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**Professional Culture of the Specialist of the Future**

**DIALOGUE OF CULTURES: THE PERCEPTION OF FOREIGN TOURISTS  
OF THE USSR**

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***Abstract***

The article analyzes the history of development of Soviet foreign tourism in terms of building a dialogue of cultures in the context of two opposing socio-political systems. The scope of this study is limited to the second half of the 20th century as it was a period of establishing people's diplomacy. The conditions that influenced the formation of the tourist infrastructure of the USSR are scrutinized. The factors contributing to developing cultural diplomacy in the pre-war period are presented. Archival documents show how comments of foreign tourists visiting cities and republics of the Soviet Union were collected to reveal and minimize weaknesses. Unusual methods of ideological confrontation – by means of mass culture such as mega events – are described. Trips offered by Soviet travel agencies organically combined the demonstration of the cosmopolitan aspirations of the USSR with the demonstration of regional features and the desire to preserve and multiply the ethno-cultural diversity of the peoples inhabiting the Soviet Union. An in-depth analysis of the Soviet approach and the modern Russian one to building a cultural dialogue shows that there is a need for such work at the present. The main difference is that in the 21st century the sphere of tourism and state cultural policies are conceptually divided. However, finding ways to introduce a "government order" into the sphere of commercial tourism for solving the described problems may be necessary.

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**Keywords:** Cultural diplomacy; dialogue of cultures; foreign tourism; ideological confrontation, the Cold War.



## **1. Introduction**

Modern interstate relations are characterized by a high level of tension. This is largely due to the activities of both politicians and mass media that shape public opinion. For countries, searching for a place of one's own in a rapidly changing world also makes actual a number of other issues. Regard to foreigners and to everything foreign is an important component in the ideology of any state. Through the perception of foreigners, the mechanisms of civilizational self-identification are revealed. It is especially relevant in the study of the political model of the Soviet Union, often described as an ideocratic system.

To fully understand the Soviet model the phenomenon of social memory should also be taken into consideration since "it not only describes the past and determines the present, but also shapes the future... It is important not only to pass on knowledge about the past to future generations, but to shape values and moral guidelines on its basis" (Krasnozhenova & Kulik, 2018, p. 677). It is extremely difficult to prepare a specialist in the 21st century, to form their professional culture without understanding and explaining this specificity.

## **2. Problem Statement**

The dynamic development of foreign tourism poses the issues of positioning themselves before foreign tourists for the regions of the Russian Federation. Strengthening the state's activities to popularize Russia, Russian culture and art among foreigners as well as opening Russian cultural centers abroad put on the agenda the issues of intercultural dialogue and cultural diplomacy to build a state strategy aimed at influencing foreign citizens. These concerns are as urgent at the present as they used to be in the second half of the 20th century. The Soviet Union, defending the principles of peaceful coexistence, intensified its efforts to make a positive impact on the public of foreign states. The relevance of this study is predicated by the similarity of goals set by the Soviet leadership in the area of building a cultural dialogue with those of the capitalist bloc countries.

## **3. Research Questions**

The major difficulties the Soviet Union encountered in building a cultural dialogue with both the foreign public and foreign tourists remain relevant for modern Russia. In the period of the Cold War, the opinion of citizens of the Western bloc countries was formed by mass media, which broadcast the overall strategy of their political beau monde.

## **4. Purpose of the Study**

Currently, the Russian Federation is facing similar challenges. This entails studying historical experience regarding the problems of perception of Russian reality by citizens of foreign states. At the same time it is necessary to understand what competencies it is necessary for managers to have to determine the vectors of influencing foreign public opinion.

## 5. Research Methods

This study represents a complex interdisciplinary approach; therefore, the basic research principles of the humanities constitute its methodological basis. First of all, this is the principle of scientific objectivity when working with sources, excluding the influence of the conjuncture on the analysis and interpretation of empirical data. To adhere to this principle such methods as abstraction, analysis, synthesis, generalization, comparative analysis and modelling were applied. Comparative-historical, formal-logical and structural-functional methods, along with descriptive ones, helped to systematize a significant amount of factual information and to identify the key phenomena. Applying the principle of social determinism made it possible to distinguish and explain the historically conditioned features of the development of the Soviet-party state and society.

