed and compromised or provoked by foreign agents in the guise of tour guides, hairdressers, doctors, taxi drivers and waiters), it is certainly noteworthy that a substantial overlap between the two nonetheless remained.[69] Even in these officially friendly countries, Soviet citizens were repeatedly warned to remain highly vigilant and to report all contacts with foreigners to their supervisors. There were also many of the exhortations that featured in regard to travel to capitalist countries: not to get involved in public demonstrations of any kind; not to buy, sell or exchange items on the streets; not to bring back literature, recordings and letters from foreigners for Soviet citizens; and not to indulge in 'dubious pleasures' like drinking sessions, gambling and striptease shows. Both sets of rules concluded with the same warning, to the effect that 'we are putting a great deal of trust in you – don't let us down'.

[66] RGASPI, f. m-5, op. 1, d. 574, l. 4.

[67] RGASPI, f. m-5, op. 1, d. 54, l. 13.

[68] On this, see R. Hornsby, 'The Enemy Within?'

[69] RGANI, f. 89, op. 31, d. 7, ll. 10-25.

One reason for reticence in regard to allowing unencumbered interaction between visiting Soviet and local youth was the occasional question mark that arose over security in the region. During summer 1973, for example, KGB reports noted an increase in the activity of capitalist intelligence agencies in targeting Soviet visitors to the cities and resorts of Eastern Europe, duly requesting that additional agents be sent to the likes of Bulgaria and Hungary in the guise of tourists in order to investigate goings on there.[70] Yugoslavia also presented a unique security problem thanks to its 'open-door' border policy, which naturally discomfited Soviet officials through the possibility of tourists defecting.[71] Indeed, those proposed as candidates for tourist travel to Yugoslavia were vetted especially carefully.[72] While defections were not common, they did happen at times and were both very embarrassing and potentially damaging. One BMMT trip to Yugoslavia in 1974, for example, saw a Lithuanian Komsomol official, an apparent KGB agent according to subsequent investigations, disappear from his hotel with passport and belongings, before later turning up in Rome (where he made contact with Lithuanian emigres) and then making his way from there to the USA, where he began publicly to speak out against the Soviet regime.[73]

Key facets of the application process were also fundamentally the same for travel to Eastern Europe as for the West. The potential traveller to the likes of Romania and East Germany was still required to give details on matters including whether he or she had been abroad before, what foreign languages they knew and if they had relatives in other countries. Potted biographies of parents, spouses and siblings were to be provided, including details of their past (like any criminal convictions) and present (like place of work and Party status). Black marks on the historical record – such as having had family members repressed under Stalin, or having lived under Nazi occupation during the war – could still put an end to one's hopes of travel. Even the most dedicated communist youth – non-members barely had a chance of international travel – could easily have an application rejected on

[70] LYA, f. k-1, op. 3, d. 709, l. 21.

[71] On the Yugoslav border regime and tourism, see I. Tchoukarine, 'Yugoslavia's Open-Door Policy and Global Tourism in the 1950s and 1960s', *East European Politics and Societies and Cultures*, Vol. 29, No. 1, 2015, pp. 168-188.

[72] LYA, f. k-1, op. 3, d. 709, ll. 28-34. On the labyrinthine and at times comically obtuse process of approving candidates for travel, see in particular I. Orlov and A. Popov, *Russo turisto*, pp. 21-57.

[73] LYA, f. 1-k, op. 10, d. 405, l. 62, l. 159.

all manner of spurious grounds.[74] Staple features of the necessary character references that had to be obtained and signed by up to half a dozen others included asserting a candidate's political maturity and reliability, outlining their contributions to the various collectives of which they were a member, and stating that they commanded the respect of their peers. The principal difference was not in the hoops that candidates had to jump through, but the closeness of the scrutiny undertaken by the relevant officials (most notably, the KGB), as seen in the demand that those applying for tourist trips to the West submit all their documents to the authorities a minimum 40 days in advance of travel, rather than the 20 days more common for visits to Eastern Europe.[75]

Because of its propagandistic underpinnings, however, the nature of Soviet tourism dictated that participants not only saw the sights but also interacted with the local population. This was especially true in regard to youth tourism to Eastern Europe. Factories, farms, universities and more were regular stopping points where Komsomol tourists would be shown local achievements, hold question and answer sessions, give performances, hold football matches and more besides. Travel itineraries were duly jam-packed with forums and official gatherings of all kinds. One party of youth tourists from Georgia who visited both Poland and Czechoslovakia in summer 1961, for example, racked up 30 scheduled meetings with local youth in just two weeks.[76] Sometimes combining both formal and informal parts (such as speeches on the one hand and dances on the other) these meetings were almost always collective affairs overseen by tour group leaders in conjunction with local communist youth officials. The most prominent delegations would certainly appear in the local media – on radio and television – but it was not at all uncommon for grassroots groups to write something for youth newspapers or else be interviewed for local media in the country they visited. The importance that the Komsomol ascribed to such meetings, and perhaps also the concomitant importance assigned to them by some of their East European hosts, can be easily discerned from the fairly frequent complaints in post-trip reports that too few encounters with local youth had been organised for visiting Soviet parties or that they had proved too formalistic in nature.[77] Similarly, when a group of Ukrainian

[74] One interviewee in Donald Raleigh's book *Russia's Sputnik Generation*, for example, recalled that she had been turned down for a trip to the GDR because local Komsomol officials did not want her head turned by witnessing higher living standards there. D. Raleigh ed. *Russia's Sputnik Generation*, p. 175.

