

Gorsuch, Anne E.: *All This is Your World. Soviet Tourism at Home and Abroad After Stalin*. New York: Oxford University Press 2011. ISBN: 978-0-199-60994-9; X, 222 S.

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Anne Gorsuch's book examines Soviet domestic and international tourism, focusing on the period between the late 1940s and the mid-1960s as a part of the cultural „Thaw“. She is particularly interested in the repercussions these changes had on the conception of Soviet identity. During the 1930s this identity had come to be defined as largely defensive and, above all, inflexible. Hence under Stalin the country developed in relative isolation from outside influences. Khrushchev, by contrast, propagated the idea of peaceful co-existence. This implies that the Soviet leadership had become more confident that the Soviet way of life could stand the test of comparison, either by international visitors to the USSR, or by Soviet citizens going abroad. As Gorsuch persuasively shows, the face to face encounters that took place as a result of these exchanges stretched the limits of the tolerable, and the regime considered it necessary to frame the perceptions of travellers and to control communication about border-crossing travel.

Focusing on the late Stalinist period, the first chapter on domestic tourism provides a somewhat simplified background for the following exploration of travelling abroad. While Gorsuch carves out the patriotic and xenophobic character of the Stalinist discourse on domestic tourism very well, her analysis of the „uniformly Soviet tourist experience“, by contrast, rather simplifies the complexities of domestic tourism. Soviet concepts of travelling the 'motherland' were ambiguous and allowed appropriations contrary to those intended. It was indeed as much a form of individual 'doing', as it was 'mass action through seeing' (p. 9). In the following chapter, Gorsuch juxtaposes Estonia as the „Soviet abroad“ to domestic tourism. Based on a wide array of sources from architecture and town planning to the sphere of consumption, Gorsuch embeds this tourism in a much larger

context of cultural politics, which certainly is one of the strong points of her study. The final chapter on „filmed tourism“, in particular, is a treasure trove for late Soviet cultural history.

As to international tourism, Gorsuch first examines the intricacies of travelling to the socialist satellites and contrasts the efforts of the regime to instruct tourists about the superiority of the Soviet Union with the tourists' attempts to reconcile sightseeing and shopping. Gorsuch's analysis of 'trip reports' filed by In-tourist's group leaders show how, against this backdrop, Soviet functionaries were particularly concerned about what they perceived as the tourists' „uncultured behaviour“. Rare trips to the west, on the contrary, were much more tightly organised and controlled, while the scarcity of hard currency restricted the purchase of goods. As Gorsuch shows, Soviet officials were even more worried about the behaviour of Soviet tourists in the West, yet ironically it was rather the overtly Soviet conduct of the latter that raised suspicion among their hosts.

The fifth chapter is particularly intriguing, as it contrasts the production of stereotypes of the West in Soviet literature and media with individual travel experiences recorded in diaries and memories. This is done in the form of a re-enactment of the actual travel, from preparation through the rite de passage of the journey and the actual stay abroad finally to the return to the USSR. During the Cold War, these trips, though shaped by prefabricated stereotypes and actual experiences, contributed to a gradual revision of the image of the West in the Soviet discourse. Whether Soviet citizens returned with new ideas and impressions or not, their first-hand experience exhibited their privileged position in Soviet society.

The basic structure of Gorsuch's study is compelling: Chapter by chapter the author follows Soviet tourists in concentric circles; beginning with the resumption of domestic travel after World War II through trips to the newly acquired territories (with a case study on Estonia) and the socialist „brotherlands“ to the capitalist world of the West. Both her introduction and her conclusions suggest, however, that Gorsuch is indeed much more intrigued by foreign travel than by domestic.

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The section on sources (p. 20-25), for example, discusses travel accounts, trip reports and memoirs, none of which are used for the analysis of domestic tourism. Beyond that, tourism within the land of Soviets is not even mentioned in the „epilogue“.

In sum, Gorsuch's book evolves around the question of how Soviet tourist practice and experience on the one hand, and the regime's anxieties about Soviet status abroad could be reconciled. Gorsuch convincingly displays the ambiguities of Soviet policy in the field, and the limited success in shaping both the perception of Soviet tourists and their hosts.

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