## 6. Findings

In the sphere of science and education, culture and sports, the USSR built strategies for an intercultural dialogue both in the pre-war and post-war period. They included making memoranda and cooperation agreements in the scientific and educational spheres that might contain clauses about regular exchange of students. In the international context of the late 1950s, such interaction allowed Soviet officials and scientists to actively participate in international public life (Olsakova, 2018). Similarly, in the late 1950s and first half of the 1960s, the Chinese Communist Party deliberately used the transnational initiatives proposed by the Pugwash Conferences to promote its own strategy and foreign policy through the methods of people's diplomacy (Barrett, 2018). At the same time, tourism as a form of Cold War diplomacy and one of the directions of the Soviet Union's cultural breakthrough in Western Europe had its own specifics: the USSR was represented by ordinary citizens who were supposed to make an impression of people "inexperienced in politics" and thus demonstrate "the human face of the Soviet socialism" (Gorsuch, 2011, p.222).

The end of the 1950s - the first half of the 1960s was the first stage of active development of the tourist industry of the Soviet Union. This was facilitated by the publication of resolutions of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, and the activities of the relevant organizations (the state-sponsored travel agency Intourist, the state-sponsored youth travel agency Sputnik). Thus, for the first time in many years Soviet citizens were given an opportunity to communicate informally with foreigners. In addition to official delegations, either youth or trade ones, cultural or sister cities delegations, Soviet people were able to communicate with citizens of other states, including the capitalist bloc, without comprehensive restrictions imposed by state bodies. Cultural diplomacy developed in the USSR as a way to get round the absent official relations with foreign countries. Subsequently, this phenomenon transformed into a system of influencing foreign public opinion through state-sponsored public organizations. They were indirectly controlled by such authorities as Vsesoiuznoe obshchestvo kulturnoi svyazi s zagranitsei (Soviet Society for Cultural Ties Abroad), or VOKS, established in 1925.

Michael David-Fox considered in detail the pre-war activities of VOKS, when the Soviet government sought to channel socialist values into Western countries through cultural diplomacy. The author argues that although VOKS and related agencies for international cultural policy and propaganda were nothing more than a medium-level political force, the efforts of the Soviet state "to influence the

opinion of foreigners, especially from the West, were so significant that they had a profound impact on the development of the Soviet system as a whole in the first decades of its existence" (David-Fox, 2015, p. 12).

In the first post-war years, the USSR used VOKS as a countermeasure against American and British propaganda. Since the 1950s, VOKS had been looking for external partners associated with the Communist parties of specific countries. This strategy was aimed at the most palatable communication of ideas and popularization of the Soviet Union. The Swedish researcher Wenell (2015) shows how the Soviet Union used friendship societies that were part of VOKS to popularize the USSR among the Swedish population.

The Finnish researcher Kostianen (1998, p. 48) argues that though the early Intourist policies were associated with the concepts of control and manipulation, there was a part of Finnish tourists that consisted of "the official and semi-official tourists, individuals and groups, who were treated in a special way and sent by the agencies of the Finnish government, such as the Ministry of Education or various organisations working for a mutual cooperation and friendship". Those delegations consisted of teachers, artists, trade union representatives, and important politicians. Their number varied from a few hundred to thousands throughout the 1950s. The author also notes that there could even be found Soviet sympathisers among them.

The broadest development of cultural diplomacy began in the second half of the 1950s. At the same time, ideological work aimed at the development of cultural dialogue played one of the leading roles. An effective method of communications work with foreigners visiting the USSR was the arrangement of friendship socials, round tables and other mass events with carefully designed programs in accord with the relevant authorities. Lecturers for this work were required to be engaged from among the best trained personnel, who were well aware of all aspects of life of those countries from which tourists arrived. Confirmation of such facts can be found in the written comments of foreign tourists: "We really liked your historic city – its churches, the Kremlin and the beach, but most of all, your friendly people. Thank you very much and most cordial greetings from America. Nancy O'Neill, a student from the USA" (Otzyvi inostrannikh turistov, 1967, p. 9).

Despite the fact that Intourist translator-guides mostly selected positive comments of foreigners about the Soviet state and the way of life of Soviet people, they nevertheless objectively reflected how visitors of the Soviet Union reconsidered their stereotypes. Orlov (2013, p. 86) makes a point that the specifics of training foreign tourism personnel and, above all, translator-guides was determined by the fact that "every employee of Intourist and other departments involved in the reception of foreign guests was considered an "ideological fighter". Translator-guides, first of all, were responsible for representing the Soviet state and the advantages of the communist system over the capitalist one.