[75] See, for example, RGASPI, f. m-1, op. 3, d. 990, l. 303.

[76] MIA, f. 96, op. 20, d. 34, l. 38.

[77] See, for example, ERAF f. 31, op. 74, d. 44, ll. 1-38.

Komsomol members returned from a 1966 student construction exchange in Czechoslovakia it was noted that they had done plenty of road-building but had barely met any locals at all and had certainly not laboured alongside their Czech and Slovak brethren, establishing mutual understanding and respect along the way, as the official narrative promised.[78]

Counter to official discourse on friendship and mutual respect, the evidence is quite clear in showing that fully open interaction with locals was not what Soviet officials desired. Czechoslovak tourist officials, for example, complained that Soviet visitors' schedules were too tightly structured and ought to allow more room for human relations to develop.[79] The endless rounds of meetings that tourists undertook were not simply opportunities for interaction, but also exercises in creating controlled environments where desired scenarios of friendship could be acted out with minimal risk of spontaneous and undesirable interludes. This is why such events had to be both communal and planned. As with travel to the West, BMMT tour group leaders complained lengthily about locally devised itineraries granting Soviet visitors too much free time whilst in Eastern Europe – typically a sure sign that they worried about how that free time was being spent.[80] Travellers were often bussed from one attraction or location to the next in a whirl of movement that kept them apart from 'ordinary life' in the places they visited. As Gorsuch notes, this was still 'friendship at a distance'.[81] Indeed, it was not just the application process and rules for conduct that resembled those for travel to the West. Reports from BMMT, for example, show that control mechanisms for groups going even to Czechoslovakia in the early 1960s were structured much the same as for trips to the West, with travelling parties sub-divided into 'cells' of no more than five members in order to facilitate close surveillance of each individual.[82]

[78] TsDAGO, f. 7, op. 20, d. 150, ll. 1-5.

[79] R. Applebaum, 'A Test of Friendship', p. 217.

[80] See, for example, ERAF (Tallinn), f. 31, op. 112, d. 2. L. 17.

[81] A. Gorsuch, *All This is Your World*, p. 91.

[82] TsDAGO, f. 7, op. 17, d. 600, l. 5.

Regarding Soviet tourism to the West, Andrei Kozovoi has succinctly noted that travellers were kept 'on a short and tight leash' to keep them out of trouble.[83] Those heading to Eastern Europe might well be granted a little more time at leisure – such as lounging on the beaches of Bulgaria or hiking in Czechoslovakia – but they were by no means entirely free to do as they pleased. Post-trip reports filed by the Ukrainian branch of BMMT, for example, reported concerns about one couple who had been observed 'gossiping' with locals in the GDR, while a second couple aroused suspicion by visiting the private home of an East German family they met.[84] Another group leader returning from a trip to Czechoslovakia raised to his superiors an instance of several individuals who had attempted to sneak out of the hotel on their own at night, giving a clear impression that he expected the case to be taken further by Komsomol officials.[85] There were also plenty of cases of Komsomol travellers to Eastern Europe successfully slipping away for unapproved socialising with local comrades: something which would have been far more dangerous in the West but was nonetheless still risky even in allied countries. On a 1960 trip to Poland, for example, an Armenian BMMT traveller was reported for going out drinking until 04.00 with new Polish and Hungarian acquaintances. The whole tour group subsequently held a meeting to condemn the individual in question's behaviour. A few days later, though, the leader of the very same group promptly did much the same thing with a Polish comrade: disappearing for a drinking session at his house and apparently slandering other members of his own tour party once drunk.[86] The offenders in question faced trouble on their return home – each of them receiving a strict reprimand in their Komsomol membership cards (which could represent a significant black mark against one's name on the official record). Files from the Estonian branch of BMMT similarly note instances of group members sneaking off with locals in Czechoslovakia for late-night drinking sessions and illicit motorbike rides which were deemed sufficiently serious that the tour group in question held a sit-down meeting to discuss the offending behaviour and reported it to higher authorities on their return home.[87] At the very least,

[83] A. Kozovoi, 'Eye to Eye with the Main Enemy: Soviet Youth Travel to the United States', *Ab Imperio*, Vol. 2, 2011, p. 235.

[84] TsDAGO, f. 7, op. 17, d. 607, ll. 18-19. Couples were not typically allowed to travel together, though it did happen from time to time.

[85] TsDAGO, f. 7, op. 17, d. 607, l. 79.

[86] RGASPI, f. m-5, op. 1, d. 53, l. 57.

[87] See, for example ERAF, f. 31, op. 74, d. 44, l. 269.

those who sought to build friendly ties independently of official structures in this way could probably expect never to travel abroad again.

As Applebaum has shown, the greater consumer opportunities in more advanced countries of the bloc, such as Czechoslovakia and the GDR, were also viewed with some concern by officials lest they turn Soviet citizens' heads and provoke difficult questions about how the East European 'little brothers' had managed to create for themselves a markedly better state of material affairs than that which prevailed at home.[88] Shopping opportunities were often an important facet of tourist travel's attraction for Soviet citizens, but as with visits to the capitalist world, the principal way in which consumer impulses were to be managed was through tight control over spending power: something which centred upon allowing tourists access to only a very small amount of local currency. Typically granted the equivalent of only ten roubles per day, this means of maintaining control meant that Soviet youth tourists were all but pauperised on their rare visits to the West and only a little better off in Eastern Europe.[89]

The first downside to this 'solution', of course, was that it often alienated those who had been granted the (not insubstantial) privilege of foreign travel. Typical of a society in which a certain sense of inventiveness had long been vital simply for getting by, though, ways of circumventing these restrictions did emerge. Several members of one BMMT tour group from Estonia to Czechoslovakia in 1963, for example, were caught speculating – selling 20 packs of Soviet cigarettes and two bottles of vodka on the streets – in order to add to their spending power.[90] Another Estonian visitor to Czechoslovakia later that same year was found to have sold his camera, the proceeds from which he had then used to buy unspecified 'customs' goods. In doing so he was described in the group leader's report as having 'compromised the name of Soviet youth and the Komsomol'. Doubtless, hawking vodka

[88] Donald Raleigh's findings suggest that this was indeed the case for some of those who went to East Germany and were taken aback by the far stronger consumer sector there. See D. Raleigh, 'On the other side of the wall, things are even better', *Ab imperio*, 4, 2012, p. 384. See also A. Gorsuch 'Time Travellers'.

[89] Chernyshova, for example, cites cases of visitors to the West all but starving themselves in order to save their meagre per diem allowances for shopping, rather than eating. N. Chernyshova, *Soviet Consumer Culture in the Brezhnev Era*, pp. 96-97.

[90] ERAF, f. 31, op. 63, d. 16, l. 81, 85.

and cigarettes on the streets hardly tallied with the image that the Soviet authorities wished to project in the region, but it was quite clearly their own practices – driven by fear of the consequences of uncontrolled economic interaction – that made such a scenario both possible and perhaps even likely.

Even group leaders' reports soon grumbled that the tight limit on funds that tourists were allowed to take with them was proving problematic, though they generally chose to emphasise that it made Soviet visitors look impoverished in places where they were supposed to impress.[91] Because tourism was throughout the bloc an important source of foreign currency, some places like hotels, shops and restaurants could be quite clear in the preference for more free-spending capitalist visitors. The last thing that was needed was for tourism to project any sense of Soviet inferiority, though the financial hardship forced upon those who travelled certainly did facilitate that on occasion. Youth on a 1961 trip to East Germany, for example, reported having been mocked by a group locals in a restaurant on account of their (widely known) lack of Marks.[92]

With (mostly) better developed and bigger tourist operations than their Soviet counterparts, Eastern European cities and resorts like Prague and Constanta also offered the potential to encounter not just locals but also people, goods and trends from the capitalist West. The relative cultural liberality of some regimes in the region, at least in comparison to the USSR, was typically a primary reason for Soviet officials' wariness about unfettered interaction. On meeting with Polish communist youth from Bialystok in 1956, for example, Belarussian Komsomol officials fretted about their likely influence, noting that 'they let anyone join who wants to', including 'religious believers, children of kulaks and other negative elements', adding – somewhat fancifully perhaps – that lots of good Polish youth were reportedly not joining because they did not wish to be in an organisation with such people.[93] The greater prominence of religious symbols and tolerance of private trade in places like Poland were also a cause for concern.[94] Czechoslovakia was noted for its vibrant jazz and rock and roll scenes, which would

[91] See, for example, RGASPI, f. m-5, op. 1, d. 53, l. 7. See also A. Gorsuch, 'Time Travellers', p. 219, on the poor impression left by the behaviour of Soviet tourists in Prague shops.

[92] TsDAGO, f. 7, op. 17, d. 598, l. 9.

[93] NARB (Minsk), f. 63, op. 19, d. 13, ll. 99-101.

[94] See RGASPI, f. m-5, op. 1, d. 3, l. 32.

duly become influential among emerging Soviet musicians and fans.[95] Indeed, a confidential Komsomol report on the scale and content of Western radio broadcasting to the Soviet Union included the addendum that some of the broadcasts from Eastern Europe which could be picked up inside the USSR were also far from ideal, including mindless entertainment, religious content and consumerist propaganda.[96] One revealing snippet in this regard could be seen in a 1962 report from a Komsomol tourist trip to Bulgaria. The leader of the Soviet party that visited an international youth camp there fumed about the orchestra repeatedly playing music to which French visitors danced 'the twist', complaining that 'such dances negatively influence the youth of socialist countries', before going on to offer the (seemingly unvoiced) advice to the visiting French youth that they should 'do what you want in France, but in socialist countries you should respect (their) morals and laws'.[97] Pia Koivunen is undoubtedly correct in asserting that the Soviet regime had grown markedly more tolerant of diversity within the socialist camp since Stalin's death, but it is nonetheless worth emphasising that this diversity could still be in some respects both substantial and troubling.