Comments of foreign tourists after visiting the Soviet Union played a significant role in the assessment of the work of guides and interpreters. Gratitude couldn't be considered informative enough for guides' immediate supervisors to assess positive results of their work. Short, in one or two sentences, notes rather reflect a cultural background of people who visited the USSR. The authors can give some comments of foreign tourists as an example. It was very typical of Frenchmen to comment on the beauty of provincial towns like Novgorod or to mention that an interpreter was "very nice and sang well". Danes, on the contrary, were distantly polite using expressions like "on behalf of 32 Danish tourists I thank the translator".

Unlike Danes, American tourists described their emotional experience from their visit to Novgorod in 1965: "Russia is unique due to the beauty of its art. Novgorod helps it look so. Novgorod and Moscow are cities people need to be proud of. It was a discovery. I hope to return here soon" (Saveliev, 2014, p. 65). Probably, such enthusiasm could be explained by the fact that citizens of the United States, considering the foreign policy relations between their country and the USSR, were in many ways more hostile toward the Soviet Union than other tourists, and had been prepared to see not cities with a rich history and culture, but what American propaganda had told them.

A comment of German tourists, who visited Novgorod on December 31, 1971, is of great interest. They highly praised the guide, who managed to get around all the problems associated with the New Year's celebrations, such as a sanitary day in the museum. She organized a wonderful excursion program and managed to provide mead tasting in the Sadko Hotel (Kniga otzivov inostrannikh turistov, 1971).

It should be taken into consideration that many foreign tourists had the slightest idea about Soviet reality before travelling to the USSR. Having become acquainted with the life of the Soviet state, the life of its citizens, they spoke directly about the fact that they had previously been incorrectly informed about the state of affairs in the USSR. The opinion of an American tourist, Baker, a businessman, can be a good example of this. In his comment, he told that before coming to the USSR, he "willingly believed that there was supposedly a total regime in the Soviet Union and foreigners couldn't use public transport; that Muscovites and Leningraders are gloomy and taciturn people. But all this is not true and the fiction of newsmen" (Bagdasaryan, Orlov, Shnaydgen, Fedulin, & Mazin. 2007, p. 98).

The Soviet Union, being a multinational state, aspired to patronize the national identity under the protection of socialism. This also affected the sphere of tourism. Of course, the initial attention of the leadership of the tourism industry was focused on "creating a correct idea of Soviet reality showing the advantages of the socio-political system, the socialist economy, and the socialist way of life" (Popov, 2017, p. 56). Nevertheless, many foreign tourists wanted to see the authenticity of the visited republics of the Soviet Union, and not just the cosmopolitanism of cities and the life of ordinary Soviet people.

Zake (2018, p. 58) notes that tourist groups and individual travellers from the West who visited Soviet Latvia were "interested in its history and ethnic uniqueness and were willing to pay for its cultural products, ranging from souvenirs to attendance at folk song and dance festivals. The Latvian SSR gradually became a destination of cultural and ethnic exploration". Growing interest from foreign tourists helped local Latvians to preserve their ethnic identity.

Similar tendencies, according to Purs (2006), took place and in pre-war Latvia. The "clean" Latvian countryside, showed to foreigners en route, was put in opposition to the cosmopolitanism of the city with its multiethnic population.

A subtle aspect in dealing with foreign tourists was the theme of anti-militarism and, in particular, the Great Patriotic War. Popov (2011) argues that anti-militarist rhetoric for foreign young people, as part of public outreach, fully justified itself. "This rhetoric based on the fear of war as the embodiment of violence, death and destruction should have been understandable to all categories of young people, regardless of their race, nationality, religion, social status and material position" (p. 475).

The issues of understanding foreign tourists' perception of Soviet reality and their attitude to the memorialization of the Great Patriotic War were actively explored in the postwar period. Sergey Kulik

notes the interest foreigners had in organized search groups that looked for the remains of fallen Soviet soldiers to memorialize their names (Kulik, 2014). This interest is quite natural since the public opinion of the anti-Hitler coalition countries about the scale of Soviet losses and damages was well-prepared in the war period, thanks to publications in the press of the Allied countries that highlighted Nazi crimes and showed the attitude of public and political figures to fascist ideology (Kovalev, Kulik, & Kokkonen, 2017; Kokkonen, 2018). At the same time, the contribution of the peoples of all the Soviet republics, including the Baltic States, to the victory of the USSR over Nazi Germany was recognized (Kulik & Samylovskaya, 2016). However, nowadays the official historiography of these countries to a large extent belittles, ignores or vulgarizes the participation of Estonian, Latvian and Lithuanian citizens in the joint struggle against Hitler Germany. This in many respects is connected with political conjuncture.