In reality, Soviet tour parties would find that while dancing 'the twist' might be somewhat taboo at home, this was not necessarily the case in other parts of the socialist bloc. A group of Komsomol visitors to Poland in 1958, for example, expressed the complaint that Polish communist youth were seemingly doing as little as they possibly could in regard to combatting the popularity of jazz, rock and roll and religious observance among their members.[98] One group leader in charge of a Komsomol trip to Prague two years subsequently noted of an evening's recreation there that 'as usual, everyone was doing the twist', adding that each evening started and ended with the twist, and that every other song played was a number to which dancers could do the twist. The group leader even wrote that their Czech tour guide was both a lover of the twist and a 'propagandist' for it, adding

[95] See, for example, A. Gorsuch, *All This is Your World*; A Troitsky, *Back in the USSR: The True Story of Rock in Russia*, London: Omnibus Press, 1987.

[96] RGASPI, f. m-1s, op. 1s, d. 1096s, l. 24.

[97] TsDAGO, f. 7, op. 17, d. 600, l. 30. On Soviet officials' worries about the moral impact on young people of increasingly popular dances such as 'the twist', 'the Charleston' and 'the shake', see in particular N. Lebina, *Povsednevnost' epokhi kosmosa i kukuruzy: destruktsiya bol'shogo stilya*, p. 241-248.

[98] RGASPI, f. m-1, op. 30, d. 63, l. 5.

that his party had met young people on Prague's Wenceslas Square who told them that 'the ChSM (Czechoslovak Union of Youth) is holding a dance evening tonight. Twist! Twist! Twist!'[99] In this context it is worth drawing a parallel with Kristin Roth-Ey's work on the evolution of Soviet mass media, particularly her assertion that television was in a sense more attractive to the authorities as symbol rather than reality.[100] In an ideological sense at least, mass tourism to Eastern Europe represented much the same quandary – it seemingly offered great promise, and was very publicly embraced from above – but it proved difficult to exploit effectively (at least in terms of its original goals) and at times gave rise to fresh challenges that could neither be ignored nor overcome.

Evolving priorities

Soviet visitors to Czechoslovakia in February 1968 subsequently wrote of the 'sincere sympathy for the Soviet people' that they felt there. In May, too, once reforms were more fully underway, Soviet youth tourists met with locals and gave only positive feedback on the experience (though one report mentioned in passing that the author had heard anti-Soviet remarks from members of a student demonstration his group had witnessed).[101] Unsurprisingly, though, the response to Soviet visitors became especially sharp in Czechoslovakia following the Warsaw Pact invasion in August. This was always one of the most visited countries for BMMT and that remained the case right up to the culmination of the Prague Spring. In June 1968, for example, after Dubcek's 'Action Programme' had long been in the public domain and with the 'Two Thousand Words' manifesto published that same month, 800 Soviet youth went to Prague for a festival of Czechoslovak-Soviet friendship. This time the ensuing report did note that many local youth chose not to join in with the events of the festival.[102] By the autumn, things had deteriorated further. A visiting party of (mostly) Komsomol workers in November described an almost unending torrent of resentment. They wrote of how everywhere on walls and roads one could see graffiti like 'Russian brothers – our enemies' and 'Lenin died on 21 August', while opinion on the street was such that group

[99] TsDAGO, f. 7, op. 17, d. 607, l. 78.

[100] K. Roth-Ey, 'Finding a Home for Television in the USSR, 1950-70', *Slavic Review*, Vol. 66, No. 2, 2007, p. 281.

[101] TsDAGO, f. 7, op. 20, d. 390, l. 91.

[102] RGASPI, f. m-1, op. 30, d. 430, l. 9.

members were advised to spend their free time cocooned in the hotel, away from locals.[103] Among many displays of anger, one guide (a representative of the Komsomol's nominally fraternal equivalent, the Czech Union of Youth) took his cohort to the 'Moravia' restaurant in Prague, before pointedly telling them it was until recently called the 'Moskva' (Moscow) restaurant.

If anything, the environment seems to have been even more hostile the following month. Beginning with the seemingly calculated insult of extremely poor service (buses consistently failed to arrive to pick up Soviet guests, rooms were never ready or clean when they eventually arrived at the hotel), numerous encounters were also more openly confrontational, such as the museum guide who refused to sell souvenirs to the 'occupiers', or the representative of the Czech Union of Youth in the High Tatras who called his Soviet guests 'occupiers' and 'invaders', and the local youth who openly refused to speak to 'Russians' (regardless of the fact that the party in question was from Ukraine).[104] Indeed, such animosity was not always confined to the territory of Czechoslovakia. A group of Soviet youth tourists in Tunisia that same summer had the misfortune of running into a party of Czechs and Slovaks there who, they alleged, 'behaved towards us like hooligans', cursing and shouting abuse.[105]

Whilst acknowledging that all manner of exchanges and interactions continued thereafter – and official discourse still championed links with East European youth as a priority – numerous commentators have convincingly presented the Prague Spring and its denouement as a point at which the goal of building genuinely warm grassroots ties between the USSR and the other countries of the bloc effectively died as a viable proposition.[106] There is certainly some evidence that the fallout was not limited to Czechoslovakia itself. In Poland, for example, which witnessed turbulent political events of its own in March 1968, BMMT tourists' encounters with locals were reportedly still positive overall, but group leaders did note that on several occasions there were either no meetings

[103] Nonetheless, the group leader still had the temerity to complain that their tour guide in Prague had not taken his party to see the city's monument to the Soviet army.

[104] TsDAGO, f. 7, op. 20, d. 81-99.

[105] RGASPI, f. m-5, op. 1, d. 592, ll. 27-29.

[106] See, for example, Z. Wojnowski, 'An Unlikely Bulwark of Sovietness' and R. Applebaum, 'The Friendship Project'.

organised with local youth, or else those scheduled were suddenly cancelled for reasons unknown. Much the same story was true of trips to Romania, where Nicolae Ceausescu had denounced the August invasion of Czechoslovakia, as planned meetings with locals were scratched from the schedule and the level of service afforded to Soviet visitors seems to have been unusually poor.[107] After having taken what was described as a 'sharply unfriendly position toward the Komsomol' following events in Czechoslovakia, the story was again broadly similar in Yugoslavia for a time.[108] Even so, it is important not to overstate the point at hand – such displays of animosity were certainly not universal or necessarily permanent. Post-trip reports submitted to the Ukrainian branch of BMMT that year showed that the bulk of the feedback remained much the same as before, even as sensitivities on the matter of grassroots attitudes were clearly at a raised level. Those returning from Bulgaria, the GDR, and Hungary (all of which countries participated in the invasion of Czechoslovakia) almost exclusively recorded only positive encounters with local youth, both before and after the denouement of the Prague Spring.[109] Indeed, Natalia Altukhova recalled a tourist visit to Czechoslovakia that coincided exactly with the tenth anniversary of the invasion in which – despite the fears and pre-emptive warnings of group leaders – she was treated very courteously by locals the whole time.[110]

That the tour parties to Czechoslovakia in late 1968 mentioned directly above were made up overwhelmingly of Komsomol professionals doubtless told of how events there had impacted on tourism operations, since the perceived need to exert 'positive' influence there was now at a premium (thus trained Komsomol propagandists and others), and the potential negative influences inside the country were similarly at a critical mass (thus fewer 'normal' tourists). One also gets a clear sense from the reports of tour group leaders around that time that they were particularly keen to avoid any unscheduled interactions with non-Soviet parties on their travels.[111] Similarly,

[107] TsDAGO, f. 7, op. 20, d. 390, l. 61.

[108] RGASPI, f. m-1, op. 30, d. 399, l. 2.

[109] TsDAGO, f. 7, op. 20, d. 390, l. 1-110.

[110] D. Raleigh, *Russia's Sputnik Generation*, p. 66.

[111] The leader of a late 1968 trip to Norway, for example, wrote of the determined resistance he had to put up in order to stop hotel and hostel administrators there from putting Soviet guests in dorms with young people from other countries, claiming the group was very busy and needed to rest. RGASPI, f. m-5, op. 1, d. 592, l. 42.

direct interaction with locals whilst abroad could also be drastically curtailed if circumstances dictated. Being so heavily state-controlled, it was not hard for the taps to be quickly turned down or else turned off in regard to the flow of tourist travel to countries at such points of political turbulence, as was the case during the Czechoslovak events and again during the Solidarity crisis in Poland. Once the worst of the crisis had passed, the tourists returned in a bid to re-bridge the divide that had appeared.[112] Nonetheless, for all the consequences it had in regard to the long-term prospects for the bloc, it is critical to note that the violent suppression of the Prague Spring barely made a lasting mark on the wider pattern of youth tourist travel to Eastern Europe in the sense that numbers travelling to the region from the USSR continued to grow substantially.

While the Brezhnev regime's growing emphasis on consumerism and 'the good life' for purposes of regime legitimation was surely a factor in the continued growth of Soviet tourism to Eastern Europe even once notions of building friendship had seemingly stalled, this was not the only driver behind its enduring growth. At its founding in 1958, the Komsomol leadership had hoped only that BMMT would not constitute too much of a financial burden on their organisation.[113] Indeed, the lack of financial motivation behind youth tourism can be easily seen from the fact that most youth tourist arrangements were 'currency-free' affairs, meaning that no money ever changed hands since BMMT and its partner organisations provided like-for-like exchanges. This, though, shifted over time. Doubtless, one of the reasons why Komsomol authorities continued to embrace foreign tourism in spite of the challenges it posed was the fact that it had soon become a valuable revenue stream, behind only membership dues and income from publishing operations. Under the stewardship of Evgenyi Tyazhel'nikov in particular, from the late 1960s to the late 1970s, the economic function of the Komsomol became ever more central to its work and to its institutional identity. BMMT soon enough became integrated into the wider economic performance expected of the Komsomol, with its employees directed to meet targets like any other form of economic activity – this they did with a rare regularity.[114] International travel was a particularly easy sell, of

[112] See, for example, Z. Wojnowski, 'Staging Patriotism: Popular Responses to Solidarnosc in Soviet Ukraine, 1980-81', *Slavic Review*, Vol. 71, No. 4, 2012, pp. 824-848.