In general, Intourist paid special attention to the condemnation of fascism, which implied any nationalistic aspirations, as it was part of propaganda aimed at foreign tourists. The theme of the Great Patriotic War was a part of excursions organized by this travel agency though it provided grounds for a host of pressing issues from foreigners.

Another important aspect that actively influenced the dynamics and vector of developing intercultural interaction was the phenomenon of mega events and related event tourism. The studies by Bagdasaryan (2008), Popov (2013, 2014), and Milovanova (2016) show how those events influenced the intensity and direction of international tourist flows.

The organization of the 6th World Festival of Youths and Students in Moscow in the summer of 1957 can be considered the first example of a mega-event after the opening of Soviet cities to mass tourism. It is natural that in many respects this festival was an active instrument for Soviet propaganda to influence a foreign audience. "For the USSR, such a meaningful international event was a good opportunity to present the world audience a positive image of life and aspirations of Soviet people and lay the groundwork for the active development of the tourism industry" (Saveliev, 2016, p. 335).

Within the scope of this study, the organization of the 1980 Olympic Games and the post-Olympic period are of great interest as they give clues to understanding foreigners' perception of the Soviet Union. Maurice Roche argues that the 1980 Olympics were the first sports mega event in the USSR (Roche, 2000). The military parity of the great powers during the Cold War made sports, among other aspects of social life, a means of ideological struggle.

Bagdasaryan, citing the opinion of John F. Kennedy that "the position of states in the modern world is determined by the number of nuclear warheads and gold Olympic medals, notes that psychosocial motives of war were extrapolated to sports in the age of weapons of mass destruction" (Baghdasaryan, 2008, p. 11). Thus, the "struggle for hearts and minds" as a representation of Soviet way of life through propaganda and cultural diplomacy required new ideas since foreign tourists and a foreign audience paid special attention to the USSR.

An ideological confrontation in the sphere of film production was one of them. The USA, Great Britain, and Germany consistently advocated a boycott of the 1980 Olympics. The Soviet animated film "Baba Yaga protiv" [Baba Yaga is against it] (1979), a fairy tale about an old witch and her cronies, who tried unsuccessfully to hinder the organization of the Olympic Games, personified the leading countries of the Western block (Baghdasaryan, 2008).

However, Tony Shaw and Denise J. Youngblood, comparing the cinematography propaganda methods of the USSR with those of the United States, admit that American film archives are more accessible than Soviet ones and warn researchers against false conclusions that Americans were more skilful in the "struggle for hearts and minds" during the Cold War (Shaw & Youngblood, 2017).

Taking into account the initial negative attitude of the USSR and Western public to the foreign press as a propaganda mouthpiece, the USSR made it a point to demonstrate its way of life and its intentions directly at the place of visit. In addition to purely propagandistic goals, the favourable perception of Soviet reality by foreign tourists could prompt them to visit other regions of the Soviet Union, which contributed to the further development of foreign tourism.

The analysis of the experience of the organizations and departments involved in the admission of foreign tourists shows that the areas in which their knowledge was required and could be applied were very diverse. Interaction with the foreign public to build a cultural dialogue in different socio-political systems meant more than just the regulation of tourist flows.

## 7. Conclusion

Today's international tourism is openly distancing itself from ideology and politics. This is partly due to the removal of the "iron curtain" and the expansion of inter-cultural dialogue. On the other hand, the exclusion of the ideological component from the sphere of foreign tourism can be explained by the absence of "ideological order" from the Russian authorities.

Since the beginning of the 21st century, Russian state leaders have been actively working for greater openness of foreign policy for both Russian citizens and representatives of the wider world community. Therefore, cultural diplomacy plays an increasingly active role both in the world and in Russia as it has become an important addition to official diplomacy.

Nowadays Russia has a great potential to develop cultural interaction. This is facilitated, above all, by the desire to continue working in this vein. This is also confirmed by the organization of the 2014 Olympic Games and the 2018 World Cup, and the systematic work of Russian cultural centers around the world.

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