[113] See, for example, RGASPI, f. m-5, op. 1, d. 3, ll. 1-35.

[114] See, for example, ERAF, f. 31, op. 121, d. 102, ll. 75-77 which discusses the economic value of tourism for the Komsomol and calls for greater efforts at raising profitability.

course, and priced reasonably affordably in regard to Eastern Europe at least, so the only real limit to success in this respect centred on the extent of the prevailing political appetite for tourism.

The forces arrayed in favour of continuing the expansion of tourism were to say the least considerable. Individual tourists and tour group leaders were usually keen to travel again (and a growing number of young people did travel to Eastern Europe twice or more by the 1970s), which apparently prompted the latter to ensure their post-trip reports were largely shorn of undesirable incidents in order that they not be accused of failing to exert proper leadership over their charges whilst abroad.[115] At the institutional level, too, there was seemingly little desire for a proper reckoning with problems. The Georgian branch of BMMT, for example, submitted details on tourist travel to Eastern Europe during the first half of 1976 which showed a total of 754 people who went to the region, resulting in a mere one infraction of customs rules and not a single breach of discipline.[116] Such unrealistic figures – the likes of Gorsuch and Koenker both show the extent to which tourists relished the shopping opportunities on offer and consistently attempted to circumvent tight limits on what could be brought home – tell most of all that problems were likely being covered up or ignored. Similarly, tourism presented rich patronage and *blat* opportunities for those in charge. A 1978 review of the work of the Georgian branch of BMMT, for example, came to the succinct conclusion that 'those in charge of selecting people for foreign travel…are picking their family and friends'.[117]

By the middle of the 1970s BMMT had an income of over 100 million roubles and had amassed hard currency reserves of over 6 million roubles, both of which figures were still growing sharply.[118] Growing tourism receipts meant more money for youth work inside the Soviet Union, such as building facilities for sports and cultural activities, as well as for costly but prestigious foreign projects, like providing aid and training to fraternal

[115] See, for example, A. Gorsuch, *All This is Your World*, p. 23.

[116] MIA, f. 96, op. 26, d. 142, l. 6.

[117] MIA, f. 96, op. 27, d. 70, l. 62.

[118] RGASPI, f. m-6, op. 17, d. 571, l. 29.

movements in the developing world.[119] Although the inflows and outflows of monies behind these figures remain somewhat opaque, we can safely surmise that the bulk of this revenue was generated by foreigners' (and especially capitalists') tourist trips into the USSR, yet accruing money from Komsomol members' paying for recreation activities was nonetheless a well-tapped resource by the 1960s and 1970s.[120] Similarly, because its international operations were based on bilateral agreements with partner organisations abroad – in which the number of visitors any organisation sent to the USSR was linked to how many they received from the USSR – there was an evident symbiosis which underpinned this income.

The 'commercial turn' that Diane Koenker has outlined in regard to the emergence of a genuine 'tourist industry' in the USSR from the end of the 1960s certainly resonates with key developments within Komsomol tourism.[121] In the first instance, it is worth noting that BMMT was 'promoted' to become a fully-fledged department of the Komsomol Central Committee in 1970, highlighting its strong institutional standing. As was often the case, success only brought demands for ever-greater achievements, and increasing revenues was emphasised as a key theme of BMMT's work by this point. An internal report compiled ahead of the 1974 Komsomol congress, for example, spoke of aiming to raise the number of BMMT travellers by more than 10% each year from 1974-80 and outlined efforts being undertaken in a variety of fields to professionalise BMMT's work on the ground, such as raising the foreign language skills of its translators. More notable, though, were the plans for substantial capital investment. BMMT officials reported that they had been spending many millions each year hiring facilities (such as rooms in Intourist hotels) and paying for services (such as meals in restaurants and cafes) that would soon be brought in-house, describing youth hotels already under construction in Odessa, Kiev and Volgograd, as well as expansions of numerous existing youth camps, with new ones about to open in Kostroma and Tbilisi.[122] The same

[119] Interview with V.T., Kiev, January 2017. On Komsomol money spent abroad, see also R. Hornsby, 'The Post-Stalin Komsomol and the Soviet Fight for Third World Youth'.

[120] Sergei Zhuk in particular has recently noted how powerful was the lure for Komsomol officials of boosting the organisation's coffers through members paying entrance fees to (Western) movie screenings, disco nights and such like. See S. Zhuk, 'Hollywood's Insidious Charms: the Impact of American Cinema and Television on the Soviet Union during the Cold War', *Cold War History*, Vol. 14, No. 4, 2014, pp. 593-617.

[121] See, for example, D. Koenker, *Club Red*, p. 262-268.

[122] RGASPI, f. m-6, op. 17, d. 571, ll. 17-27.

congress materials also floated a number of new ideas for further increasing tourism income, such as expanding river cruises, two-day trips, offering customers unspecified additional services, making better use of camps and hotels outside of the tourist season.[123] As the report remarked, this expansion of BMMT capacity justified itself for two reasons: it made it possible to draw more young people into travel, and it increased income.

As a clear economic success story, both BMMT officials and the Komsomol Central Committee were happy to keep on surpassing their (growing) output targets, and they were not at all shy about insisting that tourism made a significant contribution to Soviet prestige and international security, as official rhetoric had proclaimed from the start.[124] BMMT was not just relevant to the Komsomol's own institutional economy, however. The attractiveness of international travel – especially since demand would always outstrip supply – made the tourist pass (*putevka*) a powerful incentive. Although generally affordable, these were not easy to obtain. The kinds of labour, skills, and productivity competitions that stood at the heart of efforts to spur Soviet youth onward in playing their role in the country's economic development needed prizes that had the power to motivate.[125] Noting that the Komsomol already offered various moral stimuli (such as having one's name entered into a local, regional or republican 'Komsomol book of honour') to incentivise youth to ever greater achievements, a Karelian Komsomol request from the summer of 1966, for example, witheringly went on to state 'but these are only moral stimuli, together with which we need to establish material stimuli…'.[126] Travel passes to Eastern Europe often

[123] RGASPI, f. m-6, op. 17, d. 571, l. 29.

[124] See, for example, R. Hornsby, 'The Enemy within?', p. 275. As Bagdasaryan et al point out, the assumption that expanded tourist links offered promise in regard to friendlier international relations was sufficiently widespread to feature in a range of international agreements, including the Helsinki Final Act. See V. Bagdasaryan et al eds. *Sovetskoe zazerkal'e: inostrannyi turizm v SSSR v 1930-1980 gody*, Moskva: Forum, 2007.

[125] On this theme, see also K. Ironside, 'Khrushchev's Cash and Goods Lotteries and the Turn towards Positive Incentives', *Soviet and Post-Soviet Review*, Vol. 41, No. 3, 2014, pp. 296-323.

[126] NARK (Petrozavodsk), f. 779, op. 47, d. 23, l. 12.

cost the Komsomol substantially less than the cash prizes it had previously been awarding to competition winners, and they also tapped into a seemingly unquenchable desire among young people for travel.[127]

There were some instances of foreign travel being used as a stimulus to increase labour productivity already in the 1960s. The Karelian Komsomol, for example, reported to Moscow that 2,000 university students would be spending their summer working on collective farms in 1966, and requested 10-12 tourist passes to countries of the socialist bloc (to be paid for by the Ministry of Agriculture) with which to reward the best workers from that cohort.[128] By the 1970s, tourist passes to Eastern Europe were a particularly widely-touted incentive for raising labour productivity among young people. In 1972-3, for example, records show that in excess of 30,000 passes were handed out either free of charge or at a cut price in reward for work done 'by mechanisers in Amur *oblast'*, by livestock workers in Lithuania, cotton workers in Uzbekistan, shock workers from the fields of Ukraine and Belarus' and many more besides.[129] The same report also sharply criticised a number of union republic central committees and *obkoms* (including Azerbaijan, Armenia, Turkmenistan, Kirgizstan, Novgorod, Pskov, Kamchatka, and Belgorod) for failing to use tourist passes to incentivise youth. By the late 1970s data from a huge array of union republics and Russian *oblasti* showed that somewhere between one quarter and one half of all travel passes to Eastern Europe were being granted as a reward for work done in factories, on farms and building sites. From 1978, for example, over 500 of the 1,280 who went abroad from Altai *krai* had such 'prizes'; along with 485 of the 1,797 travellers from Armenia; 753 of the 1,192 from Vladimir; 588 of the 1,591 from Volgograd; 487 of the 813 from Kaluga; and 108 of the 525 from Dagestan.[130] Such data only tell part of the study, since tourist passes were also being procured and allocated on a more informal basis by that point. Noting that there were many Komsomol members working well at the Georgian Ministry of Finance, for example, the Minister in question wrote to the Georgian Komsomol central committee in early 1980 asking that they make

[127] On more than on occasion republican and *oblast'* Komsomol organisations had to go begging to the Council of Ministers because they had promised cash prizes to competition winners that they subsequently could not afford to pay. See, for example, NARB, f. 63, op. 19, d. 13, ll. 7-8.

[128] NARK, f. 779, op. 47, d. 23, l. 12.

[129] RGASPI, f. m-6, op. 17, d. 571, l. 16.

[130] RGASPI, f. m-5, op. 3, d. 67, ll. 1-245.

available 20 travel passes to 'the countries of the CMEA' in order to encourage further excellent work. Subsequent communications make clear that 20 travel passes to Czechoslovakia for the minister's staff were duly approved.[131]

One consequence of this growing commercialism and use of travel as a form of reward or encouragement seems to have been a weakening of focus on the 'citizen diplomacy' angle that had initially underpinned Soviet youth tourism in particular. Both the growing numbers who travelled and the increasing tendency for their tourist pass to have been awarded on the basis of labour achievements suggested rather less stringent vetting of candidates' ideological 'quality' over the years. Numerous internal memoranda and Komsomol central committee decrees on selection of candidates for foreign travel offer clear evidence of this. A 1978 review of BMMT work, for example, said that some organisations (naming Tyumen *oblast'* BMMT as an example) were guilty of 'thinking only about financial income when they select people for trips'.[132] Much the same was true of the obligatory pre-trip preparation that BMMT branches laid on for those about to travel abroad. A 1976 review of BMMT work bemoaned the poor standard of preparation, claiming that 'too often it shows only a formalistic approach, especially for those traveling to the socialist countries', adding that as a result the potential of such trips was going unfulfilled.[133] Clearly, then there was some acknowledgement that the ideological functions of tourist travel were being undermined by such developments, but, as was typical of the time, the (fundamentally misleading) narrative on such problems was that they were isolated and exceptional rather than systemic.

Conclusions

Clearly, for the communist vanguard organisation that was formed in 1918 to have branched out into the world of international tourism four decades later speaks of an organisation that underwent a considerable evolution in that time. However, the next three decades after 1958 also witnessed significant change in this respect. As the number of young people travelling to Eastern Europe grew, so the likelihood of each being a committed and effective propagandist for the Soviet system declined. In this sense we might draw a parallel with decades-long institutional

[131] MIA, f. 96, op. 27, d. 184, ll. 41-47.

[132] MIA, f.96, op. 27, d. 70, l. 84.

[133] MIA, f. 96, op. 26, d. 142, l. 3.

evolution that saw the Komsomol itself morph from a small vanguard of the most ideologically engaged youth to an increasingly ideologically moribund organ of mass socialisation. As borders began to open up across the globe, and the Soviet regime again sought to reach out first under Khrushchev and then also Brezhnev, the purposes and duties of the Komsomol came to see an ever greater focus on both winning over new friends abroad and protecting against the influence that the outside world exerted upon Soviet youth. In terms of priorities, domestic and foreign matters thus grew increasingly entwined with one another. As noted above, while they were officially in the 'friendly' camp – and were clearly regarded as being somewhat less 'dangerous' than young people from the capitalist West – interaction with youth from the countries of Eastern Europe nonetheless held myriad challenges for the Komsomol and harboured plenty of officially undesirable influences.

The basic pattern observable in regard to Soviet international youth tourism – the vast bulk of which consisted of travel to fraternal states of Eastern Europe – was for continual growth in numbers. One or two exceptions aside, each year saw more and more young people heading from the USSR to the likes of Bulgaria, Poland and the GDR. This can certainly be read as a sign that youth tourism was serving a purpose, though the evidence suggests that purpose shifted with the passing years. As noted above, the initial stimulus of building friendship and stability through greater grassroots cohesion was in time overtaken by the power of economics – both in terms of BMMT as a reliably successful economic entity in its own right and in the way that tourist passes were ever more routinely held out as incentive for young workers in industry, agriculture and the professions to raise productivity. While there is no exact point one can isolate as having witnessed this shift – and the change was certainly never declared policy – it is nonetheless instructive to draw together both the declining expectation of grassroots friendship that followed the Prague Spring and the increasing emphasis on commercialisation of tourism from the end of the 1960s.

International tourist travel served a variety of purposes for the post-Stalin Soviet regime, and it often performed multiple functions simultaneously. It was a sign of the Soviet 'good life' that developed socialism promised, a marker of prestige to be conferred or denied, it bolstered a plethora of regime narratives on issues like Soviet power on the world stage, and it served as a means of shaping citizens' behaviour through incentivising political engagement and conformity. Youth tourism to the fraternal states of Eastern Europe ticked all of these boxes, but it also formed a constituent part of a much wider effort to help build cohesion at the grassroots level throughout

the European socialist bloc. Events have, of course, since shown that effort can hardly be considered a long-term success. Nonetheless, this was not necessarily a tale of inevitable and unremitting failure, nor was it one that should be explained solely by reference to highly divisive top-level actions like the 1968 invasion of Czechoslovakia or a generalised resentment at Soviet 'imperialism'. Negative responses to the former were clear and sharp, but they were not universal or permanent. Quite how locals in the likes of Bulgaria, Hungary and Poland perceived Soviet attempts to 'make friends' through tourist encounters remains a subject for further research. How things might have panned out under conditions more conducive to developing human friendship is impossible to say. We can, though, assert with confidence that the Soviet failure to embrace fully the potential for person-to-person interaction – a failure which stemmed in the main from fears about the long-term domestic consequences of such interaction, but also from a marked shift of focus as the period wore on – that intra-bloc tourism presented can only have impeded progress in strengthening ties throughout the socialist camp.